 **Speak like a geographer**

**River Landscapes in the UK**

The keywords and definitions below, that cover river landscapes in the UK, are provided by AQA. There are more than those listed on your Get into Geography sheet. Start with those listed then build up to the others.

# Abrasion

Rocks carried along by the river wear down the river bed and banks.

# Attrition

Rocks being carried by the river smash together and break into smaller, smoother and rounder particles.

# Cross profile

The side to side cross-section of a river channel and/or valley.

# Dam and reservoir

A barrier (made on earth, concrete or stone) built across a valley to interrupt river flow and create a man‐made lake (reservoir) which stores water and controls the discharge of the river.

# Discharge

The quantity of water that passes a given point on a stream or river‐bank within a given period of time.

# Embankments

Raised banks constructed along the river; they effectively make the river deeper so it can hold more water. They are expensive and do not look natural but they do protect the land around them.

# Estuary

The tidal mouth of a river where it meets the sea; wide banks of deposited mud are exposed at low tide.

# Flood

Occurs when river discharge exceeds river channel capacity and water spills out of the channel onto the floodplain and other areas.

# Flood plain

The relatively flat area forming the valley floor on either side of a river channel, which is sometimes flooded.

# Flood plain zoning

This attempts to organise the flood defences in such a way that land that is near the river and often floods is not built on. This could be used for pastoral farming, playing fields etc. The areas that rarely get flooded would therefore be used for houses, transport and industry.

# Flood relief channels

Building new artificial channels which are used when a river is close to maximum discharge. They take the pressure off the main channels when floods are likely, therefore reducing flood risk.

# Flood risk

The predicted frequency of floods in an area.

# Flood warning

Providing reliable advance information about possible flooding. Flood warning systems give people time to remove possessions and evacuate areas.

# Fluvial processes

Processes relating to erosion, transport and deposition by a river.

# Gorge

A narrow, steep sided valley, often formed as a waterfall retreats upstream.

# Hard engineering

Involves the building of entirely artificial structures using various materials such as rock, concrete and steel to reduce, disrupt or stop the impact of river processes.

# Hydraulic action

The force of the river against the banks can cause air to be trapped in cracks and crevices. The pressure weakens the banks and gradually wears it away.

# Hydrograph

A graph which shows the discharge of a river, related to rainfall, over a period of time.

# Interlocking spurs

A series of ridges projecting out on alternate sides of a valley and around which a river winds its course.

# Lateral erosion

Sideways erosion by a river on the outside of a meander channel. It eventually leads to the widening of the valley and contributes to the formation of the flood plain.

# Levees

Embankment of sediment along the bank of a river. It may be formed naturally by regular flooding or be built up by people to protect the area against flooding.

# Long profile

The gradient of a river, from its source to its mouth.

# Meander

A pronounced bend in a river.

# Ox-bow lake

An arc-shaped lake which has been cut off from a meandering river.

# Precipitation

Moisture falling from the atmosphere - as rain, hail, sleet or snow.

# Saltation

Particles bouncing down the river bed.

# Soft engineering

Involves the use of the natural environment surrounding a river, using schemes that work with the river's natural processes. Soft engineering is usually much cheaper and offers a more sustainable option as it does not interfere directly with the river’s flow.

# Solution

Soluble particles are dissolved into the river.

# (Channel) straightening

Removing meanders from a river to make the river straighter. Straightening the river (also called channelising) allows it to carry more water quickly downstream, so it doesn’t build up and is less likely to flood.

# Suspension

Fine solid material held in the water while the water is moving.

# Traction

The rolling of boulders and pebbles along the river bed.

# Vertical erosion

Downward erosion of a river bed.

# Waterfall

Sudden descent of a river or stream over a vertical or very steep slope in its bed. It often forms where the river meets a band of softer rock after flowing over an area of more resistant material.