Ribble Pilot River Basin

Public Participation and River Basin Planning – Early Experiences

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Foreword

I am pleased to present this report of our work on public participation and the planning process for the Water Framework Directive. The report is submitted to the EC as our contribution to the testing of the Common Implementation Strategy.

It represents a lot of hard work and demonstrates the considerable success we have achieved working with our community. Many people have contributed to its production and I would like to take this opportunity to thank them all for their support and help.

I am proud of this report and believe it will make a significant contribution to the further development of European and UK best practice in River Basin Planning and public involvement.

Bernie Carr
Ribble Pilot Project Executive

Executive summary

Introduction

The Environment Agency (the Agency) has established a national Water Framework Directive (WFD) Programme to work with the European Commission (EC) and UK Government to interpret and implement the requirements of the Directive. To guide and support Member States interpreting the Directive the EC are co-ordinating work to trial Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) guidance documents in 15 Pilot River Basins (PRBs), including the River Ribble. The UK has agreed to test parts of Common Implementation Strategy guidance on Public Participation and Planning Process, relevant to the UK national situation. The Ribble Pilot River Basin Project was established in spring 2003.

This report represents a full review of the testing of selected parts of Common Implementation Strategy documents, Public Participation and the Planning Process, between March 2003 and May 2004. It contains contributions from the Agency and independent organisations who were members of the Testing Group to advise on the planning and implementation of the Ribble Pilot Project. The Agency would like to take this opportunity to thank those organisations.

This report provides the source document reviewing the work on testing the Common Implementation Strategy guidance. Whilst section 8.2 contains explicit discussion of the value of Common Implementation Strategy, this report does not review its value "line-by-line". Instead, it introduces the work done on the Ribble Pilot Project and offers these experiences as a series of case studies for consideration by other river basin managers.

The timing of the production of the River Basin Management Plan had a significant impact on the ability of the project to test fully Planning Process Common Implementation Strategy guidance. The Agency has set out the proposed planning process for the Ribble but did not proceed to detailed planning. This will follow the production of the River Basin Characterisation Report.

The Ribble Pilot Project will continue work beyond the PRB timetable to use the experience of testing to prepare for real implementation. The eventual outcome of the project will be a "prototype" River Basin Management Plan, by 2007. This prototype plan will be finalised as part of the North West England River Basin District Plan and Programme of Measures.

The River Ribble – selected for inclusion in this pilot project in line with the 15 Pilot River Basin – has a diverse landscape and social diversity. The river's tributaries drain some 1,800 square kilometres, from high moorland to lowland plains, and small villages to large industrial towns, with a population of 1.25 million people living in the basin.

Methods tested

Public participation is a core requirement of the WFD. Three forms of "stakeholder engagement" are referred to in Article 14 of the Directive:

- public access to background information;
- consultation in three steps of the planning process;
- active involvement of interested parties in all aspects of the implementation of the Directive, especially – but not limited to – the planning process.

The first two forms of engagement should be *ensured* and the latter *encouraged* for the purpose of supporting the effective implementation of the WFD.

The Common Implementation Strategy Guidance on Public participation aims at assisting competent authorities in the Member States with the implementation of Article 14. The Ribble Pilot Project provides a test for the delivery of the requirements of Article 14.

A series of methods were trialled to support the promotion of the project in its early river basin planning. These are set out in the Table i. A communication plan was also developed to underpin this work, setting out key messages for the Ribble Pilot Project.

The River Ribble

Results of Public Participation

The techniques tested all appear in the Common Implementation Strategy guidance, these support and confirm the value of these approaches during early river basin planning. The techniques selected were based on their suitability at this early stage of river basin planning and the local situation.

The Stakeholder Forum established itself as the central plank for communications with key stakeholders. The Forum contributed significantly to the development of their local “vision” for environmental protection and improvement and this will continue and be used as a way of linking the objectives of the Directive to local aspirations. The creation of the vision also served to engage a wider range of stakeholders in early river basin planning. During 2004 and 2005 the Forum will also be asked to help quality review the River Basin Characterisation Report, identify other stakeholders who can help develop options to solve problems, and potentially assist by “owning” some problems where they may have a close involvement in delivery of solutions.

The use of expert meetings proved enjoyable, provided real energy and enthusiasm to the process, and will be continued as a core component of planning. Representation on small working groups will be determined by the issues to be addressed. Such groups are likely to be varied in size, composition, membership and length of working. However, it should be remembered that building joint working arrangements takes time and that some of the issues to be addressed are likely to generate strong feelings and opposing views. This will make management of the groups more challenging and the Agency will need to invest time and resources to ensure it has the skills to successfully manage them.

Table i Techniques of engagement

Activity	Summary of activity application	Type of involvement
Project Team and Testing Group	An Agency Project Team, with a team leader, was established to co-ordinate the work. A working group (including external partners) was brought together by the Project Manager to support and advise on the testing work.	Active involvement Listening Learning
Stakeholder Mapping	A survey of 370 identified relevant stakeholders were sent background information with 120 questionnaires completed	Learning Consulting Informing
Stakeholder Forum	A group of key stakeholders were brought together into a forum to follow the policy and process closely, to advise the Agency regularly about decisions to be taken, and to learn about the Directive and support decision making.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Meetings in person	The Project Team conducted a number of meetings with individual key stakeholders, especially during the first months of testing. This gave people the feeling that someone was listening, and provided direct input during project planning. An in-depth conversation was considered a valuable investment.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Presentations	A series of presentations for formal committees and other groups were undertaken to communicate the key messages, raise awareness of the project and increase the chance that key stakeholders took note of it.	Informing
Scenario/vision building	Facilitated meetings were conducted with small numbers of participants to deepen the insight in perceptions and challenges and to map possible solutions.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Expert meetings and workshops	Meetings were held with groups of experts to provide an opportunity for specialist input to assist with developing solutions to technical problems. For example, a series of four meetings were conducted to support the development of the proposed planning process (see Section 5.6).	Active involvement Informing Listening
Website	Project pages were established within the Environment Agency Website to focus initial enquiries for advice and to support the provision of basic understanding of the work. It developed an additional role as the primary route for dissemination of information about forum meetings.	Informing
Electronic newsletter	Summary information of key milestones provided on approximately two sides of A4, updated every 8 weeks. It was directed at Agency staff, those people more deeply involved in the subject or the project (co-operators/workers and co-thinkers, sometimes co-knowers) and organisations contributing to the Stakeholder Map that expressed an interest in knowing more. The newsletter was posted on the Website and recipients were sent an email containing the web-link.	Informing
Perceptions study – questionnaire survey	A survey of random selection of 1,001 households in the basin was conducted to identify citizens' values, perceptions and interests in becoming involved in river basin planning.	Learning Listening

The website was launched in November 2003 and has received over 6,000 “hits” in the first 4 months, proving the success of using this mechanism for mass communication. The Internet has formed and will continue to provide a primary route for information provision for the Ribble pilot. While it should not be the sole source of information provision and communication, it does provide a low cost and efficient information provision tool. Content and style is controlled by the Agency, thus ensuring direct linkage to the project communication plan. Linked with this the electronic newsletter has proved a fast, efficient and low cost communication mechanism, providing information at regular milestones and in bite-size pieces. Email notification ensures that stakeholders are directed to the website regularly, which breeds familiarity with this too. The Agency will continue to produce the newsletter and extend the number of people it is sent out to.

Whilst direct contact with the general public living in the Basin was not a target audience for early active involvement, it seems likely that wide support for some actions will require sections of the public to be encouraged to participate directly in waterbody management. For example, issues of urban diffuse pollution may require local campaigns to encourage wider care for waterbodies. Here, greater emphasis may need to be placed on local activities and the help and support of local action groups, some of whom are already represented on the Stakeholder Forum, will become critical.

The general success of early work suggests that there is little need to make radical changes to the approach and techniques that have been developed and applied. In many respects, the techniques tested represent different “tools” that can be applied to different engagement situations. This approach provides flexibility and experience in the use of different tools. However, modifications to the mix and emphasis in application should be expected as the Agency moves further into river basin planning. For example, the publication of the River Basin Characterisation Report (for Article 5 of the Directive) will require significant participation. The identification of waterbodies at risk of failure to meet WFD objectives will necessarily lead to more focused debate over local protection and improvement work. This will lead to the development of options for management, as part of the planning process.

Planning Process

Establishment of a proposed process for the development of the Ribble River Basin Management Plan sets out some guiding principals. The proposed planning process was explored through considerable stakeholder engagement. The outline planning framework comprises three phases:

- Identifying issues to be addressed
- Option definition and appraisal
- Preparation of the River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures

The Directive’s requirements and continued stakeholder engagement underpin this framework. Further recommendations point towards Basin level management planing, supported by strategic level River Basin District Planning.

Conclusions

The following summary conclusions have been drawn:

- The experience of testing and developing public participation methods and tools for early river basin planning broadly supports many of the principles of the Common Implementation Strategy.
- The project has clearly demonstrated that public participation is vital in planning and engaging the public at an early stage of the process and is important in gaining their confidence and trust to complete the project.
- So far the process has achieved an increased motivation and desire within stakeholders to be more involved in the River Basin management planning process.
- Against the Common Implementation Strategy context criteria it has established a good basis from which

to develop a good process, using the lessons learned from the initial stage will develop the process in a positive

- The project has provided some initial indications to the level and nature 'all interested parties' outlined in Article 14. Fourteen percent of the general public expressed an interest for involvement. Interestingly, the majority of these were existing members or supporters of organisations presented by current stakeholders (such as RSPB, WWF). This gives some indication to the value of stakeholder representatives and level of involvement of 'interested parties' within the Ribble Basin.
- Future participation will be "issue driven". The planning process and need to derive solutions to protection and improvement issues will determine the right technique to apply and determine the people and organisations that will need to be involved.
- The Project has highlighted that Integrated River Basin Management goes beyond the aims of the WFD, illustrated through public participation and the planning process within the Ribble Pilot Project.

way to achieve a widely accepted River Basin Management Plan.

Next Steps

The work presented in this report will inform the development of national guidance on public participation and future work will be reviewed when this guidance is finalised. This will ensure that the experience of the Ribble Pilot Project is used to influence approaches throughout England and Wales and that its ongoing development is integral to work elsewhere.

The Ribble Pilot Project will continue to provide a test basin for the Agency for elements of technical and procedural guidance as they develop. The Project Team will continue to work closely with key partners and stakeholders to explore methods and techniques for engaging regional and local stakeholders in the river basin planning process. The project will also provide stakeholders with an improved understanding of how the Directive will impact upon their activities.

As part of final preparations for implementation, a "prototype" River Basin Management Plan will be prepared by 2006/7 and finalised as part of the North West's River Basin District Draft River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures.

1. Background

1.1 The Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) 2000/60/EC – "Establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy" was published in the European Union (EU) Official Journal in December 2000. The Directive is the most significant piece of European water legislation for over 20 years. The aim of the Directive is to take a holistic approach to water management. It updates existing EU Water legislation through the introduction of a statutory system of analysis and planning based upon the river basin. In 2003 the United Kingdom (UK) Government transposed the Directive into UK legislation, identifying the Environment Agency as the sole competent authority charged with the Directive's implementation in England and Wales.

1.2 Implementation in England and Wales

The Environment Agency (the Agency) has established a national WFD Programme to work with the European Commission (EC) and UK Government to interpret and implementing the requirements of the Directive. It is producing generic guidance as well as co-ordinating and delivering the technical capability within the Agency. The programme includes a number of projects as well as various programme level activities and is overseen by a Programme Board. The projects within the programme are:

- River Basin Characterisation;
- River Basin Planning;
- Programme of Measures;
- Priority and other Specific Polluting Substances;
- Environmental Monitoring, Classification, Assessment and Reporting;
- Ribble Pilot River Basin;
- Data and Information Systems;
- Business Implementation.

1.3 Testing guidance and the Pilot River Basin Process

To guide and support Member States interpreting the Directive, pilots have been established where Member States have committed to undertake trials of Common Implementation Strategy documents. The trials have taken place in 15 Pilot River Basins (PRBs) that have been nominated by Member States. The River Ribble is one of the Pilot River Basin network. The UK agreed to test parts of Common Implementation Strategy on Public Participation and the Planning Process, relevant to the UK national situation.

The Ribble Pilot Project, along with at least three other PRB projects, will continue work beyond the initial PRB timetable to use the experience of testing to prepare for full implementation. The eventual outcome of the Ribble project will be a "prototype" River Basin Management Plan. This prototype plan will be finalised as part of the North West England River Basin District Plan and Programme of Measures.

With this background, the Ribble Pilot River Basin Project was established in spring 2003. As well as testing Common Implementation Strategy, the Ribble Pilot Project forms an integral part of the Agency's Programme of Works, with the other projects in the programme using the pilot basin to test and develop national guidance for England and Wales.

The River Ribble was chosen as the pilot basin partly because of its landscape and social diversity. The river's tributaries drain some 2,125 square kilometres (820 square miles), from high moorland to lowland plains and small villages to large industrial towns, with just under 1.25 million people living in the basin. (More information is provided in Section 2.)

The fifteen Pilot River Basins

1.4 Ribble Pilot River Basin Project objectives

The Ribble Pilot Project has two principal objectives.

The first project objective is to **contribute to the official Common Implementation Strategy testing** process and to report to the EC, as described in this report. Within this the Ribble PRB Project will:

- take a systematic approach to designing engagement methods and testing the draft guidance;
- involve stakeholders in all steps of the work so as to demonstrate "active involvement".

This report represents the formal documentation of the testing process.

The second project objective is the **preparation of a prototype River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures for the Ribble basin,** by May 2007. As part of this process, the project will:

- add value to the development activities of the projects within the Agency's WFD Programme by testing and applying draft EC and Agency guidance, methodologies, tools and policies;
- work with locally based Agency staff and stakeholders to prepare the prototype River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures. Any minor modification required prior to application at the appropriate time (will not form part of this project);
- work with basin and district Agency staff (Regional Strategy Team) to examine how stakeholder engagement at the basin (local) and district (regional) level is functioning and provide feedback to the River Basin Planning Project;
- through application of specific technical and framework guidance, examine the performance of the guidance as an integrated whole and provide feedback to the Programme and River Basin Planning Project;
- test the impact of the Directive on Environment Agency operational resources and advise the WFD Programme and Agency of implementation issues;
- contribute to the understanding of the environmental protection and improvement priorities provided by the WFD on the Ribble;
- work with stakeholders to develop their understanding of how the WFD will impact on their activities and seek their input to possible solutions and Programmes of Measures.

1.5 Scope and authorship of this report

This report represents a full review of the testing of selected parts of Common Implementation Strategy documents, Public Participation and the Planning Process, between March 2003 and May 2004. It provides the source document, reviewing the work on testing the Common Implementation Strategy guidance. Whilst section 8.2 contains explicit discussion of the value of Common Implementation Strategy this report does not review its value "line-by-line". Instead, it introduces the work done on the Ribble Pilot Project and offers these experiences as a series of case studies for consideration by other river basin managers.

The report contains contributions from Agency and independent organisations who were members of a Testing Group established to advise on the planning and implementation of the Ribble Pilot Project (details in Section 3). Pete Fox (Environment Agency Ribble PRB Manager) had overall editorial control, with responsibility for drawing the individual submissions into the single document.

2. Context

2.1 Introduction

To set the public participation and planning work in context it is important to describe briefly the environment of the basin, its land use, its people and their economic activity, and the political landscape of the region. This information will be covered in greater detail in the River Basin Characterisation Report that will emerge later in 2004 as part of the "Article 5" report for the European Commission.

2.2 The environment, ecology and land use in the basin

The Ribble basin (Figure 2.1) forms one of the largest basins in the North West River Basin District of England (District 7, Figure 2.2). It comprises five principal rivers: the Ribble, Hodder, Calder, Darwen and Douglas and a smaller catchment called Crossens.

The main stem, the River Ribble, rises in the Pennines and initially runs south and then west out into the Irish Sea. Through a majority of its course, the landscape of rolling hills and wide glacial valleys provides fertile floodplains upon which dairy farming is the prevalent land use. The river meanders for much of its course with trees growing on long lengths of the banks. Gravels and cobbles form the dominant bed material with fast-flowing water, especially riffles, running over them. Together these provide common in-stream habitat features.

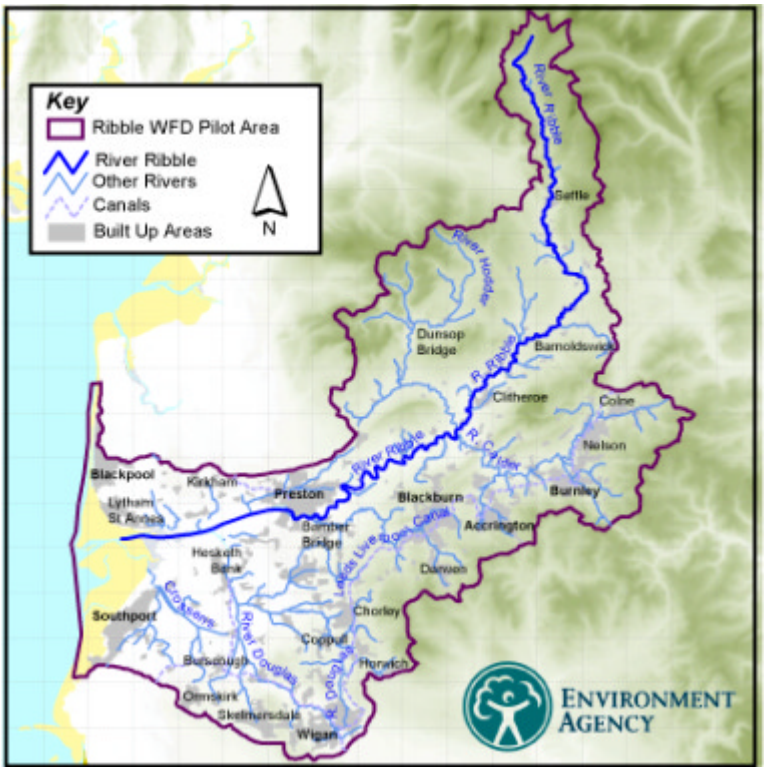


Figure 2.1 The Ribble river basin

The Pennine hills extend into the fells of the Forest of Bowland in the west, drained by the River Hodder and its tributaries. Here, the landscape comprises sheep-grazed fells incised by steep-sided valleys, drained by a series of small, steep streams running over boulders and bedrock.

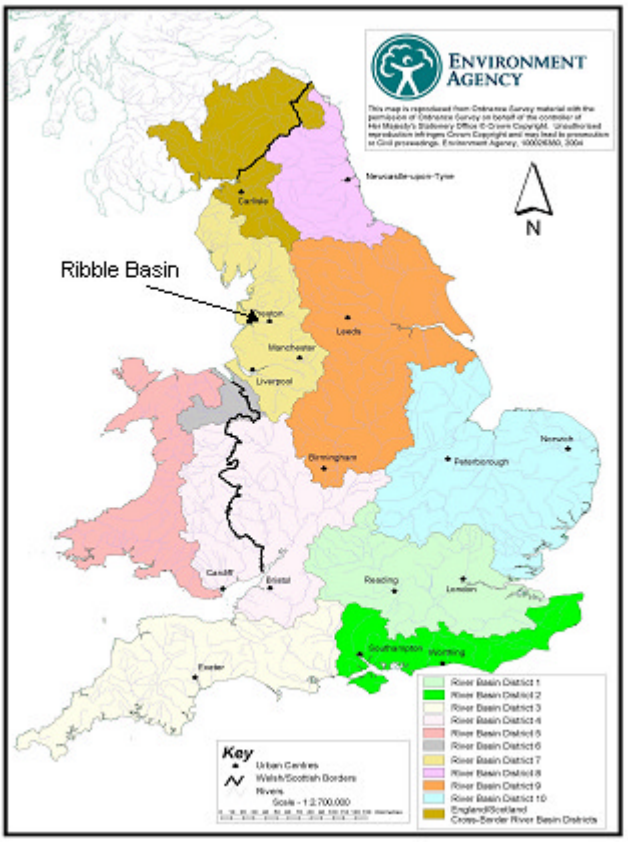
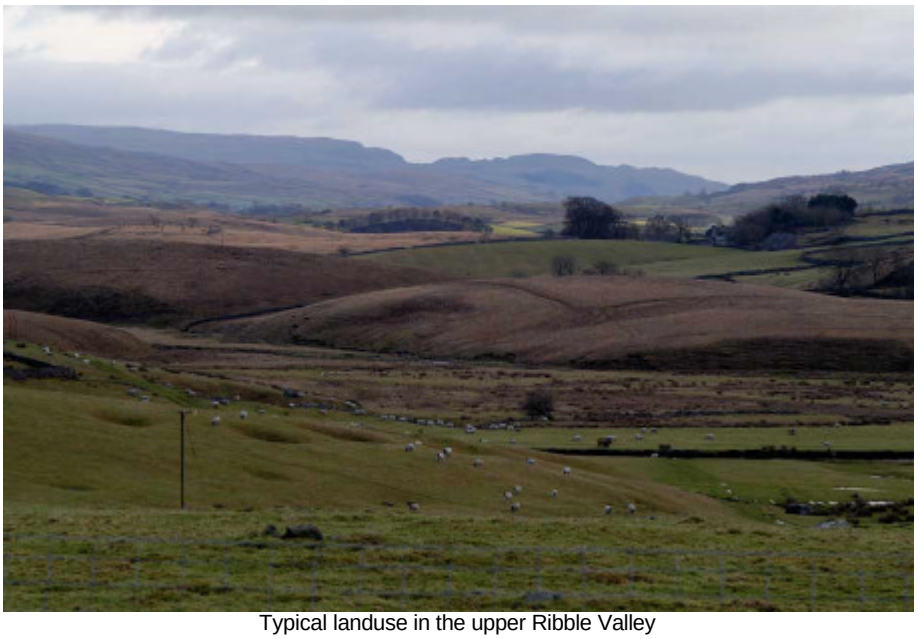


Figure 2.2 River Basin Districts (RBDs) in England and Wales

To the south of the Ribble flow the Rivers Calder and Darwen. Both are similar in landscape to the Ribble but for much of their length they run through towns and villages that have used the river as a source of washing and power for large textile mills. Long lengths of these tributaries are managed to reduce flood risk and continue to provide water for public use and receive discharges from wastewater treatment works with consequent impacts on the wetland ecology.

