



ASiantaeth yr  
Amgylchedd  
Environment  
Agency

# River Habitat Survey in Britain and Ireland



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Glossary of acronyms

Icons used as prompts for surveyors






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## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED IN THE TEXT

CFMP	Catchment Flood Management Plan
GQA	General Quality Assessment
EA	Environment Agency
EHSNI	Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland
EU	European Union
H&S	Health and Safety
NGR	National Grid Reference
OS	Ordnance Survey
GPS	Global Positioning System
PPE	Personal Protection Equipment
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
RHS	River Habitat Survey
RQO	River Quality Objective
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SERCON	System for Evaluating Rivers for Conservation
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SNIFFER	Scotland and Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research
UK	United Kingdom

## ICONS USED TO PROMPT SURVEYORS

-  Rare feature
-  Photograph in photo gallery
-  Reminder of survey approach
-  Video to be used in training
-  Health and safety issue

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## PART ONE – INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL GUIDANCE

### Preamble


- 1.1 River Habitat Survey (RHS) is a method designed to characterise and assess, in broad terms, the physical structure of freshwater streams and rivers. The field survey element does not require specialist geomorphological or botanical expertise, but recognition of vegetation types and an understanding of basic geomorphological principles and processes are needed.
- 1.2 RHS is carried out along a standard 500m length of river channel. Observations are made at ten equally spaced spot-checks along the channel, whilst information on valley form and land-use in the river corridor provides additional context.
- 1.3 The underlying need for any observational method such as RHS is confidence in the survey data. This means consistent recording of features by competent, well-trained, and accredited surveyors as well as checks on subsequent data-entry onto the computer database.
- 1.4 The field survey has been designed, tested and improved as a result of extensive use on rivers in the UK since 1994. The 2003 version represents the first major overhaul of the form design, revision of some component elements, and updating of the guidance manual, since 1997. The major differences between the 1997 and 2003 versions are summarised in Appendix 4.
- 1.5 Improvements in the contents and design of the form and the supporting guidance have been necessary to remedy weaknesses in the consistency of recording.
- 1.6 The 2003 version addresses a number of these weaknesses by:
  - providing more comprehensive definitions and guidance;
  - including a greatly expanded photographic section;
  - using a more user-friendly 'icon' system that highlights difficult features, health and safety issues and rare features, all of which need particular attention;
  - introducing more stringent requirements for recording grid references and photographic information;
  - introducing a mandatory health and safety risk assessment component;
  - including a logical cross-check list to help minimise the chances of incomplete recording.
- 1.7 The importance of consistent recording, and also completing all elements of the survey form, is paramount. Incomplete forms, and those with inadequate details of site location or photographic evidence, will not be acceptable, and not entered onto the RHS database. There is an underlying principle that any unusual feature, or any aspect which a surveyor is uncertain about, should be recorded as a special note and a photograph taken to provide supporting evidence whenever possible.
- 1.8 Surveyor accreditation is needed for data to be entered onto the RHS database. This means surveyors attending a training course using the 2003 version, and passing an accreditation test.
- 1.9 The RHS database contains field observations, map-derived information and photographs from more than 4600 RHS baseline survey sites visited in 1994-96 and over 12,000 subsequent surveys. The 1994-96 baseline network comprised a geographically representative cross-section of streams and rivers, selected on a stratified random basis, with the 10km grid squares of the Ordnance Survey as a sampling framework.
- 1.10 An overview of the physical condition of streams and rivers in the UK and Isle of Man was published in 1998<sup>1</sup>, using the baseline data.
- 1.11 Since then, surveys have been used for a number of purposes, including: determining the catchment characteristics of several rivers in the UK; identifying the attributes of known top quality 'benchmark' sites; investigating possible species-habitat relationships; and providing input to environmental impact assessment<sup>2</sup>. An educational CD-ROM has also been produced, using a simplified version of the RHS database<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.12 RHS has also been tested in other European countries such as Finland, France, Austria, Portugal (Madeira), Italy and Slovenia with a view to adapting the survey for local conditions. Cross-comparison between RHS and other methods for surveying river hydromorphology in Europe has also been carried out<sup>4</sup>, with a view to producing standard guidance on techniques for assessing the physical characteristics of watercourses<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.13 The European Water Framework Directive has had a major influence in the development of RHS. Indeed, the prototype of the survey was developed in anticipation of the requirements of such a Directive as long ago as 1992.

- 1.14 The uses and sampling strategy for RHS depend on the purpose of gathering the survey information. Given its primary objective of context-setting, RHS can be used in general surveillance as well as site-specific surveys<sup>6</sup>. What it cannot do, and never was intended to do, is to provide the level of detail needed for specialised survey work for specific plant and animal groups. Nevertheless, RHS can provide a consistent framework within which aquatic macro-invertebrate, macrophyte, fish and geomorphological surveys can be set.
- 1.15 Although RHS conforms with the basic requirements for the draft guidance standard on assessing the hydromorphological characteristics of rivers<sup>5</sup>, additional information on floodplain features and hydrology is also required for full compliance.
- 1.16 RHS also helps to provide information on river structure, vegetation character and land-use required for SERCON (System for Evaluating Rivers for Conservation), an assessment system that has scoring systems for several attributes in relation to determining the nature conservation value of rivers<sup>7</sup>.

### **Scope of the manual**

- 1.17 Guidance is provided on the fieldwork survey element of the core RHS method only. It does not cover map-based information gathering or additional modules such as the one being developed for gathering specialist geomorphological information. Details on this module, and the links with other surveys, can be obtained from the RHS team at the Environment Agency in Warrington (see 1.61).
- 1.18 The manual does not detail how to undertake preparatory work prior to a survey, gaining landowner permission, or how to link RHS to other surveys that may be carried out in tandem with RHS. All these aspects need to be planned and agreed between the commissioning organisation and the surveyor well before fieldwork is carried out.
- 1.19 The core method described is a UK one and is designed specifically for conditions in Great Britain and Ireland. Development of European versions of RHS is continuing. Further details can be obtained from the RHS team at Warrington.
- 1.20 The contents of the guidance are linked to the sequence of questions on the 2003 Survey form and are largely self-explanatory. Special icons are used to highlight issues requiring particular attention, such as when health and safety issues may be of special significance, features that are particularly rare in the UK, and where photos or videos help to illustrate features.
- 1.21 Essential equipment for undertaking RHS field surveys includes: survey forms in a waterproof document holder; laminated spot-check key; ranging-pole; range-finder; digital or a slide transparency camera; global positioning system for recording locational data and a mobile telephone (or other means of communication) in case of emergency. If the planned means of communication is by mobile phone, it is important to check that there is an adequate signal in the area being surveyed.

### **Health and safety**

- 1.22 It is imperative that all surveys are conducted in conditions which are safe for surveyors (Appendix 1).  
 A health and safety assessment is an integral part of the survey and the form must be completed before embarking on the survey, and attached with the completed survey forms.
- 1.23 The Environment Agency Lone Working Guidance (Appendix 2) must be followed and surveyors must never put themselves in a position in which they are not in control. This applies to all surveyors working for, or commissioned by the Environment Agency (EA), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) Environment and Heritage Service, Northern Ireland (EHSNI) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).
- 1.24 In areas of high risk, it is strongly recommended that a team of two undertakes a survey.
- 1.25 Not starting, or abandoning a survey when the risk is too high should be the principle that applies throughout.

### **Access and permissions**

- 1.26 Whenever practicable, permission from landowners and occupiers should be obtained before surveys are carried out. This is not always feasible or possible, so if challenged RHS surveyors should be polite, courteous and provide an explanation of what they are doing and why, and on whose authority. In some instances, this may mean having to return to do the survey if the landowner requires further clarification as to the purpose of the work. Identification must be carried by surveyors at all times. Surveyors should comply with disinfection requests from landowners.

1.27 Surveyors can offer to provide information to landowners if they are interested in receiving it.

### Preparatory work

1.28 Experience suggests that some RHS surveyors, no matter how experienced, can still overlook channel modifications. It is therefore recommended that some preparatory briefing is undertaken before visiting the site. For example, looking at the river planform and river name on a map will provide clues as to whether the watercourse has undergone historical channel management. Documentation of past flood defence works is also a source of invaluable information. Such information will help provide context for site characterisation, but should NOT over-ride field observations.

### The survey form

- 1.29 The RHS survey form is four pages long and is accompanied by a separate two-page spot-check key. The health and safety form is integral to the survey and should not be detached. It is recommended that a clipboard or "Weather-writer" is used, and a waterproof laminated version of the spot-check key taken into the field at all times.
- 1.30 Surveyors are required to record the presence, absence, and in some cases the number or extent, of specific features. Four basic types of records are made:
- counting the **number** of certain features within the whole 500m site (riffles, pools, unvegetated and vegetated point bars, and artificial features);
  - **ticking boxes** (✓) to indicate whether a feature is absent, present or extensive;
  - **entering a two-letter acronym** for features in the spot-check section;
  - taking **measurements** of the channel such as height, width and depth.
- 1.31 Where there is a choice of features to be scored, but only a single entry is allowed, boxes on the survey form are either 'shadowed' (◻) or have emboldened edges (◻).

### General site and surveyor information

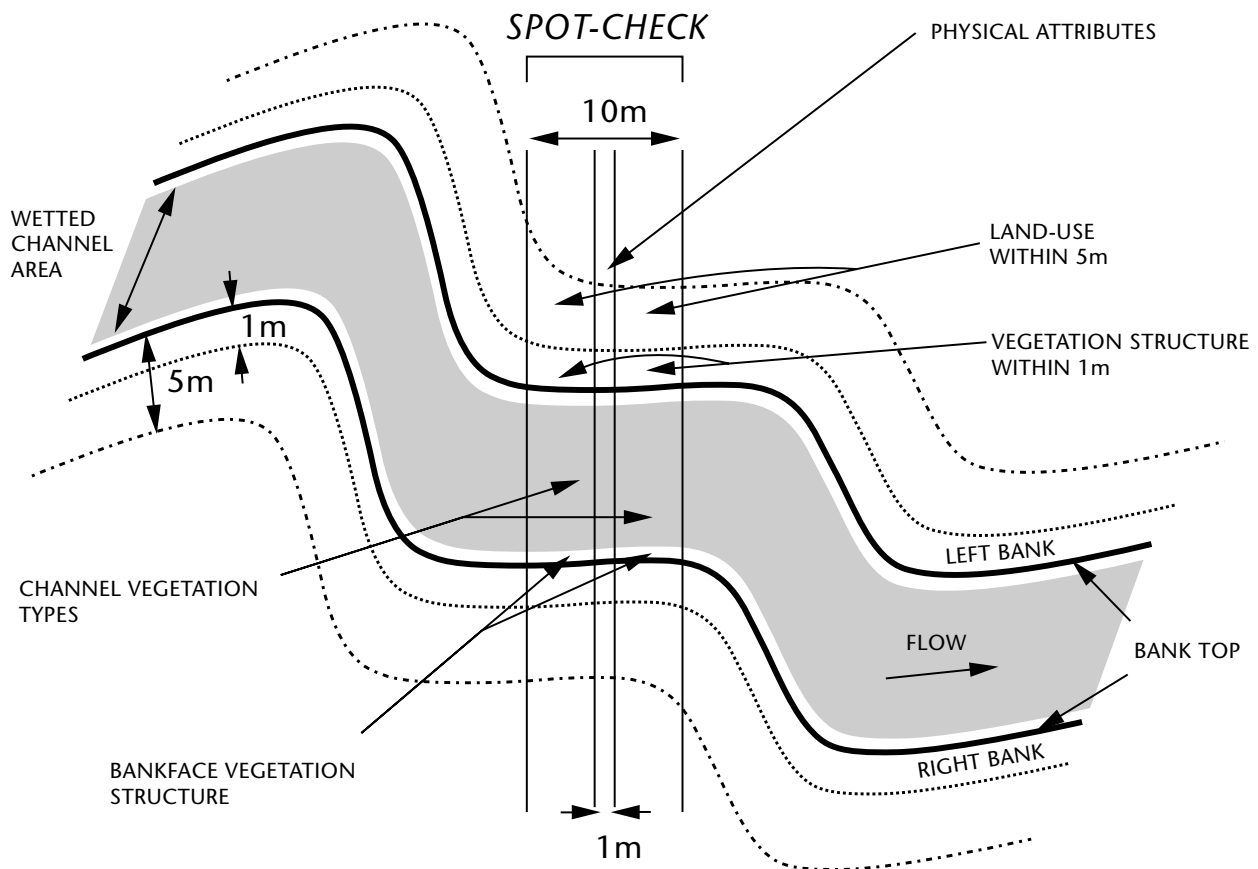
- 1.32 Information about the surveyor, general site characteristics and details about when and how the survey has been undertaken are entered in Section A on Page 1. 🧑 For most accurate recording, it is best to survey from both the river and the bank, but the overriding importance of health and safety issues will determine precisely how the survey is undertaken.
- 1.33 Section B requires information on the general valley shape and valley-floor to be recorded.
- 1.34 Most of the information in both Sections A and B of the form can be completed on arrival at a site, or at the end of the survey, as appropriate.
- 1.35 The actual number (**including zero**) of riffles, pools, unvegetated and vegetated point bars is recorded in Section C. This is best done by keeping a cumulative record of the number of these individual features when walking between spot-checks, and then tallying them up on completion of the survey.
- 1.36 Section D on page 1 requires the number of different types and extent of artificial structures to be recorded. As with counting riffles (Section C), a cumulative record is made during the survey and a tally made on completion of the survey. Again, zero must be recorded if none are present.


### Spot-checks

- 1.37 Spot-checks are designed to record predominant channel, bank and river corridor features at 10 locations spaced evenly along the 500m RHS site. Data for spot-checks are entered on page 2 of the form.
- 1.38 Spot-checks should be located at regular (approximately 50m) intervals along the site. **To do this consistently each surveyor should calibrate their stride length beforehand to identify how many of their paces represent 50m.** Rangefinders can be used for calibration too. It is best to use small strides – this tends to allow features between spot-checks to be observed and noted more comfortably. Adjustments may be needed, especially in difficult terrain because it may not always be possible to access the channel at precisely every 50m. Make a note on the form when this happens.
- 1.39 At each spot-check information relating to the channel, banks and adjacent land is recorded. This includes: predominant channel substrate and flow-type; habitat features; modifications to the channel and banks; channel vegetation types; vegetation structure of the banks and banktop; and land-use. Physical

features (Section E) are assessed using a 1m wide “transect” across the channel, while all other elements in Sections F and G are assessed within a 10m wide transect across the river (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Diagram showing dimensions for spot-checks



- 1.40 In Sections E and F, spot-check entries are abbreviations. Each entry must use the relevant unique two-letter abbreviation (e.g. BO = boulder; RI = reinforced bank). All abbreviations are listed as prompts on the form and are detailed in the spot-check key. Most are easily learnt by surveyors, but having a laminated copy of the spot-check key in the field allows double-checking in cases of doubt.
- 1.41 For boxes in Sections E and F with emboldened borders, only a single entry is allowed. This is for recording the **predominant** feature only, even though there may be more than one present. Do not spend long deliberating over which option is the predominant one. Initial reaction is the quickest, and usually the best, method.
- 1.42 In boxes without emboldened borders more than one entry is allowed; for example, bank modification may include both resectioning [RS] and reinforcement [RI].
- 1.43 Section G provides a list of channel vegetation types; those present are recorded as either a '✓' provided they cover at least 1% of the channel area, or as an 'E' if more than one third of the channel area within the 10m wide transect is covered. Records have to be made for each spot-check, including 'none' or 'not visible'. The end column also has to be completed to provide an overview of the presence and extent of each vegetation type throughout the site as a whole.
- 1.44 The primary reason for recording at spot-checks is to bring greater consistency of data collection. Each spot-check column should be completed in sequence. In most instances each spot-check should take no more than two minutes to complete, particularly since all emboldened boxes and most of the others too, will have just a single entry. For rivers with complex structure, spot-check recording may take a little longer – conversely, uniform watercourses will take less time.
- 1.45  It is essential that all boxes in Sections E and F (and at least one in Section G) are completed at each spot-check before moving to the next one. It is not possible to complete an acceptable RHS survey if any of the boxes in Sections E and F do not have entries. Figure 2 shows a completed spot-check section of the RHS form.




**Figure 2 Example of a completed page 2 of the 2003 RHS form**

SITE REF. <b>EXAMPLE 3.2</b>		<b>RIVER HABITAT SURVEY: TEN SPOT-CHECKS</b>									Page 2 of 4	
Spot-check 1 is at: upstream end <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		downstream end <input type="checkbox"/>		of site (tick one box)								
<b>E PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES</b> (to be assessed across channel within 1m wide transect)												
<b>When boxes 'shadowed', only one entry allowed</b>		<b>1 GPS</b>	2	3	4	5	<b>6 GPS</b>	7	8	9	10	<b>GPS</b>
<b>LEFT BANK</b>		Ring EC or SC if composed of sandy substrate										
<b>Material</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GS, EA, FE, CL, CC, SP, WP, GA, BR, RR, TD, FA, BI	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	EA	FA	GA	EA	EA	EA	
<b>Bank modification(s)</b> NK, NO, RS, RI, PC(B), BM, EM	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	RS/RI	RI	RS	NO	NO	
<b>Marginal &amp; bank feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EC, SC, PB, VP, SB, VS, NB	NO	NO	NO	EC	EC	NO	NO	NO	NO	EC	NO	
<b>CHANNEL</b>		GP- ring either G or P if predominant										
<b>Channel substrate</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GP, SA, SI, CL, PE, EA, AR	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	GP	SI	Co
<b>Flow-type</b> NV, FF, CH, BW, UW, CF, RP, UP, SM, NP, DR	RP	SM	SM	SM	RP	SM	RP	RP	RP	RP	NP	
<b>Channel modification(s)</b> NK, NO, CV, RS, RI, DA, FO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	
<b>Channel feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EB, RO, VR, MB, VB, MI, TR	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	MI	MI	NO	
<b>For braided rivers only: number of sub-channels</b>												
<b>RIGHT BANK</b>		Ring EC or SC if composed of sandy substrate										
<b>Material</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GS, EA, FE, CL, CC, SP, WP, GA, BR, RR, TD, FA, BI	EA	EA	EA	BI	BI	BI	FA	EA	EA	EA		
<b>Bank modification(s)</b> NK, NO, RS, RI, PC(B), BM, EM	NO	NO	NO	RI	RS/RS	RS	RS	PC	PC(B)	PC(B)		
<b>Marginal &amp; bank feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EC, SC, PB, VP, SB, VS, NB	NO	NO	SC	NO	SB	SB	NO	NO	NO	NO		
<b>F BANKTOP LAND-USE AND VEGETATION STRUCTURE</b> (to be assessed over a 10m wide transect)												
<b>Land-use: choose one from BL, BP, CW, CP, SH, OR, WL, MH, AW, OW, RP, IG, TH, RD, SU, TL, IL, PG, NV</b>												
<b>LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF LEFT BANKTOP</b>	IG	IG	IG	SH	SH	RP	RP	TH	BP	BP		
<b>LEFT BANKTOP (structure within 1m)</b> B/U/S/C/NV	U	U	U	C	C	S	S	C	C	S		
<b>LEFT BANK-FACE (structure)</b> B/U/S/C/NV	U	U	S	B	B	B	B	C	C	C		
<b>RIGHT BANK-FACE (structure)</b> B/U/S/C/NV	C	C	C	B	B	B	B	U	U	B		
<b>RIGHT BANKTOP (structure within 1m)</b> B/U/S/C/NV	C	C	C	U	U	B	B	U	B	U		
<b>LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF RIGHT BANKTOP</b>	OR	OR	RP	RP	RP	SU	SU	IG	IG	IG		
<b>G CHANNEL VEGETATION TYPES</b> (to be assessed over a 10m wide transect: use E (≥ 33% area), ✓ (present) or NV (not visible))												
None (✓) or Not Visible (NV)												
Liverworts/mosses/lichens				✓								
Emergent broad-leaved herbs	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Emergent reeds/sedges/rushes/grasses/horsetails	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓			✓
Floating-leaved (rooted)												✓
Free-floating	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Amphibious	✓			✓	✓		✓		✓			✓
Submerged broad-leaved		✓	E	✓	E	✓	E	E	✓	✓		E
Submerged linear-leaved		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓			✓
Submerged fine-leaved	E	✓	✓	✓		✓		E	✓	✓		E
Filamentous algae	✓	E	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓
Use end column for overall assessment over 500m, including types not occurring in spot-checks (use ✓, E or NV)												

↑ Enter channel substrate(s) not occurring as predominant in spot-checks but present in >1% of whole site.




### Sweep-up information

- 1.46 Page 3 of the form is designed for recording general information by means of a 'sweep-up' checklist. This is usually best done when walking back along the RHS site following completion of the spot-checks. The sweep-up represents an assessment of the extent of features over the whole 500m length, and will include those features not occurring at the spot-checks.  **Since the sample length is 500m and the ten-spot-checks are 50m apart, it is important to include the remaining 50m of the sample length in the sweep-up assessment. This means walking an extra 50m beyond the tenth spot-check and taking a GPS reading.**
- 1.47 Features in the sweep-up are recorded by entering a '✓' for those present in at least 1% of the site and 'E' for those extending more than 33% along the site. This type of recording is used in Sections H and I to provide information on land-use and bank profiles. Some features may be important, even if they do not extend 1% along an RHS site. Such features include underwater tree roots, and all such categories are marked with an asterisk (\*) to highlight they are special cases, and can be recorded as present even if they do not occur along  $\geq 1\%$  of the site.
- 1.48 Information on trees (Section J) is recorded in a tick box format, with categories for the distribution pattern of trees along each bank, and whether associated features such as 'underwater tree roots' or 'large woody debris' are absent, present or extensive along the channel as a whole.
- 1.49 The extent (absence, presence or extensive occurrence) of specific channel features is recorded in Section K. The check-list represents a range of flow-types and river channel features that are readily identified in the field. An assessment of their presence, absence and overall extent enables a broad picture of river character to be established. The five features marked by an asterisk (e.g. \*free fall flow) can be recorded as 'present' even if they do not occur along at least 1% of the site.

### Channel dimensions, influences and special features

- 1.50 Page 4 of the form contains Section L – channel dimensions. These are measured at **one location** within the 500m. Ideally, that location should be in a straight or uniform reach (i.e. not on a sharp bend), with clearly defined banks and preferably across a riffle. If riffles are not present in the site, a uniform location with clearly defined banks should be used. Channel dimensions do not have to be measured at a spot-check.
- 1.51 Guidance on how to measure the channel is included in the spot-check key. Where it is safe to do so, the bankfull width, wetted water width and water depth should be recorded, preferably using the ranging pole. A rangefinder will be needed for estimating the width of larger rivers, and these instruments should be calibrated regularly.
- 1.52 Page 4 also establishes the absence, presence (✓) or extensive occurrence (E) of the following: 'features of special interest' (Section M); 'notable nuisance plants' (Section O); and alders, including diseased trees (Section Q). Features marked by an asterisk (e.g. \*leafy debris) can be recorded as 'present' even if they do not occupy at least 1% of the site.
- 1.53 Section N requires surveyors to record whether or not the channel is choked with vegetation. This is important since RHS might be carried out at times when plant growth in rivers is at its greatest.
- 1.54 Section P contains text prompts to assist surveyors in describing the overall characteristics of the site, as well as providing a space for noting other relevant observations. Additional relevant observations are encouraged and these should be included on a separate sheet, provided that the mid-site grid reference is clearly marked on it.
- 1.55 Section R contains seven cross-check prompts to ensure that all parts of the survey form have been completed correctly.


### Suitable conditions and season

- 1.56  **RHS should never be carried out during flood (spate) flows** because there are major safety risks involved. High water levels and turbidity will also obscure many of the features RHS is designed to record and give a false impression of flow-types compared with those expected under dry-weather conditions. If a prolonged period of heavy rain occurs, a survey should be delayed until both water level and clarity, return to acceptable levels.
- 1.57 In some lowland UK rivers abundant growth by emergent and bankside vegetation in summer will obscure some channel features. Surveys during this period should be avoided: May and June are

considered the most suitable months. Upland rivers with little or no emergent vegetation are suitable for surveying over a much longer season.

- 1.58 If, for special reasons, surveys have to be carried out during non-optimal months, interpretation of the results will need to take full account of seasonal aquatic and bankside vegetation growth.
- 1.59 Likewise, in countries with different climatic conditions from the UK, surveys should be ideally carried out when aquatic vegetation growth is evident, but not excessive, and water levels are not high.

### Quality control

- 1.60 Each RHS form must be checked for completeness. A simple set of questions is included as a checklist in Section R of the form. These should be used to check the completion of relevant components of the form, and the boxes on the right of the form should be ticked after checks have been made.  An extra two minutes for quality control at the end of each survey is invaluable, because incomplete forms will be returned, and a re-survey may be needed.
- 1.61 It is important that completed RHS forms are legible, the pages stapled together **with a site reference clearly marked on all pages**. If an extra sheet is used for additional observations, make sure this is similarly marked and firmly attached.
- 1.62 Of equal importance is the need to **clearly label all photographs**, and ensure they match the references given on page 1 of the form.

