

Extending the catchment-based approach

How the Environment Agency will support and assist others

Introduction

The Environment Agency is exploring improved ways of engaging with people and organisations that can make a difference to the health of all our inland waters, from source to sea. This follows an announcement by Environment Minister Richard Benyon MP, on 22 March 2011, committing to a more catchment-based approach to sharing information, working together, co-ordinating work and making the case for collaborative action to protect England's water environment. At its heart is a desire to explore what more can be achieved for the water environment by working together.

The Environment Agency is hosting new ways of engagement in ten catchments. We sometimes refer to these as "pilot" catchments, but the intention is for the relationships and best parts of the approaches we pilot to form the basis of a longer term approach. Annex 1 provides the latest information for these catchments, which will be updated regularly at: www.environment-agency.gov.uk/catchments.

Purpose of this document

We would like to encourage other organisations to host new ways of engagement in further catchments¹. This note sets out what the Environment Agency will do to make this hosting role a practical possibility for other organisations. It is a working draft that has been circulated to Defra Water Stakeholders Forum for comment, and will be updated as we and others take forward new engagement approaches.

Aims and objectives of the new approaches to catchment engagement

Aims

Test approaches to improved engagement, information sharing and co-ordination of action at a catchment level to assess how we:

1. Get more action at a local level, from across society and business, to protect and improve water
2. Build approaches that deliver multiple benefits
3. Help trial approaches that will inform our roll out of an approach to river basin management planning that will underpin the development of second-cycle planning of the River Basin Management Plans, under the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Objectives

1. Ensure early identification and involvement of relevant stakeholders in dialogue
2. Develop a shared understanding of the current problems in the catchment
3. Ensure co-ordinated activity that will deliver multiple benefits for the environment

¹ We use the term catchment to refer to an area of land through which water drains into a series of interlinked water bodies, which can be rivers, groundwater, still waters, estuaries and coasts. It could be a very large area, for, say, an estuary and associated coastal waters, or relatively small, for say the catchment of a tributary river. We believe that a more local approach to engagement will let us plan for more ambitious outcomes. So we are interested in catchments scaled to those of our more common river systems, probably no larger than 1,500 km², rather than the entire catchment of a major river such as the Thames and its estuary.

4. Gain commitment from stakeholders to more catchment action and ambitious targets
5. Assist delivery of primary WFD objectives, including no deterioration in catchment water bodies and aiming for Good Ecological Status
6. Embed learning and share current and early successes in implementation
7. Assess the implications of adopting catchment working more widely in future.

What would be involved in hosting a new approach to engagement?

First and foremost, it would mean a commitment to managing a process of 'collaborative working'². This means involving the necessary stakeholders to:

- Share hopes and concerns
- Identify agreed problems and outcomes
- Take action and achieve more for the catchment
- Help shape the content of the second cycle River Basin Management Plans
- Influence how resources are used and targeted
- Enable better access to information about the water environment
- Help stakeholders feed information into decision making
- Help stakeholders understand what they can do differently

We do not have all the answers but want to engage you in our thinking as early as possible to help us develop what will work best.

We will collate the learning from these catchment approaches to support wider roll out to underpin the next round of River Basin Management Planning. This means there is a focus on learning which can be seen between now and December 2012. However, building trust and collaborative working takes time. So, although initial catchments will have an element of "piloting" associated with them, the expectation is that once engagement approaches are started, they may continue into the future, shaped by what is being learned.

To ensure we can capture this learning, all catchments trialling new approaches will be asked to work within a common evaluation framework³. Each host is asked to co-ordinate the production of a simple catchment 'plan' that is owned by a stakeholder group. This plan should identify the key features of the water environment, the services they provide and the main stakeholders. It should outline where actions are needed to achieve the agreed outcomes. These plans can be aspirational and identify potential future measures. If it helps you, we will issue a mandate document outlining our support for your role that sets out in simple terms:

- *Why you are hosting the new approach to engagement in the catchment*
- *What your role would be and what would remain with the Environment Agency*
- *How the Environment Agency will support you*

² The term collaborative working is used here as an overarching term, to cover a range of different types and levels of joint working. A summary of the types of collaborative working is provided in Annex 2.

³ The current draft is provided in Annex 3.

The following outline includes the kind of things we envisage would be covered under each of the bullets. We would also like to learn from your experience to help us develop clear roles and responsibilities to get us started.

1. Why you are hosting

Statement of why you are taking this role, demonstrating your commitment to collaborative working. This will also make it clear why action is needed and why increased engagement and collaboration could lead to more and quicker improvements than set out in the River Basin Management Plan.

