Achieving success through partnerships

A how to guide for building capacity within partnerships

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1. Getting started

Stakeholder engagement

Strong, effective and sustainable partnership working at the catchment scale requires collaboration across a broad and diverse range of organisations, including environmental NGO's, businesses, local government, water companies, and local communities. Achieving this diversity and strength enables partnerships to address a wide range of issues across the full breadth of land and water management, and increase the likelihood of securing funding. It also enables the adoption of a holistic and integrated approach that can yield multiple benefits for the environment, people and local economy.

Growing a partnership from scratch is a significant challenge and one that requires individuals skilled in a range of engagement techniques, underpinned by the need to communicate clearly the benefits to potential new partners of collaborative working. To achieve the necessary skill set to undertake this engagement a range of tools are available that typically encompass:

- Context and principles to consider when engaging with stakeholders
- Designing and planning a stakeholder engagement process
- Specific stakeholder engagement techniques

Tools developed under WaterLIFE provide guidance with respect to engagement with specific stakeholder groups including local authorities, water companies and businesses. One common theme is the need to understand the business drivers of each particular stakeholder and to convey the benefits of collaborative working.

Open Data

The provision of open data is a key 'enabling condition' with respect to the building of capacity and underpins multiple elements of partnership working, including a collective understanding of the pressures impacting upon a catchment and the prioritisation of action. Within the Catchment Based Approach, the multi-organisational Catchment Data User Group (CDUG) has realised the release of multiple data layers to catchment partnerships nationwide, a number of which had previously been inaccessible due to licensing and IP issues. The 100+ datasets have been released both in pdf and GIS format and include land use and management, WFD pressures and status, flood risk maps, protected area status and outputs from various predictive tools and models.

A guidance document accompanies the data package and is structured around a series of key questions designed to prompt deeper analysis:

- Where are the opportunities for action in the catchment?
- What are the well-known issues in the catchment?
- What are the key characteristics of the catchment?
- What are the suspected causes of problems in the catchment?
- What measures are most likely to have a positive impact?

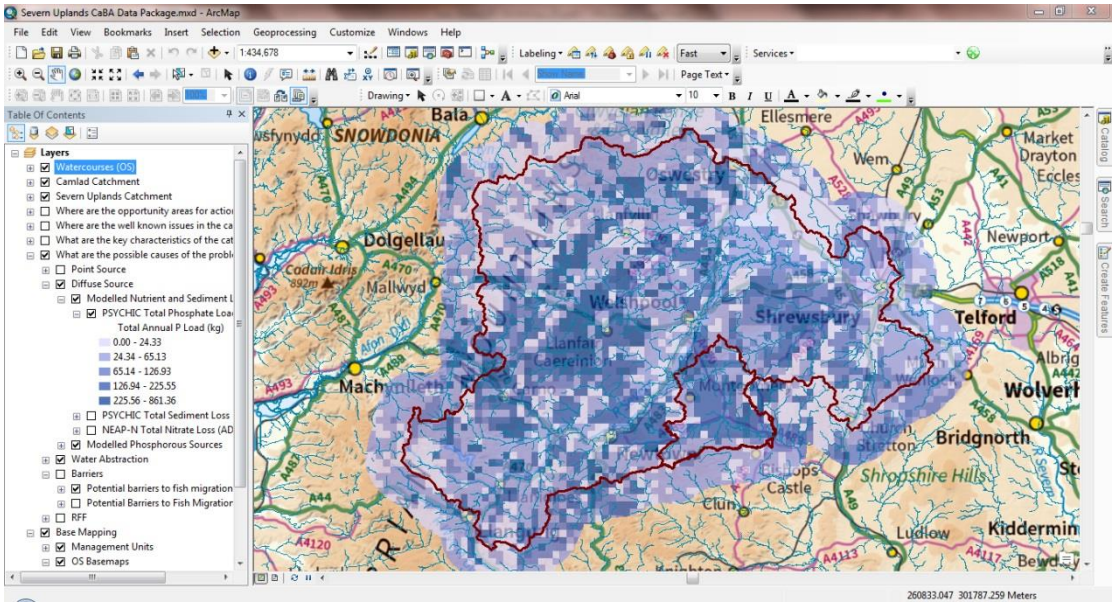

Figure 1 Screenshot illustrating the data set in the Upper Severn

Building expertise in data and evidence

Technical support to partnerships with respect to GIS and the analysis of data and evidence is key to the building of partnership capacity and expertise, and to the numerous benefits that that in turn can drive, including:

