**UPPER THAMES CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

**STEERING GROUP**

**TERMS OF REFERENCE.**

**Aims:** The Upper Thames Catchment Management Steering Group (UPCMSG) aims to develop a shared vision and an integrated strategic delivery plan (The Upper Thames Catchment Management Plan) to deliver a healthy, functioning river environment across the catchment.

**Objectives:**

1. As one of the pilot catchments, the UTCMSG will seek to promote the development of an integrated catchment-based approach across the Upper Thames.
2. Collectively review and develop the Upper Thames Catchment Management Plan, identifying related actions already in progress and adding issues that need to be included.
3. Reach a shared understanding of the catchment’s priorities through an integrated catchment-based approach.
4. Identify a range of actions that assist in the delivery of WFD requirements while at the same time achieving further environmental benefits for the catchment through multiple delivery of strategies.
5. Use the Integrated Local Delivery framework to embed collaborative working in the development of strategic priorities and on-the-ground delivery of multiple objectives through an inclusive partnership.
6. Increase community participation to improve local understanding and management of the water environment.
7. Identify best practice components that can be replicated in similar projects.

### Remit and Status

1.1 The UTCMSG will provide a forum for discussion of issues and co-ordination of activity to develop a Catchment Management Plan by December 2012. Thereafter, to work collaboratively to deliver the Plan.

1.2 The Steering Group as a partnership is unincorporated and is not a legal entity. As such, it cannot hold or expend funds itself. Projects and activities recommended or supported by the Steering Group will be led by other organisations best placed to do so.

1.3 The Steering Group, in discussions and any recommendations, will respect the rights of private businesses, landowners and local communities, while also recognising public rights and values attached to the land and landscape.

1.4 The Steering Group is not empowered to make executive decisions, but through consensus building seeks to offer a valuable advisory and consultative role, and may choose to make recommendations or representations to other organisations.

1.5 Members will keep each other informed about any existing or proposed project work relating to the catchment.

### 2. Operation

2.1 Defra has appointed FWAG SW and CCRI to develop a partnership within the Upper Thames that will deliver an integrated catchment approach as part of the process that develops and delivers the Catchment Management Plan between April 2012 and March 2013 inclusive.

2.2 The Group will meet as often as required to progress work against an agreed time line. To begin with the group will be facilitated by an independent facilitator: thereafter a Chair and Vice-Chair will be nominated by the members and reviewed annually as necessary.

2.3 Time limited Sub-groups and Task & Finish groups will be engaged to undertake specific tasks as necessary.

2.4 Agendas and any papers will be circulated at least a week before meetings. Members wishing to include items on the Agenda should try to give adequate notice to the Facilitator, or nominated Chair or responsible Officer (when appointed). Organisations may send alternative or additional representatives to meetings, with the agreement of the Partnership’s Chair.

2.5 Minutes and papers of the Group will be made publicly available through an appropriate web platform.

2.6 It is intended that the Steering Group be given adequate structure without being burdened by formality. The Group will endeavour to operate by communication and consensus, reflecting its main role of co-ordination and involvement.

2.7 The UTCMSG recognises that some partners have statutory obligations to fulfil within the catchment and does not seek to interfere with these.

### 3. Membership

3.1 The Upper Thames Catchment Steering Group will normally comprise representatives of:

Environment Agency

Natural England

Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

Cotswold Conservation Board

Swindon Borough Council

National Farmers Union

Thames Water

Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust

Gloucestershire County Council

Cotswold District Council

Cotswold Water Park

Cotswold Rivers Trust

Wiltshire Council

Others to consider:

North Wessex Downs AONB

Wiltshire RCC

Wiltshire Wildlife Trust

British Waterways

3.2 Organisations listed above will nominate their representative to attend meetings. Additional representatives from the organisations listed may be kept on a mailing list and attend meetings where this will be of value.

3.3 The Steering Group may invite guests to attend meetings for a particular topic. Members will undertake to promote the sustainable management of the Upper Thames Catchment, attend meetings whenever possible and, if no longer able to attend meetings on a regular basis, to step down or to seek another representative.

3.4 The Steering Group will regularly review its membership and may co-opt new members. It is not a closed or static group. Organisational representatives must have a significant material and/or operational interests in the catchment issues or area to support effective participation in the meetings.

3.5 Members will feed into wider networks that are share relevant objectives to the UTCMSG.