

# Horizon scanning: Water

Policy developments and opportunities for engagement

December 2024



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for Water Research

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# Acknowledgements

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## About the Institution of Environmental Sciences

The Institution of Environmental Sciences (the IES) is at the forefront of uniting the environmental sciences around a shared goal: to work with speed, vision and expertise to solve the world's most pressing environmental challenges, together.

As the global professional membership body for environmental scientists, we support a diverse network of professionals all over the world – and at every stage of their education and careers – to connect, develop, progress and inspire.

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## About the Foundation for Water Research

The [FWR Community](#) was launched following the IES inheriting the mission of the Foundation for Water Research (FWR) in 2022.

The Community is a cohesive, innovative, and independent-thinking community of water professionals offering guidance and strategic thought leadership for the IES's water activities.

The FWR Community uses an integrated, systems-thinking approach to water issues and their interactions with land and air.

## Specialism-specific relevance

This is a briefing paper on environmental policy relating to water resources and systems, including both freshwater and marine environments.

The paper is intended for FWR and IES members to encourage awareness of relevant policy issues, support horizon scanning for environmental professionals, and identify opportunities to engage with decision makers and the public on emerging issues linked to water and the environmental sciences.

IES member specialisms which may be affected by the subject-matter of the briefing include:

- Built environment
- Climatology
- Conservation & ecology
- Environmental management
- Marine and coastal science
- Policy
- Sustainability
- Waste management
- Water

Ultimately, this subject is likely to affect any professional whose work concerns topics associated with freshwater, wastewater, or marine environments.

# Chapter one: Horizon scanning & new policy developments

## Water (Special Measures) Bill

In the UK, the most immediate factor affecting new policy developments is the change of UK Government, with the new Labour administration having come to power at the 2024 general election.

While the Government's policy agenda around the environment is primarily focused on energy system decarbonisation, there are also several priorities which relate to water.

Most pertinently, the Government intends to address water quality (and river quality in particular) through new measures affecting water companies.

These proposals are currently being considered in the form of the [Water \(Special Measures\) Bill](#), which was introduced to Parliament in September, alongside an independent review of the water sector.

The Bill proposes measures to ensure independent monitoring of every outlet, block the payment of bonuses to executives of polluting companies, impose automatic fines, and potentially bring criminal charges against persistent law breakers.

These are supported by an extensive range of provisions, primarily focused on increasing accountability and the potential for sanctions on water companies. This includes new requirements to publish near real-time data of

discharges and annual pollution incident reduction plans.

The Water Bill is expected to come into law later in 2024 or in early 2025, though it may be subject to amendments, so its content is not yet final. Representatives in the House of Lords have sought to further increase the powers in the Bill, applying tighter scrutiny to water companies.

[Another Water Bill](#) has been proposed by a backbench Member of Parliament. The two Bills will each be debated in Parliament and will be voted on separately, though they cover similar subject matter and, at least in theory, both could become law.

The backbench Bill proposes greater democratic control of the water industry, new water targets and objectives for water management, and exploration of alternative ownership models for water companies.

As it is not a Public Bill proposed by the Government, it is unlikely to pass into law, but the Bill is guaranteed to be debated in the House of Commons, which may influence the Government's approach to its own legislation by the time the Special Measures Bill comes before MPs.

## Planning and infrastructure development

One of the Government's main areas of focus, planning reform, may have significant implications for water. In the second half of

2024, the Government [consulted on proposed changes](#) to the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) and associated planning reforms.

These reforms come as part of a wider government pledge to deregulate the planning sector to support infrastructure development and economic growth.

The Government has [stated its desire](#) to work with environmental NGOs, though concerns have also been raised that the current approach may falsely suggest that environmental and economic outcomes are incompatible.

Specific proposals in the consultation include changes for managing flood risk, water infrastructure provisions, and overall planning policy changes which may have consequences for integrated water management.

The Government has also indicated that it will seek to deploy private finance to support widespread reservoir construction, facilitated by proposals on infrastructure development, which is likely to have implications for water management and water security.

For the full details of the NPPF consultation and its implications for water and other areas of environmental science, [read the IES consultation response](#).

While the consultation provides a significant insight into the new Government's approach to the planning system and infrastructure development, some areas of uncertainty remain, particularly around legacy projects from the previous administration. The last Government's [proposed reforms](#) to Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) created a degree of uncertainty around how environmental impacts will be assessed in the future.