- A collective partnership understanding of the pressures facing their catchment
- A mechanism for engaging and building collaboration
- Identification of opportunities for interventions, including those that give rise to multiple benefits
- Collective prioritisation of those interventions
- Securing funds for measures
- Ability to challenge and engage in river basin management

Case study - Flood risk management in the Soar

Under WaterLIFE, capacity building support with respect to data and evidence has enabled the Soar Catchment Partnership, led by Trent Rivers Trust, to build a collective understanding of flood risk catchment-wide, drawing in additional key stakeholders and sourcing funds to manage that risk. The Soar has rural headwaters that flow into the Leicester City. The watercourse suffers from heavy silt loads and the siltation of pipes and culverts requires regular maintenance and is an important contributing factor in the high flood risk apparent in the lower catchment, with up to 3,000 properties at risk in the Leicester itself. Together with flood risk mapping and predictions of sediment loss and transport downstream (Figures 2 and 3), the suite of data and evidence has led to the funding of an innovative ‘fingerprinting’ approach to determine the sources of sediment eroded across the wider catchment. Funded by Leicester City Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership, the fingerprinting approach will help to target interventions throughout the sub-catchment of the Willow Brook that will not only trap sediment and hold back water, thereby reducing flood risk, but that also provide habitat and community benefits too. It may also reduce maintenance costs for culverts and navigation.

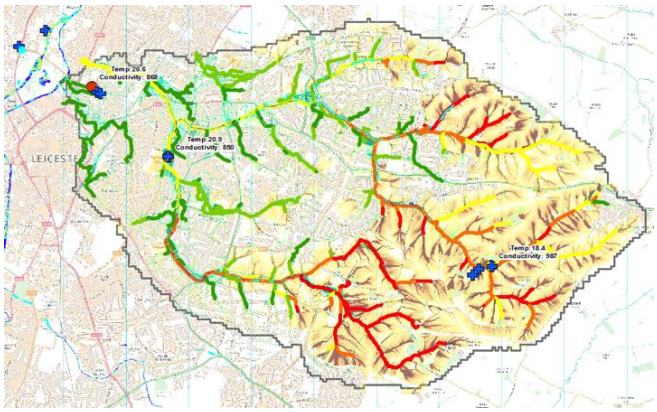

Figure 2 ArcGIS Desktop map showing combined Scimap fine sediment source risk (rural only) and in-channel sediment accumulation within the Soar. This map helps identify areas in the upper catchment that could be targeted for wetlands, riparian woodland and other interventions, which could provide a benefit in terms of sediment reduction, surface and fluvial flood risk reduction.

