

# **MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL**

## **REPORT FOR INFORMATION**

**COMMITTEE:** Communities and Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**DATE:** 11<sup>th</sup> December 2007

**SUBJECT:** The water quality ratings of Manchester's rivers and measures to attract people down to waterside amenities.

**REPORT OF:** Strategic Director, Neighbourhood Services

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To look at the water quality ratings of Manchester's rivers and measures to attract people down to waterside amenities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Members note the report.

### **FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET**

None at present

### **FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET**

None at present

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### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Reports to the Physical Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee:

- a) Progress Report on the Waterways Strategy 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007
- b) Water Quality in Manchester's Rivers 6<sup>th</sup> March 2007

### **WARDS AFFECTED**

All

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR KEY COUNCIL POLICIES**

<b>Anti Poverty</b>	<b>Equal Opportunities</b>	<b>Environment</b>	<b>Employment</b>
No	No	Yes	Yes

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 Two reports were presented to the Physical Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2007 to look at the issues of 'water quality in Manchester's rivers' and an 'update on the Manchester Waterways Strategy'. These reports provided a comprehensive overview of Manchester's rivers and canals and served to update Members on progress since the launch of the Manchester Waterways Strategy in October 2003.
- 1.2 It was agreed that future reports would integrate water quality and waterways usage issues into a single overview. This is consistent with the approach of the EC Water Framework Directive (WFD), which recognises the interrelationship between different waterways-related issues and the need for them to be considered holistically in order to realise long-term improvements in our watercourses. The WFD is the most significant piece of water legislation of the past 30 years, requiring that all European watercourses achieve "good" ecological and chemical status by 2015. Further information on the WFD is given in section 3.
- 1.3 There have been significant improvements in river and canal quality over the past 20 years, driven by legal requirements, the commitment of the water industry and regulators, the expectations of the public who use the waterways plus the activities of other parties. Performance in Manchester over the last 11 years is however more mixed, showing significant improvement in some watercourses and opposite trends in others. Further detail on this is provided in sections 2 and 3.
- 1.4 Over recent years in Manchester there has been a significant increase in the recreational usage of our waterways. This report pulls together a summary of the activities of all parties involved to give a comprehensive picture of what Manchester's waterways look like today and what they could look like in the future.

## **2 Manchester's Waterways Today**

- 2.1 The Environment Agency's General Quality Assessment is used to score watercourses on a scale of A (very good) to F (bad), with A to D rated watercourses considered acceptable for urban areas such as Manchester. This report shows that 77% of Manchester's waterways are now acceptable in terms of water quality, based on 2006 data. In 2005, 75% of Manchester's waterways were acceptable and in 1995, 47.5% were acceptable. Whilst there has been a net improvement in water quality, it is important to acknowledge that this is not the case across the board with some watercourses showing a deterioration over time. The detail of this is explored in the following sections and a full table of historical water quality data is provided in Appendix 1.
- 2.2 It is also important to note that Environment Agency (EA) monitoring takes place only once annually in set locations so is subject to a range of unexpected impacts that could affect water quality, giving rise to a non-representative rating for the watercourse for that year.
- 2.3 Under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) all European watercourses are required to achieve a set of environmental objectives, including "good" chemical and ecological status by 2015. At this stage it is not clear what the current A to F General Quality Assessment ratings will translate to in relation to the new objectives. Work on defining "good" is ongoing and is part of the process of implementing the WFD in the UK.
- 2.4 The latest stage in the process of implementing the WFD is the consultation on the Significant Water Management Issues for the NW River Basin Management Plan, which Manchester is part of. Five issues are currently identified as needing to be tackled if water quality in the NW is to continue to improve:
- Diffuse pollution from rural areas
  - Diffuse pollution from roads and urban areas
  - Pollution caused by discharges from industry
  - Pollution caused by discharges from sewerage systems
  - Physical modification of rivers and coastline
- 2.5 All of the Significant Water Management Issues, with the exception of diffuse pollution from rural areas, are significant issues for Manchester and provide an explanation for continued poor/bad and deteriorating water quality in some Manchester rivers. It is also important to note that some of the previous investments to improve water quality in Manchester have at times been reactive to existing problems and may have been offset by more recent increases in diffuse pollution from roads and urban areas and by increased pollution from industry and sewerage systems. Further detail on water quality trends in individual rivers and canals is provided in the following section and in Appendix 1.
- 2.6 Further information on the WFD process and the actions required to improve water quality in Manchester is provided in section 3.

