

CaBA Monitoring & Evaluation

2021/22

CaBA Benefits Assessment Working Group

April 2023

Catchment Based Approach

Celebrating the benefits of a collaborative approach for people and wildlife

Action and Activities in 2021/22

This reporting was for projects and activities taking place up to March 2022.



101 partnerships reported their work

25YEP

Reporting data show links to the 25 Year Environment Plan

757 projects details submitted

Building Partnerships



461 CaBA meetings across the country

All partnerships work with their local water company and

77%

have the water company involved in funding or delivery

National Support

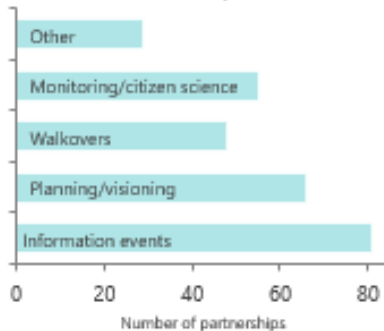


building capacity and expertise

Connecting People with the Environment

12,526

primary stakeholders engaged in 2021/22



19,203

volunteers & citizen scientists actively involved in projects



6,327

farmers engaged, often with on-farm measures implemented



115,038

Other people were engaged in projects

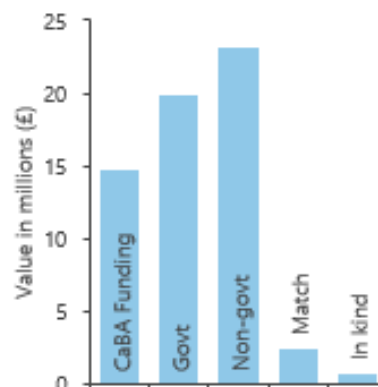
Funding & Financing

£1 : £1.6

For every £1 directly invested by the Government, CaBA partnerships have raised £1.6 from non-government funders plus

£19.8 million

of wider government funding invested via a collaborative catchment approach



Improving Biodiversity



1487ha habitat created

84 barriers to fish migration mitigated 



286

projects tackling ecological quality of waterbodies

>800km



riverbank controlled for specific invasive species

Clean & Plentiful Water



228

projects tackling diffuse and point source pollution & improving water quality

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Executive Summary

Results from the 2021/22 reporting initiative confirm that CaBA represents an important mechanism for the delivery of both the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (HM Government, 2018) and the recently announced Water Plan (Defra, 2023).

Connecting People with the Environment: CaBA partnerships engaged over 12,500 new primary stakeholders including members of the public, farmers, local businesses and community groups. Over 19,000 volunteers and/or citizen scientists were engaged, with more than 450 projects focused on raising awareness. These figures, therefore, clearly support the assertions within the Water Plan that *'River catchment partnerships in England have direct links to their local communities and engage with them on a range of education and engagement, volunteering, and citizen science activities'* and *'This...raises awareness within communities and builds local ownership of environmental issues, leading to sustained behavioural change'*.

Clean and Plentiful Water: 228 projects addressed water quality, 117 of these tackled diffuse sources, primarily rural diffuse pollution, with partnerships working with farmers on soil, nutrient and slurry management, riparian buffer strips and fencing, and farm infrastructure improvements.

Creating and Protecting Habitat and Improving Biodiversity: Almost 150 projects led to 1,500 ha of habitat creation highlighting the importance of closer alignment between CaBA and local nature recovery. 84 barriers to fish migration were removed or mitigated, opening 640 km of river. Over 800 km of invasive species were cleared from river corridors and other locales, often through local community support.

Reducing Risk of Harm from Flooding and Drought & Adapting to Climate Change: More than 150 projects addressed water resource management, building climate resilience. Of these, 93 projects reported that they specifically tackled flooding, typically through implementation of natural management techniques, whilst 15 tackled low flows.

Greening our Towns and Cities: More than 189 projects included a focus upon green-blue (nature-based) infrastructure, such as wetlands, in the urban environment. Typically, such delivery included multiple beneficial outcomes including reduced flood risk and the building of climate resilience, improved water quality, and the opportunity for local communities to engage with nature.

Funding

During 2021/22, for every £1 directly invested by Government, CaBA partnerships raised approximately £1.6 from non-governmental funders including water companies, businesses, lottery funds, EU funds and grant giving trusts (equating to £23 million). This ratio is slightly lower than last year, reflecting the continued effects of the pandemic and a decline in some non-government funding categories, but also an increase in WEIF and WEG funds to partnerships (WEIF, WEG and CaBA host funds provide the '1' in the ratio).

CaBA provides a strong framework for developing greater integration of water governance in England and can help to join up and coordinate different policies and initiatives thereby supporting the Water Plan. With sufficient and sustained funding, CaBA, supported by the partnership catchment plans, can realise synergistic outcomes e.g., with Local Nature Recovery Strategies and Environmental Land Management Schemes, and develop a more strategic and sustainable use of water resources. CaBA can continue to mobilise local expertise to collect data and build evidence to support decision-making and cost-effective delivery. It can also drive wider community engagement, raising awareness and supporting behavioural change on several issues including water efficiency.

CaBA Overview

The Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) is an inclusive collaborative water management initiative that works in partnership with Government, NGOs, local authorities, water companies, businesses and more, to maximise the natural value of our environment. CaBA partnerships are actively working in all 100+ river catchments across England and cross-border with Wales, directly supporting the achievement of many of the targets under the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.).

Each CaBA partnership has a host partner organisation, whose role it is to oversee and facilitate the partnership in its development and its delivery of outcomes. The CaBA partnerships are supported directly by funding for each host organisation from the Environment Agency.

The CaBA National Support Group (NSG), whose members represent many of the organisations engaged in CaBA, plays a key role in supporting CaBA activity and promotes the initiative across all key sectors including water industry, business, agriculture and local government. This engagement aims to strengthen the diversity of the wider initiative and help it access new sources of funding.

The NSG also works to support partnerships across England through identifying gaps in knowledge or process and resolving barriers to delivery. Many members of the NSG engage directly with partnerships and have on-the-ground knowledge of CaBA in action. Communication with the partnerships is undertaken via national conferences, workshops, newsletters, webinars and the CaBA website that incorporates a discussion forum.

A series of CaBA working groups, overseen by the NSG, each has a set of objectives specific to a particular theme or issue. Each group includes a primary focus to support the building of capacity and expertise across catchment partnerships nationwide, with respect to their theme. The focus areas of the working groups include data and monitoring, urban water management, abstraction, biodiversity, flooding, agriculture, chalk stream restoration, coastal and estuarine waters and the evaluation of benefits arising from CaBA's collaborative approach.

