

CATCH II: stakeholders' perceptions of connections for integrated catchment management



Final Report

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- Cooksley *et al* (2012) *CATCH II*, final report
- Morris *et al* (2012) *CATCH II workshop*, final report
- Potts and Stojanovic (2012) *Linking coasts and catchments*, final report and research summary
- Spray (2012) *Review of operational experiences and approaches to the implementation of an ecosystems approach and ecosystem services within integrated catchment management in policy and practice*, final report and research summary
- Spray (2012) *Review of operational experiences and approaches to the implementation of an ecosystems approach and ecosystem services within integrated catchment management in policy and practice*, final report and research summary

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Executive Summary

Background to research

Integrated catchment management (ICM) is a popular way of managing our resources, and entails making various connections between sectors, stakeholders, policy and practitioners. Making all these connections is challenging; however, there is an increasing drive to connect catchment management with policy processes (particularly the Water Framework Directive, WFD, and Floods Directive, FD) so understanding where and how to improve ICM is key.

Scotland is well placed to advance integrated catchment management, but in order to identify where connections must be improved (and to capture insights about how to achieve this), it is necessary to review the ideas and insights of stakeholders connected with ICM. This will assist future initiatives to more effectively connect stakeholders, processes and plans in order to deliver ICM.

Objectives of research

The core CATCH II project aimed to elicit views about connecting insights, processes and planning for the delivery of integrated catchment management (ICM), from a variety of stakeholders connected with planning and implementing of ICM. Views were obtained via a questionnaire survey.

Key findings and recommendations

Those surveyed by this project felt that connections could be improved, particularly across scales, but there were positive ongoing examples of initiatives and processes that could promote connections for ICM. Survey respondents noted that shared working groups and training can help bring together different groups on shared problems, whilst funding opportunities that reflect integrated policy goals can be particularly useful for also connecting 'top down' priorities with issues of local relevance to land-owners. Resourcing for events and initiatives which are not 'mission critical' or directly producing action on the ground was also seen to be invaluable, in allowing new connections to be made and new shared interests to be identified. Respondents highlighted the importance of ensuring that all such efforts to improve connections build on and relate to existing valued networks, and use best practice in communication methods.

Key words

Integrated catchment management, cross-scale management, multi-level governance, stakeholder participation



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, the catchment scale is recognised as an appropriate scale for effective environmental management. To deliver commitments to the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Flood Risk Management Act, agencies are increasingly aiming to operate at this scale and are adopting elements of catchment management. As the next step in river basin management plan (RBMP) implementation, the Scottish Government is interested in developing a strategic approach to integrated catchment management. This represents a step change for catchment management in Scotland.

It is widely advocated that to improve delivery of our various policy commitments to safeguard the water environment, catchment management must be ‘integrated’ or even ‘fully integrated’. However, achieving integrated catchment management (ICM) is generally agreed to be challenging (van Zyl, 1995). Compounding this, it can be hard to define what and who are to be integrated, and exactly what this integration involves. However, much of this approach entails making better connections: between sectors involved in managing the water environment, between catchment managers and local-level stakeholders, and between policy priorities or top-down planning processes. Improving connections has not proved easy for catchment management (or indeed for other fields of natural resource management), and is a topic requiring further evidence and research (e.g. Marshall et al., 2010). There is advice and guidance about catchment management (in particular, see the CATCH handbook¹) but no recipe for action that guarantees all relevant connections can be achieved.

Despite these challenges, Scotland is well-placed to advance the practice of ICM and improve connections. ICM is already being undertaken by partnership bodies in several areas in Scotland (notably the Dee, Tweed, Spey and South Esk catchments). These projects (linked by the CATCH network) have a considerable depth of knowledge and experience, although they tend to lack visibility outside of their catchments. However, to understand exactly what the current state of connections is, it is necessary to explore the views of those connected to ICM. Furthermore, it is useful to explore ideas for improving connections. This can help to prioritise and plan future initiatives in order that they most effectively improve connections for ICM.

This project therefore aimed to understand perceptions and ideas about ICM and existing connections by surveying key individuals connected with initiatives for ICM in Scotland. We wished to explore i) perceptions of existing connections ii) challenges to improving connections and iii) ideas and opportunities for improving connections in Scotland.

2.0 METHOD

We used a questionnaire (Appendix I) to collect views about connecting insights, processes and planning for the delivery of integrated catchment management (ICM). The questionnaire used a mixture of

¹http://catch.macaulay.ac.uk/sites/catch.macaulay.ac.uk/files/Catch%20Booklet%20Web%20Version_3.pdf

closed and open questions. The closed questions allowed for concise answers and easy comparison between respondents, whilst the open questions gave an opportunity to capture more detailed views and ideas. There were some additional questions at the end for catchment planning officers and Area Advisory Group coordinators. Responses were stored in Excel, and categorical or ordered responses to closed questions were analysed using simple descriptive statistics.