The Douglas and Crossens both rise at relatively low altitude, and they have slower flows, draining extensive areas of flat land. Parts of the Crossens lies below high tide levels where intensive agriculture and horticulture dominates land use. Here, like much of the basin, impacts resulting from diffuse pollution from agriculture are evident. Watercourses are pumped and heavily modified to improve flood defence and land drainage. As a result of these modifications the watercourses have limited physical features and very little flow variation. The bed substrate is predominantly silt and sand and the banks tend to be maintained as uniform trapezoidal channels, with intensive agriculture to the bank top. Such physical limitations, combined with poor (but improving) water quality, limit the flora and fauna. Watercourses are typified by a wetland flora including common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and iris (*Iris pseudoacurus*). These watercourses provide an undisturbed corridor for a variety of wildlife through the intensive agricultural land. However, there are problems with alien species such as Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifers*).



Typical landuse in the upper Ribble Valley

The tidal stretch of the Ribble starts in the city of Preston and over its 18 km (11 miles) opens out into a wide estuary with extensive sand and mud flats with a salt-marsh fringe. The estuary is designated as a Special Area for Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) because it supports internationally significant numbers of migrating and winter wildfowl and waders, including knot (*Calidris canutus*), dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), oystercatcher (*Haemotopus ostralegus*) and widgeon (*Anas penelope*).

As well as the fluvial network there are a number of important wetland habitats that support a diverse flora and fauna, including several areas of high conservation value. European-designated sites within the basin include the Bowland Fells and the South Pennines SPAs, and the Sefton Coast SPA and SAC. In addition there are also numerous Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), including Long Preston Deeps and Martin Mere, which support key species such as the natterjack toad (*Bufo calamita*).

The Ribble basin provides a valuable habitat for a variety of important species including otters (*Lutra lutra*), water voles (*Arvicola terrestris*) and white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), as well as a wide variety of bird life and other important wetland features.

The Ribble also supports important coarse and game fish populations. It is regarded as one of the most important salmonid rivers in England and Wales. The highest populations of salmon and sea trout are found in the Rivers Ribble and Hodder, where water quality and habitat are suitable for spawning.

Elsewhere, coarse fish predominate, although improvements in water quality have led to an increase in salmonids, in particular in the Rivers Calder and Douglas. However, as in many rivers in the basin, migration of salmonids is impacted by physical obstructions and channel modification from the industrial past. In many of the tributaries the upper reaches have good spawning gravels and in-river habitat but the physical barriers prevent migration.

The River Douglas supports a number of coarse fish, including chub, dace and perch, although water quality and physical channel structure limit fish populations. The watercourses in the Crossens area are populated by coarse fish, including bream, roach, tench, perch and pike.

2.3 People and economics in the basin

The interests and values of the people living in the basin will have a profound impact on how the WFD is viewed and the challenges the Agency is likely to face in generating wide support for the Directive's implementation.

According to the 2001 national census, provided by the Office of National Statistics, just under 1.25 million people live in the Ribble basin. Table 2.1, showing a breakdown of residents, indicates that the population is approximately equally aged, from young to old, with a slightly higher proportion of women in the population.

During the 1990s, the resident population of Lancashire as a whole grew. However, the situation in East Lancashire is contrary to this general picture. Here, a decline has been evident, mostly due to economic out-migration, with the districts of Burnley and Pendle being the worst affected in the basin.

Table 2.1 Details of ages and sex of people living in the Ribble basin

Age breakdown in years	Numbers	Average number per year of age
Under 10	157,040	17,448
10 to 19	166,884	18,542
20 to 29	142,977	15,886
30 to 59	514,912	17,755
60 to 89	257,135	8,866
90 + years	8,407	-
(Unaccounted)	10	-
Total population in Ribble basin	**1,247,365**	
Males	606,296	
Females	641,069	

The success of delivering the Directive will rely on effectively involving, and communicating with, the full representative range of the Ribble's ethnic society. The Ribble Basin is characterised by areas of diverse ethnic communities, such as in Blackburn and Pendle. As shown by the census data (in Table 2.2), the white British ethnic population predominates, comprising 91% of the people living in the Basin. The majority of the remaining ethnic groups (6 percent) are of diverse Asian extractions, but a smaller number of other ethnic communities are also represented.

Table 2.2 Ethnicity of residents

Ethnicity	Number of people
White British	1,137,580
White Irish	10,387
Other White	10,787
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	2,936
Mixed White and Black African	802
Mixed White and Asian	3,387
Other Mixed	1,609
Asian/Asian British - Indian	29,023
Asian/Asian British - Pakistani	37,747
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	2,892
Asian/Asian British – Other Asian	2,884
Black/Black British - Black Caribbean	1,750
Black/Black British – Black African	1,072
Black/Black British – Other Black	315
Chinese	2,875
Other Ethnic Group	1,441
Unaccounted	10
Total	**1,247,497**

The basin comprises approximately 575,000 properties (see Table 2.4), with the highest densities in towns and Boroughs including Preston, Blackburn, Wigan, and Burnley, in the Douglas, Calder and Darwen sub-basins (see Figure 2.1).

There are approximately 890,000 adults of working age living in the Ribble basin (see Table 2.5). Historically, many of these people would have worked in manufacturing industry, with textile manufacture being a key employment sector in the major centres of population. Although almost all of the mills have now closed, over 30% of jobs are at an equivalent level.

Table 2.4 Private and commercial properties in the Ribble basin

Property type	Number
Private properties	540,282
Commercial/public properties	35,526
Total number of properties in Ribble basin	**575,808**

Table 2.5 The socio-economic classification of 16–74 year old residents of the Ribble basin

Socio-economic breakdown	Number of people
Large employers and higher managerial and professional occupations	59,595
Lower managerial and professional occupations	147,579
Intermediate occupations	80,556
Small employers and own account workers	63,512
Lower supervisory and technical occupations and semi-routine or routine occupations	278,051
Never worked or long-term unemployed	34,480
Full-time students	54,126
Not classifiable for other reasons	173,070
Total	**890,969**

The overall picture provided by the figures suggests the Ribble basin is dominated by a low skilled, ethnically diverse series of urban communities. This summary is supported by government statistics. The Indices of Deprivation for 2000 reveal that the East Lancashire area, and Burnley in particular, has significant concentrations of deprivation.

These figures indicate that the Agency needs to listen to the views and concerns of a wide range of communities and people (including many who have traditionally not been closely involved in environmental planning and management) in undertaking river basin planning. Communications will need to use language and terms that are familiar with people in order to generate interest and support for the WFD in the basin. Whilst initial testing (covered by this report) did not focus on attempting to engage directly with the general public in the basin, some work was done. Section 5.9 includes the results of a perceptions survey, undertaken to listen to and learn those issues and attitudes held by a cross-section of people living in the basin. The results of this work will be used in on-going communication planning.

2.4 Administrative landscape of the basin

In the UK, local authorities are responsible for a wide range of public services including, land

use planning and development control (including spatial, waste and transport planning). The Ribble basin is covered by a total of 23 local authorities, in two principle layers. Figure 2.3 shows one layer and along with the North West Regional Assembly, Lancashire County Council and the Yorkshire Dales National Park, these authorities have control over much of the land use planning in the basin. As such they are considered key partners in the delivery of the Directive.

Figure 2.3 Local authority boundary map

The local authorities set out in Table 2.6, especially those shown coloured red, are going to be critical to engage in the process of preparing the River Basin Management Plan for the Ribble basin and are a key component of the public participation work as well.

Table 2.6 Local authorities in the Ribble basin (those with 75% or more of their land area in the basin are shown in red)

Local authority	Hectares of land in Ribble basin	Percentage of local authority area in Ribble basin
Blackburn with Darwen UA	8,181.66	59.71
Blackpool UA	2,596.40	60.13
Bolton MBC	1,189.88	8.51
Bradford District	0.37	0.00
Burnley District	9,595.68	86.68
Calderdale District	36.49	0.10
Chorley District	20,289.50	99.99
Craven District	24,557.57	20.83
Fylde District	12,203.90	66.82
Hyndburn District	7,296.62	99.96
Lancaster District	58.12	0.09
Pendle District	13,740.72	81.13
Preston District	6,794.97	47.54
Ribble Valley District	58,251.89	99.67
Richmondshire District	35.10	0.03
Rossendale District	550.00	3.98
Sefton MBC	7,448.22	36.37
South Lakeland District	44.09	0.03
South Ribble BC	11,461.50	100.00
St Helens MBC	72.66	0.53
West Lancashire District Council	28,986.39	76.06
Wigan MBC	7,692.28	40.87
Wyre District	55.81	0.17

2.5 Relevant plans and processes

A large number of land and water use plans and processes are already operating in the Ribble basin. It will be important to integrate with and take account of a number of these in the development of the prototype plan. Identifying current planning activities in the Ribble basin helps to outline the context of public participation within the Ribble.

Stakeholder engagement is common to most Agency and external planning initiatives. However, for Agency planning engagement takes place within clearly defined boundaries and plans are rarely integrated. For example, there are separate plans for water resources, flood defence, fisheries etc., although reference is made to other pertinent plans.

The nature of stakeholder engagement varies across planning initiatives; only Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) have a set engagement strategy (the Ribble CAMS will be initiated in 2004). There is currently no co-ordinated approach to stakeholder engagement in the Ribble basin with respect to environmental issues.

A full set of Agency plans covering the Ribble basin area is set out in Appendix 1. Some of the more important plans are listed below.

- Ribble Catchment Flood Management Plan (in prep.)
- Flood Defence Medium and Long Term Plan
- Flood Defence Asset Management Plan
- Water Level Management Plans (various, site specific)
- Ribble Estuary Study
- Shoreline Management Plan
- Douglas Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy
- Ribble Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (in prep.)
- United Utilities Water Resources Strategy

Some of the methods used for stakeholder engagement in the preparation of some of these plans are summarised in Appendix 2.

A full set of non-Agency environmental plans covering the Ribble basin area is set out in Appendix 3. Some of the more important non-Agency plans are listed below.

- Yorkshire Water Business Plan 2005–2010
- United Utilities Water Business Plan 2005–2010
- Yorkshire and Humberside Biodiversity Action Plan
- North West Biodiversity Audit
- Yorkshire Dales Biodiversity Action Plan
- Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan
- Regional Planning Guidance (soon to be Regional Spatial Strategy)
- Regional Sustainability Plan (Action for Sustainability)
- Local Authority Local Plans (various)
- County Authority Plans (including minerals and waste)

Pendle, East Lancashire

3. Approach to testing

Work on “active involvement” started at the inception of the Project. Early meetings with key stakeholder groups in the basin identified a number of specialists that could offer support and advice to the testing process. As a result a Testing Group was created, under the chair of the Agency Project Manager, to manage and co-ordinate the work. This group proved instrumental in delivering the tests that form the core component of this report. The role of the group was to:

- co-ordinate the testing work for the project;
- provide technical input and resource to the testing and help deliver individual and specific work items (including this plan);
- quality-assure the final report.

The Testing Group comprised:

Pete Fox – Agency (chair)
Carol Holt – Agency
Dan Bond – Agency
Paula Orr – Agency
Amanda Wright – Mersey Basin Campaign
Caroline Riley – Mersey Basin Campaign
Rob Oates/Sarah Black – WWF
Yvonne Rees – HarmoniCOP
Natasha Madeira – University of Strathclyde/EnviroCentre Ltd

Mersey Basin Campaign were invited to join the group to deliver the stakeholder map, and because of their role in co-ordinating the Ribble River Valley Initiative network in the Ribble catchment and their expertise in local stakeholder engagement.

WWF were invited to join because of their experience in managing public engagement projects on wetlands and because of their contribution to the delivery of the vision building work.

The Ribble Pilot Project also became a case study for the European HarmoniCOP project and the UK representative, Yvonne Rees, provided independent monitoring of the success of the work for both HarmoniCOP and the Ribble PRB Project.

Natasha Madeira was invited to join the group. She is currently working as an Environmental Education Consultant for Strathclyde University in partnership with EnviroCentre Ltd. Natasha is undertaking MPhil research into the public participation process for the implementation of River Basin Management Plans. Subsequent to the initial invitation, Natasha was part of the EnviroCentre team successful in securing the contract to develop a “vision” for the basin (see Section 5.5).

The creation of this multi-organisation group could be considered a demonstration of active involvement, encouraging a range of academic and voluntary sector groups to join in the planning, execution and evaluation of the testing and early implementation of the project.

A work plan for testing was prepared by the Agency Project Manager and agreed by the Testing Group. This set out the proposed tests and clearly identified individual responsibility for the management and reporting of individual elements. Regular meetings of the Testing Group were held during the testing, supplemented by expert meetings with individual members (during the tests) to support and develop ideas.

The Testing Group met regularly throughout the testing phase of the Ribble Pilot Project to discuss, recommend and co-ordinate the public participation work.

4. Review of testing guidance – "encouraging active involvement"

4.1 Introduction

Public participation is a core requirement of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). Three forms of "stakeholder engagement" are referred to in Article 14 of the Directive:

- public access to background information;
- consultation in three steps of the planning process;
- active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of the Directive, especially – but not limited to – the planning process.

The first two forms should be *ensured* and the latter *encouraged* for the purpose of supporting the effective implementation of the WFD. Hence, the competent authority (the Environment Agency in England and Wales) will need to devise an approach to "WFD public participation" that has "consultation" and "access to information" at its core, but that also includes wider "active involvement" to help meet the requirements of the WFD.

The Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) Guidance on public participation, accompanying and expanding on the requirements set out in Article 14, guards against "do nothing till 2006" and states that early involvement is likely to help the competent authority to produce a River Basin Management Plan on which consensus can be achieved by 2009. The guidance also recommends that competent authorities explore with other stakeholders how best to proceed with public participation. Engaging people at an early stage can help to:

- share experience and develop co-ownership of the process;
- develop best practice;
- provide support and advice to those whom the Directive may affect;
- deliver a targeted approach to public participation.

These principles were promoted in the testing that was undertaken on the Ribble where the production of a communication plan was seen as an early priority.

4.2 Communication planning

A communication plan was prepared during the early stages of the Ribble Pilot Project in order to develop key messages and set out our communication strategy in an open and transparent way. It encouraged early active involvement in the Ribble Pilot Project, with planned delivery of ongoing communications helping to inform, engage or involve the target audiences (those we need to inform and discuss the Directive with, and those that are interested in learning about it) at the most crucial time. The communication plan ensured a co-ordinated approach for specific communications.

The communication plan aimed to:

- generate and maintain awareness, interest and enthusiasm in the Ribble Pilot Project;
- build support among the target audiences;
- ensure the delivery of the project through effective proactive dialogue between interested parties.

The principles used in the development of the plan were:

- non-technical language was used to ensure messages were easily understood by all;
- appropriate routes of communication were devised to encourage communication with different and diverse audiences (e.g. the website excludes those without access but provides a fast, effective and efficient communication route to a wide audience);
- key audiences were invited to edit and comment on the plan, to ensure that the messages were understood;

- the key messages were used as a core reference for all communication material, to ensure consistent delivery.

Key messages (see below), particularly supporting the structure and objectives for the project, formed the central plank of the plan. For each key message key Agency and external audiences were identified, thus providing a focus for early involvement in the work. The plan drove the delivery of early communications, ensuring the right messages were communicated throughout the CIS testing phase of the project. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis during the life of the project.

Key messages (for year one) were:

- the WFD is a major opportunity to improve the whole water environment and promote the sustainable use of water for the benefit of people and wildlife;
- the Environment Agency is carrying out a pilot in the Ribble area which will help define how the Agency will implement the WFD;
- the Ribble Pilot Project gives you the opportunity to influence the future management of the water environment of the Ribble area;
- we will be working hard to ensure that everyone's views are considered and that they have the opportunity to get involved.

A copy of the complete communication plan is included as Appendix 4.

Lessons learned: Communication Plan
Communication planning at the process start up helps to ensure clear and consistent messages are used throughout the project generating awareness and reducing confusion. It provides a way of reducing confusion amongst audiences by clearly linking communications between similar projects. It is an important early task that can be delivered through co-operation. Working with key stakeholders in communication planning helps to identify the correct language to communicate with them and demonstrates open communication with stakeholders. The Communication Plan for the Ribble Pilot Project promotes flexible communication for different audiences ensuring messages are specific to certain audiences and stakeholders are not missed.

4.3 Selecting techniques to test

A review of available literature surrounding public participation was prepared (by Natasha Madeira, Strathclyde University, and Jo Tippett, Manchester University) and used to identify suitable techniques to test. A full review of activities is provided in Appendix 5. Allied to this was a review of references, included as Appendix 6, along with a review of relevant case studies, included as Appendix 7.

Ten techniques were chosen, these were considered appropriate to support the encouragement of active involvement in early planning. They were selected by the Agency and/or the Testing Group as the project developed. These are presented in summary form in Table 4.1 and covered in greater detail in Section 5.

Table 4.1 Summary of techniques of engagement applied during testing

Activity (see Appendix 5)	Summary of how the activity was applied	Type of involvement Project Team sought
Project Team and Testing Group	An Agency Project Team, with a team leader, was established to co-ordinate the work. A working group (including external partners) was brought together by the Project Manager to support and advise on the testing work.	Active involvement Listening Learning
Stakeholder Mapping	A survey of 370 identified relevant stakeholders were sent background information with 120 questionnaires completed	Learning Consulting Informing
Stakeholder Forum	A group of key stakeholders were brought together into a forum to follow the policy and process closely, to advise the Agency regularly about decisions to be taken, and to learn about the Directive and support decision making.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Meetings in person	The Project Team conducted a number of meetings with individual key stakeholders, especially during the first months of testing. This gave people the feeling that someone was listening, and provided direct input during project planning. An in-depth conversation was considered a valuable investment.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Presentations	A series of presentations for formal committees and other groups were undertaken to communicate the key messages, raise awareness of the project and increase the chance that key stakeholders took note of it.	Informing
Scenario/vision building	Facilitated meetings were conducted with small numbers of participants to deepen the insight in perceptions and challenges and to map possible solutions.	Active involvement Informing Listening Consulting
Expert meetings and workshops	Meetings were held with groups of experts to provide an opportunity for specialist input to assist with developing solutions to technical problems. For example, a series of four meetings were conducted to support the development of the proposed planning process (see Section 5.6).	Active involvement Informing Listening
Website	Project pages were established within the Environment Agency Website to focus initial enquiries for advice and to support the provision of basic understanding of the work. It developed an additional role as the primary route for dissemination of information about forum meetings.	Informing
Electronic newsletter	Summary information of key milestones provided on approximately two sides of A4, updated every 8 weeks. It was directed at Agency staff, those people more deeply involved in the subject or the project (co-operators/workers and co-thinkers, sometimes co-knowers) and organisations contributing to the Stakeholder Map that expressed an interest in knowing more. The newsletter was posted on the Website and recipients were sent an email containing the web-link.	Informing
Perceptions study – questionnaire survey	A survey of random selection of 1,001 households in the basin was conducted to identify citizens' values, perceptions and interests in becoming involved in river basin planning.	Learning Listening

4.4 Identifying those we needed to work with

The Common Implementation Strategy Guidance provides a guide to who should be encouraged to participate in planning and at what stage. Application at the basin level provides a list of those organisations and individuals that can help, including those that:

- contribute directly to causing impact(s) on the water environment of the basin (e.g. industry), or represent them;
- have responsibility for managing and reducing impact(s) on the water environment of the basin (e.g. local authorities), or represent them;
- contribute indirectly to causing an impact on the water environment of the basin (e.g. water users) or represent them;
- have an interest in protecting and improving the water environment of the basin (e.g. conservation groups).