## 2.7 River Irk

- 2.7.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Irk is D (fair), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was E (poor), showing an improvement has been achieved over the last 11 years.
- 2.7.2 Water quality in the Irk is affected by discharges from both Royton and Oldham wastewater treatment works (WwTW). At Royton United Utilities will be investing to meet higher ammonia standards, which the EA are requiring to be met from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010. At Oldham WwTW a reduced ammonia limit has been in force since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005 and does not, as yet, appear to have led to an improvement in water quality.
- 2.7.3 The Irk Valley Local Plan was approved by the Council in January 2007. The Local Plan recognises that outside of the major parks in North Manchester the Irk Valley is fragmented, uncoordinated and inadequately funded in terms of management and maintenance. With the Plan now in place this situation is being addressed, with a number of investments and improvements having taken place since March 2007.
- 2.7.4 Of particular note is a project currently underway to map all planned development within Irk Valley. This will help understand how new development can contribute to help achieve the aims of the Irk Valley Local Plan and is intended to help provide significant long-term investment into the Irk Valley.
- 2.7.5 Practical actions to improve a number of sites within the Irk Valley have been implemented this year. Blackley Forest, one of 6 Local Nature Reserves in Manchester, has been the focus of much community activity. A Mancunian Agreement was set up with the Friends of group, which has led to strong links being forged with Bowker Vale Primary School. Monthly health walks are now held as well as bat walks and a successful celebration event was held over the summer.
- 2.7.6 At Harpurhey Ponds work has been undertaken to improve paths, introduce planting at the pond edge and a reed bed to reduce the pollution levels of the outflow into the Irk. Local school children have also visited the ponds for pond dipping as part of their science week.
- 2.7.7 A new wetland has recently been created at Broadhurst Clough. As part of this the local community have suggested a number of further projects, including a new dipping platform. Work is ongoing with the community to decide how to spend the money.
- 2.7.8 King William 4<sup>th</sup> Anglers are one of four angling clubs in Manchester and manage 8 waters in Greater Manchester, including 3 in Heaton Park and 3 in and around Blackley Forest. They have been taking an increasingly active role in the local community by carrying out clean-up work and vegetation management at Harpurhey ponds to enable them to be used for fishing.

2.7.9 Since March, 12 events have been held in the Irk Valley attracting 579 local residents, visitors and volunteers. Plans are in place to continue with regular health and bat walks and to support the Friends of groups who are increasingly active in their local areas, such as Blackley Forest and St Michael's Flags.

## 2.8 Moston Brook

- 2.8.1 The 2006 water quality rating for Moston Brook is F (bad), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was E (poor). However, this may be a fluke result as it is the only E rating to be recorded in Moston Brook since 1990, where all other annual ratings have been F (bad).
- 2.8.2 The historical bad water quality is due to leachate from adjacent contaminated land and a number of combined sewer overflows, which discharge storm sewage into the Brook during heavy rainfall. In response to this is the Moston Brook project, described below. The EA and United Utilities (UU) have also recently agreed on a number of schemes for Moston Brook. These will introduce screening to combined sewer overflows and will be implemented by UU by 2010.
- 2.8.3 The Moston Brook valley is split 30:70 between the Council and Oldham MBC (OMBC) and provides a local recreational resource to the community on both sides of the Brook. At present the is semi-naturalised, unmanaged and suffering from bad water quality, as described above.
- 2.8.4 The Council and OMBC have commissioned Groundwork Oldham and Rochdale to produce a feasibility study that will scope out all of the various challenges in the corridor and suggest a series of actions that are required to improve this 60-hectare area. The scale of the challenge is large and complex given the variety of issues. However, there is recognition by both the Council and OMBC that the area represents a significant opportunity to provide biodiversity and recreational resources to the local and wider communities.
- 2.8.5 Local communities are involved in this project to ensure their needs are understood and to ensure wider ownership of the area. A number of community consultation events have been carried out over the Autumn.
- 2.8.6 Past work to improve the corridor has led to its use for fishing and as a regularly used recreational route between New Moston and Failsworth. Early wins are already being tackled with the local Street Environment Manager through investigation of fly-tipping incidents.
- 2.8.7 The survey of biodiversity on the site (Phase 1 Habitat Survey) has now been completed so that the full ecological resource can be understood and options put forward for its future management and improvement. The land contamination sub-group, made up of both authorities and the Environment Agency, have prepared a land contamination survey to help understand the full scale of the challenges to enable future community use and to improve the water quality of the Brook. The Groundwork feasibility study and action plan is expected in March 2008.

