

Water Resources Act 1991

1991 CHAPTER 57

PART IX

MISCELLANEOUS AND SUPPLEMENTAL

Construction of Act

General interpretation.

(1) In this Act, except in so far as the context otherwise requires—

[F1" the 1995 Act" means the Environment Act 1995;]

"abstraction", in relation to water contained in any source of supply, means the doing of anything whereby any of that water is removed from that source of supply, whether temporarily or permanently, including anything whereby the water is so removed for the purpose of being transferred to another source of supply; and "abstract" shall be construed accordingly;

"accessories", in relation to a main, sewer or other pipe, includes any manholes, ventilating shafts, inspection chambers, settling tanks, wash-out pipes, pumps, ferrules or stopcocks for the main, sewer or other pipe, or any machinery or other apparatus which is designed or adapted for use in connection with the use or maintenance of the main, sewer or other pipe or of another accessory for it, but does not include any [F2electronic communications apparatus] unless it—

- (a) is or is to be situated inside or in the close vicinity of the main, sewer or other pipe or inside or in the close vicinity of another accessory for it; and
- (b) is intended to be used only in connection with the use or maintenance of the main, sewer or other pipe or of another accessory for it;

and in this definition "stopcock" has the same meaning as in the $^{\rm M1}$ Water Industry Act 1991;

[F3"the Agency" means the Environment Agency;]

"agriculture" has the same meaning as in the M2 Agriculture Act 1947 and "agricultural" shall be construed accordingly;

"analyse", in relation to any sample of land, water or effluent, includes subjecting the sample to a test of any description, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

[F4" the appropriate agency" means—

- (a) for the purposes of the flood risk management work provisions—
 - (i) in relation to flood risks (within the meaning of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010) in Wales, the NRBW;
 - (ii) in any other case, the Agency;
- (b) for any other purpose—
 - (i) in relation to Wales, the NRBW;
 - (ii) in any other case, the Agency;]

F5

"conservancy authority" means any person who has a duty or power under any enactment to conserve, maintain or improve the navigation of a tidal water and is not a navigation authority or harbour authority;

"contravention" includes a failure to comply, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

"damage", in relation to individuals, includes death and any personal injury (including any disease or impairment of physical or mental condition);

"discrete waters" means inland waters so far as they comprise—

- (a) a lake, pond or reservoir which does not discharge to any other inland waters; or
- (b) one of a group of two or more lakes, ponds or reservoirs (whether near to or distant from each other) and of watercourses or mains connecting them, where none of the inland waters in the group discharges to any inland waters outside the group;

"disposal"—

- (a) in relation to land or any interest or right in or over land, includes the creation of such an interest or right and a disposal effected by means of the surrender or other termination of any such interest or right; and
- (b) in relation to sewage, includes treatment;

and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

"drain" has, subject to subsection (2) below, the same meaning as in the M3Water Industry Act 1991;

"drainage" in the expression "drainage works" has the meaning given by section 113 above for the purposes of Part IV of this Act;

"drought order" means an ordinary drought order under subsection (1) of section 73 above or an emergency drought order under subsection (2) of that section;

"effluent" means any liquid, including particles of matter and other substances in suspension in the liquid;

"enactment" includes an enactment contained in this Act or in any Act passed after this Act;

F7

"engineering or building operations", without prejudice to the generality of that expression, includes—

- (a) the construction, alteration, improvement, maintenance or demolition of any building or structure or of any reservoir, watercourse, dam, weir, well, borehole or other works; and
- (b) the installation, modification or removal of any machinery or apparatus; "financial year" means the twelve months ending with 31st March;

[F8: environmental permit" has the same meaning as in the Environmental Permitting Regulations;

"Environmental Permitting Regulations" means [F9the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/1154)];]

[F10ccflood defence functions", in relation to [F11the appropriate agency], means—

- (a) its functions with respect to flood defence and land drainage by virtue of Part IV of this Act, the M4Land Drainage Act 1991 and section 6 of the 1995 Act;
- (b) those functions [F12 of the appropriate agency which were previously] transferred to the Agency by section 2(1)(a)(iii) of the 1995 Act which were previously transferred to the Authority by virtue of section 136(8) of the M5Water Act 1989 and paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 15 to that Act (transfer of land drainage functions under local statutory provisions and subordinate legislation); F13...
- (c) any other functions of [F14the appropriate agency] under any of the flood defence provisions of this Act;]
- (d) [F15]its functions with respect to securing the drainage of land or the management of flood risk contained in regulations made under section 61 of the Water Act 2014; and
- (e) any other function of the appropriate agency under any provision of this Act or the 1995 Act so far as it relates to a function falling within paragraph (d);]