In order to help identify the people falling into these categories, two pieces of work were undertaken. Firstly, a stakeholder map was constructed, representing a "long-list" of all the groups and organisations that could be relevant. Secondly, the Stakeholder Forum (see below) helped develop a priority list of organisations to work with and agreed some testing assumptions, together helping to focus communications to key groups. These processes are described in the following sections.

4.4.1 Stakeholder mapping – identifying contacts and categorising stakeholders

The Mersey Basin Campaign (a locally based non-governmental organisation) identified early on in the testing process the value of identifying stakeholders in the Ribble basin to support the pilot testing and volunteered to undertake this work on behalf of the Testing Group. The United Utilities' (local water company) method of stakeholder mapping was modified and developed into a consultation by Caroline Riley (member of the Testing Group), on secondment from United Utilities. The approach was developed specifically to meet the needs of the pilot but the principles could easily be applied elsewhere.

Mapping stakeholders had two primary purposes. Firstly, to supply information on local groups, organisations and initiatives that will and may have involvement in the development of the River Basin Management Plan. This is then used to identify those groups and individuals that will need to be involved through the planning process. Secondly, to explore how those groups and individuals would wish to participate in the management process as it develops.

The initial list of stakeholders was drawn from the Mersey Basin Campaign's Ribble basin contacts list. For this they drew extensively from their associated River Valley Initiatives (local partnerships for action to protect and improve the water environment, bringing together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors). Other contact names were gathered from sources including the Environment Agency, various publications and the Internet. Partner organisations were also asked to provide information. For example, the Chamber of Commerce East Lancashire contributed a list of over 100 businesses each with more than 200 employees. Some stakeholders came forward and offered their contact details when they heard about the Ribble Pilot Project by word of mouth. Once the process of contacting stakeholders began, some stakeholders referred details of other contacts to be included in the stakeholder map. Identification of contacts has been spreading in this way ever since, and the map will need regular review to add new contacts.

A questionnaire was developed to facilitate the collection of information. As of the end of February 2004, 370 copies had been sent out along with an explanatory letter and an information leaflet (see Appendix 8). They were sent jointly from the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Environment Agency. In order to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998 a confidentiality clause was included. This ensured that contacts were happy to share their details and responses with the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Environment Agency for the purposes of the project.

The questions are designed to determine the stakeholders:

- geographical area of interest, in terms of river, tributary, coastal water or waterbody

- size of group
- interests
- desired level of involvement
- preferred method of communication (website, post, etc)

The questionnaire lists 31 specific issues related to water and land management and asks which of these the person is interested in. They were then asked to select the three that are of greatest interest. Finally, they were asked to select their preferred communication route and the level of involvement they were seeking in the planning process.

If a respondent belonged to more than one stakeholder group, they were asked to complete a questionnaire for each one. The questionnaire also asked for details of any other stakeholders who may be interested.

A database was developed so that the results can be stored and analysed at any time for any required information.

Up to the end of February 2004, when the analyses for this report were conducted, 370 questionnaires had been sent out and 128 (35%) responses received. Of these, 27 were from people who had not been contacted directly.

Respondents were grouped or "mapped" at several levels, shown in Table 4.2. This allows interrogation of the map to explore sector membership or identify individual members.

Table 4.2 Examples of how stakeholders were categorised

Category	Example 1	Example 2
Sector	Local government	Community groups
Sub-sector	Local authorities	Fisheries
Organisation	Ribble Valley Borough Council	Ribble fisheries
Key contact or initiative	Department of Planning	Ribble Fisheries Action Plan

Respondents were asked the geographical area they were interested in, as described by four categories, national through to local. Results, shown in Table 4.3, indicate that over half were only interested in local (basin or smaller) issues. Some respondents indicated their interest in more than one scale. For example, 5 respondents were interested in national and regional issues. This information is also shown in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Geographic interest of respondents

	Scale			
	National	Regional	Sub-regional	Local
Number	41	49	43	81
Percentage	32	38	34	63
Number of respondents interested in more than one geographical area	13	3	4	5
	1	13		

To supplement this result respondents were also asked to name the rivers and water bodies that most interested them. The breakdown of responses is shown in Table 4.4. The percentages of respondents interested in each river in the basin is approximately proportional to the size of each individual catchment
.

Table 4.4 Areas of interest to respondents

Area of interest		
	No.	%
River Ribble	90	70
River Hodder	57	45
River Darwen	57	45
Crossens	34	27
River Calder	53	41
River Douglas	57	45
Water catchment area	56	44
Lakes/reservoirs	54	42
Canals	66	52
Coastal waters	46	36

In order to assess and record respondents' interests, they were asked to identify any/all interests and to select three that they considered their "favourites". Results of this work (shown in Table 4.5) indicate that the most popular issues were those related to nature conservation, protected conservation sites and landscape (shown red in Table 4.5). Those issues polling over 50% interest (shown in yellow in Table 4.5) indicated a more mixed response with interests ranging from environmental quality and protection to involving people and recreation. The top ten recorded issues and interests are also displayed in Figure 4.1.

Angling on the River Lostock

Table 4.5 Categories of issues/interests of respondents

Category	Interests		Favourites	
	No.	%	No.	%
Surface or groundwater quality	70	55	15	12
Chemical status – hazardous substances	50	39	9	7
Biological status	73	57	17	13
Diffuse pollution	60	47	14	11
Drinking water quality	30	23	2	2
Water resource	50	39	6	5
Climate change	63	49	7	5
Flooding	71	55	11	9
Drought – low flows	39	30	4	3
Groundwater	46	36	3	2
Biodiversity/nature conservation	102	80	51	40
Landscape	80	63	14	11
Protected areas (e.g. SSSIs)	79	62	9	7
Land quality	50	39	3	2
Contaminated land	43	34	2	2
Local environmental quality	77	60	19	15
Visual impact/image	75	59	12	9
Regeneration	71	55	17	13
Heritage	63	49	3	2
Recreational activities	76	59	15	12
Tourism	62	48	10	8
Angling	41	32	10	8
Compliance with environmental legislation	71	55	16	13
River basin administration and planning	51	40	11	9
Rural economy	61	48	10	8
Health/social Inclusion	45	35	1	1
Economic development	45	35	3	2
Job creation/unemployment	39	30	2	2
Water costs	28	22	8	6
Statutory planning	48	38	10	8
Involving people	68	53	23	18

Respondents were asked for their preferred contact route; results are shown tabulated and schematically in Figure 4.2. Email communication was indicated as the preferred option, but post was also favoured. This result was used to support the decision to develop the electronic newsletter (see section 5.8).

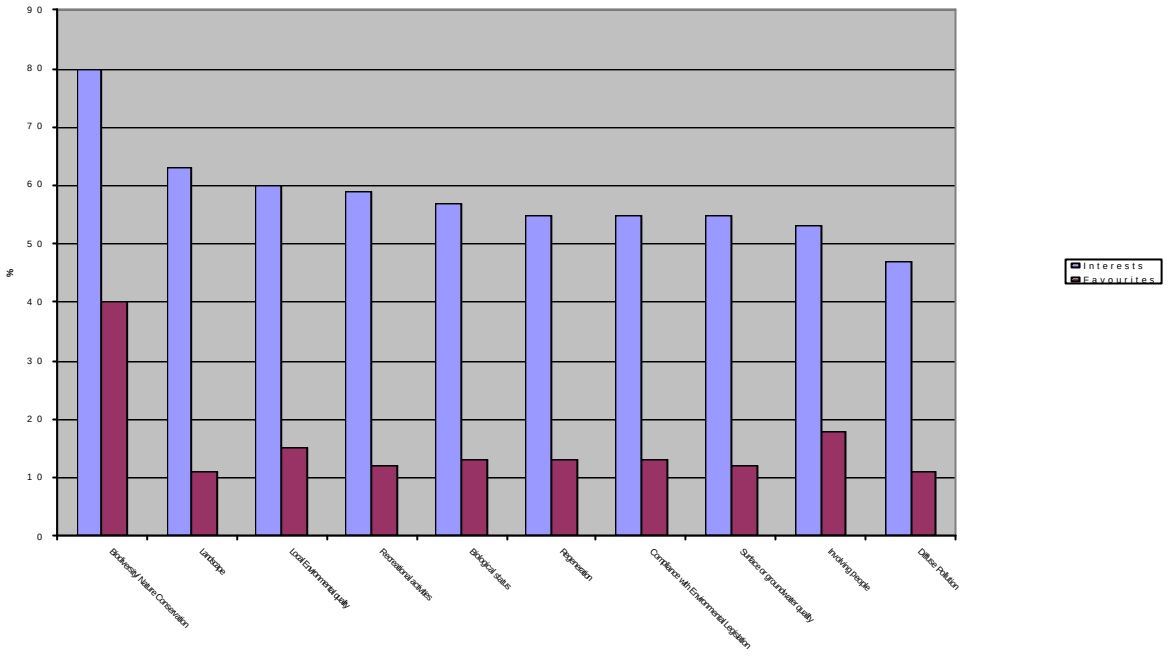
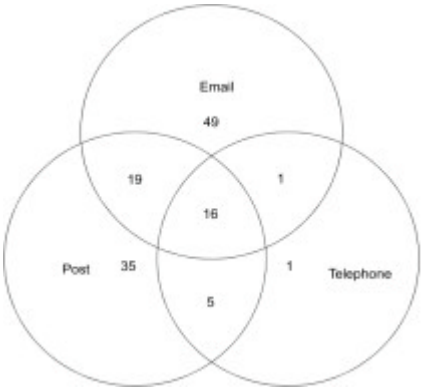


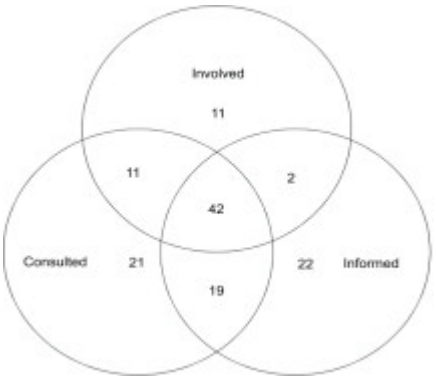
Figure 4.1 Histogram of top ten recorded interests and favourite issues



Communication		
	No.	%
Post preference	71	55
Telephone preference	23	18
Email preference	83	65

Figure 4.2 Preferred communication methods

Respondents were also asked how involved they wished to be in the planning process. Results, shown in Figure 4.3, suggest that the preferred level of involvement was consultation, with information provision also very popular. A number of respondents indicated that they wished to be involved at different levels.



Involvement Level		
	No.	%
Involved	63	49
Consulted	90	70
Informed	82	64

Figure 4.3 Desired involvement level

The stakeholder map provides a single source of information on the groups and organisations, based in the basin, that may have an interest in river basin planning, their areas of interest and their desired involvement levels and preferred communication routes. This information will be used throughout the life of the project and has already been used to select and invite attendees for the vision building workshops (see below).

Lessons learned: Stakeholder Mapping
Stakeholder mapping was carried out at the start of the project to help identify relevant stakeholders. Lessons learned included:
• Stakeholder mapping identifies who to involve in river basin planning and how they want to be involved, to help define stakeholders as co-decision makers, co-knowers, co-thinkers or co-operators.
• Refinement and iteration throughout the process is essential to capture the relevant stakeholders at the relevant times.
• Contact information is critical for collecting information for the map.
• Self-selection and dominance by one interest or issue can easily occur
• The use of a questionnaire approach to compiling the map is more "transparent" than mapping undertaken by a small group.
• The stakeholder mapping process is a continuous activity throughout river basin planning.

4.4.2 Prioritising stakeholders and agreeing testing assumptions

At the second meeting of the project's Stakeholder Forum (see section 5.2), members were asked to contribute to a review of membership and terms of reference. Details of this work are included in Section 5.2 and it was considered as an important step in helping the Project Team identify key stakeholders for river basin planning. Also, at that meeting a series of testing assumptions were agreed to ensure clear communications over the framework for testing.

These were:

- forum members were the key primary source of contacts and used to represent views of wider groups;
- testing did not attempt to engage every individual in the basin;
- work concentrated on engaging local/basin stakeholder representatives rather than national representatives;
- priority was given to working "through" existing external participation channels;
- involvement was sought from representatives of all major communities and geographic areas in the basin.

4.5 Summary of planned approach

The selected methods were then used to encourage involvement of the selected audiences.

Figure 4.4 is provided to help explain how the methods and audiences fit together. It shows a conceptual image of the people of the Ribble basin; the proportion of people in each basic category is shown by the area occupied by that section of the triangle. At the base sits the general public, the 1.25 million residents of the basin with the social structure as set out in Section 2.3. Above this sits those groups and organisations that can be assumed to represent the general public, or sections of it. Together these contain those people that can be considered to:

- contribute indirectly to causing an impact on the water environment of the basin (e.g. water users) or represent them;
- have an interest in protecting and improving the water environment of the basin (e.g. conservation groups).

Smaller still, and with a closer relative position to the Project Team, are the key stakeholders; those people that:

- contribute directly to causing impact(s) on the water environment of the basin (e.g. industry), or represent them;
- have responsibility for managing and reducing impact(s) on the water environment of the basin (e.g. local authorities), or represent them.

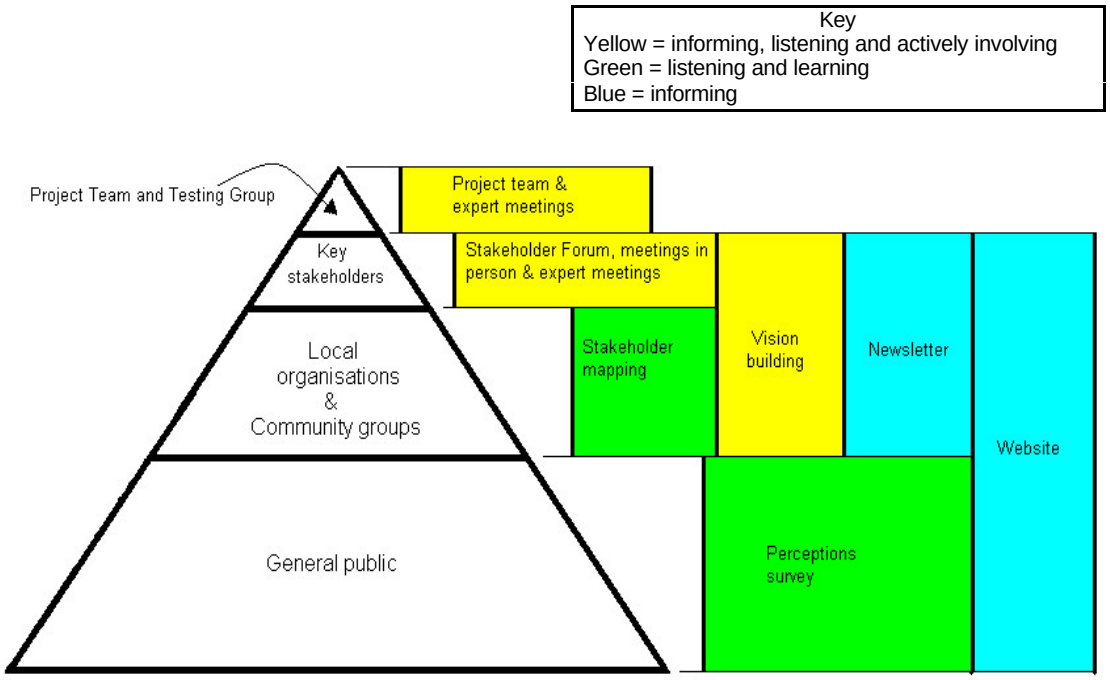


Figure 4.4 Summary of planned approach to stakeholder engagement

At the top of the triangle sits the Project Team, comprising the Environment Agency staff and those members of the CIS Testing Group.

The colours of the attendant boxes represent the types of involvement achieved by the techniques listed within each. This shows that more effort was expended working with key stakeholders and local community representatives, in line with the assumptions set out in Section 4.4.2. Together these represented a cohesive package of works that both trialled nine techniques set out in the CIS guidance and made a real contribution to the foundation of the river basin planning work.

The methods used to construct the stakeholder map, and the provisional results of this work, have already been explained. The other techniques are introduced in greater detail in the following section.

Ribblehead Viaduct

5. The tests in detail

The individual tests outlined in Section 4.3 are reviewed in greater detail below.

5.1 Project Team and Testing Group

The Environment Agency funded the creation of a core Project Team to co-ordinate the testing work. Early meetings with key stakeholder groups in the basin identified a number of specialists who could offer support and advice to the testing process. As a result, a Testing Group was created, comprising the core Project Team, representing the competent authority, supplemented by a small number of external partners. This group, under the direction of the Agency Project Manager, managed and co-ordinated the testing.

The creation of this multi-organisation group could be considered a demonstration of active involvement, encouraging a range of academic and voluntary sector groups to join in the planning, execution and evaluation of the testing and early implementation of the project.

Lessons learned: Project Team & Technical Working Groups
The Ribble Pilot Project has developed a process built on co-operation with several organisations to help bring together new ideas and stimulate discussion. At the centre of the project the Environment Agency has worked closely with a several key stakeholders. This co-operative approach demonstrated the following lessons:
• Extending membership of project teams through the creation of working groups proved an effective way of making people feel involved.
• Reliance on contributions of work from third-party organisations requires trust and understanding.
• It was the catalyst for other collaboration, for example in running a workshop to Review Public Participation Methodologies with the Mersey Basin Campaign (October 2003).
• It provided members with an excellent opportunity to exchange views and develop common understandings with a range of actors in the Ribble.
• Building joint working arrangements takes time and terms of reference may aid this process.

5.2 Stakeholder Forum

The Stakeholder Forum sits at the core of stakeholder participation. It comprises representatives of all major local and regional stakeholder sectors/groups, brought together to support and encourage the active involvement of stakeholders in the Ribble Pilot River Basin Project. It was established in embryonic form at a project inception meeting on 7 March 2003. The project was launched officially at the first full Stakeholder Forum meeting on 10 June 2003.

Documents detailing forum terms of reference, ways of working and membership were all developed in consultation with the members. Involving key stakeholders in this work was considered an important way to build trust and establish dialogue between different interest groups from the outset. The ways of working were agreed to help forum members understand their role and what is expected from them. These are considered “living” documents and an annual review is built into them.

The terms of reference identified that the Stakeholder Forum will:

- provide the primary source of help, support and advice for local/regional stakeholder engagement in the project;
- provide support and advice on proposals that affect the whole basin;

- provide knowledge on the Ribble basin to ensure issues of local significance are identified;
- assist and guide the resolution of conflict that may be generated in the river basin management planning process.
-

The Stakeholder Forum has a membership of approximately 50 organisations with an emphasis on local/regional representation (e.g. the local representative of RSPB attended rather than their national counterpart). National representatives were given observer status, the main point of contact being the local/regional representatives. The Stakeholder Forum provides an essential platform to help deliver more effective communication of the Directive and the project objectives, including helping to define language or words to best communicate technical elements of the Directive. The Forum Advisory Group was established advise the Environment Agency of how to manage the forum and consists of representatives from the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Mersey Basin Campaign, United Utilities and the Agency.

The documents detailing full terms of reference, membership and ways of working are set out in Appendix 9.

A variety of techniques of engagement were applied at Stakeholder Forum meetings to engage members over a variety of issues. Table 5.1 presents the main techniques used and an analysis of the costs and benefits of each.