2. What your role would be and what would remain with us

Your role would probably include:

- Provide a single point of contact for enquiries about the engagement work in the catchment
- Provide resources for meetings and dialogue (this may include professional facilitation)
- Manage the collaborative working process
- Ensure activities to 'ground-truth' catchment condition such as catchment walkovers take place
- Seek enforcement follow-ups from the regulator if voluntary action is not perceived to have been effective
- Draw together and evaluate the findings of your approach, following the common principles and evaluation framework

The Environment Agency will participate with you and others in the catchment. We will support you by carrying out our role, particularly in the following areas:

- Exercise of our statutory duties and powers
- Decisions to use our powers to enforce existing regulations
- Setting the statutory objectives for water bodies in the catchment
- Decisions on the formal legal classification of water bodies
- Decisions to progress actions such as Water Protection Zones
- Decisions on how to change or adapt the activities we undertake in the catchment, such as targeting pollution prevention work

There will be occasions where you or others in the catchment could supplement, or are better placed to deliver, some of the activities the Environment Agency carries out to protect and improve land and water. We will look to support this, and will draw up specific agreements as required to enable this to happen in a way that is safe, legal and ensures value for money.

3. How the Environment Agency will support you

The Environment Agency will be delivering a range of actions that have important impacts on the future quality of the catchment, and so we will want to be actively involved in the engagement processes. The extent of our support around enabling better facilitation and engagement may vary according to other commitments we have in the operational area of the catchment. We will agree what support will be possible before you commence.

At a basic level, we would expect to be able to provide the following:

- Access to environmental quality evidence from River Basin Management Plans packaged for the catchment, and support in interpreting these data
- Access to detailed environmental quality evidence and results from investigations relevant to the catchment that were not accessible from the River Basin Management Plans
- An initial assessment of the additional economic value of reaching good status/potential and meeting all Water Framework Directive objectives in water bodies across the catchment. This could form the basis for discussing alternative cost and benefits valuations that might emerge during engagement processes
- Access to Environment Agency meeting rooms, subject to their availability
- Strong endorsement of the need for your hosting role
- A commitment to include new actions developed through this process into River Basin Management Plans where it is clear that stakeholders have committed to the action
- A commitment to participate in actions and projects relevant to us, that arise from these new approaches
- Regular updates of changing information that may arise from investigations or other information that affects the confidence we assign to reasons for failure in the catchment
- Information on all initiatives and ongoing activity being undertaken by the Environment Agency that affects the catchment
- Assistance in sharing learning more widely through a national catchment forum
- Assistance in decision making on priorities
- Helping to resolve disputes
- Helping to devise measures that provide value for money
- Providing quality assurance around the effectiveness of measures

On a best endeavours basis, we would agree what we could do to provide the following:

- Targeting of existing regulatory resource in light of issues and information raised by interested parties in the catchment. For instance, enforcement follow-ups if voluntary action after catchment walkovers was not perceived to have been effective
- Training to build the capacity of organisations in the catchment to help identify issues and build partnerships to solve them
- Support in preparing bids for work that Defra's four-year programme to improve the health of our waters could fund
- Support in developing capabilities to facilitate and engage in other groups, and encourage our staff to take part in appropriate training provided by partners

Support from Defra

Defra have recently announced a programme to fund delivery of healthier waters at a more ambitious rate than set out in the first River Basin Management funds. From 2012/13 some of these funds will be specifically allocated to a catchment restoration fund. The process for accessing these funds is likely to be developed by autumn 2011 in time to invite bids early in 2012. The catchment restoration fund is for delivering on-the-ground work in all catchments, not just catchments where improved engagement trials are underway.

We will facilitate knowledge of others' expertise and sharing from the findings of our evaluation on the best approaches to help guide further engagement.

Support from Natural England

Natural England is another key source of evidence about the quality of water, and action being taken to improve it, within a catchment. They are committed to working with the Environment Agency to share this information and will endeavour to provide it in a format tailored to the catchment. The Environment Agency will help co-ordinate this through our local office contacts.

In addition Natural England will also help co-ordinate with landscape level delivery initiatives, including potential new Local Nature Partnerships.

Funding

Please note there will be no funding made available directly for the hosting role.

Next Steps – Making a proposal

In the long run, we would like to see all relevant local interests actively involved in the management of catchments. We recognise need some key partners now, to help us initiate the process and we hope to involve more partners over time.

The first step to take part now should be to lodge an interest with the Environment Agency. Please contact our national Catchment Management team (contact details below), for an initial discussion and we will then put you in contact with your local River Basin Programme Manager.

These local discussions will explore your role, help prepare a mandate for you to outline this role, and agree the plan for our support.