The responses were presented at a CATCH II workshop in March 2012, Edinburgh, to which all respondents were invited. This acted as a form of checking on our findings and interpretations. No objections or significant additions were suggested at this workshop, so the presentation and discussion there is broadly consistent with the messages of this report.

2.1 Who took part?

The questionnaire was sent by email to 90 individuals working in policy or practice relating to some aspect of protecting the water environment or to integrated catchment management. Individuals were identified through existing policy and practitioner contacts in the field of water management known to the project team and via the CATCH network. There were 18 individual respondents from all major policy and practitioner groups connected with ICM (Table 1), although one response represented a team of eight people. Three people connected with coastal management also completed the questionnaire but their responses are incorporated in the sister report from the CATCH project on coastal management (Potts and Stojanovic, 2012). Responses presented at that meeting and in this report are anonymised in order to protect respondent confidentiality.

Table 1 – Respondents to the CATCH II survey

Group	Respondent type
National-level policy-makers and statutory agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scottish Government (2) ○ Forestry Commission Scotland ○ Scottish Water ○ SEPA (4) ○ Sniffer
Local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Aberdeenshire Council ○ COSLA
Catchment and coast partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ River South Esk Catchment Partnership/Angus Council ○ Tweed Forum ○ Dee Catchment Partnership
Other third sector and management interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RSPB Scotland ○ Scottish Wildlife Trust ○ Loch Lomond & the Trossachs ○ National Park Authority

3.0 FINDINGS

The main findings are presented by the key questions that we used to focus our analysis of the questionnaire responses. We should note that there was usually no indication of strong differences in

the views of different groups of respondents (i.e. between catchment managers and between policy-makers) but our sample size makes it challenging to detect any such differences.

3.1 Perceptions of the current situation

We did not wish to assume that those working in ICM or related fields felt that improving connections was seen as a problematic issue that required improvement. We therefore explored perceptions of how well connections were already being made for ICM. As Table 2 shows, respondents generally judged that although the situation was not very poor, it could also be improved.

Table 2 Responses to the questions about how well various types of connections were being made. Responses were captured on a 4-point Likert-type scale.

Rating of how connections are made between:	Scales	Sectors	Policy/ planning processes	People
Very Poorly	0	0	2	0
Poorly	6	7	1	3
Well	8	8	9	8
Very Well	2	1	4	4

Furthermore, when we directly asked about the importance of making connections versus other issues, no-one said that efforts to build connections should be a low priority: all said it was fairly or very important. We take this as evidence that further efforts should be made to improve connections for ICM in Scotland.

3.2 Problems and challenges for improving connections

Below we synthesise and describe the key challenges identified across the dataset. These challenges are interrelated.

- *Silo working and insufficient alignment of priorities*

It is commonly perceived that different policy departments are accustomed to working separately. This is mainly understood to be a ‘cultural’ problem, but it may also be that departments do not fully recognise their duty to further the conservation of biodiversity, which relates to ICM goals.

- *Time pressure*

It can seem wasteful, particularly by publicly-funded employees, for anyone to spend time on anything not directly necessary for achieving their formal goals or statutory duties. However, all initiatives and links require time for the individuals involved to undertake formal and tacit learning about other people, interests, mindsets, sectors and policies. Lack of time is a critical barrier to realising successful links, and

there is likely to be little success with any initiatives to improve connections if at least some of the individuals do not have time specifically allocated to this.

- *Lack of resources*

Resources are needed to fund staff time, but also for myriad initiatives to provide opportunities to build connections, or practical initiatives to achieve ICM. Respondents thought that resources were needed across all levels and sectors, from funding agency staff to attend non-essential meetings, through to providing funding for practical works that land-managers can undertake to deliver practical improvements. Even relatively modest funding was seen to help provide opportunities for connections, so lack of resourcing could be a false economy. Where it is available, funding can be a powerful tool to connect with a wide range of stakeholders, but not if it reflects on single issues or goals, or is not well communicated across networks.

- *Less than optimal communication processes*

Respondents reported that they sometimes perceived a lack of openness or transparency. Data confidentiality requirements, whether real or perceived, can sometimes act as a barrier to specific data sharing initiatives. However, it is more often a pervasive non-deliberate opaqueness or lack of accessibility that mean those looking to improve connections cannot find the information or contacts they need to do so. Similar to allowing time, providing information is rarely a key priority for any individual or organisation whose resources are focused on tackling environmental problems. Where information is provided it is often thought to be in a form that is inaccessible or hard to explore. There are basic and obvious principles of communication but they are not always followed. As a result finding information often relies instead on someone knowing key contacts. Thus, existing networks are relied on but are sometimes hard to expand, or to access by newcomers. It is also the case that newer initiatives can risk not learning from (or reinventing) the work of existing initiatives. This is particularly true for cross-scale connections: there was a perception that existing catchment management organisations were not sufficiently linked to policy-led initiatives for River Basin Planning or Flood Risk Management.

