



2006-2011
Corporate Plan

2006-2007
Business Plan

www.riversagencyni.gov.uk

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the Rivers Agency's Corporate and Business Plans. The Corporate Plan outlines our strategy and objectives for delivering enhanced flood protection and improving and maintaining Northern Ireland's drainage infrastructure, over the next 5 years while the Business Plan provides details of the targets which have been set for the 2006/07 business year to secure delivery of the overall strategy. The Agency's activities contribute to achievement of Goal 4 in the DARD Strategic Plan 2006/2011 – to develop a more sustainable environment.

On 28th February 2006 the then Minister Lord Jeff Rooker launched a review of environmental governance in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State's announcement on 21st March 2006 on the final outcome of the Review of Public Administration included that the functions of the Rivers Agency could be transferred to a new Environment Agency, subject to the outcome of the Review of Environmental Governance. The Agency's corporate strategy may therefore be subject to change depending on the outcome of this review.

The Agency is also undertaking a review of flood management policy, the outcome of which will inform the review of environmental governance.

Reducing flooding risk and minimising the damage caused by flooding will continue to be our top priorities and the significant proportion of our budget will be devoted to providing flood protection schemes. These schemes will be programmed in accordance with a prioritisation process that will focus the application of resources in a manner which will most effectively secure a reduction in risk to life and damage to property.

The Agency will continue to play a positive role in facilitating economic development by upgrading drainage infrastructure where this is necessary to accommodate the increase in surface water discharge associated with industrial and housing development. It will also undertake a public consultation on the legislation to introduce charging arrangements for development led drainage infrastructure works, and it will put in place the systems and procedures necessary to implement the new charging regime.

The maintenance and management of our arterial drainage systems, which are fundamental to securing good drainage throughout Northern Ireland, will continue. While there are no sea-defence schemes in the current Business Plan work will continue on monitoring existing structures and the execution of maintenance works as appropriate.



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There will continue to be a pro-active approach to addressing environmental concerns in the planning and execution of all works for which the Agency is responsible.

The Agency is fully committed to providing the best possible standards of service to our customers and we will seek, in particular, to continue to develop our flood risk management strategies taking account of the increasing range of legislative and policy developments affecting the water environment. The Agency will also continue to seek to ensure an appropriate response in flood emergency situations, providing an effective service to those who may be affected.

The Minister responsible for the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, David Cairns, has set the key performance targets on which our Business Plan is based and these will provide the focus for the Agency in the coming year.






JOHN R HAGAN
Chief Executive






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Rivers Agency is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (“the Department”). The Agency is subject to the direction and control of the Minister with responsibility for the Department. The Agency Framework Document sets out the relationship between the Agency and the Department and the Agency’s accountability to Ministers and Parliament.

FUNCTIONS

The Department is the statutory drainage and flood protection authority for Northern Ireland. Under the terms of the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 the Department has discretionary powers to:-

- Maintain watercourses and sea defences which have been designated by the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland
- Construct and maintain drainage and flood defence structures
- Administer advisory and enforcement procedures to protect the drainage function of all watercourses.

All executive functions arising from the Department’s statutory remit under the Drainage Order are undertaken by the Agency and it also exercises the Department’s responsibilities in regard to regulation of the water levels in Lough Neagh and Lough Erne (the latter in conjunction with the Electricity Supply Board in the Republic of Ireland). The Agency advises the Department on policy issues associated with these functions.

The Agency is required to adhere to the Department’s Countryside Management Strategy in the exercise of its functions.

ORGANISATION

The Agency is headed by a Chief Executive supported by a Senior Management Directorate and employs some 458 staff. The Headquarters of the Agency is located at Hydebank in Belfast with two Regional Offices in Lisburn and Omagh and Area Offices in Coleraine, Craigavon, Lisburn and Ballinamallard, which services the Fermanagh Sub-Area. Further details of the organisational structure and office locations can be found in Appendices 1 and 2. Day to day management of the Agency is the responsibility of the Chief Executive who is responsible to the Minister for the Agency’s performance and operations. The specific responsibilities of the Chief Executive are set out in detail in a Framework Document.



AIMS

The Agency aims to improve social conditions and to support economic development in Northern Ireland through: -

- Reducing risk to life and damage to property from flooding from rivers and the sea
- Preserving the productive potential of agricultural land.

OBJECTIVES

In support of these aims the Agency's objectives are to:-

Operational Objectives

- Identify flooding risks and execute viable works to minimise such risks
- Maintain a network of free flowing watercourses to provide adequate outlet for land drainage and urban storm drainage
- Administer advisory and enforcement procedures to protect the drainage function of all watercourses
- Regulate and control the water levels of Lough Neagh and Lough Erne within specified limits so far as climatic conditions permit
- Execute all work programmes in an environmentally sympathetic manner and conserve and enhance the natural environs of watercourses wherever possible.

Customer Service Objectives

- Pursue continuous improvement in the delivery of services having regard to the effective use of available resources and the Government's fairness and equality policies
- Secure an improvement in the quality of services available to the public in line with the principles of the Agency's Charter Standard Statement.

Finance and Administration Objective

- Secure ongoing value for money and improved efficiency in the management of the Agency.



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THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Drainage and Flood Defence

Northern Ireland is intersected by an extensive network of rivers and loughs with a relatively high rainfall and soils of low permeability and poor drainage. Effective flood management is essential to support the economic development of Northern Ireland, particularly within the urban environment. The increasing number of legislative and policy developments affecting the water environment, such as the EU Water Framework Directive, the Foresight Report on Flood and Coastal Defence and the proposed European Floods Directive, is requiring a more holistic approach to be taken to flood management by considering flood risk within integrated River Basin Catchment and Coastal Zone management frameworks. Given these developments, the Agency has initiated a review of Flood Management Policy as a first step in developing the future strategic direction of the Agency.

With the exception of emergency works, drainage works can only be carried out at public expense on watercourses designated under the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973. Designation is a matter for the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland, an independent body which has responsibility for overseeing a prioritised programme of publicly-funded drainage and flood defence schemes in Northern Ireland.

A new Drainage Council was appointed in February 2006 and details of the membership are set out in Appendix 3.