The programme of mentoring overseen by the NSG is focused upon building knowledge capital throughout catchment partnerships nationwide. A small team of experienced practical catchment scientists support partnerships in a wide range of technical areas including the application and interpretation of modelling tools, spatial analysis through Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and practical project delivery across a range of issues including water quality, flood risk management, and habitat restoration. Also operating under the NSG, a dedicated CaBA Water Stewardship Service raises awareness of CaBA amongst businesses, highlighting the opportunities it provides to support business water stewardship strategies, providing support to catchment partnerships to engage with business and developing collaborative projects.

Each year, the CaBA partnerships are required to complete a reporting form. The information gathered in these forms is used to help identify priorities, look at trends and changes in priorities and focus areas over time, identify areas where partnerships may benefit from support and capacity building, and promote the work of CaBA partnerships to a range of key stakeholders. This report summarises the outputs of the reporting from the financial year 2021/22. This is the second reporting period that will review the impact of Covid-19 on the partnerships.

CaBA Reporting 2021/22: Introduction

The CaBA Monitoring & Evaluation process for 2021/22 took place in summer 2022. The partnerships were asked to self-report details about the work and activities of their partnership that took place between April 2021 and March 2022.

Important note: The timing of the reporting therefore means that the year being reported on (April 2021-March 2022) may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic could have made it more challenging for the partnerships to gather project data and complete the monitoring form with the help of their partners. With 41 partnerships reporting a negative impact from Covid-19 in 2021/22. This is slightly less than last year, but this figure highlights the long-term influence of the pandemic. Not all impacts have been negative, almost 28% of the partnerships reported a mixture of positive and negative impacts. Many note that the transition to online meetings has enabled more people to attend.

The CaBA annual reporting process has been running for several years and, though the process has been developed and refined, it aims to maintain consistency across many of the questions and measures. This allows some comparison of the data between years and will start to allow a view of trends and changes over time. Where relevant, broad comparisons to last year's results (CaBA Benefits Assessment Working Group, 2022) are indicated within the report.

These comparisons should be used as an indication only, as this large and complex self-reported dataset is affected by multiple factors over varying timescales. This includes the learning process of those completing the form as well as improvements and adjustments to the monitoring system itself. Key to the Catchment Based Approach is a cycle of partnership building, planning, delivery and improvement, a cycle within which the partnerships will be at various stages, and which brings forward different aims, focuses and outcomes over time. It is also important to note that the normal 'ebbs and flows' in funding sources and work streams (e.g. the appearance of short-term funding opportunities such as the Water Environment Grant, the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and the 5-Year cycle of the Periodic Review process in the water industry), will have an effect on the outputs and activities of the partnerships in any particular year.

CaBA & the 25 Year Environment Plan

This report illustrates the linkages and alignment between the work of CaBA partnership and the ambitions in the [25 Year Environment Plan](#) (HM Government, 2018).

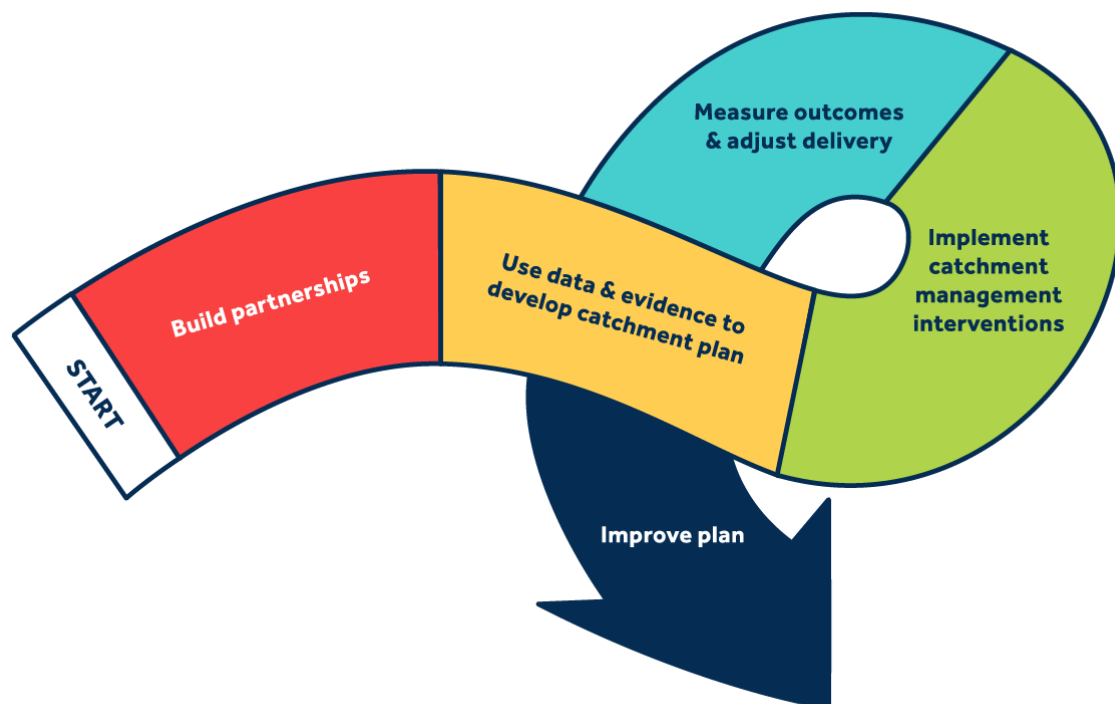
The 25 Year Environment Plan (YEP) is the Government's plan for improving the environment in England and leaving it in a better state for the next generation. It sets out a series of goals for the next 25 years. This important document provides a path for organisations and partnerships to follow in order to integrate and take action in alignment with national aspirations.

Throughout the report, inset boxes have been used to highlight how the results from the partnerships across the country fit with the plans and aspirations in the 25YEP.

Section 1: Collaboration & Organisation

In the first section of the CaBA reporting process each year, the partnerships report on details about their partnership as a whole, including partnership hosting, overall partnership communication and engagement with groups of stakeholders, the use of the various elements of support from the CaBA National Support Group, and the level of development of partnership plans.

The partnership details submitted through the CaBA reporting have been analysed and are presented in the context of the [CaBA Workflow](#) (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.). The CaBA Workflow is a framework for integrated catchment management and collaborative working. It is an adaptive cycle through which partnerships are built and strengthened, plans are developed and agreed, and environmental improvements are achieved.



Working in this way can provide multiple benefits for all the partner organisations and the local community. The CaBA workflow follows a natural capital approach consistent with the [Natural Capital Workbook](#) (Natural Capital Committee, 2017). By developing an integrated catchment plan, based on the principle of adaptive management, CaBA partners agree on the best course of action to maximise the natural capital of their catchments.

In addition, the stages of CaBA partnership working directly support the achievement of many of the targets under the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) (HM Government, 2018). Key linkages between the stages of the CaBA Workflow and the 25 Year Environment Plan have been highlighted throughout this report.

