



RTPI

mediation of space · making of place

Royal Town Planning Institute
41 Botolph Lane
London EC3R 8DL
Tel +44(0)20 7929 9494
Fax +44(0)20 7929 9490

Email online@rtpi.org.uk
Website: www.rtpi.org.uk

Registered Charity Numbers
England 262865
Scotland SC 037841

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales KG KT PC GCB

23rd March 2010

Graeme Henton
Water Availability & Quality
Defra
Area 2B Ergon House
Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 2AL

Email response sent to: GroundwaterConsultation@defra.gsi.gov.uk

Dear Mr Henton,

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION PAPER: Consultation on draft Groundwater Guidance Groundwater (England and Wales) Regulations 2009

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above. The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is a membership organisation representing over 22,000 spatial planners. It exists to advance the science and art of town planning for the benefit of the public.

This document responds to the *Consultation on draft Groundwater Guidance Groundwater (England and Wales) Regulations 2009*.

The response has been formed drawing on the expertise of members including the Biodiversity Interest Group of the RTPI Environmental Planning and Protection Network.

The guidance appears to be broadly similar to that of the 1998 regulations, and we believe that the larger range of substances coming under control will obviously benefit from groundwater protection. However, in common with the 2006 Groundwater Directive, we believe that this guidance does not recognise to an adequate extent the importance of the ecology of groundwaters and the unique assemblages of invertebrates that aquifers can contain.

Many groundwater organisms have very limited powers of dispersal and hence tend to be very limited in their distribution, with high degrees of endemism amongst species. Within Britain the Crustacean *Niphargus glenniei* has a very limited geographical distribution worldwide, only being recorded from the groundwater of Devon and the far west of Cornwall. For this reason, it has recently been added to the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) list of priority species. It is of utmost importance that incidents of pollution to groundwater bodies do not lead to the effective local extinctions of species such as this.

The introduction to the 2006 Directive includes a sentence about the consideration of the ecology of groundwaters but with little further mention in the Directive itself. It can be assumed that regulations set in place to protect the chemistry of groundwater will *de facto* protect their ecology. However, little is known about the sensitivity of most species to pollution and their auto-ecology. Several projects are in place within the UK to address this but progress has not yet met that of other European states and elsewhere in the world.

We believe that inclusion of a reference to groundwater ecology would increase awareness of the fact that aquifers have the potential to contain dynamic ecosystems that are worthy of protective measures.

If you require any further assistance, please contact Rebecca Coates, Planning Policy Officer on 020 7929 9466 or email england.policy@rtpi.org.uk.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Willmott', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Roisin Willmott
National Director RTPI Cymru