The criteria for designating watercourses are that the benefits to society as a whole from any improvement works should exceed the cost of the works and that the required works cannot reasonably be undertaken by riparians. The Agency currently maintains some 6,800 kms of designated watercourses and 26 kms of designated sea defences.

The Agency's priorities will continue to focus on those activities which protect people and property from flooding. Increasing emphasis will be placed on seeking solutions, where possible, to alleviate flooding problems as alternatives to providing hard engineering solutions. To this end the Agency will seek to build on its relationships with other stakeholders in the water environment to deliver a more holistic and sustainable approach to drainage and flood defence.



Where flood defence solutions are required the emphasis will be on protecting people and property from flooding. Projects for the sole purpose of improving agricultural land are unlikely to prove viable in the foreseeable future.

The Department is not charged with responsibility for prevention of flooding. However, in designing schemes, the Agency seeks to incorporate standards of flood protection appropriate to the property/facilities being protected.

The Agency has responsibility for a very substantial network of underground culverts throughout Northern Ireland, which have to be maintained in serviceable condition.

A Culvert Asset Management Plan has been developed which enables a more pro-active approach to planning maintenance and capital investment in the Agency's culvert assets. This includes a comprehensive inspection and survey programme to assess the condition of the culvert network.

With the increasing pace of housing and industrial development, assessing the drainage implications is an increasingly important aspect of the Agency's work.

The Agency has close, ongoing liaison with the Planning Service in relation to the drainage implications arising from the zoning of new land for housing or industrial development. Where necessary it carries out analyses of the hydraulic capacity of existing watercourses to determine if they can cope with increased run-off from development. The necessary drainage infrastructure works to facilitate development will be provided where they meet financial criteria agreed with the Department of Finance and Personnel. Over the life of this Plan the Agency is committed to introducing a system to charge developers for the provision of drainage infrastructure.

The Agency also provides technical advice to Planning Service on the drainage aspects of Development Plan proposals and planning applications. In keeping with the aspiration of joined up Government the Agency, along with other statutory consultees, is represented on various Planning Service Steering Groups tasked with carrying forward individual Development Area Plans. Over the life of this Plan the Agency will be seeking to further consolidate its relationship with the Planning Service particularly in the light of the Modernising Planning agenda and with the spirit of a joined up approach to government.



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THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

Environmental Protection

As a result of European and UK environmental legislation and other Government initiatives there is a strong emphasis on environmental improvement and awareness and an ongoing need for sustainable river management practice in the interest of water quality and conservation. Over the period of this plan the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive and the Northern Ireland Biodiversity and River Conservation Strategies will play a more influential role in how the Agency carries out its work and in the advice it provides to others.

Emergency Planning

In conjunction with the Agency's aim to reduce risk to life and damage to property from flooding from rivers and the sea, the development and promotion of Emergency Planning is given high priority within the Agency. Over the period of the plan the increasing emphasis on Civil Protection and in particular the outworking of the Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework will place an increasing emphasis on emergency planning within the Agency.

For many years the Agency has responded to emergency calls for assistance from members of the public whose property may be under threat of flooding from watercourses. The Agency plans to continue to provide a 24-hour emergency response to flooding in such circumstances. It co-operates with the Roads and Water Services on an Inter-Agency basis via the Flood Strategy Steering Group and Flooding Liaison Group to engender a co-ordinated approach to flooding issues and problems across Northern Ireland.

The Agency will continue to pursue co-operation and co-ordination issues with other organisations to provide mutual support in the event of any large-scale emergency situation which may arise within the Province in accordance with its developing Integrated Emergency Plan.

The Agency intends to develop its approach to the broad spectrum of emergency planning within the overall context of its Flood Management Strategy over the period of the Plan.



The range of factors which may influence or directly affect the work of the Agency in the future include:-

- Economic conditions and the pace of new infrastructure development
- EU, National and NI Environmental policies
- Funding allocations
- Recruitment and retention of technical staff
- Reviews of environmental governance and flood management policy.

The Economy

Anticipated growth in the Northern Ireland economy and the associated increase in investment in business and private property development will have a direct impact on the work of the Agency. Drainage infrastructure will be necessary to facilitate new property development and applications from developers and private individuals for approval to discharge to watercourses can also be expected to increase.

The Environment

The increasing influence of conservation issues and, in particular, the requirements of environmental legislation and strategies will have a direct impact on the work of the Agency. It is likely that the trend of regulation will continue throughout the life of this Plan. Within the EU Water Framework Directive there is a specific requirement for water bodies to achieve 'good ecological status' and the factors associated with this standard are directly affected by the Agency.

Also Departmental commitments on biodiversity and sustainability will demand special attention to watercourses that provide habitat for rare species or those most susceptible to the effects of works operations. Fisheries interests are a focus of particular attention in works undertaken by the Agency and, through an established Service Level Agreement, in consultation and co-operation with Inland Fisheries, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure appropriate measures will continue to be included in planned works to protect and encourage fish populations.



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When applying environmentally sensitive working practices on all watercourses the Agency affords particular care and consideration to rivers situated within or adjacent to areas designated for conservation. As the Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) continues to designate more of the Province's rivers within Areas of Special Scientific Interest this approach will require extension. In order to ensure effective and efficient consultation with EHS prior to works being undertaken within designated areas Maintenance Agreements between the two Agencies will continue to be developed.

During the time-scale of this Plan the main impacts of the EU Water Framework Directive on the Agency are considered to be threefold:-

- The Agency will actively participate in the development of River Basin Management Plans;
- It will strive to ensure that the objective of mitigation of floods (Article 1 (e) of the Directive) receives appropriate attention; and,
- It will contribute to the Directive's main aim of achievement of 'good' status, within its programmes of flood defence and river maintenance works.

EU Floods Directive

A draft Floods Directive was published by the European Commission in January 2006 – The Directive places obligations on member states to manage risks of floods to people, property and environment by concerted, co-ordinated action at river basin level and in coastal zones. This Directive, if adopted, will have major relevance to Rivers Agency.

