

Delivering environmental benefits in urban communities

22nd October 2015 – Birmingham

Background

The WaterLIFE project, EC LIFE+ funded, is working towards healthy rivers for people and nature by bringing together communities, business and government. The project focuses on accelerating delivery of the Water Framework Directive in five catchments across England and Wales initially.

This workshop brought together representatives from many different catchment partnerships, with a common interest in urban communities, to explore the potential for urban water management to deliver benefits to both people and the environment, as well as showcase examples of success.

It is one of a series of WaterLIFE catchment partnership workshops, run by [Ciria](#), the [Urban ESS project](#) and the [CaBA Urban Working Group](#). Visit www.waterlife.org.uk to read previous workshop reports.

The workshop

The one-day workshop was held in The Priory Rooms located in Birmingham's city centre. The morning was a show and tell session, where 24 practitioners, planners and academics from a diverse range of organisations and backgrounds had the opportunity to introduce the group to their work. The 'pitches' were categorised to cover four distinct areas:

- Practical delivery of interventions
- Strategic tools/approaches
- Help and guidance for urban practitioners
- Engagement, communications and partnership.

Show and tell

The diverse range of speakers certainly added value to the workshop – providing participants with the opportunity to hear many different examples. Helen Spring, London Wildlife Trusts, spoke about demystifying SuDS and engaging communities; Paul Shaffer, Ciria, introduced BeST – a tool to help evaluate drainage proposals; Michelle Walker, The Rivers Trust, introduced a brand new [Citizen Science toolkit](#) to help with data gathering; and Paul Chapman, Lewisham Borough Council, gave the local government perspective as to how improvements to rivers and green spaces can bring about benefits to local communities.

The slideshow from all 24 ‘pitches’ are available to online: urbanwater-eco.services/conference-urban-benefits

Workshops

The afternoon offered a chance for knowledge exchange. Participants could take part in 4 out of 6 facilitated discussions. Topics included design of interventions, urban practitioner’s toolbox of interventions, partnership working and communications, funding sources, evaluation and barriers of delivery.

“I also got some ideas to improve my work (such as commissioning a SuDS model for education and community engagement) and inspiration to expand into schools from hearing the SuDS for Schools project present and through networking.”

Participants

54 individuals attended from a range of local authorities, government bodies, NGOs, social enterprises, academia and the water industry. Organisations included Lewisham Borough Council, Leicester City Council, River Restoration Centre, South West Water, Thames 21, Keep Britain Tidy along with many different Rivers Trusts and Wildlife Trusts. The depth and breadth of organisations added value to the quality of discussions that people were able to have on the day.

Participants agreed that collaboration can realise a number of benefits, including reduced flood risk, improved water quality and benefits to local communities.

Outcomes

Swap shop

On the day, participants were encouraged to state what they could offer urban practitioners and the CaBA community and then what they needed help with. These were pinned to a wall and appropriate knowledge/resource/skill swaps were identified.

“What I really liked was the idea of a swap-shop. This may be something that could be rather easily implemented in the CaBA website. Everyone interested could complete a short form for what they need and what they can offer.”

Evaluation

Feedback from participants was overwhelming positive, which was reflected in the level of engagement throughout the day. Participants shared ideas, experiences and solutions.

The detailed feedback about what worked well during the day and what could be improved will feed into future urban environment workshops.

“It was a very enjoyable and constructive event, well hosted and well run. We’re really excited about the unfolding future of the Catchment Based Approach.”

Next steps

- Make pitches and workshop summaries available to participants and all catchment partnerships via website and e-news.
- Connect relevant swap shop participants with each other
- Take forward learnings into future workshops.

Contact

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Gallery



Workshop introduction



Afternoon workshops