Despite [a new consultation](#) on supplementary guidance for EIA following the Finch case, those

uncertainties have not yet been reduced and the new Government's approach is still unclear.

For water management, another critical area of uncertainty surrounds the implementation of [Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act](#) to guarantee the delivery of mandatory Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) on new developments, following the previous Government's promise of a review in early 2024.

The new Government is expected to proceed with implementation of the Schedule, though whether or not there is sufficient support to deliver SuDS in practice is yet to be seen.

## Governance for water

There have also been several recent developments around governance for water, as well as the environment more broadly. As part of its [review of the water sector](#), the Government has announced its intention to look into improving regulation and empowering regulators, particularly Ofwat, the Environment Agency, and the Drinking Water Inspectorate.

At the same time as the review of the water sector, the Government is also [conducting a review](#) of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and its contribution to economic growth, which may have ramifications for how the Government approaches issues such as water.

The goal of the review is to “put growth at the heart” of the Department, and will involve a review of regulations linked to the environment.

The outcomes of the reviews are yet to be seen, but may lead to changes in the regulatory landscape.

While these developments are ongoing in England, Northern Ireland has now published its long-awaited [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) (EIP).



**“Concerns have been raised that the current approach may falsely suggest that environmental and economic outcomes are incompatible.”**



Northern Ireland's Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) was required to publish the plan under the Environment Act 2021, but its publication was delayed due to the suspension of the Executive.

The plan is the overall strategic document setting out Northern Ireland's approach to the environment, so will play a key role in driving delivery of the Executive's commitments. The plan draws together existing strategies and policies and grounds the actions it contains in the context of sustainable development and natural capital.

It also sets six Strategic Environmental Outcomes, which are the primary objectives of the plan. One of these is 'Excellent Air, Water & Land Quality' and several of the others relate to water systems, such as 'Thriving, Resilient & Connected Nature & Wildlife' and 'Net Zero GHG Emissions & Improved Climate Resilience & Adaptability'.

Many of the goals and policies relating to water are not novel, as they are already set out in Northern Ireland's 2015-2040 Long-term Water Strategy and 2021-2046 Water Strategy. Commitments highlighted by the EIP include:

- Publishing final River Basin Management Plans in 2024, with further Programme of Measures published by 2027;
- Commissioning a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the next Nutrients Action Programme, with a consultation due in December 2024;
- Introducing Phosphorus and Nitrogen Balance targets for the Northern Irish agricultural sector by 2025, leading to a phased reduction to 2033 targets;
- Bringing 100% of waterbodies at Good Ecological Status (surface water) & Good Chemical Status (groundwater) by 2027; and

- Achieving sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources including water & soils.

Full details of the commitments are available in the [Environmental Improvement Plan for Northern Ireland](#).

## Priority areas for future policy action

Coinciding with the UK general election, the Foundation for Water Research set out its priorities for the new Government, which included:

- Adopting a long-term approach to water that acknowledges humans as part of the water system, prioritising strategic network solutions that work with nature.
- Ending the crisis for water quality by tackling all sources of pollution, providing healthy rivers and bodies of water for communities and the natural environment.
- Integrating the UK's approaches to water and climate change, providing water security and flood resilience, while maximising benefits for communities and our natural world.
- Modernising the Government's approach to evidence through purpose-built standards and indicators for water, supported by clear guidance for Ministers and delivery organisations.
- Delivering sustainable water resource management at the catchment scale, developing necessary infrastructure with transparent, reasonable and actionable plans for implementation.

For more information about priority actions for the new UK Government around water, read '[Transform the UK through a new Mission for Sustainable Wellbeing](#)'.



# Chapter two: Policy and governance context

While the new UK Government has proposed a number of changes which relate to water systems, much of the policy context remains relevant.

This section signposts key environmental policy developments over the past decade, particularly relating to environmental governance changes following the UK's exit from the European Union.

## Environmental principles

The [Environmental Principles Policy Statement](#) (EPPS) took effect in 2023, requiring Government Ministers to have due regard to a set of environmental principles when making decisions.

The role of the principles is to ensure that environmental considerations are factored into cross-governmental decision making, so that decisions by one department of minister consider the broader environmental context and do not unnecessarily produce negative effects on the state of the environment.