Environmental Governance and Flood Management Reviews

As part of the review of public administration the functions of Rivers Agency and the Drainage Council are to transfer to a new environment agency subject to the outcome of an environmental governance review. The review was launched on 28 February 2006 and is due to report late 2006.

In 2005 the Minister initiated a review of flood management policy. The review will identify the issues surrounding flood risk in Northern Ireland, how these impact on the Department's Rivers Agency and draw up a Policy Framework to provide a basis for informing strategy for future years.



CORPORATE STRATEGY

II

This Corporate Strategy describes the measures which the Agency will employ over the next 5 years to meet its aims and objectives. The key themes of the Corporate Strategy are:-

- Identifying flooding risk and undertaking viable works to minimise such risks
- Ensuring that new development is sustainable from the aspect of flood risk
- Maintaining a network of designated rural watercourses in free-flowing condition so as to provide adequate outlet for land drainage and appropriate standards of protection against flooding of agricultural land
- Administering advisory and enforcement procedures to protect the drainage function of all watercourses
- In accord with the principle of 'joined-up' Government delivering appropriate services to other Departments and Agencies in an effective, efficient and structured manner
- Accommodating environmental needs in conjunction with flood management requirements when undertaking river maintenance and flood alleviation works
- Monitoring and measuring river flows throughout Northern Ireland
- Identifying the potential impacts of the Water Framework Directive on the Agency's business and co-operating with Government and Non-Governmental organisations with regard to its implementation
- Providing a high standard of customer service and meeting the principle of equality of treatment
- Pursuing efficiency and value for money
- Developing the skills and competences required by staff to ensure the effective delivery of business objectives and a professional service to the public
- Maintaining a working environment which is safe, without undue risk to health and with adequate facilities and arrangements for welfare at work.



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FLOOD DEFENCE PROGRAMME

Objective

To identify flooding risk and undertake viable works to minimise such risks.

Key Activities

- Maintenance of flood and sea defence structures, urban watercourses including culverts and grilles
- Responding to watercourse related flooding incidents in conjunction with our fellow responders and taking follow-up remedial action
- Assessment of the adequacy of rivers, streams and culverts to carry increased flows where new housing, industrial or commercial development is proposed
- Undertaking a prioritised programme of viable works to provide the accepted standard of flood protection
- Planned inspection of all designated man-made flood and sea defences and culverts.

Strategic Priorities and Targets

The key factors influencing the urgency and priority of capital flood defence works are the risk to life and potential for structural damage to property and business activity due to flooding from rivers and the sea. Existing flood and sea defences which have been assessed as being vulnerable, i.e. their structural condition is such that there is a risk of failure, will be given priority for refurbishment/replacement over the period of this Plan. Priority will also be given to dangerous culverts and where structural defects in culverts have been identified it is the Agency's policy to carry out planned refurbishment works to avert complete failure and thereby ensure public safety. The priority given to drainage infrastructure works to enable development to proceed will be in accordance with the system of charging for drainage infrastructure which is currently being developed.

In addressing these priorities, the Agency plans to spend some £30m on new flood management schemes over the 5-year period covered by this Corporate Plan.



FLOOD DEFENCE PROGRAMME

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The Agency has identified the need to undertake detailed surveys of all drainage and flood defence structures for which it has a maintenance responsibility. Significant work has already been undertaken to establish a comprehensive database of all designated culverts similar to that which exists for designated sea defences. Completion of this work, its extension to river defences and other structures for which the Agency has responsibility and the establishment of arrangements to update the information at appropriate intervals, will be addressed over the period of this Plan. This work will form the basis of a series of Asset Management Plans which will enable a more pro-active approach to maintenance of, and capital investment in, the Agency's assets.



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ARTERIAL DRAINAGE PROGRAMME

Objective

To maintain a network of designated watercourses in free-flowing condition so as to provide adequate outlet for land drainage and appropriate standards of protection against flooding.

Key Activities

- Planned inspection of watercourses to identify flood risk and maintenance requirement
- Development and environmental scoping of maintenance programmes
- Execution of environmentally sensitive work programmes including the removal of obstructions to flow and maintenance of flood control structures such as sluices, flap valves and floodbanks, and minor works improvements.

Strategic Priorities and Targets

The Agency produces a rolling programme of planned inspection and maintenance. Maintenance proposals are published annually. However, maintenance needs can be unpredictable, dependent on weather conditions and other factors. Works frequently require re-prioritisation as new problems arise. Systems for management of watercourse maintenance will be monitored and reviewed in order to initiate compliance with relevant aspects of the EU Water Framework Directive.



Objectives

- To administer advisory and enforcement procedures to protect the drainage function of all watercourses
- To ensure that new development is sustainable from the aspect of flood risk.

Key Activities

The regulatory responsibilities are set out in Schedules 5 and 6 of the Drainage Order. Schedule 5 of the Order confers enforcement powers on the Agency in respect of the duties of riparian owners/ occupiers to maintain those reaches of undesignated watercourses which flow through or bound their lands. Legal action may be needed in a minority of cases to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Under Schedule 6 of the Drainage Order the Agency must be consulted by any party or individual whose proposals may affect flow in a watercourse. The most common Schedule 6 applications are from developers/builders wishing to discharge stormwater run-off into watercourses and from individuals or authorities wishing to culvert or bridge sections of watercourses. All such applications require the Agency's prior written consent. This advisory work is entirely demand led. Typically the Agency processes in excess of 1200 advisory applications per year.

As Planning Service implements the Regional Development Strategy for Northern Ireland 2025 Schedule 6 applications and planning applications are expected to continue to increase. This will have a direct impact on already scarce resources and how they are deployed in relation to our operational response to Planning Service.

The Agency will revise the guidelines for responses for Schedule 6 applications to take account of the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the proposal to charge developers for drainage infrastructure works.



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ADVISORY AND ENFORCEMENT WORK

There is significant pressure on Planning Service to permit development of urban areas and rural villages within Northern Ireland. Inevitably, floodplain areas fall under the pressure of potential development. Rivers Agency will continue to liaise closely with Planning Service on drainage and flood protection aspects of Area Development Plans, planning applications and in relation to sustainable development with regard to Planning Service's proposed policy on Planning and Flood Risk. The principal aims of this consultation process are:-

- To ensure as far as is practicable that new development is not affected by flooding from watercourses and does not cause an increase in flood risk to other properties
- To ensure as far as is practicable that development is sustainable i.e. development within a river catchment or coastal area avoids committing future generations to unnecessary or inappropriate options for flood defence.



