**Tyne Catchment Partnership Meeting**

**Tuesday 6th May 2014, 1:30pm**

**Newton & Bywell Community Hall**

**Apologies**

James Copeland (NFU), Phil Lynch (Port of Tyne), Sarah Tooze (North Pennines AONB Partnership), Derek Hilton-Brown (Newcastle City Council)

**Present**

Susan Mackirdy (Tyne Rivers Trust), Trevor Atkinson (Groundwork), Lynne Dunleavy (Northumberland Community Flooding Partnership), Andrew Miller (Northumberland National Park Authority), Graham Gill (Forestry Commission), Jim Heslop (Environment Agency), Clare Ross (Gateshead), Tony Baines (Northumbrian Water), Michael Rogers (Durham Wildlife Trust), Angus Collingwood-Cameron (Northern Farmers & Landowners Group), Michelle Hogg (North Tyneside), Dorothy Fairburn (CLA), Hugh Clear-Hill (Northumberland County Council), Mary Weatherby (Environment Agency), Phil Hartley (Newcastle City Council)

**Background and scene setting**

Susan Mackirdy welcomed everybody to the meeting and outlined the challenge set to us all by the Catchment Based Approach. Context for the day includes the Tyne Catchment Plan and the joint Tyne-Northumberland Rivers Trust Forum event held at Kirkley Hall in January 2014.

The Tyne catchment itself has a number of challenges including its diverse land use, population density, the tidal reach and no SAC designations.

Work began on the Tyne Catchment Plan in April 2012 (part of a national pilot) and included a large amount of community engagement. However there was no time to prioritise issues or projects in time for delivery of the Tyne Catchment Plan to Defra’s deadline of December 2012.

DEFRA began rolling out the Catchment Based Approach in 2013 and Tyne Rivers Trust is the host for the Tyne catchment. Initially 6 months of funding was secured in October 2013 – which resulted in the Joint Forum in January 2014. Now there is a further year of funding to March 2015, the only constraint being that it is spent on partnership work and not actual projects. Northumbrian Water have also promised some funding. A co-ordinator has been brought in, but it is up to us all how to take it forward.

**Current issues / data**

The Tyne Catchment Plan included 200 survey responses mentioning 340 issues. A wide array of people were spoken to, including river users, community groups and representatives of organisations / industry. The issues mentioned often go beyond the WFD, for example recreation or abstraction, and included large-scale as well as local-scale issues. One challenge is how to place these issues onto the funding agenda.

The Joint Forum event included participatory work to identify issues. Over 50 people attended and there was a broad consensus that the event was useful, perhaps to be repeated annually. The Tyne catchment was divided into three – North Tyne / Rede; South Tyne / Allens; Main Tyne / Estuary. The report by Iain Nixon (the independent facilitator) was circulated. Challenges identified to taking positive action included the multitude of initiatives with limited co-ordination; lack of easily-accessible clear evidence on issues; and the level of sustained community engagement.

Mary Weatherby outlined updates to the WFD data with two ‘metromap’ A3 handouts. We are currently in a transitional data period and the handouts represent only 1 year’s data based on the new ‘building block’ methodology – the classifications for the River Basin management Plan may be different as they will be based on 3 years’ data.

* The WFD is moving from ‘cycle 1’ into ‘cycle 2’ – which affects some of the waterbodies as boundaries are merged or split in places. Cycle 2 will cover the period 2015-2021; the objective-setting phase is completed.
* Water Body Action Plans (WAPs) for all failing waterbodies are being completed and consulted on – the WAPs for the Lower Tyne (the last for the Tyne) are in preparation.
* Data will become more accessible through a web-based system.
* Heavily-modified waterbodies are being reviewed
* The tools, models and standards (building blocks) for assessment are being changed
* The Northumbria River Basin Management Plan will be out for consultation in September
* A Cost-Benefit Analysis is complete
* Reasons for Failure (RFF) have a quarterly review process
* An investigation programme into failures are being prioritised and programmed for investigation during cycle 2

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Looking at the failures for the Tyne:

* Almost half are due to physical modification.
* 17% are from natural conditions / suspect data which may end up being removed from the list of failing waterbodies. (Natural Conditions relate to issues such as copper of pH where the standards are set nationally but perhaps locally, because of geology, the finding is natural. These ‘failures’ have no remedy.)
* 12% are due to mines / pollution
* 10% are due to pollution from urban areas & transport

The failures can also be examined by sector.