[F16" flood defence provisions", in relation to this Act, means—

- (a) any of the following provisions of this Act, that is to say—
 - (i) Part IV;
 - (ii) sections 133 to 141 (including Schedule 15), 143, F17... 155, 165 to 167, 180, 193, 194 and paragraph 5 of Schedule 25;
- (b) any of the following provisions of the 1995 Act, that is to say—
 - (i) section 6(4) (general supervision of flood defence); [F18 and]
 - (ii) section 53 (inquiries and other hearings); and
 - (iii) F19 ...
- (c) any other provision of this Act or the 1995 Act so far as it relates to a provision falling within paragraph (a) or (b) above;]

I^{F20} flood risk management work provisions" means—

- (a) sections 159(1A), 160(1A), 165 and 166; and
- (b) any other provision of Part 7 so far as it relates to a provision falling within paragraph (a);]

"harbour" has the same meaning for the purposes of the flood defence provisions of this Act as in [F21] section 313 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995];

"harbour authority" (except in the flood defence provisions of this Act, in which it has the same meaning as in [F22] section 313 of the Merchant Shipping Act 1995]) means a person who is a harbour authority [F22] as defined in section 151 for the purposes of Chapter II of Part VI of that Act] and is not a navigation authority;

"highway" has the same meaning as in the M6Highways Act 1980;

"information" includes anything contained in any records, accounts, estimates or returns;

"inland waters" means the whole or any part of—

- (a) any river, stream or other watercourse (within the meaning of Chapter II of Part II of this Act), whether natural or artificial and whether tidal or not;
- (b) any lake or pond, whether natural or artificial, or any reservoir or dock, in so far as the lake, pond, reservoir or dock does not fall within paragraph (a) of this definition; and
- (c) so much of any channel, creek, bay, estuary or arm of the sea as does not fall within paragraph (a) or (b) of this definition;

"joint planning board" has the same meaning as in the M7Town and Country Planning Act 1990;

"local authority" means the council of any county, [F23 county borough,] district or London borough or the Common Council of the City of London;

"local statutory provision" means—

- (a) a provision of a local Act (including an Act confirming a provisional order);
- (b) a provision of so much of any public general Act as has effect with respect to a particular area, with respect to particular persons or works or with respect to particular provisions falling within any paragraph of this definition;
- (c) a provision of an instrument made under any provision falling within paragraph (a) or (b) above; or
 - (d) a provision of any other instrument which is in the nature of a local enactment:

"main river" means a main river within the meaning of Part IV of this Act; [F24" the main river map for England" has the meaning given by section 193(2);

"the main river map for Wales" has the meaning given by section 194(2);] "micro-organism" includes any microscopic, biological entity which is capable of replication;

"minimum acceptable flow", in relation to any inland waters, means (except in sections 21 and 22 above and subject to section 23(3) above) the minimum acceptable flow as for the time being contained in provisions which are in force under section 21(7) above in relation to those waters;

"the Minister" means the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food;

"the Ministers" means the Secretary of State and the Minister;

"modifications" includes additions, alterations and omissions, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

"mortgage" includes any charge or lien on any property for securing money or money's worth, and "mortgagee" shall be construed accordingly;

"navigation authority" means any person who has a duty or power under any enactment to work, maintain, conserve, improve or control any canal or other inland navigation, navigable river, estuary, harbour or dock;

"notice" means notice in writing;

[F25" the NRBW" means the Natural Resources Body for Wales;]

"owner", in relation to any premises, means the person who-

- (a) is for the time being receiving the rack-rent of the premises, whether on his own account or as agent or trustee for another person; or
- (b) would receive the rack-rent if the premises were let at a rack-rent,

but for the purposes of Schedule 2 to this Act, Chapter II of Part II of this Act and the related water resources provisions does not include a mortgagee not in possession, and cognate expressions shall be construed accordingly;

"prescribed" means prescribed by regulations made by the Secretary of State or, in relation to regulations made by the Minister, by those regulations;

