

FOREWORD



Barbara Young, Chief Executive – The Environment Agency

In last year's *Yearbook* I talked about our priorities for enabling the clean up of contaminated land. This year, I want to highlight the major steps being taken to improve our environmental permitting and some of the ways in which modernising regulation can be an all-round winner.

2008 will see the implementation of the Environmental Permitting Regulations (EPR). These will replace the Waste Management Licensing Regulations and Pollution Prevention Control Regulations with a single regulatory regime. We see EPR, which came into force on 6 April 2008, as a crucial step in cutting red tape, enabling us to improve the service we offer to our business customers. It is also a crucial first step in building a platform for all future environmental regulation. The good news is that existing licences or permits automatically become environmental (EPR) permits with no need to re-apply.

This single EPR system will reduce the amount of documentation and guidance that operators need to read and comply with. We have completely overhauled our permitting

guidance. There will be shorter, more customer-friendly application forms, along with our one-stop-shop for applications through our national permitting service.

All of this can be achieved whilst maintaining current environmental standards and is part of the Government's goal of reducing the administrative burden on industry. We continue to work jointly with Government to modernise regulation. We have also been working closely with the land-development and remediation sector in recent years to improve how we regulate in practice.

More business-friendly and efficient systems are good for business and good for us. They enable us to target our resources towards those activities posing the highest risk to water, air or land and to focus on encouraging improved performance where it is necessary. For example, we have made improvements to the system of mobile-plant licensing. Another is the collaborative working by CL:AIRE and other leading interest groups to produce a Code of Practice that will set out a standard of best practice for the development sector.

We think that by following the guidance and

signing up to the Code, operators will be able to show that the material they are using to remediate sites is either not waste in the first place, or has been fully recovered and is no longer waste. They can then operate without the need for a waste permit of any kind, thereby reducing perceived blight issues previously associated with such activities. Operators who can show that they are complying with the Code of Practice (including independent sign off) will give us comfort that the environment is being protected, and allow us to target our resources at the higher risk activities. We all win from this approach. The Code should be finalised and available later this year.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with your sector over the next year. We want to develop these processes further and to promote modern efficient regulation that's good for the environment and good for business.

More information is available on the Environment Agency websites:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk