

# Abstractions

We abstract about 1900 million litres of water from the environment every day to meet customer demand in the North West. These abstractions are tightly controlled to minimise their environmental impacts. All of them require a licence issued by the Environment Agency which sets conditions such as the amount of flow needed to be maintained in rivers and maximum volumes that can be abstracted.

The Environment Agency uses a process called CAMS (Catchment Abstraction Management Plan) to periodically review abstraction licences and assess the impact of abstraction. The agency is also reviewing all licences for Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas under the Habitats Directive. In addition, the agency has a Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme for addressing rivers affected by low flows.

During 2008/09 we had no failures against the conditions of our abstraction licences.

We continue to invest to ensure our abstractions meet the requirements of European Directives – such as the Habitats Directive. For example, in 2008, on our Haweswater catchment in Cumbria, we improved the Heltondale fish pass to allow upstream fish migration and implemented a scheme to allow a higher hands-off flow at the Cawdale intake. The hands-off flow is the level at which, if a river is below it, abstraction is not permitted. We also installed new screens on the New Water abstraction from the River Gelt in Cumbria to stop smolt (very young fish) from being pulled into the abstraction.

Further improvements in flow provision are planned at more sites next year, and we've also set out a proposed programme of investment for 2010 to 2015 in our final business plan that was submitted to Ofwat in April 2009. We're also planning to undertake studies during the AMP5 investment period (from 2010-2015) which will contribute to achieving the Water Framework Directive and contribute to the Environment Agency's Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme.

We've 18 potential drought permit or drought order sites where we would seek to alter our abstraction licence conditions in the event of a drought. Here we're committed to a programme of environmental studies to determine the impacts of these changed licence conditions for all 18 sites in case of a drought event.