

WaterLIFE

Layman's Report



A Report fulfilling the Layman's Report requirement of the EC LIFE + Programme.

SEPTEMBER 2017





This report summarises the objectives, activities and impacts of the WaterLIFE project, a LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance project funded through the European Union's funding instrument for the environment.

WaterLIFE Delivery Dates: July 2014 to June 2017

Co-ordinating Beneficiary: WWF-UK

Associated Beneficiaries: The Rivers Trust and Westcountry Rivers Trust

Project Ref No: LIFE13 ENV/UK/000497

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WHY WATERLIFE?

Freshwater ecosystems provide a vital service for people, economies and nature. Throughout Europe, these are under pressure from over-abstraction, pollution, and morphological change; with climate change impacts, population growth and increasing water consumption all exacerbating these pressures. The headline objective of the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD) is the achievement of Good Ecological Status (GES) in all European Waterbodies by 2015. But this is not being achieved: the figures for England for 2015 showed just 17% of water bodies at GES. Innovation, collaboration, establishment of enabling conditions, involvement of business and civil society, and sharing of best practice are all required to advance WFD delivery.

WaterLIFE operated on the premise that the threats facing our rivers cannot be solved by one organisation alone: communities, business and government need to work together to deliver change.

WaterLIFE sought to:

- Ø Accelerate the implementation of the WFD and improve the freshwater environment.
- Ø Work with communities, businesses and government agencies to deliver new initiatives around River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs – the delivery mechanisms of the WFD).
- Ø Share these successes across the UK and Europe so they can be repeated by others elsewhere.

WHO WAS INVOLVED?

WaterLIFE was led by WWF-UK as the Co-ordinating Beneficiary, with The Rivers Trust and Westcountry Rivers Trust as Associated Beneficiaries. Work in Demonstration Catchments was led by Delivery Partners engaged from the national network of rivers trusts.

FUNDING

The €2.2m cost of WaterLIFE was funded by 50% grant support from the EU's LIFE+ Environment Policy and Governance programme. Match funding was provided by a major multi-national food and drinks company, and a range of government agency and other business sources.

WHAT WATERLIFE SET OUT TO DO

WaterLIFE set out to tackle some of the major issues and challenges facing waterbodies in England and Wales - such as over-abstraction, pollution and unsustainable management – which are blocking these waterbodies achieving Good Ecological Status. It did this by:

- Ø Working with decision-makers to make sure the right conditions are in place.
- Ø Working in partnership with business, civil society and other key stakeholders to drive greater collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Ø Building capacity and expertise across the UK to support the delivery of collaborative and innovative water management, through the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA).
- Ø Delivering catchment-scale initiatives in five Demonstration Catchments.
- Ø Upscaling these catchment-level initiatives regionally, nationally and across the European Union to drive wider collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- Ø Proving the success of partnership working through capturing the environmental, social and economic benefits that it realises.

WATERLIFE's THEORIES OF CHANGE

Theories of Change are how you seek to move from the baseline states at the start of your project to the desired states - where you hope to be by the end.

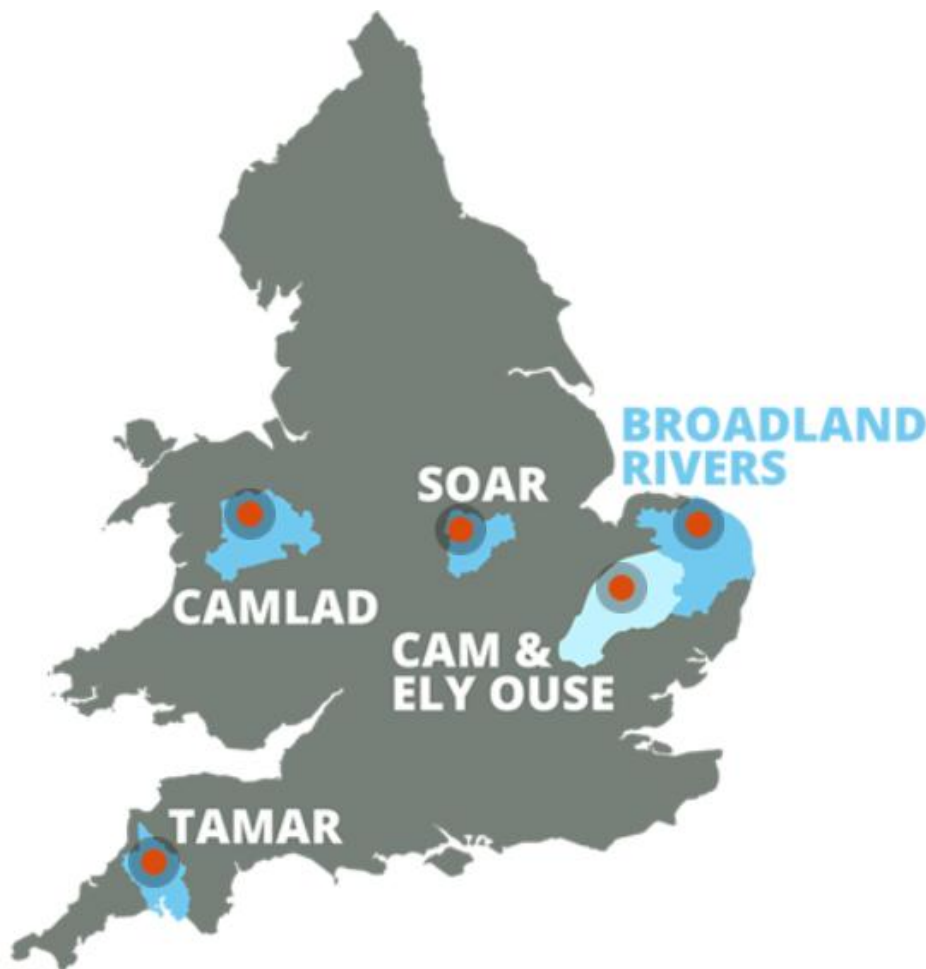
WaterLIFE's Theories were:

