

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

19 July 2011

INQUIRY INTO EU FRESHWATER POLICY

Introduction

The House of Lords European Union Committee will conduct an inquiry, through its Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment Sub-Committee (Sub-Committee D), into the future direction of EU freshwater policy. The European Commission plans a “Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Water” for publication towards the end of 2012. This has a twofold purpose: to assess the implementation and achievements of the current policy¹ while identifying gaps and shortcomings; and to look forward at the evolving vulnerability of the freshwater environment to identify measures and tools that may be needed in several EU policy areas in order to ensure a sustainable use of good quality water in the long term.

Water is a finite resource. Recent reports by the Committee have highlighted the importance of water sustainability to meeting new challenges, not least climate change and boosting agricultural productivity in order to respond to a growing global population (“*Adapting to Climate Change: EU agriculture and forestry*”, March 2010, and “*Innovation in EU Agriculture*”, July 2011).

Our recent work and the Commission’s current review of the policy, alongside current discussions on the future of the Common Agricultural Policy and cohesion policy make this a critical time to examine what is wanted from future EU freshwater policy.

The issues

The Committee is seeking evidence from interested parties on the issues outlined below. On the basis of that evidence, the Committee will formulate conclusions and recommendations to inform the House of Lords, and to contribute to the development of EU policy on freshwater by the UK Government and the EU institutions over the next few years.

The Committee invites you to submit written evidence, by **5 September 2011**. The Committee would find it helpful if you would focus on a number of specific issues, listed below. You may also wish to draw our attention to additional issues not addressed by the questions below. It is recognised that those submitting evidence will not necessarily have an interest in all the questions and may therefore wish to be selective.

¹ Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC), Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC), Environmental Quality Standards Directive (2008/105/EC), Urban Waste Water Directive (91/271/EEC as amended by 98/15/EEC), Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) and the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)

Views are sought on the following:

Strategic objectives of EU freshwater policy

1. The Commission states that the aim of future policy should be to ensure a “sustainable use of good quality water in the long term”. Would you agree that this should be the overarching goal of EU freshwater policy? What particular challenges should seek to be addressed by the policy? In the light of existing information on population and climate change trends, how long should the Commission’s “long term” be?
2. How adaptable to emerging new challenges is the current policy framework likely to be?

Adding value

3. How, and where, can the EU add value to the efforts of Member States in freshwater policy, including issues relating to financing? What aspects of the policy are best dealt with at Member State, or regional, level?

Future policy

4. In the light of the challenges that need to be addressed, the importance of flexibility and the possibilities offered by the EU to add value, how do you think EU freshwater policy should change?
5. What particular EU initiatives would be helpful in tackling water scarcity and droughts? Should the EU promote awareness, assessment, and labelling of the water footprint of products?

Research and innovation

6. How can the EU’s future research programme support freshwater policy and innovation in sustainable freshwater management most effectively?

Other policy areas: agriculture and cohesion

7. How should other EU policy areas, notably the Common Agricultural Policy and cohesion policy, be used and adapted to the needs of sustainable freshwater management?

GUIDANCE FOR THOSE SUBMITTING WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Evidence should be submitted in an editable electronic form as a Microsoft Word document by e-mail to: bristowpn@parliament.uk. Please do not submit PDFs. The deadline for written evidence is **5 September 2011**.

If you do not have access to Microsoft Word or to the internet you may submit a paper copy to Paul Bristow, Committee Office, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW, fax 020 7219 6715. The deadline for written evidence is 26 August 2011.

Short submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary.

Evidence sent in paper form must be clearly printed or typed on single sides of A4 paper, unstapled.

Paragraphs should be numbered. Evidence should be dated, with a note of the author's name and status, and of whether the evidence is submitted on an individual or corporate basis. All submissions will be acknowledged promptly.

Evidence becomes the property of the committee, and may be published by the Committee at any stage. Once you have received acknowledgement that the evidence has been received, you may publicise or publish your evidence yourself, but in doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the Committee. Parliamentary privilege will not apply to your own publication.

Personal contact details supplied to the committee will be removed from evidence before publication. However, personal contact details will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the committee's work, for instance to seek additional information or to send copies of the committee's report.

Written evidence will normally be published online and deposited in the Parliamentary Archives.

Those who submit written evidence, and others, may be invited to give oral evidence. Oral evidence is usually given in public at Westminster, broadcast in audio and often video format on the internet, and transcripts are published online. Persons invited to give oral evidence will be notified separately of the procedure to be followed and the topics likely to be discussed.

Substantive communications to the Committee about the inquiry should be addressed through the clerk or the Chairman of the Committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute formal evidence to the Committee.

This is a public call for evidence. Please bring it to the attention of other groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct.

You may follow the progress of the inquiry at <http://www.parliament.uk/hleud>.

House of Lords
July 2011