

United Kingdom

A Gateway to International Collaboration

United Kingdom National Committee for the IHP of UNESCO

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PICTURE

River Derwent, United Kingdom.

Participation in IHD and IHP programmes since 1965 has offered UK hydrologists the opportunity to expand their science internationally and enjoy the fruits of global collaboration. In turn, their projects have benefited from the endorsement of being contributions to UNESCO's scientific activities.

At the start of the Decade a National Committee for IHD was established by the Natural Environment Research Council to coordinate the UK's input to the Programme. With its secretariat at the Institute of Hydrology, now the Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, the Committee contains representatives of all areas of government and its agencies, as well as from the scientific community. Contributions from UK universities and research institutes have covered virtually all aspects of the hydrological cycle, including education and training. Postgraduate courses at Imperial College, London, the University of Newcastle, University of Birmingham and others catered for UK and foreign students and they have educated hydrologists working around the globe. More recently the Centre for Water Law, Policy and Science at the University of Dundee, the UK's only UNESCO Category 2 Centre, has provided much needed global teaching and research in the field of water governance.

The UK has been an active participant across IHD and IHP, helping formulate future phases of the IHP and review the past. However, its most notable contribution has been through the FRIEND Project which the UK, with the cooperation of Germany, the Netherlands and Norway, proposed to the IHP Council in 1984. Initially established for north-west Europe, its aim was to realise operational benefits from the data from representative and experimental basins set up under the IHD, coupled with national network data. The success of the Project attracted much attention and ensured that it evolved through successive Phases of IHP to become a worldwide, regionally-based study, recently encompassing 141 countries in eight



regions of the globe. Its many achievements include bringing together data from disparate transboundary sources, establishing a forum to encourage scientists to share methods for analysing these data, and providing very strong training and capacity building components for both research and operational hydrologists. Its results have influenced the water and land use policies of national governments.

Several other cross-cutting IHP projects have subsequently been promoted and supported by the UK, notably the HELP, G-WADI, Ecohydrology and the ISI projects, all of which have achieved considerable success with leading inputs from UK scientists.

For many UK hydrologists, both past and present, the IHP represents a route for making their water expertise available globally to the benefit of humankind. At a time when water

shortages are affecting an increasing number of nations, floods are taking a rising toll on life and climate change is altering hydrological regimes globally, participation in the coming phases of the IHP is a priority for them and the UK National Committee. In the face of such challenges, it is important that the IHP continues to provide scientific initiatives through which UNESCO has a direct impact on human wellbeing.