PROVISION OF SERVICES TO OTHER GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS/AGENCIES

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Objective

In pursuit of the principles of “joined-up” Government, to deliver appropriate services to other Departments and Agencies in an effective, efficient and structured manner.

Key Activities

- Tendering advice to Planning Service on draft Area Plans and planning applications, with particular regard to flood risks associated with inappropriate floodplain development or inadequate drainage infrastructure
- Liaison with Planning Service on policy and land use issues with respect to PPS 15 Planning and Flood Risk, climate change and the Agency’s flood mapping and management strategies
- Undertaking and maintaining water recreation projects for the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure (DCAL), and carrying out fishery measures for the Loughs Agency
- Supply of river flow information to DOE Environment and Heritage Service (EHS) to assist in their water quality and pollution functions
- Maintenance and monitoring of a small number of hydrometric stations for the supply of river flow information to Water Service (WS) for water resource purposes
- Contributing to the Department’s responses to consultations from EHS on proposed environmental legislation, policies and strategies
- To meet the requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive the Agency, at the request of EHS, is in the process of establishing a groundwater (borehole) monitoring network in Northern Ireland of approximately 15 stations.



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Strategic Priorities and Targets

The terms and parameters within which the Agency delivers most services to EHS, WS, DCAL and the Loughs Agency are set out in Service Level Agreements between the Agency and its customers. These agreements will be reviewed during the course of the Plan.

CONTROL OF WATER LEVELS ON LOUGH NEAGH AND LOUGH ERNE

Objective

To maintain water levels in the Lough Neagh and Lough Erne systems within prescribed limits.

Key Activities

- Liaising with relevant commercial, recreational and environmental interests
- Co-ordinating the operation of sluice gates in the Lower Bann River to prevailing conditions
- Liaising with the Electricity Supply Board in the Republic of Ireland on Lough Erne levels.

Strategic Priorities and Targets

The Agency is required to regulate and control water levels in Lough Neagh within a range specified in the Lough Neagh Levels Scheme (1955) (as amended) in so far as conditions of rainfall, wind and other natural influences permit.

The Agency is currently examining its physical methods of regulation and control of Lough Neagh water levels. During the period of the Plan it proposes to examine the possibility of electrifying the sluice gates at Toome and on the Lower Bann river and to examine how it can refine its control of water levels through improvements in water level monitoring.

In Lough Erne water level control is undertaken in conjunction with the Electricity Supply Board under the terms of an agreement made in 1950 when the River Erne was harnessed for hydroelectric power generation.

The Agency will aim to ensure that levels in both Loughs are maintained within the statutory ranges specified other than during periods when climatic conditions make this impossible and so far as reasonably practicable, in the general interest of stakeholders.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, CLIMATE CHANGE AND CONSULTATION

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Protection

In undertaking drainage and flood defence works the Agency endeavours to accommodate environmental interests in conjunction with drainage requirements. The Agency's strategic environmental priorities are to:-

- Continue to implement regulations for the environmental impact assessment of all new works and amend policy and procedure in accordance with any revised legislation
- Continue to assess the potential impacts of the European Water Framework Directive on the business of the Agency and to co-operate with the Environment and Heritage Services to ensure that the Agency develops its procedures and working methods in order to carry out its flood management and drainage responsibilities with full regard to requirements of the Directive and the river environment
- Support the Northern Ireland Biodiversity and River Conservation Strategies.

Climate Change

The Agency takes its lead on flood management issues relating to climate change from DEFRA and the Environment Agency who are the main flood defence authorities in the UK. Based on information coming from the UK Climate Impacts Programme, DEFRA has provided brief guidance on design of river and coastal flood defences to take account of climate change. The Agency will endeavour to comply with such design recommendations and to take cognizance of developments and specialist advice as it becomes available.

The Agency actively monitors results of research on climate change related to flood management and land drainage and in particular the potential effects on the degree and frequency of river and coastal flooding within Northern Ireland. It is participating in a project being overseen by the Environment and Heritage Service to update the 2002 NI Climate Change Impacts Scoping Study.

Consultation

- Continue to consult with statutory and non-statutory conservation groups and co-operate closely with Inland Fisheries, Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
- Compile Maintenance Agreements with Environment and Heritage Service for works within and adjacent to areas of conservation designation and on rivers which are designated for their conservation importance
- Participate in partnership with other organisations on river related conservation projects in accordance with the Northern Ireland Biodiversity and River Conservation Strategies.



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WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) established a new, holistic system for the protection and improvement of Europe's water environment - its rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwaters. The Directive's provisions were transposed into Northern Ireland law in January 2004. The Department of the Environment (DOE) is the designated 'Competent Authority' in Northern Ireland under the Directive and implementation is being driven by its agency, the Environment and Heritage Service.

Rivers Agency acknowledges that the Directive will have important implications for its main business of flood defence and land drainage and is committed to support DOE in implementing the Directive. During the Plan period, the Agency will implement the findings of its study into potential impacts of the Directive on its business in areas such as, river and groundwater monitoring, flood management, river maintenance programmes and other legislative obligations. The Agency will also contribute to WFD committees, and to river basin management planning as the implications of Directive continue to unfold.



The Agency monitors and measures river flows and water levels at locations throughout Northern Ireland. It supplies appropriate river flow data to the UK National River Flow Archive on a monthly and annual basis and to other users, such as the Environment and Heritage Service and the Water Service, who use the data for environmental and water resource monitoring. The hydrometric network comprises of approximately 119 hydrometric stations, some 60% of which have telemetric links providing instant access to information on river water levels. The Agency is represented on various hydrometric and hydrological committees at national and international levels.

