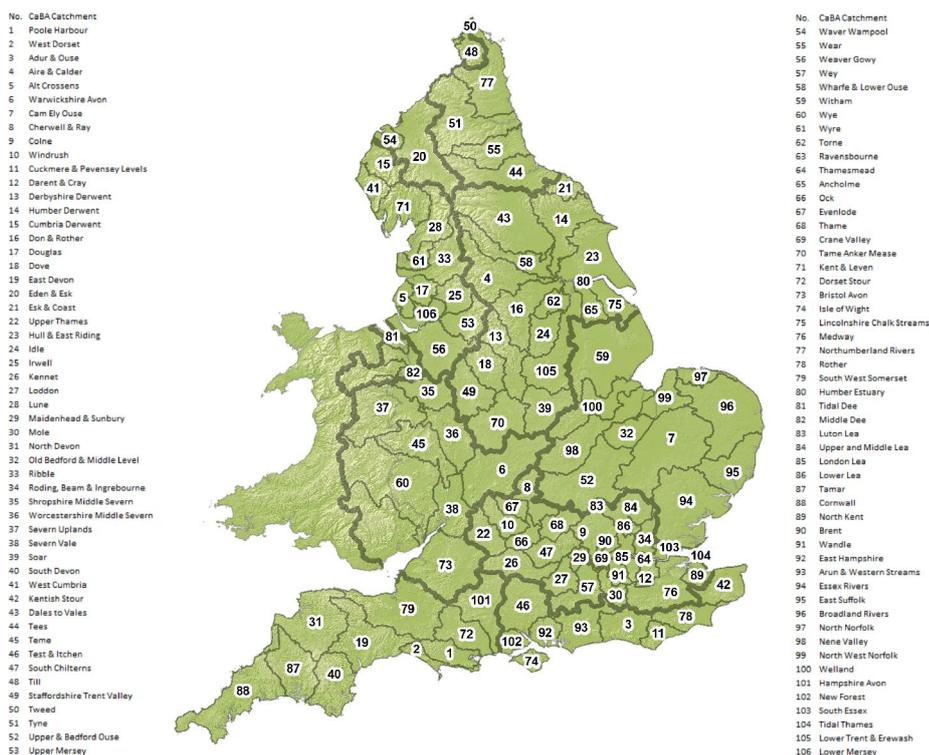




# Water Industry and the Catchment Based Approach

## Background

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) embeds collaborative working at a river catchment scale to deliver cross cutting environmental improvements. Catchment partnerships, bringing local knowledge and expertise, are active in each of the 100+ Water Framework Directive catchments across England, including those cross border with Wales (Figure below). Partnerships each have a host organisation, typically an environmental NGO such as a Rivers Trust or a Wildlife Trust, with a range of partner organisations including Water Companies, Local Authorities, Government Agencies, Landowners, Angling Clubs, Farmer Representative Bodies, Academia and Local Businesses.



For more information about the vision and justification for CaBA, see Defra's CaBA Policy Framework:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/204231/pb13934-water-environment-catchment-based-approach.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/204231/pb13934-water-environment-catchment-based-approach.pdf)

The diverse nature of the partnerships helps to identify innovative solutions and leverages considerable additional funding whilst adding value through fostering

strong collaborative relationships with local communities. Each partnership is armed with the CaBA GIS data package – 120 spatial datasets for their specific catchment including SAGIS model outputs, flood risk maps and WFD status – enabling them to collectively identify priorities for action and adopt a natural capital approach to catchment management.

The CaBA Partnerships are represented at a national level through the National Support Group (NSG), which works closely with Defra and the EA on shaping delivery under various key issues including flood risk management, water resources, river basin management planning and water stewardship. The NSG is well placed to support the water industry in shaping Outcomes and Performance Commitments, including developing Bespoke Measures, particularly with respect to the environment and integrated catchment management, and to help align opportunities for partnership approaches in PR19 against each of the drivers for the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP).

## Collaboration with water companies

Various examples of successful collaboration between CaBA Partnerships and water companies exist that have led to environmental, social and economic benefits, whilst also helping to deliver on water company outcomes and measures of success. Considerable scope exists to further align the goals and ambitions of water industry and CaBA. In doing so, water companies will address the OFWAT call to adopt a systems thinking mindset as part of their resilience business planning for the AMP7 investment programme.

**Rural Land Management:** CaBA Partnerships work closely with the farming community to address diffuse agricultural pollution, reducing the loss of soil, pesticides, nutrients and faecal microbes to receiving waters. Improved quality of drinking water sources with an associated reduction in treatment costs, reduced need for expensive phosphate stripping at small rural treatment works, enhanced bathing water quality with recreational benefits, and more sustainable and resilient farming practices are all outcomes that arise from this engagement. The intermediary role CaBA Partnerships provide between Water Companies and the farming community has also helped to broker innovative covenants to implement long-term changes in land management.

**Flood Risk Management and Uncontrolled Discharges:** CaBA Partnerships have been involved in the collaborative delivery of green infrastructure projects to address surface water and sewer flooding including through SuDS features such as rain gardens and constructed wetlands. Such delivery realises multiple benefits, with water quality improvements, enhanced biodiversity and improved community health and well-being also arising. Spill frequencies of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs) can also be reduced through addressing flood risk in this way, whilst engagement and education with communities and businesses can help to reduce blockages in the drainage network.

**Low Flows:** Demand management and river catchment improvement schemes can reduce the impact of low flows and build resilience. Engagement and education are key objectives for all CaBA partnerships and their extensive civil

society networks can be used to increase water efficiency. River restoration techniques - a key area of expertise for CaBA Partnerships - can improve the flow regime, maintaining ecological health and recreational value of the river.

**Community Engagement:** CaBA Partnerships work closely with local communities providing opportunities for volunteering and citizen science (including monitoring of biological quality and pollution), thereby fostering a sense of connection to the environment and local ownership of issues. CaBA partnerships can continue to marshal this enthusiasm to help water companies spot issues and target improvement works. Some partnerships have led community engagement campaigns with respect to water efficiency and there is great scope to expand this educational work to issues such as fats, oils and greases, and the use of household and garden chemicals.

**Water Stewardship:** With the support of WWF-UK and Coca Cola a new Water Stewardship service has recently been established to help businesses to be good water stewards and work with their local CaBA partnership to deliver sustainable solutions for water. These exciting new partnerships with business and industry can address endemic diffuse pollution problems in the supply chain, and reduce impact from key trade discharges.

**Fish and Eel Passage:** CaBA Partnerships have delivered more than 200 projects to date to improve fish and eel migration, improving the ecological health and recreational value of hundreds of kilometres of river network. Within AMP5, Catchment Partnerships have assisted with Eel Regulation compliance and helped deliver environmentally acceptable schemes very cost-effectively.

**Invasive Non-native Species:** CaBA Partnerships draw upon large teams of trained volunteers to control or eradicate freshwater invasive non-native species. With Anglers and other community groups acting as the eyes and ears of the river, rapid response protocols can be readily implemented in the event of the discovery of fresh invasions, whilst partnerships regularly undertake educational awareness campaigns such as 'Check, Clean, Dry'.

## Next Steps

The Catchment Based Approach is a highly innovative and ambitious movement which has huge opportunity to help improve the water environment and help Water Companies deliver for their customers. Are you engaged with your Catchment Partnerships?

Please contact your local Catchment Partnerships for catchment specific enquiries. You can find their contact details on the CaBA website; <https://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/catchment>

Please direct national or policy related queries to the Chair of the CaBA NSG, Arlin Rickard: [arlin@theriverstrust.org](mailto:arlin@theriverstrust.org)