

Irwell Catchment Pilot

25th November Workshop Report



The River Irwell near former East Lancs Paper Mill - Radcliffe

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1. Introduction

A workshop was held on 25th November following a period of informal discussions between the Environment Agency (EA) and a range of organisations with a strong interest in aspects of the Irwell Catchment Pilot area in relation to water quality and local environmental issues.

The discussions related to a national pilot project (set up by Defra) to trial differing approaches to stakeholder engagement at the catchment scale, whilst delivering more local action for the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The Irwell catchment was selected as one of the pilots.

1.1 Workshop Aims

The discussions suggested that a new steering group was needed, to provide the necessary drive and coordination to enable this work to go forward. The workshop brought together organisations that are potentially willing to form such a steering group to explore:

- the kinds of outcomes that could deliver mutual and multiple benefits to organisations in the Irwell Catchment Pilot area
- how these outcomes might be achieved
- whether a new collaborative group should be set up, and aspects of how that group should function
- the best way forward in relation to how we might work together better and decide the next steps

1.2 Attendees

Organisation	Contact Name
Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA)	Francis Markus - Investment Agreement and Partnerships Project Officer, Commission for the New Economy. Mark Atherton - Environment Commission lead Will Horsfall - Team Leader Environment Policy, Salford City Council
British Waterways (BW)	Nick Smith - Enterprise Manager Claire Bunter – NW South Area Manager Gordon Whitaker – Greater Manchester Environment Manager
Environment Agency (EA)	Katherine Causer – Irwell Pilot, Catchment Coordinator David Turnbull – Senior Environmental Planner (WFD) Steve Walters - Area Environmental Planning Team Leader Phil Lee – Forestry Ranger
Forestry Commission (FC)	Clive Memmott – Chief Executive Officer
Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce (GMCoc)	Derek Richardson - Principal Ecologist
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)	David Taylor - Director of Contract Services
Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority (GMWDA)	Richard Bernhardt - Regional Environmental Advisor
Highways Agency (HA)	Matt Schofield – Director
Irwell Rivers Trust (IRT)	Jo Whitaker - Regional Partnerships Director
Keep Britain Tidy (KBT)	James Hall - Senior Project Manager Martyn Walker - Greater Manchester Conservation Officer
Lancashire Wildlife Trust (LWT)	Tony Hothersall – Red Rose Forest Director
Red Rose Forest (RRF)	Mike Duddy - President
Salford Friendly Anglers (SFA)	Kate Zabatis - Acting Head of Environment Regulation, Wastewater Asset Management Rachael Dingle – Catchment Analyst
United Utilities (UU)	

Representatives from Marketing Manchester, Groundwork and Natural England were also invited but could not attend. The workshop was facilitated by an independent consultant and facilitator, Lynn Wetenhall (InterAct Networks LLP). She was supported by Jo Harris (Environment Agency Communications Business Partner).

2. Context for the workshop

Katherine Causer ran through the history of the pilot catchments to date. In summary:

There are currently 10 catchment pilots being hosted by the EA in England. These have been selected based on their differing geographic size and environmental pressures. In the North West the Irwell and Ribble catchments have been selected. A further 15 pilots will be hosted by other organisations and include the Douglas and Eden in the North West region. Defra has also offered support to other catchments that are not 'formal' pilots e.g. the Cant Beck sub-catchment of the Lune and the Coniston/Crake sub-catchment of the Kent/Leven.

A workshop was held by the EA in the summer with a range of stakeholders who have knowledge and experience of working in the Irwell Pilot area. Information was gathered on the range of environmental work being delivered by organisations and local groups. The issues that are preventing the water environment and associated land from reaching their ecological and social potential were also explored. Some broad areas of shared interest emerged. It was recognised that, given the geographical scale of the pilot area and the complexity of issues, a **strategic and coordinated** approach to environmental improvement was required. However, it was accepted that local groups and communities would have a significant role to play in helping deliver improvements to the water environment.

With the feedback from first workshop in mind, subsequent conversations have focused on those stakeholders who have a strategic interest, influence and/or expertise in environmental issues affecting the Irwell Pilot area. From these conversations a draft set of outcomes were developed and circulated in advance of this workshop.