Building Partnerships

Building partnerships takes time and effort and is vital as the foundation for collaboration. CaBA partnerships work on building trust between partners in order to gain benefits in the long run such as joint funding bids and local community support. CaBA partnerships use engagement tools and techniques to bring stakeholders together, set a vision and agree priorities.

25YEP

Building partnerships is a theme running through the 25 Year Environment Plan, with strengthening partnerships one of the key steps in 'Putting the Plan into Practice'.

Hosting

Each CaBA partnership has one or more host partners, who take the lead role in running and administering the partnership. These organisations receive funding from the Environment Agency for this work and may receive or raise additional host funds from other sources.

In 2021-2022, **278** people worked on partnership hosting, with a median average of **2** people working on each partnership. There is a marginal reduction compared to 2020-2021 (**282**), however the average remains the same.



The time spent on hosting work across all partnerships adds up to a total of **49 full-time equivalents** (FTE), (slightly less than last year), with each partnership on average having **0.5** FTEs working on hosting, which has increased slightly from 0.4 FTE reported in 2020/21.

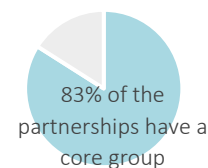
Meetings & Communications

Meetings and regular communications are a key element of building and maintaining partnerships.



A total of **461 CaBA partnership meetings** took place across the country in 2021-22, an average of **4** per partnership. This is an increase of 22% compared to 2020/21, where Covid-19 impacted partnerships' holding meetings.

83% of the partnerships have a '**core**' or '**steering**' group to help lead the partnership, this is unchanged compared to last year. These core groups held a total of 343 meetings throughout the year, which has increased compared to last year, resulting an increase in the median average from 3 to **4 per partnership**.



The most common ways that information is shared with partners was via emails and meetings. Newsletters, websites and social media were also used by many of the partnerships. Other forms of communication reported include conferences, local media and through making a film.

Engagement

Engaging new partners and wider stakeholders is a vital part of building partnerships and gaining support and buy-in for partnership initiatives and projects.

Engaging individuals and primary stakeholders

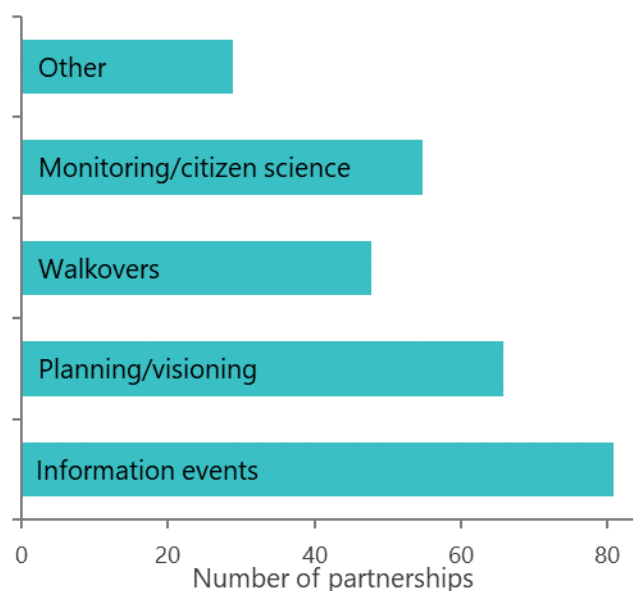
25YEP

Increasing engagement with the natural environment is one of the key goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan.

The partnerships across the country engaged over **27,700** new people in 2021/22, an average of **27** new people per partnership. This is around a **60%** increase in the number of new people compared to last year, conversely the median average reduced from 34, which suggests this increase is reported by a small number of partnerships rather than an increase across the partnerships. Of these, just over **12,500 or 20 per partnership, were primary stakeholders** such as members of the public, farmers, local businesses and community groups, an 18% reduction compared to last year.

Some partnerships focus strongly on primary stakeholder engagement, the highest figure for a single partnership was 1500.

Primary stakeholders are most commonly engaged through information events and planning/visioning. Around half of the partnerships engage primary stakeholders through walkovers and monitoring/citizen science. These summary figures show that there has been an increase in all of the methods of engagement compared to 2020/21. This could be related to the limited face-to-face contact during 2020/21 due to Covid-19. Other means of engagement reported included newsletters, training events, published media and social media; farm advice and visits; volunteering and litter picking events; shows, workshops, and working with schools.



Engaging with businesses, groups and organisations

Across the partnerships, **339** new people are **actively engaging** with the **partnerships** and **contributing** to key roles such as hosting, planning, delivery and monitoring. This is a median average of 1 new contributor per partnership, and very similar to the figures reported last year, but is almost half of the pre-pandemic numbers.



In total, **464 new organisations** were engaged across the partnerships in 2021/22, an increase of around 80 from the previous year, where a significant reduction was reported which was attributed to the Covid-19 pandemic. The median average number of new organisations engaged with each partnership is 2, which remains the same as reported in 2020/21.

The organisations that partnerships typically engage with most strongly was water companies, local authority environment teams and landowners, land managers or farming & forestry community.

Partnerships typically have lower engagement levels with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Nature Recovery Networks, Coastal Partnerships and Community Flood Partnerships. The majority of partnerships are either not engaged with these groups or report that these groups are aware of the partnership but not more involved. Increasing engagement with these groups could be supported by the CaBA Working Groups focusing on biodiversity, estuaries and coasts, as well as flooding.

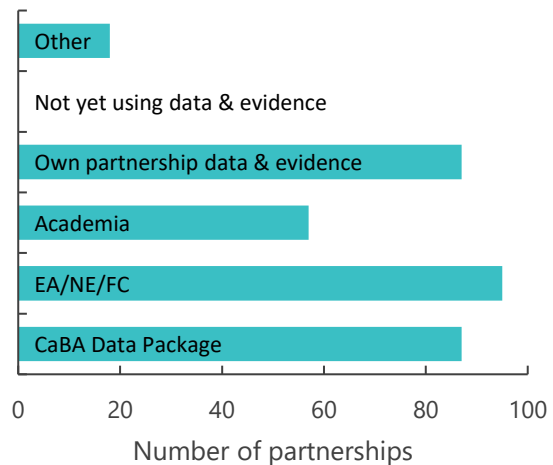
25YEP

Working with land managers is key to the goal to 'Use and Manage Land Sustainably'. Catchment Partnerships, Nature Recovery Networks, Local Enterprise Partnerships, water companies, businesses, local authorities, and other organisations are highlighted in the 25YEP as groups which need to work together and cooperate under a natural capital approach to maximise environmental benefits.