Draft version 2.0

David Baxter
Head of Catchment Management
Environment Agency

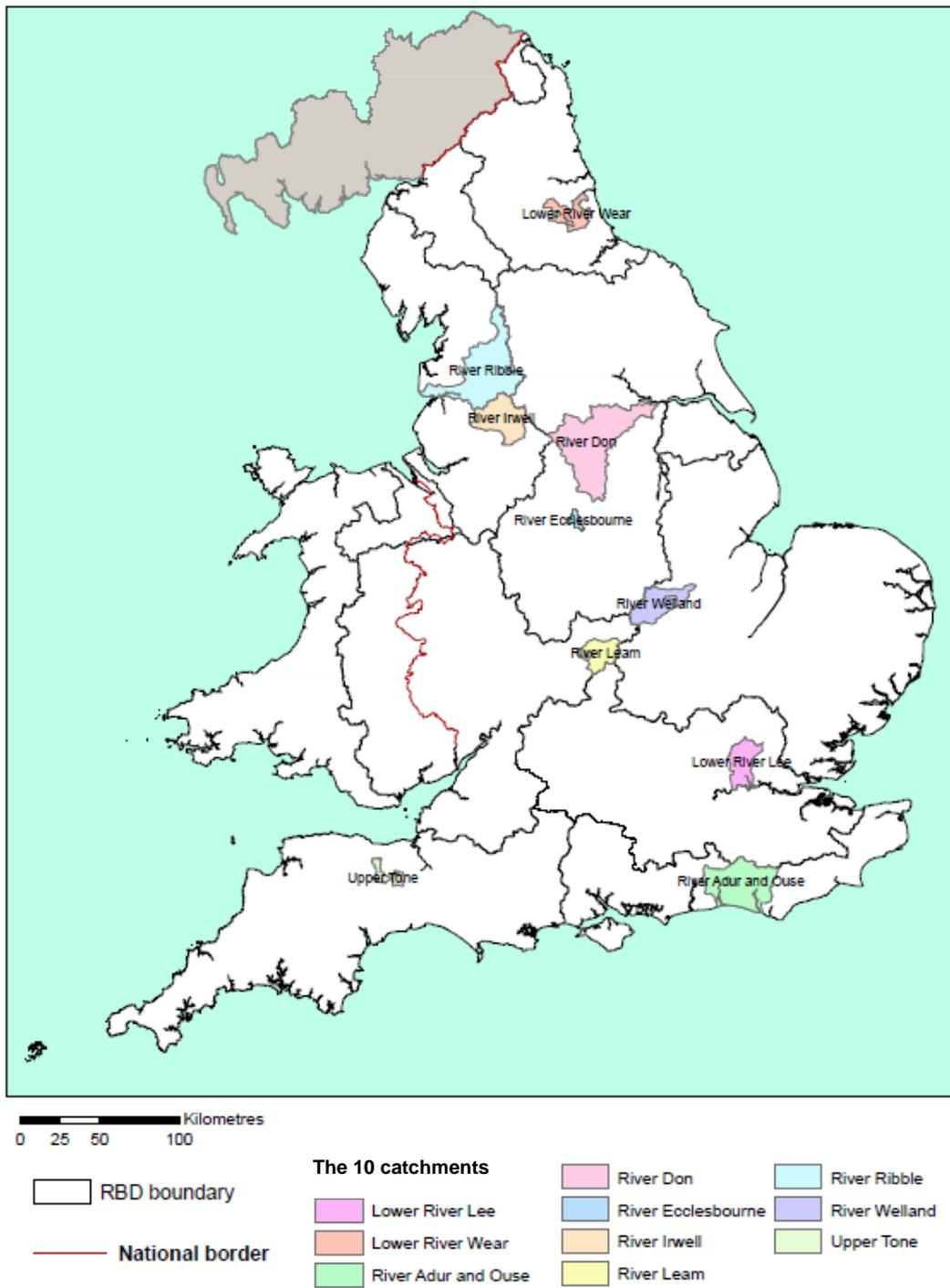
30 June 2011

Please provide comments on the approach in this draft by 29 July 2011 to:

Damian Crilly
Manager, Integrated Catchment Management
damian.crilly@environment-agency.gov.uk

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Annex 1 - The ten catchments



Map produced 18/03/2011

The ten catchments have been chosen by the Environment Agency for their variety (rather than importance), so that we can be sure that new ways of working can be applied to a wide range of scenarios.

All catchments include failing water bodies (under Water Framework Directive standards) and take into account:

- Different geographical regions
- Different pressures from pollutants or riverbank modifications
- Bathing water, drinking water and wider environmental problems
- A range of rural and urban catchments
- Groundwater and surface waters
- Different previous experiences of engagement

The project covers England only, although Environment Agency Wales is adopting a similar 'citizen-centred' approach which will provide further opportunities to identify what works well.

