Defra

Evaluation of the catchment-based approach – pilot stage

First Participant Survey Report

May 2012

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Contents

Evaluation of the catchment-based approach – pilot stage.......................... 1
1 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 1
2 Roles and Responsibilities .............................................................................. 2
3 Timescales and Delivery .................................................................................. 3
4 Engaging, Sharing, Support and Learning ...................................................... 8
5 Benefits ............................................................................................................. 12
6 Costs and Value for Money ............................................................................ 15
Appendix A: The Participant Survey Form ......................................................... 18
1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 THE PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Defra are currently supporting a series of catchment-level partnerships to pilot a new approach of improving the water environment through catchment-level engagement and planning. As part of this pilot phase Defra is evaluating 25 catchments to learn as much as possible from those participating. The information will be shared with others who may be involved in a nationwide roll-out from 2013. As part of the evaluation, two participant surveys are being conducted. One has been used early on in the process to determine the starting point, and participants’ expectations and understanding of the pilot and the catchment, and the other is at the end of the process to measure change, to reflect what went well and what was difficult from a participant’s viewpoint.

This survey, the first participant survey, was launched on 05/03/2012 and closed on 06/04/2012, using an online survey tool (Survey Methods). A copy of the survey form is provided at Appendix A. Pilot hosts were asked to circulate survey details to key participants in their catchment, defined as individuals actively involved in the catchment work on a regular basis (including multiple individuals from the same organisation/s provided they had different roles, and the pilots hosts themselves). Up to 25 participants per pilot were allowed for in the survey.

1.2 OVERVIEW OF RESPONSES

In total, 127 responses were received from participants (24 partial responses and 103 complete), covering 18 of the 25 catchment pilots. On average, the survey took 24 minutes to complete. Typically, between five and seven responses were received from participants; the maximum number of responses received for a pilot was 19. The overall results of this participant survey are presented here, and the exercise will be repeated towards the end of this process to review changes in participant views at a later stage of the pilot programme.

1.3 REPORT STRUCTURE

The main body of this report is divided into several sections in line with the structure of the participant survey: Roles and Responsibilities; Timescales and Delivery; Engaging; Learning; Benefits and Costs.
2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The participants surveyed represented a wide range of organisations, of which the most common were the Environment Agency (EA) (19%) and Local Authorities (13%), as well as Rivers Trusts (9%), water companies (9%) and the farming community (8%). A significant number of responses also came from the Forestry Commission, Natural England, and local Wildlife Trusts.

As shown in Figure 2.1, around 40% of people responding at this stage have been involved in water planning for at least five years but there were almost 20% that had no previous experience of water planning, showing that this approach is already engaging new people. The spread was also evident in most individual catchments pilots, suggesting that even new pilots have experienced people on board and vice versa.

Figure 2.1: Question 4 (122 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. How much have you been involved in water planning previously?</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all:</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>17.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not very much (&lt; 2 years):</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite a lot (2-5 years):</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>21.31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A lot (&gt; 5 years):</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>40.16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In response to Question 5 (When did you start being involved in the catchment group?), the majority of participants said they had become involved between October 2011 and March 2012. 15% of participants stated that they had become involved in 2010 or early 2011, mostly associated with EA-hosted pilots which had an earlier start date to those hosted by other stakeholders.

Overall most participants at this stage envisage they will spend more than 10 days on the pilot in 2012, evenly split between participants of EA-hosted pilots and participants of pilots hosted by other stakeholders. If pilot hosts are removed from the response, the sample gave an even spread between more than 10 days and two to 10 days. Only 6% of respondents envisaged spending less than two days on the pilot.
3 TIMESCALES AND DELIVERY

3.1 OVERVIEW

Figure 3.1 summarises the responses received from pilot participants about the degree of agreement within their pilot at this stage on: a vision for the catchment; the problems to be tackled; and the actions needed to address the problems.

Overall, most participants (59-74% of responses) indicated that there is ‘some agreement’. Participants felt there was more agreement on the problems than the vision for the catchment and actions needed to overcome problems to achieve the vision. Around 10% of participants felt there was full agreement on a vision and actions needed and 24% believed there was full agreement on the problems. Reassuringly, few participants (<2%) felt there was ‘no agreement’.