Using Data & Evidence to Develop a Catchment Plan

All the partnerships use data and evidence in their work. The most common sources of data and evidence are Government sources (the Environment Agency, Natural England and/or Forestry England), their own partnership data and the CaBA data package. **The reported use of the CaBA data package has increased by almost 7.5% this year.** Academic data are also used by many partnerships.

Other sources of data and evidence reported by partnerships include; data from water companies, citizen science, public health data and local biological records centres.



Data and evidence are used by the partnerships for a variety of purposes, most commonly **to design and target actions** and to **support funding bids**.

Through the combination of partnership building and use of data and evidence, the partnerships all have a **Catchment Plan**. These plans can be accessed online via a [list on the CaBA website](#) (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.).

The plans are typically made up of several components. The Catchment Vision and Terms of Reference are at a 'sustainable' level for more than half of the partnerships. Delivery Plans, Data Strategies, Monitoring Plans and Communication Plans are all more commonly at the 'growing' stage, reflecting the ongoing development of partnerships and their areas of work.

National Support

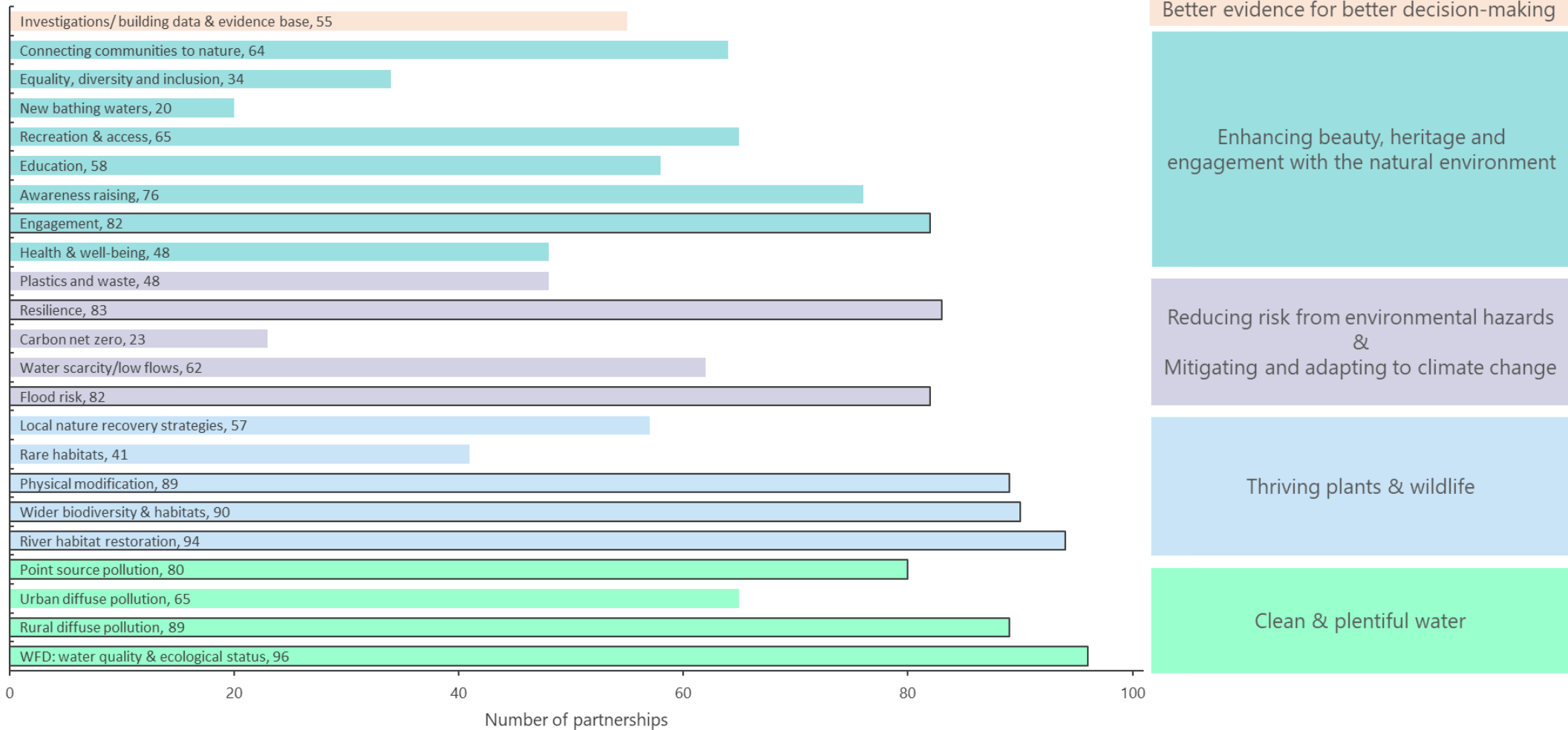
The Catchment Data User Group (CDUG) supports catchment partnerships to take an evidence-based approach to catchment management. The multi-sectoral group oversees the CaBA technical support programme, producing outputs such as the [CaBA Data & Evidence Forum](#) and the [CaBA data package and data hub](#) (Catchment Based Approach Data Hub, n.d.).

Implementing Catchment Management Interventions, Measuring Outcomes and Adjusting Delivery

CaBA Catchment Plans typically cover multiple objectives. This reflects the different partners involved and the different issues and priorities which are important across the catchments, which may include a combination of uplands, rural landscapes, urban areas, as well as transitional and coastal waters.

The graph on the following page shows the number of partnerships who reported each of the different issues and objectives as key to their Catchment Plans. Those with a dark outline were selected by more than 80% of the partnerships, and therefore are shown to be core to the Catchment Based Approach.

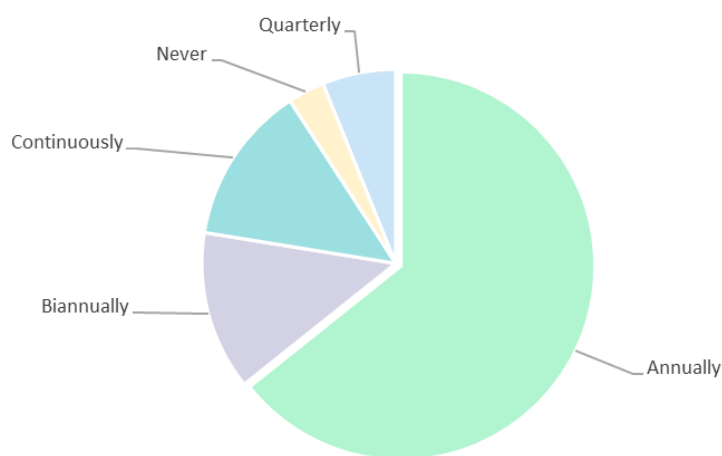
25YEP The objectives are broadly equivalent to goals in the 25YEP, as summarised below.



