The Catchment Based Approach

Working together for a healthy water environment

Read more about Defra’s Policy Framework behind the Catchment Based Approach: http://bit.ly/1lsCwRc

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From the source of our rivers to the sea, across our towns, cities, countryside and coasts – a healthy water environment is essential to all of us. It provides us with the water we need to live. To run our businesses efficiently. It reduces the risk to our homes and livelihoods of flooding. A healthy water environment means better places to live, where people and wildlife flourish.

In the past, management of the water environment has fallen to government, to private companies and to landowners, often operating in isolation.

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) brings people together to think about each river catchment as a whole. More than 1,500 organisations are now taking this approach in over 100 river catchments across England and Wales.

Together we are helping to achieve not only the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related legislation – but crucially, the aspirations of local communities.

I’m pleased to be able to showcase here just a handful of the hundreds of projects going on across the country which demonstrate how successful the Catchment Based Approach is.

Arlin Rickard,
Chair, CaBA National Support Group
Partners in the Wayoh sub-catchment include:
- Myerscough College
- Irwell Rivers Trust
- Ribble Rivers Trust
- United Utilities
- Farmers and landowners

United Utilities is working in partnership to reduce the cost of cleaning water from the Wayoh Reservoir, which has suffered from increasing levels of pesticides over the last decade. Catchment partners visited the owners of more than 75 properties, including farms, smallholdings, a commercial forestry and houses, to identify pollution sources. Sixteen farmers took advantage of free pesticide application training to help their businesses. Eleven hectares of land are now pesticide-free and have been planted with trees under the Forestry Commission Woodland Creation Grant. Over 3,000 metres of new watercourse fencing has allowed riverside vegetation to develop, which stops pesticides getting into the water from fields and connects habitats for wildlife at the same time. Water samples taken in 2014 showed a significant reduction in pesticides, achieved by working together across the catchment.

“Working together across the catchment has significantly reduced the level of pesticides in the Wayoh Reservoir”
– Jack Spees, CEO Ribble Rivers Trust

South West Water say that treating ‘clean’ raw surface water costs 20% less than treating water with a heavy sediment load. Its multi award-winning Upstream Thinking project is targeted at improving water quality at source. This is achieved through working with farmers and other landscape managers to reduce nutrient, sediment, pesticide and organic carbon inputs into stream waters. South West Water have set up an evidence monitoring programme to measure the economic benefits of the work.

South West Catchment Partnerships
Saving money on water treatment in the South West

South West Catchment Partnerships
Collaboration improves water quality in Lancashire

Water companies, landowners, farmers and NGOs are working together to improve raw drinking water quality, reducing the cost of water treatment.
Reducing flood risk

Partnerships are developing natural flood risk solutions to hold water back within the catchment, releasing it slowly, reducing flood peaks and providing greater river flow during times of drought. Partnerships give a voice to communities at risk of flooding.

Partners include:
- Bridgend Residents Against River Frome Flooding
- Chalford River Committee
- Eastington Flood Prevention Group
- Environment Agency
- Farmers and landowners Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- National Trust
- Painswick Stream Action Group
- Regional Flood and Coast Committee
- Slad Brook Action Group
- Stroud District Council

Stroud District Council works with landowners to use trees and other natural flood defence features to reduce flood risk. Over 80 individual natural flood defences have been built so far. The involvement of local flood groups, landowners and partners including the National Trust and Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust has been crucial to the success of the project. Local support and knowledge is essential to ensure that the right approach is adopted in the right place, but also to make sure the project will continue in the longer term beyond the pilot.

“The involvement of local partners is crucial to the success of this project”
- Chris Uttley, Project Officer, Stroud District Council

Soar Catchment Partnership

Reducing flood risk in Leicester

Partners include:
- Environment Agency
- Leicester City Council
- Leicestershire and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP)
- Trent Rivers Trust
- Westcountry Rivers Trust
- WWF-UK WaterLIFE project

The Soar Catchment Partnership in collaboration with Southampton University is using an innovative ‘fingerprinting’ approach to determine the sources of sediment eroded across the Willow Brook catchment, a tributary of the Soar. The Willow Brook has rural headwaters that flow into the City of Leicester. The siltation of pipes and culverts is an important contributing factor to flood risk, with up to 3,000 properties at risk in Leicester itself. Together with flood risk mapping and predictions of sediment loss and transport downstream, the approach will help to target work that will trap sediment, hold back water and improve water quality at the same time.

