

## **GAP and DWT Conference: Reconnecting Fragmented Landscapes**

**University of Exeter, 22-23 September 2009**

Session 2: Ecology and Culture. 16.50-17.10: Re-connecting with water

### **Summary note for the South West Water contribution**

South West Water is facing increasing challenges due to climate change which in the longer term could affect the cost of providing reliable high quality water supplies.

Increasing storminess leads to faster and greater runoff from moorland and farmland, carrying soil, fertilizers and pollutants into our reservoirs and to the rivers which we use for abstraction.

The rising cost of chemicals for water treatment, energy and the need to increase treatment intensity to deal with more difficult raw water are a medium to longer term business threat. To address this, we have developed a programme for collaborative working with landowners and land users, called Upstream Thinking.

Uniquely in the water industry, we were able to secure agreement with our economic regulator, Ofwat, to vary the investment rules that have applied since privatisation in 1989. We now have approval to invest in land management practices we have not been able to influence in the past. From 2010 to 2015 we will be undertaking a range of improvements valued at a total £7.5m over the five years on moorland and farmland to achieve clean water production at source.

These programmes will also help landowners and land users retain soil and fertilizers on their land, which will save a typical medium farm some £2,500 per annum.

The programme South West Water has developed will fund capital works for farm improvements, give advice and create environmental and biodiversity gains upstream of our key reservoirs and abstractions. It will improve South West Water's sustainability and will help to reduce future water charges.

Our investment will add about 64 pence to the average customer bill by 2015, but gives a programme of work when assessed over 30 years with a benefit to cost ratio of 65 to 1, which is exceptional value for money.

M M Ross, Environment Manager, South West Water

24 August 2009