Improving Plans

The final stage of the CaBA workflow, which then links it back around into an adaptive cycle, is improving plans.

The partnerships' own catchment plans are reviewed over a timescale agreed by the hosts and partners. Most commonly, this is on an **annual basis**, though some partnerships review on a biannual, quarterly or ongoing, continuous basis. This pattern has remained consistent over the years.



The partnerships are also often involved in the development of plans of other groups and organisations. **81** of the partnerships reported that they have had some level of influence over the Environment Agency Medium Term Plan for their region (a slight reduction compared to last year), and **68** report they have had some success in influencing the plans of their local water company, which has seen a slight increase from last year's reporting. Just under half have influenced flood risk management plans and local authority plans.

25YEP

The 25YEP highlights that 'At present many organisations and partnerships pursue their own plans, across different areas and boundaries. In places there is good coordination between them, but in other places opportunities for joining up and integrating environmental work are missed'.

CaBA has an important role in helping to join up and coordinate different plans which affect catchments and the water environment.

The annual CaBA Monitoring and Evaluation process also asks partners about the projects, activities and initiatives undertaken by the partnerships that year. This gives detailed information about the delivery and monitoring of interventions in each Catchment Partnership area. The information from this part of the annual reporting is detailed in Section 2 of this report

Section 2: CaBA Project Delivery

Over **757** projects were reported as having taken place during the 2021/22 financial year, which is just over 90 fewer than in 2020/21, which may be a result of the on-going Covid-19 pandemic in 2021/22. Please note, each project is described in both its broad **objectives** and its more detailed **outputs** and **outcomes**, the collated results for these are described separately in this section. In most cases projects will have multiple objectives, outcomes and outputs, so the totals can total more than the 757 projects reported.

The objectives and outcomes have been grouped according to some of the key goals in the 25 Year Environment Plan (HM Government, 2018). These are:

25YEP

- Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing
- Clean and plentiful water
- Creating and protecting habitats & improving biodiversity
- Reduce risk of harm from flooding and drought & adapting to climate change
- Greening our towns and cities
- Using and managing land sustainably

Several case studies have been included throughout the report to provide illustrative examples. The case studies are based directly on the project information submitted through the forms and summarise the aims of the project, the outputs and outcomes delivered and how the project was monitored and evaluated.

Throughout the sections, some of the work of the [CaBA Working Groups](#) (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.) has also been highlighted. These national scale groups support the CaBA partnerships on a variety of specific areas or issues. Currently, the following Working Groups are active:

- Catchment Data User Group
- Urban Working Group
- Biodiversity Working Group
- Benefits Working Group
- Water Resources Working Group
- Agriculture Working Group
- Flood Working Group
- Estuaries and Coasts Working Group
- Chalk Streams Restoration Group

The final section provides summary information about the funding of the projects across the country. This helps to indicate the contribution CaBA partnerships make to the 'Putting the Plan into Practice' section of the 25 YEP, which includes a section on funding, financing and incentivising improvement in natural capital.

Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing

Project objectives



Project outputs and outcomes

Volunteers/citizen scientists engaged: 19203

Farmers engaged: 6,327

Other people engaged: 115,038 - this figure has almost doubled compared to last year.

Partnerships are also asked to report, where possible, the **social outcomes** of the project work, including benefits for health and well-being. Some examples reported include:

- Improved water quality which support bathing waters;
- Opportunities for volunteers to learn new skills – i.e. Riverfly monitoring, Water Guardians;
- Increased farmer to farmer collaboration has potential well-being outcomes by improving relationships and local connections.

Project Case Study: Voices of the Dart

The Bioregional Learning Centre (South Devon Catchment Partnership) has just completed a project in the River Dart catchment. The aim of the project was to engage local communities. This was achieved by working with an artist to ask local people 'If water could speak, what would it say?'. Through a series of four workshops we gave citizens the tools, data, climate science and local knowledge to co-design a habitable water future. The focus in the workshops were on ways to use less water. Not just individually but collectively. And not just for the benefit of humans but also for wildlife and ecosystems.

Objectives

- Engagement, awareness raising, education.
- Low Flows/water scarcity, resilience.
- Investigation and evidence.

Outcomes and engagement

- 28 volunteers or citizen scientists were engaged.
- Water quality and resource as well as ecological issues were tackled.

Social and economic outcomes

- A substantial part of the workshop, led by local artist Ione Maria Rojas, was on the positive experiences that rivers provide.
- It was estimated by South West Water (SWW) that significant impact on water saving would have been achieved because of this project.

Monitoring

A survey of workshop participants before and after the workshops was undertaken, as well as a project review day to assess whether project goals had been met, and evaluation meetings with SWW.

Clean and plentiful water

Project objectives



Rural diffuse pollution

279 projects



37% of the projects



Urban diffuse pollution

141 projects



19% of the projects



Point source pollution

169 projects



22% of the projects

Project outputs and outcomes

Improved water quality was reported as an outcome for **228** of the projects this year, this is less than reported last year. 32 of these were specifically related to tackling point source pollution, 117 to tackling diffuse pollution, 73 to tackling both, and 6 didn't specify.

Improved ecological quality was reported as an outcome for **286** of the projects. This around a 17% decrease on the numbers reported last year.

Some of the partnerships have noted it was too early in the project to report on outcomes, so it is possible these figures will increase in subsequent years as individual projects develop.

Also see the section on 'Reducing risk of harm from flooding and drought & adapting to climate change' for the project outputs relating to **water resource management**, which is also essential for the delivery of clean and plentiful water.

National Support

The CaBA Agriculture Working Group champions and demonstrates the role of catchment partnerships in the development and delivery of agricultural land management that benefits both the environment and farm business. This includes a focus upon approaches that realise multiple benefits, for example, with respect to water quality, flood risk, air quality and biodiversity. The Group also provides for knowledge exchange, disseminating best and innovative practice across CaBA including Defra and the industry, and sharing developments in agricultural policy (e.g. Farming Rules for Water) with catchment partnerships.

The [Agricultural Advice Hub](#) was established to connect farmers and other actors in the food supply chain with advice and information on sustainable farming practices.

Project Case Study: The Coordinated Response for Intertidal Taw Torridge Estuary Restoration Project (CRITTER)

This is an on-going project funded by the Environment Agency's Water Environment Investment Fund (WEIF) and delivered by the North Devon Biosphere (North Devon Catchment Partnership). The project consists of two complementary strands, coastal fresh and saltwater marsh habitat creation, and terrestrial on-farm land management advice. The land management aims of the project are to improve water quality, based on elemental improvements to the Water Framework Directive status in seven key catchments which are either at risk of failure or are close to becoming 'good', and further to construct and install natural flood management features at the catchment scale. Equally, the project aims to enhance biodiversity within the Taw Torridge Estuary by protecting and enhancing local shellfisheries through fresh and saltwater marsh creation/restoration works, and relieve morphological pressures on the tidal prism associated with long-standing physical modification of the estuary and its floodplain.