A single Environment Agency point of contact in an Area team (supported by an Area Environment Manager) will co-ordinate hosting activities in each catchment. These contacts are currently being confirmed but in the meantime you can contact the following people for more information on their catchments:

Catchment	Catchment contact	Email
Upper Tone	Jeremy Taylor	jeremy.taylor@environment-agency.gov.uk
Ribble	Jackie Monk	jackie.monk@environment-agency.gov.uk
Irwell	Katherine Causer	katherine.causer@environment-agency.gov.uk
Welland	Mark Grant	mark.grant@environment-agency.gov.uk
River Ecclesbourne	Tim Pickering	tim.pickering@environment-agency.gov.uk
River Leam	Mickie Karle	mickie.karle@environment-agency.gov.uk
Lower Wear	Graeme Warren	Graeme.Warren@environment-agency.gov.uk
River Don and Rother	Karen Byrom	Karen.Byrom@environment-agency.gov.uk
Lower Lee	Sandra Spinks	sandra.spinks@environment-agency.gov.uk
Adur and Ouse	Cat Fuller	catherine.fuller@environment-agency.gov.uk

Annex 2 – Collaborative Working

What is collaborative working?

It is a means of working, whereby people from different organisations work together to achieve something, or some benefit, which they could not achieve through working alone. Collaborative working is different to working within one organisation. The key differences are:

- Agreeing issues and outcomes in a transparent way
- The issues are often very difficult and the goals are challenging
- Accommodating different ways of working across other organisations
- There is no standard agreed process by which things will happen

Principles for collaborative working in catchments

Have an outcomes focus	Be clear about what outcomes we want to achieve. Listen to what the other stakeholders want from the process. All stakeholders need to express what they want to achieve in clear, outcomes-oriented language. Regularly review those outcomes as they may change over time.
Establishing shared outcomes	Look to establish shared outcomes that reflect a range of objectives. Invest time with stakeholders to reach a shared expression of what you want to achieve that is compelling and clear to all. In doing this, more may be gained from the planning process than anticipated.
Developing a shared identity	Ensure any collaborative stakeholder group remains independent of any one organisation. Development of a shared identity will contribute to this.
Establishing common ground	If a multiple benefit approach is to be taken at the catchment level then different stakeholders will be part of the process. Be clear about what we can/cannot do, and listen to what stakeholders can/cannot do. Rather than focussing on the differences, it is important to establish the common ground from which a stakeholder group can move forward.
Plan together, before doing together	You are unlikely to have a successful collaboration if all the thinking and planning has only been done by one party, with others presented with a finished idea/product that they sign up to. The planning stage is vital for thrashing out hidden issues, common ground, bottom lines and showstoppers.
Sharing information	Information must be shared equally amongst the stakeholders as far as possible. Access to information and knowledge becomes a very real form of power, and needs to be part of the engagement process. This is important if stakeholders are going to support plan implementation.
Showing respect	Go into this process with an attitude of respect for other stakeholders, their knowledge and interests. Personal relationships are critical to the success of collaboration. Recognise that stakeholders may have different interests to ours and seek ways of taking these interests into consideration as part of catchment management.

Representativeness	Catchment-level engagement needs to be representative of the full range of people and interests potentially affected by actions within the catchment. Map stakeholders to check who is who, and who is doing what in relation to your catchment. Make sure there are opportunities for new people to join the engagement as appropriate.
Understanding and supporting others	Who has power and influence? What's their jargon and culture? Why would they want to be involved in this process? Work together to support others' objectives as well as ours. If we want support for our actions, we need to support others in theirs.
Being responsive	This is more than keeping people informed, it is about having a process that is responsive to the needs of the stakeholders involved. Pay attention to all aspects of communication, from written documents to interpersonal interactions. At a catchment level there should be mechanisms to communicate with local, river basin district and national level groups, so that the levels are joined up.
Using resources wisely	Stakeholders will have limited time and money to put into catchment-level engagement. Discuss up front what time commitment stakeholders have and how best to use it.
Openness and transparency	Catchment-level engagement should be open and transparent to all involved and to those not directly involved. Make sure that all interested parties can clearly understand as much as possible about what is being done and why. Be honest with potential collaborators about your own agenda, any 'bottom lines' and issues, and ask them to be honest with you.
Learning	This is more than exchanging information. It is about being open to making changes and adapting as new information and insights arise.