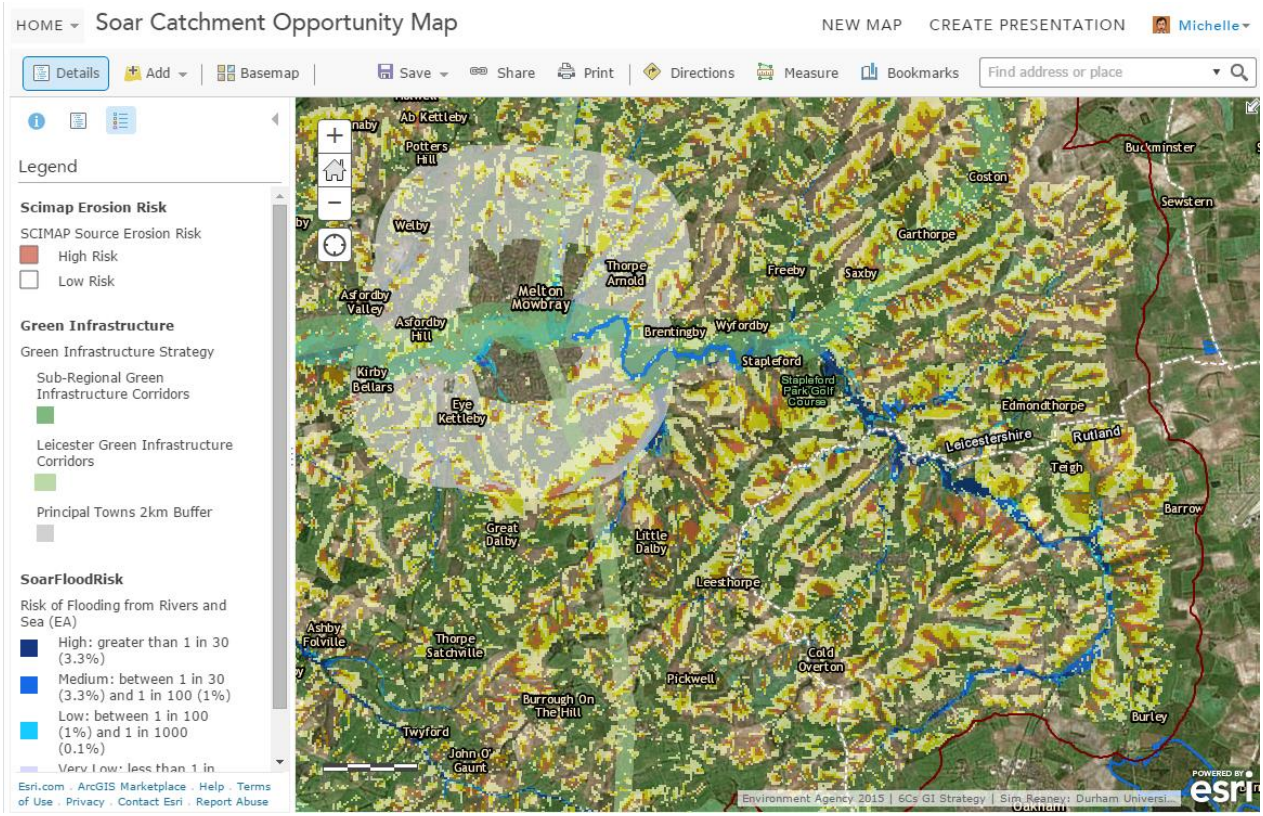

Figure 3 ArcGIS Online map showing areas within the Soar with potential multiple benefit opportunities, encompassing green infrastructure solutions to flood risk and sediment loss.

Case study - Participatory ecosystem services visualisation in the Upper Severn

The availability of multiple data layers enables a process of stakeholder-led spatial visualisation of ecosystem services across a catchment. During this participatory process, stakeholders and technical specialists work, ideally, with a facilitator to collate and scrutinise all of the data and evidence relating to environmental infrastructure and ecosystem services provision for their area of interest.

Once the evidence has been evaluated, the partnership then works to develop a series of conceptual models or ‘rules’ that can be used to define areas of the catchment most likely to play

a critical role in the provision of the different ecosystem services singly or in combination. These priority areas are locations where a programme of measures may realise the greatest enhancement in the provision of multiple ecosystem services. This data visualisation and evidence exploration process facilitates the development of a shared vision and language in a catchment group. It also enables a partnership to map opportunities for interventions that can subsequently feed into more rounded project plans.

Provided sufficient data layers are available, the approach can encompass a wide range of ecosystem services (Figure 4) including the provision of food and clean drinking water, alleviating the risk of flooding and drought, provision of habitat for wildlife and biodiversity, carbon regulation, tourism, recreation and leisure. Combination of the resultant data layers can lead to the identification of areas important for the provision of multiple ecosystem services, where interventions can realise multiple benefits.