Objectives

- Engagement;
- Rural diffuse pollution;
- Flooding;
- River habitat restoration, biodiversity/conservation/habitats.

Outcomes

Engagement:

- Twenty eight landowners were provided with capital grants and/or have received advice on water quality and natural flood management improvements, biodiversity as well as information on wider private finance opportunities through biodiversity net gain and carbon credits.

Water Quality:

- So far over half a kilometre of river habitat has been enhanced;
- On-farm interventions (including tree planting and bespoke yard capital works) have addressed some rural diffuse pollution issues in the catchment and slowed the flow of waters for local communities.

Monitoring

As the project is ongoing, monitoring sites are being identified with the assistance of project partners and will be surveyed in subsequent years.

Creating and protecting habitat & improving biodiversity

Project objectives



River habitat restoration

373 projects



49% of the projects



Biodiversity and conservation

508 projects



67% of the projects



Physical modifications

246 projects



32% of the projects

Project outputs and outcomes

Habitat creation was reported as an outcome for **149 of the projects**, with **1,487ha** of habitat creation reported, this is almost a 150% increase in projects reported, and 20% increase in the area created. While the number of projects is more in line with pre-pandemic figures reported in 2019/2020, the area created has not increased to the same degree. This could be linked to improvements in reporting, or the scope of projects remaining more limited as a result of Covid-19. Habitat creation work included wetland habitats, riparian buffer strips, flower-rich grasslands, woodland and hedgerows, rain gardens and pond creation, among other more specific habitat work. The habitat creation work undertaken by CaBA highlights the potential for synergistic outcomes arising from greater engagement between CaBA and Local Nature Recovery initiatives.

Barriers to fish migration have a significant impact on fish populations and a knock-on effect on the biodiversity of rivers and streams. **84 barriers** to fish migration were reported as removed or mitigated, opening up almost **640km** of river for improved fish migration. While the overall number of barriers removed is more than last year, the resulting river habitat opened has decreased. However, it is difficult to compare this value year to year as the km improved for fish migration is dependent on physical characteristics up and downstream of barriers removed, so it is likely to vary year on year.

Invasive non-native species negatively impact habitats and biodiversity. They each have their own impact, which may include out-competing native species, affecting natural processes like soil functioning, and damaging natural features such as riverbanks. In the reporting form, participants were asked to provide details of the types and amount (in hectares or kilometres) of invasive species controlled or eradicated through their projects. **71 projects** reported outputs and outcomes relating to the clearance or management of invasive species. **Over 807km** of invasive species were cleared or managed on linear features such as rivers. Much of this total was not reported to a species-specific level, but for those which did, Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed were frequently reported, as well as less commonly tackled species such as water fern, rhododendron, and skunk cabbage. **Just over 135ha** of clearance or management was recorded, with giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam again being common.

National Support

The CaBA Biodiversity Working Group supports catchment partnerships in their delivery of water and wetland biodiversity projects. The group has produced the [CaBA Biodiversity Pack](#) which includes habitat-specific guides promoting the restoration of natural function in rivers, headwaters, lakes, ponds, wet grasslands, wet heaths, reedbeds, and more, plus a guide covering action for key species, and a summary of how WFD and biodiversity policy inter-relate (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.). Furthermore, a new [Biodiversity Hub](#) has been created, this is a tool to guide partnerships through the key national and local data and evidence that can help identify opportunities to deliver more naturally functioning landscapes.

Case Study: Wiza Beck

Wildlife for Wigton, a local environmental group, received funding from Cumbria County Council to enhance a local park by improving habitat and access, creating ponds, wildflower plots and a small woodland. They also identified issues of bank erosion and agricultural runoff from a well-used footpath adjacent to the park. In partnership with West Cumbria Rivers Trust (representing the West Cumbria Catchment Partnership), and funded by the Environment Agency, a 400 m length of Wiza Beck was fenced off to create a riparian woodland, and areas of bank erosion were stabilised with willow bundling.

Objectives:

- Engagement and education;
- Rural diffuse pollution;
- River habitat restoration and Biodiversity/conservation/habitats;
- Access and recreation.

Outcomes and Outputs

Ecological, water quality and farm and land management outcomes:

- Better stock management was achieved by separating footpath/river from livestock, preventing livestock from accessing the waterway;
- 2ha of habitat was created including a pond and woodland;
- Improved water quality by reduced bank erosion and agricultural runoff.

Social outcomes:

Inclusion of local people in planning and delivering the project gives sense of ownership and pride in local environment and increased physical activity.

Engagement

26 local volunteers were involved in the project, they helped to plan and deliver the project, including tree planting and willow work by a local Scout group.



Reducing risk of harm from flooding and drought & adapting to climate change

Project objectives



Flooding

288 projects



38% of the projects



Low flows/ water scarcity

146 projects



19% of the projects



Resilience

359 projects



47% of the projects

Project outputs and outcomes

Better **water resource management** was reported as an outcome for **158 projects**. Of these, 93 projects reported that they specifically tackled flooding, 15 tackled low flows, 41 tackled both of these water management issues and 9 did not specify. All of these figures are less compared to 2020/2021, however the proportion of projects reporting better water resource management is the same.

National Support

The CaBA Flood Working Group focuses on developing capacity and helping Catchment Partnerships' work to reduce flood risk, including using Natural Flood Management (NFM), land management and Working with Natural Processes (WWNP). There are lots of Natural Flood Management resources available through the CaBA website (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.), including a [7-step guide to NFM](#) and a guide to [monitoring and evaluating NFM projects](#), the new [NFM Hub](#) and there are data layers relevant for planning flood risk projects through the [CaBA data package](#) (Catchment Based Approach Data Hub, n.d.).

The Abstraction (Water Resources) Working Group was established to ensure that catchment partnerships are supported to integrate water resources management into a wider programme of integrated catchment planning and delivery. The group is supporting the testing of new management approaches in some initial priority catchments but will be looking to broaden the impact and knowledge of the group's activities across all catchments in England.

In addition, climate change adaptation is a crucial and growing element in the work of many of the other national working groups. More information on the working groups and the new advice hubs can be found on the [CaBA website](#) (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.).

Project Case Study: River Glen Restoration Project

The River Glen Special Area of Conservation is a high energy river with a long history of management to protect farmland (embankments, dredging and bank protection). Over the past 15 years, the river has tried to switch course on several occasions, driven by sudden embankment failure during large flood events. On each occasion, the river was trained back to its original course to keep the status quo. Over the last decade Tweed Forum, the Environment Agency and Natural England worked with the four affected farms to ease the transition to a more natural system, while improving resilience to farmland and infrastructure.