“We welcome this opportunity to use new techniques to trace the origins of the sediment so we can tackle these issues and reduce the amount of silt entering our watercourses. Cleaner water will benefit the people living in Leicester, the wildlife associated with it as well as making it a more attractive resource within our local parks for everyone to enjoy”
- Deputy Mayor Cllr Clarke, Leicester City Council

River Soar, Leicester

Severn Vale Catchment Partnership

Natural flood defences in the Stroud valleys

Partners include:
- Environment Agency
- Gloucestershire County Council
- Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
- National Trust
- Painswick Stream Action Group
- Regional Flood and Coast Committee
- Slad Brook Action Group
- Stroud District Council

“Partnerships are developing natural flood risk solutions to hold water back within the catchment, releasing it slowly, reducing flood peaks and providing greater river flow during times of drought. Partnerships give a voice to communities at risk of flooding.”

“We use the 10,000 principles but on a much larger scale. Some structures work by spreading water over the neighbouring land, others act to physically slow down flood flows. They all provide great habitats for wildlife, reduce the amount of silt travelling downstream and improve the already low flood risk in our catchment.”
- Chris Uttley, Stroud District Council Project Officer

River Soar, Leicester

“Sustainable drainage systems have been in use in the built-up environment for a number of years now – we use the 10,000 principles but on a much larger scale. Some structures work by spreading water over the neighbouring land, others act to physically slow down flood flows. They all provide great habitats for wildlife, reduce the amount of silt travelling downstream and improve the already low flood risk in our catchment.”
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Photo: Leicester City Council
Foot Meadow Island sits within the Northampton Enterprise Zone in the town centre. In recent years it has been characterised as a space for antisocial behaviour, including drug dealing and rough sleeping. As a result it has been largely abandoned and avoided by neighbouring residents. Work to improve the area for the community at the same time as improving habitat on the adjacent Nene River has been put into action by the Nene Valley Catchment Partnership. Encouraging residents to get involved in the project is creating a better place to live and instilling a sense of ownership which means people will continue to look after their stretch of the river into the future. Working in partnership meant the project could go ahead, with an additional £70,000 secured that would not have been obtainable with organisations working in isolation.

“There is a great deal of enthusiasm within the community to get involved and restore the river” – Kathryn Hardcastle, River Nene Regional Partnership

Partners include:
- Anglian Water
- Association of River Nene Clubs
- Canal and Rivers Trust
- Environment Agency
- Groundwork Northamptonshire
- Nene Park Trust
- National Farmers Union
- Northampton Borough Council
- Northamptonshire County Council
- River Nene Regional Park
- RSPB
- University of Northampton
- Wildlife Trust BCN
- Woodland Trust

Lower Lea Catchment Partnership
Local people help design a better environment

Thames21 is working with Enfield Council to improve the Salmons Brook in North London. Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS) are being designed to improve water quality and reduce flood risk. The systems, including wooded wetlands and ponds, have been co-designed with local people as part of the Love the Lea campaign, and will also provide new wildlife habitat and green space for the local community to enjoy. Both the Thames Water Community Investment Fund and the Greater London Authority have provided funding to enhance the amenity and educational value of the SuDS sites.
Ladywell Fields has been transformed from its previously characterless landscape into a diverse, popular and accessible public open space, with surveys indicating that the public’s perception of the park in terms of recreational value and safety has improved. Before the river was restored to its natural course, only 44% of people felt safe using the park. Now 78% say they feel comfortable visiting Ladywell Fields. And the number of people using the park has increased by 250%. Returning the river to a natural state has led to a marked increase in wildlife. Local communities play an important role in the rivers’ upkeep.

"There is a real need for a joined up, inclusive approach to river management in urban areas. The Catchment Based Approach provides a structured way for local government to see the benefits of a shared vision for their section of a shared river catchment without taking away from local objectives."
— Paul Chapman, European Projects Manager, London Borough of Lewisham

"Planners have the power to make river restoration work within current laws and can insist that it is part of new development”
— Paul Chapman, London Borough of Lewisham

The River Ravensbourne has been freed from its concrete banks at Cornmill Gardens, creating a better place for people and wildlife. Flood management has also been improved.

People feel safer at Ladywell Fields in Lewisham since the river was restored.

Partners include:
Environment Agency
London Boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Greenwich and Lewisham
London Wildlife Trust
Quaggy Waterways Action Group
Thames21
Better places for wildlife and people

Partnerships protect and restore freshwater habitats and are well placed to coordinate action for wetland, estuarine and coastal wildlife too. Well-placed woodland creation can improve water quality and reduce flood risk, help to keep rivers cool and protect aquatic life. Restoring rivers for wildlife makes for healthier, happier communities.

