

Ensuring hydrometric data are fit-for-purpose through a national Service Level Agreement

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Abstract Globally, access to hydrometric data of adequate quality, consistency and coverage to answer pressing research questions and manage operational freshwater systems remains a major issue. Despite recent advances, many datasets remain inaccessible or have limited utility due to data accuracy and completeness issues. In light of such problems, a Service Level Agreement (SLA) was introduced in 2002 to control the provision of data to the UK national hydrometric archive. Central to this framework is a set of quantifiable indicators of data quality, completeness and provision. The paper presents the results from the first 11 years of the SLA and discusses the experiences in applying the system to a diverse gauging station network maintained by multiple data providers. The improvements shown in data quality and consistency demonstrate that such systems can help to ensure hydrological databases provide high quality information to meet water management needs both today and into the future.

Key words hydrometric information; data management; monitoring; gauging station networks; river flow data; UK