Objectives:

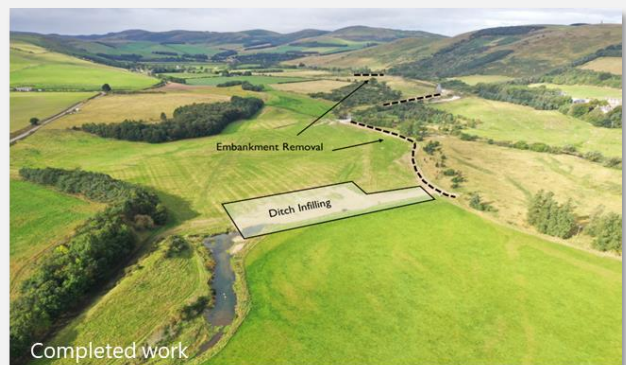
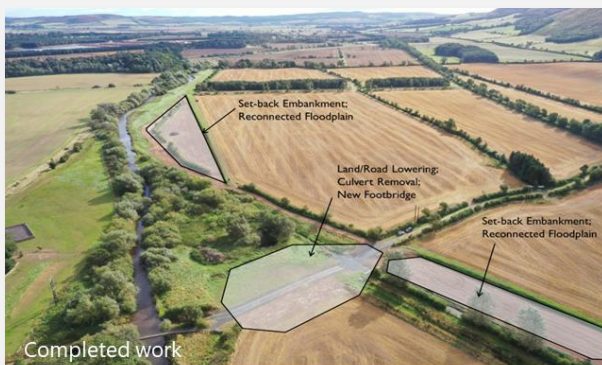
- Engagement, awareness raising, education;
- Rural diffuse pollution;
- Flooding, low Flows/water scarcity, resilience;
- River habitat restoration, biodiversity/conservation/habitats;
- Physical modification.

Biodiversity and River habitat restoration

- Reconnected/created 6ha of new flood plain.
- Improved habitat for birds, fish and invertebrates.

Outputs and outcomes:

- Reduced flood risk to farmland, properties and infrastructure.
- Engaged with 10 farmers/landowners and 20 other people through community engagement.
- Tackled water quality issues by creating depositional zones for fine sediment to prevent it reaching the water course.



Greening our towns and cities

Project objectives



Green-blue infrastructure

189 projects



25% of the projects

National Support

The CaBA Urban Working Group champions a collaborative, partnership approach to urban water management. The CUWG supports CaBA partnerships nationwide to engage more effectively with key stakeholders in urban water management, including local authorities, communities, businesses and developers. The group is helping to drive the delivery of urban water management under the 25 Year Environment Plan, including through the promotion of green-blue infrastructure. The group regularly holds workshops to showcase the multiple benefits of a collaborative approach to urban water management and has supported the production of various resources and guidance packs. These resources and contact details for the group can be accessed through the [CUWG page](#) on the CaBA website (Catchment Based Approach, n.d.)

In addition to the Working Group pages there are also a number of Advice Hubs available and includes a new [Urban Advice Hub](#) which helps to make key datasets and evidence resources more accessible to CaBA partnerships working in urban environments.

Project Case Study: Sherbourne Valley Project

This is an ongoing project which aims to restore and enhance the river Sherbourne through Coventry City, led by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (representing the Warwickshire Avon Catchment Partnership), in partnership with other organisations including Coventry City Council, the Environment Agency and Severn Trent. The four year National Lottery Heritage funded delivery plans include; river restoration projects including stage zero restoration and weir mitigation, wetland enhancements and creations, surveying natural heritage sites, developing an ongoing management plans, as well as volunteering, training, walks, other test activities and consultation.

Objectives:

- Engagement, awareness raising and education;
- Urban diffuse pollution;
- Flooding, low flows/water scarcity and resilience;
- River habitat restoration, biodiversity/conservation/habitats, physical modification;
- Access/recreation, green-blue infrastructure and investigation/evidence.

Outputs and outcomes:

So far -

- 0.5km of the river has been enhanced by the removal of Himalayan balsam;
- Around 1800 people have been engaged in the project, which includes volunteers, citizen scientists and farmers/landowners. Engagement has been reported in audiences not traditionally involved including BAME, youth and families, and from deprived communities in Coventry City;
- Ecological issues have been tackled by 10 Volunteer days on river restoration installing leaky barriers, and tackling invasive Himalayan balsam by removal.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A wide range of feedback and evaluation especially capturing peoples' hopes and wishes for the area have been captured. Furthermore, assessing if an activity has provided participants with information and enabled them to input to the consultation. A specific questionnaire regarding demographics was used at all events run. Follow up visits to sites following balsam clearance to assess the difference were also carried out.

Using and managing land sustainably

Project outputs and outcomes

The partnerships were asked to give written details about how their projects have tackled farm and land management issues and the outputs and outcomes of these interventions, and a description was given for **175** of the projects.

Key topics which are being discussed, planned and advised on across the projects are:

- **NFM**, slowing the flow and floodplain management;
- Nutrient & pesticide use;
- **Soil** management;
- Water quality and **interventions to protect watercourses** such as buffer strips, fencing, crossing points and drinking water solutions;
- Point source and diffuse pollution issues;
- Invasive non-native species (INNS) management;
- **Nutrient** loss;
- **Habitat** creation/restoration;
- Whole-farm **natural solutions** and **regenerative agriculture**;
- Linking landowners to funding.

Some specific examples of land management work undertaken in individual projects include:

- Buffer strip creation to reduce impact from livestock grazing;
- Farm plastic management leaflets were produced that are available to farmers and landowners to better manage their waste;
- Promotion of better soils management and Regenerative Agriculture. Training landowners in Soilmentor (a soil monitoring app);
- Improving clean and dirty water separation on farms;
- Soil aerator provided to groups of farmers to improve soil management.
- Creation of working wetlands to slow storm flow. Creating slow release mechanisms allowing greater percolation into lower soil strata.

National Support

Please see the **clean and plentiful water** section for national support relating to using and managing land sustainably.