Types of collaborative working

<p>Degree of innovation, shared decision making</p> <p>Amount of collaboration</p> 	Exchanging information	A critical starting point for any further progress.
	Coordination	<i>'Let's not duplicate each other's activities'.</i>
	Cooperation	<i>'Doing what we each do, in a more cooperative way'.</i> For example, joint branding of existing projects / initiatives. Tends to be for activities which are more or less 'business as usual' for the cooperating organisations i.e. no great leap involved.
	Jointly conceived / managed / funded initiatives / projects	<i>'It's our project'.</i> This involves some innovation, but each organisation is still entirely 'separate'. For example, agreeing to deliver a new project together, with each organisation putting in staff time and some money.
	Joint conception of and delivery of mainstream services, at operational level	<i>'We have to do this specific thing together'.</i> Core services are delivered in a joint way. There may be commitment to shared management and monitoring, and certainly some pooled resources. Senior management / strategic priorities can remain relatively unaffected.
	Full strategic and operational mainstreaming	<i>'It's our shared issue / we all really want this'.</i> This is where the government is trying to push the public sector towards negotiation and agreement on high level strategic priorities, on how they will be delivered across named collaborating organisations, and all of this integrated into the respective organisations' business plans i.e. beyond 'projects', into 'everyone's day job'.

Reference: *Principles and practice for collaborative working*
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Annex 3 – Common Evaluation Framework

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a framework for those who will be hosting new ways of working with others at the catchment level. It contains key information about things to consider when working with others. All catchments trialling new approaches will be asked to work within this common evaluation framework.

2. Products and milestones

A summary of the products and milestones for evaluation of the approaches being trialled in all catchments is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Products required, with milestones

Ref	Product	Milestone
P1	Common evaluation framework Live working framework and signpost document for all catchments trialling new approaches. To include common objectives and success measures.	Jun 2012
P2	Baseline stakeholder and activity mapping Identify current activity and issues, and potential partners and networks. Set up stakeholder group.	Sep 2011
P3	Stakeholder feedback for each pilot Ongoing evaluation of stakeholder feedback.	Quarterly Reports
P4	Catchment appraisals and agreed catchment priorities for each pilot catchment A brief description and shared understanding of the problems in each catchment, to inform the catchment 'plan', and a shared vision.	Dec 2011
P5	Catchment 'plan' for each pilot catchment To show key problems, shared vision, action required, and commitment from partners. Description of key services provided by the catchment and relative value to users. Register of the outline costs and relative effectiveness of actions identified. Format to be defined locally.	Mar 2012 (Draft) Dec 2012 (Final)
P6	National evaluation report Including case studies, recommendations, lessons learned and resource assessment for future approach.	Quarterly reports Dec 2012 (final)

3. Objectives and actions

A summary of the objectives, actions, timescales and products for evaluation of the catchment-based approach within a common framework is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Objectives, actions, timescales and evaluation products

Objectives	Actions	Target	Evaluation (Product Ref)
Identify and involve relevant partners in dialogue	Catchment stakeholder mapping	Sep 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner feedback shows baseline willingness to participate (P3) Quarterly review
	Establish catchment stakeholder group and nominate Chair person		
Develop and agree a shared understanding of current problems in the catchment	Seek and use data, information and learning from others	Dec 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner feedback shows shared understanding of problems (P3) A simple agreed description of catchment status and a shared vision for the catchment (P4) Comparison of value of approaches and techniques (P6) Quarterly review
	Decide where and how resources are allocated for investigation		
	Develop new ways to present data and the catchment 'story' so that it is easier to understand/use.		
	Trial different deliberative techniques to help reach shared understanding of current problems		
Gain commitment from partners to more action and ambitious targets	Identify activity already being undertaken in the catchment	Mar 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partner feedback shows shared understanding of actions required (P3) A simple agreed description of the priority actions and their relative effectiveness (P4) Catchment 'plan', endorsed by partners, showing more external partners committed to action including members of civil society (P5) Look at value for money of the actions proposed (P5) Quarterly review
	Environment Agency Catchment Project develops modelling tools and case studies to demonstrate effectiveness of possible measures in a catchment		
	Decide what future measures are needed		
	Decide how resources are devolved to allow partners to undertake measures		
	Trial different deliberative techniques to identify additional action and encourage commitment to action	Dec 2012	
Ensure co-ordinated activity to deliver multiple benefits for the environment	Align catchment activities and planning processes to deliver actions	Dec 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summary in the catchment plans (P5) Assessment of whether committed activity is likely to be effective (P5,6) Assessment of whether the approach will deliver wider ecosystem benefits (P5,6) Quarterly review and learning checkpoints
	Contribute to learning checkpoints, to broaden the toolkit available for catchment approach and share good practice		
	Explore potential to include and deliver wider environmental objectives and ecosystem benefits		
Assess implications of adopting a catchment-based approach more widely	Record time spent on engagement and planning, skills gaps and training needs	Ongoing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly review and learning checkpoints. Case studies
		Mar 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft evaluation report (P6)
		Dec 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final evaluation report (P6)

4. What is a simple catchment ‘plan’

Each host is asked to co-ordinate the production of a simple catchment ‘plan’ that is owned by a stakeholder group, as a means of evaluating different approaches and shaping the planning process for the second cycle of river basin management planning.