"public authority" means any Minister of the Crown or government department, the Agency, [F26the NRBW,] any local authority or any person certified by the Secretary of State to be a public authority for the purposes of this Act;

"public sewer" means a sewer for the time being vested in a sewerage undertaker in its capacity as such, whether vested in that undertaker by virtue of a scheme under Schedule 2 to the M8Water Act 1989, section 179 of or Schedule 2 to the M9Water Industry Act 1991 or otherwise;

"records" includes computer records and any other records kept otherwise than in a document;

[F27":the related water resources provisions", in relation to Chapter II of Part II of this Act, means—

- (a) the following provisions of this Act, that is to say, the provisions—
 - (i) of sections 21 to 23 (including Schedule 5);
 - (ii) of sections 120, 125 to 130, 158, 189, 199 to 201, 206(3), 209(3), 211(1) and 216; and
 - (iii) of paragraph 1 of Schedule 25; and
- (b) the following provisions of the 1995 Act, that is to say, the provisions—
 - (i) of sections 41 and 42 (charging schemes) as they have effect by virtue of subsection (1)(a) of section 41 (licences under Chapter II of Part II of this Act); and
 - (ii) of subsections (1) [F28, (1A)] and (2) of section 53 (inquiries and other hearings);]

"sewage effluent" includes any effluent from the sewage disposal or sewerage works of a sewerage undertaker but does not include surface water;

"sewer" has, subject to subsection (2) below, the same meaning as in the Water Industry Act 1991;

"source of supply" means—

- (a) any inland waters except, without prejudice to subsection (3) below in its application to paragraph (b) of this definition, any which are discrete waters; or
- (b) any underground strata in which water is or at any time may be contained;

"street" has, subject to subsection (4) below, the same meaning as in Part III of the M10 New Roads and Street Works 1991;

"subordinate legislation" has the same meaning as in the M11 Interpretation Act 1978;

"substance" includes micro-organisms and any natural or artificial substance or other matter, whether it is in solid or liquid form or in the form of a gas or vapour;

"surface water" includes water from roofs;

"trade effluent" includes any effluent which is discharged from premises used for carrying on any trade or industry, other than surface water and domestic sewage, and for the purposes of this definition any premises wholly or mainly used (whether for profit or not) for agricultural purposes or for the purposes of fish farming or for scientific research or experiment shall be deemed to be premises used for carrying on a trade;

"underground strata" means strata subjacent to the surface of any land;

"vessel" includes a hovercraft within the meaning of the M12Hovercraft Act 1968;

"watercourse" includes (subject to sections 72(2) [F29113(1), 193(6) and 194(6)] above) all rivers, streams, ditches, drains, cuts, culverts, dykes, sluices, sewers and passages through which water flows, except mains and other pipes which—

- (a) belong to the Agency [F30, the NRBW,] or a water undertaker; or
- (b) are used by a water undertaker or any other person for the purpose only of providing a supply of water to any premises;

"water pollution provisions", in relation to this Act, means the following provisions of this Act —

- (a) the provisions of Part III of this Act;
- (b) sections 161 [F31 to 161D], 190, 202, [F32 and 203] above; and
- (c) paragraph 4 of Schedule 25 to this Act and section 211 above so far as it relates to byelaws made under that paragraph.

[F33 and the following provisions of the 1995 Act, that is to say, the provisions of subsections (1) [F34 , (1A)] and (2) of section 53.]

- [F35(1A) For the purposes of the definition of "the appropriate agency" in subsection (1), "Wales" has the meaning given by section 158 of the Government of Wales Act 2006.]
 - (2) References in this Act to a pipe, including references to a main, a drain or a sewer, shall include references to a tunnel or conduit which serves or is to serve as the pipe in question and to any accessories for the pipe; and, accordingly, references to the laying of a pipe shall include references to the construction of such a tunnel or conduit, to the construction or installation of any such accessories and to the making of a connection between one pipe and another.
 - (3) Any reference in this Act to water contained in underground strata is a reference to water so contained otherwise than in a sewer, pipe, reservoir, tank or other underground works constructed in any such strata; but for the purposes of this Act water for the time being contained in—
 - a well, borehole or similar work, including any adit or passage constructed in connection with the well, borehole or work for facilitating the collection of water in the well, borehole or work; or