## 2.9 River Irwell

- 2.9.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Irwell is D (fair), showing an improvement from last year's E rating (poor). In 1995 the rating was E (poor), showing an improvement has been achieved over the last 11 years.
- 2.9.2 Industrial discharge and discharges from WwTW at Rossendale, Bury and Bolton have the main impact on the Irwell. Phosphorous removal facilities are planned to be provided at these WwTWs by no later than December 2008, which it is hoped will help improve the ability of the river to support increasing populations of fish and other aquatic life. Three programmed schemes from AMP 3 have now been agreed between the EA and UU and will be in place by 2010. The schemes will introduce screening.
- 2.9.3 The majority of activity in relation to the Irwell since March has been focussed on the Irwell City Park project, which aims to make major improvements to the access, quality and amenity of the corridor from Salford University at one end through to Salford Quays at the other. A bid was submitted to the Big Lottery Fund for £25m in May 2007, which was unsuccessful. Further work is currently underway to help continue the momentum established between Manchester, Salford and Trafford Councils.

## 2.10 River Medlock

- 2.10.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Medlock is C (fairly good), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was E (poor), showing an improvement has been achieved over the last 11 years.
- 2.10.2 Following the award of nearly £3m of NWDA funding the programme of access and environmental improvement works for the Medlock Valley are now well underway, including new footpaths, strategic entrance points and the extension of Clayton vale Visitor Centre. To date works have been completed at Clayton Vale and Bank Bridge Meadows to further encourage visitor access. Additional works are planned at Philips Park as well as wildflower and bulb planting and woodland management to further enhance local biodiversity and appeal to visitors.
- 2.10.3 The physical improvement works have been complemented by a wide range of community events and the production of a marketing, communications and interpretation plan to further increase visitor numbers. A regular newsletter is now produced with a distribution of 4,000 copies to the Medlock Valley mailing list, New Deal for Communities centres plus others.
- 2.10.4 River clean ups, wildflower planting, public walks and pond dipping with local school children have all been carried out. Events in 2007 have proved popular including 200 people at the Jolly Bunny Hop Easter event, 200 people at the Clayton Vale Halloween Howler and approximately 2000 people at Party in the Park at Philips Park. In total over 40 events have been held since March with over 3000 local residents, visitors and volunteers in attendance. Similar events are scheduled to take place into 2008.
- 2.10.5 The River Medlock is identified as being integral to the creation of sustainable communities in New East Manchester and is recognised as such in the latest Strategic Regeneration Framework. Several development schemes are currently underway that will further embed the Medlock Valley as a key recreational, biodiversity and transport resource for local communities.
- 2.10.6 Lower Medlock Valley is at an advanced stage of design to deliver approximately 700 high quality family homes set within an area of well-managed accessible green and open space. The latest plans show the development of approximately 14 hectares of the total 40 hectares. Over 8 hectares of open space and riverscape improvements, including the creation of new habitats, are proposed. All of which will result in the creation of new, well-managed leisure and recreational opportunities for residents of the valley and surrounding areas, including the City Centre, which adjoins Lower Medlock Valley.