Each ‘plan’ must enable communication of a shared vision, key problems, action required, and commitment from partners. Where relevant, a description of the key services provided by the catchment and relative value to users will be welcomed. In addition, those who host a catchment are asked to provide a register of the outline costs and relative effectiveness of actions identified.

Those hosting a catchment trial are free to determine the format and process for compiling these ‘plans’.

5. Case studies of good practice

This section presents a summary of four good practice case studies.

5.1. Case study one: The Ribble Pilot

“Identify other stakeholders who can help develop options to solve problems, and potentially assist by “owning” some problems where they may have a close involvement in delivery of solutions”

Location	North West England
Key words	Piloting, surveying, information sharing, partnership, CIS (Common Implementation Strategy), collaboration, expertise
Principal activities	Project team and expert meetings, stakeholder forums, meetings with key stakeholders, stakeholder mapping, newsletter, website, perceptions surveys, vision building.
Partners	United Utilities, North West regional Assembly, Lancashire County Council, Yorkshire Dales National Park, Mersey Basin Campaign (locally based NGO), WWF, HarmoniCOP, University of Strathclyde / EnviroCentre Ltd, RSPB
Lessons learnt	Public participation should begin as the planning process commences in order to develop ownership Clarity about objectives and the process to achieve them. A range of participation techniques can be used Participation requires sufficient resources Local activities are needed Planning at the Ribble (operational) scale works. Existing organisations represent a high proportion of interested individuals
Where to go for more information	<i>Ribble Pilot River Basin Public Participation and River Basin Planning Early experiences, May 2004.</i>

5.2. Case study two: Witton Lakes Project

<i>"You can keep people motivated by demonstrating action"</i>	
Location	Birmingham
Key words	Local, variety, independent, disadvantaged, partnership, volunteers, integrated
Principal activities	Project meetings, technical advice, expert meetings, local focus, related initiatives involving schoolchildren and local groups
Partners	Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Pollution Partnership, Witton Lodge Community Association, Friends of Witton Lakes, Severn Trent Water, private developers, local residents
Lessons learnt	<p>Focus on developing trusting relationships based on a common understanding of the objectives</p> <p>Doing what you say you're going to do</p> <p>Communicating face-to-face</p> <p>Having direct contacts at Council, EA, Community Association and Water company level</p> <p>Making the most of existing partnerships</p> <p>Accounting for varying degrees of environmental knowledge among partners</p> <p>Partners need to see visible progress in order to remain motivated</p>
Where to go for more information	[Insert link]

5.3. Case study three: Lancashire Environment Forum

<i>'The Forum has built up trust and respect between members: this takes a long time'</i>	
Location	North West England
Key words	Representation, sustainability, reporting, responsibility, influencing
Principal activities	Intelligence sharing, joint action, influencing the activities of Lancashire County Council, wider environmental focus than WFD
Partners	Lancashire County Council (LCC), Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust, private company (InBev)
Lessons learnt	<p>Building trust with communities and partners takes time</p> <p>Clear boundaries can help distinguish between the different partners and their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Communities need big aspirations to remain motivated.</p> <p>Responsibility for decision-making can be shared, but ultimately some decisions may need to be referred back to those organisations most affected</p>
Where to go for more information	www.lancspartners.org/environmentforum/

5.4. Case study four: Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT)

<i>'Many Environment Agency officers and people who have been walking the rivers know a lot about the problems and issues. But they don't necessarily know the problems that concern different stakeholders'</i>	
Location	South West England
Key words	Charity, expertise, ownership, knowledge, sustainability
Principal activities	Knowledge transfer, action learning, catchment walkovers, sampling
Partners	Partners in other EU countries National public bodies including the Environment Agency, Natural England, Water companies, e.g. South West Water Local authorities Interest groups e.g. anglers, River Exe and Tributaries Association Farmers Academic institutions and programmes, e.g. Exeter University, Kings College London, Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU)
Lessons learnt	Consensus is central to WFD engagement. The lead organisation cannot act alone to generate action / share knowledge / get feedback. Partnership is about allowing all partners the space to share their views and concerns for collective solutions. Engagement needs to take place at the appropriate level for action and /or decision making
Where to go for more information	Westcountry Rivers Trust web pages: www.wrt.org.uk/index.html

6. Evaluation framework - **section still under development**

It is important that we learn from the work trialled under a catchment-based approach. This evaluation framework is provided to help evaluate and learn what works.

This framework is in three parts:

- 1) Description of the catchment
- 2) What to evaluate
- 3) Reporting and feedback

The framework is designed so that, by December 2012, we have:

- Captured what has worked (and not worked)
- Implemented learning through doing along the way
- Have evidence to support the overall evaluation

6.1. Description of the catchment

This part of the evaluation is about describing the catchment and identifying the baseline characteristics at the start of the process. This will help comparison over time within the catchment and across different catchments.