3. What outcomes might we seek to achieve?

Separating what needs to be achieved from actual solutions is a key way to help people build agreement on some specific, unambiguous shared outcomes. These outcomes should be based on a shared understanding of underlying facts - for example, about what the problems currently are. This step must be worked through before moving into proposed solutions /actions.

Participants were sent a discussion paper before the workshop, which set out the kinds of outcomes that a group might seek to achieve¹. When developing the outcomes for the discussion paper, the following set of criteria was used to determine whether or not the outcome was an appropriate one for a new collaborative group to take on.

The outcome can only be achieved:

- a. by two or more organisations working together i.e. **no one organisation can achieve this alone**.
- b. **to a greater degree, and/or more efficiently and effectively**, through two or more organisations working together.
- c. by two or more organisations **working together in a different way** than before i.e. in more depth, considering innovative approaches etc.

The facilitator asked the group to work through a two stage process:

- First to focus on **what** a new group might want to achieve – the outcomes.
- Second, to move into considering **how** those things might be achieved – the backcasting exercise.

Participants discussed the proposed outcomes in the discussion paper. Amendments to those outcomes were made and new outcomes proposed (Appendix 1). Following amendments and additions there was broad agreement on the proposed outcomes i.e. participants saw common areas of interest for their organisations.

¹ The original discussion papers can be obtained from Katherine Causer at Katherine.causer@environment-agency.gov.uk

4. How might we deliver those outcomes – backcasting exercise?

Participants moved on from considering the outcomes that a new group might want to achieve, into thinking about how some of those outcomes might be realised using backcasting methods. Backcasting works by assuming that the future goal has been achieved, then provides a structure to work backwards to consider how that goal was achieved. It is particularly useful when the problem you are looking at is complex.

One outcome was selected by each of five groups; the task was to come up with key actions or decisions that need to be taken by the Group or others, which were essential to successfully achieving that outcome.

The outputs from the backcasting exercise have been incorporated into the revised outcomes in Appendix 1.

4.1 Reflection on 'backcasting' exercise

Participants discussed what the process of backcasting had led them to consider. Comments included:

- Seeing the value of taking a longer term view, rather than trying to come up with answers that fit within a very limited time frame, driven largely by funding deadlines.
- The importance of having a shared picture of what needs to be achieved as the starting point.

5 Governance for a new Group

A discussion paper setting out proposals for the new Group's governance and management¹ had been circulated in advance of the workshop.

There was broad agreement with the idea of forming a Steering Group, with task and finish groups sitting under it. There was strong support for the idea that task and finish groups were only set up when there was a clear task for them to undertake. Task and finish groups should be reviewed regularly and would be disbanded when that task ended.

There was discussion around whether or not there had to be a 'lead' organisation and if so, what 'leading' actually meant. Some people felt that the Environment Agency had to take a very strong lead. The facilitator, (speaking as a consultant specialising in collaborative working, rather than as the facilitator), highlighted the fact that successful strategic level collaborations tend to have fairly equal power and responsibilities as their hallmark and that one very strong 'lead' organisation often leads to other organisations being or feeling less engaged.

Some other general observations/comments were also made:

- The Steering Group will need to take account of existing groups like the River Basin Liaison Panel and any future developments that could impact on them such as the formation of the Greater Manchester Local Nature Partnership and the Local Waterways Partnership (Canals) for Manchester and Pennine (Part of British Waterways new charitable government structure). The Group will need to agree its relationship with these groups, e.g. whether it should belong to a higher level group.
- It was agreed that the formation of a Steering Group should proceed but keep dialogue open about relationships to other partnerships.
- The term *Greater Manchester Water Environment Group* was seen as misleading as the Irwell Catchment Pilot area, whilst covering a significant part of Greater Manchester, does not encompass the entire political area. However the term *Irwell Catchment* may also be misleading as the Irwell Pilot area covers the river catchments of the Croal, Irwell, Roch, Irk and Medlock. It was agreed that the name of the Group or geographical coverage of the Pilot should be considered further by the Steering Group.