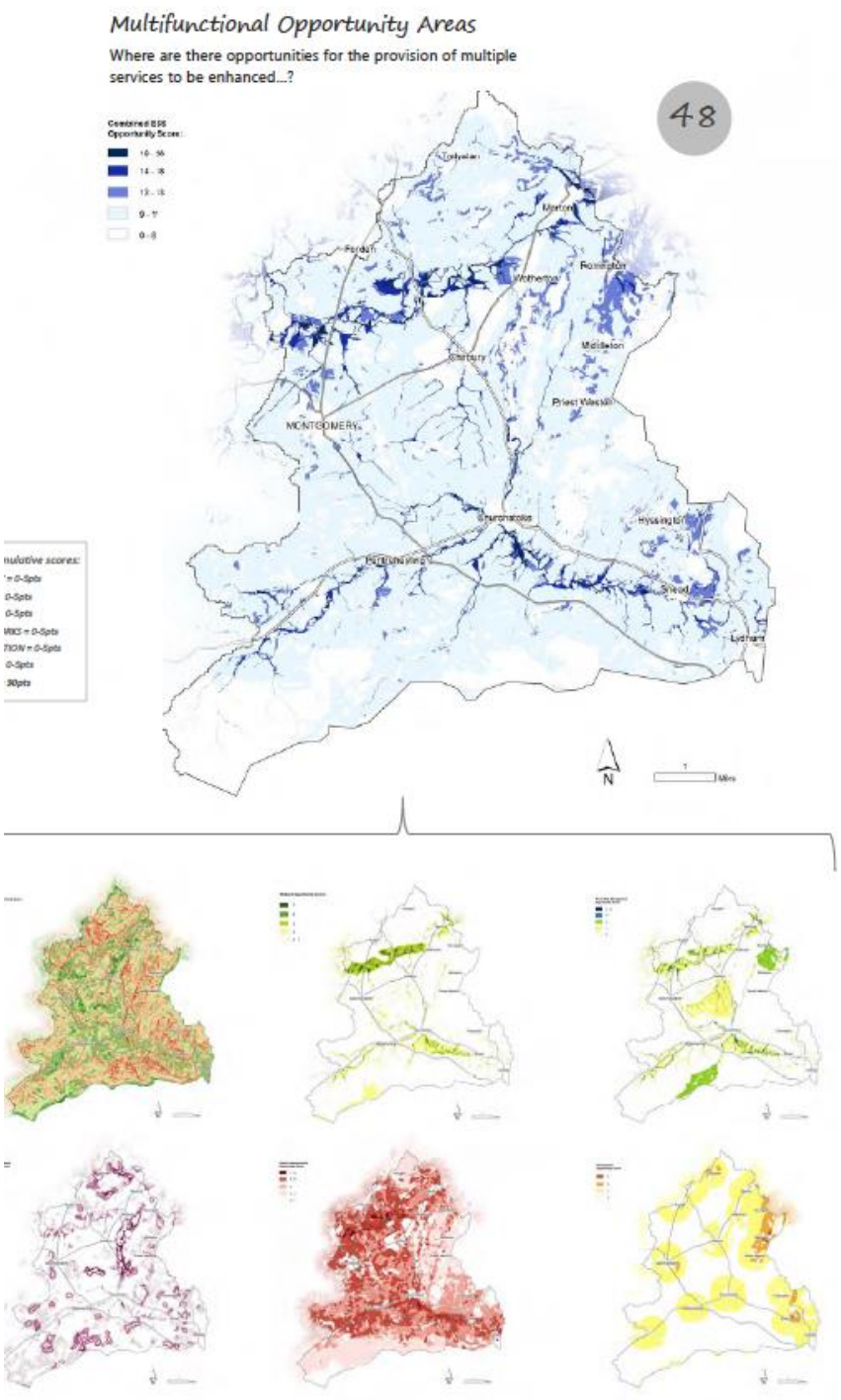

Figure 4 Combination of ecosystem service layers into a multifunctional opportunity map for the Camlad, Upper Severn

Catchment plans prioritise action and maximise opportunity

Data and evidence underpin the potential to develop a series of individual project plans, whereby a partnership has collectively prioritised a series of interventions, backing them up with robust evidence and identifying outcomes, funding sources, timelines and roles and responsibilities. Capturing this information within a succinct ‘catchment plan’ conveys the impression of a

professional and technically proficient partnership to external audiences, increasing confidence in that partnership as a delivery partner and the likelihood of securing funding.