If you wish, you can collect additional baseline information about your catchment and the initial conditions at the start, in a form that suits your local ways of working (text, tables, data, maps etc) as part of product P1. This may help you later as you evaluate what changes. Table 3 below is provided as an aid if you wish to do so (ignore an issue if not of relevance to your catchment and/or add any other topics that are of importance).

Table 3: Describing the catchment and baseline conditions

Brief description of the catchment:

- Geographical area: location, size, urban/rural/land use, population etc
- Significant water issues
- Wider environment issues
- Wider social and economic issues
- Stakeholders: existing groups and networks including previous engagement and actions

Baseline situation at the beginning of the catchment based approach evaluation process:

- Water environment characteristics
- Flood risk in the catchment area e.g. number of households at risk
- Wider environmental characteristics
- Social and economic situation
- Identify any important historic and/or forecast trends

6.2. What to evaluate

We are evaluating three main issues within a catchment-based approach:

- Engagement
- Knowledge and information
- Action

6.2.1. Evaluating catchment engagement

There are two aspects to evaluating catchment level engagement:

- 1) Evaluating against the engagement objectives developed for that specific catchment. We anticipate that for each catchment, because of contextual issues, engagement objectives will be specified which will vary from one catchment to another.

There are six main questions that should be asked in any evaluation of public, stakeholder or community engagement. These are:

- Has the engagement met its objectives?
- Has the engagement met standards of good practice?
- Have those involved been satisfied with the engagement (what is in it for them)?
- What difference / impact has the engagement made?
- What was the balance overall of the costs and benefits of the engagement?
- What are the lessons for the future (for practice, in terms of what worked and what did not, and more widely for future planning of engagement activities)?

Answering these six questions will provide a picture of the success, quality, costs and benefits of the engagement work. It is intended that this information will feed into product P3 and P6 and may be required for the quarterly reporting.

- 2) Evaluating against the principles for collaborative working in catchments as discussed in the previous section. Decide what evidence you will need to demonstrate that these principles have been met, and how you will get that evidence.

6.2.2. Evaluating knowledge and information

One of the main aims is to test approaches to information sharing amongst participants in the catchment. Information sharing, and the associated development of knowledge, will also contribute to better environmental planning and facilitate the possibility of collective ownership of the problems.

The sorts of things to consider here are:

- Have we made our environmental data and information available to stakeholders in the catchment?
- To what extent have people accessed it?
- How is it being used?
- Are stakeholders providing us with their information and knowledge?
- Are we incorporating stakeholder knowledge into our ways of working?
- What types of information are of most interest (e.g. local, scientific, and financial) to which stakeholders?
- Is there agreement around what the data and information means?
- Has more knowledge and information led to action?
- Is the accuracy and/or meaning of data and information contested, leading to problems around the sharing of problems and solutions?
- Are data and information – including the use of maps and models – proving a useful way of structuring stakeholder involvement in the catchment?

The Environment Agency will provide a template to support this.

6.2.3. Evaluating action

We want to know what new commitment to action is identified as a result of the engagement activity. We would also like to find-out, where possible, the environment outcomes expected, the costs expected, and how effective stakeholder feel the actions will be in addressing the problems.

The things to consider when evaluating action in the catchment include:

- What new action has been identified?
- Who will be responsible for it, and how have you established a commitment?
- Why did they take action?
- What resources will be involved (e.g. estimated costs and time)?
- What will the wider impacts be (benefits, problems, environmental outcomes, wider socio-economic)?

- What is the relative effectiveness of the action in addressing the problems identified?
- If action has not occurred, what has limited it from occurring (e.g. knowledge of the problem, disagreement of the causes of the problem, ownership of the problem, resources)?

The Environment Agency will provide a template to support this.

6.3. How to evaluate: approaches and techniques

Evaluation is about assessing the quality and effectiveness of a project or programme, in this case catchment engagement. Quality and effectiveness is evaluated with respect to the aims and objectives of the project, the wider objectives of the organisation and the public policy objectives of the Government (such as environment, social and economic policy goals). This can be done at different levels of formality, rigor and detail. Evaluation can thus range from:

- A simple qualitative assessment of how 'things are going' with respect to the project objectives by the project team
- A qualitative evaluation of the project involving the wider stakeholder group, through to a qualitative and quantitative assessment of the project that evaluates the effectiveness of the project in detail from the perspective of all participants

And use a range of methods such as:

- Basic reflection on what has worked and what has been learnt by the project team
- Qualitative social scientific and/or market research techniques such as semi-structured interviews, focus groups and surveys of stakeholders
- Formal independent evaluation using best-practice qualitative and quantitative techniques

The important issue is that the evaluation is proportionate to what is needed and the resources available. In the case of the catchment-based approach the important issues are:

- Use evaluation as an opportunity to learn and improve during the engagement process
- That the wider group of stakeholders and collaborators also learn
- The evaluation process reveals information and learning that is shared with others

Level of evaluation	Activities necessary
Light touch evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear purpose for the evaluation: what do you want the evaluation to achieve? • Clear objectives for the engagement, and how you will assess whether they have been met • Regular discussions within the team to review what is working, what is not and needs to be changed, what is being achieved etc.

