**Monitoring and Evaluating Framework: Upper Thames Pilot Catchment**

**Project aims**

*What is your project trying to achieve & why?*

What: The Upper Thames Catchment Steering Group aims to develop a vision and an integrated strategic delivery plan to deliver a healthy, functioning river environment across the catchment.

Why: There are a number of relevant but currently unconnected initiatives that are seeking to have a positive impact on the Upper Thames Catchment. Experience suggests that there is significant overlap between these initiatives and that this leads to a disconnect between the agency-led initiatives and the ability of farmer/land managers and communities to understand, engage and influence both the development of the initiatives and the implementation of the resulting activities.

*How will you know you have succeeded?*

There is an agreed shared vision across all of those partners who are delivering strategic objectives, both statutory and non-statutory. Local communities, interest groups and farmers/land managers reporting that there is greater co-operation and integrated delivery among the various policy initiatives and agencies

*What lessons do you hope to learn?*

The ability of the Integrated Local Delivery (ILD) framework approach to embed an integrated strategic delivery plan at the catchment scale, including links into community led planning. How an integrated catchment approach further develops the ILD framework and what is needed to role out the approach more widely. How to design and deliver integrated strategic delivery plans at the catchment scale. The impact of the ILD framework on the attitudes and behaviour of partner organisations towards the integrated delivery of environmental strategic objectives (statutory and non-statutory).

**Initial phase**

*Base line information*

There will be an initial scoping of the ‘assets’ within the catchment and the existing designations, projects and initiatives to determine the main stakeholders to incorporate within the Steering Group. Some of this will come from the Environment Agency (EA) but others will be indentified through other means. The initial phase will be to inform all those partners who have been consulted as part of the project development and the initial phase of the project that funding has been awarded and will go ahead. The requirement for the initial phase is to maintain their interest and support in order to overlay the various strategies so that a shared vision and delivery framework can be developed that meets the requirements for the EA, in terms of WFD, and the other project partners for their own projects and initiatives. The aim is for this data to become locally relevant and available in each parish for farmers and communities to interpret and enable delivery through local resources and capacity with partnership support, increasing both understanding and social capital.

*Systems and procedures*

The monitoring framework will need to consist of a number of tiers to allow for evaluation against the various outputs and outcomes. All data sets will be stored electronically and entered into database(s) for systematic analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

*Key timing, critical points in the project*

* Contact and engage with relevant partners and interest groups
* Form the project steering group and related Task and Finish groups
* Overlay appropriate strategic priorities
* Identify partners who are able and willing to support and integrate their area of expertise into the ILD framework
* Develop an accepted framework for the delivery of the integrated strategic delivery plan
* Review shared vision, integrated priorities and effectiveness of ILD
* Determine next steps

**Evaluation aims**

*What are the criteria you are measuring against?*

Current processes for delivery of environmental objectives within the Upper Thames catchment.

*What will tell you, you have been successful?*

Delivery on the ground, an increased uptake of schemes and opportunities that deliver actual environmental gain. General recognition among those local communities, interest groups, farmers/land managers involved as well as members of the Catchment Steering Group that integrating delivery and the development of a shared vision enhances both local delivery and the success of policy.

*What data will be useful to justify the project / make the action* *permanent?*

Longitudinal qualitative data regarding the change in views among participants (individual and organisational). Data will need to assess the impact of ILD on the strategic approach of delivery partners as well as the extent to which local communities, interest groups and farmers/land managers feel involved in the shaping and contributing towards delivery. Evidence of information transfer to the extent that participants (partner organisation and local communities) feel a greater understanding of the complex issues around environmental management and inspired to take local action.

**Risks - What could go wrong and how would you manage it**

1. Local communities, interest groups, farmers/land managers not wanting to take part – currently low risk due to the involvement of Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) due to their contacts within the county (and beyond). The project lead (FWAG SW) is responsible for community, interest group and farmer/land manager recruitment.
2. Insufficient engagement from strategic delivery partners – currently low risk. The initial meetings have suggests a high level of interest and recognition that there is some duplication of delivery and overlap between initiatives. As above the project lead will oversee partner engagement.
3. ILD does not deliver to expectations and quality of delivery poor – low risk. The use of professional facilitators and high-level interest will ensure that meetings and the project overall is successful and effective. Continuous feedback will be gathered and adjustments made where necessary so that all partners increase their understanding of integrated delivery and the benefits it brings to the meeting of a range of environmental objectives.