## 2.11 River Mersey

- 2.11.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Mersey is D/E (fair/poor), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was D (fair), showing that water quality has deteriorated slightly over the last 11 years.
- 2.11.2 A number of AMP 3 schemes from have now been agreed between the EA and UU. A scheme to introduce screening at Princess parkway will be in place by May 2009 and two schemes to introduce screening will be in place on Chorlton Brook by 2010. All three schemes are expected to increase water quality in the Mersey.
- 2.11.3 As part of the Trans Pennine Trail the Mersey Valley continues to be one of the most popular stretches of Manchester's waterways. Chorlton Water Park in particular has a unique offer for a variety of different user groups. Forty fishing pegs attract anglers throughout the year, there are trails and paths for walking, running and orienteering and on the water, canoeing, sailing, sail boarding and model boat sailing all serve to attract regular visitors to the water park.
- 2.11.4 To complement the variety of activities a number of events have also been run since March 2007, including natural history walks, craft activities and practical conservation work.
- 2.11.5 A range of similar activities are also scheduled for the coming year including coppicing and habitat creation, nature walks, treasure hunts and bird box building.

## 2.12 River Bollin

- 2.12.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Bollin is C (fairly good), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was D (fair), showing that water quality has improved over the last 11 years.
- 2.12.2 The Bollin receives discharges from Macclesfield WwTW and Wilsmlow WwTW (via the River Dean) and in dry weather treated effluent comprises a significant proportion of the river flow. Tighter final effluent ammonia standards for Macclesfield WwTW came into effect in April 2005. Further improvements are scheduled during 2005-1010, which will result in further water quality improvements.
- 2.12.3 The Bollin is essentially rural in character as it flows through the Cheshire Plain, passing arable land, hedgerows and small woodlands.
- 2.12.4 Due to the small length of Bollin in Manchester (1.1km) relative to other watercourses, the City Council's resources are focussed on the other waterways discussed in this report. There are however a wide range of activities undertaken by the Bollin Valley Partnership to maximise usage of the river valley and the adjoining area around Manchester Airport second runway.
- 2.12.5 Recent activities have included the tenth annual countryside taster day for people with disabilities who took part in Bikes, Boots and Buses into the Bollin, a project to encourage people from Wythenshawe into the Bollin valley.
- 2.12.6 Future activities will be around educational events that help people enjoy and be involved with the extensive network of paths and open spaces.

## 2.13 Ashton Canal

- 2.13.1 The 2006 water quality rating for the Ashton is B (good), showing no change from last year. In 1995 the rating was B (good), showing that water quality has remained the same over the last 11 years.
- 2.13.2 The canal is identified as one of 36 of Manchester's Sites of Biological Interest and provides excellent habitat for plants, birds, invertebrates and fish. British Waterways.
- 2.13.3 British Waterways recently released the findings of their National Waterway Wildlife Survey, made up of sightings by the general public along all canals in the UK. Manchester was recognised for the high presence of various important species. Data is available at a Greater Manchester scale, which whilst not specific to the Manchester boundary, shows the importance of the sub-regions canals in providing habitat networks for wildlife and opportunities bird watching. A total of 199 sightings were recorded including kingfishers, bats, water voles and badgers.
- 2.13.4 As with the River Medlock, the Ashton Canal is well recognised by New East Manchester for the key role it can play in the regeneration of the wider area through providing a focus for new investment, providing walking and cycling movement from the City Centre to NEM and beyond, and for the biodiversity resource it offers as part of a wider network of habitat corridors.
- 2.13.5 £24m has already been invested in the canal corridor and it provides a key link to Sport City and Philips Park from the City Centre. Regular fishing takes place at various points along the canal as well as jogging and cycling.
- 2.13.6 To date a number of new developments have contributed to the further improvement of the canal corridor, including Islington Wharf and New Islington on the edge of the City Centre through to Sport City. At New Islington a new waterpark has been created that links the Ashton and Rochdale Canals. Almost half of the whole New Islington area is given over to the park, which is made up of a variety of different habitats, public areas and an orchard for making Ancoats Cider.