Comparing the two handouts the group noted some of the changes between cycle 1 / cycle 2 including some surprises. Questions included how significant is the ‘high’ status, the impact of invasives or intensive agriculture / forestry / industry. Jim Heslop & Mary explained that this isn’t a classification year – the next one is 2015Also elements are monitored on different timescales e.g. 3 years / 6 years. The data is a snapshot, not a classification.

Further questions included what is a ‘suspected reason for failure’ and what is ‘confirmed reason for failure’. The starting point is an understanding of the RFF, which through investigations moves into probable and, when there is enough evidence, becomes confirmed. It is merely expressing confidence in the RFF, not what is required to bring a waterbody back into good status.

Dorothy Fairburn asked if there is an assessment of action needed. This is where the Waterbody Action Plans can help identify what all sectors can do to both mitigate and improve issues or locations. The Plans identify many actions, for partnership working, possibly to contribute collective intelligence, where to focus, reaching FC / DEFRA grants, and community participation.

Susan brought the WFD discussion to a close in order to stick to time, reminding the group that the Tyne Catchment Partnership is funded by DEFRA not the WFD, and is about more than WFD work.

**Discussion around Tyne Catchment Partnership structure**

A proposed structure had previously been circulated based on the discussions held at the Kirkley Hall Joint Forum – Susan outlined the proposals, firstly for a steering group – including the need for an independent chair, the need to combine sector representatives (e.g. local authorities) to keep steering group numbers down to a manageable and useful number, tasks including prioritising issues and gap analysis. The steering group would include a role to influence decision-makers and other advocacy.



A targeted approach could be through ‘working groups’ / ‘delivery groups’. One suggestion is making the most of opportunities for funding – for example there is a current opportunity around the Ouseburn building on a previous research project. The working groups would have links to project funders, such as WFD, HLF, SITA etc.

There would also be space to tie-in with neighbouring catchments and wider partnerships / membership organisations. The structure would be fluid, over time.

The following discussion around the table included:

* Whether there would be enough active stakeholders to form dynamic working groups – Susan explained that a working group could be 1 person if needed, working in partnership on the issue or the location. Working groups would not need a set structure. For example on an issue such as flooding, everybody in an affected community would be involved, but one person would be reporting back.
* That the working groups needed to be focused more on delivery, and defining their remit would be important
* That the steering group would have no power or authority so unclear what it would steer – Susan explained it would also seek to influence policy. Jim Heslop supported this, saying that it was important to co-ordinate all the strands of activity. The WFD with its multi-layers of issues, information & problems is like a beast, we need the Tyne Catchment Partnership to focus instead on benefits and opportunities. Michael Rogers felt it could be a way of co-ordinating the projects that already deliver on the ground.
* The relationship between the Tyne Catchment Partnership and other partnerships in the area, such as the LEP, the LNPs. Although these work on different spatial scales & remits, can they be brought together?
* That the Tyne Catchment Partnership would find its niche perhaps after completing gap analysis – or hadn’t this been already achieved by the Tyne Catchment Plan? It was queried for whom the gap analysis task would be undertaken, and how nebulous it could be
* Some overview is needed although the relationship to existing, established partnerships is unclear
* Andrew Miller summed up the massive challenge set by DEFRA and a shame the guidance wasn’t clearer – in some ways it would be easier if it was focused just on WFD work. The Northumberland National Park has over 200 existing partnerships and this would be one more. The proposed structure is very similar to the Northern Upland Chain LNP – where only some of the working groups have started delivering. Two concerns were governance and facilitation. He felt in the uplands of the North Tyne the partnership may not be needed, and in the South Tyne effectively there is already the AONB Partnership.