- ü Putting pressure on governments through policy advocacy (and also showing that civil society and the private sector can offer delivery solutions) will result in better commitment to deliver the WFD.
- ü Demonstrating that engaging with businesses and leveraging action from the private sector can help governments deliver against their WFD obligations.
- ü Demonstrating that engaging with, and building the capacity of, civil society can help governments deliver against their WFD obligations.
- ü Engaging with stakeholders across the European Union will ground-truth the wider applicability of WaterLIFE, and facilitate scaling up of deliverables and lessons learnt to other EU countries.

WHERE WATERLIFE WORKED

WaterLIFE worked in five Demonstration Catchments across England and Wales.

- Ø In three Civil Society catchments – the Soar, Camlad and Tamar – WaterLIFE worked with individuals and community groups to strengthen their understanding, awareness and capacity to deliver the aspirations of the WFD, enabling them to fully engage and helping to improve their local rivers.
- Ø In the remaining two, Water Stewardship catchments - Broadland Rivers and the Cam & Ely Ouse (CamEO) – WaterLIFE worked to secure commitment to, and delivery of, the Water Stewardship approach.



Additionally, WaterLIFE worked nationally with the government, Defra and its agencies, regulators such as Ofwat, water companies and other environmental NGOs to develop and define appropriate policy enabling conditions: new or amended legislation, statutory guidance or other mechanisms that, when implemented, could enhance collaborative delivery of the Water Framework Directive.

This policy work was led by WWF-UK and had a focus on chalk streams: the crystal-clear rivers almost unique, on a world scale, to southern and eastern England.

WHAT WATERLIFE DID

- Ø WaterLIFE engaged with the government, Defra, Ofwat, the Environment Agency and water companies to develop enabling conditions focused on abstraction reform and water company business planning (the PR19 Price Review process). During the project, we undertook 12 river visits and over 110 face-to-face meetings with government ministers, other politicians, and key officials.
- Ø WaterLIFE engaged with farmers and supply chain businesses with a focus on Water Stewardship implementation around sugar beet production. Farm Advisers in the CamEO and Broadland catchments promoted water sensitive farming, delivered farm advice, and enabled changes in cropping practice to over 800ha of arable land and the installation of 32 “silt trap” features - to reduce agricultural pollution and improve water quality. River visits, workshops and meetings were also undertaken with key business stakeholders.
- Ø WaterLIFE delivered stakeholder workshops and field visits to engage stakeholders in catchment issues and build the capacity of civil society groups. A range of novel and innovative work packages were delivered that: provided landowner advice and guidance; delivered practical site interventions; and engaged civil society in the various issues facing their catchments, such as flood risk and poor water quality.
- Ø WaterLIFE engaged with stakeholders in England and Wales and across the European Union through workshops, face-to-face meetings and conference presentations, to disseminate the experiences and learnings of the project and enable the wider delivery of collaborative water management.