### Contact for enquiries

- 1.63 Queries and further information on this manual should be addressed to:

**The RHS Team,  
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Tel: 01925 653999  
Fax: 01925 415961**

**E-mail: [rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:rhs@environment-agency.gov.uk)**

**General Enquiry: 0845 9333111**

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# **PART TWO**

- **Site Health and Safety Assessment**
  - **Spot-check Key (2003 Version)**
- **River Habitat Survey Forms (2003 Version)**

**RIVER HABITAT SURVEY 2003 VERSION: SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT**

Site Number <sup>1</sup> :	Site Ref:	River Name:	Date:
Grid References/Co-ordinates:	Spot 1 <sup>2</sup> :	Mid-site:	End of site <sup>2</sup> :
Surveyor Name:		Accredited Surveyor Code:	
<small><sup>1</sup> Leave blank if new site.</small>		<small><sup>2</sup> Optional</small>	

Weather Conditions:

Flow Conditions:

<b>Site details:</b> (enter comments or circle if applicable and give details)	<b>Risk Level</b> (Low/Mod/High)
Access and Parking: (entry & exit)	
Conditions: comment on ground stability, footing, exposure/remoteness	
Obstacles/Hazards: fencing, stiles, dense vegetation, steep bank	
Occupied/Unoccupied: people, livestock, animals	
Activities/Land-use: agriculture, woodland, residential, industrial, construction, recreational	
Risk if lone-working	

**IF THERE ARE ANY HIGH RISKS OR MORE THAN THREE MODERATE RISKS  
DO NOT CONTINUE WITH THE SURVEY.**

**Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis)**

Instructions to card holders

1. As infection may enter through breaks in the skin, ensure that any cut, scratch or abrasion is thoroughly cleansed and covered with a waterproof plaster.
2. Avoid rubbing your eyes, nose and mouth during work.
3. Clean protective clothing, footwear and equipment etc. after use
4. After work, and particularly before taking food or drink, wash hands thoroughly.
5. Report all accidents and/or injuries, however slight.
6. Keep your card with you at all times.

**Lyme Disease**

1. Dress appropriately with skin covered up.
2. Regularly inspect for ticks when in the field.
3. Check for, and remove, any ticks as soon as possible after leaving the site.
4. Seek medical attention if bitten by a tick.

**PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES (SECTION E)**

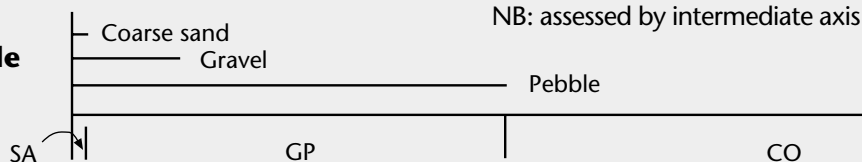
BANKS		CHANNEL	
<p><b>Predominant bank material</b></p> <p><b>NV</b> = not visible</p> <p><b>BE</b> = bedrock  <b>BO</b> = boulder  <b>CO</b> = cobble  <b>GS</b> = gravel/sand  <b>EA</b> = earth (crumbly)  <b>PE</b> = peat  <b>CL</b> = sticky clay</p> <p><b>CC</b> = concrete  <b>SP</b> = sheet piling  <b>WP</b> = wood piling  <b>GA</b> = gabion  <b>BR</b> = brick/laid stone  <b>RR</b> = rip-rap  <b>TD</b> = tipped debris  <b>FA</b> = fabric  <b>BI</b> = bio-engineering materials</p>	<p><b>Bank modifications</b></p> <p><b>NK</b> = not known  <b>NO</b> = none</p> <p><b>RS</b> = resectioned (reprofiled)  <b>RI</b> = reinforced  <b>PC</b> = poached  <b>PC(B)</b> = poached (bare)  <b>BM</b> = artificial berm  <b>EM</b> = embanked</p> <p><b>Marginal and bank features</b></p> <p><b>NV</b> = not visible (e.g. far bank)  <b>NO</b> = none</p> <p><b>EC</b> = eroding cliff (<b>EC</b> if sandy substrate)  <b>SC</b> = stable cliff (<b>SC</b> if sandy substrate)</p> <p><b>PB</b> = unvegetated point bar  <b>VP</b> = vegetated point bar</p> <p><b>SB</b> = unvegetated side bar  <b>VS</b> = vegetated side bar</p> <p><b>NB</b> = natural berm</p>	<p><b>Predominant substrate</b></p> <p><b>NV</b> = not visible</p> <p><b>BE</b> = bedrock  <b>BO</b> = boulder  <b>CO</b> = cobble  <b>GP</b> = gravel/pebble (<b>G</b> or <b>P</b> if predominant)  <b>SA</b> = sand  <b>SI</b> = silt  <b>CL</b> = clay  <b>PE</b> = peat  <b>EA</b> = earth  <b>AR</b> = artificial</p> <p><b>Predominant flow-type</b></p> <p><b>NV</b> = not visible  <b>FF</b> = free fall  <b>CH</b> = chute  <b>BW</b> = broken standing waves (white water)  <b>UW</b> = unbroken standing waves  <b>CF</b> = chaotic flow  <b>RP</b> = rippled  <b>UP</b> = upwelling  <b>SM</b> = smooth  <b>NP</b> = no perceptible flow  <b>DR</b> = no flow (dry)</p>	<p><b>Channel modifications</b></p> <p><b>NK</b> = not known  <b>NO</b> = none</p> <p><b>CV</b> = culverted  <b>RS</b> = resectioned  <b>RI</b> = reinforced  <b>DA</b> = dam/weir/slucice  <b>FO</b> = ford (man-made)</p> <p><b>Channel features</b></p> <p><b>NV</b> = not visible  <b>NO</b> = none</p> <p><b>EB</b> = exposed bedrock  <b>RO</b> = exposed boulders  <b>VR</b> = vegetated rock  <b>MB</b> = unvegetated mid-channel bar  <b>VB</b> = vegetated mid-channel bar  <b>MI</b> = mature island  <b>TR</b> = Trash (urban debris)</p>

**FLOW-TYPES**

**DESCRIPTION**

<b>FF: Free fall</b>	clearly separates from back-wall of vertical feature ~ associated with waterfalls
<b>CH: Chute</b>	low curving fall in contact with substrate ~ often associated with cascades
<b>BW: Broken standing waves</b>	white-water tumbling waves must be present ~ mostly associated with rapids
<b>UW: Unbroken standing waves</b>	upstream facing wavelets which are not broken ~ mostly associated with riffles
<b>CF: Chaotic flow</b>	a chaotic mixture of three or more of the four fast flow-types with no predominant one obvious
<b>RP: Rippled</b>	no waves, but general flow direction is downstream with disturbed rippled surface ~ mostly associated with runs
<b>UP: Upwelling</b>	heaving water as upwellings break the surface ~ associated with boils.
<b>SM: Smooth</b>	perceptible downstream movement is smooth (no eddies) ~ mostly associated with glides
<b>NP: No perceptible flow</b>	no net downstream flow ~ associated with pools, ponded reaches and marginal deadwater
<b>DR: No flow (dry)</b>	dry river bed

**Scale**



LEFT

Banks are determined by looking downstream

RIGHT

**CHANNEL MODIFICATION INDICATORS**




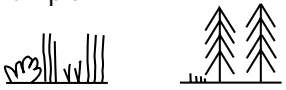




One or more of the following may be indicative of resectioning:

1. Uniform bank profile
2. Straightened planform
3. Bankfull width/bankfull height ratio <4:1
4. Uniform/low energy flow-types
5. No trees/uniformly-aged trees along bank
6. Intensive/urban land-use

**LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF BANKTOP (SECTION F) & 50m (SECTION H)**

<b>BL</b> = Broadleaf/mixed woodland (semi-natural)	<b>AW</b> = Artificial open water	<b>TL</b> = Tilled land
<b>BP</b> = Broadleaf/mixed plantation	<b>OW</b> = Natural open water	<b>IL</b> = Irrigated land
<b>CW</b> = Coniferous woodland (semi-natural)	<b>RP</b> = Rough unimproved grassland/pasture	<b>PG</b> = Parkland or gardens
<b>CP</b> = Coniferous plantation	<b>IG</b> = Improved/semi-improved grassland	<b>NV</b> = Not visible
<b>SH</b> = Scrub & shrubs	<b>TH</b> = Tall herb/rank vegetation	
<b>OR</b> = Orchard	<b>RD</b> = Rock, scree or sand dunes	
<b>WL</b> = Wetland (e.g. bog, marsh, fen)	<b>SU</b> = Suburban/urban development	
<b>MH</b> = Moorland/heath		

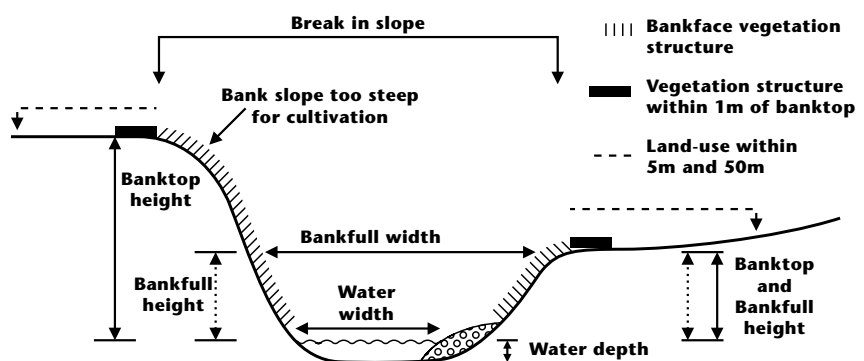
**BANKTOP AND BANKFACE VEGETATION STRUCTURE To be assessed within a 10m wide transect (SECTION F)**

bare	B	bare earth/rock etc.	vegetation types
uniform 	U	predominantly one type (no scrub or trees)	 bryophytes  short/creeping herbs or grasses
simple 	S	two or three vegetation types	 tall herbs/grasses  scrub or shrubs
complex 	C	four or more types	 saplings and trees

**Channel dimensions guidance (Section L)**

- Select location on uniform section.
- If riffle is present, measure there. If not, measure at straightest and shallowest point.
- **Banktop** = first major break in slope above which cultivation or development is possible.
- **Bankfull** = point where river first spills on to floodplain.

**Cross-section of channel showing definitions used to define where spot-check recording and channel dimensions measured**



**EMERGENCY HOTLINE 0800 80 70 60**

24 hour free emergency telephone line for reporting all environmental incidents relating to air, land and water.



**A FIELD SURVEY DETAILS**

Site Number:

Site Reference:

Spot-check 1 Grid Ref:

Spot-check 6 Grid Ref:

End of site Grid Ref:

Reach Reference:

River name:

Date / /20      Time:

Surveyor name:

Accredited Surveyor code:

Is the site part of a river or an artificial channel? River  Artificial

Are adverse conditions affecting survey? No  Yes

If yes, state .....

Is bed of river visible? barely or not  partially  ±entirely

Is health and safety assessment form attached? Yes  No

Number of photographs taken:

Photo references:

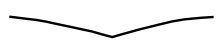






Site surveyed from: left bank  right bank  channel

**When options shown with 'shadow boxes', tick one box only**

**LEFT      banks determined by facing downstream      RIGHT**

**B PREDOMINANT VALLEY FORM (within the horizon limit) (tick one box only)**

(tick one box only)

	<input type="checkbox"/> shallow vee		<input type="checkbox"/> concave/bowl
	<input type="checkbox"/> deep vee		<input type="checkbox"/> asymmetrical valley
	<input type="checkbox"/> gorge		<input type="checkbox"/> U-shape valley
			<input type="checkbox"/> no obvious valley sides

Distinct flat valley bottom? No  Yes       Natural terraces? No  Yes

**C NUMBER OF RIFFLES, POOLS AND POINT BARS (enter total number in boxes)**

Riffle(s) <input type="text"/>	Unvegetated point bar(s) <input type="text"/>
Pool(s) <input type="text"/>	Vegetated point bar(s) <input type="text"/>

**D ARTIFICIAL FEATURES (indicate total number of occurrences of each category within the 500m site)**




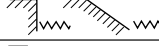
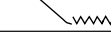

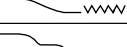
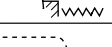
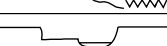
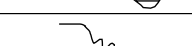
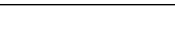
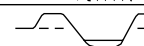

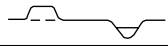
If none, tick box <input type="checkbox"/>	Weirs/slucices			Outfalls/intakes		
	Major	Intermediate	Minor	Major	Intermediate	Minor
	Other - state <input type="text"/>					

**Is channel obviously realigned?** No  Yes, <33% of site  ≥33% of site

**Is channel obviously over-deepened?** No  Yes, <33% of site  ≥33% of site

**Is water impounded by weir/dam?** No  Yes, <33% of site  ≥33% of site

SITE REF.	<b>RIVER HABITAT SURVEY: TEN SPOT-CHECKS</b>					<b>Page 2 of 4</b>					
Spot-check 1 is at: upstream end <input type="checkbox"/> downstream end <input type="checkbox"/> of site (tick one box)											
<b>E PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES</b> (to be assessed across channel within 1m wide transect)											
<b>When boxes 'bordered', only one entry allowed</b>											
	<b>1 GPS</b>	2	3	4	5	<b>6 GPS</b>	7	8	9	10	<b>GPS</b>
<b>LEFT BANK</b>	Ring EC or SC if composed of sandy substrate										↑ Enter channel substrate(s) not occurring as predominant in spot-checks but present in >1% of whole site.
<b>Material</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GS, EA, PE, CL, CC, SP, WP, GA, BR, RR, TD, FA, BI											
<b>Bank modification(s)</b> NK, NO, RS, RI, PC(B), BM, EM											
<b>Marginal &amp; bank feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EC, SC, PB, VP, SB, VS, NB											
<b>CHANNEL</b>	GP- ring either G or P if predominant										
<b>Channel substrate</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GP, SA, SI, CL, PE, EA, AR											
<b>Flow-type</b> NV, FF, CH, BW, UW, CF, RP, UP, SM, NP, DR											
<b>Channel modification(s)</b> NK, NO, CV, RS, RI, DA, FO											
<b>Channel feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EB, RO, VR, MB, VB, MI, TR											
<b>For braided rivers only: number of sub-channels</b>											
<b>RIGHT BANK</b>	Ring EC or SC if composed of sandy substrate										
<b>Material</b> NV, BE, BO, CO, GS, EA, PE, CL, CC, SP, WP, GA, BR, RR, TD, FA, BI											
<b>Bank modification(s)</b> NK, NO, RS, RI, PC(B), BM, EM											
<b>Marginal &amp; bank feature(s)</b> NV, NO, EC, SC, PB, VP, SB, VS, NB											
<b>F BANKTOP LAND-USE AND VEGETATION STRUCTURE</b> (to be assessed over a 10m wide transect)											
<b>Land-use: choose one from BL, BP, CW, CP, SH, OR, WL, MH, AW, OW, RP, IG, TH, RD, SU, TL, IL, PG, NV</b>											
LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF LEFT BANKTOP											
LEFT BANKTOP (structure within 1m) B/U/S/C/NV											
LEFT BANK-FACE (structure) B/U/S/C/NV											
RIGHT BANK-FACE (structure) B/U/S/C/NV											
RIGHT BANKTOP (structure within 1m) B/U/S/C/NV											
LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF RIGHT BANKTOP											
<b>G CHANNEL VEGETATION TYPES</b> (to be assessed over a 10m wide transect: use E (≥ 33% area), ✓(present) or NV (not visible))											
None (✓) or Not Visible (NV)											
Liverworts/mosses/lichens											
Emergent broad-leaved herbs											
Emergent reeds/sedges/rushes/grasses/horsetails											
Floating-leaved (rooted)											
Free-floating											
Amphibious											
Submerged broad-leaved											
Submerged linear-leaved											
Submerged fine-leaved											
Filamentous algae											
Use end column for overall assessment over 500m, including types not occurring in spot-checks (use ✓, E or NV) ————— ↑											

SITE REF.	<b>RIVER HABITAT SURVEY : 500m SWEEP-UP</b>				<b>Page 3 of 4</b>		
H LAND-USE WITHIN 50m OF BANKTOP Use ✓ (present) or E (≥ 33% banklength)							
	L	R		L	R		
Broadleaf/mixed woodland (semi-natural) (BL)			Natural open water (OW)				
Broadleaf/mixed plantation (BP)			Rough/unimproved grassland/pasture (RP)				
Coniferous woodland (semi-natural) (CW)			Improved/semi-improved grassland (IG)				
Coniferous plantation (CP)			Tall herb/rank vegetation (TH)				
Scrub & shrubs (SH)			Rock, scree or sand dunes (RD)				
Orchard (OR)			Suburban/urban development (SU)				
Wetland (e.g. bog, marsh, fen) (WL)			Tilled land (TL)				
Moorland/heath (MH)			Irrigated land (IL)				
Artificial open water (AW)			Parkland or gardens (PG)				
			Not visible (NV)				
I BANK PROFILES Use ✓ (present) or E (≥ 33% banklength)							
<b>Natural/unmodified</b>	L	R	<b>Artificial/modified</b>	L	R		
Vertical/undercut 			Resectioned (reprofiled) 				
Vertical with toe 			Reinforced - whole 				
Steep (>45°) 			Reinforced - top only 				
Gentle 			Reinforced - toe only 				
Composite 			Artificial two-stage 				
Natural berm 			Poached bank 				
			Embanked 				
			Set-back embankment 				
J EXTENT OF TREES AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES *record even if <1%							
<b>TREES</b> (tick one box per bank)			<b>ASSOCIATED FEATURES</b> (tick one box per feature)				
	Left	Right		None	Present	E (≥33%)	
None	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Shading of channel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Isolated/scattered	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Overhanging boughs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Regularly spaced, single	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Exposed bankside roots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Occasional clumps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Underwater tree roots	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Semi-continuous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fallen trees	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Continuous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Large woody debris	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
K EXTENT OF CHANNEL AND BANK FEATURES (tick one box for each feature) *record even if <1%							
	None	Present	E(≥33%)		None	Present	E(≥33%)
*Free fall flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exposed bedrock	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chute flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exposed boulders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Broken standing waves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetated bedrock/boulders	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Unbroken standing waves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unvegetated mid-channel bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rippled flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetated mid-channel bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
*Upwelling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mature island(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smooth flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unvegetated side bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No perceptible flow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetated side bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No flow (dry)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unvegetated point bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Marginal deadwater	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vegetated point bar(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eroding cliff(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Unvegetated silt deposit(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stable cliff(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Discrete unvegetated sand deposit(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
				*Discrete unvegetated gravel deposit(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SITE REF.	<b>RIVER HABITAT SURVEY : DIMENSIONS AND INFLUENCES</b> <span style="float: right;">Page 4 of 4</span>						
<b>L CHANNEL DIMENSIONS</b> (to be measured at one location on a straight uniform section, preferably across a riffle)							
LEFT BANK		CHANNEL		RIGHT BANK			
Banktop height (m)		Bankfull width (m)		Banktop height (m)			
Is banktop height also bankfull height? (Y or N)		Water width (m)		Is banktop height also bankfull height? (Y or N)			
Embanked height (m)		Water depth (m)		Embanked height (m)			
If trashline lower than banktop, indicate: height above water (m) = _____ width from bank to bank (m) = _____							
Bed material at site is: consolidated <input type="checkbox"/> unconsolidated (loose) <input type="checkbox"/> unknown <input type="checkbox"/>							
Location of measurements is: riffle <input type="checkbox"/> other <input type="checkbox"/> (state)							
<b>M FEATURES OF SPECIAL INTEREST</b> Use ✓ or E (> 33% length) *record even if <1%							
None <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Very large boulders (>1m) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Backwater(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Marsh(es) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Braided channels <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Debris dam(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Floodplain boulder deposits <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Flush(es) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Side channel(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Leafy debris <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Water meadow(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Natural open water <input type="checkbox"/>	
*Natural waterfall(s) > 5m high <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fringing reed-bank(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fen(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Others (state) <input type="checkbox"/>	
*Natural waterfall(s) < 5m high <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quaking bank(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bog(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Natural cascade(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Sink hole(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wet woodland(s) <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<b>N CHOKED CHANNEL</b> (tick one box)							
Is 33% or more of the channel choked with vegetation? No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/>							
<b>O NOTABLE NUISANCE PLANT SPECIES</b> Use ✓ or E (> 33% length) *record even if <1%							
None <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	bankface	banktop to 50m	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	bankface	banktop to 50m
*Giant hogweed <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Himalayan balsam <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
*Japanese knotweed <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	*Other (state)..... <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>P OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS</b> (Circle appropriate words, add others as necessary)							
<b>Major impacts:</b> landfill - tipping - litter - sewage - pollution - drought - abstraction - mill - dam - road - rail - industry - housing mining - quarrying - overdeepening - afforestation - fisheries management - silting - waterlogging - hydroelectric power							
<b>Evidence of recent management:</b> dredging - bank mowing - weed cutting - enhancement - river rehabilitation - gravel extraction - other (please specify)							
<b>Animals:</b> otter - mink - water vole - kingfisher - dipper - grey wagtail - sand martin - heron - dragonflies/damselflies							
<b>Other significant observations:</b> if necessary use separate sheet to describe overall characteristics and relevant observations							
<b>Q ALDERS</b> (tick one box in each of the two categories) *record even if <1%							
*Alders? None <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/> Extensive <input type="checkbox"/>				*Diseased Alders? None <input type="checkbox"/> Present <input type="checkbox"/> Extensive <input type="checkbox"/>			
<b>R FIELD SURVEY QUALITY CONTROL</b> ( ✓ boxes to confirm checks)							
Have you taken at least two photos that illustrate the general character of the site and additional photos of any weirs/ sluices and major/intermediate structures across the channel? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you completed all ten spot-checks and made entries in all boxes in E & F on page 2? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you completed column 11 of section G (and E if appropriate) on page 1? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you recorded in section C the number of riffles, pools and point bars (even if 0) on page 1? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you given an accurate (alphanumeric) grid reference for spot-checks 1, 6 and end of site (page 1)? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you stated whether spot-check 1 is at the upstream or downstream end of the site (top of page 2)? <input type="checkbox"/>							
Have you cross-checked your spot-check and sweep-up responses with the channel modification indicators given on page 2 of the spot-check key? <input type="checkbox"/>							

## PART THREE – DEFINITIONS AND DETAILED GUIDANCE

### RHS form page 1: Field Survey Details, Valley Form, Riffles etc. and Artificial Features

#### SECTION A. FIELD SURVEY DETAILS

##### Site number

For RHS database entry purposes only. Every site will be given a unique reference number when entered on the RHS database. **Leave blank.** For re-surveyed sites, enter original number (if known) followed by (R) to indicate repeat survey.

##### Site reference

Surveyors should enter their own unique reference number/name for the site, and replicate it on the left hand corner on each page of the form. 💡 Photos should also contain the same reference number.

##### Spot-checks 1, 6 and end of site grid reference/co-ordinates

In the UK, using a GPS, it is essential to record a 10 figure NGR (national Ordnance Survey grid reference) for spot-checks 1 and 6 (the mid-point); a reminder to do so is given in the spot-check columns on page 2 of the form. The grid reference for spot-check 1 is required to ensure re-surveys start at the same locations as the original surveys. The grid reference for spot-check 6 is required to calculate distance from source, site gradient and other map-derived data. 💡 It is also essential to record a grid reference for 50m beyond spot-check 10 (where the site ends). Use 1:10,000 or 1:25,000 scale maps to provide a cross-check for the grid references and whenever possible annotate the site boundaries on a 1:25,000 scale map.

Alternatively, record latitude and longitude. If there is no GPS signal, or only a poor one, enter an 8-figure reference from a 1:25,000 scale map.

##### **Reach reference (optional).**

Record the reference of the reach (if any). Reaches can be defined as part of a sampling strategy for Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs), Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS), River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) or SERCON assessments.

##### River name

Enter name appearing on River Quality Objective (RQO) map. If not named, or even depicted, on these maps, use name given on 1:50,000 scale maps, or more detailed scale if available. Use the name appearing on the map, including Welsh or Gaelic names. Include alternative names if two are given on the map. Unnamed headwater tributaries should be categorised as such, but refer to the named mainstream watercourse (e.g. tributary of.....Eden). In these cases it is not necessary to enter the words 'Afon' or 'River'.

##### Date/time

The time of survey, as well as the date, is important because this could be useful regarding significant observations (e.g. pollution) and in relation to gauged river flow information.

##### Surveyor name/Accredited surveyor Code

All accredited surveyors have an individual code. Surveyor name and code must be entered on the form to comply with the RHS accreditation scheme. Names on the survey forms should match those on the surveyor's accreditation certificate. Only surveys from accredited surveyors will be entered on the RHS database.

##### Is the site part of a river or an artificial channel?

Artificial channels are canals, dykes, ditches and drains constructed entirely by human activity. Natural rivers that have been extensively modified by human activity should be recorded as 'rivers' (e.g. navigation course of the Thames, concrete-lined urban streams). **Tick one box only.** 🗳️ A1a,b,c,d.

### Are adverse conditions affecting survey?

**Surveys should not be carried out in spate conditions.** ☠️ Take full account of the risk assessment carried out before embarking on a survey. Do not enter the channel if the water is turbid. 💡 Beware too that weather conditions can affect both safety and the accuracy of survey results - examples of conditions adversely affecting survey include: strong winds and heavy rain (affects flow-type assessment and recording on the field sheets); overgrown channels (where vegetation may hide some features). **Tick one box only.**

### Is bed of river visible?

A number of factors can affect whether a surveyor can see the bed of the river. Even under low flow conditions, the bed of wide or very deep rivers will only be partially visible, at best. Dense growth of free-floating macrophytes or planktonic algae may similarly obscure the bed from view, even when flows are very low. Use common sense, but as a guide, ✓ the 'barely or not' box if 0-33% of the bed visible; ✓ the 'partially obscured' box if 33-95% visible, and ✓ the '± entirely' box if ≥95% of bed visible. 📄 A3a,b.