The value of the Stakeholder Forum, as the principal source of advice and support from external stakeholders, has grown as the project has developed. It does not represent the only form of communication but it is where some of the more complex and sensitive information is first discussed. Members have contributed to development of technical and sometimes complex work outside forum meetings where the Project Team rely on an understanding of the background for this work in order to make speedy progress.

Lessons learned: Ribble Stakeholder Forum

The Ribble Stakeholder forum was established at the process outset as the centrepiece for communication with key stakeholders. The forum played an integral role in the 'process set up' helping to discuss the objectives, process, terms of reference and communications plan. The role of the forum will change with time and the river basin planning process evolves. Key lessons from the forum included:

- The Stakeholder Forum provided a means of demonstrating from the early stages to stakeholders the proposed approach to public participation.
- The Stakeholder Forum provides a link to the wider basin. Encouraging members to talk to peers outside the forum about the WFD is an effective way of communicating messages.
- While the Stakeholder Forum represents interests within the basin, it also represents cross-basin and cross-district interests.
- The Stakeholder Forum provides an early indication as to what are the main issues and what are the key questions stakeholders want answering.
- Terms of reference should be produced early in the process and the Stakeholder Forum can help define the role and membership of the group; this provides a focus for their involvement.
- Adequate resources are required to run and facilitate the Stakeholder Forum effectively.
- Identification of key stakeholders requires careful planning including for example, stakeholder mapping and analysis.
- Representation from business and industry was low, although level of interest from the business and industry community has grown since the project started.

Table 5.1 Analysis of forum meetings

Purpose	Techniques used	Responses	Costs/benefits
Introduction to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Ribble Pilot Project What do stakeholders want to get out of the project? How do stakeholders want to be involved?	Presentations Facilitated (by Agency) discussion groups	• Offers of help to Agency were made • The project should be real and lead to long-term environmental improvements • Integration should be essential with existing plans and initiatives • Forum needs terms of reference • Communication advice • Idea of creating a "vision" was proposed • Stakeholders were keen to learn more and develop best practice	**Costs:** Preparation Agency staff (5 man-days) Stakeholders' time **Benefits:** Informed stakeholders Offers of resource (time/financial)
Discuss role and membership of forum Produce priority list of stakeholders Introduce public participation activities	Presentations Facilitated (by non-Agency staff) discussion groups	• Stakeholder Forum Terms of reference revised and updated • Priority list of stakeholders produced • Membership of group revised • Testing assumptions agreed	**Costs:** Preparation Agency staff (5 man-days) Venue (£1,000/€1,400) Stakeholders' time (included facilitation) **Benefits:** Informed stakeholders Role of group established Priority stakeholder list produced to help identify stakeholders we need to involve in River Basin Management Plan

5.3 Meetings in person

The objective of meetings in person (bi-lateral meetings between Agency Project Team members and one other organisation or individual) was to provide and share information, seek advice and support, encourage others to offer support and resources, and build and improve partnerships. This technique was used extensively during the early months of the project, especially during project planning. The value of such personal meetings is recognised in the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) guidance. This states that "the process of co-development and co-ownership is likely to build trust, attract greater support from stakeholders and create mutual willingness to make the process a success."

Project Team members had a number of organised and ad hoc meetings. A full list of engagements (between February and October 2003) is included within Appendix 10, and includes both external and internal audiences.

The communication plan provided a key source of information for effective project communications.

Lessons learned: meetings in person

- One-to-one meetings proved successful to communicate the project effectively and enabled good two-way communication.
- There are a finite number of meetings that can be undertaken and they can be demanding on resources. Through providing information to key representatives, we encouraged the cascading of information through their organisation (this snowball effect occurred in a number of organisations, such as local angling associations and industry organisations).
- Meetings helped the understanding of how the WFD may affect organisations. For example, they helped to identify the links between the WFD and planning.
- Use language stakeholders are comfortable with. The Directive is complicated and technical; explaining in plain English and communicating simple messages is more effective. The use of case studies to explain the Directive's objectives enables stakeholders to fully and clearly understand the implications.

5.4 Presentations

Presentations were used to explain the purpose of the Directive and the Ribble project to a number of different local, national and international meetings during the testing work. These gave the opportunity to communicate the key messages of the communication plan, and other complex messages (with the aid of PowerPoint graphics) to specific audiences including the Environment Agency's statutory committees and local environmental partnerships. These events were used to inform audiences and encourage stakeholders to be involved in the project. The presentations included requests for people to join the Stakeholder Forum and to ask for further information. An indicative list of presentations (between February and October 2003) is included in Appendix 10.

Lessons learned: Presentations

A series of presentations were undertaken to communicate key messages and raise awareness. Presentations help to increase the profile of the Ribble Pilot Project and provide a platform to exchange best practice. They are particularly successful to inform specialist groups or organisations, such as business or industry groups.

5.5 Vision building

River basin management planning will lead to the development of a series of Directive lead goals for the protection and improvement of water bodies in the Ribble basin. The extent to which these goals match local aspirations are important in determining whether local people will want to help deliver them. If Directive goals form a discrete set of objectives then the Agency will have few partners in their work to deliver them.

In order to compare and assess the overlap between local and Directive goals and as a way of engendering local support for environmental protection and improvement, a vision building exercise was undertaken.

To help during the design phase of the vision building, the extensive literature on this subject was reviewed and leading practitioners were consulted (Appendices 5-7). The main body of this review incorporates a summary of the Common Implementation Strategy guidance on techniques for ease of reference, and an

overview of practitioners, projects and ICT tools. Key reference material and components of the literature review included:

- the proceedings of a research workshop for leading practitioners on Public Participation in the WFD organised by the Mersey Basin Campaign;
- the EU Life-Environment Project Wise Use of Floodplains guide on participatory processes;
- an overview of IC-tools from the HarmoniCOP project;
- a summary of innovative tools from PhD research on public participation methods by Joanne Tippett.

Envisioning activities can be divided into visions and vision building. A vision may merely be an intangible ideal. However, vision building leads to the development of something more realistic, often underpinned by a plan of action to achieve a tangible common goal. This can evolve with time, continually being modified as awareness and understanding of issues relating to the vision are changed or enhanced.

The functions of vision building within the context of the Ribble Pilot Project were to:

- create the overall direction of an organisation/effort against which progress can be measured;
- encourage active involvement of stakeholders in river basin management planning;
- change people's views as the key step towards changing the environment. Desirable social outcomes are relationship building, social learning and a framework for identifying actions.
- Help to manage expectation of what the WFD can and cannot deliver.

5.5.1 Approach to the vision building process

The approach taken to the vision building process was to address the need for public participation on two general levels:

1. The requirements to develop and test approaches and methodologies for the public participation and planning process for river basin management within the Ribble Pilot Project (vision building tests one approach/method).
2. To provide an opportunity for interested parties to contribute to the development of a River Basin Management Plan for the Ribble.

During the vision building process the objective was to ensure that all stakeholders, including the Agency, had a clear understanding of their role in engagement activities and within the overall process. This was especially important in the case of engagement of members of the public (generally unaware of the Directive), where the language and approach taken was appropriate to their experience and set in contexts and terms familiar to them.

Throughout the engagement process, the aim was to facilitate stakeholders' identification of their desired outcomes within their own (and neighbouring) basins, for themes including the following:

- integrated water and land use planning
- biodiversity
- heritage
- landscape
- the rural economy
- water quality
- flood management
- tourism and leisure

The first stage is to work towards the establishment of the ideal future state for the basin from each organisation's or group's perspective, followed by exploration of benefits and disadvantages of particular outcomes of actions to achieve the ideal state. This can then lead to a balancing process to achieve the best option tempered by constraints such as:

- natural processes
- global processes (e.g. climate change)
- social/cultural considerations
- economic considerations
- political and institutional considerations

The objective was to allow stakeholders to come to independent decisions on realistic constraints, through informed dialogue and careful presentations of facts and differing perspectives. The process led to the

identification of a range of uncertainties, areas where more information is required and issues for further exploration or research.

Black Moss Reservoirs, Barley

The process produced vision building information to be used for the continued development of a vision for the Ribble basin that will be amalgamated with the results of the WFD characterisation process and used as a framework for future action. The record of vision building events was documented in a vision building report (Appendix 11). The resulting information, gained from further development of the vision should enable the stakeholders to highlight common goals that will lead to the identification amongst other things of those actions that:

- could be addressed/delivered within the WFD (i.e. matched Article 5 results);
- could be delivered by the Environment Agency in other ways;
- were the responsibility of other parties (e.g. local authorities);
- could be delivered through partnership projects;
- would require additional powers or funding from central government;
- could not be delivered at all.

Taking into account some or all of the above would help the Agency and other involved stakeholders to develop and deliver the prototype River Basin Management Plan.

5.5.2 Approach to vision building methods

The vision building events were tailored to fit limitations on time, resources and scope of the Ribble Pilot Project. Although the key objectives for the Ribble Pilot Project could be met within the events described below, more comprehensive coverage of these objectives may be achieved by the stakeholders involved through medium to long-term continuation of this process.

The methodology was based on an iterative approach to determine the nature and content of the events and the stakeholders and locations. Through discussions with the Testing Group, a series of events were planned and held between January and March 2004. Details of the design and planning of the vision building events were clarified through discussions with the Testing Group and by reference to literature.

The chosen methodology adopted elements of a soft systems analysis approach including, where relevant, rapid appraisal and stakeholder analysis (further details in Appendix 5). The methodology explores role of social learning with "platforms" of stakeholders who play a part in resolving catchment management problems.

Stakeholder selection

The events aimed to engage a reasonably broad range of stakeholders from the whole of the catchment, while accepting that, at this initial stage, it may not be possible to include some areas and stakeholder groups. Where possible, the stakeholders engaged should provide a good representative sample of the basin.

The Stakeholder Map and the Stakeholder Forum were used to determine who to invite to specific workshops and establish a more defined target audience in the chosen area. The assumptions in Section 4.4.2 defined stakeholder engagement decisions.

Evaluation and monitoring
Evaluation and monitoring techniques were incorporated in the planning process for events. The assessment had three functions:

- to measure progress;
- to enable learning;
- to understand change.

Generally, only intangible assessments were possible, covering the development of a group identity between stakeholders or enhanced commitment. What was being assessed was the movement of stakeholders along the gradient of:

Awareness ➜ Insight ➜ Competence

When assessing the intangibles, it was important to have assessment done by a diversity of parties. Among those parties, the key persons involved in assessment are the stakeholders, who should also be assessing themselves. Further details of evaluation can be found in Section 7.

Vision workshop held at Wigan

Design and management of events
Through consultation and reference to literature, various participation methods for the events were adapted and designed specifically for the Ribble Pilot Project. The events were designed to start the vision building process, with a view to enabling stakeholders to develop a vision document. This document would summarise stakeholders future views on water and land management in the river basin.

The workshop events commenced with a background presentation prepared and delivered by the Agency to provide information on the Ribble Pilot Project, the Ribble basin and the WFD.

Then the vision building events were structured to incorporate elements of the following stepwise procedure:

1. The first stage of the process consisted of participatory discussions in which representatives of different interests would be encouraged to share their experiences of how current water and land management practices affect their interests.

2. Participants were encouraged to identify the contexts that need to be considered in relation to the changes they seek: climate change, economic constraints, etc.

3. Participants were encouraged to identify the assets (environmental, social, economic and ways of working) they value and how current water and land management practices affect them positively or negatively.
4. Participants were encouraged to define the outcomes they seek in the short to long term.

5. Participants were encouraged to identify which practices they value because they contribute to the delivery of outcomes, and what they would like to change.

6. Participants were then encouraged to flag up a range of solutions to potentially deliver the changes they seek, and which could be delivered through the WFD and Integrated River Basin Management.

7. Participants were encouraged to identify barriers that could potentially block solutions and

opportunities that could catalyse their implementation.

5.5.3 Application of chosen methodology

Figure 5.1 provides an overview of the events undertaken in the vision building process. The community event allowed the public to give their views on a localised area, which fed into the final workshop. Local (sub-basin) workshops were highly structured half day session events which depended strongly on facilitator guidance, whereas the Ribble basin two-day workshop was less structured and allowed facilitators to respond and adapt to delegates' needs and requests. The final half day workshop brought together and consolidated the main results of the vision building events, in preparation for drawing together the vision summary report.

Appendix 11 summarises the activities and techniques used within the events. The vision building report (Appendix 11) provides a detailed record of the results of the events.

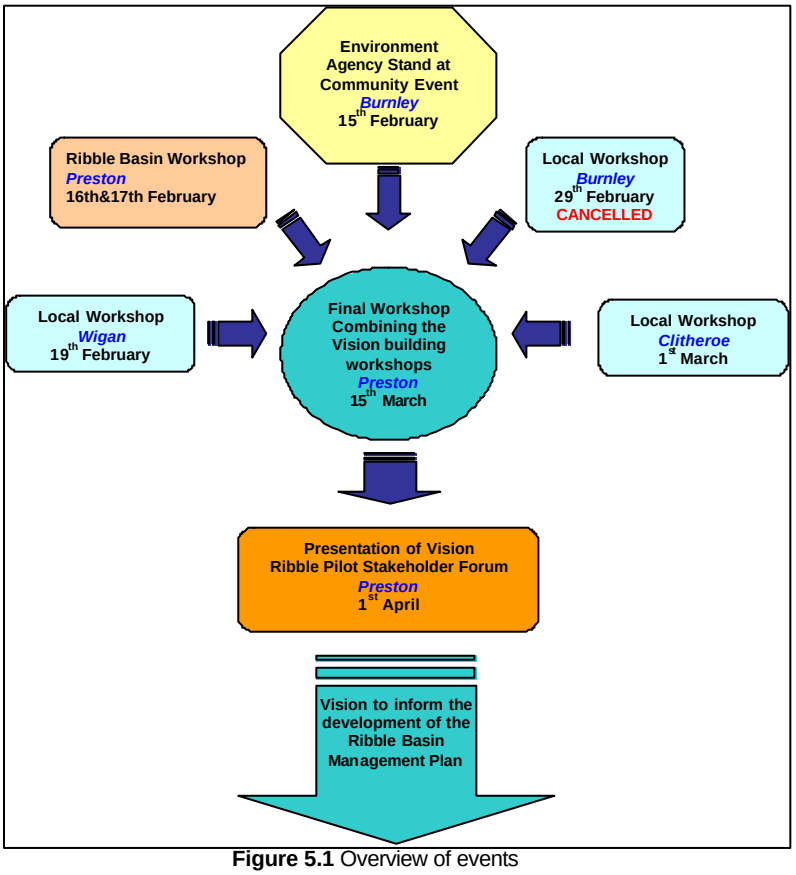


Figure 5.1 Overview of events

5.5.4 Results of the vision building process

The vision building process involved an analysis of the past and present water environment. The process defined stakeholder perceptions of the current state of the water environment and their aspirations for a sustainable water environment. They also considered the mechanism and challenges to achieving these goals (example provided in Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Illustration of goals, benefits and challenges

Goal	Benefits	Challenges
Improved water quality	• Enhance and stimulate tourism, increase investment in recreational facilities and amenities • Improve opportunities for education and quality of life • Diversification of habitats	• Runoff from urban and rural areas • Point source pollution by sewage • Physical structure in watercourse • Population increases
Improved partnerships	• Sharing knowledge, experience and best practice • Reduction in conflict • Involvement of different social groups	• Time, resources and funding • Facilitation of partnerships • Finding relevant expertise • Ensuring partnerships are not just talking shops

The process indicated that stakeholders valued the ownership of the goals. Furthermore, they were keen to identify the mechanism, benefits and challenges, demonstrating a sense of ownership over the vision. Comparison from the different workshops also highlighted the synergy between the perceived issues and stakeholder goals across the basin (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Illustration of common goals identified

Illustration of goals
Improve and safeguard recreation opportunities and the quality of the waterside environment
Improve habitats for specific dwelling animals (e.g. such as otters in the River Hodder)
Enhance and strengthen partnerships working towards reducing levels of diffuse pollution
Improve water quality by reduction of nutrient and chemical levels
Improve sustainable drainage
Encourage development of sustainable farming
Improve habitats of migratory fish through Ribble basin

From the workshop outputs, three types of report of the vision building events were produced:

1. Individual event reports – brief factual reports of the events for delegates and other interested parties.
2. Full vision building events report – summarising the information from all individual reports.
3. Presentation of the executive summary of the full vision building events report to Stakeholder Forum.

The reports will be used to communicate the initial goals and challenges identified for the vision so far. The proposed next steps should incorporate the following:

- establishment of a vision sub-group to help finalise and clarify the vision;
- development of a simple and clear common vision statement approved by the stakeholder forum;
- use identified key goals and values to clarify the details of the vision for the Ribble basin;
- use the details of the vision to identify clear short, medium and long-term goals and actions required.

These will be considered and used to inform the river basin management planning process.

Of equal importance throughout a vision building process were:

- the development, by stakeholders, of a common set of goals and approaches towards achieving them;
- the establishment of a sense of ownership, strong partnership working networks and good dynamics between all stakeholders.

Within the Ribble Pilot Project vision building process, encouraging results in both areas were seen (see Section 7), along with strong evidence of the associated social learning between stakeholders. Considering the small number of events, the participants produced a wealth of useful material and information that will provide an excellent base for further vision development. There are clearly high levels of motivation from the stakeholders already involved in the vision building events to continue participating in the river basin management planning and vision building processes, within a partnership framework. The main challenge now for the Agency and the Ribble Stakeholder Forum will be to maintain, increase and effectively channel efforts into the most appropriate areas of the river basin management planning process.

Lessons Learned: Vision Building

The creation of a local vision for environmental protection and improvement served to engage a wide range of stakeholders in early river basin planning. The vision building aimed to promote active involvement in the early stages of the river basin management planning process. The vision building process demonstrated:

- This is a powerful way of encouraging active involvement in identifying issues for river basin planning.
- It was expensive, relative to the number of people involved, but this was partly due to the short time scale. Longer planning and operating time in future situations could make it more economical (including longer notice for participants).
- Amalgamation with the Directive-driven goals needs to be managed carefully to ensure expectations are met.
- Vision building takes time and should be started early in the planning process.
- Vision building workshops did not encourage hard to reach groups and other more proactive techniques may be more successful. Inviting people does not always lead to involvement.
- The Community event demonstrated the value of 'piggy-backing' other events, to reach wider and more diverse sections of the community.

5.6 Expert meetings

Meetings were held with groups of experts to test this as a mechanism for active involvement and to provide an opportunity for specialist input to assist with developing solutions to technical problems.

Meetings were organised to undertake two pieces of work during the testing period. Firstly, to support the Ribble Project Team and national Agency colleagues in testing the development of national Agency guidance of public participation. Secondly, to support the Ribble Project Team to prepare a proposed approach to river basin planning for the Ribble Pilot Project. This development work is described in detail to demonstrate how expert meetings can actively involve interested parties. The full results of this work are in Appendix 12, a proposed planning process for the Ribble Pilot Project.

5.6.1 Expert meetings on public participation

The Environment Agency's national WFD Programme is responsible for developing a strategy for public participation for river basin planning that will ensure that the Directive's requirements are met and that there is consistency between the levels at which participation occurs.

The Ribble project provided the opportunity to involve stakeholders in

thinking about how they could most effectively contribute to river basin planning. Selected members of the forum and others were invited to participate at two stages in the development of public participation options:

- review and refinement of four models for involving stakeholders and members of the public
- testing one option for participation.

For this work, two workshops were held in December 2003. About 20 people attended (most attending both sessions). Participants represented a range of stakeholder interests (including regional and local authorities, business, farming, nature conservation and environmental NGOs).

The first workshop was a one-day session. A background paper "Models for Public Participation" was circulated to participants in advance. The workshop started with two presentations, one explaining the relationship between the national public participation strategy and the Ribble Pilot Project, and the other outlining four options for public participation. Participants were then divided into groups, and asked a series of technical questions, including:

- are the options workable?
- are the options appropriate to different scales of participation, such as densely populated urban areas, remote rural areas, etc?
- which option(s) would be most appropriate for each geographical scale defined in the WFD (i.e. national, river basin district, river basin, sub-basin, waterbody)?

The feedback received from participants indicated that they were comfortable with the style of questioning and were able to provide answers valuable to the strategy development process.

At the second workshop the same groups studied the options in more depth, building on the outcome of the earlier workshop and on input from a workshop with national stakeholders. There were two introductory presentations followed by two break-out sessions, which focused on the following questions:

- what is your preferred hybrid model?
- who should be involved at each stage?