There are five environmental principles:

- The Integration Principle
- The Prevention Principle
- The Rectification at Source Principle
- The Polluter Pays Principle
- The Precautionary Principle

Ministers are expected to iteratively apply the principles throughout policy development, from the outset through any subsequent stages, subject to a degree of proportionality.

This process should identify potential positive or negative environmental effects with the goal that the principles should inform the design of policy.

Following the application of the principles, the EPPS suggests that Ministers could act by amending or reframing a policy, ensure the future application of the principles by embedding one or more of them in policy, or delay the delivery of a policy to gather more implementation before acting.

For more information about the EPPS and its application, read the IES's 2023 primer on environmental governance: ['Progressing or regressing: The future of environmental science under new UK governance'](#).

## Environmental targets

In 2022, the Government published a framework of long-term legally-binding environmental targets, including [those which apply to water](#), as required under the [Environment Act 2021](#).

Several of the targets have implications for water, including four which directly address freshwater and [one on Marine Protected Areas](#). The [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) for England (EIP) also sets out interim targets to

support progress towards the long-term targets.

The long-term targets for water are:

- **Agriculture and water:** the load of each of the following (a) total nitrogen, (b) total phosphorus, (c) sediment, entering the water environment through agricultural diffuse pollution is, by 31st December 2038, at least 40% lower than agricultural diffuse pollution in the year from 1st January 2018 to 31st December 2018.
- **Waste water:** the load of total phosphorus discharged into freshwaters from discharges of treated waste water ... is, by 31st December 2038, at least 80% lower than discharges in the year from 1st January 2020 to 31st December 2020.
- **Abandoned metal mines:** the length of relevant waters polluted by any of the following: (a) arsenic, (b) cadmium, (c) copper, (d) lead, (e) nickel, (f) zinc; from abandoned metal mines is, by 31st December 2038, at least 50% lower than in the year from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022.
- **Water demand:** the volume of potable water supplied per day per head of population in England is, by 31st March 2038, at least 20% lower than in the year from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2020.
- **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** before the end of 31st December 2042 (a) the number of protected features which are in favourable condition within all relevant MPAs is not less than 70% of the total number of all protected features within relevant MPAs; and (b) all other protected features within relevant MPAs are in recovering condition.

The interim targets for water set out in the EIP are:

- **Agriculture and water (reduction):** Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment by 10% by 31 January 2028.
- **Agriculture and water (sensitive catchments):** Reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment pollution from agriculture to the water environment by 15% in catchments containing protected sites in unfavourable condition due to nutrient pollution by 31 January 2028.
- **Waste water:** Reduce phosphorous loadings from treated wastewater by 50% by 31 January 2028, against a 2020 baseline.
- **Abandoned metal mines:** Construct eight mine water treatment schemes and 20 diffuse interventions to control inputs of target substances to rivers by 31 January 2028.
- **Water demand:** Reduce the use of public water supply in England per head of population by 9% by 31 March 2027 and 14% by 31 March 2032.
- **Water leakage:** Reduce leakage by 20% by 31 March 2027 and 30% by 31 March 2030 by the end of January 2028.
- **Marine Protected Areas:** For 48% of designated features in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to be in favourable condition, with the remainder in recovering condition, by 31 January 2028.

Outside of the specified water targets, a number of the other targets may present the possibility of risks or co-benefits for water.

These include:

- Targets to address waste and resource use, which may have consequences for waste water and its effects on watercourses;
- Targets to address biodiversity, which may have effects on freshwater ecosystems and the quality of use of water resources.

Importantly, the water targets act in conjunction with the existing targets and limit levels which are already enshrined in UK legislation.

Many of these existing water objectives are explicitly listed in the EIP, such as restoring 75% of water bodies to good ecological status and targeting a level of resilience to drought so that emergency measures are needed only once in 500 years.

For further commentary on the selected targets and how they might affect policy and regulation for water, see the consultation responses to the environmental targets consultation [from the IES](#) and [the Society for the Environment](#).

## The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP)

The [Office for Environmental Protection](#) (OEP) is an Arms-Length Body responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England and Northern Ireland, which it achieves by holding to account public authorities and the Government.

It was created by the [Environment Act 2021](#) as part of the environmental governance arrangements which emerged from the UK's exit from the European Union (EU).