- The Group should be rigorous in avoiding duplication and be prepared to adapt and evolve.
- It should monitor against a plan and adapt accordingly.
- Review and decide if there's a need for the group on a regular basis.
- The Group was advised to look back over other multi agency projects (e.g. Mersey Basin Campaign) and learn from their successes.
- The Group will need to find new ways to engage meaningfully with the private sector, in particular Peel Holdings, and be clear about their role and why they should be involved.
- One of the 'aims' of the Group should be "what we learn we'll share".
- We need to clarify what we mean by "local water environment".
- Emphasise how the outcomes will contribute to the local economy.

It was agreed that these points would require further discussion as the process unfolds.

5.1 Membership of Steering Group and task and finish groups.

The representatives from **United Utilities, Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority, Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (Planning and Housing Commission), Keep Britain Tidy, Lancashire Wildlife Trust, Red Rose Forest, Salford Friendly Anglers and Irwell Rivers Trust** * said that they were ready to agree to become part of new Steering Group.

The Forestry Commission was unable to fully commit to being on the Steering Group at this stage due to organisational changes but expressed an interest in the task and finish groups.

The representatives from **British Waterways, Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and Highways Agency**, said that they were supportive of the Pilot and if or where appropriate would like to be involved with the task and finish groups.

** Please note that since the workshop, the Irwell Rivers Trust has withdrawn their offer to sit on the steering group but have confirmed their commitment and desire to be involved with the task and finish groups.*

7 Next steps

Discussion on what should happen next threw up a particular issue about how often the Steering Group could and should meet. Participants recognised a tension between busy people finding time to attend meetings, and the need to get together relatively frequently if things are to move forward. Katherine Causer, Environment Agency, proposed an ideal of the Steering Group meeting once a month, at least for the first few months of its life. It was agreed to arrange the first Steering Group meeting in January but for some of the group to come together before then to develop the plan for the meeting.

The Steering Group would also need to consider issues such as who should chair the meetings and what their role should be.

8 Decision and actions

Decision/action	Who	When
<p>The organisations signing up to membership of the new Steering Group are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • United Utilities • AGMA (Planning and Housing Commission) • Greater Manchester Waste Disposal Authority • Keep Britain Tidy • Lancashire Wildlife Trust • Red Rose Forest • Salford Friendly Anglers <p>All other organisations will continue to be engaged, this will include Marketing Manchester, Groundwork and Natural England who were unable to attend the workshop</p>	<p>Kate Zabatis Will Horsfall David Taylor Jo Whitaker James Hall or Martyn Walker Tony Hothersall Mike Duddy</p>	
Provide updated version of the draft outcomes and governance papers. Complete a summary report of the workshop	Katherine Causer (EA)	ASAP
Provide Short Briefing on the GM LNP process	Mark Atherton (AGMA)	ASAP
Send report on waterways in GM	Mark Atherton (AGMA)	ASAP
Set up first Steering Group meeting for January with those who have agreed to go forward	Katherine Causer (EA)	Mid December
Develop agenda for first Steering Group meeting, which should be in January	Katherine Causer (EA) Will Horsfall (AGMA) Mike Duddy (SFA)	Early January
Put together any necessary material for Steering Group members relevant to the first meeting	Katherine Causer (EA - with input from external stakeholders and EA colleagues)	In time to circulate to Steering Group members before their first meeting
Draw up a draft strategy template for circulation	Jo Whitaker (Keep Britain Tidy)	Before next meeting

Appendix 1

Proposed outcomes for a new Water Environment Group

1. Fish stocks

Survey data shows that the rivers in the Irwell Pilot area do not support the diversity, abundance and distribution of fish that would be expected of this freshwater environment. This is a significant reason why we are failing to meet the legally required standards for water quality and why angling opportunities are limited.

