

**Towards a branding/naming strategy for
the Mersey Basin Campaign**

1st Draft – September 2003



1. INTRODUCTION

The recent Communications review and strategy conducted by Creative Concern for the Mersey Basin Campaign highlighted the requirement to review the organisation's name and brand.

From the research and consultation involved in the review, a number of branding issues were raised:

Mersey Basin Campaign brand

The name of the organisation creates confusion because:

- The word 'Mersey' implies a narrow geographical focus
- The word 'basin' is seen as a technical misnomer as the campaign's work involves rivers, other waterways and coastal areas
- The word 'campaign' is felt to be misleading as it implies both a short term activity and a confrontational rather than partnership approach

Proliferation of different internal brands

The inadequacies in the Mersey Basin Campaign name have led to a proliferation of different visual identities for the variety of initiatives that the organisation undertakes. Brands for initiatives such as Water Watch, Water Mark and Stream Care have developed distinct identities of their own which created confusion with the Campaigns funders and supporters

Supporter brands

The requirements of partnership working invariably lead to a degree of partner branding requirements. A clear policy on how this is handled is required to avoid a 'logo soup' that confuses the organisation's audiences.

The Communications Strategy recommends the development of an overarching brand or marque that brings the many parts of the organisation together under a new name which more clearly conveys the organisation's remit, purpose and mode of operation.

Within this it is important to ensure that there is sufficient differentiation with other environmental/sustainable organisations working within England's Northwest and sufficient synergy with the local, regional and national government sustainable development agendas.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the investigations to date into the renaming and rebranding of the Mersey Basin Campaign, summarising the findings and making recommendation for the next actions to be taken.



2. METHODOLOGY

The findings in this report have been ascertained from analysis and interpretation of the following sources:

- Individual in depth consultation with staff and stakeholders undertaken by Creative Concern as part of the Communications Review process in 2002
- Two creative workshops held with staff and stakeholders at the Mersey Basin campaign Offices in early September 2003

These workshops interrogated participants' views, both directly and laterally, on:

- What are the current perceptions of the organisation?
- What are its values and characteristics?
- What characterises its personality and behaviour?
- How does it relate to other organisations and bodies?
- What is its vision for the future?

The full transcript of the points arising from these workshops is shown in Appendix A.

3. OBJECTIVES

A brand strategy sets out to define and articulate the brand of the organisation through key words and statements (brand values and brand positioning) visual representations (the brand identity) and brand relationships/hierarchy (how the brand relates to organisations and partners).

In working towards a brand strategy for the organisation, this interim report aims to :

- **To define the 'brand' of the organisation currently known as the Mersey Basin Campaign**
Before we can evaluate any name or visual options we need to agree the key values and characteristics that we want to convey about the organisation
- **To agree the practical parameters to be taken into account when investigating naming options i.e. geography, purpose, mode, mood and timescale**
This will give a clear guide as to what the new name/brand needs to convey, including any 'no-go' areas that exist e.g. due to regional brand guidelines.
- **To develop a creative brief for the development of a new name and visual identity**
This will be used by a creative agency to develop a range of initial suggestions for the new name and visual identity. These visual options will be evaluated against the agreed brand aspects for the organisation, avoiding the danger of making a visual choice based on individual preference.



4. KEY THEMES

The key themes arising from the workshops were:

- MBC is seen as an organisation that delivers, with a strong track record of achievement and an international reputation
- MBC's core purpose is a 'good cause', it has a gravitas and a moral authority which comes from working on such a beneficial areas
- It is seen as a bridge and a source – a route through to information and contacts with a large sphere of influence
- It's seen as having clear objectives and an intelligent, smart way of working
- Its holistic, pragmatic approach and partnership brokering role is highly valued
- Its work is a strong fit with the Northwest's regional agenda and the results of its work impact strongly on the region's image
- The organisation is held in great affection by those that deal with it engendered by its longevity, integrity and commitment – it is described as being 'cherished'
- MBC is seen as a 'brave' organisation – one with integrity that is prepared to be provocative and 'stir it up' a little if the issue demands it
- Water and waterside environments are seen as very appealing to the public – the subject matter therefore has the potential to be seen as 'sexy'
- Seen as a fun organisation to be involved with by those that know it well