Covering a range of functions, the OEP is responsible for scrutiny and advice to the Government, monitoring and reporting on environmental plans and law, and investigations

and enforcement in cases where public bodies fail to comply with environmental law.

Despite this array of functions, the OEP is not a direct successor organisation to the roles played by the European Commission during the UK's membership of the EU, with limited functions by comparison.

Where environmental laws are implemented, primarily by DEFRA and delivery agencies, the OEP has a role to ensure compliance with environmental law by government and public bodies, as well as the capacity to investigate suspected serious breaches and take action where needed. The enforcement role of the OEP is focused on public bodies and regulation of private entities remains the responsibility of the Environment Agency (or other relevant bodies, such as Ofwat).

For more information about the OEP and how its role differs to that of the European Commission, read the IES's 2023 primer on environmental governance: '[Progressing or regressing: The future of environmental science under new UK governance](#)'.

## Governance in the devolved administrations

The devolved administrations of the UK operate under similar yet differentiated systems of governance.

Some elements of the Environmental Principles Policy Statement apply outside England, though the majority of environmental decisions are devolved to the relevant administrations.

Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland have equivalent duties to consider environmental principles in their governance regime following the UK's exit from the EU, so there is little practical difference beyond the ways that

different administrations interpret their own environmental principles.

Equivalent organisations to the Office for Environmental Protection in the devolved administrations have subtly different remits and approaches.

In Scotland, [Environmental Standards Scotland](#) (ESS) plays the same role as the OEP, though the [Scottish Environmental Protection Agency](#) (SEPA) serves as Scotland's primary environmental regulator and functions alongside ESS in Scotland's environmental governance landscape. In Wales, these functions are primarily fulfilled by the [Interim Environmental Protection Assessor for Wales](#) (IEPAW).

At the start of 2024, the Welsh Government [consulted on new environmental governance rules](#). The proposals set out how the Welsh equivalent to the environmental principles would be embedded in law, how environmental targets and biodiversity restoration duties would be introduced, and proposals for a new environmental governance body, which will replace the IEPAW and expand upon its powers and duties.

## England's Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP)

In 2023, the UK Government published the [Environmental Improvement Plan for England](#) (EIP), as the first update to its 25 Year Environment Plan.

The Plan covers 10 high-level goals, one of which is 'Clean and plentiful water', although several of the others directly interact with water, either through linked natural systems or through other goals with the potential for significant co-benefits.

The new UK Government has stated its intention to review the EIP and produce a new approach,

which is likely to reflect the commitments and announcements which have already been made.

More information on the updated EIP is expected over the coming months. Until the EIP is updated, many of the policies announced or consolidated in the 2023 version will remain relevant.

Many of the measures in the EIP addressing water exist to support the delivery of the Government's legally-binding targets on water, linked interim targets, and Integrated Water Plan.

To find out more about the full list of policy commitments in the EIP affecting water, read the IES's 2023 [briefing on the EIP](#).

## Integrated Water Plan

In 2023, DEFRA published its [Plan for Water](#) (also called the Integrated Water Plan), which set out the Government's strategic approach to delivering "clean and plentiful water – a healthy water environment, and a sustainable supply of water for people, businesses, and nature".

Though the Plan was produced by the previous Government and reflects that Government's approach, many aspects are likely to remain relevant. In particular, the Integrated Water Plan consolidates many of the existing commitments, targets, and objectives.

One of the main objectives in the Plan is the goal to "Transform management of the whole water system", which indicates the desire for a systems approach to tackling water, though far greater action would be required to achieve that goal in practice.

## Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework

In December 2022, the fifteenth Conference of the Parties ([COP15](#)) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) was held in Montreal, culminating in the publication of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#).

The Framework sets out post-2020 targets and rules to address biodiversity loss. The first set of [targets for biodiversity](#), set out in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, were due to be met in 2020 and were universally unmet.

The Framework has been considered to be ‘a Paris Agreement for nature’ but will require a significant degree of implementation to deliver on its ambition for nature.

The Framework itself contains four overarching long-term goals, as well as 23 targets. The long-term goals address a vision for biodiversity and global action with a view to 2050, whereas the majority of the targets focus on the next seven years until 2030. The global goals address:

1. The integrity, connectivity, and resilience of ecosystems, as well as the threat of human-induced extinction of species;
2. The sustainable use and management of nature and its contributions to people;
3. The fair and equitable utilisation of genetic resources for monetary and non-monetary benefits; and
4. The implementation of the Framework, including funding, capacity, technical and scientific cooperation, and access to technology.