Outcome 1

By 2027, the rivers Croal, Irwell, Roch, Irk and Medlock and their major tributaries support more diverse, abundant and sustainable fish stocks, that can maintain angling activity.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Fish populations are more resilient to problems associated with climate change, pollution, disease and in-breeding.
- b) Previously extinct native species of fish are present e.g. salmon, sea trout, eels and graining.
- c) Anti-social behaviour is reduced because of an increase in angling activity and the introduction of angling participation schemes and free fishing in designated areas to any angler with a current rod licence.
- d) Improved local economy through increased angler spending.

2. Habitats

Whilst the rivers, reservoirs, lakes and canals in the Irwell Pilot area support a wide range of habitats, many of them are in a poor condition and have been significantly modified and impacted by human activity. They are often deficient in the diversity of plant and animal species that would normally be expected in such environments. Our evidence also tells us that there is still a lack of key species such as otter despite their return to neighbouring areas.

Outcome 2

By 2027, the rivers Croal, Irwell, Roch, Irk and Medlock support a wider range of connected habitats. Protected species such as otter and water vole are present in larger numbers and there is a greater movement of species between habitats.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) A more well-balanced and healthy ecosystem due the regulating presence of top predators such as otters.
- b) A better public perception of our local water environments. Otters and water vole are protected and well recognised (flagship) species. The public value their presence and our national obligation to help reverse the recent decline in their numbers would be met.
- c) A greater awareness of local flora and fauna through wildlife education (interpretation boards).
- d) Fewer invasive species would mean better access to river banks and less erosion.
- e) There is a planned and shared approach to % reduction of invasive species (e.g. Giant Hogweed) within X metres of footpath.
- f) Each riparian interest group will have an invasive species management strategy.

Backcasting exercise for Outcome 2

Activities listed below are in chronological order:

- Understand and share the evidence that each organisation holds. Evaluate what's useful and where the gaps are.
- Establish who's already doing what and where. Agree the gaps and the opportunities.
- Identify existing funding streams.
- Analysis of stakeholders to be involved in developing and delivering a landscape wide management plan (e.g. Landowners, Farmers and Commerce).
- Create Irwell pilot habitats and species sub group.
- Consult public on which flagship species mean something to them, agree on this (potential conflicts between stakeholders), prior to adopting a 'mascot' for PR / Comms.
- Branding (e.g. "Adopt an Otter"). Use as a hook into tourism and use voluntary groups to help with monitoring. Provide support material to help them do this.
- Analyse ecosystem services delivered by the projects and show economic benefits - this should open up additional funding streams.
- Develop sub catchment action plans (e.g. invasive control, mowing regimes, planting times).
- Raise awareness. Provide training and guidance re the above plans to contractors and our staff re sensitive land management practice.
- Implement a landscape wide management plan for the identified habitats and species.
- Delivery through a) planning / development regime, b) internal policies of stakeholders, c) volunteer networks.

3. River appearance and function

Over two-thirds of the rivers in the Irwell Pilot area have been classified as heavily modified. This is a reason why they are failing to meet the standards set out in the Water Framework Directive. In addition, these modifications reduce the ability of the water environment to respond naturally to environmental changes and diminish the ecosystem services they provide. It makes access to the river for recreation difficult and often dangerous.

Outcome 3

By 2021, where feasible and relative to existing infrastructure, the rivers Croal, Irwell, Roch, Irk and Medlock are more natural in appearance and function. This will make them more resilient to changes in flow conditions such drought or flooding, and will lead to a more robust, diverse and accessible environment.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) A reduction in flooding in some areas due to an increased capacity for the river and floodplain to store flood water.
- b) Better connected habitats which have a greater diversity of plant and animal species.
- c) Better access to the rivers for recreation because river banks are less engineered.
- d) More attractive environments for local communities to enjoy.
- e) Lower cost of flood defences.