## 2.14 Rochdale Canal

2.14.1 Given the length of the Rochdale Canal there are 3 separate sections for monitoring:

	<u>1995</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>
Ashton Canal to Knott Mill	B	A	B
Empress Processing to Ashton Canal	B	D	D
Summit to Empress Processing	B	D	D

### 2.14.2 *Rochdale Canal Corridor Regeneration Strategy*

This is a project between the Council, Oldham MBC, Rochdale MBC, Calderdale and British Waterways (BW). The overarching objective of the strategy is to devise a mechanism and set of working arrangements between the four local authorities and BW whereby value generated by canal-side regeneration activity can be captured. This value would then be invested in works identified by BW as being necessary to keep the canal operational and fit for purpose as a navigable waterway, including investment to prevent breaches, to resolve any outstanding issues around the poor water supply and to improve facilities for boaters. The strategy is scheduled for completion is January 2008.

2.14.3 A stretch of the Rochdale Canal is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest owing to the presence of floating water plantain, which is recognised as an internationally significant species. In addition to the Ashton, the canal is also identified as one of 36 of Manchester's Sites of Biological Interest and provides excellent habitat for plants, birds, invertebrates and fish.

2.14.4 The Venice of the North (VOTN) project is one of three Sense of Place projects being overseen by Marketing Manchester (MM) to increase the appeal and experience for visitors to the City Centre. The project will focus on the three elements of lighting, public realm and heritage on the City Centre's canals and is being delivered on MM's behalf by Mersey Basin Campaign. The project will be delivered from April 2008 with completion targeted for June 2008.

2.14.5 The Museum of Science and Industry have recently launched a new £54m redevelopment plan including the design and construction of an innovative building that will achieve high standards of sustainable design. The redeveloped Museum will extend from the River Irwell to Deansgate and it is hoped will encourage further footfall into the Castlefield area of the City Centre.

2.14.6 There is need for the standards of development in Castlefield to be maintained and to keep apace and become better integrated with the wider regeneration of the surrounding area. Work is currently underway to improve the surfacing and lighting in the area.

## **2.15 Debdale Outdoor Centre/ Gorton Reservoir**

2.15.1 Debdale Outdoor Centre is a purpose-built outdoor centre owned and operated by the Council, and offers a wide range of water-based activities based on practical learning and theory lessons.

2.15.2 Watersport activities available include dinghy sailing, windsurfing, canoeing, kayaking and powerboating. The centre also offers rock climbing, abseiling, hillwalking, gorge scrambling, orienteering, camping, navigation, multi-activity and team-building activities.

2.15.3 The outdoor centre has been temporarily closed for maintenance during 2007 so activities have taken place at Audenshaw reservoir in Tameside instead.

2.15.4 In order to monitor compliance with safety thresholds and to ensure the maximum recreational potential is realised, algal and bacteriological sampling is carried out regularly at the reservoir. This assessment is not required to be as comprehensive as the assessment for Bathing Waters. Bathing waters are covered by the Bathing Water Directive, which came into force in 1976 to help protect public health and the environment from faecal pollution at popular bathing waters. Gorton Reservoir is not classified as a bathing water.

### **3 The Future of Manchester's Waterways**

#### *Actions by United Utilities and the Environment Agency*

- 3.1 The Environment Agency (EA), along with other stakeholders, plays a significant role in deciding what environmental improvements the water industry should make. The water industry works on five-year investment cycles, called Asset Management Plans (AMP), which are overseen by the water industry financial regulator OFWAT. We are now in the third year of AMP4 (2005 to 2010), which will have significant implications for water quality in Manchester and the rivers upstream and downstream once schemes have been implemented.
- 3.2 A study is currently underway to look at the Manchester Ship Canal (MSC) to produce a water quality model for the MSC and the rivers upstream. The study is a major AMP4 funded project that will assist with the identification of schemes needed for improving the water quality of the MSC and the rivers upstream, including those that flow through Manchester. The study will be completed in March 2008 and the proposals that come from the models may have implications for United Utilities' assets and water quality in, and upstream, of the Manchester area.