**Tea break task**

During the break people were able to note ideas for ‘working groups’ / ‘delivery groups’ around the room on flip chart paper. The ideas noted were:

* Pollution (Tony Baines) – this is a big issue across the catchment including diffuse, point, nutrient, sediments and sewage connections. A possible quick-win to test the model / partnership structure. A case-study of the Wandle was mentioned where volunteers had been trained up to EA standards to help add evidence to the picture of pollution incidents.
* Contaminated sediments / minewaters group (Phil Hartley) – this is a problem in the estuary but ties back to the metal mine sources. Benefits would include economic aspects and ecological benefits (fish etc). This is effectively already being looked at by the Tyne Sediments Group.
* ‘Rural links to urban issues’ working group (Angus Collingwood-Cameron) – focusing on sediment & pollution causing problems in the estuary, upstream land management decisions that affect downstream flooding, for example softer interventions, natural flood management, slow-the-flow, wider land management. There is lots of awareness of these issues but little done to really deal with them, or to get key bodies like the NE LEP to commit resources to face these challenges. Benefits would be economic and public health / welfare.
* Resilience to climate change (Dorothy Fairburn) – a group to look at water in the uplands, for example water storage for agriculture, not just for flood management. Cheviot Futures had worked on projects like this – but not in the Tyne area
* Overview of the main river (Clare Ross) – focusing on development pressures and lack of environmental designation. At the Joint Forum there was a ‘local authority’ group which raised concerns such as surface water, SuDS. The S Tyneside / Gateshead / Sunderland local authorities meet to discuss nature conservation. Otherwise local authority teams liaise through the EA. In Northumberland the emerging Local Development Plan is feeding in. How well co-ordinated are the ecologists and the flood risk officers across the catchment? The three LNPs in the area have recently worked together to put a prospectus to the LEP for work on collective and collaborative restoration techniques including brownfield sites.
* Ouseburn (Susan Mackirdy) – the drivers here are WFD failure, local desire and DEFRA funding for Evidence & Measures Study. The aim would be to improve water quality in the lower Ouseburn and tackle barriers to fish, also create a usable, healthy river environment for people to use and to tie-in to other Ouseburn initiatives such as SuDS work in the upper catchment and the Ouseburn User Group (including flooding concerns and fishing boat access through the barrage)
* Balsam Bashing (Trevor Atkinson) – co-ordinated work on invasive species management, mapping locations, joined-up effort, links to community groups and volunteers through Wildlife Trusts and the TRT. Current work on invasives tends to be opportunistic. The Tees Rivers Trust secured funding from DEFRA’s Invasive Species Local Action Group with match from the Landscape Lottery project to bring in a dedicated officer.

**Summary**

Avoiding duplication – Look for existing working groups that could be adapted, rather than setting up new ones e.g. Border Uplands, Forest Streams – and suggest new ideas to them. Graham Gill would support The Tyne Catchment Partnership steering group only if it replaces the RBMP liaison group. Andrew Miller advised that the terminology on the proposed structure needs looking at, so that the ‘working groups’ / ‘delivery groups’ are not subordinate. Angus Collingwood-Cameron pointed out as well that Natural England need to fit into the proposed structure, with all the changes to agri-environment schemes (NE were invited to the meeting but had not replied).

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**Next steps**

In a general discussion about next steps for the Tyne Catchment Partnership there was no immediate take up on the proposal to set up a Steering Group, instead the group was looking to Tyne Rivers Trust as Catchment Host to provide leadership and guidance on what the priority areas for action should be.

It was agreed that the group should meet again when TRT was in a position to provide recommendations as to issues / locations to focus on, taking into account:

* WFD data and classifications
* the issues raised and concerns expressed through the Tyne Catchment Plan pilot project
* other sources of information about the pressures and issues in the catchment
* existing projects, and the extent to which they are tackling these issues

TRT undertook to provide recommendations to the reconvened group on the basis of an analysis of this information.

It was also agreed that the following would be useful next steps:

1. Repeat the (joint) annual forum, perhaps expand it to include the Tees and the Wear – next January?
2. Sharing information, communication
3. Prioritise quick wins in the short-term and make some initial joint funding bids, while the partnership itself takes shape
4. Susan to carry on seizing the opportunities already identified in the Ouseburn