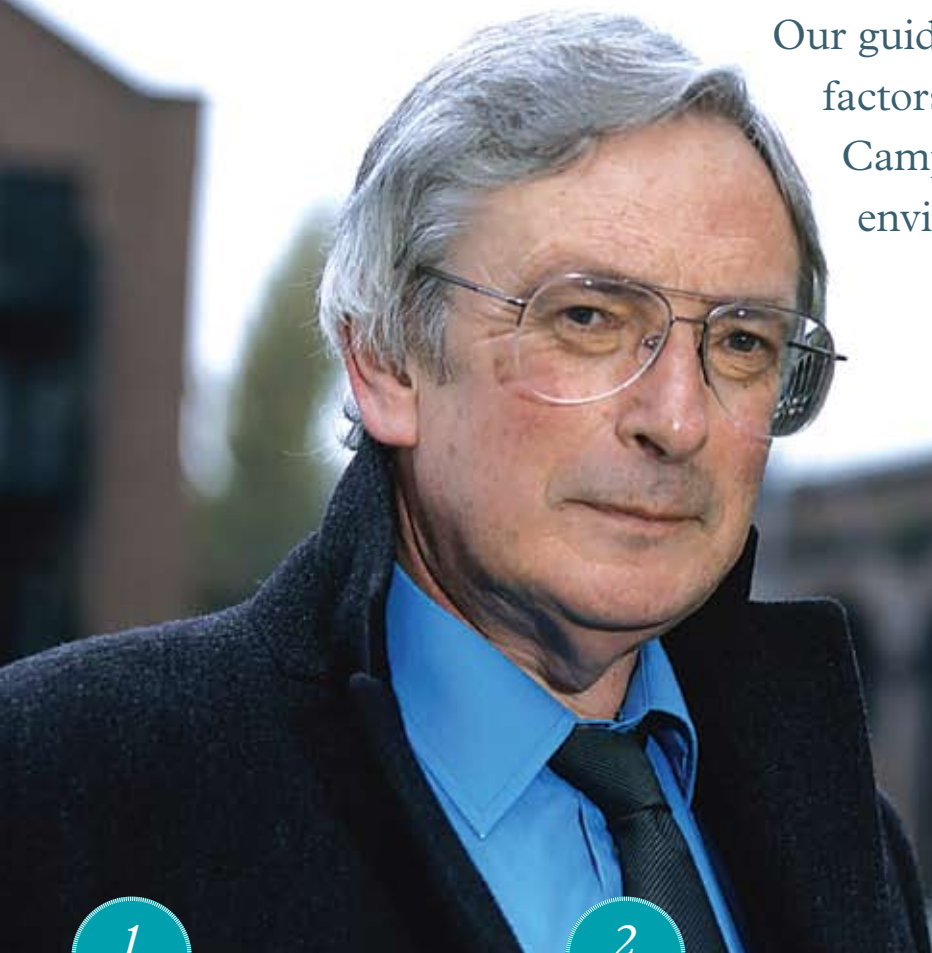


THIRTEEN FROM

Our guide to the thirteen critical success factors that guided the Mersey Basin Campaign through 25 years of environmental action.



1

LEADERSHIP

Leadership emerges in many different places – in community groups as well as at the head of powerful public and private sector organisations. Some leaders are elected. Others are appointed or self-appointed. Successful partnerships need strong leadership.

BELOW: It was government minister Michael Heseltine's leadership following the Toxteth Riots in 1981 that led directly to the creation of the Mersey Basin Campaign.



2

VISION

It is easy to be overwhelmed by conflicting ideas, information and distractions. 'Mission drift' is a constant threat. So the vision must be clear and unshakeable. Our vision is one of waters clean enough for fish to live in, flowing through green or appropriately developed watersides. The focus of the Mersey Basin Campaign throughout its entire life has been on improving the waters and watersides of our river system by engaging organisations and individuals in the process.

BELOW: Cleaner water made possible the superb regeneration of Salford Quays.



3

PEOPLE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN STRUCTURES

People are more important than organisational structures. Progress is more important than process. Positive change on the ground is more important than strategy. Despite constipated systems and the dangers of strangulation by process and targets, good people can achieve remarkable things.

BELOW: 2008 Unilever Dragonfly Award Winner Amy Preston, an inspiring schoolgirl volunteer.



TWENTY-FIVE

Words

Walter Menzies, chief executive,
Mersey Basin Campaign

[PICTURED LEFT]



4

THE BIG IDEA

The big idea is sustainable development: progress that recognises that the environment, the economy and social conditions are inextricably linked. Sending the bill to future generations is wrong. The Campaign has avoided being sidelined as a single-issue organisation by working across the sectors and viewing all of them – including business – as part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

ABOVE: Sustainable development in action: the Manchester headquarters of architects BDP has impressive environmental standards. The development won a Northwest Business Environment Award, organised by the Mersey Basin Campaign – one of the ways the Campaign engages with business.



