

Mapping EA & Ofwat Statutory Duties to River Rights Charters



With River Ouse Case-Based Examples

Regulator	Statutory Duty / Function	Legal / Policy Basis	How Charters Support Delivery	River Ouse Example (Illustrative)
Environment Agency	Prevent deterioration of water bodies	WFD (retained); Environment Act 2021	Charters translate “no deterioration” into locally understood rights, supporting early intervention.	The Ouse Charter’s emphasis on a living river helps flag incremental pollution impacts before formal WFD deterioration is triggered.
Environment Agency	Improve water quality & ecological status	WFD objectives; RBMPs	Charter-linked indicators align community monitoring with RBMP priorities.	Ouse Charter indicators (e.g. nutrients, ecological health) are aligned with RBMP targets, reinforcing catchment-scale improvement efforts.
Environment Agency	Risk-based regulation & prioritisation	EA Regulatory Principles	Charters enhance intelligence and help prioritise enforcement resources.	Citizen science linked to the Ouse Charter helps identify pollution hotspots, supporting EA risk-based targeting.
Environment Agency	Environmental permitting & enforcement	Environmental Permitting Regulations	Charters provide a locally agreed baseline, strengthening legitimacy of enforcement decisions.	Where permit breaches affect Ouse Charter rights, enforcement action can be explained as protecting agreed river outcomes.
Environment Agency	Transparency & public engagement	Environment Act; EA engagement duties	Charters make regulatory action understandable and trusted.	EA communications referencing the Ouse Charter help explain why certain interventions are necessary and proportionate.

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Environment Agency	Long-term environmental resilience	National Adaptation Programme	Rights framing legitimises precautionary and preventative action.	Ouse Charter rights to flow and ecological function support EA decisions aimed at climate resilience and drought planning.
Ofwat	Protect consumers & public interest	Water Industry Act 1991	Charters demonstrate that river health is a consumer-valued public interest outcome.	Ouse Charter engagement evidence shows customer support for investment to reduce sewage impacts on the river.
Ofwat	Secure long-term system resilience	Water Act 2014	Charters support catchment-based, nature-based solutions.	Charter-aligned restoration in the Ouse catchment supports flood attenuation and water quality resilience objectives.
Ofwat	Outcomes-based regulation	PR19 / PR24 framework	Charters define place-based outcomes companies can align with.	Ouse Charter rights help translate abstract performance commitments into tangible local outcomes.
Ofwat	Value for money & efficient investment	PR guidance	Charters justify preventative investment with long-term benefits.	Investment to meet Ouse Charter rights can be framed as avoiding future remediation and enforcement costs.

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Ofwat	Customer engagement & acceptability	Customer Challenge Groups	Charters provide evidence of meaningful local engagement.	Ouse Charter consultation shows customer backing for environmental spending in the catchment.
Ofwat	Align incentives with environmental delivery	Licence conditions; incentives	Charter indicators provide a transparent narrative for incentives.	Performance incentives tied to outcomes that protect Ouse Charter rights can be publicly explained and scrutinised.
Both	Coordination across fragmented governance	Catchment-Based Approach (CaBA)	Charters act as a shared reference point across institutions.	The Ouse Charter aligns council planning, EA regulation and water company action under a shared framework.
Both	Maintain legitimacy & public trust	Public law principles	Rights framing provides a social mandate for action.	Referencing the Ouse Charter helps regulators demonstrate decisions are rooted in community-agreed priorities.

Key reassurance. River Rights Charters:

- Do **not** alter statutory duties
- Do **not** constrain regulatory discretion
- Do **not** create legal risk

They function as a **delivery aid**, improving clarity, legitimacy and effectiveness of existing regulation.

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