The Soar Catchment Partnership undertook an in-depth analysis of the CaBA database, feeding in additional local data to enable priorities to be determined using a data and evidence based approach. The catchment has been divided into nine smaller sub catchments, each with a series of maps highlighting the needs, opportunities and key objectives. This information forms the framework for the Soar catchment plan.

Case study - Tamar Fisheries Forum and Fisheries Plan

In many catchments there are often specialist groups with very particular and focused interests in the freshwater environment who can be very valuable contributors to the development of a catchment plan. These can include groups with interests in fisheries, as well as specialist societies and associations that make use of the river in some way, for example for recreational use.

The Tamar Fisheries Forum is a stakeholder group that has come together to discuss the health of fisheries in the Tamar catchment; the issues these fisheries face; and to explore what might be done to improve them. They meet two or three times a year with the aim of gathering and sharing data and information on fisheries in the catchment and building consensus as to the state of these fisheries. The group is also developing a catchment fisheries plan, outlining what needs to be done to improve fisheries and meet the aspirations of the Fisheries Forum members. The group aims to balance economic and environmental priorities for fisheries within the catchment and provide a forum for local groups to ‘manage upwards’, based on local knowledge, experience and commitment.

The Forum shares information about its plans and activities with the catchment partnership, so that funding, projects and voluntary activities in the catchment can be aligned where opportunities arise.

2. Building momentum and broadening the partnership

Building an understanding of the Water Framework Directive and wider benefits

To an emerging partnership, understanding the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and related legislation can present a sizeable challenge and provide a barrier to engagement. Research under WaterLIFE has shown that community organisations need a 'hook' or mechanism by which they can take ownership of an issue and drive through positive outcomes.

In this respect it is important that the capacity building process makes clear that opportunities to engage exist, not only directly related to WFD objectives, but also more indirectly too, particularly with respect to community engagement with freshwater. With respect to the latter, river clean-up projects, efforts to control or eradicate freshwater invasive species, vegetation management and pathway maintenance can all help a fledging partnership to not only work collaboratively through action on the ground, but to also develop a stronger understanding of the wider issues impacting a watercourse.

The Upper Severn WaterLIFE demonstration catchment provides an example of the development and empowerment of a local community group. The River Severn Custodians in Newtown began as an invasive species removal community group and have developed into a local hub for river engagement and a link with WFD delivery partners. They are now undertaking Riverfly monitoring, delivering informative talks to the wider population, working with local schools, monitoring river channel change, removing litter and sharing their enthusiasm for river wildlife via social media, press and at local events. They form part of a network of ten community groups in the Upper Severn catchment.

In Leicester, a strong partnership has developed across the River Soar, due in part to the existence of a well-established team of riverside officers, employed by Leicester City Council. This team had already been working on the river carrying out a wide range of duties, many of which are directly connected to issues of pollution, litter and wider environmental quality. Their work continues, within the branding of the wider catchment partnership, as many of the respective objectives are the same.

Citizen science – empowering partnerships

Catchment partnerships and community organisations more generally can be significantly empowered through developing the capacity and expertise to capture their own environmental datasets. Such datasets can be derived from a range of environmental monitoring including of water quality and biological parameters, invasive species, riparian habitat, barriers to fish migration, wet weather walkover surveys to identify pollution sources, monitoring of outfalls, identification of misconnections and many more. Provided that data is collected using recognised techniques, the information that is derived can provide an important 'weight of evidence' with which to improve understanding of the pressures impacting upon watercourses, the impacts that arise, and the most appropriate and cost effective measures for addressing them.

