



Review of Farm Incentive Schemes Benefiting Rivers

Compiled by the River Restoration Centre

Silsoe Campus, Silsoe
Bedfordshire, MK45 4DT
Tel: 01525 863341
www.theRRC.co.uk

**Neil Bannister
Jenny Mant
Martin Janes**

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1. Introduction

Over the last few years there has been a growing realisation that there is a need to develop a coherent integrated catchment scale approach to managing Europe's rivers, floodplains and catchments. There is however, concern over how land use is affecting water quality, flood risk and biodiversity in our river systems. European and UK policy is starting to reflect this concern.

It is the view of the River Restoration Centre (RRC) that effective catchment scale river restoration requires a multi-disciplinary approach, including targeted strategic site based river restoration, effective land management, education and community involvement to name but a few. Appropriate land management is a key factor in delivering catchment scale restoration. This review will summarise the incentive schemes available to farmers and land managers that can encourage catchment sensitive farming throughout England and Wales. It will also outline how these mechanisms might help deliver catchment wide benefits especially with respect to river restoration projects. References for further information, especially relating to other projects which are evaluating similar issues will be included to provide a forum for focusing on how the various agricultural incentives might help to improve the UK watercourses.

2. Policy and Mechanisms

There is a number of European and UK policies that aim to assist or act as a catalyst to land use change. These are discussed below:

2.1 European Policy Overview

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) will establish a new integrated approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of Europe's rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater (Environment Agency Website 2004). The Directive is the most significant piece of water legislation to be released in 20 years.

In summary the major aims of the Directive are to:

- Prevent further deterioration, protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands;
- Promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources;
- Implement specific measures for the progressive reduction of discharges, emissions and losses of priority substances and the cessation or phasing-out of discharges, emissions and losses of the priority hazardous substances;
- Ensure the progressive reduction of pollution of groundwater and prevent further pollution; and
- Contribute to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts.

In order to deliver these aims the WFD states that the best management model is to consider riverine issues via river basins (i.e. the natural geographical and hydrological unit), instead of