

‘Making the most of our waters’

Irish knowledge exchange, IRD Dulhallow

16-17 May 2016

Background

The WaterLIFE project, funded through the EC LIFE+ programme, 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.

‘Making the most of our waters’ was a two-day workshop, organised by the newly formed Local Authorities Waters and Communities Office (LAWCO) in Ireland. LAWCO’s remit includes promoting knowledge sharing of implementing river basin management plans and associated measures across different bodies. The approach is driving public and private bodies and communities to think about how best to deliver catchment management within the context of challenging funding conditions. Therefore, the workshop provided a timely platform for WaterLIFE to share its experiences to date.

This is one of a series of WaterLIFE workshops. Visit www.waterlife.org.uk to read previous workshop reports.

The workshop

From a WaterLIFE knowledge exchange perspective, the workshop objectives were:

- To share WaterLIFE and Catchment Based Approach objectives, lessons and impacts to date
- To provide UK collaborative delivery examples
- To learn about recent developments in collaborative water management in Ireland

Participants had the opportunity to hear about WaterLIFE, its objectives, and successes to date. There was a specific focus on collaborative delivery examples, including: Water stewardship work with Coca-Cola in East Anglia, collaborative working in the Soar catchment and use of data and evidence in driving decision-making and implementation of measures.

The workshop was successful in bringing together a wide range of partners to share different experiences and learnings. The lengthy discussions that took place throughout both days reflected the level of engagement and interest in the room.

Participants

Between 40-50 delegates attended (most stayed for the full two days) from a range of organisations from across the public and third sector including LAWCO, IRD Dulhallow, the Irish Department of Environment, Community and Local Government, WWF, The Rivers Trust, Cork County Council as well as many representatives from LEADER-funded projects.

Outcomes

Key learnings from the workshop

There is appetite for collaborative delivery in Ireland

With LAWCO newly established with a clear commitment to public participation and a bottom-up approach, the time seems ripe to really drive collective action and delivery.

There are differences in the UK and Ireland context and experience. For example, in England, only 17% of rivers are in good status under WFD whilst in Ireland the equivalent figure is 53%. Parts of England are affected by water scarcity whereas this is not an issue in Ireland.

However, there are also some common challenges – ever-decreasing public funding for the environment, the need for greater public engagement and wider participation in water management and the extent of the impact of rural pollution upon freshwater.

There are early signs of rivers' trusts and catchment management groups being set up in Ireland. This suggests that continuing to disseminate experiences of implementing the catchment based approach in England will be of value. Equally, it is clear that there is valuable information arising from the new approach in Ireland suggesting that the two-way knowledge exchange should continue. As a consequence, it is recommended that WaterLIFE should keep in communication with LAWCO.

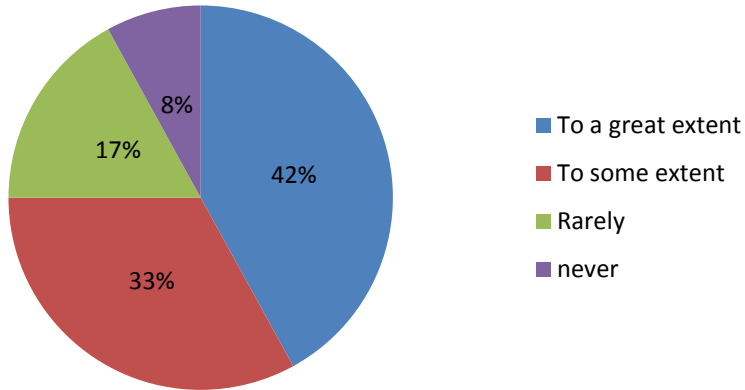
There is scope for future knowledge exchange with Ireland with respect to improving the water environment through collective action and collaborative delivery.

The workshop provided a useful platform to share WaterLIFE experiences and catchment work. However, perhaps a useful follow on from this workshop would be for Irish representatives to visit WaterLIFE catchments. This would enable them to see first-hand the impact of the approach, as well as speak to some of the organisations involved.

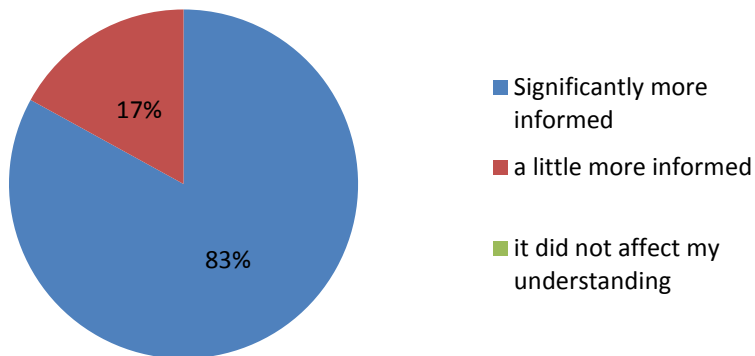
Evaluation

Delegates were asked to complete a short feedback form to measure to extent to which the learnings and successes from WaterLIFE had increased their understanding of the UK catchment management experience. 83% of respondents were significantly more informed about the catchment based approach and collaboratively delivery (and its impact) after the workshop.

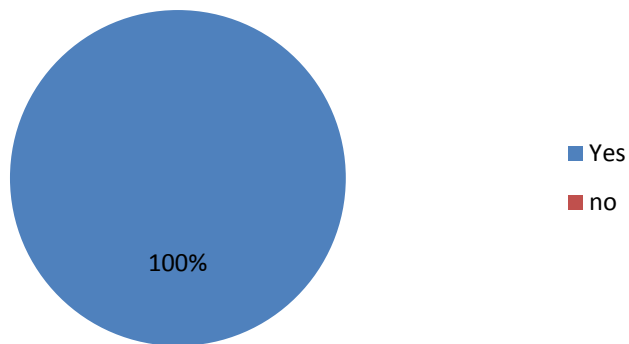
Do you currently work with other organisations to deliver improvements to the water environment?



Are you more informed about the catchment based approach and its impact?



Will you explore doing anything differently because of the workshop?



Next steps

- Share workshop report and additional WaterLIFE guidance sheets with workshop delegates. During the workshop, delegates were made aware of various products including guidance for engaging the public, a booklet aimed at implementing water stewardship on the ground.
- Share CaBA case studies booklet. During the workshop, a variety of collaborative delivery examples were shared. To enable workshop attendees to fully digest these, we will share the newly published booklet of CaBA good practice.
- Scope potential follow up visit from LAWCO to WaterLIFE catchments. After the workshop, there was interest from LAWCO in visiting the UK to see some of this work first hand.

Contacts

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Gallery

Dr Fran Igoe, examining river
life following a 'kick-sample'



Newly created pond at IRD Dulhallow to remove
phosphorus runoff from the golf course