A growing recognition of the importance of citizen science reflects the reality that monitoring by regulatory authorities will always be limited to some extent in its temporal and spatial resolution, and especially so in times of resource constraints. The emergence of citizen science has also been driven in part through the availability and relatively low cost of a range of supporting technologies. These include water quality monitoring kits that can address a range of parameters, mobile apps and web-based data management systems, together with a range of 'how-to' guides. Under WaterLIFE, a Citizen Science and Volunteer Monitoring Resource Pack has been developed, capturing a wealth of information.

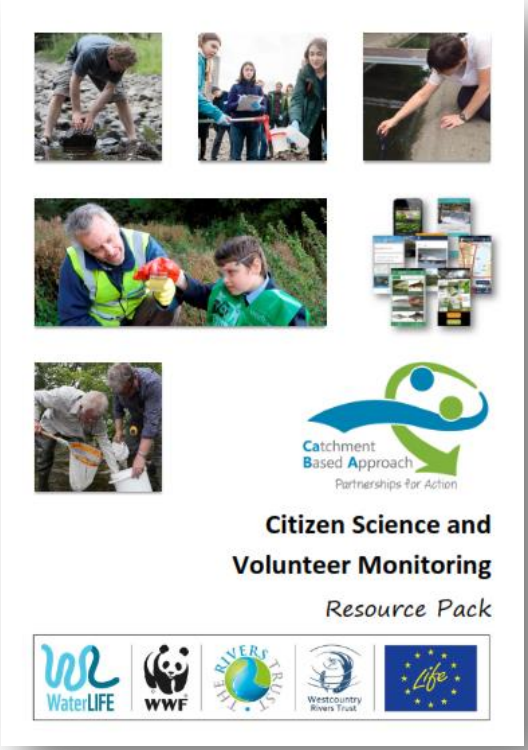

Figure 5 The Citizen Science and Volunteer Monitoring Resource Pack

Case study – Riverfly Partnership

The Riverfly Monitoring Initiative (www.riverflies.org) is an outstanding example of citizen science, enabling volunteers to monitor the health of their local rivers in order to detect serious pollution incidents early and ensure a rapid response by regulatory authorities. Indeed, part of its success lies in the knowledge that the information it realises will be used and acted upon.

Riverfly species (and other freshwater invertebrates) are at the heart of the freshwater ecosystem and are a vital link in the aquatic food chain. Riverfly populations are affected by many factors; particularly water quality, habitat diversity, water level and flow rate. Their common characteristics of limited mobility, relatively long life cycle, presence throughout the year and specific tolerances to changes in environmental conditions make them powerful biological indicators to monitor water quality, and are commonly referred to as 'the canary of our rivers.'

Using its engagement with partner organisations and the wider community, Severn Rivers Trust has to date trained 241 individuals in Riverfly monitoring techniques that collectively sample 92 sites on 46 different rivers. The monitors provide the eyes and ears of the river and in one year alone have led to investigations into four events where sampling results have triggered a response. Riverfly monitors in the Severn were also the first to identify a national decline in Gammarus – a native crustacean.

All the site details and historical data are currently being uploaded onto the new national database, which is being hosted by the Freshwater Biological Association (FBA). Once this is operational all Riverfly monitors will receive a password and access to the database where they will not only be able to enter their results directly, but view other monitoring datasets too.

Case study - Tamar Citizen Science Investigations

Tamar CSI (Citizen Science Investigations) aims to encourage local interest groups, residents and communities to engage with their local river catchment and become actively involved in its

environmental protection. By developing a network and web platform, simple records of minor river pollution incidents in the Tamar catchment can be gathered, categorised and reported to the main partners - namely the Environment Agency and South West Water - via Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT). Minor water pollution incidents are recorded and submitted through an app or website on a personal communication tool such as a mobile phone or tablet.

WRT then acts to gather and coordinate communication links whereby all reports may be mapped and evaluated to identify or track high risk areas or those with certain recurrent issues, allowing feedback to partners and the ability to target responses tackling water pollution.

