

CaBA meeting in London, 5 November 2013

CaBA: Catchment-based Approach, a consortium of partnership groups sponsored by Defra, with a steering committee run by the Rivers Trust (Helen Dangerfield of the National Trust is a local member). The role of the groups is to provide coordination and guidance. The Environment Agency is actively involved and is appointing a Coordinator for each catchment.

Some random notes from the meeting:

- A main reason that Defra has given priority to setting up this network of voluntary efforts is that it has significant obligations under the EU [Water Framework Directive](#) but is being subjected to continuing funding cuts.
- It is intended to be a long-term adaptive process, not constrained by plan deadlines
- Defra's aspiration is that partnerships should attract funding and become self-sustaining within 18 months
- Key needs:
 - Increase public awareness
 - Good objective evidence and data
 - Early engagement with agriculture
 - Engagement with flood risk plans
 - Robust monitoring to assess which actions are most successful
 - Guidance for local authority planners to understand the consequences of approving such things as chicken sheds and be more aware generally of WFD responsibilities
 - Work with the Forestry Commission to use woodland management to help water quality and flood risk
- Some threats to the waterway system
 - diffuse pollution: chemical, microbiological, metals, highway run-off etc
 - nutrient overload
 - invasive non-native species
 - oxygen depletion and anaerobic conditions
- Two WFD articles particularly to be noted:
 - 14: requires public participation
 - 7: requires protection of drinking water sources
- The steering committee plans to mount technical workshops and an online forum, together with a web page <http://www.catchmentbasedapproach.net/> providing access to Ordnance Survey, EA and Natural England data, and useful tools.
- It will need to foster the development of data standards and protocols
- Internal Drainage Boards are showing signs of cooperating, though their objectives are different
- Some particular interests of water companies:
 - return to the environment of used water
 - lower-carbon lower-energy treatment methods
 - non-treatable substances
- Biggest challenges:
 - silo thinking (people need bringing together)
 - achieving delivery
 - time resources (for engaging with different bodies)
- Some useful tools:
 - Mapping – get people to look at their sector
 - Popup workshops
 - [Integrated Local Delivery](#)
 - Modern methods to engage with communities (be innovative)
 - Setting up local groups helps unlock funding sources
- A possible funding stream is through the creation of [Paid Ecosystem Services](#). The steering committee is investigating providing appropriate tools.

In the lunch break I remarked to a couple of Defra people that there had been no mention of consultants. They gave as reasons:

- There should be sufficient expertise within the partnerships
- Consultants are likely to have less local knowledge
- They need paying

I then asked whether it was necessary to have consultants write things up in the sort of language Defra and other public bodies are used to, and they said no.