WHAT WATERLIFE ACHIEVED

- Ø Policy recommendations were developed around abstraction reform; water companies and the PR19 business planning process; and post-Brexit agricultural policy. The abstraction reform policies included low-flow targets for rivers, and we obtained a Defra commitment to progress this reform through secondary legislation. PR19 results included proposals for a mandatory performance outcome on water companies that they reduce unsustainable abstraction through the Abstraction Incentive Mechanism. Additionally, “Catchment Pages” were integrated into the 2nd Cycle RBMPs as a result of WaterLIFE lobbying – providing a vital link between the Basin-scale Plans and catchment-scale collaborative delivery of the WFD.
- Ø Business commitment to Water Stewardship grew from a baseline of just one company engaged prior to WaterLIFE. The focus on the sugar beet supply chain drew in commitment from other companies at regional, national and multi-national levels. Local commitment to Water Stewardship principles was also evidenced in our Civil Society Demonstration Catchments.
- Ø Civil society capacity and expertise was built through a wide range of events, workshops, conference presentations, field trips and broad engagement around the 2nd Cycle RBMPs and the principles of the Catchment Based Approach. Capacity building aided the production and implementation of Catchment Plans in the three Civil Society catchments. The Plans were built on robust data and evidence and generated significant leveraged funding – over £2m in the Soar, for example.
- Ø Methodologies and tools developed within WaterLIFE for WFD delivery were well received by EU Member State audiences. Especial interest was shown in Water Stewardship, the Catchment Based Approach and the Save Our Waters mechanism developed to engage the public with RBMPs.



BENEFITS, SUSTAINABILITY, LEGACY & IMPACT

- ü WaterLIFE’s on-the-ground interventions will deliver measurable improvements towards WFD Good Ecological Status in our five Demonstration Catchments. Broader environmental benefits will also accrue, including reduced flood risk, Invasive Non-Native Species control and riparian habitat restoration.
- ü WaterLIFE’s “catalyst” and “enabler” roles enabled enhanced relationships to be built with government, the Environment Agency, Ofwat and water companies. These will lead to legislative and regulatory mechanisms being put in place that will enhance the water environment.
- ü A Water Stewardship Service has been established within The Rivers Trust to support and develop business engagement with catchment partnerships, building on the innovative Water Stewardship work developed under WaterLIFE.
- ü 19 best practice lessons were identified from WaterLIFE delivery. These include data and evidence underpinning stakeholder engagement; catchment-scale “test beds” providing critical modelling opportunities; and shared information platforms enabling collective prioritisation of delivery.
- ü Work is already underway to better integrate the Catchment Based Approach into the 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plans, due to be published in 2021.
- ü Government thinking on flooding also changed within WaterLIFE, towards a more catchment-wide approach that incorporates Natural Flood Risk Management.
- ü WaterLIFE’s Final Conference celebrated the Catchment Based Approach as the key mechanism for effective WFD delivery. At the event, the Water Minister, Thérèse Coffey, MP, pledged £6.3 million of government investment in catchment partnership working and the water environment.



THE WATERLIFE LEGACY WEBSITE

WaterLIFE's key stakeholders and target audiences were catchment partnerships, businesses and government.

Our three years of research and delivery produced a wealth of guidance, reports, findings, films, case studies and learnings. To communicate and disseminate these materials, we built WaterLIFE legacy pages into the website of the Catchment Based Approach.

A narrative guides users to almost 40 downloadable resources across three themed areas:

- Ø engaging local communities in river health;
- Ø engaging business in the water environment; and
- Ø influencing decision-makers and legislation.

Find out more at www.catchmentbasedapproach.org/waterlife

THE WATERLIFE DECLARATION

During WaterLIFE delivery, we learnt what conditions are needed to achieve our vision of healthy rivers for people and nature. We set these into the WaterLIFE Declaration:

ü **The WaterLIFE Declaration calls for healthy rivers, fair water use and sustainable supply chains, through the principles of Partnership, Equity and Collaboration.**

The Declaration has been signed by 112 organisations, including key national players such as the Environment Agency, National Trust, the Wildlife Trusts and River Restoration Centre, as well as local NGOs and Catchment Partnerships. See overleaf for the full Declaration and signatories

The WaterLIFE Declaration will continue to be used in advocacy work with the Government to show the widespread support for healthy rivers.

The WaterLIFE DECLARATION

We, the undersigned, share a vision for healthy rivers, fair water use and sustainable supply chains. We are all committed to achieving this vision and recognise the importance of the following to do so:

PARTNERSHIP

Support and investment in the Catchment Based Approach, recognising catchment partnerships are an essential basis for collaborative action and impact at all scales.

EQUITY

Through its new abstraction and agricultural policies, the government must create a level playing field and ensure environmental protection across England and Wales.

COLLABORATION

All players working together openly, honestly and without blame, to develop shared, evidence-based and deliverable solutions.

