Policy priorities for catchment management in England

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Defra’s objectives

1. Support and develop British farming and encourage sustainable food production
   • Competitiveness, productivity, sustainability

2. Help to enhance the environment and biodiversity to improve quality of life
   • Reducing pollution and protecting habitats

3. Support a strong and sustainable green economy, resilient to climate change
   • Economy uses natural resources sustainably, reduce waste, adapt to climate change
• Draws on the evidence of the recent National Ecosystem Assessment

• Commitments include:
  - Working with industry and environmental partners to reconcile the goals of improving the environment and increasing food production;
  - Better integration of policy
  - Reviewing how we provide advice and incentives for farmers and land managers
  - Assess the effectiveness of voluntary approaches;
  - Paid ecosystem services – to expand markets and schemes in which payments are made by the beneficiary of a natural service to the provider of that service;
Overview

Water Framework Directive and Catchment Management

• Evidence from catchment research and elsewhere has greatly influenced policy thinking
• It has started to inform and shape our strategy for delivering the Water Framework Directive.
• Stakeholders have criticised River Basin Management Plans for not taking account of local issues and locally planned action. Many have pressed for a catchment-based approach
• Ministers have now committed to applying a catchment based approach to deliver the Water Framework Directive
• This may provide a way to better integrate policy and its delivery through an ecosystems approach
Environment Agency will engage stakeholders to identify issues, agree priorities and deliver catchment plans that support the WFD.

We have invited other stakeholders to lead or “host” in 15 other catchments.

The pilot catchments will:

- Cover a variety of: scales; topography; pressures; political boundaries and, degrees of existing engagement
- Provide proof of concept for WFD and help inform wider national roll-out across England’s 100 catchments
- Test approaches for stakeholder engagement at a catchment and sub-catchment level

We will formally evaluate progress alongside developing guidance and support tools

It will run until December 2012 before roll-out to begin 2nd cycle River Basin Management Planning by 2014
Adopting a catchment approach for the Water Framework Directive provides opportunities to integrate other policies

- Ministers have recently agreed to develop a more integrated policy framework
- Achieving goals for water relies upon land management so needs the involvement of farmers, water companies and other sectors
- Water supports ecosystems that underpin biodiversity and other Defra policies
- We need to:
  - Align the demands we place on key sectors
  - Better target measures
  - Achieve multiple benefits
  - Improve efficiency of policy delivery

- We are starting to scope this across related policy areas
Stages are likely to include:

- Gathering evidence of issues through local intelligence and catchment walking
- Producing a ‘catchment report card’
- Agreeing priorities with stakeholders
- Agreeing a catchment action plan
- Allocating resources to deliver supporting actions at a sub-catchment level
- Monitoring and evaluating progress
ongoing need for evidence, tools and guidance

Issues we still need to investigate include:

• How best to engage with stakeholders
• How to resolve cross-boundary/political issues
• How to prioritise actions to achieve multiple benefits
• How to target action and allocate resources

We hope to draw together and share learning from our ‘pilot’ evaluation on a quarterly basis.

Catchment science has achieved a great deal but we need to continue the good work.
Summary

Overall:
• More integration of policy
• Focus on production, competitiveness and sustainability
• Working with industry and stakeholders
• Ecosystem services
• Developing catchment approaches

• We need the science, social science and economic research to help us to do this