5. KEY ISSUES

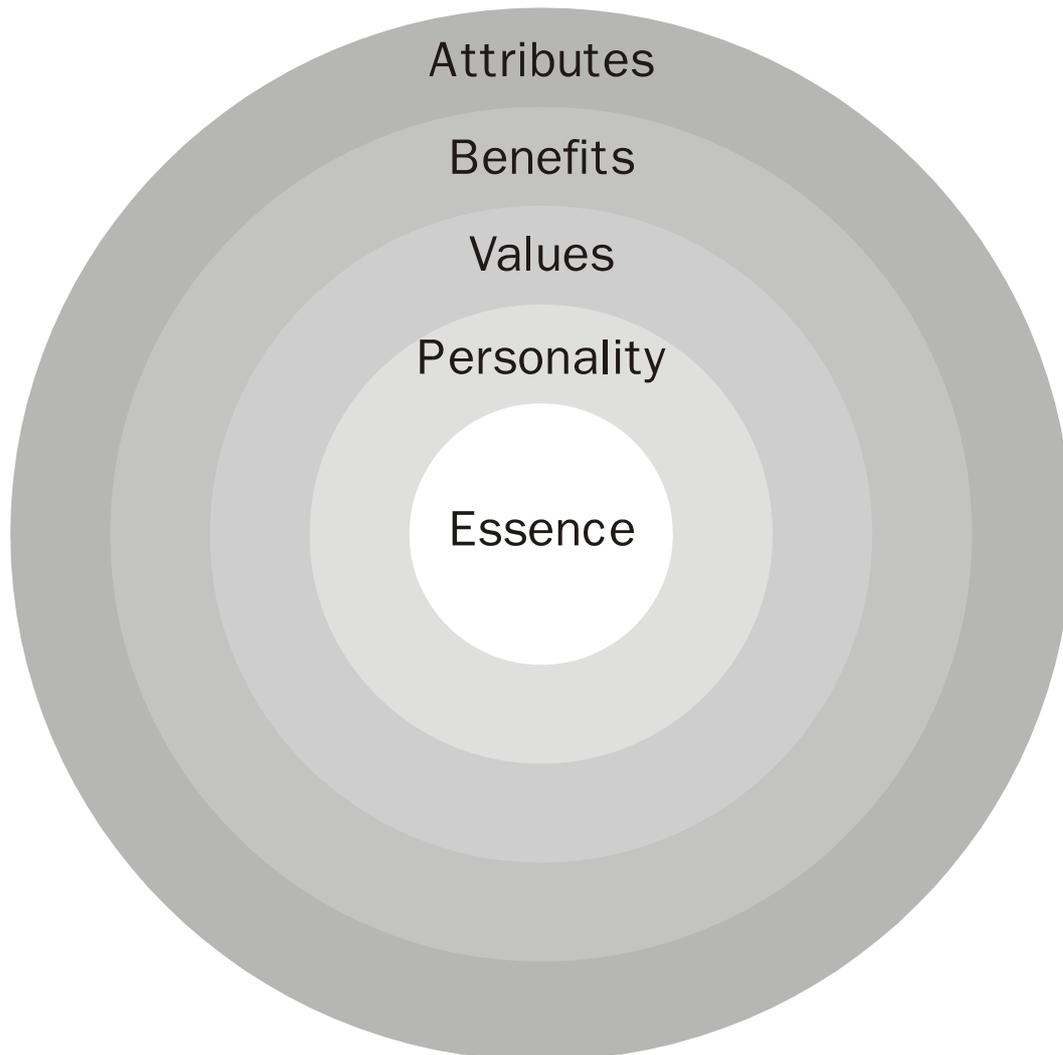
The key issues arising from the workshops were:

- The existing name is seen as a major barrier to perception and understanding, particularly the association with Merseyside
- MBC is perceived by many to be associated with government, primarily due to being located in the same building as GONW
- The organisation's office location and public face is in an urban environment nowhere near water, which undermines the integrity of its purpose
- Partnership working inevitably creates a confusion because of the complexities of the relationships involved
- Many of the organisation's successes (e.g. improved water quality) are not visible, therefore it is not easy to promote what the organisation does.
- By those who know the organisation well it has a high reputation but outside this small group the organisation and its work has very low recognition
- There is a perceived lack of clarity externally about the organisation's purpose although this is offset by an internal view that MBC has a clear set of policies and objectives
- Awareness is based around the individual initiatives, not the organisation itself



6. BRAND ANALYSIS

In focussing in on the brand of the Mersey Basin Campaign, we have used a version of the 'brand wheel' model where a series of attributes, benefits and personality traits are funnelled into a central core set of values and finally the brand essence, the organisation's identity.