It will be interesting to see whether participants’ perceptions on the level of agreement at the end of the pilot process have changed.

**Figure 3.1: Question 11 (110 responses)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No agreement:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little agreement:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some agreement:</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>73.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full agreement:</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>11.82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No view:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.1: Question 13 (108 responses)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No agreement:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little agreement:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some agreement:</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>59.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full agreement:</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No view:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There are many pilots where at least one participant has already indicated that they believe there is full agreement on the vision, the problems or the actions. However, in many cases this was a single response with the general response indicating lesser agreement. The number of pilots where at least half of participants who responded indicated there was full agreement was much smaller, and with the exception of the Frome and Piddle (Hosted by Wessex Water) all of these are hosted by the EA and have been running for at least 7 months (see Table 3.1). The only pilot where the majority of participants feel there is full agreement on the vision, the problems and the actions is the Welland, an EA hosted pilot which has been running for 8 months.

### Table 3.1 Numbers of pilots where participants indicated there was ‘full agreement’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pilots where at least one participant indicated there was ‘full agreement’</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of pilots where at least half of participants indicated there was ‘full agreement’</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Names of pilots where at least half of participants who responded indicated there was ‘full agreement’ (with host organisation and running time in months)</th>
<th>Vision</th>
<th>Problems</th>
<th>Actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irwell (EA, 12) Welland (EA, 8)</td>
<td>Adur and Ouse (EA, 10) Frome and Piddle (Wessex Water, 5) Irwell (EA, 12) Lower Lee (EA, 8) Welland (EA, 8)</td>
<td>Ecclesbourne (EA, 7) Welland (EA, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 3.2 VISION

There were two catchments where at least 50% of participants indicated there was full agreement on the vision.

Most participants expressed their vision in terms of the need for an improved environment as a long-term outcome, with typical statements such as:

*A vibrant, healthy watercourse supporting everyone’s ambitions* and
providing water for life and livelihoods.’

For some however, the focus was on more short term process orientated outcomes for improved collaboration, or engagement, or the development of a plan; for example:

‘To develop truly integrated solutions that involve real partnership and solve problems holistically.’

Or in many cases visions included a mixture of both, for example, the agreed vision developed for the Welland of:

‘Our vision for the Welland Valley Partnership (WVP) (aka Pilot Catchment) is that the Welland, from source to sea will be cleaner & healthier, support more fish, birds & wildlife, meet the needs of drinking water suppliers & business, provide an attractive amenity for people to enjoy, be sensitively managed by people whose activities affect it. The WVP will work with everyone who wants to help realise this vision.’

Though notably not all of the Welland participants quoted this vision statement in responding to this question and for the Irwell no-one quoted an agreed vision.

Encouragingly, most phrases on the vision reflected the need for integrated uses but there were a small number of cases where visions were quoted with a single focus, for example:

‘Improved access to a wide variety of watercourses for recreational canoeing, enjoying a clean water environment where I can see and enjoy wildlife, and/or enjoy the thrill of "bouncy water". Fixed structures designed to improve the experience for all users, professional and recreational including walkers and cyclists.’

3.3 AGREETING PROBLEMS

There were five catchments where at least 50% of participants indicated there was full agreement on the problems.

The problems quoted range enormously covering the whole spectrum of pressures you would expect, for example:

‘Fragmented river corridors; Diffuse pollution; Some invasive species, especially mink and balsam, and threats from others e.g. signal crayfish.’

Others highlighted the managerial problems of bringing people together for joint action, with responses such as:
‘Encouraging some of the partners of the benefits of integrated management rather than just WFD delivery; Partners preferring to pursue their singular objectives; a range of complex interconnected issues from inappropriate land use to water abstraction issues.’

3.4 AGREEING ACTIONS

There were two catchments where at least 50% of participants indicated there was full agreement on the actions needed, the Welland (as for the vision and problems) and the Ecclesbourne.