Level of evaluation	Activities necessary
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end, a short discussion within the team to assess whether the objectives were met, the engagement met standards of good practice, what the impacts have been, what were the costs and benefits, and lessons for the future • Short report with short description of activities, numbers and types of participants and events, whether the objectives and key criteria were met, and lessons for the future
Medium level evaluation	<p>All the above, in more depth, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some review of documents to identify what was supposed to happen from the beginning • Regular review and reflection sessions as part of team meetings, including basic monitoring of costs and emerging benefits • Some feedback from participants (communities, stakeholders etc) to provide their views on how the engagement worked for them. Could include questionnaires at events, followed by analysis of those • Interviews with a small sample of participants and those commissioning the engagement, plus short analysis of interviews • Fuller report covering some analysis as well as facts, figures and lessons.
Full evaluation	<p>All the above, in more depth, plus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreeing and publishing the objectives of the engagement • Full review of relevant documents, and summary of findings • Questionnaires at all events and to a wider range of those involved; could include observers, stakeholders, scientific and technical experts etc; then full quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaire responses • Interviews with a sample of people from all aspects of the project (as above), followed by full qualitative analysis of interview responses • Full analysis of costs and benefits, impacts and influences, and of what worked well and less well • Full report covering all analysis and conclusions, and lessons for the future.

6.4. Reporting and feedback

The approach to reporting and feedback described here is designed to fit with the existing structures and processes within Environment Agency Operations.

This section describes how to join-up reporting and feedback on the catchments – including the information and learning generating by doing evaluation – with these existing reporting routes. Specifically, to contribute to, and make best use of:

- Quarterly special topic review process for ‘River Basin Management’
- Quarterly ‘checkpoints’ to learn from – and share learning with – wider initiatives
- Monthly progress reporting and feedback for the national catchment-based approach project.

At the end of the project Defra will undertake an independent overarching evaluation of the catchment-based approach.

6.4.1. Quarterly reporting

The following topics will be included within internal Environment Agency 2011-2012 quarterly reviews:

- **Quarter 1** - *How do those hosting feel?*
Do we know who our potential partners are and have we identified new ones?
- **Quarter 2** - *What's working well for river basin management, and what do we expect to achieve over and above existing commitments?*
Can you talk me through an example of where we're aligning our work better across functions, and with others?
- **Quarter 3** - *How have you worked to develop a shared understanding of the issues in catchments? What's the feedback from our partners?*
How have we deepened our own understanding in the process?
- **Quarter 4** - *Can you talk me through a catchment, its problems and the resulting actions? How have the investigations informed these actions?*
Do we have new commitments from others, and what does this look like?

6.4.2. Quarterly learning checkpoints

The Environment Agency will also hold quarterly learning checkpoints for those involved in the catchments and river basin management. These will enable us to stop, look, and listen each quarter and ask: “what are we learning from the catchment-based approach which can be embedded elsewhere?” and “what have we done elsewhere – in other catchments, or through other initiatives – which we can use to enhance the catchment-based approach?”. This will also help to report on other findings in line with milestones set out in Table 1.

6.4.3. Monthly progress reporting and feedback

The Environment Agency will hold internal monthly checks to review progress and get structured feedback. Like the quarterly review process, these checks will be an opportunity and focus for evaluation, giving and receiving feedback on how things are going, and for sharing learning.

A checklist, which summarises the issues for on-going evaluation, is provided in Table 4 below for reference.

Table 4: Monthly reporting evaluation checklist

Description of the catchment

- Significant political, social, economic or environmental changes or emerging issues in the catchment

Engagement

- Shared understanding
- Satisfaction with engagement
- Commitment from others

Knowledge and Information

- Data and information shared
- Interest in and use of information
- Opportunities and problems

Action

- Action taken
- Reasons for action (or inaction)
- Impacts and outcomes

Progress and issues

- Example of recent success
- Example of key risk or issue

6.4.4. Final reporting in 2012

We will draw together reporting and evaluation into a final report in December 2012 for internal use, for Defra and for wider stakeholders. However, if we get the quarterly reviews and the monthly progress reporting and feedback right we will have generated the evidence and done learning along the way.