6.1. ATTRIBUTES

These are the factual attributes of the Mersey Basin campaign, the things we know it possesses – the things that you get when you get involved with the organisation

- **Northwest -focussed**
The organisation is rooted and committed to the region, working to bring best practise in sustainable development to England's Northwest
- **A good cause**
MBC is there for a worthy and credible purpose, a not for profit initiative that aims to improve the quality of life of people in the region
- **Independent**
The MBC is able to articulate an unbiased view – it has no axe to grind other than that of the doing the right thing for the environment
- **A partnership**
As an organisation it does nothing on its own, its purpose is to involve people in making things happen, encouraging ownership and delivering what couldn't be delivered by any organisation working on their own
- **Well-connected**
The organisations links into local regional and national agendas means that it has access to policy and decision makers at the highest levels
- **Effective**
The MBC's track record of delivery to the highest international standard means that competence and success are assured
- **A conscience**
The passion and commitment of the organisation and its people mean that the MBC is true to its cause and will not be diverted
- **Pragmatic**
The organisation uses its conscience and its expertise not to berate people to follow its agenda but to practically and rationally take them on a journey that proves the logic of the arguments



6.2. **BENEFITS**

These are the benefits you get from involvement with the Mersey Basin Campaign:

- **Environmental improvements**
Real benefits to the environment that are derived from the organisation's work
- **Regenerated communities**
Environmental improvements are not just about the physical but also about the impact on individuals and communities quality of life
- **Strong guardianship**
The trust and respect that MBC engenders means that it brings a sense of responsibility and ownership to those that are involved with its work
- **Doing/saying the right thing**
MBC can be relied upon to be a true voice and to undertake projects that deliver real benefit
- **Bringing people together/brokerage**
MBC's partnership mode of operation brokers alliances and brings people together to deliver real results
- **Influence**
Involvement with MBC brings access to influence across a local, regional, national and international landscape
- **Competence**
This was seen as a major benefit of MBC - its professional, knowledgeable and businesslike approach to delivering results
- **Expertise**
MBC brings with it its international reputation at the leading edge of water-related sustainable development
- **Sense of purpose**
The passion and commitment of MBC brings real direction to its activities, creating momentum and a sense of progression for those who are involved with it



6.3. PERSONALITY

This is the personality that you are engaging with when you get involved with Mersey Basin Campaign.

- **Committed**
MBC is passionate about what it believes in, it is not half hearted.
- **Brave**
This means that it is not afraid to say what is right, even though it may not be quite what people want to hear
- **Quirky**
The organisation is seen as being distinctive and a bit out of the ordinary, not just another environmental organisation
- **Practical/pragmatic**
MBC is not just an ideas factory or an intellectual concept – it is an organisation that rolls up its sleeves and makes things happen
- **Trustworthy**
The MBC is seen as a ‘safe pair of hands’ for the issues it represents – it can be relied upon to do the right thing
- **A team player**
MBC thrives by working with other people – it is not a loner nor does it get satisfaction from delivering things in isolation.
- **An instigator**
MBC does not sit back and wait for things to come its way – it seeks out opportunities and motivates others to get involved



6.4. BRAND VALUES

MBC's brand values are the key things that underpin its brand. The various strategies and initiatives that the organisation undertakes should all support these values and these values should be demonstrated in everything that the organisation does. This means that they impact on

- how MBC behaves – its systems and processes
- what MBC looks like – its name and visual identity
- what it sounds like – its 'tone of voice' in our communications with our different audiences

It is the combination of these three strands that creates the organisation's difference, its distinct personality. It is these values that people and organisations will want to 'rub off' on them when they associate themselves with the Mersey Basin Campaign.

BRAND VALUE 1 - INTEGRITY

The integrity that people associate with Mersey Basin campaign is key to how people feel about it – its why staff feel good about working for it, its why stakeholders feel positive to be involved with it and why the wider community responds well to its initiatives and actions.

It is also the characteristic behind the sense of affection that many people have for the organisation. This sense of the MBC being 'precious' or highly valued is an important element to build on in widening its appeal.

BRAND VALUE 2 - CREDIBILITY

Credibility is vital to the MBC's brand, from its reputation at the leading edge of work in its field to its extensive sphere of influence and its ability to broker relationships with the people that matter. Its high level professional and business like approach, is what sets it apart from some other environmental organisations and enables it to relate equally well to private sector partners and government as well as local community groups.