Backcasting exercise for Outcome 3

Activities listed below are in chronological order:

- All non-natural structures (physical modifications) on heavily modified waterbodies have been mapped onto GIS.
- We know who own these modifications.
- We understand the impact/s of removing modifications. Impact assessments completed.
- There is a clear understanding of the issues caused by physically modifying waterbodies.
- All flood defences have been reviewed and a strategy for improvement has been implemented.
- Priorities have been agreed for the removal or improvement of modifications.
- We have a costed plan of action.
- We have an understanding of the impact on small, medium and large businesses and other stakeholders in achieving the outcome.
- Key stakeholders agree to collaborate and invest (money/resources) in achieving the outcomes.
- We have created a positive community input to the removal of modifications.
- We have identified suitable funding streams.
- We have applied for and received funding to remove modifications.
- A resourced programme of modification removal is initiated.
- Techniques are implemented by developers and landowners to achieve the outcome.
- Landowners are financially incentivised to let their land flood where appropriate.

4. Diffuse urban pollution

Pollution running off roads and contaminated land such as old landfill sites, into water (diffuse urban pollution) is a significant reason for rivers failing to meet the legally required standards set out in European legislation. It particularly affects the large urban areas in the Irwell Pilot area where traffic densities and road networks are concentrated and where there is a legacy of industrial activity. Some of the solutions to tackle diffuse urban pollution can also help to reduce the risk of local flooding.

Outcome 4

By 2021, rivers in urban areas are cleaner because diffuse pollution (contaminated water running off roads or leaching from polluted land) is reduced.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) An overall improvement in water quality (fewer harmful chemicals such as heavy metals and hydrocarbons entering our rivers).
- b) Water looks cleaner because of fewer unsightly discharges entering the river.
- c) Reduced pollution incidents and their associated impacts such as fish kills.
- d) Reduced flood risk with associated savings .
- e) Replenished and cleaner groundwater.

- f) No visible sewage litter, general litter or fly tipping.

Backcasting exercise for Outcome 4

(Nb this only looked at diffuse pollution from roads)

Activities listed below are in chronological order:

- All highway authorities give consideration to drainage / outfall improvements as part of highways projects.
- Local Authorities establish knowledge of where their key highway outfalls are.
- All highway authorities agree to assess their highway outfalls using the HAWRAT tool (Highways Agency Risk Assessment Tool).
- Share best practice and available / new technological approaches.
- Highways Authorities, United Utilities and Environment Agency to share information to target asset renewals and improvements.
- Co-ordinate remediation of outfall discharges (e.g. with Highways Agency, Local Authorities and United Utilities).
- Highways Agency implements improvements at prioritised (using HAWRAT model) outfalls in Area 10 (Irwell).
- Action taken to remediate remaining priority polluting outfalls.

5. Access to local water environments

A clean and healthy environment with access to nature is vital for everyone's quality of life. People who are socially and economically disadvantaged often live in the worst environments with limited access to natural green space. These problems can affect people's health and well-being and can add to the burden of social and economic deprivation. Within the Irwell Pilot area are some of the most deprived communities in the UK. Tackling environmental inequalities and ensuring that all people have access to a good quality environment in the future is critical to sustainable development.

The Greater Manchester Green Infrastructure Strategy already sets out ways to achieve these things, but there is scope, through joint working to achieve more in relation to recreation and the local water environment in particular.

Outcome 5

By 2027, more people enjoy their local water environments for recreational activities such as walking, cycling and angling. This will focus particularly on people from town centres, population growth points, regeneration areas, and deprived communities for example, Manchester, Salford, Rochdale, Bolton and Bury.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Improvement in physical and mental health of local communities and therefore a reduction health care costs.
- b) Greater community pride and participation in activities to improve the local environment.
- c) Carbon reductions as people do not have to travel to access the natural environment.

6. Skills and jobs from environmental improvement

The North West has some of the highest concentrations of youth unemployment and worklessness in the UK and these figures are rising. This is of concern to a number of organisations and partnerships.

By using environmental Intermediate Labour Markets, young people can be engaged in local environmental improvement schemes. This can provide them with routes into longer term employment, enterprise, education and training.

Outcome 6

Each outcome agreed will have a clear plan of how it will provide young people not in education, employment, enterprise or training, plus the long term unemployed and ex-offenders with the necessary skills, knowledge and training to deliver local environmental improvements throughout the Irwell Pilot area.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Reduction in cost of sustaining high unemployment.
- b) Providing labour markets with people equipped with the right skills and experience.
- c) A sense of hope, pride and achievement in those sectors of society most affected by unemployment.