Implementation of Flood Estimation Handbook methods of estimating flood flows will continue during the period of the Plan and the Agency will input to national projects such as, the 'High-Flows' project which is scheduled for completion during the Plan and to the updating of catchment descriptor databases used in the methodology. During the course of the Plan hydrometric data will be utilised to inform elements of the Agency's Flood Management Strategy and methods of flood estimation.

The Agency is represented on a number of Scotland and N.I Forum for Environmental Research (SNIFFER) projects and is in regular liaison with the Met Office concerning issues such as weather radar and dissemination of Met Office data and weather forecast information.



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CUSTOMER SERVICE

The Agency is committed to providing a high standard of customer service. The key elements of its approach to customer service are:-

- To provide a courteous and timely response to all enquiries from members of the public
- To apply equality of treatment across Northern Ireland regarding decisions to invest public monies on drainage and flood protection works
- To consult with all relevant interest groups prior to commencement of a new works scheme
- To give adequate notice to individuals affected by works and agree access arrangements
- To reinstate private property to agreed standards after completion of works
- To provide a prompt response to watercourse related flooding incidents
- To take all complaints seriously and deal with them as quickly as possible.

The Agency will monitor performance against the standards set and where performance is unsatisfactory, corrective action will be taken.



EQUALITY OF TREATMENT

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In its dealings with the public, delivery of its functions and provision of services, the Agency is committed to the principle of equality of treatment. This equality ethos will be maintained and fostered by appropriate training of staff with regard to statutory requirements and good practice.



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EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The on-going pursuit of efficiency and value for money will continue unabated throughout the period of this Plan.

In keeping with the Modernising Government agenda, the Agency will be taking forward projects to move progressively to optimum availability of electronic service delivery.

There will also be a continuing focus on enhancing the Agency's expertise in procurement. To ensure good procurement practice, the Agency intends to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Department of Finance and Personnel, Central Procurement Directorate.

In undertaking its flood management projects, the Agency will endeavor to make the right choices in order to achieve optimum benefit in relation to cost and risk i.e. Value For Money.

Business Risk Management is embedded within the Agency's management procedures in accordance with the principles set out in the Turnbull report and will continue to be applied.

The Agency is developing the arrangement to charge developers for drainage infrastructure works. In delivering the business over the next five years the Agency will ensure that it is structured to meet changing needs.



INFORMATION SYSTEMS (IS) AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT)

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Over the period covered by this Corporate Plan, the Agency intends to review its Management Information Systems and Geographic Information (map-based) Systems to ensure that the Agency is able to meet the needs of its internal and external customers and to improve efficiency.



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HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Staff are one of the Agency's most valued resources and they possess a unique range of skills and knowledge to carry out its functions. The Agency will continue to develop the skills and competences required by staff to ensure the effective delivery of business objectives.

Re-accreditation of Investors in People (IIP) during December 2005 confirmed this staff focus. The Agency will aim to maintain IIP accreditation and to support the development of staff in line with business aims and objectives.

Over the coming 2 to 3 years the Agency will implement the electronic delivery of personnel service in conjunction with progress in the core Department. It is planned to have the first services on stream late 2007 with all services fully operational during 2008.

High importance is placed on the need for good internal communication in order to maintain a high quality of service to the public. Communication policy and procedures within the Agency will be kept under review.

The Agency is committed to the Equal Opportunities policy of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and will continue to ensure that the practices within this are applied consistently to all staff.



The Agency is committed to complying with the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978, and all other relevant regulations. It will continuously strive to provide and maintain a working environment which is safe, without undue risk to health and with adequate facilities and arrangements for welfare at work. The Agency maintains a Health and Safety Policy, Organisation and Arrangements document which defines responsibilities of individual officers and arrangements for staff consultation, training, personal protection, first aid and welfare.

Within the life of this Plan the Agency will keep its health and safety policies under review in the light of new health and safety standards and legislative requirements and provide the necessary training for staff on vital health and safety issues.



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MANPOWER AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES

The Agency employs some 458 staff, made up of 134 Professional and Technical staff, 56 Administrative staff and 268 Industrial staff.

The Agency is funded through the Parliamentary supply process and resources are provided from within the overall resources allocated to the Department. Allocations for the year 2006/07 are set out in Appendix 4.

The Agency will generate revenue through recoupment of costs incurred in providing water recreation facilities under the terms of a Service Level Agreement, from sales of obsolete plant, vehicles and equipment, from the provision of hydrometric services to other government agencies and from charging developers for development led drainage infrastructure works.



The Agency's objectives in relation to financial management are to comply with Government accounting requirements and to enable the optimum use of resources in pursuit of the Agency's business objectives. The main strategic targets are:-

- To ensure full compliance with DFP Accounts Direction
- To fully embed resource budgeting and accounting procedures.

Audit

It is intended that the Department Core should continue to provide the internal audit function to the Agency under the terms of a Service Level Agreement.



RIVERS AGENCY

2006-2011

Corporate Plan

This Business Plan covers the period 1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007. It includes the key performance targets set by the Minister and the second level targets which the Agency has set in respect of various areas of activity to enable it to make progress towards achieving its strategic aims and objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan and to contribute to the DARD Strategic Plan 2006-2011.

RELATIONSHIP TO DARD PRIORITIES AND TARGETS

As an Agency of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD), Rivers Agency contributes to Goal 4 within the DARD Strategic Plan 2006-2011 i.e. “To develop a more sustainable environment”. The related DARD Strategic Objective arising from that goal which is met by the Agency is “Reduced risks to life and property from flooding”.

The activities and targets outlined in this Business Plan support and complement the Agency’s commitment to the wider departmental remit.



KEY PERFORMANCE TARGETS 2006/07

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The Minister has set the Agency a number of challenging key performance targets. These measures cover the Agency's main functional areas and are geared to reflect output, quality of service, efficiency and financial performance.

Urban Flood Defences: To construct or refurbish 1693 metres of urban flood defences.

Drainage Infrastructure: To accommodate increased storm run-off from 18 hectares of development land.

To replace/refurbish 242 metres of dangerous culverts.

Maintenance Watercourses: To complete identified maintenance works on 865 of the 1484 designated open watercourses included in the Notice of Annual Maintenance as part of a 6-year scheduled maintenance programme.