This aspect of MBC is also important to the organisation's own sense of self belief and self worth.

BRAND VALUE 3 - FUNCTIONALITY

Despite the intellectual level at which it operates one of the key components of the MBC brand is that it delivers on a thoroughly practical level. It is responsible for real results and real progress in both water quality, environmental standards and the quality of people's lives. It also knows that this functionality is bound up in partnerships and teamwork, the things that enable it to deliver to a consistently high standard.



6.5. BRAND ESSENCE

From the three brand values identified, we have arrived at a core brand essence for the Mersey Basin Campaign of

“making a difference”

Everything the organisation does is geared towards delivering real change and this encapsulates what the MBC promises and delivers through its key brand values:

Integrity

MBC gets involved in things it believes in and cares passionately about because it wants to make a real difference – it wants to physically change the water landscape of England’s Northwest and to change people’s attitudes towards it.

Credibility

Only by maintaining its position as a professional credible body at the leading edge of its field can MBC influence and impact at a sufficiently high level to generate real results.

Functionality

Having the practicality and functional skills to deliver on the ground is a key aspect of making this difference, from the delivery of projects to their ongoing sustainability



7. NAMING ISSUES

From the workshop findings and the Communications Review the main issues to be taken into account in considering the renaming of Mersey Basin campaign are as follows:

- Reference to the MBC's Northwest remit should form a part of a secondary descriptor statement but is not necessarily required as part of the name itself
- It was the unanimous view of the workshop participants that acronyms should be avoided
- A name need not be bound by an idea of timescale as the future plans for the organisation's remit at the end of its currently planned 25 year status is as yet undecided
- The partnership approach of the organisation and its engagement with communities is crucial to its mode of operation and should therefore form part of its description of not its name
- The name needs to convey the organisation's purpose, regeneration and sustainable development of waterways and watersides in order to improve people's quality of life
- There was divided views as to how 'abstract' the name could be. Although totally abstract names (e.g. Blue) lend themselves to innovative and well recognised marketing campaigns this is only achievable with a substantial promotional budget. It was agreed that any chosen name needed to be viable within the constraints of MBC's promotional resources.
- It was agreed that the new name/brand should have differentiation from organisation names such as Groundwork, British Waterways, Isis, Northwest Water and the Environment Agency. It was also pointed out that the Mersey Waterfront is also looking to rebrand and care should be taken to avoid any confusion

Agreed 'no-go' areas for the name included:

- Not corporate
- No mimicry – creates confusion
- Watersnorthwest – contravenes regional brand guidelines
- Not too tree hugging
- Not public sector
- Jargon



8. CREATIVE BRIEF

The creation of the name and brand marque for the Mersey Basin Campaign is the process of encapsulating the brand essence of the organisation in visual form. This design process can be undertaken once the main aspects of the brand analysis and naming parameters have been agreed.

The Communications Strategy recommends the development of an overarching brand or marque that brings the many parts of the organisation together under a new name which more clearly conveys the organisation's remit, purpose and mode of operation.

Within this it is important to ensure that there is sufficient differentiation with other environmental/sustainable organisations working within England's Northwest and sufficient synergy with the local, regional and national government sustainable development agendas.

From the workshop findings and the Communications Review the main issues to be taken into account in considering the new name and brand marque for the Mersey Basin Campaign are as follows:

8.1. Brand Analysis

Naming and visual identity options should clearly reflect the brand values of the organisation, namely those of integrity, credibility and functionality

8.2. Naming Considerations

The issues outlined in section 7 should be used as the main parameters for suggested naming options

8.3. Brand Relationship Considerations

- *Relationship between the MBC and its initiatives*

The requirement is to create a strong corporate brand, allowing for distinction of service areas without creating a proliferation of confusing, independent sub-brands. The inadequacies of the current brand have led to the creation of completely unrelated visual identities for the variety of initiatives that the organisation undertakes, which has created confusion with the organisation's funders and supporters

- *Relationship between the MBC and the England's Northwest brand*

As a result of the synergy between the Mersey Basin Campaign's work and the regional agenda on sustainable development and image, it is a given that the strong relationship between the organisation and the Northwest Development Agency will be maintained. Therefore it is essential to take the England's Northwest brand into consideration when investigating visual identity options for the future

- *Relationship between the MBC and other partner/stakeholder brands*

The requirements of partnership working invariably lead to a degree of partner branding requirements. This needs to be taken into consideration in any visual identity proposals and a clear policy developed on how this is handled in order to avoid 'logo soup' on Mersey Basin Campaign promotional materials.