The targets address how the global community must achieve those goals, including a crucial commitment that at least 30% of terrestrial, inland water, and coastal & marine areas will be effectively conserved and managed by 2030 (known as the 30x30 initiative).

COP15 was followed in late 2024 by [COP16](#) in Colombia, which was intended to progress negotiations on the delivery of the Kunming-Montreal Framework and further action on biodiversity.

Progress was made on a number of issues, including the creation of the [Cali Fund](#), a mechanism under which profits from genetic resources can be levied towards conservation efforts. Further progress was made including agreements to link up biodiversity action with action on climate change and health, as well as procedures to describe ecologically significant marine areas.

Ultimately, a consensus could not be reached during the summit on key implementation issues such as funding for nature, leaving a significant degree of uncertainty around the future of global action on biodiversity.

Major assessment reports are due to be published in the coming months by the [Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services](#) (IPBES), which may offer a chance for further reflection ahead of future negotiations.

# Chapter three: Outstanding issues

While policy developments are ongoing, there are several key areas of concern for water systems, each of which may be the subject of further interventions in the future.

Regardless, these issues remain relevant from a horizon scanning perspective, as they are some of the most pressing topics relating to policy for water.

## Water quality

Water quality is an issue that has captured significant public and media attention. The new UK Government has made clear its intention to address this, though there are a wide array of interlinked issues, some of which are not presently at the top of the policy agenda.

Three of the largest sources of pollution to UK watercourses and rivers are wastewater pollution from industry (including from sewage and storm overflows), agricultural runoff, and highway runoff. The first has been the primary focus of intervention and public debate.

Agriculture has seen some policy focus, particularly through [Environmental Land Management Schemes](#) and the long-term target on agricultural runoff. Highway runoff may be an area where future policy intervention is required

to achieve the Government's objectives around water quality.

Water quality issues manifest in a number of ways. The Environmental Audit Committee's [report on water quality in rivers](#) has been particularly influential, and flashpoint events such as the pollution of the River Wye have also raised awareness.

Further water quality issues have emerged in the context of bathing water status and emerging issues affecting drinking water.

## Water security and resilience

The [IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report](#) (and the report of its [second working group](#) on impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability) demonstrate the significance of long-term planning to address water security and to embed resilience into design-making.

As climate adaptation efforts become increasingly mainstreamed in planning and policy systems, a significant co-benefit could be better water security and catchment-level plans to address risks associated with scarcity and poor water quality. The implementation of mandatory [Sustainable Drainage Systems](#) will be a key action to deliver improved resilience in practice.

Ongoing reforms to planning and the built environment, including the [NPPF consultation](#) mean that the long-term future of resilience in the built environment remains uncertain.

Resilience to flooding continues to be focused on risk management. To that end, the [National Risk Register 2023](#) and [third National Adaptation Programme](#) play a key role in managing the risks associated with water security and flooding in the UK.

The Risk Register recognises coastal, fluvial and surface water flooding as significant risks. At a more granular level, [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management](#) (FCERM) remains a key avenue for engagement with the risks associated with the interactions between water and infrastructure.

On the sectoral level, Ofwat has set water companies a [target to reduce leakage](#) by 16% by 2025, with a further commitment by water companies to deliver a 50% reduction in leakage from 2017/18 levels by 2050.

Water companies have also committed to reducing per capita consumption to 110 litres by 2050, supported by the requirement to produce [Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans](#) and the work of the [Regulators' Alliance for Progressing Infrastructure Development](#) (RAPID).

Climate change also presents multiple co-benefits in the context of water systems, such as increased utilisation of soil water storage in agriculture by promoting more sustainable agricultural practices which also benefit nature and provide carbon storage.

## Data, monitoring, and modelling

In the context of the complex issues facing water systems, particularly around water quality, the importance of effective monitoring and evaluation for policy cannot be understated.

Currently, there are several risks and opportunities facing the use of data for water policy.

As the UK inherited many of the indicators currently used in policy from the European Union through the [Water Framework Directive](#) (WFD) and [River Ecosystem Classification Regulations](#), there are points of incompatibility between the intention of the indicators and the current state of water quality in the UK.