5

REALISTIC TIMESCALE

Ecological time, community time and political time are rarely synchronised. Short-term, quick fix political initiatives come and go and are soon forgotten. They are not the answer to big, long-term problems. The Campaign's lifespan of 25 years was quite exceptional for a government-backed initiative – and about right.

ABOVE: The Mersey is attracting new development – but it took 25 years for the political, environmental and economic timescales to bear fruit.



6

GOVERNMENT BACKING

Successive governments, both Conservative and Labour, have backed the Mersey Basin Campaign and provided essential core funding around which additional resources have been packaged. The government also appoints the Campaign's chair, which confers status upon the role. This relationship with the government reassures business partners and sponsors that the Campaign is a serious force.

ABOVE: Environment Minister Hilary Benn, a contributor to the Campaign's Environment 09 Conference. Photo by Steve Punter.

“People are more important than organisational structures.
 Progress is more important than process.
 Positive change on the ground is more important than strategy.”



7

RESOURCES

The scale of investment in water quality improvements in Northwest England has been massive in comparison with investment in other types of infrastructure. Since privatisation in 1989, the capital investment by the region’s water company, United Utilities, has been around £8 billion. The economic regulator OFWAT determines the level of investment. Alongside the Environment Agency’s environmental regulation, this investment has made a massive impact: shockingly polluted waters have been transformed and wildlife has returned.

ABOVE: Engineers inspecting the 134km Thirlmere Aqueduct – part of an eight year, £350 million programme by United Utilities.



8

ACTION AT EVERY LEVEL

We have understood the importance of both strategy and delivery and the weakness of one without the other. Action has been needed at every level. The Campaign was the inaugural winner of the World Riverprize, cementing our reputation as an international leader. This has been helpful. And it has been good for our region to have an outstanding environmental success story.

Europe has been the originator of important environmental directives and of valuable funding and partnerships: through our participation in transnational programmes we have learned from our European colleagues and they have learned from us. We have been active too in influencing policy and decisions nationally and at the level of the Northwest region.

At the community level the Campaign’s network of local action partnerships has been led by people with local knowledge and commitment. This has guided our action partnership coordinators in delivering real change on the ground.

ABOVE: Volunteers building an otter holt in Cheshire.



9

WAYS OF WORKING

The Campaign has no power and very limited resources. We are not a regulator and we are driven not by profit, but by our mission. We have sought to lead massive change and to exercise influence far beyond our authority. So we have worked in very different ways – by influencing opinion and priorities among stakeholders, politicians, government officials, the business community and local people; by enabling projects to be delivered by the Campaign itself and its many partners; by enhancing the work of partners by raising their aspirations towards higher quality outcomes; and by communicating appropriately with different audiences.

ABOVE: Delegates networking at one of the Campaign’s popular forums.

13

THE JOURNEY, NOT THE DESTINATION

In its 25-year life, the Mersey Basin Campaign has made a big difference to the economy, the environment and the quality of life in our river basin. Salmon have returned to the river, development no longer turns its back to the water and greening has replaced dereliction.

But this is just a stage in a longer journey. The goalposts have moved. Adapting to climate change and meeting the ecological quality requirements demanded by the European Water Framework Directive are just two of the big issues for our region in 2009. Are our successors up to it? For the sake of future generations, we must hope so.

10

PROFESSIONALISM

Aiming for the highest common factor rather than the lowest common denominator demands confidence and professionalism. In projects, events and communications, we aspire to excellence.

BELOW: The Campaign's Source magazine has achieved high standards in content and design.



11

COMMUNICATIONS

It is no good being correct, worthy, dull and ignored. We live and work in a communications ecosystem of many voices and many media. Communications are at the heart of everything the Campaign has attempted. We have a carefully targeted communications strategy that is regularly refreshed. We have achieved very big impact with minimal resources. From face to face forums through to state of the art social media, we have constantly pushed the communications boundaries.

BELOW: Sammy the celebrity Salmon, worldwide blogger, with the Lord Mayor of Liverpool.



12

PARTNERSHIP

Partnership has become an aerosol word – sprayed on everything – at least in the world of regeneration in which the Campaign is a player. Its meaning has become devalued. But the silos within government, along with misconceptions and mistrust between the public, private, voluntary, community and academic sectors, remain serious barriers to progress. The Campaign has been a pioneer of ambitious partnership working across these sectors. By attacking stereotypes, breaking down barriers and creating new alliances, more has been achieved with less.

BELOW: Speke Garston Coastal reserve, the largest area of new open space in Liverpool for 100 years, made possible by the Campaign's partnership with developer Peel Holdings and voluntary group Liverpool Sailing Club.