8.4. Practical Implementation Issues

As well as taking into account these conceptual considerations, the new name and visual identity also needs to meet a number of basic, practical requirements:

- Work well in all executions from full to single colour
- Be easily faxable and be web friendly
- Be easy and simple to use, bearing in mind that it is likely to be included in word documents etc by staff with varying degrees of design sensibility
- Be practical to use in the environment, e.g. on signage
- Work well as a partnership 'badge' on other organisation's promotional materials



9. NEXT STEPS

The next steps in the process are shown below, with a detailed timetable to be agreed after further consultation.

Action	Timetable
Production of findings and analysis from branding workshops	by 19 September
Agreement of process/scope/budget etc	By 29 September
First stage creative work on naming/branding options	30 September – 16 October
Presentation of initial ideas to MBC	17 October
Further refinement of 2-3 selected options	20 – 27 October
Presentation of 2-3 options to MBC	28 October
Circulation of 2-3 agreed ideas/treatment to MBC Communications Advisory Group	29 October – 5 November
Agreement of preferred option	6 November
Further visualisation of preferred option	7 November – 13 November
Presentation to MBC Council	14 November
Announcement at MBC Conference	24 November



APPENDIX A - WORKSHOP FINDINGS

POSITIVES

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It reaches targets• It engages with the people/public• It's involved• Has a clear direction/policies• It's of benefit to the environment• Has good partnerships• Fits with the NW region agenda• Has a cooperative approach• Looks for positives• Its wide reaching (local, national etc)• Has a good reputation• Good at raising awareness• The diversity of involvement• Its large sphere of influence• It's fun!	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It's for a good cause (the environment)• It's intelligent• It's got gravitas• It has a good track record of delivering real results• Example of international best practice• Holistic working methods• Water is sexy• Impacts positively on the region's image• Pragmatic and sensible approach to business support• A partnership catalyst• A bridge and a source



NEGATIVES

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of funding • Complexity of regional structures • Wrong name • Lack of media coverage • Misinterpretation of its purpose • Restrictions on its purpose • Not well known • Geography of operation • Basin is a misnomer • Office location – the perception of ‘government’ • Urban location nowhere near water • Lack of clarity of actions • Technical language involved • Complexity of partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Merseyside • Improvements not necessarily visible • Low profile • Extensive misconceptions (local & government) • Seen as part of government • Lack of clarity • Location • Public face • Complexity of organisation • Complexity of regional agenda

CURRENT IDENTITY

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • strong with current partners • has grown substantially in two years • local initiatives have generated good awareness in the areas of operation • connection of RVI’s back to MBC - not easy to explain • not an ‘organisation’ – it’s more a partnership – we can’t do anything on our own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • need to keep the affection • improving in business sector • not widely known • awareness of initiatives not the organisation • dissipated reputation • ‘loved/cherished’ within the sector • brave – courts organisations and takes them on a journey • Risk and uncertainty • Feels very communal, not foisted on people • Part of the region’s development • Local involvement



ATTRIBUTES

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• public/private sector• independent• makes physical improvements• acts as a signposting agency for information• facilitates others• non partisan – proactive• involving communities• improves water quality• makes habitat improvements• raises awareness of issues• enabled things to happen• creates structures and partnerships• helps to educate business and public• provides access to resources• communicates what's going on• facilitates 'joined-up' activities• commissions new research• plants trees• lobbies/influences/campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enthusiastic• Sensible & pragmatic• A broker• A route through to information and expertise• Encourages community involvement• Long term guardian• Constant aims and objectives• International reputation• A catalyst to ongoing involvement• A significant catalyst for regeneration• Inspirational• Not just environmental• Joined up• Business-like• Brave



BENEFITS

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• can say what's right – be daring• improved quality of life & better water quality• joined up working• involvement of people• brokerage of partnerships and resources• voluntary involvement and resources• umbrella – gives small groups a voice/bringing them together• regional significance• ties into wider strategies• honesty and credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• improved environment• true sustainable development in practise• better water quality• Local ownership & pride• Improved quality of life• Economic benefits• Increased land values• Moving forward