Again, the participants' comments were valuable to both the Agency Ribble Pilot Project Team and colleagues developing the national Agency guidance.

Public participation workshop at Blackburn Cathedral, March 2004

5.6.2 Expert meetings to define the planning process

A further two workshops were held in March 2004 to establish a series of guiding principles for river basin planning on the Ribble. These events included:

- key representatives of the Ribble Stakeholder Forum;
- local Agency officers managing Agency planning (including; Catchment Abstraction Management Plans, Fisheries/Salmon Action Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans);
- representatives of key external partners also involved in activities closely related to river planning (including local authorities, regional assembly, English Nature).

The aim of these events was to explore and recommend processes and products to deliver the requirements for river basin planning, related to the preferences for public participation set out at the workshops in December 2003.

The events used a series of presentations to "set the scene", joint working between participants to derive options for planning, voting by all participants to select preferred options, and, finally, some scenario planning to test the emerging

planning model. Consultants also conducted work between the meetings to help ensure progress was made.

Results of all this work, presented using "why, when, what, who and how" prompts, were used to develop a series of "guiding principles" the Agency proposes to apply during preparation of the prototype River Basin Management Plan for the Ribble (Appendix 12).

Lessons learned: Expert Meetings
Meetings were held with experts to provide an opportunity for specialist input to assist with developing solutions to technical problems. The stakeholder forum facilitated the easy selection of participants and ensured they understood the directive and how it fitted in.
Lessons learned from expert meetings were: • Participants shared knowledge about the river environment. • Participants gained insights into the concerns and perspectives of others. • Participants were able to look at the different measures that could be taken to deal with pollution. • Participants provided real energy and enthusiasm to the process. • Participants felt that their opinions were important. • A number of stakeholder interests were absent (e.g. community groups, businesses and farming). It was recognised that these stakeholders often did not have the resources (time and personnel) to participate in this kind of activity. • The process might have been easier if the participants had been provided with more information. • Professional facilitation of the group discussions would have increased effectiveness by clarifying what was required.

5.7 Website

The Ribble Pilot Project, along with all other Pilot River Basins, has developed its own website to support communications. The Internet provides one of the most important forms of communication across Europe, for a number of reasons including:

- low cost of entry
- accessibility
- speed and fluidity
- multiple modes of communication
- breaks down geographic barriers
- information dissemination

The Internet will be a valuable tool in helping to meet requirements of Article 14 for information provision. It provides a library facility, to supply basic information, although its capabilities go further. Through use of online questionnaires, email correspondence, consultation exercises and discussion forums it can be an important tool for participation. The Internet also supports the Directive's concept of an integrated and consistent approach across Europe, where Member States can share and learn from each other. Members of the public are able to share in this information across geographical and political barriers.

Growth in access to the Internet adds to its attraction as a communication tool. By September 2002 it was estimated that approximately 57% of the population in the United Kingdom were online.

The Ribble Pilot River Basin Website sits within the Environment Agency's central Website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk/ribblewfd. The Ribble Pilot Project site sits within the North West Environment section on the Agency's structured site.

5.7.1 Provision of information

The Internet provides a key tool with respect to the requirement in Article 14 of access to information. The Ribble Pilot Project Website provides information on:

- project objectives;
- background on the character of the basin;
- the work on public participation and promoting "active involvement";

- minutes and records of public meetings held for the Ribble Pilot Project;
- electronic newsletter;
- other key documents, such as the terms of reference for the Stakeholder Forum.

These sections provide information for public access and are updated monthly. The site provides the opportunity for limited dialogue through email; the Agency receives responses from the public. The nature of this mechanism is singular, with each response between the Agency and the individual. Emails have tended to be requests for further information rather than engaging in public debate. As an information tool the Internet is fast efficient and has a wide, although unverifiable audience. However, caution should be noted, as using the Internet alone can lead to increased inequity unless other forms of communication can supplement it.

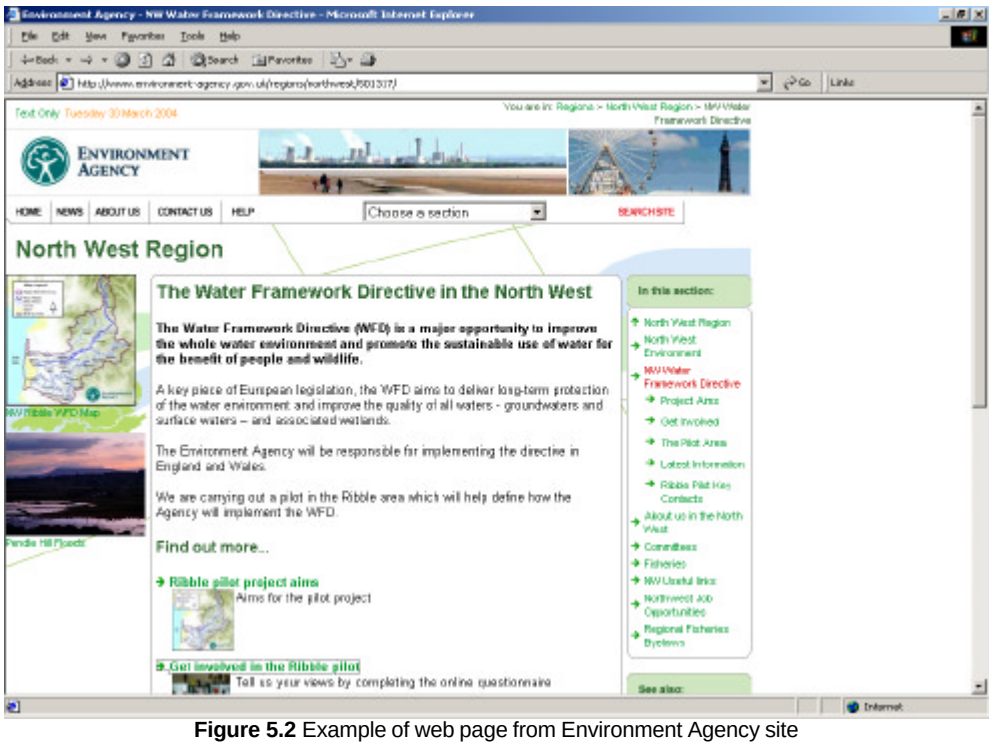


Figure 5.2 Example of web page from Environment Agency site

5.7.2 Consultation

The Internet provided the platform for early consultation on the Ribble Pilot Project (Figure 5.2). The perceptions survey questionnaire (see Section 5.9) was adapted for application on the web and opinions were sought to learn from people's knowledge, perceptions, experience and ideas on the water environment and management. Questionnaires are easily presented on the Internet (Figure 5.3). The questionnaire enables the user to make selections from specific answers (tick boxes, menu items, ranking) as well as requiring the user to type their own comments or specific details (text boxes). Responses are submitted and gathered automatically into data analysis software. Results of this work were not available at the time of writing this report.

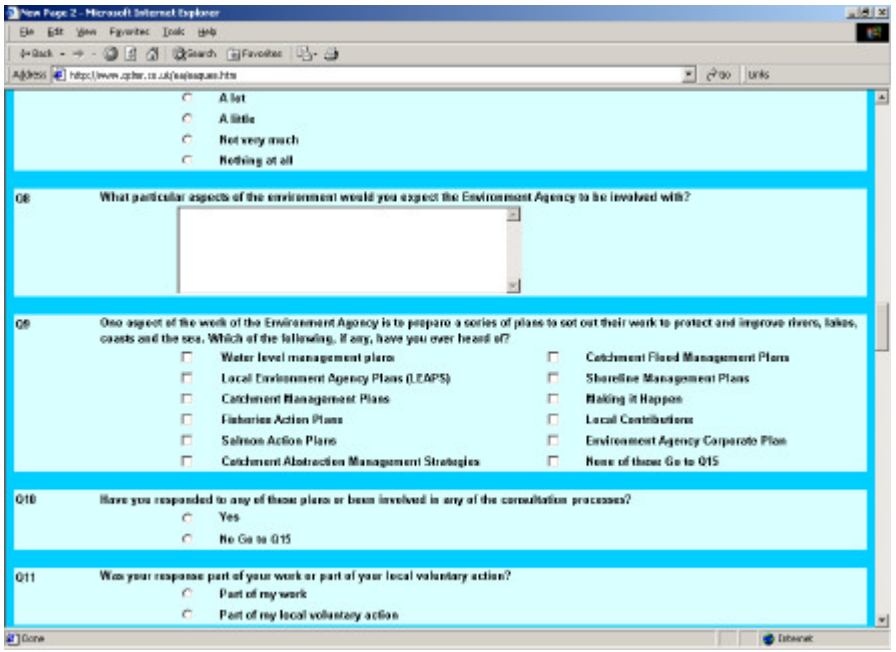


Figure 5.3 Example page showing the questionnaire on the Ribble Website

5.7.3 Active involvement

The Internet provides limited capability for active involvement. Although not used for this Ribble Pilot Project the Internet can be used for online discussion and debate. During later phases in the river basin management process the Internet could provide a useful resource for informing stakeholders. It could also provide a useful tool for discussion groups prior to public meetings. However, this mode of communication excludes those with no access to the Internet.

5.7.4 Results

The visitor data for the Ribble Pilot Project Website has been logged since the site went live on 25 November 2003. The total number of 'hits' since the site went live in November is 5,958, an average of 48 hits per day.

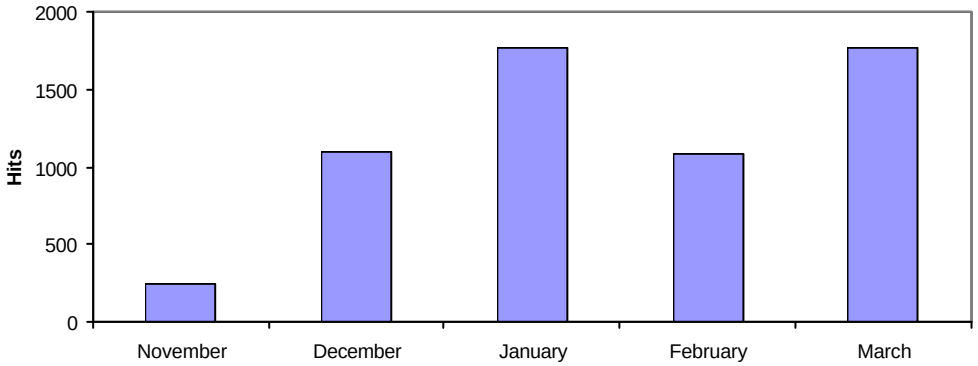


Figure 5.4 Histogram showing monthly hits on Ribble Pilot Project Website, 2004

Site visitors have increased since November, and this is expected to continue as the project progresses and the site address becomes more publicised (Figure 5.4).

The site's home page is the most visited page. Table 5.4 indicates the most popular pages on the site from January to March 2004.

Table 5.4 Number of 'hits' for each page between January and March 2004

Web page	January	February	March	Total
Home page	567	401	602	1,570
Latest Information	316	175	246	737
Newsletter	172	90	209	471
Project Aims	178	118	165	461
Basin Area	152	93	159	404
Minutes and Notes	143	76	131	350
Get Involved	113	62	150	325
Contact information	103	56	106	265

Increases in numbers of site visitors have coincided with the release of the electronic newsletter (see Section 5.8), which is located on the site and provides reference to the site's contents. The release of the first Ribble newsletter coincided with the highest recorded hits for the North West site. A similar peak was also recorded with the release of the second newsletter, demonstrating the value of using email notification for project updates. There has also been an increase in "Ribble" searches on the site. During the last 2 weeks in March 2004 the top searches on the site were related to the project, including the top searchable phrase (Ribble WFD). In January, "Water Framework Directive" was the sixth most popular search on the site, by mid March it became the top search phrase.

Tracking of "domains" of visitors, such as .uk or .es, gives an idea of where site visitors. Indications have shown visitors from across Europe (e.g. Spain, Netherlands, France) as well as further afield (USA, Thailand), demonstrating the value of the web breaking geographical barriers.

Current limitations to the site include the small number of sites that link to the Ribble Website. Additional links to the site would no doubt increase the number of visitors to the site.

Lessons learned: Website

The internet formed a primary route for information provision for the Ribble Pilot Project, the key lessons learned included:

- The Internet has formed a primary route for information provision for the Ribble Pilot Project.
- The Internet should not be the sole source of information provision and communication.
- The Internet has a low cost and resource requirement for its use as an information provision tool.
- The Internet provides the most effective and fluid form of information provision, spanning both geographic and political boundaries.
- The potential audience is great and has no geographic barriers, although the target group is unverifiable.
- Information and data can be uploaded and downloaded quickly and efficiently;
- The media and nature of the information can be diverse, including maps, GIS, documents etc.
- It provides multiple modes of communication.
- It can be used to demonstrate the requirements of Article 14, not only information provision.

- If used alone for information provision the internet could increase social inequalities, as UK access to the internet is only 57% (September 2002), and is limited by computer infrastructure.
- Information must be updated regularly, to ensure that new material will stimulate communication through email notification (e.g. through using a newsletter to provide a regular need to access the website).
- The Internet can be used to raise awareness throughout the process, in particular during phases of minimal consultation or active involvement.
- It enables audiences not to be limited to those who can attend meetings.
- There is a need for web-links demonstrating co-ownership between organisations and co-learning between different sectors and stakeholders.

5.8 Electronic newsletter

To support the communications of the project an electronic newsletter was developed. This was directed at Agency staff and those people more deeply involved in the project. The newsletter is produced once every 2 months and is posted on the project Website (see Appendix 13). Distribution of the newsletter is through an electronic mailing list of approximately 200 external stakeholders plus several hundred Agency staff.

The newsletter indicates the most significant issues and progress and is an efficient route of communication. The use of the internet ensures this method is cost effective and can reach a wide range of stakeholders.

Lessons learned: Electronic newsletter

- An electronic newsletter is a fast and efficient communication mechanism to keep stakeholders informed.
- It provides a communication tool at regular milestones and in bite-size pieces to ensure main issues are communicated in simple language (plain english).
- Email notification ensures that stakeholders are directed to the Website regularly, which breeds familiarity with the Ribble Pilot Project's Website.
- There is a need to ensure that the newsletter is also published as hard copy to reduce the potential for social inequality of communication.

5.9 Perceptions survey

While one of the testing assumptions was that we were not going to attempt to speak to individual members of the public in the basin, it was felt valuable to undertake a survey of a sample of residents to better understand their:

- views on the environment and the importance of water protection and management;
- knowledge and use of their local water environment;
- knowledge and understanding of the Environment Agency and its planning;
- knowledge of the WFD and how they find out about environmental issues;
- their views on how they would like to be involved with planning in the future.

In order to access people's views, knowledge, understanding, perceptions and opinions a market research company (QCL) was commissioned to poll a small cross-section of 1,001 householders living in the Ribble basin. The research was carried out by means of a telephone survey using randomly generated telephone numbers to ensure that interviews were carried out with a representative group of respondents throughout the area. This selection method ensured that all households with a telephone had an equal chance of being asked to contribute. Subsequent

comparison of the socio-economic data collected from respondents confirmed that the sample closely represented the profile of the area as a whole.

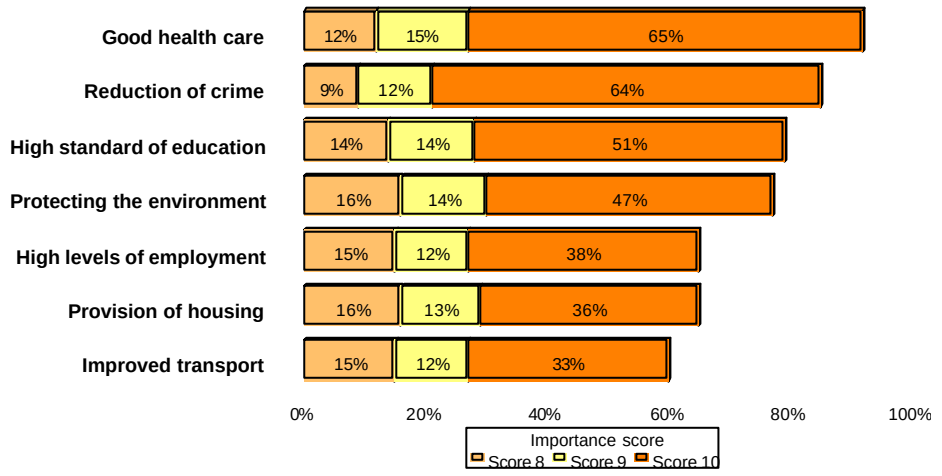
During March 2004, trained interviewers carried out a total of 1,001 telephone interviews with the chief wage earner or their partner within each household. Each interview lasted approximately 20 minutes, and consisted of the interviewer posing a series of standard questions. A copy of the questionnaire and the full report of the findings is included in Appendix 14.

5.9.1 Importance of the environment

Respondents were asked to consider the importance of environmental protection alongside other important social and economic issues. Protecting the environment was ranked fourth, behind health care, reduction in crime and a good education (see Figure 5.5). This said, 47% of respondents scored protection of the environment as 10 (highest) on a scale of 1 to 10. This maximum score proved not to be biased towards any particular location within the basin or socio-economic group(s).

Respondents were then asked which individual environmental issues they felt were most important. For this, they were given a list and asked to rank each on a 1 to 10 scale, where 10 was the highest. Maintaining water quality was the highest priority issue, with 90% of householders scoring it 8 or more out of 10. Three more issues (ensuring clean air, keeping the area free of litter and dealing with waste) were scored 8 to 10 by more than 80% of respondents.

Q. Thinking about living in your area; please tell me how important each of the following issues are to you personally, on a scale of 1 to 10 where 10 is very important and 1 is "of no importance"



Base: All Respondents (1001)

Figure 5.5 Histogram showing the importance of the environment ranked alongside other issues

5.9.2 Water, its importance and use

A series of questions then focused householders onto water management, to find out more about why water was important to them. Respondents were asked to spontaneously list up to four reasons why water was important to them personally. Two principal reasons were given: personal hygiene and for drinking. Both these were mentioned by over 70% of respondents. Overall, water for personal hygiene was mentioned most frequently but water for drinking was mentioned first the greatest number of times (47%).

When provided with a list of issues (around cleanliness and ecological value) and asked their perceptions of the magnitude of any problems associated with their management in the local area, overwhelmingly respondents felt that most issues were small in nature. Results are shown in Figure 5.6. There were only three water-related issues that were

considered to be a major problem by 20% or more of respondents. These were:

- rubbish in waterways
- pollution of the sea
- cleanliness of beaches
-

Water also plays a significant part in the leisure activities of those in the area, with a large proportion visiting seaside towns or beaches, walking by rivers, canals or lakes, or visiting nearby waterside beauty spots. Among the three most popular activities, walking beside waterways was the most often undertaken, with 71% doing so at least monthly. Between 40 and 50% visit waterside beauty spots or the seaside with a similar frequency

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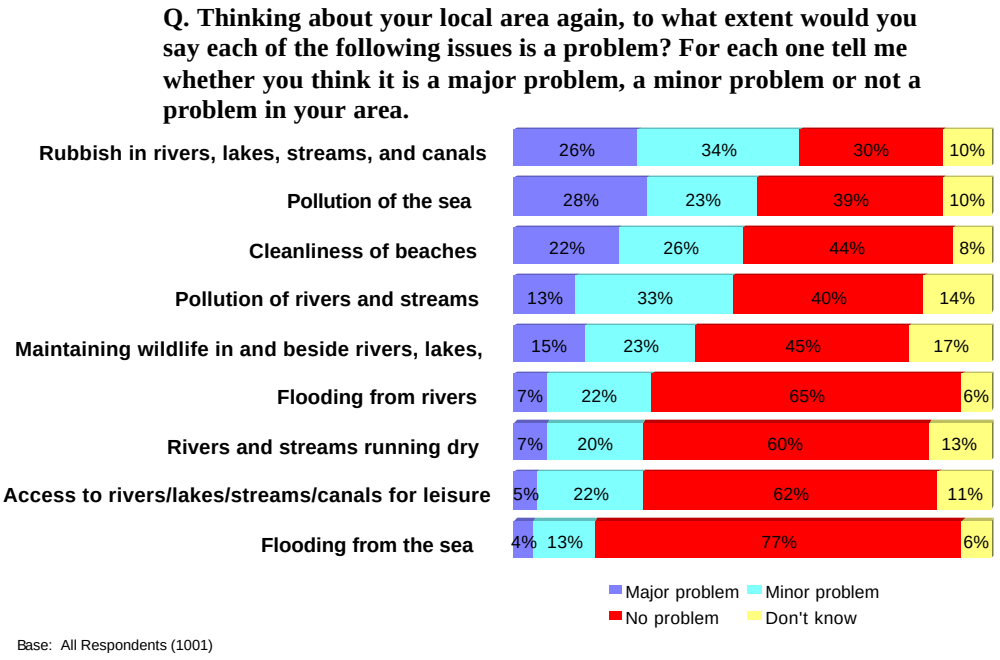


Figure 5.6 Histogram showing perceptions of water-related environmental issues

Respondents were asked to spontaneously name any waterways, waterside beauty spots or seaside resorts in the North West Region. A total of 225 different answers were provided with only 14 mentioned by at least 5%. Three locations were mentioned by at least 40% of respondents:

Blackpool	73%
Southport	50%
River Ribble/Ribble Valley	40%

When prompted with the names of some popular rivers, canals and waterside places within the area awareness increases dramatically. When prompted, 95% of those surveyed had heard of the River Ribble. Awareness was also observed to be high for a significant number of other rivers and waterside places. For example, around 65% are aware of the rivers Darwen and Calder and Rivington Reservoirs.