- (b) any excavation into underground strata, where the level of water in the excavation depends wholly or mainly on water entering it from those strata, shall be treated as water contained in the underground strata into which the well, borehole or work was sunk or, as the case may be, the excavation was made.
- (4) Until the coming into force of Part III of the M13New Roads and Street Works Act 1991, the definition of "street" in subsection (1) above shall have effect as if the reference to that Part were a reference to the M14Public Utilities Street Works Act 1950; but nothing in this section shall be taken—
 - (a) to prejudice the power of the Secretary of State under that Act of 1991 to make an order bringing Part III of that Act into force on different days for different purposes (including the purposes of this section); or
 - (b) in the period before the coming into force of that Part, to prevent references in this Act to a street, where the street is a highway which passes over a bridge or through a tunnel, from including that bridge or tunnel.
- (5) For the purposes of any provision of this Act by or under which power is or may be conferred on any person to recover the expenses incurred by that person in doing anything, those expenses shall be assumed to include such sum as may be reasonable in respect of establishment charges or overheads.
- (6) References in this Act to the later or latest of two or more different times or days are, in a case where those times or days coincide, references to the time at which or, as the case may be, the day on which they coincide.
- (7) For the purposes of this Act—
 - (a) references in this Act to more than one Minister of the Crown, in relation to anything falling to be done by those Ministers, are references to those Ministers acting jointly; and
 - (b) any provision of this Act by virtue of which any function of a Minister of the Crown is exercisable concurrently by different Ministers, shall have effect as providing for that function also to be exercisable jointly by any two or more of those Ministers.
- (8) Sub-paragraph (1) of paragraph 1 of Schedule 2 to the M15Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991 has effect (by virtue of sub-paragraph (2)(b) of that paragraph) so that references in this Act to things done under or for the purposes of provisions of this Act, the M16Water Industry Act 1991 or the M17Land Drainage Act 1991 include references to things done, or treated as done, under or for the purposes of the corresponding provisions of the law in force before the commencement of this Act.
- (9) Subject to any provision to the contrary which is contained in Schedule 26 to the M18Water Act 1989 or in the M19Water Consolidation (Consequential Provisions) Act 1991, nothing in any local statutory provision passed or made before 1st September 1989 shall be construed as relieving any water undertaker or sewerage undertaker from any liability arising by virtue of this Act in respect of any act or omission occurring on or after that date.

Textual Amendments

F1 Words in s. 221(1) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), Sch. 22 para. 177(2) (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, art. 3 (with art. 4)