Large pollution incidents are generally dealt with swiftly, whereas numerous small-scale incidents are often overlooked but cumulatively create a significant impact on the quality of both fresh and coastal waters. By utilising a quick and simple means of reporting small pollution incidents, not only will the relevant authorities be better informed to understand the true scale of pollutants in the catchment, it will also enable the local community to influence outcomes and generate pressure for better environmental conditions to become the norm.

Tamar CSI encourages community involvement within the Tamar catchment area to get more people activity involved in their local freshwater environment, by encouraging local people to adopt the habit of looking more closely at their local river or stream to gain a better understanding of how healthy their river is and how they can help to bring about positive change.

3. Create an identity and build an audience

Catchment partnerships typically bring together a core group of organisations, businesses and interest groups that have a clear and direct connection to, and interest in, the freshwater environment. They usually include local environmental NGO's, such as Rivers Trusts & Wildlife Trusts; representatives from relevant government bodies such as the Environment Agency and Natural England, National Parks and AONBs; the water company; and often specialist local interest groups such as Angling Associations.

Uniting the core partnership under a common identity and public facing brand can help provide the hook with which to attract and engage a wider group of 'non-usual' businesses and civil society groups or organisations, and raise funds through mechanisms such as corporate social responsibility or payments for ecosystem services to support projects identified in the partnership action plan.

Case study - My Tamar Campaign and Festival

In the summer of 2015, Westcountry Rivers Trust developed and delivered a campaign to celebrate the River Tamar, engaging and inspiring the local community to take action to protect and improve their river. The aim of the campaign was to raise awareness of the activities of the Tamar Catchment Partnership, gain public support and engage new businesses. The campaign was designed to help communities understand the value of the River Tamar from an ecological, sociological and recreational standpoint, while also appealing to local businesses and encouraging them to get involved.

The approach

Developing a concept and brand that would appeal to a number of different audiences was key. This was achieved through top-level audience research and analysis; to understand target audiences and develop a strong concept, brand and tone of voice to use across all materials and content. Materials and content included development of the My Tamar logos, creation of a My Tamar animation, a website and a Facebook page, as well as My Tamar leaflets, posters, badges and stickers.

Figure 6 Logos, leaflets and posters developed for the Tamar campaign and for use by the Tamar Catchment Partnership

Having developed the campaign materials, Westcountry Rivers Trust hit the road on a summer tour of events in the Tamar catchment to explore current feeling about what communities (schools, businesses and individuals) living in the Tamar catchment thought about their water environment. People living and working in the Tamar catchment were invited to share their Tamar photos in a photo competition, share stories about what the river meant to them, and create their own artwork inspired by the river and local environment. The tour aimed to unite people living and working in the Tamar catchment, raising awareness about the resources the river provides and the health of freshwater ecosystems. As well as raising awareness, the tour also aimed to inform and update people on activities delivered through the Tamar Catchment Partnership, and the actions they can take to protect and improve freshwater environments. Ultimately, awareness and engagement leads to behaviour change, where individuals, businesses and organisations are encouraged to take action and make small changes to make a collective difference to their river.

The summer tour culminated in the Tamar Festival which took place at Cotehele Quay, a National Trust property situated on the banks of the river. The festival was organised along four key Tamar themes; the environment, arts & heritage, food & produce, and recreation. Members of the Tamar Catchment Partnership were able to showcase projects and activities currently underway to protect and restore the river for future generations. Also on show was an array of local produce, artists and community groups based along the river, and attendees at the festival enjoyed live music, craft workshops, water quality testing demonstrations and a series of River Tamar talks throughout the day. A wide variety of new businesses and local interest groups contributed to the Festival and around 400 people visited the event on the day.

Figure 7 Photos from the Tamar Festival

Developing a strong identity for the River Tamar and the Tamar Catchment Partnership enabled engagement with some of the non-usual interests in the catchment. It has also provided a platform on which the partnership can further grow and develop its relationships with businesses and community groups within the catchment.

www.waterlife.org