Replies to written enquiries: To issue substantive replies to 80% of written enquiries within 15 working days of receipt.

Schedule 6 applications: To respond to 98% of Schedule 6 applications within 3 months.



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SECOND LEVEL TARGETS 2006/07

The Agency Management Board has set a range of second level targets relating to important aspects of the Agency's planned work for the year.

Flood Management

- Produce a Flood Mapping strategy for Rivers Agency.
- Develop an Asset Management Plan for Sea Defences.
- Support research into intra-urban flooding

Flood Defence Programme

- Review guidelines for addressing Schedule 5 and Schedule 6 responses taking into account the Water Framework Directive.

Arterial Drainage Programme

- Update training on the management of watercourse maintenance.

Environment

- Develop an Action Plan from the recommendations of the Agency's Water Framework Directive Stage 2 Scoping Report.

Emergency Planning

- Assess the implications for the Agency of the NI Civil Contingences Framework.
- Develop integrated emergency management arrangements with appropriate stakeholders.

Efficiency Planning

- Complete the review of flood management policy in conjunction with the Core department.
- Make the subordinate legislation to implement charging for drainage infrastructure work.
- Develop and implement the systems to charge for drainage infrastructure works.
- Complete the review of methods for application of Economic Appraisals in Agency business in light of the latest developments.
- Implement an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS).



SECOND LEVEL TARGETS 2006/07

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Procurement

- Complete a new Framework for Consultants to provide the Agency with the ability to obtain engineering services in a broad range of applications.
- Establish a new Framework(s) for Works to maintain the Agency's ability to undertake works through civil engineering contractors.
- Complete actions defined in the Agency's Achieving Excellence in Construction Plans.

Information Systems and Information Technology

- Complete the development and implementation of key elements of the Agency's Project Administration System.

Financial Management and Reporting

- Maintain expenditure within resource limits and to approved budgets.



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CORPORATE GOVERNANCE -

How the Agency directs and controls its functions

Agency Management Board

The strategic direction of the Agency is driven by the Agency Management Board (AMB). This group is chaired by the Agency Chief Executive and is composed of the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Development and the Director of Operations. The Board meets monthly to oversee the governance of the Agency at a strategic level, set the corporate business agenda and ensure that the organisation delivers its Key and Secondary Targets. The Board operates within the parameters of policy set by, and in consultation with, the Minister.

Business Planning

Each year the Agency senior staff review and update the Agency's Corporate Plan and prepare the Agency Business Plan for the forthcoming year. Key Targets are agreed with the Department and approved by the Minister.

Risk Management

The Agency has a comprehensive Risk Register for the identification and management of risk. The Register is updated regularly and identifies any new risks and movements in risk rankings. The Agency Board has overall responsibility for the management of risks associated with the delivery of the Agency's functions. The implications of a rise in risk rankings are considered by the Board and remedial action agreed.

Stewardship Reports

Stewardship reports are signed off annually by the Chief Executive and Directors at Directorate level to state that internal controls operated effectively over the last year and that risk was managed appropriately. Each report covers effective and efficient operations; the integrity and accuracy of management information; the safeguarding of assets; and compliance with laws and regulations.

Resource Accounts/Statement of Internal Control

The Agency is required to submit an annual Resource Account to the Northern Ireland Audit Office. The Resource Accounts contain a Statement of Internal Control in which the Chief Executive, as Accounting Officer, provides Parliament and the public with an assurance that internal controls are in place and effective.



CORPORATE GOVERNANCE -

How the Agency directs and controls its functions

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Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

The Agency Corporate Governance and Audit Committee (CGAC) oversees, promotes and provides input to all activity associated with business risk, corporate governance and audit. CGAC contributes to the overall process for ensuring that an effective internal control system is maintained. It is chaired by a DARD Deputy Secretary and comprises the Agency Directors and the DARD Director of Finance.

Audit

Internal audit support is provided to the Agency Chief Executive through the Department on the basis of a Service Level Agreement.



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FLOOD MANAGEMENT

The Agency sees Flood Management as an overarching strategic platform for achieving its flood-related aims and objectives. It sets a high priority in developing strong links with the Planning Service to ensure development is sustainable. The Agency recognises the ongoing changes to legislation and policy within the water environment and the emphasis on sustainability. Where appropriate, it will continue to reduce flood risk by defending property against flooding and maintaining watercourses according to flood protection, drainage and environmental needs. It is anticipated that the soft engineering approach of prevention (e.g. avoidance of development in flood plains) rather than cure (flood alleviation schemes) will continue to develop.

Main Activities

- Co-ordinate and balance the various aspects of the Agency's flood management role
- Manage the Agency's external interfaces with the range of stakeholders in the river environment
- Progress the production of the first National Flood Map for strategic development use in partnership with the Planning Service.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

The construction and maintenance of flood and sea defences to protect life and alleviate flood damage to property is one of the Agency's primary functions. A formal risk assessment methodology is applied to prioritise capital flood defence programmes thereby maximising the benefit secured from available resources. Details of the main flood defence schemes which will be progressed during 2006/07 and the anticipated costs are included in Appendix 5.

Main Activities

- Undertaking a prioritised programme of viable works to provide accepted standards of flood protection
- Assessment of the adequacy of rivers, streams and culverts to carry increased flows where new housing, industrial or commercial development is proposed
- Maintenance of flood and sea defence structures, urban watercourse including culverts and grilles
- Responding to watercourse related flooding incidents as part of a co-ordinated Government response and taking follow-up remedial action as necessary
- Planned inspection of all designated man-made flood and sea defences and culverts.
- Development of Asset Management Plans
- Advising Planning Service on development in floodplains and elsewhere to avert any increase in risk to life and property through flooding and working closely with Planning Service in respect of policies on Planning and Flood Risk (Planning Policy Statement 15)
- Operating the Northern Ireland surface water hydrometric network stations to provide data on river flows as a basis for estimating flood flows
- Administering Schedule 5 of the Drainage (Northern Ireland) Order 1973 to ensure adequate maintenance of undesignated watercourses
- Administering Schedule 6 of the Drainage Order for the protection of watercourses against interference which might lead to flooding and drainage disability.