5.9.3 Environmental awareness and the work of the Environment Agency

When asked to name organisations they considered were concerned with the environment in the local area less than half (43%) were able to do so. The most often mentioned were the local council, followed by the Environment Agency. United Utilities, often in the guise of North West Water, was mentioned by 6%. The spontaneous level of awareness of the Environment Agency varies across different socio-economic groups (from 3 to 13% with an average of 9%). A further

64% were aware of the Agency when prompted with the name, bringing total awareness up to 73%.

Among those aware of the Agency 5% claim to know a lot about them with a further 34% knowing a little. Just over a fifth of those who are aware claim to know nothing about the Agency.

In terms of water use and management nearly half had not seen or heard anything about the topic in the media. The two major sources of information for those who were aware of seeing information were local newspapers and regional television, being remembered by 36 and 33% respectively. As yet the internet has not made an impact as a source of information in this area, being mentioned by only 2%.

Nearly 90% were able to mention at least one aspect of the environment that they would expect the Environment Agency to be involved with. The most often mentioned aspect was “cleanliness of waterways” (30%), followed by “pollution” in general (27%). The next most often mentioned was “the countryside”, at a considerably lower level (16%).

The names of a number of plans/strategies prepared by the Environment Agency were read out and some 30% had heard of at least one of them. In three cases more than 10% were aware of them with a further two being recognised by 9%. Awareness of these plans is highest among men, those of AB social grade and those aged 35 to 74. The great majority of those aware of the “Water Level Management Plans” claimed to have read some or all of it (12% heard of 10% read). In the case of other plans a much lower proportion has actually read any of them, typically between a quarter and a third.

The most important source of initial awareness of these plans derives from newspapers, accounting for 28% of all responses. Television accounted for 19% with a range of other sources each accounting for 8% or less of all mentions.

5.9.4 Knowledge of the Water Framework Directive

Overall, 3% (35 respondents) claimed to have heard of the WFD, with awareness highest among men (6%), AB social group (7%) and city dwellers (7%). This group had become aware of the WFD from a variety of sources, the most important of which was “local newspapers” (mentioned by 8 respondents).

5.9.5 The involvement of the public

Finally, householders were asked a series of questions relating to past and future involvement in planning initiatives.

Firstly, they were asked whether they had responded to Agency consultations in the past. Only 1% of the overall sample (11 people) had responded to one or more of the environment plans or been involved in the consultation process. Among the 11 people who had responded, half had done so as part of their work and half as part of personal voluntary action. These 11 people had on average done so in three different ways. The majority had attended meetings or discussion groups.

Secondly, householders were asked how they would like to be involved in the future. A total of 14% said they would like to find out more or become involved in planning work needed to improve rivers, lakes, coasts and the sea. The groups most likely to want to become involved are:

- aged under 35
- AB social grade
- city dwellers
- existing supporter/member of environmental, wildlife or conservation organisation

Preferences for how to be involved varied among this group. Most would like to be involved by reading about the topic, while around half would like to be involved in a number of other ways, each of which would involve positive actions on their part. To give an overall measure of interest, those respondents were asked to approximate the time they might be willing to contribute to this work. Results are shown in Figure 5.7.

Q. About how much time do you think you might be willing to spend on your involvement with these aspects of the environment either on a regular basis or as one off event?

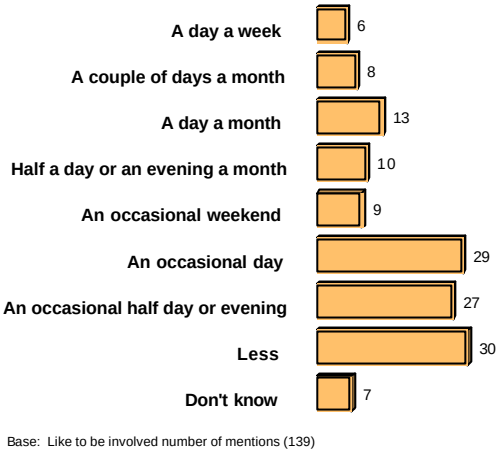


Figure 5.7 Histogram showing time commitment offered by those willing to get more involved in planning (number of respondents shown)

This indicates that a small group would be willing to commit a significant amount of time. However, less than 4% of all respondents would be willing to spend more than an occasional day or evening following up their interest.

Lessons learned: meetings in person
• It is a quick and easy way of canvassing opinion, providing measurable results. • The communication is largely one way and cannot be considered “involvement”. • The survey has yielded some very important messages that can be woven into future management of the project, especially communication planning.
These important messages include: • there is a high level of awareness of the basin, and 95% of people living in the area have heard of the River Ribble; • environmental protection is a high priority for most people and within this water protection and management is their greatest concern; • people living in the Ribble basin do not believe there are many major issues with water protection and management.

6.0 Proposed planning process for the Ribble Prototype River Basin Plan

6.1 Background

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) introduces an integrated and co-ordinated approach to, and represents an important step forward for, water management in Europe. It rationalises and updates existing water legislation by setting common EU wide objectives for water protection and management.

It's key objectives, as set out in Article 1 are to:

- prevent further deterioration and protect and enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands;
- promote sustainable water consumption;
- contribute to mitigating the effects of floods and droughts.

The aim of the Directive is to take a holistic approach to water management, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, as water flows through a catchment from lakes, rivers and groundwaters towards estuaries and the sea.

The Directive takes a planned approach to delivering objectives and requires this to be set out in River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), one plan produced for each River Basin District. By 2009, along with the rest of Europe, a North West River Basin District Management Plan will need to be produced (approximately equivalent to the Government Office boundary for North West England). As the Competent Authority for the Directive, the Agency is responsible for co-ordinating the production of RBMPs in England and Wales.

In order to develop and disseminate best practice for the implementation of the whole Directive the Agency has set up a national programme of work. This includes a specific project dealing with planning and public participation. The Ribble Pilot Project was set up as part of this programme, to develop and test methods for the implementation of the Directive and offer local experience to assist in development of national and European best practice and guidance.

The main output for the Ribble Pilot Project will be a "prototype River Basin Management Plan for the Ribble in 2007, as a contribution to the North West District's plan."

This section sets out the proposed process for development of the Ribble basin plan, including proposals for stakeholder engagement. It represents the views of both Agency planners and key external partners in the Ribble Basin, having been drawn together following considerable stakeholder engagement. It is offered as the proposed planning process for the production of the Ribble prototype plan, to guide the Stakeholder Forum on how it will be engaged during the preparation of the prototype plan and as our local contribution to the development of national best practice.

6.2 River Basin Planning and Public Participation – Directive requirements

River Basin Management Plans are the main mechanism of reporting and recording the Directive's environmental objectives within a River Basin District. The requirement for planning is set out in Article 13 of the Directive and detailed in Annex VII, where the content of River Basin Management Plan is set out, including:

- The characteristics of the River Basin District;
- Environmental monitoring data;
- Details of the impacts of human activity (e.g. point / diffuse pollution, abstractions, flood defence works);
- An analysis of the economic usage of water;

- A strategic plan for the achievement of "good status" – the Programme of Measures.

The main elements of the planning cycle, along with key dates for deliverables, are shown in Figure 6.1, drawn from Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) guidance on the planning process (an abstract of the most important points is included in Appendix 12).

The process follows the familiar "plan, do, check, correct" cycle and should not be a surprise to planners in the UK. The Agency (or its predecessors) have applied this process to river basin planning for over 20 years. During this time a number of different types of water management plans have been, and continue to be, developed. One main difference between RBMPs and many existing plans is that that RBMPs (and the programme of measures within them) will be statutory. In implementing the WFD, the relationship between existing water management plans and the RBMPs required by the Directive will need careful analysis to prevent duplication and to preserve elements of existing plans which are not required by the Directive. This is being undertaken ahead of the production of guidance on how key Agency plans can be more effectively integrated. In the meantime, closer but still informal working between Agency water planners is proposed in the Ribble process in readiness of further guidance.

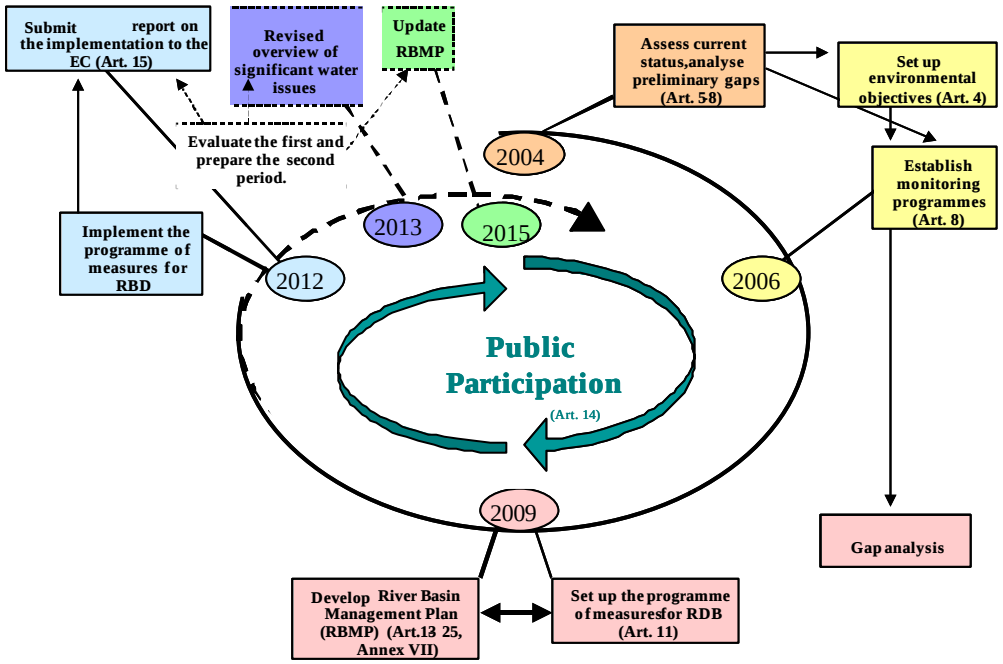


Figure 6.1. A schematic of the process and key dates for River Basin Planning.

The requirements for public participation are an integral component of implementing the Directive (as shown in Figure 6.1) and are set out in Article 14. These are:

- Public access to background information;
- Formal consultation on three stages of river basin planning;
- Encouragement of active involvement.

The provision of background information and the management of consultations at three key stages will be straightforward. The "encouragement" of active involvement of all interested parties is exercising more attention. This has been subject of considerable effort and testing, not least on the Ribble.

The successful implementation of the Directive relies on effective public participation to bring together key partners, develop understanding of ecological objectives, find innovative ways of solving complex "puzzles" and gain buy-in from a wide public to support delivery.

To meet these objectives, the Agency is seeking to develop a flexible approach

with structures that are not institutionalised but can form and dissolve as necessary, providing opportunities for engagement
A strategic approach to engagement will be needed, ensuring clear linkage between decisions taken at the local, river basin, national and European levels.

This section sets out the key stages at which public participation will be crucial to the development of the prototype plan.

6.3 River Basin Planning on the Ribble - guiding principles for planning and participation

A series of four expert meetings were held, between December 2003 and March 2004 to establish a series of guiding principles for River Basin Planning on the Ribble. These events included:

- key representatives of the Ribble Stakeholder Forum;
- local Agency officers managing Agency plan (including; Catchment Abstraction Management Plans, Fisheries/Salmon Action Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans);
- representatives of key external partners also involved in activities closely related to river planning (including Local Authorities, Regional Assembly, English Nature).

The aim of these events was to explore and recommend processes and products to deliver the requirements for River Basin Planning. Results of all this work, presented using "why, when, what, who and how" prompts, set out the following "guiding principles" the Agency proposes that focus on the decisions, issues and areas where engagement is most needed.

to apply during preparation of the prototype River Basin Plan for the Ribble.

Why are we undertaking the work?

To improve the environment by delivering the basin contribution to the North West River Basin Management Plan, pursuant to the Water Framework Directive. The "prototype River Basin Management Plan for the Ribble" will be the major output of the Ribble Pilot Project.

When will we be doing this work?

Member States are required to prepare River Basin Management Plans by 2009 (see Figure 6.1 and Appendix 12 for greater detail). The Ribble Pilot Project is due to complete and deliver its plan by mid 2007, running a little ahead of the official timetable to facilitate testing.

What will a Basin Plan look like?

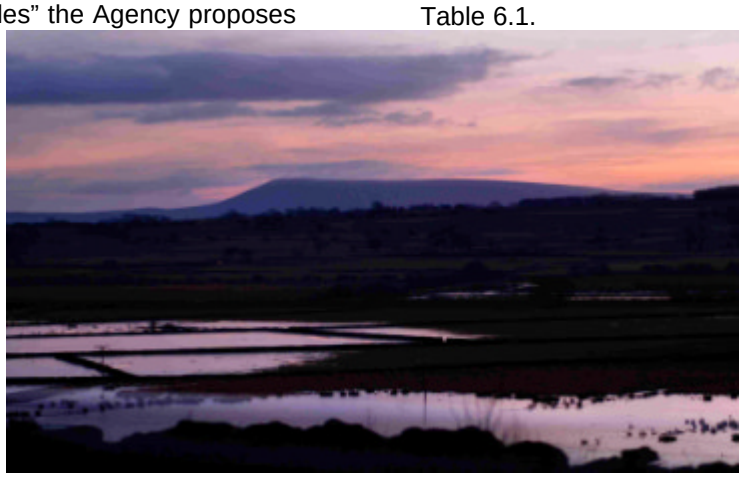
Considerable effort was expended into what a Basin level output would look like. Three suggested approaches were explored. These were:

1. Detailed basin operational plans with minimal District Plan comprising a simple reporting tool;

2. Detailed District Plan with local delivery without a local plan;

3. Strategic District Plan guiding and supporting development of detailed Basin Plans.

The positives and negatives associated with the three broad options were considered and results are summarised in Table 6.1.



Flooding of agricultural land in Ribble Valley

Table 6.1. A review of the positives and negatives of three planning approaches

1 Detailed basin operational plans with minimal District Plan comprising a simple reporting tool		2. Detailed District Plan with local delivery without a local plan		3. Strategic District Plan guiding and supporting development of detailed Basin Plans	
+	-	+	-	+	-
Strong local links	Risk of missing directive requirements as "top down" co-ordination is reduced	Cheaper to prepare	Lots of communication needed to "sell" the plan	Strong local links	Risk of confusing boundaries
Encourages small/local stakeholders in participation and delivery	Risk of missing linkage to important regional issues (eg Regional Spatial Strategy)	National consistency easier to ensure with smaller number of plans	More difficult to establish local link/involvement	Can match policies in the Programmes of Measures to right scale (local and regional plans/ structures)	Possible conflicts between objectives
Helps ensure local delivery			Danger of not getting local delivery	Encourages small/local stakeholders in participation and delivery	
Easily captures existing Agency plans			More cumbersome, quickly out of date	Helps ensure local delivery	
Match's scale of majority of existing plans				Easily captures existing Agency plans	
				Match's scale of majority of existing plans	

This analysis suggested that option 3, a Strategic District Plan guiding and supporting development of detailed Basin Plans, delivered the greatest number of benefits. This option was further developed.

Under this option, the Basin Plan will be the major building block of a District Plan with 80 – 90% of the total planning effort expended at the Basin or sub-basin levels. This builds on the fact that almost all of local Agency water planning is currently managed at the basin or sub-basin level.

The District "statutory" Plans will contain appropriate strategic WFD Objectives to cover issues with wider than single basin importance and steer the production of basin level planning. District plans will comprise a summary of constituent Basin Plans. It will include links to Agency objectives and would be used for influencing regional bodies (eg Regional Assemblies) and reporting to Defra and the European Commission.

In addition to preparing District Plans, planners at the regional scale also have a role to help identify the technical coverage of individual Basin Plans, to ensure local planning delivers necessary waterbody specific objectives.

A Basin Plan will contain the major requirements of a District Plan (as set out in Annex VII of the Directive) and would be an operational tool, identifying and locating actions in a Programme of Measures. It will contain all relevant statutory actions (work required for the delivery of the Directive, including licensing, regulation, enforcing, monitoring). In addition, it should contain information on aspirational work (including supplementary actions and those actions desired by local

stakeholders in support of protecting and improving the water environment).

Who will be involved in preparing and quality-assuring the Basin Plan?

Two distinct groups were identified at the workshops; those who will be responsible for writing and editing the plan and preparing the options, and those who will comment on and assure the quality of the product.

Writing and editing will be undertaken by a small Basin Planning Team, comprising the Agency officers responsible for local water resources, flood risk and fisheries planning (all these identified as having significant technical overlap with River Basin Planning). The production of the River Basin Plan will be co-ordinated by a lead WFD planner with overall responsibility for preparing the Plan.

Quality assurance will comprise a much wider group, with constituents determined by and covering all the issues addressed within the plan, most importantly, those that can affect the delivery of the actions. To help determine the preferred ways of including partners in quality assurance on the Ribble, four options for engagement were considered.

Option 1: Existing Agency structures and processes

This option provides for a partnership at the district level between agencies and institutions with statutory responsibilities for the main measures to be included in River Basin Management Plans. The partnership would take evidence and also facilitate meetings between stakeholders to promote collective approaches to resolve shared problems. This provides benefits in terms of collective working and catchment consciousness, but is not seen as transparent. I its inclusiveness and effectiveness in taking account of stakeholder perspectives, and contribution to social capital would depend on the Basin Facilitation Team and its relationships with the Liaison Panel and with stakeholders.

Option 2: Administrative organisations

Options 2 and 3 propose having a Sub-committee at the district level, which is part of the Agency's existing regional advisory committee structure with members drawn from the three existing committees (possibly from more than one region where districts cross regional boundaries). The membership of the Sub-committee, like that of Agency advisory committees, would include members from different sectors (e.g. industry, non governmental organisations, local authorities, etc) and would have an active role both in channelling information to other stakeholders and in feeding back their input to the Agency's river basin planning process. Option 2 has Stakeholder Forums at River Basin level, (as established in the Ribble Pilot Project) providing an opportunity for a wider group of stakeholders to meet, share information and input to river basin planning. The Forum would provide transparency, promote collective action and enhance networks and trust.

Option 3: Stakeholder Forum

In Option 3 the emphasis would be on working with existing stakeholder networks. This is likely to strengthen these networks and enhance their capacity for action; where networks do not exist or are in conflict, there is a risk that not all stakeholder interests will be included or taken into consideration.

Option 4: Stakeholder Working Group

This option has a similar structure to Option 1, with a small group of experts at the district level who take evidence from stakeholders at all levels. Because the expert group is independent it is seen as more transparent and potentially inclusive than option 1. However, unless it were given some powers or significant resources, it is unlikely to be effective in promoting collective action or building social capital, and it is uncertain to what extent stakeholder views would be taken into account in decisions.

Table 6.2 provides further detail on the four different options for public participation.

The workshop concluded that option 2 offered the greatest value for the Ribble and built on the success of the basin level forum. Given the preferred option, including a planning capability at the District level, the Ribble Pilot Project will be working under the assumption that some sort of District Planning Team will be created.