**Ongoing monitoring**

*Are you meeting the target groups, areas, sub populations, needs?*

The two main groups involved, Steering Group partners and local communities, interest groups, farmers/land managers will be asked for their views on the effectiveness of ILD and the benefits of integrated delivery at the start, during and at the end of the project. Their feedback will be integrated into the review of ILD. Partners will be asked for their views on the direct impact of both integrated delivery and ILD on the way they work and the overall effectiveness of the integrated catchment approach and also to give anecdotal feedback from their peer group. As the Steering Group is flexible this process can be repeated as more partners become involved as part of the wider consultation group.

*What appropriate data are you going to need to make the case for success?*

Longitudinal (duration of the project) qualitative data collection asking individuals to assess the impact of the approach on management within the sub-catchment using proformas, semi-structured interviews, case studies, reflections and quotations. For example partners and individuals involved with be required to complete questionnaires during and after the project to assess the impact of the integrated approach on the changes to their existing way of working and the role of this approach in delivering environmental objectives. Partners will be asked to keep records of delivery that they are directly involved in.

*How are you to ensure it’s collected properly, who what why where when*

Standardised evaluation sheets at agreed points during the project, semi-structured interviews with a selection of partners and individuals. On-line questionnaires will be administered and collected by the CCRI with support from the lead partners (FWAG SW).

*Information collection*

The table below provides an indication of the information that will be collected

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ***Type of information***  | ***Method***  | ***Storage***  |
| Activity Partner details Meeting details (level, venue, trainers etc) | Application forms  | Tabulated in excel  |
| Baseline Knowledge and activity assessmentData on current strategic activity within the catchment, including maps. | On-line questionnaires Secondary data from Environment Agency and other sources such s NE | Analysed and stored on-line |
| Outputs Partners attending Steering Group meetingsLocal community/farmer & land manager meetingsScoped catchment and parish maps with assets identified (using ILD framework)Trained FIELD advisers delivering agreed outputs Project evaluation sheets  | Registrations sheetsCourse evaluation sheets  | Data inputted to excel Electronic storage  |
| Outcomes Impact assessment at the end of the project | On-line assessment Semi-structured interviewsCase studies  | Data analysed andElectronic storage |

**End of project evaluation**

The project will be evaluating the perceived and actual benefits of using ILD within an integrated catchment context. While the information gathered during the project is important, this is best achieved ex-post. A feedback form will be developed for members of the steering group and the local communities, interest groups, farmers/land managers in mid 2013 (or later?). This will be an assessment of the impact that ILD has had on their approach to partnership working and the development of a shared vision for the sub-catchment. Likewise a form will be developed for local communities, interest groups, farmers/land managers and circulated through those partners who have developed these links (e.g. GRCC and FWAG SW). T his will seek local and individual views on the approach of ILD and the level of understanding gained regarding integrated delivery.

***Possible Indicators for M&E framework (adaptedfrom the Collective Action literature)***

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| --- | --- |
| **Indicator** | **Explanation** |
| **Indicators of functioning** |  |
| Meetings | Partners and local users have set up a meeting structure – formal or informal - and meet on a regular basis to discuss governance and delivery. Include meetings within and outside of the project  |
| Governance | Partners and local users have developed a governance structure with a set of rules regarding engagement within the sub-catchment (Agency led (designed) and/or local community led (crafted) |
| Delivery  | Partners have a shared strategy for an integrated strategic delivery plan to deliver a healthy, functioning river environment across the catchment. This might also include bidding for funding that is mutually beneficial and builds on their area of expertise and need to delivery statutory duty or constituted aim. |
| Monitoring governance | Partners and local users have set up a monitoring mechanism to ensure effective governance. |
| **Indicators of durability**  |  |
| Level of understanding | Actors – partners and local as well as external agencies – understand the entitlements and responsibilities that are stipulated in the statutory objectives concerning the sub-catchment and how each individual contribution helps deliver the wider strategic objectives |
| Level of awareness | All users – not just the steering group members – are aware of the activities of the pilot/project and the priorities that it has identified |
| Level of inclusion  | All partners and local users are meaningfully included in the activities and decisions and understand the position of others within the partnership and the local organizations within the sub-catchment |
| Level of perceived management capacity | Participants are confident that they have the ability to continue their activities – as incorporated into the integrated approach - without being dependent on others (e.g. external agents) to deliver environmental objectives. Within the Upper Thames this would be the GRCC and FIELD advisors for local communities and the EA team in Wallingford for other partners on the UTCMSG. |
| Level of connections | Participants in the integrated delivery approach are connected with external agents (e.g. FILED advisers) and other communities of partners and local users which will allow for knowledge transfer in both directions, concurrence on conflicts of interest, the building trust and reciprocity |
| Financial and material resources | Participants in the integrated delivery approach need sufficient (access to) financial and/or material resources to operate and a shared strategic aims for funding bids. |
| Level of confidence in future benefits | Participants in the integrated delivery approach are confident that their actions will benefit them and deliver environmental gain in the future |