#### *Appropriate infrastructure/service capacity*

- 3.3 According to the Environment Agency's *River Basin Planning: Summary of Significant Water Management Issues* consultation for the NW River Basin District, the main problems with water quality in Manchester are diffuse pollution from roads and urban areas, pollution caused by discharges from industry, pollution caused by discharges from sewerage systems, and physical modification of rivers.
- 3.4 In terms of discharges from sewerage systems, we experience a significant amount of pollution in Manchester due to the use of a sewerage system upstream that combines both foul water and surface water run-off. At times there is insufficient capacity within the system to accommodate the volume of foul and surface water draining into it, such as during periods of heavy rainfall. In such instances the system is designed to divert to combined sewer overflows, where the wastewater is released, untreated into the watercourse, sometimes being passed through mesh screens to break up larger particles and other times left unscreened. There are a number of such combined sewer overflows upstream of Manchester, which have an ongoing impact on the water quality of the City's rivers.
- 3.5 In order to improve water quality in Manchester into the future we need to ensure that there is sufficient capacity in the water supply, wastewater drainage and wastewater treatment infrastructure, both within the City and upstream of it. Continued growth and regeneration of Greater Manchester will likely exacerbate the water quality problems currently experienced, particularly pollution from surface water run-off,

discharges from industry and discharges from sewerage systems. The physical modification of a number of our watercourses will further add to these problems.

- 3.6 Infrastructure issues (water supply, water treatment, drainage, energy etc) are raised in the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy Issues and Options Consultation, which will be out for public consultation in December 2007. Part of the LDF process will help to understand what our future infrastructure capacity will need to be to support planned levels of Citywide growth and to help inform the content of Manchester's new local planning system.

#### *Water Framework Directive*

- 3.7 The new legislative framework for the water quality of European waterways is set by the EC Water Framework Directive (WFD). The core environmental objectives of which are to prevent deterioration of aquatic ecosystems and to restore polluted surface waters and groundwater to "good" ecological and chemical status by 2015.
- 3.8 In order to achieve this an integrated, holistic approach to the protection, improvement and sustainable use of rivers, lakes, estuaries, coastal waters and groundwater is being established. For the first time disparate issues such as flood risk, biodiversity, water quality, river morphology and others will all be considered holistically within the scope of the WFD.
- 3.9 In order to support this integrated, holistic approach "River Basin Management Plans" (RBMP) have been established for each River Basin District. Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Merseyside, Lancashire and much of Cumbria comprise the North West River Basin District. Whereas the Asset Management Plan system can be largely reactive to existing problems, the River Basin Management Planning process enables a proactive approach to water quality improvement to be adopted.
- 3.10 At this stage it is not clear what the current A to F General Quality Assessment ratings will translate to in relation to the new WFD objectives. Work on defining "good" is ongoing and is part of the process of implementing the WFD in the UK. Some surface water bodies may currently fail to meet "good" status due to man made changes carried out for reasons such as protecting people and property from flooding. In these cases, it may not be a realistic objective to try to achieve "good" status. The WFD recognises this and therefore provides scope for defining some surface water bodies as heavily modified or artificial. These water bodies must then have an environmental objective where they can achieve "good ecological potential" that is consistent with how they are used.
- 3.11 An overview of the key stages in the production of the first NW RBMP is provided in Appendix 2. The latest stage is the *River Basin Planning*:

*Summary of Significant Water Management Issues*, which is currently out for public consultation. The consultation recognises five significant issues for the NW, four of which are particularly relevant to Manchester, namely:

- Diffuse pollution from roads and urban areas
- Pollution caused by discharges from industry
- Pollution caused by discharges from sewerage systems
- Physical modification of rivers and coastline

- 3.12 The Council is currently preparing a response to this consultation, and will be pushing for an approach to water management that is proportionate to the scale of the challenge across the City, particularly in the context of the planned levels of growth for Manchester, which if unmanaged could contribute to the water quality challenge. The Council's role in helping to manage this growth is outlined below. The Council response will also encourage a leading edge approach to water management issues to ensure that opportunities for biodiversity, recreation and "good" water quality are realised.