### Is health and safety assessment form attached?

A health and safety assessment must be completed before starting the survey. 💡 A separate form must be filled in (see Appendix 1 for details, and form in Section 2). **Tick one box only** – if the 'No' box is ticked, reasons for not completing, and attaching, the form should be given. The ☠️ icon is shown in this manual to remind surveyors of common health and safety issues.

### Photography (general)

**A PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD OF THE SITE IS ESSENTIAL TO AID INTERPRETATION OF DATA, AND AS A RECORD OF THE SITE FOR FUTURE REFERENCE.** At least two photos must be taken, and any others for clarification purposes. Sufficient photographs should be taken to illustrate the general character of the site. In more inaccessible sites it may be necessary to seek a vantage point that will provide the most comprehensive view. It may be necessary to take more than two photographs to effectively illustrate general character. Avoid taking photos directly into the sun.

💡 Photographs of channel modifications and special features should also be taken. **It is essential that all 'major' structures are photographed to enable interpretation of potential impacts to be made.**

A good quality digital camera is recommended. If this is not possible, take colour transparencies with a film speed of ASA 200 or 400. The quality of digital photographs required will depend upon their intended use. For inclusion on the RHS database, a 1024x768-pixel picture with a standard JPEG compression (100-150kbyte) is required. For inclusion in printed documents, additional photographs at a higher resolution (e.g. 2048x1536 TIFF or JPEG) are recommended. A camera with built-in coding facilities is ideal as this should ensure photos are accurately assigned to a site, in the field.

💡 If you are unsure about an unusual or unfamiliar feature, take a photograph for reference and make accompanying notes. **Enter the number of photographs taken in the box.** Photographs that include, in the foreground, a chalk-board showing the site reference, will ensure photographs and site survey forms always correspond. **Enter on the form the references used during survey to ensure the correct photographs are matched with the sites surveyed. It is the responsibility of the surveyor to check that the photographs and site numbers match.**

### Site surveyed from

For wide and deep rivers, surveys might only be able to be carried out from one bank only, although for best results each bank would need to be walked. The same applies for rivers flowing through gorges. For shallow rivers a survey can be carried out easily from both sides of the channel, or by accessing the watercourse. ☠️ Beware of health & safety issues. Insert ✓ in one or more boxes to indicate where site has been surveyed from.

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## SECTION B. PREDOMINANT VALLEY FORM (within the horizon limit)

Profile diagrams are drawn on the form for guidance. **Valley form** refers to the shape of whole valley landform within which the RHS site is situated. It is assessed in the context of the horizon. It is the predominant valley form viewed by the surveyor when looking from the river to the mid-distant horizon. If you are unsure about a particular valley form, photograph and make a note or a sketch with an evaluation of distances. 💡 Tick one box only.

### Shallow vee

Overall valley side slopes  $<30^\circ$  from floor to top (horizon). 🗳️ B1a,b, E1Pb.

### Deep vee

Overall valley side slopes  $>30^\circ - 80^\circ$  from floor to top (horizon). 🗳️ B2a,b, J1b.

### Gorge

Steep ( $>80^\circ$  to vertical), rocky, valley sides with narrow valley bottom. 🗳️ B3a.

### Concave/bowl

Gently curving slopes that do not have a distinct glaciated U-shape. 🗳️ B4a.

### Asymmetrical valley

Valley sides are different, shallow on one side and steep on the other. 🗳️ B5a.

### U-shape valley

Steep valley sides rising from a flat valley floor that characterises a glacial valley. 🗳️ B6a, C1a.

### No valley-sides obvious

No obvious valley sides in near- to mid-horizon. 🗳️ B7a,b, A1a.

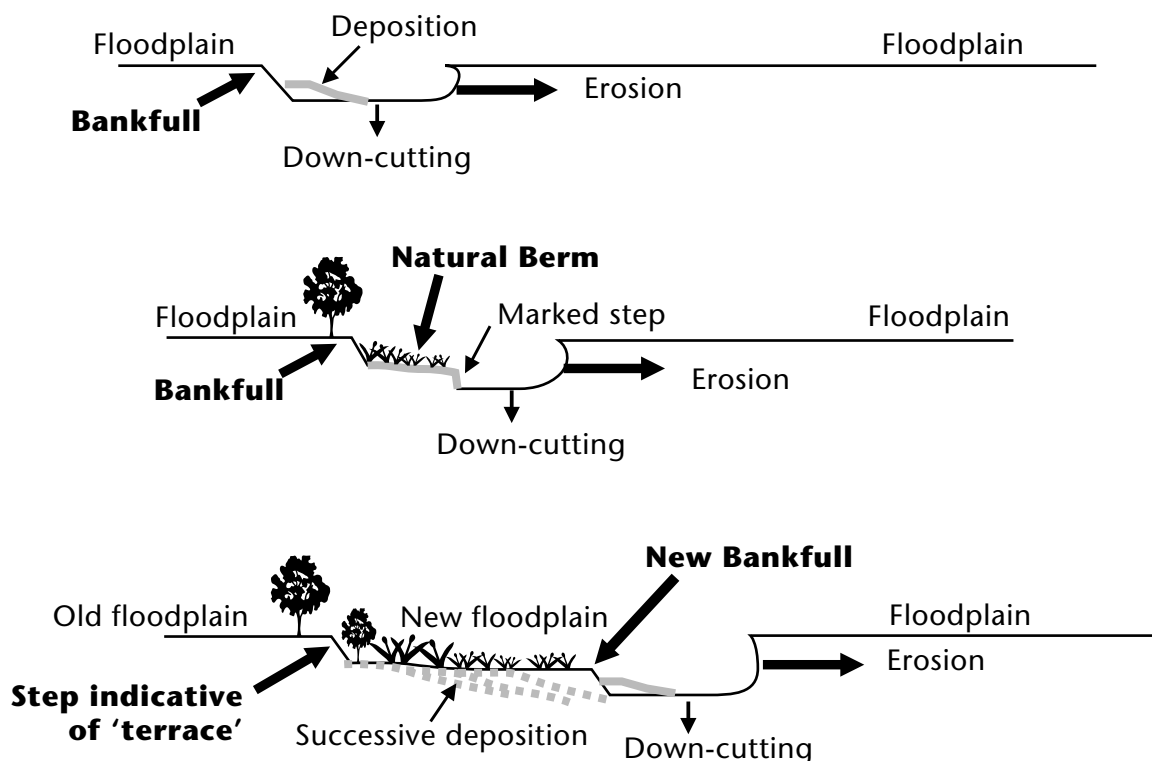
### Distinct flat valley bottom?

Flat area of valley into which water would spill during floods. If not obvious, record 'No'. Always tick 'No' box if no valley sides obvious. 🗳️ B1a,b, B2a,b, B5a, B6a, B7a,b, B8a,b, M1c.

### Natural terraces?

Distinct geomorphological features on a river valley floor forming steps or breaks in slope produced as the river erodes downwards. Characteristic of moraine-filled glaciated valleys. See Figure B1. 🗳️ B9a,b.

**Figure B1 Sequence of natural berm and terrace formation**





## SECTION C. NUMBER OF RIFFLES, POOLS AND POINT BARS

For analytical purposes, the **numbers** of riffles, pools, unvegetated and vegetated point bars need to be recorded. This is best done as a cumulative tally between spot-checks. 💡 Always give the actual numbers, including zero. The tally can be recorded alongside the boxes, or at the top or bottom of page 2, and at the end of the survey the total number is transferred to the relevant boxes in Section C.

### Riffle(s)

Habitat feature characterised by shallow, fast-flowing, water with a distinctly disturbed surface over **unconsolidated** gravel-pebble, or cobble, substrate. **'Unbroken standing waves'** is the predominant flow-type. 💡 Does not include unbroken standing waves associated with bedrock or solid peat/clay substrates. Riffles recorded in Section C must occupy most of the wetted channel width and be no longer than five times the river width. Riffles create a distinct 'bubbling' sound. 📷 C1a,b,c, E5Db.

Continuous 'unbroken standing wave' flow-type does not constitute discrete riffles. 💡 To be recorded as discrete individual features, a contrasting flow-type must separate each riffle. As a rough guide, riffles naturally occur at intervals equivalent to 5-10 times the channel bankfull width.

💡 In well-vegetated streams, aquatic vegetation sometimes creates unbroken standing waves by constricting or obstructing flow, or cause fine sediment deposition that raises the riverbed. **Do not record such examples as riffles.**

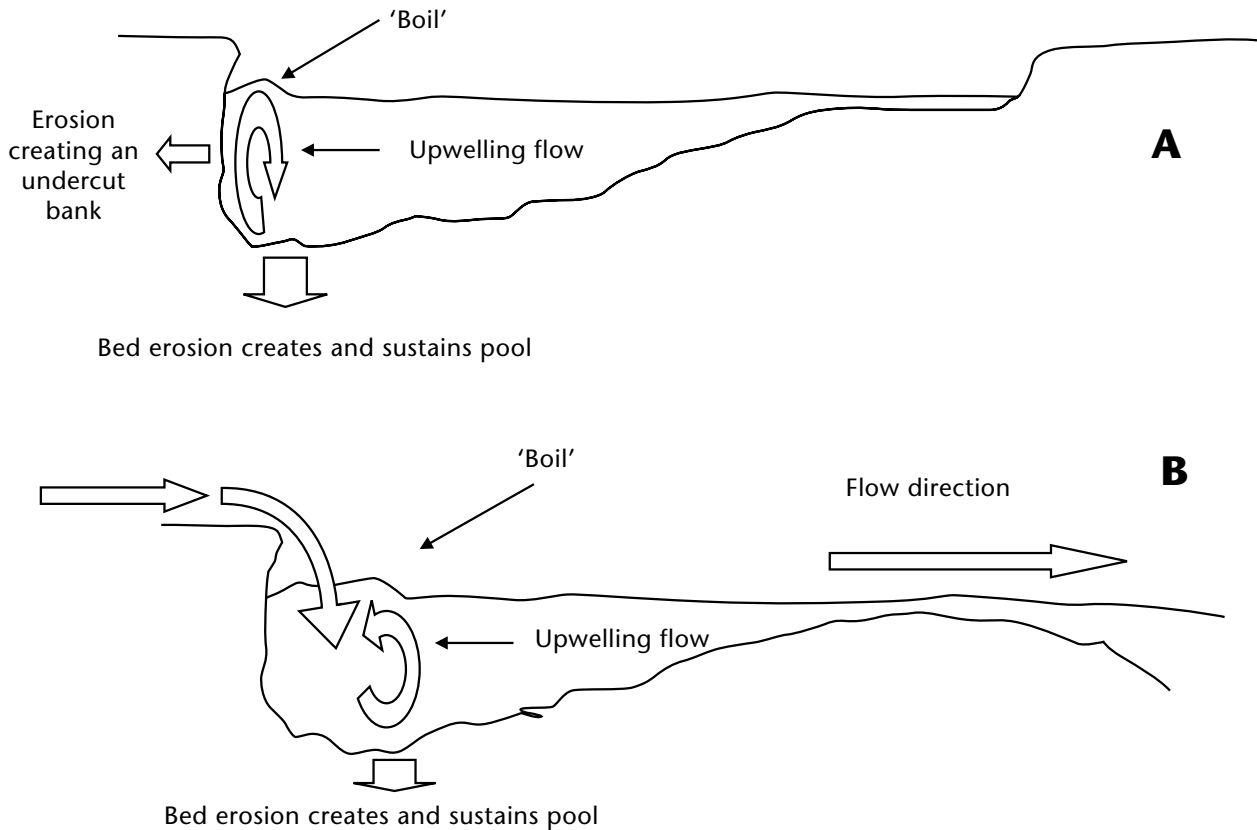
### Pool(s)

Habitat feature characterised by distinctly deeper parts of the channel that are usually no longer than **one to three times the channel's bankfull width**, and where the hollowed river bed profiles are sustained by scouring. Typical locations for pools include: the outside of tight meanders, downstream from natural bedrock outcrops (e.g. downstream from waterfalls or chutes where 'plunge pools' are formed), and below some weirs, where both downward and lateral erosion creates a typical scour pool. Due to their self-scouring nature, associated flow-types can vary across the pool, and include upwelling, and even no perceptible flow when there is circulating current. See Figure C1. 📷 C2a,b,c, C1b, E5Bb, I1a, M3a, M4a,b.

💡 Deep water impounded upstream of natural (bedrock), or artificial (weir) obstructions does NOT constitute a pool.

Even where the river bed is visible, pools are difficult to identify with absolute certainty. Do not spend time agonising over detail, but be consistent in your assessment. If in doubt, take photographs and seek advice for future surveys.

**Figure C1 Pool character at:**  
**A: tight meander bend (cross-section);**  
**B: waterfall or weir (long-section)**



### Unvegetated point bar(s) (PB)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of unconsolidated river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. Characteristically located on the **inside** of tight meanders in actively eroding/depositing rivers. Classified as 'unvegetated' if <50% of the surface area has plant cover. 🗑️ B1b, C1b, C3a,b,c, I1a,b.

Constituent material of point bars is primarily sediment that has been transported from upstream; it is generally not derived locally. 💡 This contrasts with slumped banks recorded in Section I.

### Vegetated point bar(s) (VP)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of consolidating river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. Characteristically located on the inside of distinct meander bends, usually on rivers that are less active than where 'unvegetated' bars are found. Constituent material as for unvegetated point bars. Classified as 'vegetated' if  $\geq 50\%$  of surface area has plant cover, often showing a successional sequence from bare shingle to even some scrub. Moss cover on bars is included as part of the vegetation cover, as this indicates stability. 🗑️ C4a,b,c.

In certain circumstances a sequence from unvegetated to vegetated bars may progress further, so that over time they may become 'natural berms' (see E; Marginal and Bank Features).

## SECTION D. ARTIFICIAL FEATURES

Indicate the number of artificial features in each category (major, intermediate or minor) occurring within the site. Use the tally system (as in Section C) and add up the total at the end of your survey, and enter the number in the appropriate box. 💡 Insert ✓ in the box to indicate 'none' if no artificial features are present.

💡 You should take a photograph of any **major** or **intermediate** structure across the channel, with, if possible, a ranging pole alongside. Take pictures upstream and downstream of the structure if it appears to be causing a significant change in river character (e.g. a dam). If a structure contains features of interest (e.g. fish ladder in major weir), make a note in Section P, as well as taking a photograph. 💡 Photographs of weirs should be taken since the height, design and construction material will determine the impact on the river.

If you are unsure about the nature of a structure, take a picture and send it with the form.

Figure D1 shows in plan-form the range of 'major', 'intermediate' and 'minor' artificial features that need to be recorded.

### Weirs and sluices across river channels

**Major:** any permanent, ±water-tight, fixed (but can be adjustable to control flow), weir/sluice structures. Typically made of concrete, cemented boulders, wood or metal **extending across the entire width of the channel**. Weirs and sluices can be used for controlling water level or water flow, abstracting water or trapping sediment. (Exclude rubble/loose stone weirs.) 📷 D1a,b,c,d.

**Intermediate:** semi-permeable, fixed, structures controlling water levels; **extending across the entire width of the channel but permeable enough to allow some water to flow through them**. Commonly made from loose rubble, inter-locked boulders and, less commonly, logs. 📷 D1e,f.

**Minor:** small, permeable, and usually temporary structures across the river channel, often made from stones, cobbles or pebbles by children. They often get dislodged by large spates. 📷 D1g.

**Composite weirs** should be recorded as a single structure. These are a series of weir crests close to each other, and linked with concrete aprons and/or side-walls so that there is no natural bank material between the weir crests. 📷 D1a,d.

**Weirs that have completely collapsed**, and only extend partially across the channel (and therefore do not control water levels upstream), should be recorded as 'groynes', and a note made in Section P. (📷 D6b).

### Culverts

Arched, enclosed or piped structures, constructed to carry water under roads, railways and buildings. Commonly made from concrete, but may be constructed from brick, metal or other building materials. Culverts either carry the full river flow through a single arch, or through multiple arches.

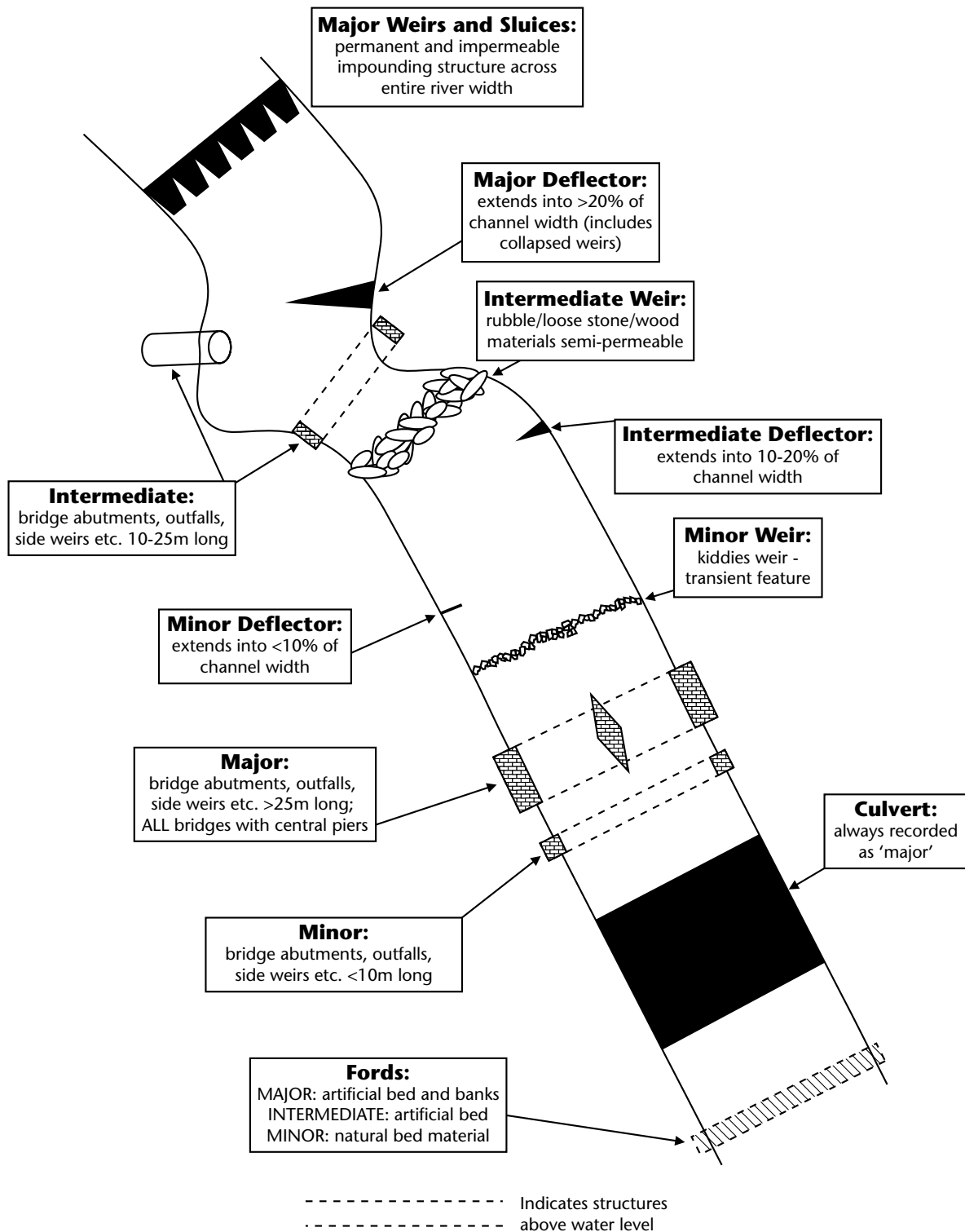
☠️ **Do not enter any culverts.**

Some culverts may be a kilometre or more long, passing under fields, roads, residential and industrial areas. In such cases the location of many RHS spot-checks may have to be estimated from maps obtained previously. Entries for spot-checks in a culvert will normally simply enable 'CV' to be recorded as the modification, and the appropriate land-use noted. All other entries should be 'NV' (not visible) or 'NK' (not known) as appropriate unless the culvert is short and a clear view can be gained without entering it, or compromising the safety of the surveyor. 📷 D2a.

## Bridges

**Major:** road or rail bridges of any width, with one or more in-channel supports, OR wide bridges with bank abutments extending along  $\geq 25\text{m}$  of bank-length. Banks are often resectioned or reinforced immediately upstream and downstream of a major bridge. Photographs are essential for interpretation of potential impacts of the in-channel supports. 📷 D3a,b, D5b.

**Figure D1 Illustrated definitions of artificial features**



**Intermediate:** road or rail bridges **without any in-river supports**, and with bank abutments occupying 10-25m of the bank. 🗑️ D3c.

**Minor:** all road/rail bridges lacking in-river supports, and with bank abutments occupying <10m of the bank. Also includes all bridges, irrespective of width, with no abutments on the bank, such as viaducts. 🗑️ D3d,e, Na.

### Outfalls/intakes

Outfalls and intakes mark points of discharge to, or abstraction from, watercourses. They are classified according to size, so this means that associated aprons, wing-walls and bank protection measures are included as part of the structure. Examples include abstraction intakes, sewer discharges, side weirs and sluices.

**Major:** permanent structures occupying  $\geq 25$ m of bank-length. 🗑️ D4a.

**Intermediate:** permanent structures occupying 10-25m of bank-length. 🗑️ D4b.

**Minor:** permanent structures occupying <10m of bank-length. Includes flap valves on feeder streams. 🗑️ D4c.

💡 Do not include agricultural land drainage pipes (typically <150mm diameter).

### Fords

Permanent crossing places for vehicles or machinery. 💡 Do not record sites where animals, but no vehicles, cross a river. 🗑️ D5e.

**Major:** crossing place with banks and bed comprising artificial material which cause significant ponding of water upstream. Can be rubble infill (farm track) or a road crossing (e.g. tarmac, concrete). 🗑️ D3f, D5a.

**Intermediate:** shallow crossing with banks made from artificial material, but bed material not so. May cause slight ponding of water upstream. 🗑️ D5b.

**Minor:** shallow crossing with no artificial bank or river bed material. Ponding effects will be negligible. 🗑️ D5c,d.

### Deflectors/groynes/croys

Artificial structures that are installed part way across the channel to deflect currents away from eroding banks or help create more in-channel habitat diversity. Most often installed flush with the bank toe to deflect flow from one side of the channel to the other, but may be also installed in mid-channel. Can be made from a variety of materials, including rocks, logs, sheeting, gabions, wooden/heather hurdles, posts and wire, and occasionally wooden stakes.

**Major:** extends across  $\geq 20\%$  of channel width. Includes completely collapsed weirs that no longer influence water levels upstream. 🗑️ D6a,b.

**Intermediate:** extends across 10-20% of channel width. 🗑️ D6c,d.

**Minor:** extends across <10% of channel width. 🗑️ D6e.

If it is clear that these structures have been installed for habitat/fishing enhancement, note in Section P. **It is recommended that all deflectors are photographed since their impact/purpose varies greatly according to their height and material, not just their extension across the channel.**


## Other

Other structures (e.g. boat moorings, walls, jetties, fishing platforms) should be recorded as follows:

**Major:** occupying  $\geq 25$ m of bank-length.

**Intermediate:** occupying 10-25m of bank-length  D6f

**Minor:** occupying  $< 10$ m of bank-length.  D6g.

 **It is important only to record distinct structures as opposed to bank modifications for buildings and revetments** (covered in Section E).

### Is channel obviously realigned?

Only record 'yes' if you are sure. Common sense is required, but re-aligned channels are typically straight, and exhibit the same characteristics of resectioned (and often over-deepened) channels. See below. **Tick one box only.**  D7a,b, Na,b – for comparison see B1b, B5a, B6a, B7a, C4a, D7c.

### Is channel obviously over-deepened?

Only record 'yes' if you are sure. Channel-deepening is frequently undertaken in tandem with bank resectioning. Diagnostic signs of over-deepened channels include:

1. uniform (and sometimes evenly stepped) bank profile;
2. no trees/uniformly-aged trees or saplings along banktop;
3. bankfull height often atypically high compared with bankfull width: ratio of width to depth commonly  $< 4:1$ .

**Tick one box only.**  D7a, D8a, D8b, D8c, E2Aa.

### Is water impounded by weir/dam?

If a weir or dam is present, indicate if water in the site is affected partly ( $< 33\%$  of its length) or predominantly ( $\geq 33\%$  of its length) by artificial channel impoundment. You will need to include the effects of weirs or dams located downstream from the site if appropriate. Effects of impoundment include water velocity reductions (creating ponded water) and increased water depth. **Tick one box only.**  D9a, D1b,c, D5a.

It is essential to indicate on the form whether spot-check one (1) is at the upstream or downstream end of the site; tick one box only.

💡 Ten spot-checks must be completed at regular intervals (c50m) along the 500m site.

At each spot-check, stand on the bank and look across the channel and indicate in each box, in each column, the material, modifications and features present. In shallow rivers, and where safe to do so, surveyors may choose to enter the channel to improve accuracy of recording bed character and features of the opposite bank. ☠ Risk assessment is vital before entering the channel.

💡 All boxes in sections E and F must be completed (i.e. entries made in ALL boxes in the column representing an individual spot-check) before moving on to the next spot-check. At least one box in Section G must also have an entry for each spot-check. Each entry must be made clearly using the unique abbreviations shown in the spot-check key and described below.

