

## 14.0 Climate change

Global warming is likely to have an increasing effect upon our climate. The severity will depend on the amount of greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere from now on, and how the climate system responds.

However, we are likely to experience:

- more frequent and dangerous extreme weather events
- heavier winter rainfall
- warmer summers.

Warmer, drier and sunnier summers could benefit domestic summer tourism. But they could also result in low river flows hampering recreation and damaging wetlands and aquatic habitats. A reduction in dilution of effluents could cause poor water quality and increase the likelihood of harmful algal blooms.<sup>1</sup>

Hotter weather will lead to increased importance of green spaces as people seek open-air recreation. Heavier rainfall would increase the risk of flooding and make dangerously strong stream conditions more frequent.

The South East Regional Plan sets out a framework for addressing climate change. It suggests that mitigation, through reducing greenhouse gas emissions, will primarily be addressed through greater resource efficiency. One measure is of particular relevance to this plan:<sup>2</sup>

‘Reducing the need to travel and ensuring good accessibility to public and other sustainable modes of transport.’

If this plan is successful in attracting greater use of the Thames, it could contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. This would be the case if recreation and tourism in the Thames corridor was an alternative to overseas travel or longer trips, for example to the coast.

### Policy 26 - climate change

#### We will plan how the river is managed to respond to climate change

##### Possible actions

- 1 identify how best to adapt to climate change, minimising the negative effects, whilst taking advantage of more positive aspects
- 2 plan how to protect the interests of recreation and navigation whilst meeting the demands of flood risk management, water supply and protection of key water dependent environmental sites
- 3 consider the management implications arising from possible lower flows in summer and higher flows in winter
- 4 provide space for wildlife to adapt to climate change (buffer zones, wildlife corridors etc).

Our climate is changing and instances of violent storms, droughts in summer and floods in winter seem set to increase. This is likely to have a significant impact on river levels.

<sup>1</sup> The most common and visible are the cyanobacteria (often referred to as blue-green algae) that form a toxic scum on the surface of the water.

<sup>2</sup> Policy CC2: Climate Change, Draft South East Regional Plan, South East England Regional Assembly, July 2005