*Manchester City Council Actions to Improve Water Quality and Improve Recreational Opportunities for Residents and Visitors*

- 3.13 The Council is already engaged in the process to produce the first NW River Basin Management Plan, as described above, and this provides part of our approach to improve Manchester water quality. In the context of the significant water management issues currently identified for the NW and the opportunities to improve recreational opportunities, the following sections outline other Council actions that are currently underway and planned.
- 3.14 Strategic Regeneration Frameworks (SRFs) have been established for all areas of Manchester (City Centre Strategic Plan for the City Centre) outlining the baseline issues and the strategic direction for improvements and the achievement of area-wide regeneration. The North, South and East SRFs and the City Centre Strategic Plan all recognise the importance of their respective waterways in the wider regeneration of their area and the creation of sustainable communities. This work has already begun and it is expected that it will continue to improve, as supported by the area-based regeneration teams.
- 3.15 The local planning system is also key to realising the long-term improvements in water quality and maximising opportunities for recreational usage. The current *Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance*, adopted by the Council in April 2007, contains a range of 'environmental standards' including 'Water Management and Weather Resilience' and 'Waterways' standards. These standards are designed to decrease the level of pollution in the City's watercourses and groundwater sources, and to improve the waterways as part of a recreational network where development can help to improve public access, biodiversity and management. Developers are expected to submit a statement with

planning applications on how their proposal will address the environmental standards.

- 3.16 For documents produced as part of the new LDF, they are subject to a Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The SA asks what impact a new document, policy etc will have on a range of objectives including; “improve water quality” and “maintain and enhance waterways and their environment and improve access to them.” This ensures that the issues discussed in this document, plus many others, are at the core of the new LDF process.

## **4 Summary**

- 4.1 Recreational usage of Manchester's waterways is high and is strongly supported by the activities of partners such as the Irk Valley Project, the Medlock Valley Project, the Mersey Valley Countryside Wardens Service, Mersey Basin Campaign and British Waterways. However, there is still significant opportunity to build on the established good work to date and to expand the quality and range of recreational activities available to Manchester's residents and visitors. A number of ongoing and planned activities are outlined in section 2.
- 4.2 In 1995, 47.5% of watercourses were considered acceptable on the A (very good) to F (bad) General Quality Assessment Scale. This improved to 75% in 2005 and 77% in 2006. However, whilst a net improvement has been achieved overall it is important to recognise that water quality has remained and/or become unacceptable in some watercourses.
- 4.3 The focus is now to ensure that all watercourses can meet the challenging objectives that are set to ensure compliance with the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The mechanism for securing such future long-term improvements is via the River Basin Management Planning process, which is the main tool for delivering the WFD in the UK. The Council is already engaged in this process, which provides an opportunity to engage formally with the Environment Agency and United Utilities on the actions needed to ensure that Manchester watercourses achieve the environmental objectives that will be set out in the forthcoming NW River Basin Management Plan.
- 4.4 In addition to existing activities and the River Basin Management Planning process, the Council is also working to improve water quality and recreational opportunities through its regeneration and planning functions.

## Appendix 1 – General Quality Assessment of Manchester Rivers

RIVER	STRETCH	LENGTH (km)	LENGTH (%)	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Change 1995 to 2006	Change 2005 to 2006
Mersey	Princess Parkway to Carrington	1.3	1.6	E	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	↔	↔
Mersey	Stockport WwTW to Princess Parkway	7.6	9.5	E	D	D	D	D	E	E	E	E	↓	↔
Irwell (MSC)	Salford University to Salford Docks	1.5	1.9	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	D	↑	↑
Bollin	Dean to Pedley (Birkin) Bk	1.1	1.4	E	D	D	C	D	D	D	C	C	↑	↔
Cotterill Clough	Ringway to River Bollin	1.5	1.9	0	F	E	C	C	D	F	F	F	↔	↔
Sinderland (Baguley) Bk	Portway to Fairywell Bk	6.5	8.2	0	E	D	C	D	D	D	C	B	↑	↑
Fairywell Bk	Whitecarr Lane to Sinderland Bk	1.1	1.4	0	C	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	↔	↔
Corn Bk	Openshaw to MSC	2.8	3.5	0	F	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	↑	↔