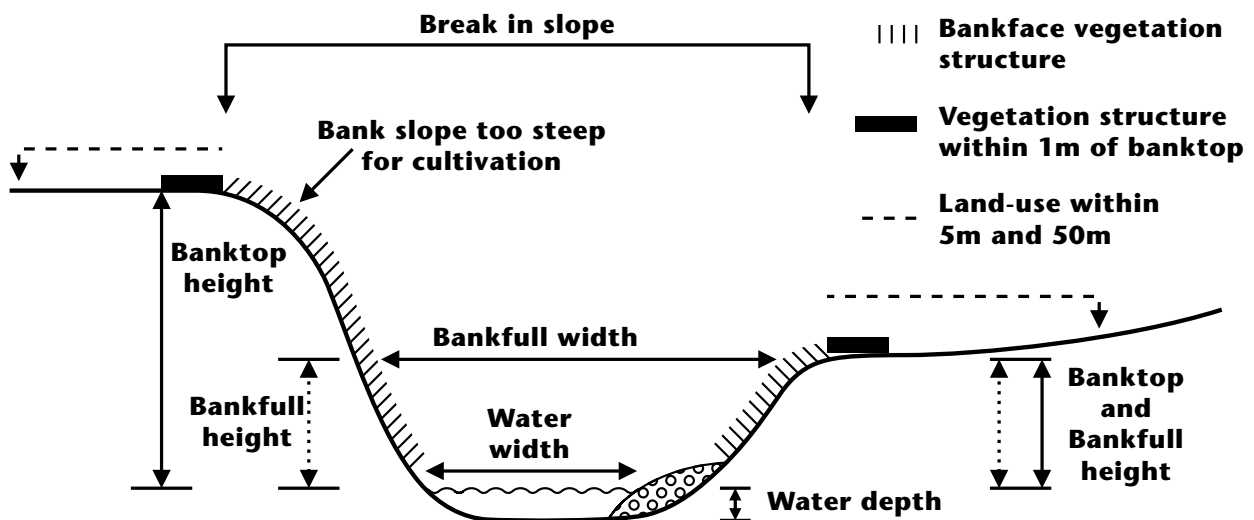
### Bank

Permanent side to the river channel. For recording purposes (see Figure E1) the bank starts at the water's edge (and **excludes** marginal depositional features such as bars) and gives way to the 'banktop' where the break of slope allows cultivation or development to take place.

### Left and Right banks

'Left' and 'right' banks are determined by facing downstream.

**Figure E1 Cross-section of channel showing definitions used to define where spot-check recording and channel dimensions measured**



For physical attributes (E), use a transect 1m wide at each spot-check across the channel. For land-use, vegetation structure and channel vegetation types (Sections F and G on page 2), use a 10m wide transect, at the same location (see Figure 1).

💡 Only one entry per box is allowed for recording predominant bank material.

More than one channel or bank **feature or modification** can be recorded at a spot-check. In these cases, use a diagonal line to include a further entry in the box.

Only one entry per box is allowed for recording both **predominant channel substrate and flow-type**.

Only one entry per box is allowed for recording **land-use and bank and banktop vegetation structure**.

For **channel vegetation**, occurrences of all types are entered into appropriate boxes.

💡 **GPS readings are required at spot-check 1, 6 and 50m beyond spot-check 10.**



## Section E: Physical Attributes of Bank and Channel

To be assessed over a 1m wide transect of bank and channel at each spot-check. Refer to spot-check key and Figure 1.

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### SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - BANK MATERIAL

💡 As boxes are emboldened, only a single entry per box is permissible (i.e. the predominant material of the whole bankface within the 1m wide spot-check).

#### Not visible (NV)

Self-explanatory. This entry may need to be used for inaccessible far banks on wide rivers, especially when the banks are covered in vegetation, and cannot be given close inspection. Should be also used when a spot-check is located at a culvert.

#### Bedrock (BE)

Exposure of solid rock. 🗿 E1Aa,b, C2b, E5Ab, M3a.

#### Boulder (BO)

Large rocks  $\geq 256$ mm in diameter (larger than head size) that can be loose, embedded or interlocked. When boulders are imported, record as 'rip-rap' material (RR), and reinforced (RI) bank modification. 🗿 E1Ba,b.

#### Cobble (CO)

Loose rock material 64-256mm in diameter (half-fist to large head size). Often associated with glacial deposits. 🗿 E1Ca,b.

#### Gravel/sand (GS)

Combined category. Loose material, comprising: coarse gravel, (including pebbles 16-64mm in diameter); fine gravel (2-16mm in diameter); and sand (<2mm in diameter). Often associated with glacial and fluvial deposits. 🗿 E1Da,,b,c, E3Aa.

#### Earth (EA)

Soil comprising mainly crumbly loam material, **but not predominantly composed of clays (see clay - CL)**. A jab with a ranging pole will leave no distinct hole, or one with ragged or crumbling edges. 🗿 E1Ea,b, I1b.

#### Peat (PE)

Material formed almost entirely of organic matter derived from decayed vegetation under water-logged conditions and therefore usually associated with heaths and bogs. Peat is normally dark brown or black. 🗿 E1Fa.

#### Sticky clay (CL)

Distinctive, solid and cohesive soil material. Compared with earth (EA), it is sticky when rubbed between finger and thumb. A jab from a ranging pole will produce a neat, smooth, conical hole. 🗿 E1Ga, FV1a, I1a, I2a.

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### ARTIFICIAL MATERIALS

💡 When recorded as bank materials, they will also be noted as reinforced (RI) in bank modifications.

### **Concrete (CC)**

Cemented bankface reinforcement that forms a solid revetment with no gaps or fissures. 📷 E1Ha,b, A1c, E2Cb, E7Cc.

### **Sheet piling (SP)**

Vertical, inter-locking, steel sheets protecting the bankface. Includes corrugated iron. 📷 E11a.

### **Wood piling (WP)**

Wooden poles, or horizontal/vertical planks protecting the bankface (most often the lower half or toe of the bank only). 📷 E1Ja,b, I6b.

### **Gabion (GA)**

Stones in wire baskets; installed to protect banks from erosion. 📷 E1Ka.

### **Brick/laid stone (BR)**

Bank protection that includes any cemented walls, including brick walls, and also regimented, un-cemented, laid stones characteristic of riverside walls in the Lake District and limestone dales. 📷 E1La,b,c.

### **Rip-rap (RR)**

Boulders (normally quarried and ±square and of similar size) purposely tipped or laid along the bankface to protect it from erosion. Rip-rap is often along the toe of the bank only. Includes un-cemented blockstone and boulders compacted into the bank with vegetated soil between. 📷 E1Ma,b,c,d, I6a.

### **Tipped debris (TD)**

Discarded material from, for example, farming, mineral extraction and building works. Includes: rubble, metal, wood, old cars and excavated soils and other minerals. Location on the bank may be un-intentional, or to provide extra bank protection. If providing bank protection, reinforcement (RI) should be recorded in bank modification.

If in doubt, enter miscellaneous artificial materials here (e.g. tyres) and take a photograph. 📷 E1Na,b,c,d.

### **Fabric (FA)**

Synthetic (usually permeable geo-textile) bank protection fabric often used in conjunction with soil back-fill. Always non-biodegradable, with the prime function of bank support and protection from erosion. Includes materials such as plastic, and proprietary products such as 'enkamat' and 'nicospan'. 📷 E1Oa.

### **Bio-engineering materials (BI)**

Live or dead plants (or non-synthetic materials) used to protect banks from erosion, and often to create/restore bankside and marginal habitat. Typical materials include live willow stakes and spiles, dead brushwood faggots, bio-degradable matting and planted reeds. When used in combination with synthetic fabrics (FA), record whichever has the dominant surface area. 📷 E1Pa,b,c,d,e.

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## **SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - BANK MODIFICATION(S)**

💡 **Boxes are NOT emboldened, so more than one entry per box is permissible (e.g. if the bank is reprofiled with toe reinforcement, enter RS/RI).**

### **Not known (NK)**

If you are unsure whether or not a bank has been modified, record NK. You can consult river management records to assess if the reach has been previously engineered. If so, make additional notes. Enter 'NK' for spot-checks in culverts.

## None (NO)

No **obvious** modifications visible. See NK above, and guidance below for signs indicative of resectioning. It may be that subtle changes are missed at a site on the first spot-checks, but later ones show clearer signs of modification. Under such circumstances, modifying earlier spot-check records is permissible if, on closer subsequent inspection, signs are evident. To do so, review spot-checks whilst completing the sweep-up on the return leg of the survey.

## Resectioned (reprofiled) bank (RS)

Bank profile modified (**but not necessarily reinforced**), often to accommodate flood flows, flood defence or other maintenance machinery. Recent re-profiling will produce a relatively smooth, uniformly angled, bank slope. If either the top or the bottom of a resectioned bank is reinforced, enter both RS and RI. 🗑️ A1a, D8a,b,c, E2Aa,b, E3Da, I6b.

NB One or more of the following clues **may** be indicative of resectioning:

1. **uniform (and sometimes evenly stepped) bank profile;**
2. **no trees/uniformly aged trees/saplings along banktop;**
3. bankfull height often atypically high compared with bankfull width - width to height ratio <4:1 not uncommon;
4. intensive agricultural/urban land-use;
5. straightened river channel.

Typically bank re-sectioning is carried out in tandem with channel deepening; the former alone results primarily in characteristics 1 and 2 above, whilst bank and channel resectioning can also result in characteristics 3-5.

Figure E2 illustrates a typical flood defence/channel modification sequence.

## Reinforced bank (RI)

Whole or part of bank artificially strengthened for bank protection purposes. Examples include concrete, sheet piling, corrugated iron, wood piling, gabion, brick/laid stone, rip-rap, and if clearly for bank reinforcement purposes, tipped debris (see Bank Material descriptions above). 🗑️ E1Ha,b, E1Ia, E1Ja,b, E1Ka, E1La,b,c, E1Ma,b,c,d, E1Oa, E1Pa,b,c,d,e.

## Poached bank (PC)

Bank significantly trampled or puddled by livestock. Includes banks heavily trampled as a result of human activity such as picnic spots, canoe access points and fishing spots dug into the bank.

Add **(B)** after PC (i.e. **PC(B)**) if the bank is predominantly bare due to poaching i.e. <50% vegetation cover. 🗑️ E2Ba,b,c,d, I5b, P1a.

## Artificial berm (BM)

Artificial two-stage channel created when either: a) a bank has been excavated laterally at a level above dry-weather water level, but below the banktop; or b) an over-wide channel has artificial ledges constructed to reduce the low-flow width. This modification creates a distinct stepped or shelf appearance when first constructed, but may become less evident over time. Mention in Section P if the berm is part of river rehabilitation works. 🗑️ E1Hb, E2Ca,b,c,d, F18b.

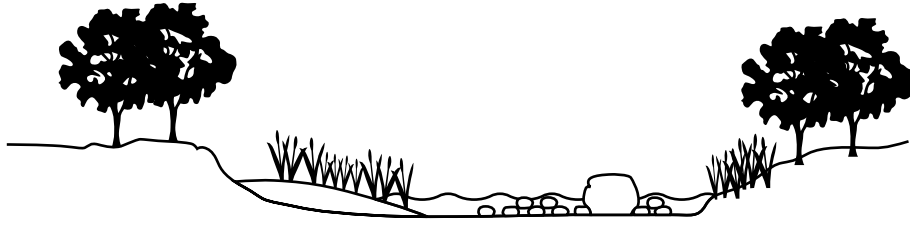
## Embanked (EM)

Artificial raising of bank. A variety of materials can be used, including earth, natural stone or walls of concrete or brick. 💡 Only recorded at a spot-check when it forms an integral part of the bank. Do not include embankments set back from the immediate banktop; these are accounted for in the 'sweep-up', Section I. 🗑️ E2Da,b.

**Note on bank modifications: if you are sure, beyond reasonable doubt, that there are no obvious signs of bank modification, then record 'NO' (none); if in doubt, record 'NK' (not known). Beware: some bankfaces will appear 'natural' even though they have been resectioned previously. Use the prompts listed above to help make up your mind whether to record 'NK' or 'NO'. See Figure E2.**

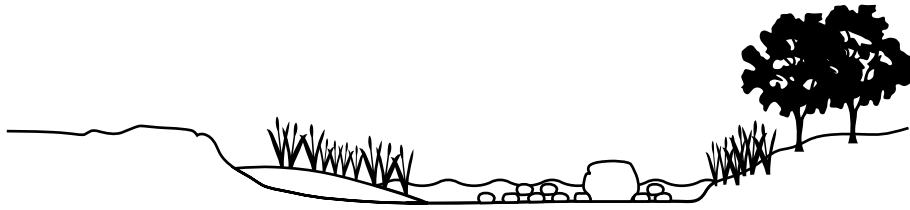
**Figure E2 Sequence of channel modifications for flood defence**

**River unmodified**

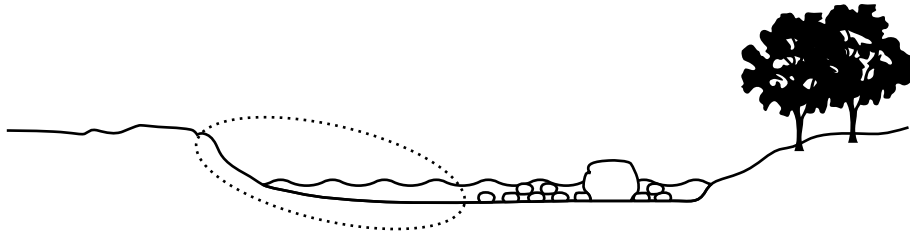


**Note: bankfull height/channel bankfull width ratio >1:4**

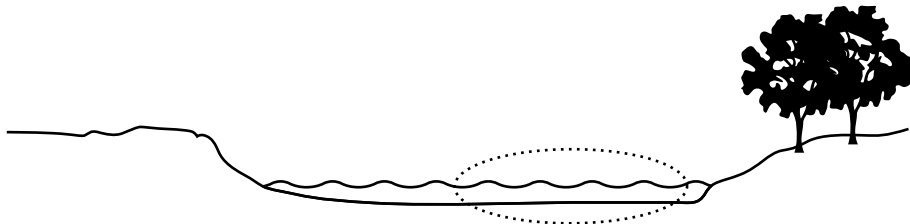
**Trees removed from one bank to allow machine access**



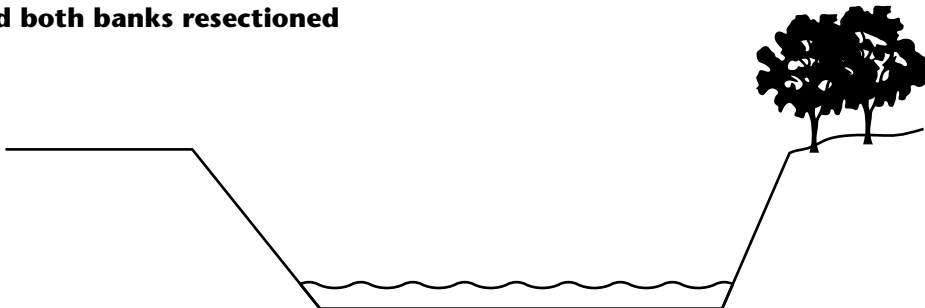
**Marginal features (bars) removed**



**Boulders removed**



**Trapezoidal channel excavated/  
bed and both banks resectioned**



**Note: bankfull height/channel bankfull width ratio <1:4**

## SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES – MARGINAL AND BANK FEATURE(S)

Recording relates purely to 'cliffs' (bank features), and 'bars' (depositional marginal features). See Figure E3 for location of bar features. 💡 **Boxes are NOT emboldened, so more than one entry per box is permissible.**

### Not visible (NV)

Self-explanatory. Use for culverts and if the far bank and margin are obscured by large mid-channel structures or impenetrable vegetation. 💡 Beware overgrown channels in late summer where vegetation may also mask features.

### None (NO)

No **obvious** features. Record only when there is a clear view of the bank and marginal areas of the spot-check, AND no features are present.

### Eroding cliff (EC)

Bankface profile is **predominantly** vertical, near vertical, or undercut, with a minimum height of 0.5m, and showing a 'clean' face (<50% cover of mosses, ferns and other vegetation). The angle of the cliff will depend on bank substrate; clay or cohesive earth banks are often almost vertical; sandy ones are rarely this steep. Other clues: turf overhanging cliff, turf in channel, recently fallen trees, leaning or over-hanging fence posts.

If the eroding cliff is composed of sandy soil, sands and/or gravels put a circle around **(EC)**. 🗑️ B1b, E1Da, b,c, E1Ea,b, E3Aa,b.

### Stable cliff (SC)

Bankface profile is **predominantly** vertical, near vertical, or undercut, with a minimum height of 0.5m, and without obvious signs of recent erosion. Mosses, ferns and other vegetation on the bankface usually cover  $\geq 50\%$  of the bankface. Some clay banks may have little or no vegetation, but are nevertheless stable. 🗑️ E3Ba,b, E5Fa, FV1a.

📄 If the stable cliff is composed of sandy soil, sands or gravels put a circle around **(SC)**.

💡 **Vertical rock faces should not be recorded as 'SC'**. The purpose of recording 'cliffs' is to identify the instream sources and character of sediments that may be transported downstream, and those riverine features associated with active erosion.

### Unvegetated point bar (PB)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of unconsolidated river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. Characteristically located on the **inside** of a distinct meander bend in actively eroding/depositing rivers. Classified as 'unvegetated' if <50% of the surface area has plant cover. 🗑️ B1b, C1b, C3a,b,c, I1a,b.

Constituent material of point bars is primarily sediment that has been transported from upstream; it is generally not derived locally. 💡 This contrasts with slumped banks recorded in Section I.

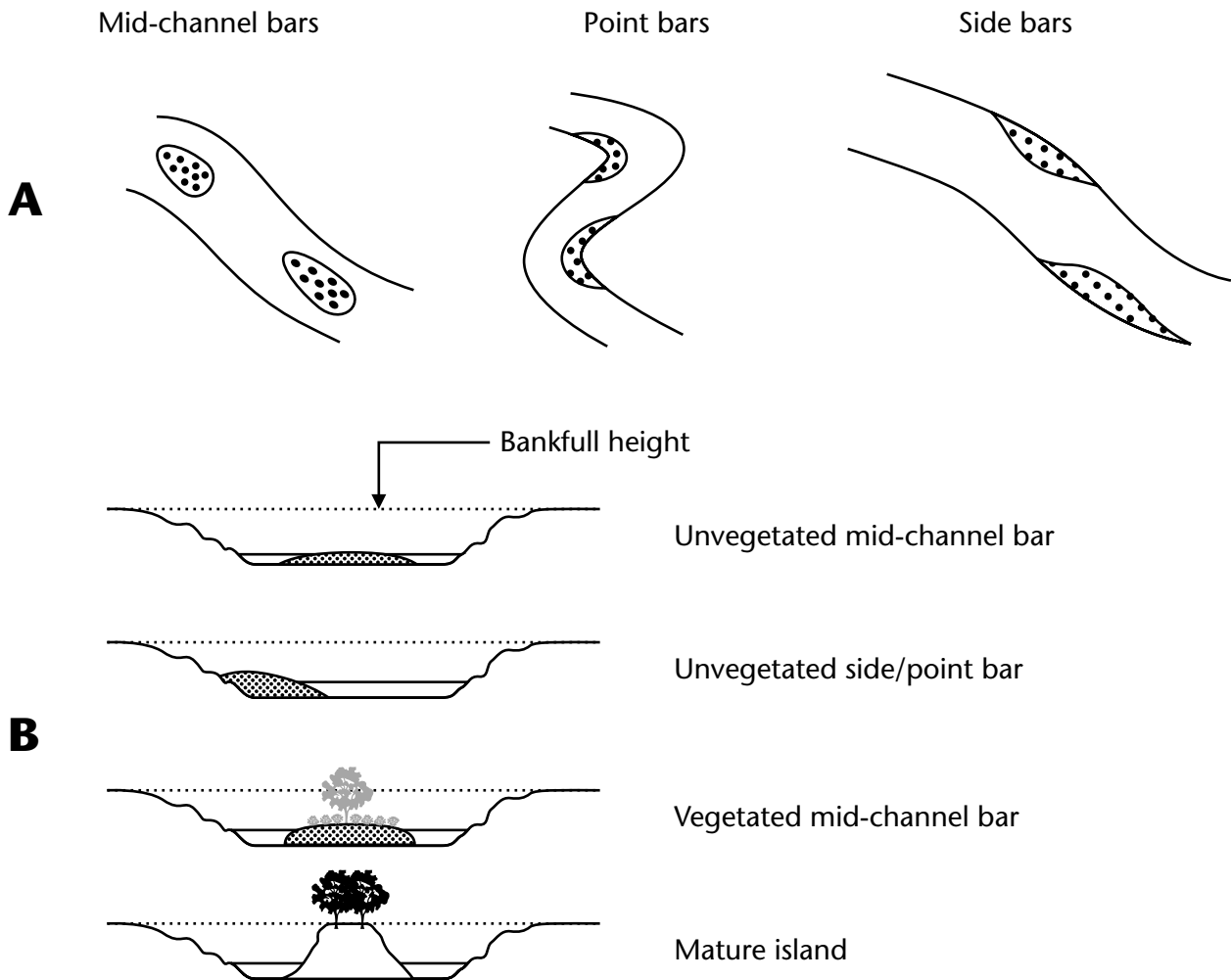
### Vegetated point bar (VP)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of consolidating river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. Characteristically located on the **inside** of distinct meander bends, usually on reaches of rivers that are less-active than where 'unvegetated' bars are found. Constituent material comprising the bars is as for unvegetated point bars. Classified as 'vegetated' if  $\geq 50\%$  of surface area has plant cover, often showing a successional sequence from bare shingle to scrub, and may include mosses. 🗑️ C4a,b,c.

### Unvegetated side bar (SB)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of unconsolidated sediment located along the margins of rivers. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. 'Unvegetated' when <50% of the total surface area has plant cover. Found in locations other-than the inside of distinct bends. Material similar to that described for unvegetated point bars. 🗑️ E3Ca.

**Figure E3 Location of bar features recorded in RHS:  
A - planforms  
B - cross-sections**



### Vegetated side bar (VS)

A distinctive depositional feature composed of consolidating sediment along the margins of rivers. Exposed at low flow, usually with a shallow slope into the water. Material comprising the bars is as described for unvegetated point bars. 'Vegetated' when  $\geq 50\%$  of the total surface area has plant cover. May show a successional sequence from bare shingle, herbs and mosses, to scrub. Found in locations other-than inside of distinct bends. 🗺️ E3Da.

In certain circumstances the successional sequence from unvegetated bars to vegetated bars may progress further, so that over time vegetated bars may become 'natural berms'. Here sediment may stop accumulating, and erosion may begin. A key difference between a 'bar' and a 'natural berm' is the former has a gradual slope into the water; the latter has a distinct steep face.

Bars are depositional features, primarily composed of material transported down the river channel, and deposited on the river bed. River bed material can be carried long distances (many kilometres), or very short distances, depending on the size of the material and the energy of the river. A gravel-bed river will usually have gravel bars; a sand-bed river will have sand bars.

📌 Point or side bars composed of silt are extremely unlikely to occur in UK rivers. **Silt is not considered to be a substrate of distinct 'bars'; if silt is the predominant substrate in spot-checks, record SI; if discrete silt deposits are present record these as 'present' in Section K, and if large expanses of silt occur record as 'extensive' in Section K.** If the silt forms distinct deposits resembling bars, note this in Section P, as these deposits are often signs of channels recovering from over-widening as a result of engineering works.

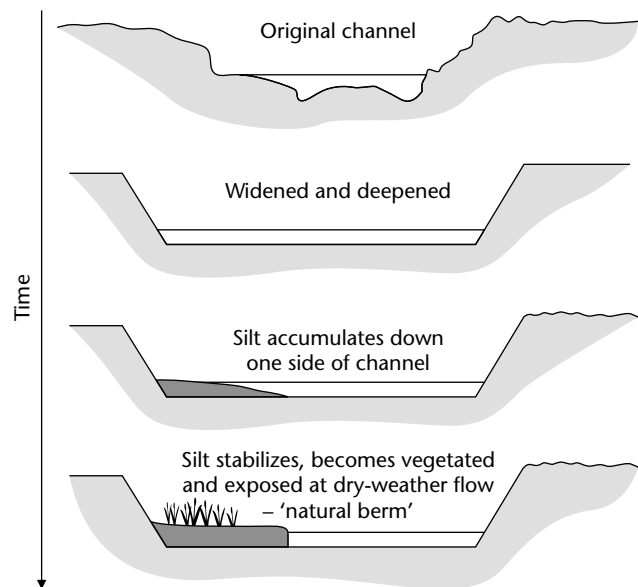
Over time, some continuous silt deposits along river margins may become stable, and resemble 'bars'. When they become vegetated and have accreted sufficient sediment to be exposed during dry-weather flow, they should be recorded as 'natural berms'. 💡 If in doubt, take a photograph.

### Natural berm (NB) 📌

A relatively rare feature that is transitional between a depositional bar and a terrace on the floodplain (see Figures E4 & B1). Not to be confused with an **artificial berm** (see definition and check against river management records [see Figure I1]). Natural berms can occur in: (i) actively meandering channels; or (ii) recovering rivers naturally restoring a low-flow channel width following over-widening. They can also occur as a transitional feature if channel straightening downstream results in down-cutting and channel narrowing produces increased gradient.