In line with findings on the vision and problems, comments fell into two parts, those around actions on management, for example:

‘1 - evidence based issues (i.e. targeting phosphates), 2 - partnership work, 3 – funding.’

And others focussing on dealing with specific pressures such as farming, for example:

‘Advice, help and support to land owners where woodlands/ riparian tree corridors are a key feature to the local landscape. Grant delivery or other funding directly could help create action.’

3.5 OVERALL CONFIDENCE

Most participants indicate they are ‘quite confident’ that action will lead to improvements in the water environment (see Figure 3.2) with confidence higher in catchments where draft plans are already developed. In some cases participants quote positive comments such as:

‘Given the good level of shared objectives already, and the current level of partnership working, we should be confident of success.’

However this is often supported with caveats, even where participants have indicated they are ‘very confident’, such as:

‘the plan is drafted, but the issue will be how it is received by the local stakeholders. There has been little consultation and it could come across as quite black and white e.g. ‘failing’ for this and that.’

And another where a participant commented:

‘I worry that the participants are being asked to create a plan with little knowledge little time when [another organisation] has already produced a plan and have been doing this for 15 years.’ (Words in brackets replace name to protect anonymity)
Those catchments still in early stages recognise the enormity of the task, the need for strong leadership and give and take in order to make progress. Many commented on the challenge of limited time and getting people to sign up to actions without funding.

The main concern expressed throughout was about plan delivery requiring ‘proper funding and effective enforcement by DEFRA and the EA’ and as ‘vital in keeping stakeholder involvement going forward’, that ‘real (sustained) improvement will only come about after many years of supported programme’.

‘I think that learning will come about from this project, but I'm not sure what will be delivered in terms of improving the water environment if no resources are put in (funding). It will require long term commitment that will continue long after Dec 2012.’
4 ENGAGING, SHARING, SUPPORT AND LEARNING

As shown in Figure 4.1, the majority of the participants see their main role as representatives of their organisations/communities, although a considerable minority consider themselves as partners, and interestingly few see their role as consultees.

**Figure 4.1:** Question 8 (119 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Partner</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultee</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert advisor</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representative of your organisation/community</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>53.78%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Figure 4.2, the majority of participants don’t think that all the relevant stakeholders are involved in the catchment group. It was interesting to examine the comments that were made around which groups were considered to be missing (Table 4.1).

**Figure 4.2:** Question 16 (103 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you think all relevant stakeholders are involved in the catchment group?</th>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>44.66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>55.34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1: Groups considered to be missing from the current catchment group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of group</th>
<th>Number of mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business/industrial including extraction industries</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowner/private landowners</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of the public/communities/residents</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers/representatives of farming: National Farmers' Union; Country Landowners Association</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Authorities</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local community groups, parish councils</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wildlife NGOs: wildlife trusts, WWF, RSPB</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Commission</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural England</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation groups e.g. ramblers, anglers, river users</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPs, local politicians</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage organisations: National Trust, English Heritage</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water companies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academics, scientists</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education, schools</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other organisations mentioned once: Inland Drainage Board, British Waterways, Local Nature Partnerships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was clear from this list that the participants are thinking widely about who might be involved in the pilot. One participant made a pertinent comment about how some stakeholders may find it difficult to engage with a collaborative approach: ‘some communities are not represented as they have never been asked to contribute to collaborative projects such as this. Those communities are not always structured in such a way as to allow straightforward engagement’.

In addition, comments were made about how more and different stakeholders would be involved as the pilot progressed.

Question 18 provided information on the support that the pilots felt they have received from Defra and its agencies (Figure 4.3). From this graph it is clear that the majority of the participants have found Defra and its agencies to be supportive or very supportive of the pilot process.
**Defra**

**Evaluation of the Catchment-based Approach – Pilot Stage**

**First Participant Survey**

**Figure 4.3**: Question 18. What is your view of the relationship between the catchment group and Defra and its network? (106 responses)

In terms of the comments made in relation to this question, approximately 10 were about Defra, in which a variety of responses was expressed. Two comments were made about Defra being very keen and positive. The other comments suggested that Defra seem quite distant from the pilots, that sometimes the messages from Defra were confused and whilst there were many excellent Defra-led initiatives it would be good to see them more integrated e.g. the Love Your Rivers campaign was mentioned as something people did not know about. It was also felt that Defra could have better links with the EA.