Tame and Mease & Staffordshire Trent Catchment Partnerships
Restoring the River Trent in Staffordshire

A number of partnerships are working in the Tame and Mease Catchment to improve the river Trent for wildlife and for the people of Tamworth, Burton-upon-Trent and Lichfield. Staffordshire Wildlife Trust created small islands in the Trent using an innovative technique of partially burying live willow trees. Re-naturalising the river improves water quality and creates better conditions for fish, plants and other aquatic species to thrive, which in turn benefits other wildlife. Restoring highly-modified parts of the river and re-connecting it with its floodplain is improving biodiversity and making the river accessible for a wide range of people for recreation, including walking and canoeing. The river is now visible and safe to approach, when before it was hidden from view.

“Restoring the river is creating a place people want to visit, which is important for local businesses” – Nick Mott, Project Manager, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust

Colne and Upper Lea Catchment Partnerships
A neighbourhood watch for rivers in Hertfordshire

Volunteers are trained to detect serious pollution incidents in their local rivers as part of the Riverfly Partnership. This means rivers can be monitored more widely than is possible by the Environment Agency alone. Catchment partnerships in the Colne and Upper Lea worked together with the Riverfly Partnership to create a regional training hub which has since trained 100 people and established an impressive 90 monitoring sites across 13 rivers. The in-kind support provided by the volunteers equates to £80,000 a year. The hub has also helped to establish new groups in neighbouring catchments, helping to connect people with their local rivers and providing essential monitoring services, helping to build a better picture of river health across the country.

“Riverfly volunteers play a vital role in monitoring our rivers and alert the Environment Agency to pollution incidents” – Charlie Bell, Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts

Working together for a healthy water environment

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Partners include:
AB Sugar
Anglian Water
Cambridge Water Company
Campain
Elveden Estate
Hutchinsons
LEAF
National Farmers Union
Produce World Group
The Rivers Trust
Sainsbury’s
WWF-UK WaterLIFE project

Anglian Water is working with the Rivers Trust and large-scale agricultural businesses through the Cam and Ely Ouse catchment partnership. The area is characterised by high quality farmland producing wheat, oil seed rape, vegetables and sugar beet. Rivers are under pressure from agricultural run off. In addition excessive abstraction of groundwater for public supply, agriculture and industry threatens the catchment’s chalk stream. Business owners have joined forces to create an integrated water management plan, whilst the European funded WaterLIFE project, led by WWF-UK, plays an important role, carrying out farm visits focused on sugar-beet farming communities, and developing outcomes that are good for business and for the water environment.

Through the Middle Dee Catchment Partnership, United Utilities and Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water are helping to fund a project to improve water quality on tributaries of the River Dee which suffer from livestock farming run-off. The Dee supplies nearly three million people with drinking water, so preventing pollution is a high priority. Together the partners have built important relationships with farmers and landowners through 28 farm visits, to discuss how working together can reduce run-off from fields into the brooks – and collaborate on plans that benefit both the business and the environment.

Healthy productive countryside

Farmers, landowners and land managers get advice and training through catchment partnerships to improve air, soil and water quality in the rural environment – which makes business more efficient.

“Farmers who grow cover crops over the winter protect soil and water quality while saving money on fertilisers”
– Mark Pierce, Project Officer, Welsh Dee Trust

“Catchment Partnerships have an opportunity to be at the centre of a step change approach towards the resilient management of water and other resources. This is both a challenge and an opportunity that the New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership is keen to encourage as part of the Green Economy”
– Iain Dunnett, New Anglia LEP

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Middle Dee Catchment Partnership
Preventing pollution on the River Dee

Partners include:
CWAC (Cheshire West and Chester Council)
Cheshire Wildlife Trust
Dwr Cymru/Welsh Water
Environment Agency
Grosvenor Estates
Landowners
National Farmers Union (NFU)
Natural England
Natural Resources Wales
North Wales Wildlife Trust
Reaseheath College
Welsh Dee Trust
Woodland Trust
United Utilities

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Four reasons why catchment partnerships work

1. Working together, partners in a river catchment can secure funding that they may not have access to as individual organisations – for flood prevention for example.

2. Local knowledge and local networks are invaluable in identifying problems – and in galvanising action on the ground. Partnerships enable the views of local communities and businesses to be taken into account.

3. Partnerships can achieve multiple benefits – flood risk reduction, better water quality, more biodiversity and enhanced green spaces for the whole community to enjoy.

4. Working together means saving money and positive outcomes for everyone – for local people, for business and for the environment.

Photo: WWF UK/Jiri Rezac
The CaBA National Support Group

also supported by

Photo: Jack Perks

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