Table 6.2. Possible options for public participation in the WFD

OPTION/LEVEL	OPTION 1	OPTION 2	OPTION 3	OPTION 4
RIVER BASIN DISTRICT	**Regional Liaison Panel:** 5-7 representatives of institutions with statutory responsibility for implementing WFD measures (Environment Agency, Regional Assembly, English Nature, County Council, etc)	**EA Regional Committees Joint Water Sub-Committee**: 9 – 12 members selected from Agency regional committees to represent range of stakeholder interests.	**EA Regional Committees Joint Water Sub-Committee**: 9 – 12 members selected from Agency 3 regional committees to represent range of stakeholder interests.	Independent Commission of "the great and the good": 5 – 7 appointed members meeting to provide input to three river basin planning tasks: definition of river basin planning work programme & timetable; identification of key issues; development of draft RBMP
Role:	Collate input from river basin level Receive and consider feedback from river basin district-level stakeholders Shared decision-making on high level issues Contribute to draft RBMP Approve final RBMP Joint implementation	Agree issues to be covered in RBMP Co-ordination between main stakeholder interests Recommend draft and final RBMP to Agency Audit work of the Stakeholder Forum	Agree issues to be covered in RBMP Co-ordination between main stakeholder interests Recommend draft and final RBMP to Agency	Seek and receive information Analyse comments and representations provide input to three river basin planning tasks (see above)
RIVER BASIN	Joint Facilitation Team: Specialist resource made up of staff seconded from members of Regional Liaison Panel, serviced by the Agency	Stakeholder Forum made up of 30 – 60 s/h representatives meeting 2/3 times p.a.	Proactive engagement by Agency and support for stakeholder networks	Proactive engagement by Commission and support for stakeholder networks.
Role:	Information provision, consultation & active involvement Promote catchment consciousness Facilitate stakeholder input at river basin level Support facilitation at sub-basin/waterbody level	Input to main stages of river basin planning (identification of pressures & impacts, options identification etc Information channel (to/from river basin district & sub-basin)	Information provision & consultation Promote collective problem solving through existing networks. Collation of input from different networks	Information provision & consultation Promote collective problem solving through existing networks. Collation of input from different networks

How will the Basin Plan be developed?
The principles developed so far indicate the major outputs of planning as:

- Dates by which products will be required;
- The production of Basin and District Plans;
- The creation of District and Basin Planning Teams;
- The creation of a Basin Stakeholder Forum.

The processes these groups will use to work together in undertaking River Basin Planning was also discussed at the workshops. And a series of 3 major phases in planning were proposed.

Phase 1 – Identifying the issues to be addressed
The major output of this initial stage will be the determination of a list of issues to be addressed in the River Basin Plan. It is likely that there will be two major sources of issues to be addressed; potential statutory requirements to deliver the objectives of the Directive; and any additional objectives determined by local stakeholders (in the form of a stakeholder vision for the Basin). A process to sift out those that can be best delivered outside the Directive will be required and a proactive, Agency driven approach was considered important at this stage.

The membership of the Basin Forum will be reviewed towards the end of this phase and a seat offered to those that can effect most the outcome of each of the major impacts.

Phase 2 – Option definition and appraisal
This stage will involve more detailed work to generate options for a solution to each issue and consideration of the merits of each in determining a preferred option. This is considered the most important phase and will involve more stakeholders in more detailed work than for phase 1. Involvement and guidance from the national level will also be important at this stage.

Considering potential options will require more detailed technical work (for example, cost effectiveness analysis will be needed at this stage) and closer involvement of stakeholders who will have a direct impact on solving any problems. These stakeholders will include those offering a different perspective, perhaps members of pressure groups, as well as those who could help achieve goals. The involvement of technical specialists was seen as a key element of this stage.

At sub basin level and waterbody level it will be important to ensure that individual stakeholders will be consulted. Specific issues will need to drive the consultation at this level.

Phase 3 – Preparation of the River Basin Management Plans and Programme of Measures
This represents the plan production phase, where all outputs will be drawn together into the final product. The Stakeholder Forum will be used as primary process of engagement. It will recommend (or otherwise) to the Agency the inclusion of the proposals in the draft District Plan.

At all phases the ways of engagement should ensure:

- Directive requirements met;
- Existing partnerships and groups are used as much as possible;
- A wide circulation of information is maintained to ensure all issues and views are captured;
- There is an effective, two way, flow of information and opinions.

6.4 Summary of planning process and way forward

The guiding principles developed in this paper are presented in summary form in Table 6.3.

This proposal will be reviewed and submitted to Agency River Basin Planning Project for consideration in development of national best practice. The process will then be reviewed in the light of this work, probably in early 2005.

Table 6.3. Summarising the outputs and processes for planning and participation in the production of the Ribble River Basin Plan (Stakeholder Forum involvement shown in red)

OUTPUTS	PROCESSES
Phase 1 – Identifying the issues to be addressed **Ribble = mid 2004 – mid 2005**	
1. A District Planning Team 2. A Basin Stakeholder Forum 3. A Basin Planning Team 4. A Basin level Issue Log – created by amalgamating local (bottom-up) and Directive driven (top-down) issues from the Vision and the River Basin Characterisation Report respectively. Each Issue will have the following information: • Description of the Issue (including extent in the basin) • Desired outcome/status objectives (quality measure) • Policy/regulatory framework for management • Issue owner (may or may not be Agency) • Monitoring information and requirements to support management	1. A District Planning Team (managed by the Agency's Regional Strategic Unit) is established. It reviews the River Basin Characterisation Report and determines those applicable to the Basin. 2. The Basin Stakeholder Forum creates a Vision (locally derived list of Basin issues) they would like to see addressed. 3. A Basin Planning Team is established (comprising local Agency planners). It receives the District team's outputs and combines it with the Forum's output and constructs the Issue Log. 4. The Basin Planning Team filters the Log to remove those that can/should be achieved outside the Water Framework Directive. 5. The Basin Team constructs a log for each Issue and submits this to the Forum for discussion. 6. Monitoring networks are constructed to support definition of Issues, led by the Agency. 7. Forum membership is reviewed to include any/all "significant" (Basin wide) Issue Owners (the Key Stakeholders). 8. The Basin Team, together with the Forum promotes the issues to encourage active involvement for phase 2 of planning.
Phase 2 – Option definition and appraisal **Ribble = mid 2005 – mid 2006**	
1. For each Issue, the Log is extended and a range of options are presented outlining societal, economic and environmental costs and benefits for each and the preferred option. 2. Consultation report on the issues to be addressed and the planning process – to meet Directive requirements.	1. Issue owners co-ordinate collection of detailed and likely technical work to support the derivation and appraisal of options. Allied to this proactive programmes of "issue driven" local engagement is started, with those that can affect the outcome of proposed work. 2. The Forum meets to discuss and comment on official consultation document, comprising the Issue Log and Planning Process (modified to fit Agency National Guidance as required). 3. The Forum meets regularly to review progress with Issue management and support derivation of preferred options (as required).
Phase 3 – Preparation of the River Basin Management Plans and Programme of Measures **Ribble Plan mid 2006 – mid 2007**	
1. Basin Plan and Programme of Measures. 2. District Plan and Programme of Measures	1. Basin Planning Teams bring the Issue Logs together into a Basin Management Plan and the proposed actions into a Basin Programme of Measures. 2. This is sent out to the Forum for final quality review. 3. The Basin Planning Team incorporates comments and sends plan on to District Planning Team. 4. The District Planning Team draws together the Basin outputs into the District's River Basin Management Plan and provide the necessary report for formal consultation

7. Independent Evaluation and Lessons Learned

7.1 Introduction and Approach

This section presents a summary of the independent evaluation of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) testing by the Ribble Pilot Project, prepared by WRc. The Ribble Pilot Project became a case study for the European HarmoniCOP project and UK representatives, Yvonne Rees and colleague Miles Davis, provided independent monitoring of the success of the work for both HarmoniCOP and the Ribble Pilot Project.

The Agency has contributed to its production through answering evaluation questionnaires, but has not written this section. Pete Fox has edited the full report (reproduced in Appendix 15) to provide this summary. Hence, the views and opinions expressed in this section can be considered those of the WRc authors.

The evaluation took place during the period November 2003 to April 2004. The aim was to evaluate the success of the whole process and all activities undertaken by the Agency to encourage public participation, as outlined in section 5. In addition, event specific evaluation was undertaken for the planning and vision building events and for the last Stakeholder Forum meeting.

The evaluation methods used were:

1. Interviews with stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum, at the beginning and end of this stage of the process, to obtain views about the way in which the Agency lead the process, relationships developed and the extent to which objectives were achieved;
2. Real time observation carried out during planning and vision building events and the April 2004 Stakeholder Forum meeting to explore the success of these approaches in engaging the public;
3. Event specific questionnaires circulated at planning and vision building events;
4. Questionnaires completed by the Testing Group to obtain views on the success of the process from a range of external organisations working alongside the Agency in developing the process;
5. A comparison of the process adopted with the guidance given in the Common Implementation Strategy document.

Table 7.1 summarises the methods used and their purpose.

Helwith Bridge, River Ribble

Table 7.1 Elements of the Evaluation and Reporting Process used in the Ribble pilot

When	What	Why	Who with	How
Pre-process Jan/Feb 2004	Set out **objectives** for public participation	To be clear about what we are trying to achieve from the start	In discussion between WRc, and the Agency at national and local levels	Email and telephone exchanges
	Set out **success measures** linked to objectives	To measure progress	Identified from the Common Implementation Strategy	Internal discussion
	Undertake **pre-process survey** of key stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum either by interview or questionnaire	As a benchmark for measuring progress, to identify public participation issues that may need addressing by special measures	15 stakeholders selected from the Stakeholder Forum to reflect sectoral interests + 5 key policy implementers from Defra and the Agency	Face-to-face interviews based on questionnaire (some by telephone for policy implementers)
During Feb/Mar 2004	Seek **event-specific** feedback through **questionnaires** circulated at vision building and planning events	To identify any mid-process refocusing needed and introduce changes where appropriate	All stakeholders attending 7 local and regional events (88 circulated 72 returned)	Paper questionnaire for completion on the day
	Observation during vision building and planning events to identify approaches which work and those which do not	To identify any mid-process refocusing needed and introduce changes where appropriate	Independent evaluators from WRc, Mersey Basin Campaign and WWF at 7 local and regional events	Observation using a checklist of issues
Oct-Apr 2004	**Register of public participation activities**	To contribute to evaluation and also to report to the Commission	Agency staff recorded key information for the entire period of the pilot	Excel spreadsheets
After Apr 2004	Undertake **post-process survey** of key stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum by interview and/or questionnaire	To measure success against objectives	15 stakeholders who underwent the pre-process survey Testing Group	Telephone interviews based on questionnaire (email for Testing Group)
	Evaluate and feedback	To identify the most cost-effective measures, lessons to learn etc	WRc with feedback from Testing Group	Review of all elements listed above supported by stakeholder analysis

7.2 Evaluation

Objectives for the Ribble pilot as a whole are described earlier in the report. (section 1.4). Objectives specifically for public participation were not set at the start of the process but were developed as the project progressed by WRc in discussion with the Agency, nationally and locally. Success measures linked to each objective were then derived.

A summary of the objectives set for public participation in the Ribble Pilot Project is provided in Table 7.2. along with associated success measures and the elements of evaluation used to determine the degree to which objectives were met.

Table 7.2 Summary of objectives and success measures

Objective	By when	Success measure	Reporting tool used
To seek involvement of all major sectors, interests and geographic areas in the basin.	By start of process	Type and numbers of stakeholders reached by public participation activities Type and number of stakeholders involved in public participation activities	• Stakeholder analysis • Register of public participation activities • Observation • Event-specific questionnaires • Post-process questionnaires and interviews
To effectively communicate the process and role of stakeholders in that process so that stakeholders understand their role and what is expected of them	End of testing	Number of stakeholders reached with information about process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process	• Register of public participation activities • Event-specific questionnaires • Post-process interviews
To test a range of public participation methods so as to identify those which provide stakeholders and the Agency with effective participation at an acceptable cost to all parties.	End of testing	Number of stakeholders reached with information on process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process Feedback on lessons and suggestions for improvements	• Register of public participation activities • Event-specific questionnaires • Observation • Post-process interviews
To improve the capacity of the Agency and other stakeholders in the basin to make joint decisions on complex issues in the development of River Basin Management Plans	End of testing	No. of stakeholders thinking the process worthwhile No. of stakeholders believing contribution made a difference No. of stakeholders showing willingness to be involved in subsequent stages	• Observation • Event-specific questionnaires • Pre- and post-process interviews
To increase the desire of stakeholder to take action to implement River Basin Management Plans.	End of testing	No. of stakeholders showing willingness to take action to implement	• Observation • Event-specific questionnaires • Pre- and post-process interviews
To enhance the mutual understanding of the views and stances of stakeholders in the basin.	End of testing	Level of understanding of other's viewpoints Way in which conflicts are reported	• Observation • Pre- and post-process interviews

7.3 Costs of public participation

An attempt was made to estimate the costs of each of the activities and to determine their success and importance. From this analysis, some tentative conclusions were drawn, bearing in mind that:

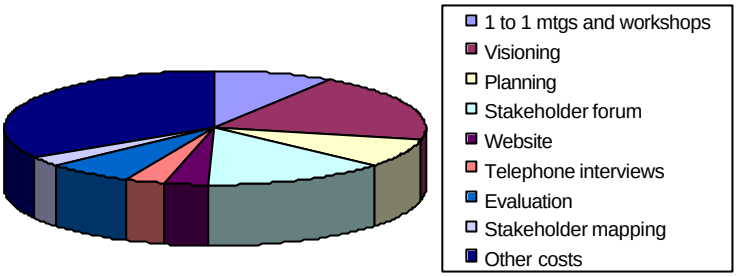
- No allowance for help-in-kind was made e.g. the Testing Group for any of these activities.
- No allowance was made for travel costs – as above.
- Costs to stakeholders involved in the activities were not included.
- There were big assumptions about the costs of the Agency staff involved.
- The degree of stakeholder involvement varied greatly depending on the methods used to involve them, for example the degree of involvement for a visit to a web site is very different from engaging someone in a workshop for a whole day.
- Costs were also estimated for the evaluation process.

7.3.1 Relative costs and importance of the different methods

- The web-site was the least costly method of engaging the public at an average cost of 90 pence (€1.26) per stakeholder visiting the site. Around 6000 visits to the site were made.
- The vision building events were seen to be the most effective way of engaging the public. Most events were organised specifically for the vision building process and cost from £48-96 (€67-134) per stakeholder engaged.
- The vision building event which "piggy-backed" the local event in Burnley was much less expensive at £1.80 per stakeholder, but, the degree of involvement of stakeholders was low due to the absence of technical knowledge amongst the general public participating.
- The most expensive activity was the evaluation at £6-120 (€8.4-168) per stakeholder. Evaluation also scored lowest in terms of importance in engaging the public.
- The greatest proportion of costs to date is the other costs to the project section e.g. travel and in-kind contributions from the Testing Group. This demonstrates the difficulty in completing such a process over a large river basin such as the Ribble, i.e. holding events in one place means that travel from geographically disparate areas of the region and outside the region will have a significant impact on costs.
- The majority of the remaining costs to date are related to the vision building events and the Stakeholder Forum.
- The Stakeholder Forum will become more cost effective to the Agency as it is intended to use this for other processes e.g. Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS), Catchment Flood Management Plans (CFMPs)
- Use of the website, telephone interviews and stakeholder mapping represent the lowest proportion of costs.
- The stakeholder mapping was considered to represent the 3rd most important factor of the process. In terms of cost-benefit this would appear to have been efficient.
- Total costs of the Ribble Pilot Project public participation testing to date were approximately £150,000 (€210,000) which £20,876 (€292,26) was spent on Stakeholder Forum meetings, £28,794 (€ 40,312) on Vision building events, £12,090 (€16,926) on Planning events, £13,884 (€19,438) on 1 to 1 meetings and presentations, £10,000 (€14,000) on Evaluation and £9,840 (€1,378) on communication tools. Other costs including the Testing Group were just over £50,000 (€70,000). Costs are expected to be lower when the process is "rolled out" over the whole country as approaches will be rationalised.

The relative proportions of the cost to date are displayed in the pie chart (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 Piechart showing relative costs of public participation work undertaken during testing in the Ribble Pilot Project



7.4 Outcomes

7.4.1 Achievement of Objectives

The post-process questionnaire demonstrated that the overall process had been worthwhile and that all the objectives of the process had been in part, or mostly, achieved. Some stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum suggested that certain objectives had not been achieved at all e.g. to improve the capacity of the Agency and other stakeholders in the basin to make joint decisions on complex issues in the development of a Ribble Basin Management Plan (RBMP). Table 7.3 summarises feedback on the extent to which each of the objectives for public participation were achieved classifying success as either:

- Fully achieved
- Mostly achieved
- Achieved in part, or,
- Not achieved.

Grindlethorpe Bridge on River Ribble

Table 7.3 Summary of achievement

Objective	Success measure	Results
To seek involvement of all major sectors, interests and geographic areas in the basin.	Type and numbers of stakeholder reached by public participation activities Type and number of stakeholder involved in public participation activities	**Mostly achieved** • Stakeholder analysis showed 150 invited to workshops with 88 attending • Stakeholder Forum- on average 'mostly achieved' • High inclusivity • Missing sectors: business (despite considerable attempts to involve this sector) economics, under 30 year olds
To effectively communicate the process and role of stakeholders in that process so that stakeholders understand their role and what is expected of them	Number of stakeholders reached with information about process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process	**Mostly (but for limited number)** • 88 stakeholders attended initial workshops • >80% of attendees at events reported having a greater awareness of issues relating to the Ribble and RBMP • 1001 telephone interviews to understand wider views about the environment and extent of knowledge about the Agency and WFD. • 42 1:1 meetings • Over 6000 hits on web-site • Stakeholder Forum On average 'achieved in part '– 'mostly achieved'
To test a range of public participation methods so as to identify those which provide stakeholders and the Agency with effective participation at an acceptable cost to all parties.	Number of stakeholders reached with information on process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process Feedback on lessons and suggestions for improvements	**In part (limited approaches used to actually engage the public)** • 88 Stakeholders attended initial workshops • 1001 telephone interviews to understand wider views about the environment and extent of knowledge about the Agency and WFD. • 42 1:1 meetings • Over 6000 hits on web-site • Time limited range of methods to meetings, workshops, Stakeholder Forum, telephone survey and web • Stakeholder Forum - On average 'achieved in part' recognising time limits
To improve the capacity of the Agency and other stakeholders in the basin to make joint decisions on complex issues in the development of River Basin Management Plans	No. of stakeholders thinking the process worthwhile No. of stakeholders believing contribution made a difference No. of stakeholders showing willingness to be involved in subsequent stages	**In part** • 95% of stakeholders from events deemed worthwhile • <5% not being interested in attending future events. • Stakeholder Forum - On average 'achieved in part' – tendency to cherry pick stakeholders
To increase the desire of stakeholder to take action to implement River Basin Management Plans.	No. of stakeholders showing willingness to take action to implement	**Mostly (albeit for limited number and range of stakeholders)** • <5% not being interested in attending future events • Stakeholder Forum - On average 'mostly achieved'– good start to the process
To enhance the mutual understanding of the views and stances of stakeholders in the basin.	Level of understanding of others viewpoints Way in which conflicts are reported	**In part (only at the start of the process)** • Growing understanding reported in events • Growing understanding reported through process • Stakeholder Forum - On average 'achieved in part' – recognised this has just started

Notes: on Table 7.3
Stakeholder feedback: It was rare that stakeholders thought objectives were not achieved at all, even in the limited timeframe (one vote each in 2,3,4 and 6). Several stakeholders thought objective 1 was fully achieved. Isolated stakeholders thought 3, 4, 5 and 6 were fully achieved. Views from the Agency tended to be more positive than from other stakeholders. There was a concern among some stakeholders that the process changed throughout the course of events from public participation to public consultation in that, the Agency took an increasingly active role in the direction of and discussion within workshops.

7.4.2 Appraisal against the Common Implementation Strategy document

The process was appraised by considering the Context, Content and Process factors considered as 'Keys to Success' in the Common Implementation Strategy document.