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MAIN ACTIVITIES

ARTERIAL DRAINAGE PROGRAMME

The Agency undertakes an annual watercourse maintenance programme to maintain the network of designated watercourses in free-flowing condition thus reducing flooding risks and providing adequate outlet for land drainage. In accordance with the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Regulations, the Agency publishes details of its annual watercourse maintenance programme.

Main Activities

- Undertaking watercourse maintenance works at intervals appropriate to individual watercourses in accordance with the Agency's watercourse maintenance management system
- Maintaining plant and equipment to facilitate the undertaking of works and schemes by the Agency's Direct Labour Organisation. Liaising with riparian owners and consulting with other interests
- Undertaking river corridor surveys and post-scheme environmental audits
- Identifying and developing schemes suitable for contracting-out and award of contracts
- Monitoring the channel condition and free-flow status of designated watercourses.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

The Agency is committed to undertaking its functions in a manner which is sympathetic to the environment and it seeks to conserve and enhance the natural environs of watercourses wherever that is possible. Under the provisions of the Drainage (NI) Order 1973 it must provide protection for fisheries which may be affected by its operations, while the Drainage (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations (NI) 2006 require a more widely-based assessment of the environmental impact of works and provide for public consultation in advance of works being undertaken. In undertaking its roles and responsibilities the Agency will comply with the EU Water Framework Directive.

Main Activities

- Ensuring the watercourse maintenance programme complies with environmental legislation and has been publicised to consultees and the public
- Undertaking environmental scoping exercises for proposed schemes and commissioning Environmental Impact Assessments where scoping indicates a requirement
- Carrying out Walk-over and River Corridor Surveys and Post-Works Audit Surveys
- The promotion of environmental awareness within the Agency through the provision of training, information and advice
- Maintenance and development of environment expertise by networking with other organisations operating within the water environment.



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MAIN ACTIVITIES

EMERGENCY PLANNING

High priority is accorded to flood alleviation measures, but in some locations it is impossible to avoid flooding in extreme weather conditions. Where watercourse related flooding occurs the Agency seeks to provide a fast and effective response with a view to mitigating any threat to life or property.

The Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework (NICCF) sets out the core principles within which NI public service organisations will discharge their civil contingencies responsibilities. The Agency will continue to develop and maintain relationships with other stakeholders to provide an integrated response to flooding within the context of the NICCF.

Main Activities

- Development of Emergency Planning Strategy and Policy
- Establishment and development of relationships at all levels with flooding emergency co-responders
- Implementation of “Best Practice Guidelines” for Inter-agency flooding response
- Implementation of good operational practice in relation to preventive measures
- Publicising and promoting the flooding emergency arrangements
- Exercising and testing emergency procedures
- Reviewing and auditing emergency procedures.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

The Agency is committed to continuous improvement in the delivery of services and to maintaining high standards in all its dealings with the public. Details of the standards of service which customers can expect are set out in the Agency's Charter Standard Statement.

Main Activities

- Applying equality of treatment across Northern Ireland regarding decisions to invest public monies in drainage and flood protection works
- Consulting with all relevant interest groups prior to commencement of new works schemes
- Ensuring that adequate notice is given to individuals affected by works and that access arrangements are agreed
- Reinstating private property to agreed standards after completion of works
- Providing a prompt response to watercourse related flooding incidents
- Providing a courteous and timely response to all enquiries from members of the public
- Operating an effective complaints procedure.



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MAIN ACTIVITIES

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Compliance with the Health and Safety at Work (NI) Order 1978 and all other relevant Health and Safety Regulations is given appropriate priority within the Agency. Specific attention is given to maintaining a working environment which is safe, without undue risk to health and with adequate facilities and arrangements for welfare at work. Overall the Agency seeks to engender a positive health and safety culture.

Main Activities

- Deploying a dedicated Health and Safety Officer
- Keeping abreast of legislative requirements and developments in best practice
- Updating a customised Health and Safety Policy Organisation and Arrangements Document and maintaining it as appropriate
- Ensuring that staff receive appropriate training and that individual officers understand their responsibilities
- Integrating health and safety into day-to-day working practice and procedures.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

Ensuring efficiency and effectiveness remains a cornerstone of the Agency's ethos. The private sector already delivers over 95% of the Agency's capital works, feasibility studies and design work. The same principles of subjecting services to private sector competition are also being extended, where feasible, to watercourse maintenance schemes.

Organisational and business systems across the Agency are kept under review to ensure optimum efficiency.

Work will continue to put in place a charging regime for drainage infrastructure works. The administrative and financial systems will be put in place and the subordinate legislation will be made.

In accordance with NICS objectives in relation to the E-Government initiative Rivers Agency plans to implement an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS) for handling and storing records. This will mean that, with few exceptions, documents will be handled and stored electronically and the electronic record will become the "official record". The shift from conventional file storage to EDRMS should result in more rapid access to shared information systems, greater efficiency in retrieval of information and reduction of file storage space needs.

The activities identified below will form the basis of the Agency's Efficiency Plan for the 2006/07 business year.

Main Activities

- Reviewing organisational and business systems
- Putting in place the arrangements for charging developers for drainage infrastructure works
- Implementing EDRMS.



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INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Agency acknowledges the importance of effective use of Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT) in improving efficiency and effectiveness. A dedicated IT Section works closely with the Information Systems and Information Management Branches in the DARD Core to procure and develop systems which support and enhance the delivery of business objectives and management information requirements.

Main Activities

- Co-ordination of the review, development and implementation of Agency, DARD and NICS-led projects
- Provision of development and maintenance services for specific Agency IT systems
- Central focus for the Agency on all IT matters including budgets, projects, security, data protection and general advice to staff.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

The expertise of a skilled and experienced workforce is one of the Agency's greatest assets and there is a commitment to developing that potential to the full. Accordingly, the training and development of staff is accorded high priority. The focus is to enhance business performance and deliver high standards of service to the public.

The Agency's commitment to Human Resource Development has been formally recognised by re-accreditation under Investors in People (IIP).