To qualify as a natural berm, the profile must have a marked step, or a composite profile with ridges representing a series of deposition/incision events. Natural berms develop through deposition (or incision) processes and over time often attract further sediment deposition. If formed on the inside of a meander they may also have a point bar features at the water's edge. They are usually vegetated, making them relatively stable and attracting further deposition. Depending on location and age, the vegetation may comprise bankside herbs, grasses and reeds, or a mixture of these with willow and alder saplings. As 'mature bank or riparian' vegetation becomes established, and the berm becomes higher in relation to the river bed (either by channel down-cutting or further deposition on the berm), old berms then become the new 'bankface' and 'banktop' (see Figure B1). Natural berms do not develop from bank erosion features such as slumping/slips. 📌 E3Ea,b,c, E3Ed,e.

**Figure E4 Cross-sections showing formation of 'natural berm' following recovery from channel over-widening**



💡 **Natural berms are difficult to determine precisely, and when recorded, should be photographed for subsequent confirmation.**

## SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - CHANNEL SUBSTRATE

The ranging pole should be used to prod the river bed to determine the **predominant** channel substrate. 💡 In some cases a thin layer of silt, especially during low flows, can cover coarser substrates; in such instances, **the underlying substrate should be recorded**, together with a note that silt is present as an overlying deposit (in Section P).

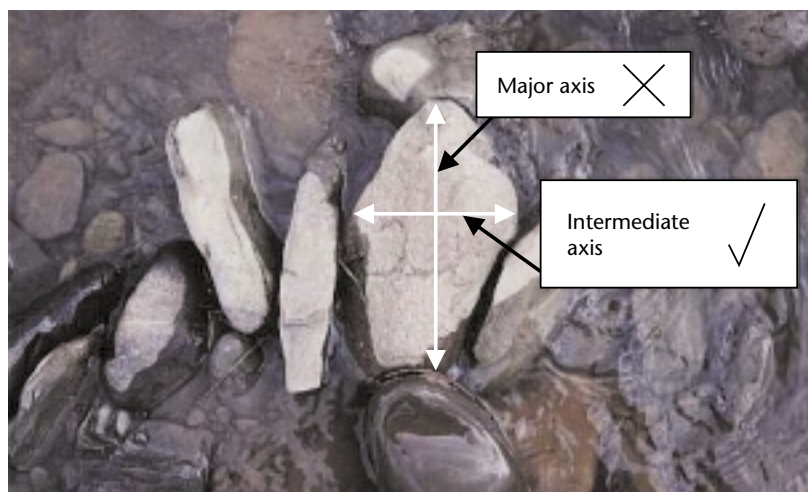
Categories of substrate size are determined by the Wentworth scale<sup>8</sup> (Wentworth; 1922). The scale is shown on the spot-check key. When assessing substrate size, do it using the intermediate axis and not the long axis (see spot-check key and Figure E5). For more details of similar categories used also for bank material, see Section E, Bank Materials.

💡 **Boxes are emboldened, so only a single entry per box (the predominant substrate type) is permissible.**

### Not visible (NV)

Use this only if the channel is too deep, or water too turbid, to determine the predominant substrates of the channel. 🚫 Health and safety considerations are paramount – follow the guidance in Appendix 1.

**Figure E5 Illustration of correct use of the 'intermediate axis' for channel substrate assessments in RHS**



### Bedrock (BE)

Underlying solid rock. 🗑️ C2b, E4Aa,b, E5Bb, E7Bb, M3a,b, M5b.

### Boulder (BO)

Large rocks  $\geq 256$ mm in diameter (larger than head size). 🗑️ E4Ba,b, E7Aa,b, M5a, M6a,b.

### Cobble (CO)

Loose material 64-256mm in diameter (half-fist to large head size). 🗑️ B1a, D3a, E4Ca,b, M1a,b, M2a,c.

### Gravel/pebble (GP)

A combined category: Coarse gravel is 16-64mm in diameter (includes pebbles that are conker to half-fist size); fine gravel is 2-16mm in diameter. Where it is obvious that either pebble or gravel dominate, put a circle round either GⓅ or ⓄP depending on which one is predominant. If, as is usually the case, the proportions are roughly equal, or it is not possible to determine which is predominant, simply enter GP. 🗑️ E4Da,b,c, E4Fb.

### Sand (SA)

Particle sizes  $< 2$ mm but  $\geq 0.06$ mm in diameter. 🗑️ E4Ea.

### Silt (SI)

Very fine material as a deposit exceeding a depth of 10mm. Exclude thin layers of silt covering coarser substrates. 🗑️ E4Fa,b.

### Clay (CL)


Record 'CL' if the predominant river bed material comprises sticky cohesive clay material. 🗑️ E4Ga,b.

### Peat (PE) 📄


Peat, as a predominant channel substrate, is rare. Record 'PE' only if the river bed is formed of organic matter derived from decayed vegetation under water-logged conditions. Peat is normally dark brown or black. 🗑️ E4Ha.




## Earth (EA)

Reserved solely for recording when earth forms the substrate in streams with seasonal flow (e.g. winterbournes). Such streams often flow through open fields, and have substrates similar to 'soil'.  E41a.

## Artificial (AR)

Obviously non-natural bed material predominant (e.g. concrete, bricks, tipped waste)  D5a,b, E1La, E4Ja,b.



 Any channel substrates that cover >1% of the whole river bed within the whole RHS site, but are not recorded (i.e. were not predominant) in any of the ten spot-checks, should be entered in the shaded box in the end column.


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## SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - FLOW-TYPE


### Recognising flow-types in the field

The nine flow-types used for RHS are largely based on patterns of the surface, velocity, flow direction and the influence of river bed substrate. Flow-type at a particular location will vary with different volumetric discharges and river levels, but the definitions used correspond to those occurring during dry-weather conditions.

 Relying on photographs (Part Four) for recognition of flow-types is inadequate. Many of the diagnostic elements for flow-types come from other clues such as movement, sound and position in relation to channel features.  An RHS geomorphology training video has been produced which describes characteristics of all the flow-types. All RHS surveyors should study the video as part of their overall training.

 In all instances, the **predominant** flow-type (i.e. that normally occupying at least 50% of the wetted channel) must be recorded and only **one entry per spot-check** is allowed. Where there are two flow-types both occupying about 50% of the wetted channel, the **faster** flow-type should be recorded.



 Beware: strong or gusty winds give a false impression of flow (e.g. wind-dragged ripples may suggest 'rippled' flow when flow-type is actually either 'smooth' or 'no perceptible'). Windy conditions should be recorded in Section A as a factor affecting survey conditions.

 **Boxes are emboldened, so only a single entry per box (the predominant flow-type) is permissible.**




### Not visible (NV)

This should only be used when the watercourse is in a long culvert and the flow-type cannot be seen.



### Free fall (FF)

Where vertically-falling water clearly separates from the 'back-wall' of a distinct vertical rock face. Generally associated with **waterfalls**.   E5Aa,b, M3a, M4a,b.



### Chute (CH)

Low, curving flow with substantial water contact 'hugging' the substrate. Where multiple chutes occur over individual boulders or bedrock outcrops, a 'stepped' profile is created. Mostly associated with **cascades**.    
 D1d, E5Ba,b.




### Broken standing waves (BW)

These are the 'stoppers' favoured by canoeists and rafters but they may occur on a more localised scale where water appears to be trying to flow upstream. A **white water tumbling wave** must be present for the wave to be described as broken. Mostly associated with **rapids**, but may occasionally occur within **riffles**.    
B3a, D3e, E1Ba, E5Ca,b.




### Unbroken standing waves (UW)

'Babbling' water with a disturbed 'dragon-back' surface, which has **upstream facing wavelets** that have not broken. White water may occur as crest waves, not as breaking waves. Mostly associated with **riffles**, but may also occur within a **rapid**.   C1a,b, E5Da,b,c.



### Chaotic flow (CF)

A chaotic mixture of several faster flow-types (e.g. FF, CH, BW and UW) in no organised pattern. This category should be used only where there are three of these **fast** flow-types at a spot-check, and where no one of them is clearly predominant.  **Not to be used as a 'catch-all category'.**   E5Ea.



### Rippled (RP)

Water surface with distinct, symmetrical, small ripples that are generally **only a centimetre or so high** and moving downstream.  Beware: in windy conditions smooth flow can have wind-induced ripples on the surface.   E5Fa,b.



### Upwelling (UP)

Upwellings are found where strong upward flow movements disturb the surface, creating an appearance of bubbling or boiling water (see Figure C1). Upwellings are sometimes also called 'boils'. They are typically found on the outside of tight meander bends, behind in-channel structures (e.g. bridge abutments) or below waterfalls, cascade weirs and sluices. Upwellings also help maintain the depth of pools by their scouring action, but also produce lateral bank erosion on meander bends.   E5Ga.


### Smooth (SM)

Laminar flow where water movement does not produce a disturbed surface. If in doubt, put a ranging rod into the water (or observe shadows on the bed in clear water) and you will artificially produce disturbed surface movement either side of the rod or shadow. Mostly associated with **glides**.   E5Ha, E7De.

### No perceptible flow (NP)

In ponded reaches (such as upstream from natural bedrock controls and weirs), it may be difficult to perceive any surface water movement. When using the ranging rod test (as in '**SM**'), no surface movement of water will be seen. If associated with **impounded reaches above dams**, note in **Section D. Marginal deadwater (Section K)** has no perceptible flow, as will stagnant pools in prolonged dry conditions. Also used to record flow in pools where there is obvious rotational surface flow, but no obvious net downstream movement of water at the surface.   A1a, E1Da, E51a,b.


### No flow (DR)

When a channel is dry, either naturally or due to excessive water abstraction in a dry year, record flow as 'DR'. In limestone or chalk areas, dry reaches will occur downstream from sinkholes or in headwater winterbournes that naturally dry annually. Record channel, bank and bed materials as if flow was present, EXCEPT for dry channels with soil/earth beds – record as 'EA'. Record channel vegetation according to 'type', and provide notes in Section P. Do not include terrestrial vegetation.  E5Ja,b.

In rivers with pools present between long stretches of dry channel, record 'DR' in spot-checks where the channel is dry, and 'NP' if spot-checks are located at pools.

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## SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - CHANNEL MODIFICATION(S)

 All recording of modifications should be confined to alterations made to the river **BED**, not the banks. If you are sure, beyond reasonable doubt, that there are no obvious signs of channel modification, record 'NO' (none); if in doubt, record 'NK' (not known).

 Boxes are **NOT** emboldened, so more than one entry per box is permissible.

### Not known (NK)

When unsure, record 'NK'. Seek further information from maps and flood defence records if unsure. For guidance on identifying individual types of modification, see below.

### None (NO)

No **obvious** modification to the channel bed.

### Culverted (CV)

As for 'Culvert' described earlier in Section E – 'Bank Modifications'.

### Resectioned (RS)

**Obvious** over-deepening of the channel bed resulting from lowering of the river bed, affecting both long- and cross- section profiles, as well as artificially increasing the channel depth relative to its width. See 'Bank Resectioned' described earlier in Section E – 'Bank Modifications'. 💡 In Britain and Ireland channel deepening on its own is rare, so look for other signs as listed in Section E. 📦 A1a,b,c,d, E6a,b,c,d,e,f, I6b.

### Reinforced (RI)

Artificial reinforcement of the channel bed with material such as concrete, brick or gabion baskets. Bank materials (artificial). 📦 E1H-M, E1Nd, E1O-P.

### Dam/weir/sluice (DA)

Permanent in-channel structures installed to control river flows/levels. The presence of such structures at spot-checks may be rare, but their presence within an RHS site, and their 'impounding impacts', will be noted in Section D, and described in Section P. 📦 D1a,b,c,d,e,f.

### Ford (FO)

Permanent, shallow, artificial fording place: can be made from concrete, metalled road surface, rubble infill or natural consolidated river bed material. (In Section D the 'category' of fords occurring within the site will be noted.) 📦 D5a,b,c,d,e.

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## SECTION E: PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES - CHANNEL FEATURE(S)

**Most channel features recorded by RHS will not be obvious unless the river is flowing at dry-weather level, or below.**

💡 **Boxes are NOT emboldened, so more than one entry is permissible (e.g. if unvegetated mid-channel bar and exposed bedrock present, record 'MB'/'EB').**

### Not visible (NV)

Self-explanatory. Record 'NV' if flows are too high for accurate recording, or if mid-channel obstructions, including vegetation, obscure parts of the channel from view. Also use for culverts.

### None (NO)

No channel features present. 💡 **'NO' must be entered if no other categories are recorded.**

### Exposed bedrock (EB)

Bedrock exposure protruding above the water at low flow. 📦 E4Aa,b.

### Exposed boulders (RO)

Naturally occurring large, (at least 'head size') boulders protruding above the water. May be covered with mosses/liverworts in upland streams. 💡 Exposed boulders should only be recorded in spot-checks and in Section K if they are prominently protruding from the water, and where the predominant channel substrate

is cobble, boulder or bedrock. In cases where boulder-sized material has been placed in the river for fishery enhancements, or has collapsed into the channel from boundary walls or rip-rap, this should be recorded as artificial ('AR') when predominant in the spot-check (i.e. material is out of context with the overall river bed character). Note the presence of failed reinforcement, or imported boulders for other purposes, in Section P. 📷 E7Aa,b, K4a.

### Vegetated rock (VR)

Bedrock or groups of boulders protruding from the water that have accumulated fine sediments in crevices which has allowed higher plant vegetation to become established (e.g. tall herbs, reeds, grasses, shrubs). 💡  
**Does not include rocks with only mosses or liverworts.** 📷 E7Ba,b.

### Unvegetated mid-channel bar(s) (MB)

A distinctive, in-channel, depositional feature composed of unconsolidated river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with shallow sloping sides into the water. Classified as 'unvegetated' if <50% of the total surface area has plant cover. See Figure E3 for characteristics. 📷 E7Ca,b,c.

### Vegetated mid-channel bar(s) (VB)

A distinctive in-channel depositional feature composed of consolidating river bed material. Exposed at low flow, usually with shallow sloping sides into the water. Classified as 'vegetated' if ≥50% of the total surface area has plant cover. Vegetation may include perennials such as reed canary-grass, shrubs and trees. 💡 Moss-covered substrates are also included as these indicate stability. Surface of bar is lower than the bank height, so the whole feature is submerged during large floods. 📷 E7Da,b,c,d,e.

### Mature island(s) (MI)

Permanent in-channel feature with the surface at the same height, or above, the bankfull height. Usually well vegetated, often with mature scrub and trees. 💡 **If significant deposits of fresh material surround a mature island, then both mature island (MI) and unvegetated mid-channel bar (MB) can be present – if so, record both at the spot-check** because this indicates both the presence of a mature feature and active deposition. See Figure E3. 📷 E7Ea,b,c.

### Trash [urban debris] (TR)

Rubbish such as bricks, shopping trolleys, piles of flotsam and jetsam etc. 📷 E7Fa, E7Cc.

### Braided channels 🏞️

Braided rivers are dynamic and mobile, where the channel is divided into several sub-channels separated by active mid-channel bars along most (>50%) of the 500m site. 💡 In braided rivers, most bars are unvegetated and the wetted area, at low flows, represents substantially less than 50% of the river bed. Bar surfaces are typically at lower elevations than the vegetated floodplain margins. Braided rivers must feature at least two sub-channels and two mid-channel bars along most of the site. Some of the sub-channels may be dry at the time of the survey. **Recording features of braided channels is very difficult to do accurately, and surveys will take much longer to complete than on a more typical RHS site.**

For more details, see Section M, Special Features. 📷 M1a,b,c.

💡 **When recording spot-checks on braided channels, record the number of sub-channels (wet and dry) at each spot-check in the grey row dedicated for such records, and then record all channel features of a spot-check on the channel carrying the major flow at the time of survey.**

Marginal and bank features, bank modifications and bankface vegetation structure records are all made from the outer edges of the two channels abutting the floodplain.

## SECTION F: BANKTOP LAND-USE AND VEGETATION STRUCTURE

To be assessed over a 10m length of bank at each spot-check (See Figure 1). Refer to spot-check key prompts on the form.

The contribution of adjacent land-use and vegetation structure alongside watercourses can contribute significantly to riparian habitat diversity.

At each spot-check, using the 10m wide transect guidance (Figure 1), surveyors are required, for both banks, to record:

- (i) **land-use within 5m of the banktop**, using abbreviations in the spot-check key;
- (ii) **vegetation structure within 1m of the banktop**;
- (iii) **vegetation structure on the bankface**, using 'B' (bare), 'U' (uniform), 'S' (simple) or 'C' (complex) categories. See below for guidance and Figure F1.

Since floodplain land-use up to 50m from each bank is also recorded in Section H, the combination of vegetation structure within 1m, land-use within 5m and a general overview of land-use will provide a collective picture of riparian habitat character.

### Banktop

This is defined as the first major break in slope where cultivation or development would be possible. Where no distinct breaks in slope occur (e.g. streams in vee-shaped valleys), the bankfull height may be estimated by the winter flood level, often marked by a trashline or 'notches' at similar heights above the bed level. Notches may be seen along lines of exposed bank material that represent where vegetation has been ripped out by the roots at the level water reaches during times of peak floods.

Illustrated examples of banktop and bankface, as defined for recording vegetation structure and land-use during RHS are shown in Figures E1 and F1.

💡 A banktop hedgeline (as shown in photo D7a) should be recorded as complex structure (C) in spot-checks and not included as tree distribution (Section J). A hedgeline with scattered "standard trees" would be similarly recorded as complex structure in the spot-checks, but with "isolated" or "regularly spaced" trees (as appropriate) recorded in Section J.

---

## SECTION F: LAND-USE WITHIN 5m OF BANKTOP

Boxes are emboldened, so only a single entry per box (the predominant land-use) is permissible.

### Broadleaf/mixed woodland (BL)

Woodland containing predominantly deciduous broadleaved trees. 💡 **Does not include broadleaf/mixed plantations.** Vegetation below trees (understorey) is usually mixed young trees/shrubs and/or mixed grasses/herbs. 📦 C3b, E7Dd, F1a,b, J6a,b, M2b.

### Broadleaf/mixed plantation (BP)

Plantation woodland containing deciduous broadleaved trees such as poplars planted in rows, or in similar regimented fashion. Include young plantations with just saplings. 📦 F2a.

### Coniferous woodland (CW) 📖

Native conifers, typically Caledonian forest in Scotland. 💡 **Excludes all coniferous plantations.** 📦 F3a.

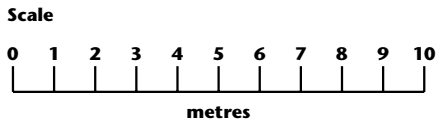
### Coniferous plantation (CP)

Coniferous trees (e.g. sitka spruce, lodgepole pine) planted for commercial forestry. 📦 F4a.

### Scrub & shrubs (SH)

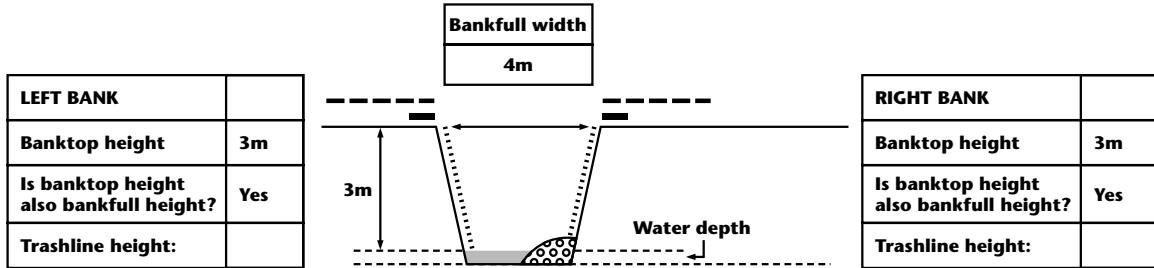
Scrub (e.g. brambles, gorse, rhododendron) and woody shrubs (e.g. blackthorn and hawthorn). 📦 F5a.

**Figure F1** Examples of different channel shapes affecting definitions of bankface, banktop and bankfull width.

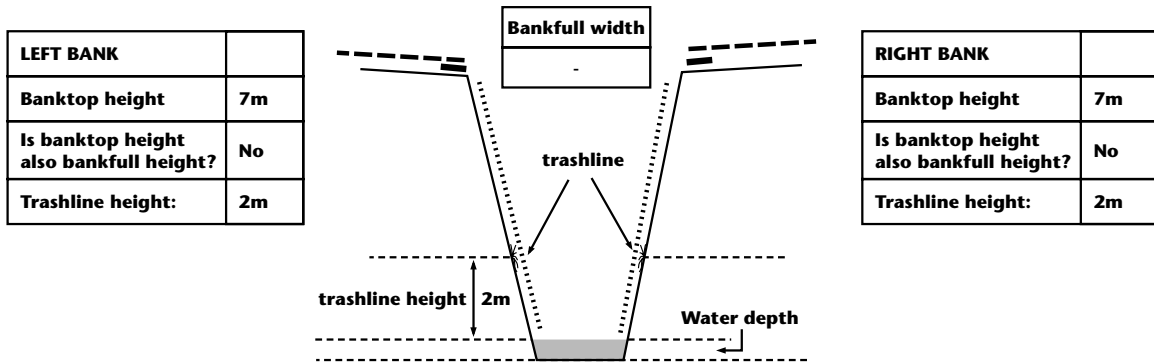


For recording vegetation:	
.....	Bankface vegetation structure
—	1m banktop vegetation structure
- - -	5m and 50m land-use

**Symmetrical channel**

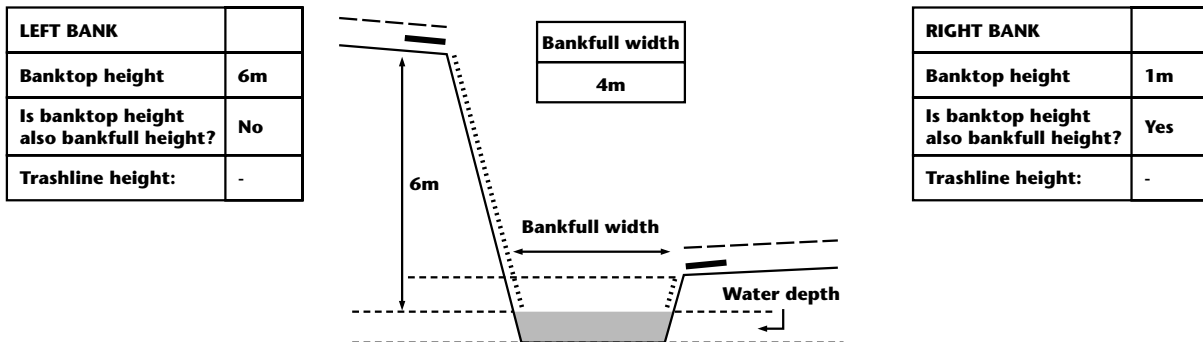


**Gorge**

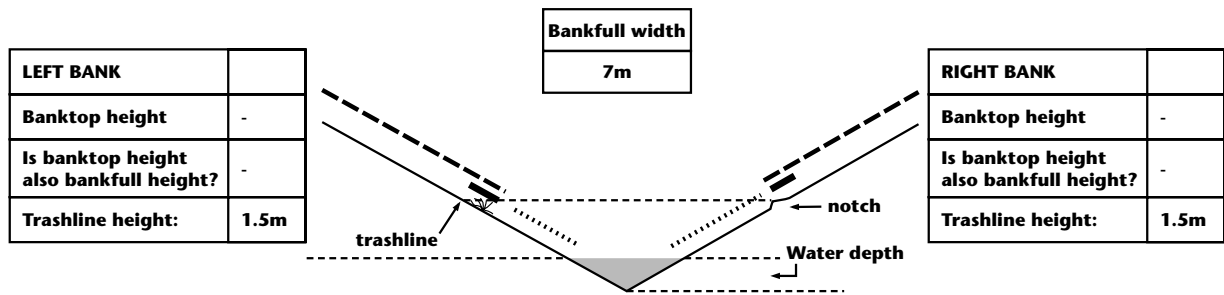


*Note: in over-deepened artificial channels there will be a trashline – see text.*

**Asymmetrical channel or valley**

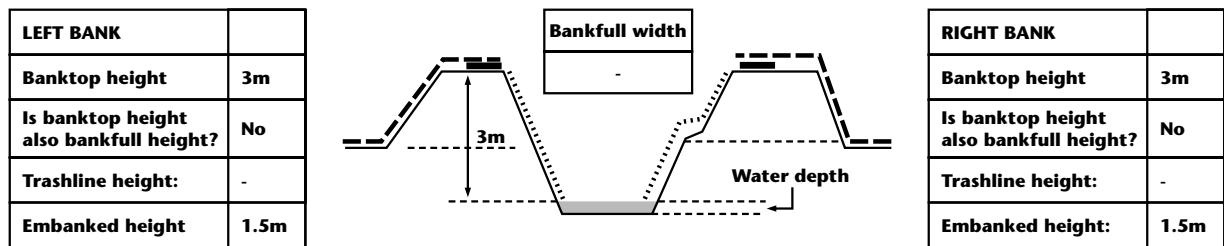


### Deep vee/shallow vee valley (and rivers with no obvious banktop)

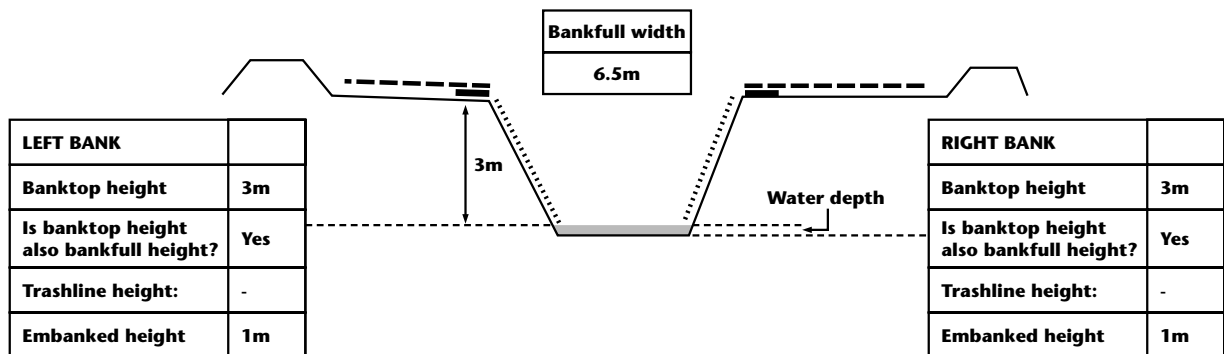


To be used **only** when no obvious banktop evident for both banks. Look for presence of small 'notches' at consistent height to indicate level of water during large floods. Use this, or trashlines, to determine bankfull height, and areas for recording banktop vegetation structure and land-use.

