

# The Environment

**MINEWATER SPECIAL**

## Making a Difference: Priorities

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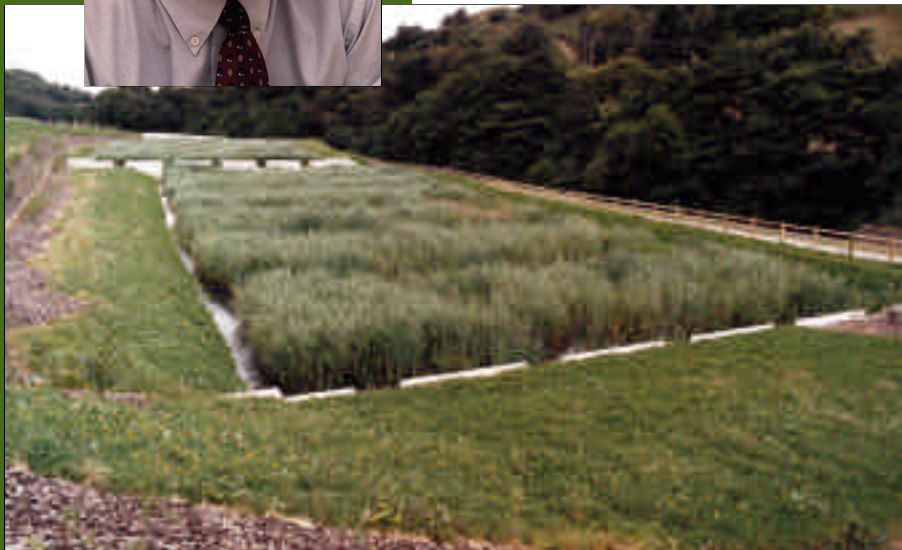
**I am not sure whether it is a case of 'time flies as you get older' but the five years since the Coal Authority first started to tackle the minewater problems of England, Scotland and Wales certainly seems to have passed by incredibly quickly. However, five years is an appropriate milestone to look back on what has been achieved, and what challenges lay ahead.**

It all seems a long time ago when the Authority initially sat down with the then National Rivers Authority (NRA), thinking 'where do we start'. These initial discussions led to the constructive relationship that developed between the organisations, culminating in the development of the 'Priority List' of minewater discharges,

The coalfield areas of England and Wales have been divided into discrete 'mining blocks', and the Authority is currently working with the Environment Agency to develop a method of prioritisation to mirror that for existing discharges.

I think the most satisfying thing of all is that the Authority has 'made a difference'. It has built constructive and productive working relationships along the way, not just with the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), whose work is crucial to the success of the programme, but also others as demonstrated on the 'flagship' Taff Methyr project which is featured later in this issue.

**Operations Manager**



which to this day forms the backbone of our minewater programme.

Since that time, the level of activity has continued to grow and the Authority now has a dedicated team of six people to manage this important area of its work. The Authority has now in operation 13 schemes to treat or prevent minewater pollution, with a further four schemes currently under construction.

Perhaps the biggest advance over the last year, has been the improvement in the understanding of what is happening underground. In order to be able to foresee future problems arising, and to plan preventive action, the Authority needs to have a good understanding of the mining and geology of each coalfield area, and have a network of monitoring facilities to facilitate this understanding.

To this end, a review of each coalfield has been carried out to establish the current minewater position, and to identify priority areas for additional monitoring or preventive action. As a result, 25 new monitoring boreholes were sunk in the early part of this year and the findings are being evaluated to determine if further action is necessary.

### Flagship Launch



The largest minewater wetland scheme in Britain is now operational at Taff Merthyr, Wales. In addition to treating the minewater discharge it forms an integral part of the Taff Bargoed Community Park, offering benefits to the environment, local residents and the wider community.

**See pages 4 & 5 for full story.**



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