- F2 Words in s. 221 substituted (25.7.2003 for specified purposes, 29.12.2003 in so far as not already in force) by Communications Act 2003 (c. 21), s. 411(2), Sch. 17 para. 113 (with Sch. 18); S.I. 2003/1900, arts. 1(2), 2(1), Sch. 1 (with art. 3) (as amended by S.I. 2003/3142, art. 1(3)); S.I. 2003/3142, art. 3(2) (with art. 11)
- F3 Words in s. 221(1) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), Sch. 22 para. 177(3) (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, art. 3 (with art. 4)
- **F4** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(2)** (with Sch. 7)
- F5 Words in s. 221(1) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1)(3), Sch. 22 para. 177(4), Sch. 24 (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, art. 3 (with art. 4)
- **F6** Words in s. 221(1) repealed (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1)(3), Sch. 22 para. 177(5), **Sch. 24** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- F7 Words in s. 221 repealed (6.4.2010) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales)
 Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/675), reg. 1(1)(b), Sch. 26 para. 8(10)(b), Sch. 28 (with reg. 1(2), Sch. 4)
- **F8** Words in s. 221 inserted (6.4.2010) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2010 (S.I. 2010/675), reg. 1(1)(b), **Sch. 26 para. 8(10)(a)** (with reg. 1(2), Sch. 4)
- F9 Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.1.2017) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/1154), reg. 1(1), Sch. 29 Pt. 1 para. 9 (with regs. 1(3), 77-79, Sch. 4)
- **F10** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(7)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- F11 Words in s. 221 substituted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), Sch. 2 para. 304(3)(a) (with Sch. 7)
- **F12** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(3)(b)** (with Sch. 7)
- F13 Word in s. 221(1) omitted (6.4.2016) by virtue of The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/475), reg. 1(2), Sch. 3 para. 2(a) (with regs. 31-33)
- **F14** Words in s. 221 substituted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(3)(c)** (with Sch. 7)
- Words in s. 221(1) inserted (6.4.2016) by The Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2016 (S.I. 2016/475), reg. 1(2), Sch. 3 para. 2(b) (with regs. 31-33)
- **F16** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(8)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- F17 Words in s. 221(1) repealed (17.3.2004 for E., 1.4.2004 for W.) by Water Act 2003 (c. 37), ss. 69(4), 105(3), Sch. 9 Pt. 3; S.I. 2004/641, art. 2(a)(d); S.I. 2004/910, art. 2(1)(b)
- F18 Word in s. 221(1) inserted (14.7.2014) by Water Act 2014 (c. 21), s. 94(2)(r), Sch. 10 para. 13(a)
- F19 Words in s. 221(1) repealed (14.7.2014) by Water Act 2014 (c. 21), s. 94(2)(r), Sch. 10 para. 13(b)
- **F20** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(4)** (with Sch. 7)
- **F21** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.1.1996) by 1995 c. 21, ss. 314(2), 316(2), **Sch. 13 para. 90(a)** (with s. 312(1))
- **F22** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.1.1996) by 1995 c. 21, ss. 314(2), 316(2), **Sch. 13 para. 90(b)** (with s. 312(1))
- F23 Words in s. 221(1) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1994 c. 19, s. 22(5), Sch. 11 Pt. I para. 3(6) (with ss. 54(4) (7), 55(5), Sch. 17 paras. 22(1), 23(2)); S.I. 1996/396, art. 3, Sch. 1
- **F24** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.10.2014) by Water Act 2014 (c. 21), ss. 59(4)(a), 94; S.I. 2014/1823, art. 3
- **F25** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(5)** (with Sch. 7)
- **F26** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(6)** (with Sch. 7)
- **F27** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(9)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)

- **F28** Word in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(7)** (with Sch. 7)
- **F29** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.10.2014) by Water Act 2014 (c. 21), ss. 59(4)(b), 94; S.I. 2014/1823, art. 3
- **F30** Words in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(8)** (with Sch. 7)
- **F31** Words in s. 221(1) inserted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(10)(a)(i)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- **F32** Words in s. 221(1) substituted (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(10)(a)(ii)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- **F33** Words in s. 221(1) added (1.4.1996) by 1995 c. 25, s. 120(1), **Sch. 22 para. 177(10)(b)** (with ss. 7(6), 115, 117); S.I. 1996/186, **art. 3** (with art. 4)
- **F34** Word in s. 221 inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), **Sch. 2 para. 304(9)** (with Sch. 7)
- F35 S. 221(1A) inserted (1.4.2013) by The Natural Resources Body for Wales (Functions) Order 2013 (S.I. 2013/755), art. 1(2), Sch. 2 para. 304(10) (with Sch. 7)

Modifications etc. (not altering text)

- C1 S. 221 applied (1.4.2004) by Water Act 2003 (c. 37), ss. 27(3), 105(3); S.I. 2004/641, art. 3(i) (with Sch. 3 para. 7)
- C2 S. 221(1): definition applied (01.12.1991) by Land Drainage Act 1991 (c. 59, SIF 73:1), ss. 61(2), 67(2)(6), 76(2).
- C3 S. 221(3) extended (14.7.2014) by Water Act 2014 (c. 21), ss. 61(10), 94(2)(n)

Marginal Citations

- **M1** 1991 c. 56.
- **M2** 1947 c. 48.
- **M3** 1991 c. 56.
- **M4** 1991 c. 59.
- **M5** 1989 c. 15.
- **M6** 1980 c. 66.
- **M7** 1990 c. 8.
- **M8** 1989 c. 15.
- **M9** 1991 c. 56.
- **M10** 1991 c. 22.
- **M11** 1978 c. 30.
- **M12** 1968 c. 59.
- **M13** 1991 c. 22. **M14** 1950 c. 39.
- **M15** 1991 c. 60.
- M16 1991 c. 56.
- M17 1991 c. 59.
- M18 1989 c. 15.
- M19 1991 c. 60.

Changes to legislation:

There are currently no known outstanding effects for the Water Resources Act 1991, Section 221.