RIVER	STRETCH	LENGTH (km)	LENGTH (%)	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Change 1995 to 2006	Change 2005 to 2006
Medlock	Lords Br to River Irwell	9.6	12.0	F	E	E	E	E	E	C	C	C	↑	↔
Irk	Moston Bk to River Irwell	1.7	2.1	F	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	↑	↔
Irk	Wince Bk to Moston Bk	7.3	9.2	F	E	E	E	E	D	D	D	D	↑	↔
Moston Bk	Hale Lane at Failsworth to River Irk	4.7	5.9	F	E	F	F	F	F	F	F	F	↓	↔
Chorlton BK	Cringle Bk to Mersey	4.6	5.8	D	C	B	B	C	C	C	C	C	↔	↔
Chorlton Bk	Tan Yard Brow to Cringle Bk	6	7.5	0	B	B	B	B	C	C	C	C	↓	↔
Cringle Bk	Heaton Chapel to Platt Bk	3.6	4.5	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	↔	↔

RIVER	STRETCH	LENGTH (km)	LENGTH (%)	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	Change 1995 to 2006	Change 2005 to 2006
Fallowfield Bk	North Reddish to Chorlton Bk	4.5	5.7	0	E	C	C	D	E	E	E	E	↔	↔
Gatley Bk	Heald Green Station to River Mersey	1.6	2.0	0	E	D	D	D	D	D	D	C	↑	↑
Bridgewater Canal	Conf Rochdale Canal to Tilting Weir	0.3	0.4	0	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	↑	↔
Bridgewater Canal	Waters Meeting to Rochdale Canal	0.7	0.9	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	B	↔	↔
Rochdale Canal	Aston Canal to Knott Mill	1.8	2.3	E	B	B	B	B	A	B	A	B	↔	↓
Rochdale Canal	Empress Processing to Ashton Canal	0.3	0.4	0	B	B	B	B	C	D	D	D	↓	↔
Rochdale Canal	Summit to Empress Processing	4.6	5.8	C	B	B	B	B	C	D	D	D	↓	↔
Ashton Canal	Robertsons to Rochdale Canal	4.8	6.0	E	B	C	B	B	B	B	B	B	↔	↔

**Key**

**A** (Very Good)

**B** (Good)

**C** (Fairly Good)

**D** (Fair)

**E** (Poor)

**F** (Bad)

## Appendix 2 – Main Stages of the First River Basin Management Cycle

Taken from *River Basin Planning: Summary of Significant Water Management Issues* for the NW River Basin District, Environment Agency, 2007.

<b>Name of Document</b>	<b>Main content of document</b>	<b>Purpose of document</b>	
River Basin Characterisation	Analysis of each River Basin District, a review of the impact of human activity on the condition of surface water and groundwater, and an economic analysis of water use.	To establish an initial characterisation of the River Basin District and to direct future monitoring.	December 2004
River Basin Planning: Working Together (Statement of Steps and Consultation Measures)	A timetable, stakeholder engagement and proposed work programme for the production of the River Basin Management Plan.	To shape how we will engage with private and public sector organisations whose activities and interests are likely to be affected by the River Basin Management Plans.	December 2006
River Basin Planning: Summary of Significant Water Management Issues	An early overview of the main pressures and impacts that will need to be addressed in the River Basin Management Plans and the likely implications of doing so for specific sectors and groups.	To consult on the main issues that will need to be addressed by the River Basin Management Plans and engage those who will be affected by measures to address them.	July 2007
River Basin Planning: Draft River Basin Management Plan	The proposed environmental objectives for water bodies and proposed programmes of measures required to achieve them, including some different approaches.	To show the reasons for and consult on the proposed objectives for water bodies, and on the measures that will be required to meet them.	December 2008
River Basin Management Plan (2009 – 2015)	The environmental objectives identified for water bodies in the River Basin District and a summary of the programme of measures required to achieve them.	To provide a strategic plan that sets out broad policies and proposals to underpin the management of the water environment in each River Basin District.	December 2009