7 Engaging local people in improving their water environment

The River Irwell and its tributaries are currently perceived by many as being lifeless open sewers, strongly enforced by the sights and smells witnessed in recent history. Huge improvements in river quality in the last decade are largely un-noticed. Fly tipping is abundant and pollution events occur regularly.

Public involvement is key to environmental success, yet opportunities for this are currently limited. Complex legal responsibilities, processes and procedures of regulatory bodies and riparian ownership can create barriers, preventing local action groups forming and becoming involved.

Empowering local communities by assisting with group development, training in identifying and carrying out practical improvement works, and applying for funding will generate a great momentum in conservation and restoration efforts.

Outcome 7

By 2021, local people feel and act as owners of their local rivers. They get involved in voluntary action to identify their desired outcomes and take action to improve and maintain the rivers. Local action groups (LAGs) will be established on all tributaries of the River Irwell.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Increased sense of ownership, stewardship and pride in the local environment.
- b) Young people are engaged through special programmes, and adopt life-long behaviours to protect and improve the environment ensuring the sustainability of improvements.
- c) Local angling groups have a greater involvement in the management of the water environment.
- d) There is increased public understanding of the value, interest and worth of their local environment resulting in local communities insisting on the protection of local areas and wildlife.

Backcasting exercise for Outcome 7

Activities listed below are in chronological order:

- All current location action groups mapped - use existing stakeholders.
- Clear understanding of business actions (ongoing in plans).
- Identify benefits to people / business achieved.
- Change of public perception of Irwell as a place to spend leisure time.
- School curriculum includes focus and involvement in environment and compulsory engagement with environmental groups.
- Effective strategy for behaviour change.
- One visionary figurehead identified to champion our cause.
- All groups currently working agree to work together in a different way. Core purpose developed with linked outcomes. All groups voluntarily agreed strategic plan, objectives and implementation.
- Effective model to fund co-ordinated programme.
- Section 106s targeted to fund improvements.
- Web site / other media info available regarding access / action. Broker people with projects.
- Social benefits of community involvement recognised and communicated.
- All groups (e.g. unemployed, probation) refer individuals to projects (e.g. green gym).
- Community owned assets encouraged / implemented.

8. Brownfield land

Within the Irwell Pilot area there is a legacy of unremediated brownfield land that could increase given the current economic climate. Bringing brownfield land back into use in an environmentally sustainable way would have a positive impact on the area's economy, image, environment and health of local communities.

Outcome 8

By 2015, all brownfield land in the Irwell catchment has been fully assessed and prioritised. Priority sites are identified in the Local Development Plan. Working with the public sector, we are in the best position with good evidence as soon as market conditions improve to attract appropriate new business and development.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Reduction in diffuse pollution to help achieve WFD obligations.
- b) Removal of blight from local communities many of which will be in the most deprived areas. This would also improve their quality of life.
- c) A partnership approach with local deprived communities will help to build their capacity, confidence and pride.
- d) Improved image to enhance prospects for inward investment.

Backcasting exercise for Outcome 8

Activities listed below are in chronological order:

- Public sector organisations effectively share staff and resources for work, which contributes towards environmental protection and enhancement.
- Recognition of the economic value of waterways and GI to the community and economy.
- Reduction in red tape to stimulate business (e.g. appropriate allocations in LDF – amended where necessary).
- Define key development sites and ensure that this is achievable (economic reality) and driven by the current situation.
- Long term sustainable funding mechanism in place.
 - i. Business rebate
 - ii. Business improvement district
- Waterways in the Irwell Pilot area become an attraction.
- Optimise the benefit of the environment to Greater Manchester.

Possible additional outcomes

Outcome 9

By 2027, the West Pennine Moors are managed by landowners (e.g. UU, farmers. Local Authorities, MoD) in a way that reduces flooding and improves water quality.

Outcome 10

By 2027, all new developments are planned to maximise their contribution to the Irwell Catchment Pilot objectives.

Appendix 2 Evaluation of workshop