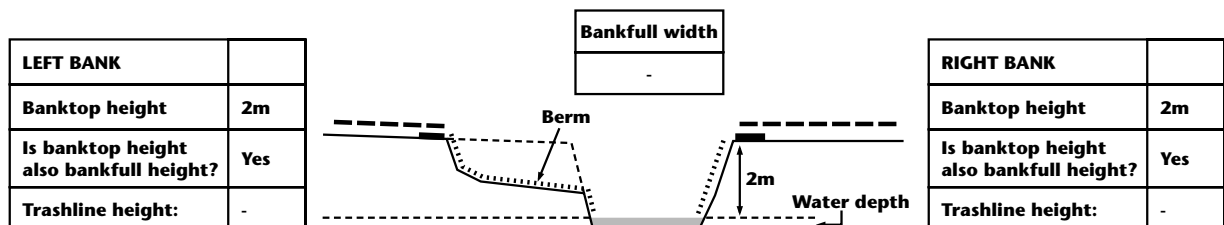
### Embanked channel



### Channel with set-back embankments



### Two-stage channel formed through excavation



### Orchard (OR)

Horticultural crop of fruit trees planted in lines and carefully managed to produce fruit crops. Includes hop fields and vineyards.

### Wetland (WL)

Includes bog, marsh, and fen. **Fens** typically have groundwater sustaining them as wetlands, with vegetation, often (but not exclusively) growing over peat, where the water-table is at, or just below, the surface. Water is derived from both rainfall and drainage of surrounding land. Some fens may have *Sphagnum* moss, but typically the vegetation is dominated by tall reeds, wetland herbs, sedges, and rushes. **Bogs** have vegetation growing on wet peat; the water source is direct rainfall, or in some cases, over-land flow during heavy rain events. *Sphagnum* moss is always present, often with bog cotton (*Eriophorum*). In locally drier areas heather (*Calluna*, *Erica*) may also be present, but never dominant. 📖 F7a,b,c, M15a, M18a,b, M20a.

### Moorland/heath (MH)

Typical moorlands and heaths have heather (*Calluna*, *Erica*) present, even if not the dominant vegetation type. In some upland areas (e.g. Bodmin Moor), or lowland heath areas (e.g. the machair of the Outer Hebrides), the plant communities may be dominated by acid-tolerant grasses such as purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Cotton-grass (*Eriophorum* spp.) may occur in wetter areas, and in more free-draining areas may merge with heathy scrub with dwarf willow and birch (*Salix*, *Betula*) present. 📖 B2a,b, E7Dc, E7Ea, F8a,b, J1b, M16b.

💡 When the bog component within heathland is small, and heather is dominant, record wetland as 'present', and moorland/heath as 'extensive' in Section H.

### Artificial open water (AW)

Off-line artificial lakes, reservoirs, water-filled gravel pits, canals and the full range of amenity, farm and 'conservation' ponds. Natural lakes which have been modified by control structures are regarded as artificial. Includes mill streams, and artificial secondary channels which branch from, or join, the main watercourse. 📖 F9a,b,c.

💡 RHS should not be undertaken on on-line lakes.

### Natural open water (OW)

Natural lakes, ponds and pools, including bog pools and old river cut-offs.

💡 Some natural lakes have impounding structures; if these are not clearly visible, record 'OW'. 📖 F10a,b, M20b,c.

### Rough/unimproved grassland/pasture (RP)

Unimproved (i.e. not reseeded or fertilized) upland or lowland grassland. Usually herb-rich, and includes hay meadows. If ground is seasonally wet, tussocks of 'coarse' grass or rushes (e.g. *Deschampsia cespitosa*, *Juncus effusus*), can occur. 📖 F11a,b.

### Improved/semi-improved grassland (IG)


All **agricultural** grassland other than 'RP'. Includes pasture/meadow grassland which has been re-seeded (typically with *Lolium perenne* – rye-grass) or artificially fertilised. 📖 B7b, F12a.

### Tall herb/rank vegetation (TH)

Vegetation at least waist-high, dominated by herbs (not grasses or reeds, but **includes bracken** – *Pteridium*). "Wildlife areas" where farmers have left the land on the inside of meanders uncultivated to grow 'wild' for conservation reasons are included. 📖 F13a,b,c.





### Rock, scree or sand dunes (RD)


Collective category that includes extensive rock outcrops, mountain scree or sand dunes.  F14a,b.

### Suburban/urban development (SU)


Buildings, metalled roads, tracks, railways. Also includes land-fill sites.

 Where un-metalled tracks follow the banktop, the land-use in which they are located should be recorded, and not 'SU'.  A1c, F15a,b.



### Tilled land (TL)

Agricultural land where crops grown on regularly ploughed soil. Includes root and horticultural crops and allotments.  E1Jb, F16a.

### Irrigated land (IL)

Agricultural land dependent on irrigation for crop yield. In Britain this includes cress beds.  F17a.

### Parkland or gardens (PG)

Includes parks, golf courses, public amenity spaces, sports fields and gardens. This includes a wide variety of land-uses, where grass is mown for recreational purposes.  Do not confuse with agricultural land-use of improved grassland.  E1La,b, F18a,b.


### Not visible (NV)

Self-explanatory. Only to be used if land-use is genuinely obscured (e.g. top of a gorge, behind a mature island, or beyond dense stands of tall trees on the far bank).

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## SECTION F: BANK AND BANKFACE VEGETATION STRUCTURE

To be assessed over a 10m length of each bank (see Figure 1). Separate records are made for the structure of the vegetation on the face of the bank, and the vegetation structure in the 1m zone beyond the banktop (see definition above; Figures E1 and F1). Even in intensively farmed arable land, the 1m banktop vegetation structure may contrast with the land-use within the full width of the 5m banktop zone (recorded separately, and described above).

 **When recording bankface vegetation structure, ignore vegetation on bars or berms at the base of banks.**


The category recorded is determined by the complexity of structure produced by different vegetation types. If the vegetation structure cannot be assessed (i.e. when surveying from the bottom of a gorge), record 'NV' for not visible. On wide rivers, binoculars can assist with defining vegetation structure on the far bank.

Since this exercise is a rapid overview, only **the predominant structure** is to be assessed. Use your initial assessment - time must not be wasted searching for relatively inconspicuous types of vegetation.

Vegetation structure is based on four categories. Component elements represent vegetation types that contribute to vertical layering on the bank. **Refer to the spot-check key for diagrammatic representation, and the categories of vegetation types listed below.**

**Bryophytes** Mosses and liverworts.  FV1a.

**Short/creeping herbs or grasses** Below knee height (includes ivy).  A1a, B7a,b, E2Ca, FV2a,b.

**Tall herbs or grasses** Knee height, and taller; includes bracken and other ferns.  C3a, D1c, D8a, E1Oa, F18a, FV3a,b.

<b>Scrub or shrubs</b>	Brambles, woody (and multi-stemmed) shrubs, thickets. ☞ D1c, F18a, FV4a,b.
<b>Saplings and trees</b>	Mature trees and single-stemmed young trees ( <i>cf.</i> bushy nature of shrubs). ☞ FV5a,b, G2b.

Boxes are emboldened, so only a single entry per box (the predominant vegetation structure) is permissible.

#### **Bare (B)**

Predominantly bare earth or unvegetated artificial bank material (e.g. concrete, sheet piling, gabion). Vegetation cover <50% over the 10m bank-length. ☞ A1c, E1La,b, E1Ma,b,c, E1Pa, E7Cc, FV6a,b.

#### **Uniform (U)**

Predominantly one vegetation type (e.g. grass, nettles, heather), but lacking scrub or trees. ☞ B7a,b, C4c, D6c, E2Ca, F8a, FV1a,b, FV2a,b, FV5b, FV7a,b.

#### **Simple (S)**

Predominantly 2-3 vegetation types, often with scrub, and may include trees. Trees with sparse herb understorey (e.g. coniferous forest extending to the riverbank) to be included in this category. ☞ E1Pd, E7Dd, F18a, FV8a,b, G2b.

#### **Complex (C)**

Four or more vegetation types, and scrub and/or trees must be present. ☞ FV4b, FV5b, FV9a,b, G2b.

#### **Not visible (NV)**

To be used only where the bank is genuinely obscured.

### **SECTION G: CHANNEL VEGETATION TYPES**

To be assessed within a 10m wide transect across the channel at each spot-check (see Figure 1).

Channel vegetation types are recorded in categories that assess the habitat structure they provide at the time of survey, not their morphological character described in textbooks. The purpose is to provide information on the range of functional habitats that channel vegetation may be providing for invertebrates and other animals. This is especially important in rivers with otherwise limited structural diversity.

💡 To be recorded as present (✓), a channel vegetation type must occupy at least 1% of the channel area within the 10m wide transect (e.g. 1m<sup>2</sup> on a 10m wide river). To be recorded as extensive (E), the channel vegetation type must occupy at least 33% of the channel area within the 10m wide transect. Thus, vegetation growth should be obvious, and time should not be wasted looking for isolated plants.

💡 It is essential that at each spot-check at least one box has an entry. Several 'vegetation type' entries will be made for the same spot-check when there is more than a single type present. When the water is very turbid, enter 'NV', and record cover of emergent, floating or amphibious vegetation as appropriate.

It is important to complete the end-column to assess overall presence of vegetation types occurring along the 500m as a whole, including those types not recorded at the spot-checks. Use 'E' for vegetation forms covering ≥33% of the 500m site, or ✓ for those vegetation types occupying at least 1% of the 500m site, but <33% of it.

💡 This end-column is not a summation of the vegetation types recorded in spot-checks – it is possible that rare forms may be recorded in one or more spot-checks, but not cover ≥1% of the whole RHS site; as such they would not be recorded in the end-column.

#### **None/Not visible**

If <1% vegetation cover, or none is visible, even though water clarity is good, enter ✓ in this box. When the bed of the channel is not visible (e.g. when enclosed in a culvert) also enter 'NV'. Also enter 'NV' if the water is too turbid to determine submerged plant cover, even though entries for emergent, amphibious and floating forms can be made if present.

### Liverworts/mosses/lichens

Aquatic liverworts (e.g. *Scapania*), mosses (e.g. *Fontinalis*) and lichens (e.g. *Collema*). Includes vegetation that is submerged, or in the splash zone. 📖 G1a,b,c, M6a,b.

### Emergent broad-leaved herbs

Broad-leaved plants rooted on the river bed or along the water's edge. Leaves and flowers grow above water level e.g. fool's water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and water-speedwell (*Veronica* spp.). 📖 G2a,b.

### Emergent reeds/sedges/rushes/grasses/horsetails

Narrow-leaved monocotyledons (e.g. reeds, sedges, rushes, grasses and horsetails) rooted below water-level or along the water's edge. Examples include branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), reedmace (*Typha*), common/Norfolk reed (*Phragmites australis*), sedges (*Carex* spp.), rushes (*Juncus* spp.) bulrush (*Schoenoplectus* spp.), reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) and water horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*). 📖 G3a,b,c.

### Floating-leaved (rooted)

Plants rooted on the river bed but with either **broad floating leaves** such as yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) and broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*); or **linear floating leaves** such as those produced by unbranched bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*). 📖 G4a.

### Free-floating

Plants floating on, or just under, the water surface, and not rooted to the river bed. Examples include duckweeds (*Lemna* spp.), frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), hornwort (*Ceratophyllum* spp.) and water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*). 📖 G5a,b,c.

### Amphibious

Plants rooted at the edge of the river, or on the bank, but shoots or leaves trail across the water. Examples include amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), creeping bent-grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*), floating sweet-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), and water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*). 📖 G6a,b.

### Submerged broad-leaved

Rooted submerged plants with underwater leaves no more than four times longer than broad. Some part of the plant, or some leaves, may reach the surface but the majority are submerged. Includes submerged 'cabbage-like' leaves of yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*), perfoliate and several other broad-leaved pondweeds (*Potamogeton perfoliatus*, *P. lucens*, *P. alpinus*), Canadian pondweed (*Elodea canadensis*), and starworts (*Callitriche* spp.). 📖 G7a,b,c.

### Submerged linear-leaved

Rooted submerged plants with narrow, unbranched, laminar leaves (blade/strap/belt-shaped) that are either totally submerged or just have their tips or upper parts floating on the surface. The most typical examples are unbranched bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*) and the underwater leaves of arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), bulrush (*Schoenoplectus* spp.) and flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*). 📖 G8a,b.

### Submerged fine-leaved

Rooted submerged plants with fine, branched, leaves. Examples include the feathery leaves of water milfoil (*Myriophyllum* spp.) and the longer 'shoe-lace' appearance of some water-crowfoot species (*Ranunculus* spp.) and fennel pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*). 📖 G9a,b,c.

### Filamentous algae

Blanketweed (*Cladophora*), mole pelt (*Vaucheria*) and other obvious **filamentous** algal growths (e.g. *Enteromorpha*). Do not record diatom films that occur alone, or coating aquatic plants or stones. 📖 G10a,b.

All sweep-up information is based on the occurrence of features and river characteristics over the whole 500m site.

💡 It is important to continue another 50m beyond the last spot-check to ensure the whole RHS site is 500m long.

For the majority of features, record their presence only if they occur along at least 1% of the channel or bank. Exceptions to this general rule include the presence of specific features such as waterfalls or overhanging boughs that typically may not extend more than 5m along the channel. 💡 All features that can be recorded as present even if they occur along <1% of the RHS sites are marked with an asterisk (\*) on the form.

💡 It is possible that some features recorded as dominant in a spot-check in Section E (e.g. poached bank 'PC') may not even be recorded as a ✓ in the sweep-up if they do not extend at least 5m along the bank.

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#### SECTION H: LAND-USE WITHIN 50m OF BANKTOP

Record 'E' if a land-use type occurs along  $\geq 33\%$  of bank-length, or ✓ when it extends for 1-33% of the bank-length. Only record land-use occurring within 50m of the banktop. Record left and right sides of the watercourse separately. Where two parallel land-uses border the river (e.g. along 50% of one bank there is a 20m grassland strip giving way to arable) - both are recorded as 'E'. Moreover, if the other 50% is a parallel pattern of urban and artificial open water, these too are both recorded as 'E'. Therefore, in exceptional circumstances, more than three 'E' categories can be recorded for one bank.

Use the prompts on the form. For descriptions of land-use categories, see Section F. The following categories are used:

Broadleaf/mixed woodland (BL)  
Broadleaf/mixed plantation (BP)  
Coniferous woodland (CW)  
Coniferous plantation (CP)  
Scrub & shrubs (SH)  
Orchard (OR)  
Wetland (WL)  
Moorland/heath (MH)  
Artificial open water (AW)  
Natural open water (OW)  
Rough/unimproved grassland/pasture (RP)  
Improved/semi-improved grassland (IG)  
Tall herb/rank vegetation (TH)  
Rock, scree or sand dunes (RD)  
Suburban/urban development (SU)  
Tilled land (TL)  
Irrigated land (IL)  
Parkland or gardens (PG)  
Not visible (NV)


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#### SECTION I: BANK PROFILES

Use 'E' ( $\geq 33\%$  of bank-length within the site) or '✓' (present -  $\geq 1\%$  but  $< 33\%$ ) for profiles visible on both left and right banks.

## NATURAL/UNMODIFIED PROFILES.

Record in the 'left' and 'right' bank columns the profiles (slopes) of unmodified banks. The first two categories cover vertical banks, including 'cliffs' recorded in Section E, and other vertical banks not forming cliff features such as banks on chalks streams that are vertical, but may be only a few centimetres high. Other steep banks should be recorded in the third category, and gently sloping banks in the fourth.

 **All natural bank profiles are recorded here. In cases where there is uncertainty over bank profile, record them as best as possible in the natural/unmodified categories.**

### Vertical/undercut

Predominantly vertical banks, which may include eroding and stable cliffs.  B1b, C4a, E3Ab, I1a,b.


### Vertical with toe

Vertical bank with slumped material at base.  E1Ea, I2a,b.


### Steep

Bank slope  $\geq 45^\circ$  angle, but not predominantly vertical.  B3a, I3a, I4a.



### Gentle

Bank slope  $< 45^\circ$ .  B1b, B7a, C4a, E3Ec, I4a.

### Composite

Banks with complex profile which may be caused by previous slumping or sequences of channel erosion.  I5a,b.

### Natural berm


See detailed definition in Section E and Figure E4. A transitional feature that requires a well-trained eye to confirm its presence.  Beware: if artificial two-stage channels have been excavated just above the original river bed level, these may, over time, appear 'like a new floodplain'; if so, do not record here.  E3Ea,b,c, d,e – for artificial berm, see E2Ca,b,c,d.

## ARTIFICIAL/MODIFIED PROFILES.


The same modifications to banks noted in Section E are also included here, and as for 'unmodified banks', all the different resectioned and reinforced profiles on the left and right banks should be recorded in the appropriate columns. This is the only place where the occurrences of embankments set back from the bank are recorded.

 **All modifications to banks are summarized here.**


### Resectioned (reprofiled)


Bank profile modified, often to accommodate flood flow, flood defence or other maintenance machinery. Recent re-profiling will produce a relatively smooth, uniformly angled, bank slope. See Section E; Bank Modifications. **Only record in the sweep-up if not accompanied by whole bank reinforcement.**  A1a, D8a,b,c, E2Aa,b, E3Da, I6b.

### Reinforced bank


Whole or part of bank artificially strengthened for bank protection purposes. Examples include concrete, sheet piling, corrugated iron, wood piling, gabion, brick/laid stone, rip-rap and builders' waste (see descriptions of above in E: Bank Materials). For sweep-up purposes, bank reinforcements are differentiated into three categories to indicate their vertical extent: (i) whole bank; (ii) top only; (iii) toe only. **When the whole bank is reinforced, there is no need to record resectioning.**  A1c, E1Ja,b, E1Ka, E1La,b, E1Oa, I6a,b,c.

### Artificial two-stage channel



Typically this is where one or both banks have been excavated laterally into the floodplain to create a shelf above dry-weather flow (see Figure I1). Also included are shelves constructed in previously widened channels to create narrower low-flow channels. Water spills over the second (normally dry) stage shelves during high flows. These are constructed features.  E2Ca,b,c,d.

Do not confuse with natural berms (see Natural berm  E3Ea,b,c,d,e).


### Poached bank

Bank significantly trampled or puddled by livestock. Include banks trampled as a result of human activity such as picnic spots, canoe access points, and fishing spots dug into the bank.  E2Ba,b,c,d, I5b, P1a.

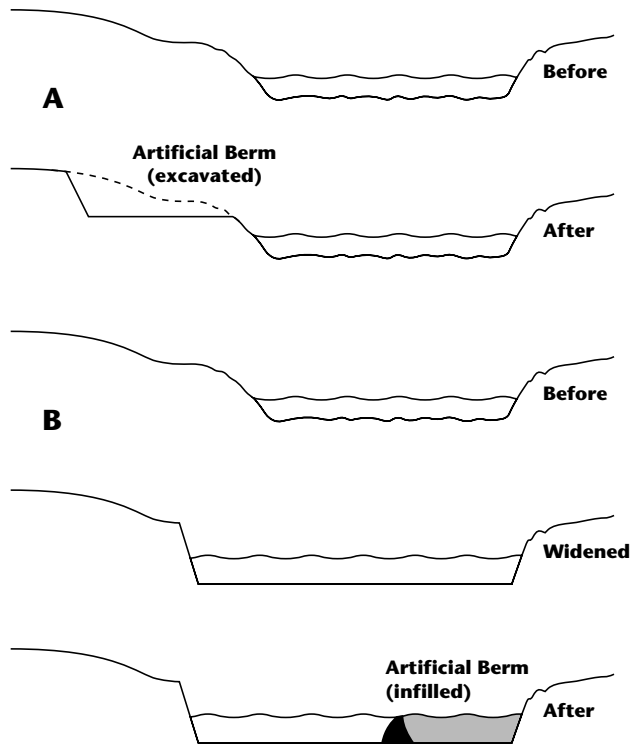
### Embanked

Artificial embankment created to increase the banktop height. Only recorded here when it forms an integral part of the bank.  **Do not** include embankments set back from the immediate banktop; these are recorded as set-back embankments (below).  E2Da,b.

### Set-back embankment

Artificial embankment or earth bund designed to increase flood capacity but set back from the river channel and forming a distinct floodplain landscape feature.  I7a.

**Figure I1 Artificial two-stage channel – berm formation through:**  
**A - bank excavation**  
**B - channel infill**




## SECTION J: EXTENT OF TREES AND ASSOCIATED FEATURES

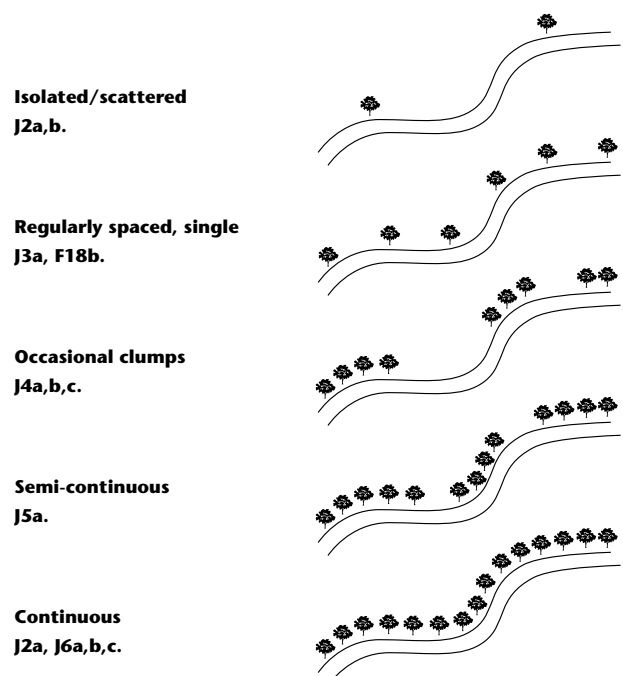
Due to the importance of trees and associated features, these warrant individual attention and are recorded in more detail in this section.

### TREES

Distribution along each bank for the entire 500m length is recorded using five descriptive categories. These are not meant to represent an accurate distribution pattern for individual sites, but to provide an overview. Recent aerial photographs can provide an extra check.

For each bank tick one box only for the nearest distribution 'match' based on the categories in Figure J1.  **ONE BOX FOR EACH BANK MUST BE TICKED.**

**Figure J1 Illustration of RHS recording of bankside trees**



## ASSOCIATED FEATURES



These are habitats, or features, associated with trees.

 IN EACH CASE, ONE BOX PER FEATURE MUST BE TICKED.


Records are made on their occurrence within, or along, the total 500m length of the site. Record 'None' when <1% occurrence (absent, or not present in >5m of channel length); 'Present' if 1-33% occurrence (present in 5-165m of channel length); and 'E' when  $\geq$  33% occurrence (present in >165m of channel length).

For the three features marked with an asterisk (\*), presence can be ticked even if they do not occur in >1% of the site.

### Shading of channel

Extent of **direct**, overhead, **tree canopy shade**.  Do not include shade from culverts and bridges.  J7a,b, M4a, M6a, M7a.


### \*Overhanging boughs

Large (forearm-size or larger) tree boughs which arc horizontally over, or dip close to, the water surface.  C2a, E4Bb, I1a, J6b, J7a, J8a,b, J9b.

### \*Exposed bankside roots

Large (forearm-sized or larger) exposed roots and associated cavities. These can provide a good location for otter holts.  J9a,b.

### \*Underwater tree roots

Exposed underwater tree or shrub roots. Alder and willow roots are distinctive examples.  J10a.

### Fallen trees

Uprooted or collapsed tree(s) that are **still attached to the bank**, either alive or dead.  J11a,b,c.

### Large woody debris

Whole trees or large trunks and branches **swept downstream** and lodged in the channel or on the banks.  J12a,b.


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## SECTION K: EXTENT OF CHANNEL AND BANK FEATURES

This section includes a wide variety of features ranging from flow types to exposed bedrock.

 IN EACH CASE, ONE BOX PER FEATURE MUST BE TICKED.

Records are made on their occurrence within, or along, the total 500m length of the site. Record 'None' when <1% occurrence; 'Present' if 1-33% occurrence; and 'E' when  $\geq$  33% occurrence .

 For the five features marked with an asterisk (\*), presence can be ticked even if they do not occur in >1% of the site.

RHS uses flow-types as a diagnostic guide to channel habitats. Predominant flow-type is determined at the 10 spot-checks (Section E). However, it is also necessary to assess flow-types in the site as a whole. For this purpose only, you need to record flow-types when they are dominant across most of the channel width **and** when they form a distinct feature that is at least 5m long (i.e. >1% of channel length). 'Free fall' and 'upwelling' flow-types can be recorded as present even if they do not represent a predominant flow type along at least 5m of the channel length. 💡 **Do not record these flow-types in Section K if they result from artificial features such as weirs.**

For the definitions of flow-types and channel features, see Section E. The following are recorded (spot-check abbreviations are included for easy cross-reference).