Fewer comments were made about the other agencies, with four participants commenting about how supportive and engaged the EA are. In terms of Natural England, a couple of comments were made around the right level of the organisation not being involved together with the difficulty for Natural England of getting consistent engagement in the pilots. In terms of the Forestry Commission, there was only one comment which pertained to how they did not see that specific pilot as a priority area and so were just being informed of progress. This last issue, that is, how national organisations use their limited resources to be engaged with pilots will become key as the catchment approach is rolled out nationally.

Q9 asked participants how much they were expecting to learn from their involvement in the pilot. All participants said they expected to learn something and over 94% felt that they would learn quite a lot or a great deal. There was quite a range of views about what people expect to learn, from specific technical information (e.g. ‘impact of
habitats work on water quality’) to collaborative approaches (e.g. ‘effectiveness of pilot in terms of public participation’) and ‘wider catchment issues’. Several people suggested that the collaboration and engagement would themselves generate learning: ‘The pilot has brought together individuals willing to share time, skills and knowledge’. While several people commented that it is difficult to predict the outcomes of this new kind of approach, most felt that these would be positive: ‘All new ground for us. Anything can happen but should be for the better.’ Only one respondent said they were ‘cynical’ about the results.
5 BENEFITS

The benefits section of the participant survey sought the views of participants on what they expect the likely benefits of the pilot to be for their organisation (Q20-27). 106 responses were received for this section of the survey. Given that a number of the pilot catchments are at a relatively early stage, most responses were associated with likely benefits rather than actual ones, and were considered more likely to be realised in the long term.

5.1 BETTER PLANNING AND COLLABORATION

The largest benefits of the pilot process were seen by most participants to be in improved planning and collaboration (Figure 5.1a), with over 90% of participants viewing the benefits in this area as likely. The three largest benefits identified were in improved understanding and recognition of the problems in the catchment, improved information availability and sharing, and improved stakeholder buy-in to catchment objectives and delivery. Participants commented on additional likely benefits through the formation of steering groups, better identification of key issues and improved development of communication strategies.

5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

Pilot hosts’ views on the various potential environmental benefits of the catchment pilots were mixed (Figure 5.1b). Most participants thought improvements to water quality and biodiversity were likely as a result of the pilot work, as well as improving confidence that the catchment will not deteriorate. Reduced flood risk and improvements in water availability were also considered likely to be benefits seen as a result of the catchment pilot work. Responses indicate that the avoidance of carbon emissions was the least likely environmental aspect to benefit from catchment pilot work (although this was still considered likely to see a benefit in 75% of responses).

Other environmental benefits identified from the survey include integrating adaptation to climate change and enhancing landscape features under the catchment based approach. A number of stakeholders also noted that they expected to see wider “ecosystem services” benefits as well as positive impacts on quality of life, tourism, culture and environmental awareness.

5.3 SOCIAL BENEFITS

Significant social benefits were considered likely by the majority of participants (Figure 5.1c), particularly with respect to enhanced reputation and improved awareness throughout the wider catchment community. Other expected social benefits identified from the survey included improved access to river corridors and
waterways, facilitation of stakeholder engagement, improved recreational opportunities, enhanced public awareness and voluntary sector influence on planning and policy.

5.4 ECONOMIC BENEFITS

Participants were less optimistic about the likely economic benefits of the catchment pilot work than benefits in other areas (Figure 5.1d). More than half of participants expected to see some benefit in terms of efficiency savings, wider catchment solutions and indirect benefits (through positive impacts on business), although the proportion of participants who thought these benefits were likely to be large was relatively small.