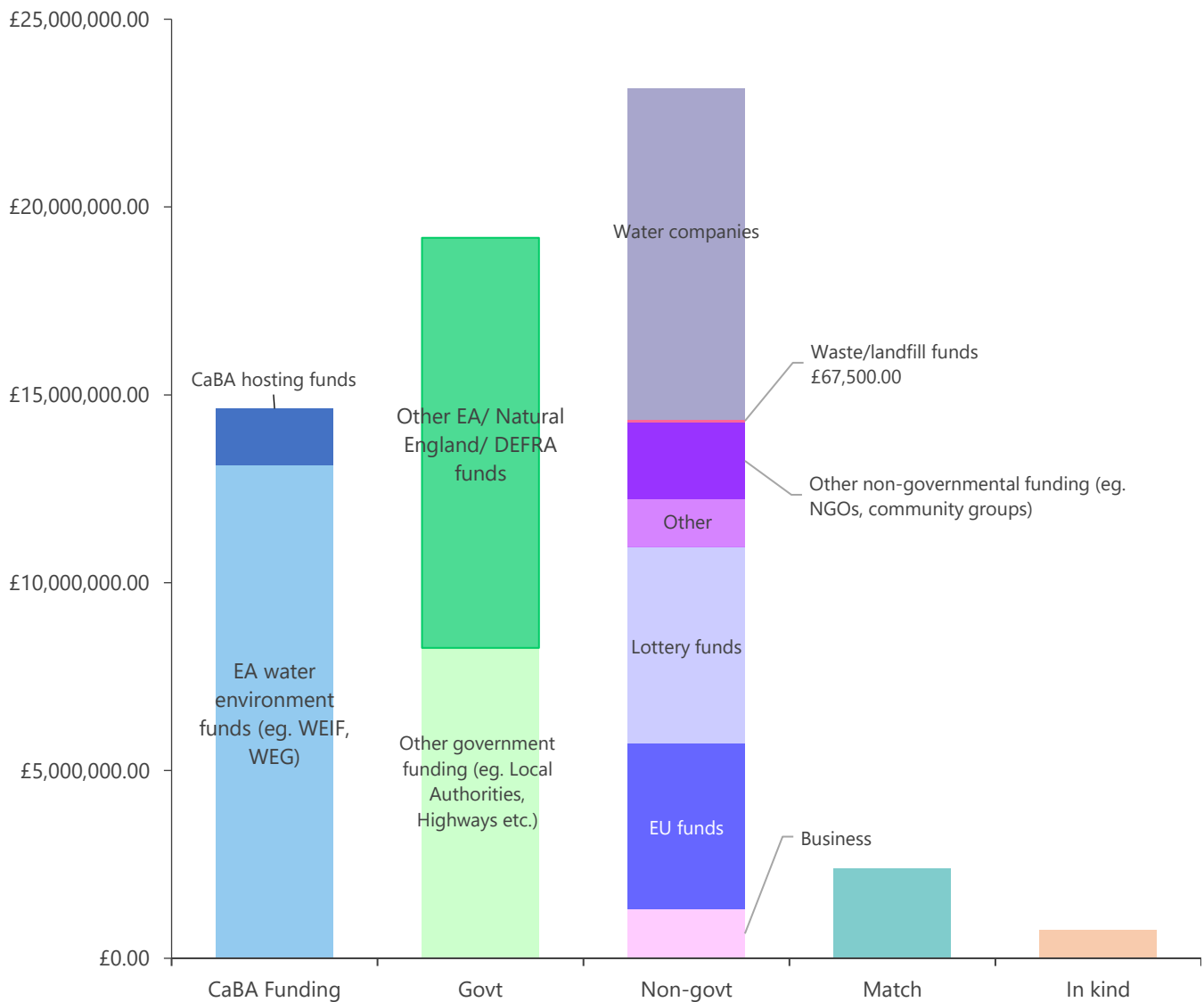
Funding, financing and incentivising improvement in natural capital

25YEP

The 25 Year Environment Plan states that ‘the right mix of public and private funding and financing for projects that protect and enhance natural assets will be crucial to the successful delivery of this ambitious plan’ (HM Government, 2018).

Funding for CaBA projects comes from a variety of sources from both the public and private sector. Each year, the project funding details submitted through the CaBA form are assessed to understand the different funding sources being accessed for catchment-based projects. The data is also used to give an indication of the ratio between direct funding for CaBA and the water environment, and funding brought in from outside; non-governmental sources. The graph below shows the funding reported this year, and the groups and figures are explained in more detail on the following page.

CaBA Funding



The CaBA partnerships receive funding to cover the costs of hosting and running the partnerships, which across all the partnerships totals around £1.5m a year. In addition, partnerships are able to bid for funding from the Environment Agency (EA) for specific catchment-based funding, such as the Water Environment Improvement Fund (WEIF) and the Water Environment Grant (WEG). Both WEIF and WEG funds are lumped with CaBA host funding in the 'CaBA funding' category in the graph above and the ratio below. EA Water Environment Funds including **WEIF** and **WEG** together totalled just over **£13.1M** of the project funding reported in 2021/22, an increase of around £0.75M or 6% compared to last year.

Government

Other DEFRA, EA and Natural England funding, and funding from other government sources such as local authorities, totalled just over **£19.8M** in the reporting period 2021/22. This government funding has been invested in the environment in a collaborative and targeted way via the Catchment Based Approach. This figure is lower than the £24.5M reported last year.

Non-Government

Funding from non-governmental sources includes funding from water companies, businesses, lottery funds, EU funds, NGOs and community groups. In 2021/22, this funding totalled almost £23.2M. This is lower than last year's total, £27.7M. As seen in previous years, most of the funding secured falls within this category. There has been around a £4.5M reduction in funding in this category in 2021/22, and there could be a number of reasons for this, including the covid-19 pandemic, which has continued to negatively impact some partnerships, or the reporting process itself. The reported figures for EU funding have decreased from around £5.3M to £4.4M. Lottery funding has also decreased, from almost 10.5M in 2020/21 to £5.2M this year. Conversely, water company, business and other non-governmental funding (e.g., NGO's and community groups) has all increased this year, with water companies now accounting for the highest proportion of funding in the non-government category.

Other funding

Finally, partnerships were asked to report the amount of match funding and in-kind contributions invested in their partnership projects. These total almost £2.4M and £750K respectively. While the match figure is higher than last year, the combined total has reduced from around £3.4M in 2020/2021 to around £3.1M this year.

Summary

These results show that overall there has been a reduction in the reported funding this year in all categories apart from the WEIF and WEG elements of the CaBA funding. This, combined with the reduction in non-government sources is reflected in a reduction in this year's funding ratio.

The ratio of CaBA funding (so WEIF, WEG and Hosting money combined) to non-Governmental funding this year is **1:1.6** (1:2.23 in 2021/22).

This ratio is based on the comparison between the first column in the chart above (direct CaBA funding = WEIF + WEG + Hosting) and the third column (non-governmental funding). It should be noted that collecting funding data from such a large and diverse group as CaBA partnerships on an annual basis, especially as many projects run on multi-year timescales, is challenging. The process of collecting this data within the reporting form has been through some refinements. In particular, Environment Agency Water Environment Improvement Fund and Water Environment Grant funds are now more consistently recorded and included as host funding.

We will continue to reflect on the recording and reporting of CaBA data and improve the process where possible, while also maintaining some consistencies to allow comparison between years.

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