**\*Free fall flow (FF) – but only if associated with natural features**

**Chute flow (CH)**

**Broken standing waves (BW)**

**Unbroken standing waves (UW)**

**Rippled flow (RP)**

**\*Upwelling (UP) - but only if associated with natural features**

**Smooth flow (SM)**

**No perceptible flow (NP)**

**No flow [dry] (DR)**

The following other (non-flow-type related) features are recorded.

**Marginal deadwater**

Margins of the main channel which have **no perceptible flow**. These are good refuge areas for various aquatic invertebrates and fish fry. Examples include where the bank has eroded into an embayment, or remnants of old abandoned channels are still connected to the main channel (also recorded as backwaters in Section M). Marginal deadwater may also occur downstream of large 'side' or 'point bars'. 🗑️ K1a,b,c, M12a,b.

**Eroding cliff(s)**

See Section E, marginal and bank features. Extent is for both banks.

**Stable cliff(s)**

See Section E, marginal and bank features. Extent is for both banks.

**Exposed bedrock**

See Section E, channel features.

**Exposed boulders**

See Section E, channel features.

**Vegetated bedrock/boulders**

See Section E, channel features.



### **Unvegetated mid-channel bar(s)**

See Section E, channel features.

### **Vegetated mid-channel bar(s)**

See Section E, channel features.

### **Mature island(s)**

See Section E, channel features.

### **Unvegetated side bar(s)**

See Section E, marginal and bank features. Extent is for both banks.

### **Vegetated side bar(s)**

See Section E, marginal and bank features. Extent is for both banks.




### **Unvegetated point bar(s)**

See Section C. Extent is for both banks.



### **Vegetated point bar(s)**

See Section C. Extent is for both banks.




### **\*Unvegetated silt deposit(s)**

 DO NOT RECORD when silt covers the bed from bank to bank and does not contrast with the predominant substrate present in the whole site (recorded as 'SI' in spot-checks in Section E) – the deposits must contrast with the predominant river bed substrate(s). Unvegetated silt deposits may be either underwater or exposed, in the channel or on the margins with a minimum size of 5m<sup>2</sup>. Silt deposits are often formed in response to obstructions (e.g. fallen tree, naturally protruding boulders, or artificial deflector structures); such deposits would be recorded as 'present'. Extensive deposits are often associated with rivers recovering from artificial channel over-widening.  If they form discrete ledges, and occur in more than 33% of the site, record as 'E'.  K2a,b,c.

### **\*Discrete unvegetated sand deposit(s)**

A discrete unvegetated sand deposit is either underwater or exposed, in the channel or on the margins with a minimum size of 5m<sup>2</sup>.  DO NOT RECORD when sand covers the bed from bank to bank (recorded as 'SA' in Section E) – the deposits must contrast with the predominant river bed substrate(s). Discrete sand deposits are often formed in response to obstructions (e.g. fallen tree, naturally protruding boulders or artificial deflector structures), or in recesses in banks. Discrete sand deposits are recorded because they are valuable habitats for several invertebrate species. As sand deposits are not considered to be 'discrete' if they are present along more than 33% of a site (sand would be a predominant substrate in Section E), it is not possible to record extensive discrete sand deposits ('extensive' box not on the form).  K3a,b.

### **\*Discrete unvegetated gravel deposit(s)**

A discrete unvegetated gravel deposit is either underwater or exposed, in the channel or on the margins with a minimum size of 5m<sup>2</sup>.  DO NOT RECORD when gravel covers the bed from bank to bank (recorded as 'GP' in Section E) – the deposits must contrast with the predominant river bed substrate(s). Found only in channels with a predominant substrate of cobbles/boulders/bedrock, and located in the lee of large boulders, structures, fallen trees or other obstacles.  Do not record in any other circumstances, and not to be confused with bars (recorded in Section E). As gravel deposits are not considered to be 'discrete' if they are present along more than 33% of a site (gravel would be a predominant substrate in Section E), it is not possible to record extensive discrete gravel deposits ('extensive' box not on the form).  K4a,b.

## SECTION L. CHANNEL DIMENSIONS

☠ **Make sure that Health & Safety guidance (Appendix 1) is strictly followed when entering the channel to take measurements. For large rivers where mid-channel water depth cannot be safely measured, enter “unknown” in the appropriate box.**

**Measurement of channel width, water depth and banktop height.**

Choose a straight part of the site if possible, preferably with well-defined banks and a riffle. This is the optimum location for measuring channel and bank dimensions. In many instances channel dimensions will need to be measured at a location other than at one of the spot-checks.

**For guidance on banktop, water width etc., see Figure F1. To ensure consistent recording it is imperative that surveyors fully comprehend this information before undertaking field measurements.**

**Both steep and very low gradient sites will not have riffles. In such cases choose a relatively uniform (and if possible, shallow) cross-section and state on the form the predominant flow-type at the location where channel dimensions are taken. In some instances, the river bed will be inaccessible and consequently water depth and river bed consolidation will not be determined. If so, indicate accordingly on the form.**

Rangefinders and ranging poles will improve the accuracy of measurements taken. When a rangefinder is used to measure width, indicate by adding 'R'.

💡 📏 **Measuring channel dimensions on braided channels can be very complicated due to the presence of several sub-channels. Water depth should be the average depth of water in the largest channel (i.e. the one from which flow-type and substrate are recorded in spot-checks), but water width cannot be measured. Banktop height and bankfull width should be measured using the banks abutting the floodplain.**

**Banktop height (m)**

Banktop height is the vertical distance from water level, to the first major break in slope above which cultivation or development is possible. Use the ranging pole to estimate height (m).

**Bankfull width (m)**

Bankfull width is the horizontal distance across the channel to be measured at the level where the river first spills out of the channel on to the floodplain.

💡 Where no distinct breaks in slope occur (e.g. streams in vee-shaped valleys or gorges, the bankfull height should be **estimated** using clues such as the winter flood level, often marked by a trashline, or 'notches' along the bank at similar heights to the trashline. Estimate bankfull width and height at this point: ENTER MEASUREMENT IN LINE FOUR – and do not enter bankfull width measurements in line one.

**Is banktop height also bankfull height?**

Bankfull height is the vertical distance from water level on the day, to the point where the river first spills out of its channel on to the floodplain (if it can). Indicate, using 'yes' or 'no', whether the bankfull height is equivalent to the banktop height.

**Water width (m)**

Water width is the distance across the wetted perimeter of the channel. Use the ranging rod to make crossing the watercourse in shallow locations safer, and use the rod to help measure the width. When a range-finder is used to measure channel width, indicate by adding (R) with the width measurement entry. Note on the form the max-min range of the range-finder used.

💡 Beware: in misty conditions, or where the bank has a non-reflective substrate, accurate range-finder readings are difficult to get.

If it is impossible to wade safely across the river, and you do not have a range-finder, a reasonably accurate estimate can be made by sticking a ranging pole on the bank, and walking along the bank until the pole appears to be the same distance away as the far bank; pace the distance to the pole to estimate the channel width. Wherever possible, however, use a range-finder for measurements.

### Water depth (m)

Water depth is the estimated average depth of the channel (to the nearest 10cm). Where possible, always try to estimate the actual depth, using the ranging pole; otherwise use "not known". Common sense should prevail, but recording the average of three measurements taken across the depth range is good practice. ⚠ If access to the channel is considered too risky, estimate the depth if feasible; if in doubt, record 'NK' in the box.

### Embanked height (m)

Where embankments are present, record the extra height created by the embanked material. Include set-back embankments where practicable.

### Trashline height (m)

The **height** of the trashline above water level is to be recorded only if lower than the banktop. This may give an indication of an over-deepened channel with the 'natural' bankfull height, indicated by trashline marks. The **width** of the channel at the trashline height can be estimated and recorded. As the height of the trashline is dependent on the previous flood, measurement of this level provides less reliable information than bankfull and banktop heights and widths.

NOTE: Do not choose a location for channel measurements based on the presence or absence of a trashline.

### River bed consolidation

Consolidated river bed material will be normally characterised by luxuriant bryophyte or rooted higher plant macrophyte growth. Where gravel and cobbles are present, these will be firmly inter-locked with other substrates, be hard to dislodge, and give a stable 'feel' when kicked.

💡 **Unconsolidated river bed material** will comprise gravel, pebbles, cobbles or boulders which are not inter-locked and so are easily dislodged or moved when kicked.

In deep rivers where the channel cannot be safely accessed, record as '**unknown**'.

### Location of measurements

Tick one of two boxes; if 'other' box ticked, enter the predominant flow type present across the channel where the measurements were taken.

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## SECTION M. FEATURES OF SPECIAL INTEREST

This is an opportunity to record features of special ecological interest, either in the river channel or adjacent corridor.

**The extent of all these features should be recorded as present (✓) if present along  $\geq 1-33\%$  of the site, or 'E' if present along  $\geq 33\%$  of the site. Five of the 21 listed features are marked by an asterisk (\*) – these can be ticked even if they do not occur within at least 1% of the site.**

**Special features should be recorded as '✓' or 'E' if they are within a 50m corridor either side of the channel. Where features of special interest are observed beyond this 50m limit, their presence should be noted in Section P.**

### None

💡 An entry is required in this box when no entries are made in any other boxes **to confirm that no features of interest were observed.**

### Braided channels

Braided rivers are dynamic, mobile, rivers where the channel is divided into several sub-channels separated by active mid-channel bars along most ( $\geq 50\%$ ) of the 500m site. In braided rivers, most bars are unvegetated and the wetted area, at low flows, represents substantially less than 50% of the river bed. Bar surfaces are

typically at lower elevations than the vegetated floodplain margins. Braided rivers must feature at least two sub-channels and two mid-channel bars along most of the site. Some of the sub-channels may be dry at the time of the survey.

💡 Excludes all river reaches with more than a single channel that are **not actively changing the location of the sub-channels** – these include:

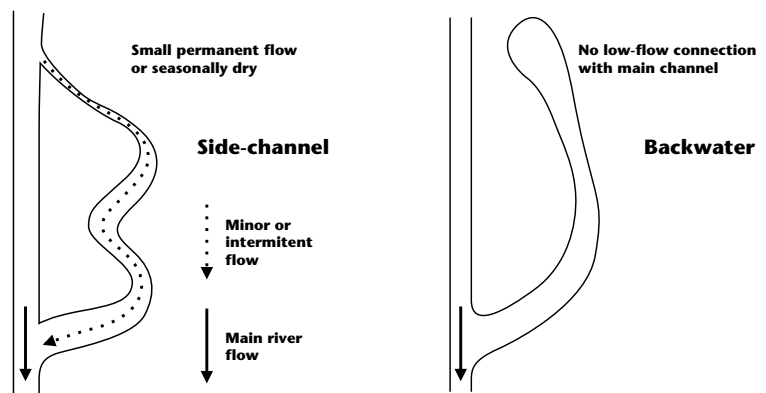
- (i) where two or more channels have developed naturally and are separated by vegetated mid-channel bars or mature islands;
- (ii) man-made by-pass channels, including mill leats;
- (iii) secondary feeder channels;
- (iv) parallel floodplain drainage systems;
- (v) chalk streams with multiple, man-made, channels.

It is recommended that aerial photographs are included to confirm braided rivers. 📷 M1a,b,c.

### Side channel(s)

To be considered as features of special interest, side channels must be natural, and convey only a minor flow compared with the main channel. They may be dry in periods of low-flow, and will always have bed levels higher than in the main channel (*cf.* multiple channels associated with islands). Side channels generally indicate channel migration across the floodplain, and are most often associated with down-cutting of the main channel. They are always connected to the main channel at their upstream and downstream limits (which may be outside/beyond the site), and convey flow during moderate to high flows (see Figure M1). 📷 M2a,b,c.

**Figure M1 Side channels and backwaters**



💡 Do not record as special interest features any artificial channels (e.g. mill races, water meadow feeder channels and multi-channels of chalk rivers) which can be recorded in Section P as appropriate.

### \*Natural waterfall(s) >5m high 📷

Uninterrupted natural free-fall flow more than 5m high. 📷 M3a,b.

### \*Natural waterfall(s) <5m high

Uninterrupted natural free-fall flow < 5m high. 📷 M4a,b.

### Natural cascade(s)

Distinct series of 'stepped' flow features occurring over boulder substrate or bedrock outcrops. 📷 E5Ca, M5a,b.

### Very large boulders (>1m) 📷

Very large, (at least 1m diameter), boulders protruding well above water level. Very large boulders will be recorded as extensive only if they occur along more than 33% of the channel length. 💡 Only naturally occurring boulders are noted; those introduced for fisheries enhancement purposes, or derived from collapsed rip-rap, are excluded but can be recorded in Section P. 📷 E4Bb, M5a, M6a,b.

### \*Debris dam(s) 📄

Log jam of large woody debris creating an obstruction across the channel and significantly impeding water flow. 📄 M7a,b.

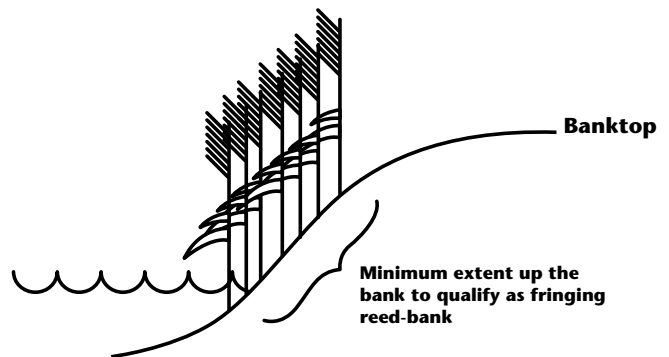
### \*Leafy debris 📄

Significant accumulations (at least 2m<sup>2</sup>) of twigs and leaf litter along channel edge. An important temporary habitat for some insects. 📄 M8a,b.

### Fringing reed-bank(s)

Fringing reeds such as common/Norfolk reed (*Phragmites australis*) which extend **at least** half-way up the bank. To be recorded, a fringing reed-bank must extend at least 10m along the bank-length. See Figure M2. 📄 M9a,b,c.

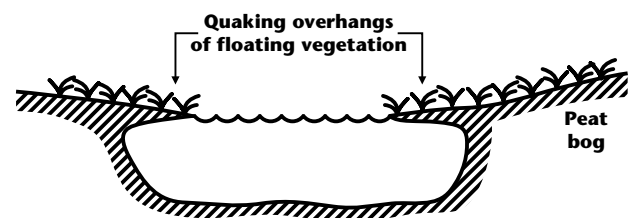
**Figure M2 Fringing reed bank**



### Quaking bank(s) 📄

A distinct floating 'ledge' or shelf of vegetation only, equivalent to a 'quaking', bog which extends into the channel. Usually an extension of adjacent wetland into the channel. Very rare in Britain and Ireland. See Figure M3. 📄 M10a.

**Figure M3 Quaking bank**  
A distinct floating 'ledge,' which extends into the channel



### \*Sink hole(s) 📄

A feature of some channels in limestone areas. Except during spates, flow in the channel upstream disappears into the ground through the channel bed, re-appearing further downstream. 📄 M11a,b.

### Backwater(s) 📄

Redundant river channels that are connected to the main channel only at one point, normally the downstream end. In contrast to side channels, they do not act as flood-conveyance channels (see Figure M1). 📄 B8a, K1c, M12a,b.

### Floodplain boulder deposits 📄

Boulders deposited **on the floodplain** by the river, typically close to the banktop and downstream of a constricted section of channel (e.g. gorge or V-shaped valley). 💡 Boulders in the channel should be recorded as boulder substrates or exposed boulders, as appropriate, **and not floodplain boulder deposits**. 📄 M13a.

### Water meadow(s)

Floodplain meadows, primarily associated with chalk streams, and traditionally flooded via constructed feeder channels. These drainage channels are straight, shallow and parallel. Features include remnant channels and floodplain grasslands. 📄 M14a,b.

### Fen(s)

Wetland vegetation, often (but not exclusively) growing over peat, where the water-table is at, or just below, the surface. Water is derived from both rainfall and drainage of surrounding land. Some fens may have *Sphagnum* moss, but typically the vegetation is dominated by tall reeds, wetland herbs, sedges, and rushes. 📖 M15a.

### Bog(s)

Vegetation growing on wet peat where the water table is at, or just below, the surface. The water source is direct rainfall and in some cases, over-land flow occurs during heavy rain events. *Sphagnum* moss is always present, often with bog cotton (*Eriophorum*). In locally drier areas heather (*Calluna*, *Erica*) may also be present, but never dominant. 💡 When the heathland component is uncommon, and bog predominates, record 'Moorland/heath' as 'present', and record 'Bog' as 'extensive'. 📖 M16a,b,c.

### Wet woodland(s) 📖

Wet woodland comprises trees such as willow (*Salix* spp.) and alder (*Alnus* spp.), usually with an understorey of wetland herbs, reeds and mosses. Often at the edge of other wetlands, and often referred to as 'carr'. 📖 M17a,b.

### Marsh(es)

Wetland habitat that includes tall grasses and rushes on periodically wet ground (unlike fen or bog that are permanently wet), or where wetland herbs are an important component of the ground flora (e.g. meadowsweet – *Filipendula ulmaria*, marsh orchids – *Dactylorhiza* spp., kingcup – *Caltha palustris*, valerians – *Valeriana* spp.). 📖 F7a, M18a,b.

### Flush(es)

A collective term for wet areas near springs where water emerges from the ground or seeps from fissures in rock faces, or valley slopes. Flushes are fed by groundwater – when surface water predominates a stream is formed. 📖 M19a,b.

### Natural open water

Includes abandoned ox-bows, natural lakes, bog-pools and meres.

💡 Only include features that are **NOT** connected to the river channel except during periods of floods. 📖 M20a,b,c.

### Others

It is important to record any other features of ecological interest, such as reedbeds, herb-rich wet grassland etc. associated with the river and adjacent land.

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## SECTION N. CHOKED CHANNEL

If 33% or more of the total channel area is choked with vegetation, causing **significant** impediment to flow, indicate by putting a ✓ in the 'Yes' box. If not, ✓ the 'No' box. 💡 **One of the two boxes must be ticked.** 📖 Na,b.

The extent of vegetation will depend to some degree on seasonal influences, but choked channels can present a barrier to fish migration, or increase flood risk.

## SECTION O. NOTABLE NUISANCE PLANT SPECIES

Indicate the absence or presence (including extent) of those alien plant species listed on the form by ticking appropriate boxes.

Estimate abundance within the site as a whole by using a '✓' when present along <33% of the bank-length or 'E', when present along ≥33% of total bank-length. Separate records are made for the bankface, and the river corridor up to 50m from the banktop. **Include plants growing on mid-channel bars in the 'bankface' category.**

The main introduced nuisance species associated with rivers in Britain and Ireland are:

- \* giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) 🗳️ O1a;
- \* Himalayan (Indian) balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) 🗳️ O2a;
- \* Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) 🗳️ O3a.

If you know that other alien species are present, list these in the space provided. A common example in some upland locations is Rhododendron. 🗳️ O4a.

💡 Species are shown on the form prefixed by an \*asterisk, so the presence of a single plant should be recorded. It is important to report even an isolated occurrence, since control measures may be able to be taken.

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## SECTION P. OVERALL CHARACTERISTICS

This section has a prompt check-list to capture important additional information. Circle relevant prompt words on the form and add others as appropriate.

### Major impacts

Any major impacts on the site using the self-explanatory checklist on the form. 🗳️ P1a,b.

### Evidence of recent management

A brief descriptive checklist for obvious and recent activities is listed. Briefly describe other activities as appropriate.

'Recent' management is defined by the presence of **obvious signs** e.g. machinery present, excavated bare earth, weed/brush cuttings and bank mowing, unvegetated dredge spoil on the bank etc. 🗳️ E2Aa, P2a.

**Enhancement works:** examples include meander or riffle reinstatement, channel narrowing, bank re-profiling, reed-planting and tree-planting. Most will be obvious only when recently undertaken. 🗳️ E1Hb, E1Mb, E2Cc,d, P2b.

### Animals

Sightings of mammals, birds, insects and other taxa of interest. Use the checklist and add as appropriate. Indicate if the presence is indirectly inferred from footprints or faeces (e.g. otter spraints). Records of animals will not be systematic since they will depend greatly on the interests and expertise of individual surveyors.

### Other significant observations

💡 It is important to record your overview of the site to complement information recorded on the form and photographs. Use a separate sheet if necessary, and make sure it has the mid-site grid reference clearly marked on it and the sheet is attached to the form.

## SECTION Q. ALDERS

In this section record the presence or absence of alder trees (*Alnus glutinosa*). Record whether they are present or absent, and indicate whether they are healthy or affected by *Phytophthora* root disease. Information on *Phytophthora* is needed for a national assessment of the incidence of the disease. 📷 Qa,b.

💡 See Appendix 3 for illustrated guidance on how to recognise symptoms. This has been reproduced with the permission of the Forestry Commission from: *Information Note 6 'Phytophthora Disease of Alder'* © Crown Copyright 2000.

💡 One of the three boxes in both categories must be ticked. Record 'none' if no alders are present; 'present' if alders occur in <33% of bank-length (even if just one tree – hence the \*asterisk reminder on the form); and 'E' if present along ≥33% of bank-length, **irrespective of whether they are affected by the disease or not**. If no trees are affected by *Phytophthora*, record 'None'; 'Present' if diseased alders occur in <33% of bank-length; and 'E' if disease affects alders along ≥33% of bank-length.

Observations of diseases affecting other trees (e.g. willows [*Salix*]) can be noted in Section P.

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## SECTION R. FIELD SURVEY QUALITY CONTROL

💡 **However experienced you are with filling in RHS forms, it is easy to make a mistake or send in an incomplete site record. To avoid this, you should check the form and tick the seven boxes as each one is checked in the field. This will save you having to rectify omissions later, and possibly save the need for a re-survey. The prompts ask the surveyor if they have:**

- taken at least two photos that illustrate the general character of the site and additional photos of all weirs and any major/intermediate structures across the channel?
- completed all ten spot-checks and made entries in all boxes in E and F on page 2?
- completed column 11 of section G, and E if appropriate on page 2?
- recorded in section C the number of riffles, pools and point bars (even if 0) on page 1?
- given an accurate (alphanumeric) grid reference for spot-checks 1 and 6, and the end of the site (page 1)?
- stated whether spot-check 1 is at the upstream or downstream end of the site (top of page 2)?
- cross-checked spot-check and sweep-up responses with the channel modification indicators given on page 2 of the spot-check key?




# PART FIVE – TECHNICAL APPENDICES

## Appendix 1 – Health & Safety Guidance

### General guidelines




Being near rivers, streams or any other body of water, either for work or recreation, is potentially hazardous.


 **When doing an RHS survey, health and safety must always be taken into account.**

 Safety is an integral, and important, part of the RHS training course with the main hazards/risks being highlighted. However it is not fully comprehensive and line managers of surveyors are responsible for making all field staff aware of potential dangers, and the procedures to follow, in case of accidents.

RHS surveyors need to be physically fit and must have adequate personal protective equipment (PPE) i.e. appropriate footwear and waterproof jacket and trousers. Footwear should have cleated, felt or studded soles. Waders or wellington boots must be worn when surveying from the channel.

Every effort should be made to minimise risks in the field and the following guidelines should be followed:

- Life jackets should be worn at all times when working **in** rivers, and in any other situations wherever there is a risk of drowning.  Do not enter a river in spate flow.
-  Do not enter the water if the river bed is not visible.
- When entering the channel, take into account the depth, flow and temperature of water, conditions under foot (e.g. substrate, algae) and entry/exit points. Check for any potential obstructions.
- It is sensible to walk **against** the flow of the river.
- When in the channel, use a ranging pole or wading stick to check depth and substrate.
- Avoid steep, unstable and overhanging banks, and always have an identified exit route close to where you are surveying.
- Work in pairs if river channels need to be crossed.
-  Never enter a culvert.
- Look out for hazards, especially in urban rivers, e.g. broken glass, sharp metal, decomposing waste or pollutants.
- Take care to avoid contact with the water, soil or vegetation before eating or drinking during survey work.
- Wear the right clothes for both the job and the weather conditions.
- When driving, shoes or walking boots should be worn and not waders.
- Carry a basic first-aid kit and hand-wipes.
- Wear a whistle, especially in remote, urban or wooded areas. Do not put it in a rucksack or pocket.
- When there is good reception, carry a mobile telephone.
- Always double-man or use a 'lone worker' system i.e. reporting-in and signing-off procedures, linked to a home base. (**NB lone working also includes where two people are working in a remote location.**) Line managers should have systems in place that ensure that the location of surveyors is known, and should establish an agreed system of emergency action in case a surveyor does not report back at the end of the day. For more details on lone-working, see Appendix 2.

 A risk assessment should be carried out before doing survey work and an RHS health and safety assessment needs to be completed on-site. If there are problems on site, the surveyor needs to report these to their line manager, or survey coordinator, at their office. If it is considered unsafe, or there is any doubt, the survey should not be carried out.

### Risk assessment for a River Habitat Survey (see Appendix 1.1)

Surveyors need to decide if there are any risks and to what level they are. Measures are suggested to reduce the risks and they should be applied. However it is down to the surveyor's, and their line manager/survey supervisor's, personal judgement(s) whether to proceed with the survey. The information in the Appendix 1.1 table should be used as a guide in undertaking risk assessment.