PERSONALITY

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volvo<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Swedish• distinctive• out on a limb• environmentally trustworthy• SAAB<ul style="list-style-type: none">• exciting• different• distinctive• cutting edge• People Carrier<ul style="list-style-type: none">• good at everything• Polo<ul style="list-style-type: none">• small• quality• German engineering• BMW M3<ul style="list-style-type: none">• fast• racy• sporty• young• convertible• pushy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Volvo<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Trustworthy○ Country○ Positive modern attributes• Skoda<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Good cars○ Poor reputation○ Better than you think• Landrover<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ good at everything○ reliable workhorse• Mini<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ British○ Reinvented• Kit Car<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Organic○ Funky○ Personal○ Constructed• Beetle<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Idiosyncratic○ Loyalty○ Fanaticism/devotion• Campervan<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ All in the van going somewhere• Renault/Peugeot<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Va va voom/sexy



SINGLE WORD DESCRIPTORS

Staff	Stakeholders
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• respected• sustainable• quality• successful• progressive• leading• exciting• flexible• believable• knowledgeable• professional• enterprising• involving• inclusive• evolving• responsive• complex• worthy• a conscience (altruistic)• delivers (not just doing stuff)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• quality• regeneration• life• living• celebration• transforming• resilience• influential• passionate• commitment• success• water



NAMING ISSUES

Geography

- 'Mersey' is misleading/confusing
- Is it essential that the name contains a geographical reference?
- Useful to indicate that organisation is not global, or UK wide
- Could allude to the wider impact of the organisation

Therefore use of geographical reference could be part of the solution – not necessarily in the name but in the secondary description.

Acronym

- Unanimous view that acronyms should be avoided

Timescale

- Current name infers a temporary nature
- Needs to imply idea of legacy/long term future
- Part of the solution but does not need to be central to the name itself

Mode

- Partnership working is crucial but again, not necessarily in the name
- Could form part of the descriptor

Purpose

Name needs to convey:

- Central purpose is about waters and watersides
- Not just rivers
- Regeneration
- Quality of life
- Not just environment – the reality is that it's about sustainable development but can't use those words as they're not widely understood
- Engagement
- Impact
- Cleaner waters

No go areas

- Mersey Basin Campaign
- Not corporate
- No mimicry – creates confusion
- Watersnorthwest – contravenes regional brand guidelines
- Not too green – swampy's out
- Not public sector
- Jargon-free
- Debate over how abstract it can be – significant view that the name should say what the organisation does but concern not to dismiss good abstract options
- Concern that limitations of promotional budget will make it difficult to successfully add meaning to an abstract name (e.g. Blue)



Differentiation

The new name/brand should have differentiation from:

- Groundwork
- Environment Agency
- Northwest Water
- British Waterways
- ISIS

Synergy

The new name needs to have synergy with the following agendas

- Local authorities
- NGO's
- Government
- Quangos
- Private sector partners
- ALMOs

Other Issues to consider

- Mersey waterfront likely to rebrand – potential for confusion
- Use of regional brand to continue (i.e. englandsnorthwest badge on print) therefore could take the regional aspect out of any name. This is OK for materials produced/communications for the organisation itself but would be difficult to control externally e.g. use in broadcast media

Words around water

Water regen	Water actions
Changing waters	Source
New waters	Cascade
Future waters	Water source
Love waters	Bubble
Sparkling waters	Ripple
Turning the Tide	Channel
Water respect	Confluence
Clean waters	Spring
The Clean Waters Partnership	Natural
Aqua	Open
Water life	Aquatic (Aqua 'tick')
Water front	Healthy
Water Space	Clear Water (s)
Water First	Pure Water (s)
Water Forward	Living Water (s)
Water works	Your Water (s)
Water revival	Good Water (s)
Water alive	Better Waters (s)



APPENDIX B - WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

NAME	POSITION	ORGANISATION
Walter Menzies		Mersey Basin Campaign
Matthew Sutcliffe		Mersey Basin Campaign
Iain Taylor		Mersey Basin Campaign
Mark Turner		Mersey Basin Campaign
Hazel Lord		Mersey Basin Campaign
Amanda Wright		Mersey Basin Campaign
Brendan Cassin		Mersey Basin Campaign
Val Dowd		Mersey Basin Campaign
Sara Flynn		Mersey Basin Campaign
Fouzia Bhatti		Mersey Basin Campaign
Mary Lee		Mersey Basin Campaign
Sue Fox		Environment Agency
Peter Mearns		NWDA
Barrie Kelly		Mersey Partnership
Steve Connor		Creative Concern
Susan Brown		ISIS
Grant Windridge		Hemisphere
Caroline Riley		United Utilities
Sharon King		United Utilities
Mike Taylor		360 Media