

Irwell Catchment Pilot

Outcomes document

May 2012

Purpose of this document

Being able to explore and agree clear outcomes lies at the heart of successful collaboration. This includes being able to see how different organisation's outcomes complement and/or overlap each other's, even when they use different language and concepts to express what they want to achieve.

Achieving the highest levels of collaborative advantage usually means exploring outcomes that are relatively radical, long term and imaginative, as opposed to simply considering how to get 'a bit more' of something.

This document sets out a number of outcomes that the Irwell Catchment Pilot Group would like to explore.

The outcomes outlined below were derived from talking to a number of organisations about what they want to achieve in relation to water quality and associated environments and then further developed at a workshop held on the 25th November 2011. They have subsequently been refined at the Irwell Pilot Steering Group meetings.

Criteria used for selecting the outcomes

To ensure that any new group only focuses on things, which *cannot be achieved through 'business as usual'*, the following criteria were used to shape these possible outcomes:

1. Outcomes **can only be achieved** by two or more organisations in the group working together i.e. no one organisation can achieve this alone.
2. Outcomes can only be achieved **to a greater degree, and/or more efficiently and effectively**, through two or more organisations working together.
3. Outcomes can only be achieved by two or more organisations in the group **working together in a different way than before** i.e. in more depth, considering innovative approaches etc.

Proposed outcomes for the Irwell Catchment Pilot

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 absent native species of fish are present e.g. salmon, sea trout and eels .
- 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. Many are infested with non-native invasive species such as Japanese knotweed or signal crayfish which negatively impact on our native flora and fauna. 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 a 75% reduction of invasive plant species (e.g. Giant Hogweed) within 10 metres of the rivers edge.
- f) Each riparian interest group will have an invasive species management strategy.

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 and greatly diminishes the aesthetic appeal. In addition litter from various sources acts to detract from peoples enjoyment of their environment.

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 as drought or flooding, and will lead to a more robust, diverse, attractive 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) Lower cost of flood defences.
- c) Better connected habitats, which have a greater diversity of plant and animal species.
- d) Better access to the rivers for recreation because river banks are less engineered.
- e) More attractive environments for local communities to enjoy including no visible sewage litter, general litter or fly tipping..

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, from surface water outfalls, 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) An overall improvement in the biological integrity of the rivers (plant and animal species/food chain)
- c) Water looks cleaner because of fewer unsightly discharges entering the river.
- d) Reduced pollution incidents and their associated impacts such as fish kills.
- e) An increase in quality green space through the implementation of Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and Green Infrastructure (GI) solutions.
- f) Reduced flood risk with associated savings through the implementation of SUDS.
- g) Replenished and cleaner groundwater.
- h) Enhanced ecosystem services

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.

Outcome 5

By 2027, where appropriate, more people enjoy their local water environments for recreational activities such as walking, cycling, angling and water based activities. 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 in 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) 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.
- d) A reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour

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.

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 as opportunities to expand quality green space of wildlife value. Where housing and new business opportunities are identified green infrastructure should play a key role in their 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.

9 Upland and rural land management

Changes to rural land management over the past two hundred years has had a significant impact on water quality. Activities such as moorland gripping to drain upland areas, afforestation, diffuse pollution, over-grazing and farming intensification have contributed to the degradation of our rural watercourses and associated habitats in the Irwell Pilot area. The impacts are not only seen in the headwaters but impact downstream as well where the accumulative effects can be significant.

Outcome 9

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

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Reduction in the cost of treating drinking water derived from local reservoirs.
- b) Cost saving to farmers from reducing nutrient additions to land.
- c) More sensitive land management practices lead to an improvement in biodiversity.

10 Planning and development

The North West has some of the highest urban population densities in England and these are predicted to grow over the coming decades. The development of additional housing and employment sites will increase the pressure on the natural environment and its resources. It is therefore important to recognise the value of quality green space and green infrastructure in providing ecosystem services and integrate them into development schemes.

Outcome 10

By 2027, all new developments are planned to maximise their contribution to green infrastructure and the delivery of the Irwell Catchment Pilot objectives.

Additional outcomes would include:

- a) Developments that incorporate green space have a higher market value.
- b) Inward investment in an area with quality green space is likely to be higher.
- c) Incorporating functional GI solutions into developments adds value to the ecosystem services provided at a location.