## Appendix 1.1 – River Habitat Survey 2003 version: risk assessment

Site Number/Reference:

Date:

Task Element	Risk	Risk Level (low, moderate, high)	Potential Risk Control Measures	Proceed With Survey (Yes or No)
Arriving at site and the duration of survey	Aggressive animals/people, hostile situation.		Cautionary approach, avoid animals where possible, conflict resolution/breakaway training, double-man or lone worker system, mobile phone, personal alarm, whistle	
	Bank stability, high/steep banks.		Cautionary approach, test with ranging pole/wading stick, double-man, wear a lifejacket.	
	Falling in, swept-off feet, losing footing.		Cautionary approach, double-man, wear a lifejacket, walk in upstream direction.	
	Fences (barbed wire, electric).		Try to find a safe crossing point. Do not climb over, or crawl under, unless assessed to be safe to do so. If not safe to cross and no alternative crossing points, abandon the survey.	
	Livestock.		Cautionary approach, avoid animals where possible, walk around the edges of fields.	
	Lone or remote working, lack of visibility, lack of local knowledge, vulnerable position.		Double-man or lone worker system, estimated finish time known to others, assess communications before starting survey, mobile phone, personal alarm, whistle.	
	No communication (out of mobile range/no telephone).		Double-man or lone worker system, estimated finish time known to others, assess communications before starting survey, personal alarm, whistle.	
	Railway, road.		Find a safe crossing point.	
	Rough terrain, marsh/bogs.		Appropriate footwear and clothing, watch footing, walk around outer edges of bogs etc.	
	Ticks (Lyme disease).		Wear long sleeves & trousers, regularly check for ticks, inspect body at end of survey.	
	Valuable equipment, high crime rate location.		Double-man in such locations, estimated finish time known to others, assess communications before starting survey, mobile phone, personal alarm, whistle. If confronted for equipment, always give it over.	
	Weather: dehydration, heatstroke, hypothermia or unpredictable.		Heat: wear suncream, sunglasses, keep head and back of neck covered, have bottled water, go into shade regularly. Cold: have insulating layers, wear hat/hood and gloves. Wet: do not survey in heavy rain, be extra vigilant to conditions underfoot. Be prepared for all likely conditions.	
When surveying from channel	Swept-off feet, losing footing.		Double-man, use ranging pole to test depth and ground before entering channel, wear lifejacket, If water above knee-height or you do not feel comfortable, do not survey from channel	
	Entry & exit points.		Check bank stability with ranging pole, wear lifejacket, double-man.	
	Hidden hazards under the water.		Use ranging pole to check in the channel before entering, and whilst in, the channel. If hazards found, do not enter channel or make a safe exit from it.	
	Infection (in particular <i>Leptospirosis</i> ).		Keep open skin covered, wear gloves, have hand wipes and first-aid kit, wash hands thoroughly, avoid touching face, carry <i>Leptospirosis</i> Card.	
	Pools.		Use ranging pole to test depth and ground, move around outer edges, watch footing.	
	Poor visibility/water clarity.		Use ranging pole to check in channel, watch footing. If not comfortable do not survey from channel.	
	Poor water quality, pollution, sewage outfall/treatment works.		Wear gloves, keep open skin covered, have hand wipes and first-aid kit, wash hands thoroughly before eating/drinking.	
	Substrate soft or uneven.		Use ranging pole to test depth and conditions underfoot before entering the channel and whilst in it. If not comfortable, do not survey from channel.	
Algae, thick weed growth, woody debris dams.		Use ranging pole to check in channel, watch footing. If not comfortable, do not survey from channel.		

## Site health and safety form (see Appendix 1.2)

This is now a required component of an RHS Survey and should be submitted along with the other four pages of the survey form. Surveyors need to assess, and comment on, the general characteristics of the site, and specifically on such aspects as weather and flow conditions. On the form it is necessary to record if the risks are low, medium or high. 💡 If a single category is recorded as a 'high' risk, surveys should not be carried out; similarly if more than three 'moderate' risks are recorded, RHS should not be carried out.

## Personal safety

Equipment used in an RHS survey can be highly expensive and the surveyor should also have a mobile phone. This may attract unwanted attention, particularly in urban areas, and might lead to a hostile situation.

Surveyors need to be able to recognise these types of situations and know how to deal with them appropriately, minimising risk of personal injury. Some sort of 'conflict resolution' training may be required so that the surveyor is able to evaluate the situation, avoid aggravating it, and know how to breakaway and escape attack if necessary.

☠️ If confronted for survey equipment, always give it over. Equipment, or data, are not as valuable as the surveyor!

## Life jackets

☠️ Where there is a risk of drowning a life jacket must be worn.

Surveyors must be trained in how to use, maintain and inspect their life jacket. They also need to know about the dangers of immersion and hypothermia.

## Weil's disease (*Leptospirosis*)

This can be a life threatening disease and surveyors need to **carry a medical/warning card at all times** (for England and Wales available from the RHS team at Warrington) to alert people to the nature of any potential illness. The symptoms start as a fever and headache. 💡 Treatment with antibiotics is needed straightaway.

Rivers being surveyed for RHS may contain rat urine, which can cause this illness. Therefore **waterproof clothing** must be worn when in the channel. Dead rodents at the site should not be touched, with or without, hand protection. Infection enters through breaks in the skin (i.e. abrasions, cuts, eyes, nose and mouth). Cuts and/or broken skin must be covered with **waterproof plasters** and surveyors should not rub their eyes, nose and mouth.

Surveyors **must always wash their hands before drinking, eating or smoking**. Clothing and equipment should be cleaned after use.

## Lyme disease

Lyme Disease can lead to serious illness if not treated quickly and properly. It is caught through being bitten by infected ticks, particularly in areas with sheep and deer. The first symptom is a ring-shaped rash around the bite followed by the development of flu-like symptoms within 24-48 hours. 💡 Treatment with antibiotics is required and is normally successful. If the disease is not treated, serious complications will develop over 1-12 weeks.

Whilst doing survey work in areas where tall grasses, reeds, heather (*Erica*, *Calluna*), bracken (*Pteridium*) and cranberry/blueberry/bilberry (*Vaccinium*) are abundant, surveyors must **keep their skin covered** (i.e. trousers and long sleeves). They also need to **regularly inspect** their clothing and skin for ticks and thoroughly check their body at the end of the day.

If ticks are found on the body, use tweezers to remove them. This needs to be done slowly and carefully to ensure no mouth-parts are left behind below the skin. Following removal, put a dressing over the bite, and seek medical attention.

## Appendix 1.2 – River Habitat Survey 2003 version: site health and safety assessment form

RIVER HABITAT SURVEY 2003 VERSION: SITE HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSESSMENT			
Site Number <sup>1</sup> :	Site Ref:	River Name:	Date:
Grid References/Co-ordinates:	Spot 1 <sup>2</sup> :	Mid-site:	End of site <sup>2</sup> :
Surveyor Name:		Accredited Surveyor Code:	
<sup>1</sup> Leave blank if new site.		<sup>2</sup> Optional	
Weather Conditions:			
Flow Conditions:			
<b>Site details:</b> (enter comments or circle if applicable and give details)			<b>Risk Level</b> (Low/Mod/High)
Access and Parking: (entry & exit)			
Conditions: comment on ground stability, footing, exposure/remoteness			
Obstacles/Hazards: fencing, stiles, dense vegetation, steep bank			
Occupied/Unoccupied: people, livestock, animals			
Activities/Land-use: agriculture, woodland, residential, industrial, construction, recreational			
Risk if lone-working			
<b>IF THERE ARE ANY HIGH RISKS OR MORE THAN THREE MODERATE RISKS DO NOT CONTINUE WITH THE SURVEY.</b>			
<b><u>Weil's Disease (Leptospirosis)</u></b>			
<u>Instructions to card holders</u>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As infection may enter through breaks in the skin, ensure that any cut, scratch or abrasion is thoroughly cleansed and covered with a waterproof plaster.</li> <li>2. Avoid rubbing your eyes, nose and mouth during work.</li> <li>3. Clean protective clothing, footwear and equipment etc. after use</li> <li>4. After work, and particularly before taking food or drink, wash hands thoroughly.</li> <li>5. Report all accidents and/or injuries, however slight.</li> <li>6. Keep your card with you at all times.</li> </ol>			
<b><u>Lyme Disease</u></b>			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dress appropriately with skin covered up.</li> <li>2. Regularly inspect for ticks when in the field.</li> <li>3. Check for, and remove, any ticks as soon as possible after leaving the site.</li> <li>4. Seek medical attention if bitten by a tick.</li> </ol>			

## Appendix 2 – Lone Working Guidance

This Appendix contains excerpts from the Environment Agency's *Health and Safety Risk Management Manual* and the *Lone Worker Code of Practice*.

'**Lone working**' is where there is either no visual or audible communication with someone who can effectively get assistance in the event of an incident.

'**Remote working**' is when there are two people working in an area which is regarded as being isolated from potential rescuers, either because of the distance from inhabited locations, or because of features which make the site inaccessible.

**Lone or remote working** surveyors need to have the same level of safety as those working with others, or in populated locations, i.e. be in a minimal risk situation.

☠ If it is deemed **high risk** for a lone surveyor to do a survey, those responsible for the safety of surveyors need to make an additional person available. Surveyors should not perform RHS alone when there is a foreseeable chance that doing so might result in an accident, which would require a second person to be available to summon help.

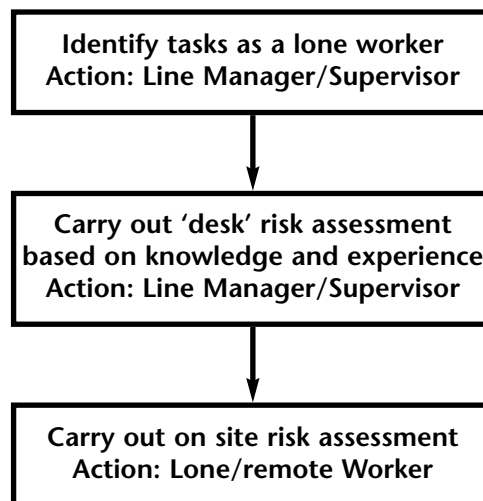
💡 Those who do work alone, or remotely, should have health and safety training which includes first-aid, map reading, using safety equipment and conflict resolution/breakaway skills.

### Risk assessment

Personnel responsible for the safety of surveyors must carry out a **risk assessment** for lone and remote surveyors and reduce risks to an acceptable level. However, surveyors must complete a risk assessment on site and use their own judgement. If they feel they are vulnerable, they should have assistance.


☠ **Surveyors should not put themselves or others at risk.**

The risk assessment may be carried out in three phases:




Lone or remote surveyors need to evaluate the following key risk criteria:

- the kind of accidents that may occur;
- the type of injuries that might result;
- the need for those injuries to receive immediate treatment;
- the chances of the injured person being able to summon help using telephone/radio equipment.

 **These should be looked at in addition to the RHS Risk Assessment (Appendix 1.1).**

 **Lone, or remote, surveyors should not do RHS in:**

- reduced visibility when there is a risk of falling into deep or fast flowing water or if there are steep banks;
- sites where banks are unstable or slippery;
- urban areas with high crime rates or known problems of physical attacks and muggings;
- sites where a hostile situation might be anticipated.


 Lone surveyors should not undertake survey from within the channel if the water is above knee height, fast flowing, or turbid.

### **Safe system for lone working**

Once risks have been assessed, and hazards identified, then risk control measures can be put in place to minimise the risks.


When designing a safe system of work, the following areas must be examined:

- work location;
- hazards;
- safety equipment;
- personnel;
- communication.

Personnel responsible for the safety of surveyors need to ensure there is a system in place to enable effective communication with, and monitoring of, surveyors working alone or remotely.  They should know the **surveyor's location, route, estimated start and finish times and be able to contact them**. Similarly, surveyors should be able to make contact with personnel operating their safety procedures.

**Good practice procedures for lone, or remote, surveyors include reporting to their office:**

- at the start of a survey;
- periodically during a survey;
- if there are problems or changes to the planned routine;
- at the end of the survey.

There also needs to be a pre-determined course of action in case a surveyor **fails to report in at the end of survey work, or at the agreed times**.  In such circumstance, good practice requires attempts to be made to contact the surveyor at 5-10 minute intervals, and record the attempts made. If after an hour there is still no contact, search and emergency procedures should be initiated.

# Phytophthora Disease of Alder

## INFORMATION NOTE

ISSUED BY FORESTRY PRACTICE

JULY 1998

BY JOHN GIBBS AND DAVID LONSDALE OF FOREST RESEARCH

### ABSTRACT

Phytophthora disease of alder can be found in young woodland plantations and orchard shelterbelts. However, its greatest impact is on the riparian alders of southern Britain. Survey results for trees alongside rivers over 8 m wide show that the incidence of the disease has increased every year from 1994 to 1997. The rate of increase in 1997 was less than that in the year before. Current information is presented on the possible origin of the disease and on approaches to management and control.

### INTRODUCTION

1. A previously unknown disease of alder was described in southern Britain in 1993 (Gibbs, 1995). It was shown to be caused by a fungus resembling *Phytophthora cambivora*, an organism which was well-known as a pathogen of broadleaved trees but which had not previously been reported from alder. During the next few years, considerable efforts were directed to determining the distribution and severity of the disease within the UK. A research project into the biology and control of the disease was also instituted (see Gibbs and Lonsdale, 1996). This information note provides a current assessment of the situation. A companion note on the alder species commonly grown in Britain is in preparation (White and Gibbs, 1998).

### CHARACTERISTICS AND PATTERNS OF OCCURRENCE OF THE DISEASE

2. From a distance, diseased alders attract attention in mid to late summer because the leaves are abnormally small, yellow and sparse (Figure 1). They frequently fall prematurely, leaving the tree bare. The stem base of a tree with severe crown symptoms is often marked with tarry or rusty spots, sometimes occurring up to two metres from ground level (Figure 2). These spots indicate that the underlying bark is dead. Over the next few years the fine twig structure, the bark and eventually the trunk will break up. However, it is quite common for narrow strips of bark to remain alive and to support a limited growth of new shoots from the trunk and major branches.



Figure 1

Affected alder stem showing rather sparse yellow foliage typical of Phytophthora disease.



Figure 2

Base of alder stem showing the tarry spots commonly found with Phytophthora disease.

3. Phytophthoras infect their hosts mainly by means of free-swimming spores, which are often dispersed by flowing water. This form of transmission could explain the spread of the 'alder *Phytophthora*' amongst riparian trees. Indeed, surveys of disease incidence within 10 m of the water's edge have shown a very strong negative effect of distance from water. However, the disease has also been found in sites remote from watercourses: in young woodland plantations for example and in orchard shelterbelts.
4. It has been shown that the free-swimming spores of the alder *Phytophthora* are attracted to the fine roots of young alders. However, it is by no means certain that fine roots are the main infection sites in nature. Detailed studies of diseased trees have indicated that bark-killing often begins at the collar (the base of the stem) rather than well down the root system. It is evident that foliar symptoms do not occur until a stem has been largely girdled, and that, in consequence, many years can elapse between infection and the appearance of visible disease in the crown.
5. It has recently been found that trees with severe crown symptoms may recover in subsequent years, due to the arrested development of the lesions at the stem base, followed by the development of sufficient live tissues to provide an effective link between root system and crown. Such trees show basal cankers, sometimes in the absence of tarry spots.
6. Most records of the alder *Phytophthora* have come from the common alder *Alnus glutinosa*, but the fungus has also been detected in grey alder, *A. incana*, and the Italian alder, *A. cordata* (Figure 3). It has not been recorded on any other species of tree and experiments on a number of common riparian trees have not shown any of them to be susceptible.

**Figure 3**

Italian alder in the remnant of a woodland-planting subject to occasional flooding. One tree has recently died from *Phytophthora* disease.

## DISEASE DISTRIBUTION IN THE UK AND ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE

7. It has been known for some years that the disease is present through much of southern Britain (see maps in Gibbs (1995) and Gibbs and Lonsdale (1996)). Recently attention has been focused on determining its distribution further north. In 1996 it was found on the Till, a tributary of the Tweed in the extreme north-east of England and on the Spey in north-east Scotland. Following the description of the disease from the UK, it has been reported from a number of other countries, such as Austria, France, Germany, and Sweden. It has not been found outside Europe.

## THE SCALE OF THE DISEASE IN THE UK

### On Rivers

8. The principal information on the scale of the disease comes from a series of riparian plots established in 1994 on rivers over 8 m wide in southern Britain. These plots have now been assessed for four successive years and data from them are contained in Table 1. Further analysis of the survey data from 1994 to 1996 can be found in Gibbs, Lipscombe and Peace (1998).





The survey is based on alders (maidens or coppice stools) that have at least one stem of 7 cm dbh. Annual fluctuations in the total number of trees assessed are due to the net effect of recruitment, through growth into the 7 cm size class, and loss, due to activities such as felling or events such as flood. The data show that in 1994 5.2% of the trees were diseased or dead, although it was recognised that a small proportion of the dead trees had not been killed by *Phytophthora*. This percentage has increased each year such that by 1997 8.5% of the total was diseased or dead. By extrapolation from the plot data, it is possible to produce rough estimates of the total numbers of trees affected. This procedure gives a population of 580,000 trees of which 35,000 were diseased and 15,000 were dead.

9. The biggest increase was between 1995 and 1996 (Table 1), with the increase between 1996 and 1997 being notably smaller. Scrutiny of the individual plot data for this last year indicates considerable variation, with some plots showing much increase in disease while others show little or none at all. A few trees have definitely recovered from the disease, i.e. there has been no recent death of bark and the leaves are of a normal size and colour, although they may remain sparse. Such trees show the development of new tissues at the edge of basal stem lesions, as described above. It remains to be seen whether this remission from disease is permanent.
10. On average, the disease incidence is highest in south-east England. However, heavy losses are occurring in some of the large alder populations that occur along western rivers - for example, in the Marches (Figure 4).



Figure 4

Alders killed by the disease along the River Lugg in Herefordshire.

### On Smaller Watercourses

11. Comparative data for rivers over 8 m wide and smaller watercourses are available only for two parts of the country. Both show a markedly lower incidence of disease on the smaller streams. Thus in south-east England the incidence of disease was 15% of the alder population on streams below 8 m in width as compared to 41% on the larger rivers. In the Welsh borders the equivalent figures were 1% and 19%.

**Table 1 Summary of data from riparian alder plots surveyed from 1994–1997**

	Year			
	1994	1995	1996	1997
Number of trees assessed	1704	1741	1744	1746
Number of trees observed with <i>Phytophthora</i> disease	67	78	97	105
Number of standing dead trees*	21	27	40	44
Percentage of trees observed diseased or dead	5.2	6.0	7.9	8.5

\*Between 1994 and 1997 a total of 23 trees which had died of *Phytophthora* disease were felled or washed away. These figures are not included in the table.

## DISEASE HISTORY AND ORIGIN

12. From a knowledge of the biology of the causal fungus and from its wide distribution, it is evident that the disease has been present in the UK for at least 20 years, probably much longer. The key question is whether it is caused by a native pathogen, the effects of which have been exacerbated by particular environmental circumstances, or whether it is caused by an entirely new fungus, originating within, say, the last century.
13. In favour of the first hypothesis can be cited the evidence, presented above, that the incidence of overt disease increase can fluctuate and that trees can recover from the disease. It seems possible that there was a distinct wave of infection in the mid-1990s and that this has to a degree subsided. Additional evidence for this point comes from the presence in many severely affected riparian alder stands, of substantial numbers of healthy young saplings of *c.* 2–3 years of age (Figure 5). It seems probable that these saplings are intrinsically susceptible yet they are at present apparently free from infection.
14. The second hypothesis is supported by increasing evidence that the causal fungus is of recent genetic origin. This first became apparent from a study of the morphological and cultural characteristics of the fungus (Brasier, Rose and Gibbs, 1995) and has subsequently been borne out by data from studies on the molecular biology of a collection of alder *Phytophthora* isolates obtained from across its known range in Britain and mainland Europe.
15. Some evidence can be interpreted in various ways. From the survey data, a correlation has now been established between the level of total oxidised nitrates in a stretch of river and the incidence of *Phytophthora* infection in the adjacent riparian alder (Gibbs, Lipscombe and Peace, 1998). However, much more research is required before a causal relationship between these two variables can be inferred. The sections of river with highest nitrate counts will also be those most exposed to other types of human activity, and if we are dealing with a newly evolved pathogen and this is being gradually disseminated around the country by one means or another, it could appear in much-disturbed rivers before more remote watercourses.



Figure 5

Healthy young growth of alder alongside some small trees that show severe disease symptoms.

## DISEASE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL

16. It is not recommended that time and resources should be spent in attempts to eliminate the fungus from a site through the felling or winching out of affected trees. These operations cannot be conducted in a sufficiently comprehensive way to be effective. Moreover, at least in riparian sites, additional infective propagules of the fungus may well be brought to remaining healthy trees from diseased trees further upstream.
17. Studies on an approach to disease management through the coppicing of affected trees were initiated in summer 1996 when 50 alders, in various stages of disease, were felled along the Hadley Brook in Worcestershire. As might be expected, some stools were either already dead or soon died. However, vigorous coppice growth occurred from the stumps of a number of quite severely affected trees and this was still healthy in September 1997. This observation is consistent with the view that the fungus may sometimes die out within tissue that it has colonised, and that the remaining tissue will remain unaffected unless or until a new infection is initiated. Coppicing gives any new growth a chance to develop under favourable space and light conditions.

## Disease Resistance

18. Three experiments involving various alder species and various provenances of *A. glutinosa* have been established on ground subject to flooding alongside rivers on which many diseased trees can be found. No disease data are available as yet from these experiments. However, an inoculation experiment conducted on 1-year-old seedlings of twelve *A. glutinosa* provenances provided some evidence that western European provenances were more resistant to the disease than those from further east. The same experiment provided evidence that the North American red alder, *A. rubra* could be infected by the pathogen but that it was rather more resistant than *A. glutinosa*.

## PLANTING POLICIES

19. There is a possibility that the fungus can be disseminated on plants; something that is common with Phytophthoras affecting ornamental nursery stock. We only know of two putative occurrences so far; disease in two young woodland plantations had the common feature that both had been planted with alders supplied by the same nursery. The plants had been imported from Belgium.
20. Those who are concerned about the risk of buying infected plants, should evaluate potential suppliers carefully and, if possible, see the growing stock in the nursery prior to purchase to determine that there are no apparent health problems.
21. It is quite clear that the planting of alder on sites liable to flooding by rivers, on the banks of which diseased alders are known to occur, presents a high risk. While alder is often the most suitable genus for a variety of reasons, owners should take account of the threat of disease, and consider other flood-tolerant species, such as willow, as replacements or in mixture.
22. Special care should be taken not to introduce the fungus to remote riparian sites. Here it should be noted that natural regeneration of alder can often be achieved through the use of a stockproof enclosure, and this is often preferable to planting.

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#### Appendix 4 Main differences between the 1997 and 2003 RHS survey forms

2003 Form	1997 Form	NOTES
-	Section A	Background map-based information – no longer part of field-survey, so not on 2003 form.
A	A	Field survey details - minor changes of detail only. It is now important to record grid-references at spot-checks 1, 6 and the end of site for map-based data gathering and GIS applications.
B	B	Predominant valley form – minor changes: e.g. addition of U-shape valley; presence/absence of floodplain recorded.
C	C	Number of riffles, pools and point bars – no change.
D	D	Artificial features - moved to front page from back, and types refined.
E	E	Physical attributes - 3 additional bank materials: tipped debris (TD) [includes old category of 'builders waste, as well as other discarded materials], fabric (FA), bio-engineering (BI); one additional marginal and bank feature: natural berm (NB); Flow-type: No water abbreviation changed from NO to DR to give unique 2-letter abbreviation; Earth (EA) added as bed material for seasonally dry channels; two additional channel features: Exposed bedrock (EB) and Vegetated rock (VR); capability to record numbers of channels at braided sites.
F	F	Banktop land-use and vegetation structure – Same method of recording, but seven new categories of land-use to enable, for example, separation of 'natural' woodlands from plantations, and 'natural' open water from artificial open water.
G	G	Channel vegetation types – no change, but clearer guidance on data entry in column 11.
H	H	Land-use within 50m of banktop – same additions of categories as F.
I	I	Bank profiles – natural berm added.
J	J	Extent of trees and associated features – no change except clearer guidance, by way of *asterisks, for recording discrete features that may not extend along 1% of the site, but require recording if present.
K	K	Extent of channel and bank features – significant changes. All descriptive flow types (e.g. rapids, runs) replaced by flow types (e.g. broken standing waves, rippled); eroding/stable cliffs, vegetated bedrock/boulders, unvegetated/vegetated point bars and discrete gravel deposits additions to 2003 form. Use of *asterisks for some features, as in J.
L	L	Channel dimensions – no significant change, but now requires flow-type to be noted if measurements not taken at a riffle.
M	O	Features of special interest – more categories. Includes: splitting of braided and side channels; slight changes in terminology (e.g. wet woodland(s) for carr); new categories <5m high waterfalls, natural cascades, very large boulders, floodplain boulder deposits, backwaters.
P	N	Choked channel – no change in recording.
O	Q	Notable nuisance plant species – ability to record on the bankface and in the 50m corridor separately. Use of *asterisks to remind surveyors that just a single occurrence of an alien species should be recorded.
P	R	Overall characteristics – only minor additions in guidance notes.
Q	S	Alders – no change, but use of *asterisks to remind surveyors that just a single alder, or a single diseased one, should be recorded.
R	-	Field survey quality control – new guidance for checking entries are completed before leaving the site.