Other expected economic benefits identified from the survey include improved opportunities for sustainable farming and tourism, plus reductions in diffuse pollution and its potential to reduce water companies’ capital and operational expenditure.
**Figure 5.1:** For your organisation, do you expect the pilot to lead to any of the following benefits/positive outcomes: (106 responses)


- a. Improved understanding and recognition of the problems in the catchment and which need action first?  
- b. Improved data/information availability and sharing?  
- c. Agreement on actions to improve the catchment that have not previously been agreed to?  
- d. Identification of additional funding, or funding opportunities?  
- e. Better integration with other planning processes?  
- f. Improved stakeholder buy-in to catchment objectives/delivery?  
- g. Buy-in to further engagement/continuation beyond the initial phase of the pilot?  
- h. Other process related benefits?

*b: Q22. Environmental benefits.*

- a. Higher confidence that the catchment will not deteriorate:  
- b. Improved water quality:  
- c. Improved water availability:  
- d. Reduced flood risk:  
- e. Increased biodiversity:  
- f. Avoided carbon emissions:  
- g. Other environmental benefits e.g. ecosystem services:


- a. Positive communication/reputation:  
- b. Improved awareness across wide catchment communities:  
- c. Increased recreational use of the catchment:  
- d. Other social benefits:


- a. Efficiency savings:  
- b. Avoided expenditure:  
- c. Positive impacts on employment, profitability, competitiveness, health:  
- d. Other economic benefits:
6 COSTS AND VALUE FOR MONEY

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This part of the survey asked about the expected costs of the pilot to the participating organisation. There was a range of responses to this section, reflecting the uncertainty in estimating (particularly less tangible) costs at a relatively early stage of the process. It is likely that more robust and complete estimates will be provided as the catchment pilots progress.

6.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Figure 6.1 shows the amount of time (staff days) that participating organisations expect to spend on the pilot process.

Figure 6.1: Staff time (days)* (84 responses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Range</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More than 220 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110 to 220 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 110 days</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 days or less</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Days are given per year. Full-time equivalent was considered to be 220 days/year for the purpose of this analysis. Where a range of days were given, the central value was used.

Most participating organisations expect to spend a relatively modest amount of time on the pilot process. This is consistent with the response to Question 7 (see Section 2), which showed that around half of participants expect to spend less than 10 days in 2012, whilst half of participants expect to spend more than 10 days.

Whilst for some organisations, the pilot is “part of the day job”, others have recruited staff specifically (paid or voluntary) or have allocated a specific amount of time (e.g. a few days per month) to engage with the process.

It is interesting to note that a significant minority expect to spend more than 110 days (i.e. more than 0.5 FTE), suggesting that the pilots could be quite onerous for some.

Figure 6.2 shows the amount of (non-staff related) money (e.g. travel and equipment)
that participant organisations expect to spend on the pilot process.

**Figure 6.2:** Non-staff expect expenditure (£) (76 responses)

![Bar chart showing expenditure expectations](chart1.png)

Inevitably at this early stage, a large number of participants are unsure of the expenditure implications of the pilots. Of those providing an estimate, the majority expect to spend relatively modest amounts (less than £250). However, a significant minority expect to spend over £2,000. Most of the smaller costs are associated with meetings (travel, venue hire, materials, etc), whilst the higher costs tend to be associated with funding contributions to the pilot programme or with specific measures (e.g. construction of fish passage). In some cases, these ‘project costs’ run into several hundred thousand pounds. When combined with the staff costs and summed across all organisations in all catchments, this suggests that the process could involve a significant amount of cost.

**Figure 6.3:** Percentage of participants expecting the pilot to lead to negative outcomes: (101 responses)

![Bar chart showing negative outcomes](chart2.png)

Figure 6.3 shows the extent to which participants expect the pilots to lead to other negative outcomes (costs). The large majority of respondents do not expect the pilots to lead to other negative outcomes. Of those that did express concerns in this area,
the most commonly cited was the potential damage to relationships if the pilot does not go as well as hoped or deliver the expected outcomes. Other concerns noted included the displacement of time/resources from other projects (especially where organisations rely on voluntary staff) and potential carbon emissions associated with capital investment.
APPENDIX A: THE PARTICIPANT SURVEY FORM

See separate file