The focus in the WFD classification system on largely pristine conditions is not as immediately useful to the UK's degraded water environments as it would be in other contexts.

Solutions could include a greater focus on broader assemblages of invertebrates, genomic modelling, or approaches based on actual pathogenic risk.

Regardless of which approaches are used, a more purpose-driven approach to indicators and monitoring will be necessary to ensure effective transformation of water systems.

Environmental scientists will need to play a key role in supporting the development of standards and approaches, as well as scrutinising the decisions made by policy makers about how data is collected and used.

Positive developments have been made on modelling of whole water systems. Imperial College London's [Water Systems Integrated Modelling framework](#) (WSIMOD) supports a more complete understanding of water systems, with the potential to promote more evidence-informed approaches to policy for water.

## Economics of water

In 2024, the Global Commission on the Economics of Water published its foundational report: '[The Economics of Water: Valuing the water cycle as a global common good](#)'.

The report seeks to increase understanding of the financial value of water in a similar way to the [Stern Review](#) for climate and the [Dasgupta Review](#) for nature.

Though the impact of the report is still very nascent, this could increase opportunities for engagement from environmental science as water systems become better understood in the context of the multiple benefits they can provide for people, the economy, and the planet.

Similarly, risks could arise that a purely economical value of water systems gives rise to unintended consequences or siloed approaches to water.

## Emerging concerns

Novel contaminants are receiving increasing interest, with potential consequences for policy approaches to water quality as well as a wider set of environmental outcomes. In particular, [per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances](#) (PFAS) are emerging as a key focus on action on chemical substances.

While the contaminants underpinning these concerns are no longer ‘emerging’, policy responses remain highly emergent and uncertain.

The vast differences between contaminants in the ‘PFAS family’ and the limited historic regulatory oversight means that this area of policy is underdeveloped compared to other areas of water quality policy, with a pressing need for regulation to catch up with scientific understanding.

These contaminants have the potential to be focus areas in the long-promised UK Chemicals Strategy, which is expected to be delivered by the new Government.

Water quality professionals will play a key role in scrutinising the Strategy once it is released, to ensure that it will effectively address these novel contaminants where regulation is not as well-established.

There are also emerging approaches which could serve as solutions to challenges for water quality, such as wastewater-based epidemiology, which could play a future role in both assessing water quality and resolving issues for monitoring and evaluation in the context of policy and regulation, and sponge cities, which could significantly improve urban resilience.



# Further information

## Find out more about influencing policy decisions

Our IES member briefing note: '[Influencing the UK Parliament](#)', first published in 2011 and most recently re-issued in 2022, provides an overview of some of the ways that environmental professionals can influence Parliament and legislation.

The IES also runs training to help environmental professionals learn more about policy, how it affects them, and how they can influence policy decisions. Regular training sessions are available for [sign-ups on the IES website](#).

In the UK, many issues of environmental policy are devolved to national administrations. If you live in Scotland, you can [contact your Member of Scottish Parliament](#) or learn more about [influencing Scottish legislation](#).

If you live in Wales, you can [contact your Member of Senedd Cymru](#) or learn more about the [business of the Senedd](#). If you live in Northern Ireland, you can [contact your local Member of the Legislative Assembly](#) or learn more about [the Assembly's work](#).

## Other relevant legislation & regulations

Find out more about existing legislation & policy on this topic:

- [Environment Act 2021](#)
- [Water Environment \(Water Framework Directive\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2017](#)
- [Global Biodiversity Framework](#)
- [UK National Risk Register 2023](#)

Read other briefings from FWR and the IES:

- [Governance briefing: Progressing or regressing](#)
- [Priorities for the UK Government, 2024-2029](#)
- [Briefing: OEP progress report on the EIP](#)

Is there a policy-related topic which you would like to see covered by the IES or FWR? Get in touch with Joseph Lewis ([joseph@the-ies.org](mailto:joseph@the-ies.org)) to let us know your thoughts on potential topics for future briefings, or with your suggestions for other content.

An aerial photograph of a braided river system, characterized by multiple channels and islands of sediment. The surrounding landscape is covered in trees with vibrant autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and red. The river channels are light-colored, likely due to sand or silt. The image is partially obscured by a green graphic overlay on the left side.

**“A more purpose-driven approach to indicators and monitoring will be necessary.”**



# Image Credits

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