Main Activities

- Maintaining IIP accreditation by ensuring that systems and procedures and the associated cultural changes continue to be embedded in the Agency
- Identifying and agreeing training needs at individual, team and organisational levels through personalised training and development plans
- Producing a strategic Training and Development Plan to support the Agency's Business Plan on an annual basis
- Post-training evaluation to ensure that business needs are met
- Consulting with Trade Unions and maintaining good industrial relations.



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MAIN ACTIVITIES

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

The primary objectives in relation to financial management are to protect against fraud, to secure the optimum use of resources, to ensure that resources are applied in accordance with business priorities and objectives and to maintain expenditure within agreed limits.

Main Activities

- Bidding for appropriate funds and establishing internal budgets in accordance with business priorities
- In-year monitoring of expenditure against budget
- Complying with Government accounting directions and procedures
- Securing accountability at appropriate levels within the Agency
- Guarding against the fraudulent use of funds and maintaining a Fraud Risk Register
- Producing annual accounts in accordance with a Department of Finance and Personnel Accounts Direction
- Securing the independent audit of procedures and accounts.



MAIN ACTIVITIES

**RIVERS AGENCY**

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AGENCY CORPORATE DIRECTORATE



Chief Executive Mr J R Hagan

Director of Development

Mr J Clarke

Capital Works
Programme

Construction
Procurement

Hydrometrics

Asset Management

Information
Technology

Professional
Standards

Director of Operations

Mr P Mehaffey

Operational
Management

Design

Plant

Health & Safety

Environment

Emergency Planning

Planning Advice

Director of Corporate Services

Mr A P Morton

Finance

Human resource
management and
development

Corporate policy,
planning and
correspondence

Legislation

Drainage Council
Secretariat

Agency Headquarters

Hydebank
4 Hospital Road
BELFAST BT8 8JP

Tel: 028 9025 3355
Fax: 028 9025 3455

Western Region

Regional Office
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Gortin Road
OMAGH BT79 7BS

Tel: 028 8225 4900
Fax: 028 8225 4901

Eastern Region

Regional Office
Ravarnet House
Altona Road
LISBURN BT27 5QB

Tel: 028 9260 6100
Fax: 028 9260 6111

Coleraine Office

37 Castleroe Road
COLERAINE BT51 3RL

Tel: 028 7034 2357
Fax: 028 7032 0628

Armagh Office

44 Seagoe Industrial Estate
CRAIGAVON BT63 5QE

Tel: 028 3839 9111
Fax: 028 3839 9113

Fermanagh Office

Riversdale
Ballinamallard
ENNISKILLEN BT94 2NA

Tel: 028 6638 8529
Fax: 028 6638 8972

Plant Unit

44 Seagoe Industrial Estate
CRAIGAVON BT63 5QE

Tel: 028 3839 9100
Fax: 028 3839 9112



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APPENDIX TWO

MEMBERSHIP OF THE DRAINAGE COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN IRELAND



From left to right

Front row: Councillor Catherine McCambridge, Moyle District Council; Dr Alexandra McGarel, representing conservation interests; Alderman Hubert Nicholl (Vice-Chairman), Ballymena Borough Council; Mr Gerald Crawford (Chairman), representing fisheries interests; Councillor William King MBE, Coleraine Borough Council.

Middle row: Councillor Michael Gillespie, Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council; Councillor Jim McBriar, Ards Borough Council; Dr Harold Johnston, drainage specialist; Mr Robert Cummings, representing agricultural interests; Councillor Gerry McHugh, Fermanagh District Council; Alderman Roy Beggs, Larne Borough Council.

Back row: Mr Gareth Boyd, representing industrial interests; Councillor Alan Graham, North Down Borough Council; Councillor Oliver Hughes, Magherafelt District Council.

Not pictured: Mr John Hagan, Chief Executive, Rivers Agency; Mr Pat McBride, Director of Operations, DOE Planning Service; Alderman Edwin Poots, Lisburn Borough Council; Miss Janice Gault, representing tourism interests.

AGENCY RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS 2006/07

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	2006/07 £'000
Departmental Running Costs	12,761.3
<i>Programme Expenditure</i>	
Capital	7,006
Current	2,385
	<hr/>
Sub-Total	9,391
	<hr/>
Total	22,152.3



RIVERS AGENCY

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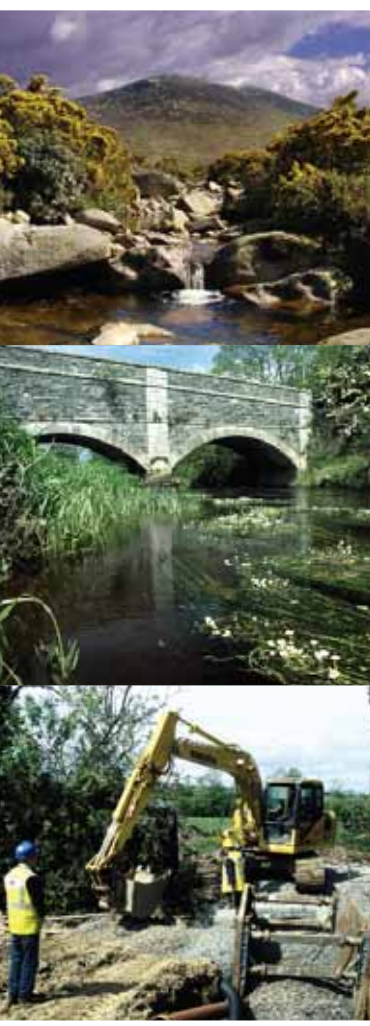
APPENDIX FOUR

CAPITAL WORKS PROGRAMME APRIL 2006 - MARCH 2007

Flood Defence Schemes (Costing over £100,000)

Schemes in Progress	Estimated Total Cost	Estimated Expenditure in 2006/07
	£k	£k
Enniskillen, Killynure Drain	2,200	1,385
Maghera Fairhill 2	40	10
Lisburn, Plantation Stream	250	180
Lisburn, Altona Stream	250	180
Newcastle, Burren River	4450	2500
Schemes Programmed to Commence During Year		
Magherafelt, Ballymoghna Drain	270	50





INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

DMS 06.07.017

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