Context

Context refers to the existing conditions or circumstances in which the approach to public participation is being developed. Common Implementation Strategy suggests that the strength of a good process is to recognise the context in which the participation is being developed. This includes the need for the competent body and other stakeholders to accept changes in the political commitment, attitudes towards the environment and organisation. The approach used in the Ribble has taken account of these criteria and not only compliments but develops previous approaches. There has been a recognition by the Agency of the importance of other stakeholders in RBMP and by the stakeholders in the changing political commitment of the Agency towards the environment and environmental planning. During the majority of the process, the Agency has been open-minded and flexible although some stakeholders considered that they became defensive regarding some issues. The Agency has recognised the need to demonstrate their commitment at an operational level but perhaps needs to demonstrate to stakeholders that there is commitment to the process at senior, regional and national levels. Provision of information to stakeholders has been made but this was highlighted as not being sufficient and that the majority of stakeholders wanted more information. Considering the Ribble Pilot Project against the context criteria demonstrates that it has established a good basis from which to develop a good process, using the lessons learned from the initial stage will develop the process in a positive way to achieve a widely accepted RBMP.

Process

Process refers to the ways in which the stakeholders participate. The quality of the process is dependent on trust and transparency. The process should encourage:

- Trust
- Openness
- Transparency
- Honesty
- Respect
- Inclusion
- Positiveness

As a result the process for public participation should be characterised by some or all of the following:

- Early involvement of people in setting the terms of reference
- Developing co-ownership of the process design
- Opportunities for learning between stakeholders
- Mutual respect
- Flexible and 'open' process
- Iterative and continuous evaluation
- Independent facilitation
- Ongoing

The Ribble Pilot Project has been characterised by all of these points, stakeholders were engaged at an early stage of the process to develop terms of reference. Feedback from stakeholders has identified an increase in co-ownership, learning and mutual respect. At the start of the process, some stakeholders were worried about the Agency commitment to the process and if their views would really be included or if the exercise was purely a bureaucratic "box-ticking" exercise. Stakeholders felt that the process has been open and this has resulted in increased mutual respect and trust. Throughout the process there has been independent facilitation and evaluation which has helped to build trust between stakeholders and the competent body. The process is ongoing and stakeholders have indicated a strong desire to remain involved. Considering these criteria, the Ribble Pilot Project has established a good quality process and this needs to be maintained throughout the remainder of the project.

Content

Many of the factors relating to the content are closely linked to the design of the process, i.e. getting the process properly focused helped the content to be right. The Common Implementation Strategy suggests that the following factors will be important at some stage of the process:

- Valuing diversity of knowledge
- Evidence, proof and uncertainty
- Reporting and communication

Valuing diversity of knowledge addresses the question of using expert / non-expert, technical / non-technical and political / non-political actors in RBMP. Feedback from the stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum indicated that non-expert, non-political and non-technical actors should be involved at every stage of river basin management planning. This will only be tested in the Ribble Pilot Project by studying the utilisation of these actors as the process of RBMP is run.

Evidence, proof and uncertainty considers the use of information from non-specialist actors. Some stakeholders may consider that only scientific information should be used in the process. It is suggested by the Common Implementation Strategy that all the information available should be used by the competent authority in the decision making process and that with a robust and transparent process, uncertainties can be discussed and decisions taken. In the Ribble Pilot Project, all the opinions expressed by the stakeholders contacted have been considered and included within the process, this inclusion of information will be further examined throughout the process.

The reporting and communicating of findings stage of the Ribble Pilot Project has only just been reached. As suggested in the Common Implementation Strategy non-technical summaries are going to be made available through the Agency website, at this stage it is uncertain whether more localised summaries will be produced so that local stakeholders can identify with specific situations.

Appraising the Ribble Pilot Project against the Common Implementation Strategy for implementing a successful public participation demonstrates that the process contains all the key elements for success and that the ongoing process needs to be carefully organised and managed to ensure a successful conclusion.

7.5 Lessons to be taken forward

Overall, the public participation employed in the Ribble Pilot Project was very successful. As a pilot project, designed to investigate and test methodology to improve, modify and analyse the process so that similar future processes are completed efficiently. The project has also identified many lessons to learn. These are summarised below:

Downham Village

7.5.1 Planning Time

The most important factor in this public participation process has been time, with the testing being completed with very restrictive deadlines meaning that considerable effort was needed to organise a limited number of events. Increased planning time, coupled with the "piggy-backing" of other events to raise awareness of workshops would have enabled:

- A more diverse range of stakeholders to be contacted and involved in each event.
- Attendees to schedule work around events to ensure continuity in participation from key organisations.
- Participation of schools, as they need to fit events in with tight school schedules. The Ribble Pilot Project intended to include a vision building event at a secondary school with children at General Certificate of Secondary Education level (age 14-16) in the Blackburn area. Despite showing interest in principle, schools were unable to schedule in such an event at short notice.

7.5.2 Inclusivity

The use of Stakeholder mapping to develop a diverse coverage of interests is key in effective participation. The response rate in this project, 30-40%, was thought to be good, but it indicates how

important it is to contact as many stakeholders as possible.

The Stakeholder Forum
The Forum developed for the Ribble was considered by those involved to be inclusive, but some difficulties/omissions were mentioned as follows:

- The Forum does not include bankside landowners.
- The Forum is dominated by professional middle-aged people, and it was suggested that a younger audience be engaged so that the vision is continued in future years especially from 2015 onwards.
- Initially it was difficult to get representation from education e.g. universities and colleges but these groups became engaged as the process developed.

The Stakeholder Forum provided an effective mechanism for building partnership and an important platform to build on during the remainder of the process**.**

Specific events
Main groups not well represented included industry and urban community groups. Despite considerable effort by the Agency to engage with industry, further discussion is required on how best to engage them in river basin planning. Urban community groups from ethnic minority backgrounds were a considerable omission given the social, economic and cultural diversity of the pilot area. Engagement with these groups may be difficult but could be attempted through community leaders and publishing the leaflets and information in languages other than English.

7.5.3 Website and Interactive Tools
The Website engaged more people than any other method. It had over 6000 visits. Also, the Website could be accessed through public information points in libraries and interactive tools which could be used in school classrooms without the need for facilitators. Interactive tools could also be used to engage business and industry who may not have the time or resources to attend workshops and meetings. For example, an online forum or even a video-conferencing approach could be used. However, information is needed through traditional routes as the website is less appropriate for other groups, for example those involved with agriculture pointed out that farmers will not “surf” the internet to find this information. Websites need to be ‘hot-linked’ to related sites. Some stakeholders stated that they found information on the site difficult to find and that a “hot-link” should be present on the Agency home page rather than going to regional site and then find the information.

7.5.4 Events
The regional vision building and planning events were more successful than local vision building events. Local events were less cost and time efficient , different approaches of engaging the general public at this level may be more appropriate, for example engagement in shopping centres or through the media. The use of facilitators during events enhanced the process and prevented discussions becoming dominated by individuals, or becoming question and answer sessions with Agency staff who were present.

Senior Agency representation is required to make a statement of commitment to the process. This would increase commitment from the other participants.
Representatives from the Agency should remove themselves from discussions, as far as is reasonably practical. On occasions, Agency representatives were seen by participants in group discussions to be leaders to whom opinions should be directed, this may reduce effective participation by marginalising others in the group.

It is very important to allocate the right amount of time for events. Too little time, can make participants feel that they are being ‘rail-roaded’ into decisions This was noticeable in the Ribble Basin workshop 2 where the programme was too ambitious for a half day event. Too much time however, may further deter participation by busy stakeholders particularly business / industry. A longer timescale may also have resulted in focus and impetus being lost and the development of a “talking shop” where issues, goals and aims were not decided, hampering the process. Increasing discussion may have disaffected stakeholders, some of whom have already voiced the opinion that if action was taken rather than being

discussed, there would not be a requirement for a participation process.

The “blank sheet” approach adopted in developing the Vision for the Ribble (i.e. stakeholders defined the issues, aims, process and goals without interference from statutory bodies) had both strengths and weaknesses. Time is required for participants to develop and explain ideas and goals, and further develop relationships between the actors. When groups were defined in workshops, the time allowed to discuss the selected topics was often shortened by the need to discuss the expected output. The time needed could be reduced by explaining, before the event, the type of outcome required. On the positive side, the blank sheet approach was seen to be important in increasing mutual confidence and trust, both amongst the stakeholders and towards the process.

7.5.5 Raising Interest to Participate

Marketing and advertising of the project is required to increase public enthusiasm and desire to be involved. In the pilot project, the Agency Website served this purpose effectively receiving over 6000 “hits”.

Stakeholders expected to see more coverage in local press and television. Many stakeholders reported seeing no local press or television coverage and others a single article in a local paper (Clitheroe Advertiser) giving general background and contact details for further information. Stakeholders commented that greater press coverage was needed to explain where the general public fit into the process and to increase interest in local vision building events leading to greater attendance of these events.

Early engagement of stakeholders is vital in building confidence in the process and as a result of this people were more willing to give time and remain involved in the process.

Timing of events is important. The timing of the events made it difficult for landowners and farmers to be involved due to lambing and other agricultural requirements. Future engagements should take account of the external time pressures on the stakeholders that are to be engaged.

8. Conclusions and way forward

8.1 Overall conclusions

Conclusions from early public participation and river basin planning in the Ribble Pilot Project are listed below.

- The experience of testing and developing public participation methods and tools for early river basin planning broadly supports many of the principles of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS).
- The Ribble Pilot Project has involved and received strong support from stakeholders to help design a shared public participation and planning strategy. This has helped stakeholders understand what the project will deliver.
- Engagement required resource commitments from the Environment Agency and other organisations. The Ribble Pilot Project Team secured early support for the project from some key stakeholders, and additional resources. For example, WWF, Strathclyde University, WRc and the Mersey Basin Campaign all offered valuable technical and/or financial support.
- Ten different techniques were tested, including meetings, workshops and presentations. It was evident that different approaches suited different audiences and different stages of planning. While meetings worked well for small numbers and when decisions were required, presentations were useful to communicate simple messages to a wider audience with diverse backgrounds. Workshops provided a more interactive focus and helped the participants learn more about the process; they also stimulated greater dialogue between the stakeholders involved. The Ribble Pilot Project Team witnessed willingness for groups of stakeholders to co-operate outside the forum.
- The Stakeholder Forum sat at the heart of the public participation in the Ribble Pilot Project and involved all major stakeholders in the basin. It proved cost-effective to bring these key stakeholders together to share views and to guide the Agency. They provided the Agency with some clear messages. For example, the need to run the project for real and not just as a virtual test.
- Other plans and related stakeholder engagement must not be overlooked. For example, the Ribble Fisheries Action Plan and the Douglas Catchment Abstraction Management Strategy (CAMS) are key documents that must be fed into the river basin planning process.
- Early engagement was important to set up the necessary structures for public participation and to establish terms of reference for the Forum. Before detailed planning begins and difficult decisions are faced sufficient time is required for building common understandings and ways of working. In particular, time is then available to communicate the basic principles of the Water Framework Directive, which are complicated.
- Future participation will be “issue driven”. The planning process and need to derive solutions to protection and improvement issues will determine the technique to apply and the people and organisations that will need to be involved.

These overall conclusions, drawn from the report presented, are supported by the independent assessment of the Ribble Pilot Project provided by WRc, and set out below.

1. The Ribble Pilot Project has represented a significant improvement within River Basin Management Planning (RBMP). The overall view of the stakeholders is that those involved have done well to achieve so much in such a short time frame. The project has clearly demonstrated that public participation is vital in planning and engaging the public at an early stage of the process and is important in gaining their confidence and trust to complete the project.
2. The outcomes from the participation have been very positive, the key

elements of the vision have been prepared and can be used in the next stage of the process. The stakeholders who have been involved in the Ribble Pilot Project are committed to the process and keen to continue to the next stage.

3. There have been some reservations about aspects of the process but it must be remembered that this was a pilot project to test methods of engagement in RBMP, not simply applying a finished product and that parts of the process will require refinement and improvement for future participation.
4. In general the stakeholders were confident in the process, the people managing the process and the outcomes of the events. However, lessons that must be learnt from this process to ensure continued and more effective participation from these stakeholders.
5. Dissemination of feedback from the Ribble Pilot Project to stakeholders is required to maintain their interest in the participation. This feedback should contain the conclusions from this part of the process as well as information on the next stage of the participation. There is a risk of losing new stakeholders if there is no regular and timely follow up.
6. More time should be allowed for discussions and meetings to allow relationships between stakeholders to further develop and a clearer final vision to be developed.
7. Financial resources permitting, there should be increased marketing and advertising of the Ribble Pilot Project to improve its image and increase accessibility. Although the Agency Website does provide a point of contact for information, this should not represent the sole contact route for the project and the use of more traditional methods should not be discounted.
8. The Agency Website represented a cost effective way of reaching a high number of stakeholders. However, the vision building events were perceived as most effective in terms of public participation. The “piggy-backing” of events represented another cost efficient means of engagement.
9. Raising expectations too high was an important concern voiced by some stakeholders and the Agency. Clear and effective management of the process can avoid this so that all stakeholders involved clearly understand the process, their role, and the limits of what the Directive can deliver
10. So far the process has achieved an increased motivation and desire within stakeholders to be more involved in the River Basin management planning process.
11. There is an increased acknowledgement within the Agency of the importance of active engagement, and importantly an increasing acknowledgement amongst many stakeholders that the Agency is changing its approach to environmental management.
12. Considering the CIS process criteria, the Ribble Pilot Project has established a good quality process and this needs to be maintained throughout the remainder of the project.
13. Against the CIS context criteria it has established a good basis from which to develop a good process, using the lessons learned from the initial stage will develop the process in a positive way to achieve a widely accepted River Basin Management Plan (RBMP).
14. Appraising the Ribble Pilot Project against the CIS guidance for implementing a successful public participation demonstrates that the process contains all the key elements for success and that ongoing work needs to be carefully organised and managed to ensure a successful conclusion.

The success of the Ribble Pilot Project will only be fully realised with the implementation of future planning stages and the completion of the final Ribble River Basin Management Plan. Some stakeholders were concerned that the Agency would “dumb down” the process by selecting easily achievable targets. These concerns for the future commitment of the Agency which, up to now, has been key in the project should be addressed at the earliest opportunity to ensure successful delivery.

8.2 Linkage to the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) guidance report

The report presents a review of tests of Common Implementation Strategy Guidance on public participation. Some outline conclusions of the value of this document to the experiences of river basin planning on the Ribble are provided, grouped in relation to the relevant Sections of the Strategy:

Section 2 – Introduction to public participation in River Basin Management

- Stakeholder analysis and mapping is an essential first step in developing public participation. The Ribble Pilot Project has carried out a detailed stakeholder mapping.
- The distinction between three types of involvement (co-knowing, co-thinking and co-producing) is useful in designing activities for different stakeholder groups and should be determined as part of stakeholder mapping.
- The workshops used a simplified "problem and cause" analysis: the detailed approach described in the Common Implementation Strategy was considered too time-consuming for this activity. However, it was recognised that if the analysis concentrates on problems at the expense of causes, the wrong solutions will often be identified.

Section 3 – Active involvement of all interested parties in the planning process of the Directive

- Early involvement of stakeholders in deciding how the process will be run was appreciated. However, many of those who have been involved at an early stage are those with an existing interest in the water environment; most members of the public were either not especially interested in participating or belonged to "hard-to-reach groups".
- The project has provided some initial indications of the level and nature 'all interested parties' outlined in Article 14. Fourteen percent of the general public expressed an interest for involvement. Interestingly the majority of these were existing members or supporters of organisations presented by current stakeholders (such as RSPB, WWF).

Section 5 – Access to information and background documents

Information is vital to public participation, is required both on the issues to be considered in river basin planning and the planning/decision making process itself.

Section 7– Developing a learning approach to public participation

The use of expert meetings, including the Testing Group, over a period of time was a practical example of a learning approach. The Testing Group shared the experience of developing the public participation process and was able to reflect on and take account of lessons from the past, in order to guide future initiatives.

Annex 1 – Tools

A number of different tools were used for public involvement in the Ribble (workshops, vision building, website, meetings, Stakeholder Forum, etc). The effectiveness of these tools is likely to vary depending on local social and cultural factors, the stakeholders involved and the stage in the process. A toolkit approach, as developed on the Ribble, facilitates flexibility in the use of different tools.

8.3 The way forward

The general success of early work suggests that there is little need to make radical changes to the approach and techniques that have been developed and applied. The techniques tested represent different "tools" that can be applied to different engagement situations, and provided experience in their use. However, modifications to the mix and emphasis in application should be expected as the Agency moves further into river basin planning. For example, the publication of the River Basin Characterisation Report (for Article 5 of the Directive) will require significant participation. The identification of waterbodies at risk of failure to meet Directive objectives will necessarily lead to more focused debate over local protection and improvement work. This will lead to the development of options for management. Hence, the next phase in planning will be used to determine the

techniques for participation and will include the following major work items:

- the communication of characterisation outputs and their quality review;
- development of monitoring programmes to support characterisation assessments;
- identification of those stakeholders who can help generate and appraise options for solutions.

Using these as the "drivers" for engagement, the following mixture of tested techniques is recommended.

Communication plan
The communication plan will need to be reviewed to ensure the inclusion of key messages pertinent to the forthcoming stages of planning. This will ensure that in all communications the Ribble Pilot Project Team uses clear and consistent messages. The vision will be used to help identify those issues that local people are interested in working on. The perceptions study will also be used to ensure that the right language is used and terms familiar with and important to the public are included.

Stakeholder map
Further work will be required to extend the numbers and types of organisations interested in learning about and providing information for the Ribble Pilot Project. The stakeholder map will form a critical source of information for matching local groups to waterbody issues that will need to be addressed.

Stakeholder Forum
The forum will continue to provide a central link to key stakeholders in the basin. In particular, their role during 2004 and 2005 will be to help quality review the River Basin Characterisation Report, identify other stakeholders who can help develop options to solve problems and potentially assist by "owning" some problems where they may have a close involvement in delivering solutions. The Forum has already contributed significantly to the development of the vision. With their help this will be finalised and used as a way of linking the objectives arrangements takes time and some of the issues to be addressed are likely to generate strong feelings and opposing views. This will make their management of the Directive to local aspirations, and to manage expectations where these aspirations can only be realised through measures outside the scope of the Water Framework Directive.

Meetings in person
One-to-one will be used to encourage key stakeholders to contribute to planning. In particular, meetings will be sought with stakeholders who can assist in delivering solutions but are currently unaware of their influence or have not previously shown interest in contributing. There are a finite number of meetings that can be undertaken as they can be demanding on resources.

Presentations
Presentations provided an important role communicating specific and technical messages. For this reason they will provide an important communication route during the launch of the River Basin Characterisation Report and the delivery of the vision to large audiences.

Vision building
Work to refine and complete the vision will continue, with the close involvement of the Stakeholder Forum. This will be used as an adjunct to the River Basin Characterisation Report to promote a wider understanding of what the Agency and its partners would like to see happen in the Ribble basin. Attempts will be made to complete the vision at the same time as the River Basin Characterisation Report is launched as they represent twin assessments of management needs. The likely high degree of overlap in aspirations of the two should make easier the further development of local ownership for Directive objectives. Sustained and high quality facilitation will be vital for the vision building process to be a success.

Expert meetings
This type of partnership working will be continued as a core component of planning. Representation on small working groups will be determined by the issues to be addressed. They are likely to be varied in size, composition, membership and length of working. However, it should be remembered that building joint working more challenging, and the Agency will need to invest time and resources to ensure it has the skills to successfully manage them.

Website and electronic newsletter
The Internet has formed and will continue to provide a primary route for information provision for the Ribble Pilot Project. The Agency will need to remember that if used alone as the method of sharing information it could increase social inequalities. Access to the Internet in the UK is high by world comparison, but is still only 57% and is limited by computer infrastructure.

The Agency will also need to explore ways of promoting the web address, to advertise this as the primary route for finding out about the Ribble Pilot Project and for encouraging those people interested in learning more to go there first. (The newsletter is one way of advertising the site.) An attached email address allows a clear route for further correspondence if required.

Information will need to be updated regularly to ensure that new material stimulates communication through email notification (e.g. through using the newsletter to provide a regular need to access the website). The Agency will continue to produce the newsletter and extend the number of people it is sent out to.

Perceptions survey
The survey has yielded some very important messages that can be woven into future management of the Ribble Pilot Project, especially communication planning. Repeat surveys would provide a measure of progress with participation as the project evolves.

Finally, the conclusions of this work will inform the development of national guidance on public participation and future work will be reviewed when this guidance is finalised. This will ensure that the experience of the Ribble Pilot Project is used to influence approaches throughout England and Wales and that its ongoing development is integral to work elsewhere.