- *Lack of drivers to make connections*

ICM is advocated by academics and practitioners in catchment organisations, and is increasingly thought relevant to policy goals under the Water Framework and Floods Directives. However, no stakeholder group is under statutory obligations to achieve ICM. Therefore, if time and resources are tight, there are few drivers to promote ICM, even though this may cause inefficient sub-optimal outcomes in the long-term. Widespread acceptance that ICM matters will help, but resources must also be allowed to support progress to what can appear to be a 'non-essential' goal.

3.3 Opportunities and ideas for improving connections

Respondents mentioned a number of current initiatives as being useful for helping to build connections. These can be learnt from to improve other and future efforts. However, to avoid duplication, and for efficient use of resources, it was seen to be wise to build on existing initiatives.

- *Existing forums for information exchange*

These forums can help to build and share specific knowledge and may often at the same time help sectors and individuals to learn about each other. The SEweb

(<http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/>) was given as an example of such a forum.

- *Existing networks designed to connect different sectors and individuals.*

These operate at different scales: indeed there is probably no one 'best' scale for a network to be designed or operated at or that can encompass all sectors and all issues. Examples of existing networks given were catchment management groups (see <http://catch.macauley.ac.uk/>) and RBMP implementation groups (see http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx)

- *Existing processes to connect policy areas*

There are already some opportunities to link delivery of key policy objectives with ongoing planning processes. In particular, respondents noted that the growing links between River Basin Management Planning and Flood Risk Management Planning should be encouraged. Offering specific training and resources was also felt useful for practically encouraging and enabling connections.

- *Targeted training on specific issues.*

Focusing on a specific issue can help to bring together different interests and sectors. Shared training can be one way to achieve this, whilst also investing in people and improving the skillset needed to tackle ICM issues. An example of this was training on Invasive Non-Native Species which had been delivered to agency and non-agency partners.

- *Compatible funding opportunities.*

High level policy goals can be encouraged by supporting funding opportunities whose criteria are compatible with one or more policy goals, in order to allow participation of catchment partnerships or individuals and land-managers. In this way work can be carried out that is perceived as locally relevant as well compatible with higher-level policy goals. The SEPA Restoration Funding was the main example given of this (http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/restoration_fund.aspx). Respondents also made a number of more abstract suggestions that did not refer to any specific ongoing initiative. These nicely tie with the examples that were given of existing initiatives, and suggest a number of steps in order to identify which existing processes and networks to build on.

- Encourage strategic thinking by policy makers reviewing existing policy goals to identify shared outcomes and opportunities to link these with existing planning processes

- All sectors to become involved in setting up joint working parties to focus on specific issues

- Identify and use key individuals as intermediaries or brokers able to connect different sectors
- Deliberately support and resource networks (CATCH II was mentioned as useful)
- Provide support for existing and new partnership working/ meetings
- Resource agency staff to spend time building links and attending meetings not directly linked to statutory obligations and duties.



4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Existing connections between policies, sectors and individuals for ICM are generally seen as in a fair state, but there is a generally perceived need to improve these, and in particular to connect across scales and sectors. In the main the challenges for achieving improved connections are not new: they relate to a lack of time, resources and compelling drivers for ICM, but also to customs and work cultures which may not encourage communication and connections beyond specific sectors and departments.

Attempting to make connections between different scales is particularly difficult, but funding schemes such as SEPA's Restoration Fund can be particularly useful for helping to link bottom-up interests with top-down priorities.

There are no 'silver bullets' that allow us to tackle these challenges. Instead, attention needs to be given to improving existing networks, where these are valued, and enabling forums, opportunities and resources that enable individuals to take time to learn and make new connections.



6.0 REFERENCES

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7.0 APPENDICES

Appendix I Questionnaire distributed to elicit views on connections for ICM

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1. Current situation: at present, how well are we delivering integrated catchment management in Scotland?				
In the context of:	Very poorly	Poorly	Well	Very well
a) Making connections across scales e.g. connecting catchment coordinators with the WFD.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you explain?				
In the context of:	Very poorly	Poorly	Well	Very well
b) Connecting sectors e.g. connecting agricultural interests with conservation interests.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you explain?				
In the context of:	Very poorly	Poorly	Well	Very well
c) Connecting relevant policy and planning processes with each other e.g. WFD and Floods Directive; fisheries trust plans and national park plans.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Which processes were you particularly thinking of?				
In the context of:	Very poorly	Poorly	Well	Very well
d) Personal connections e.g. being able to contact individuals in other sectors to your own.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you explain?				
Any other points?				
e) Would you like to make any additional points?				

If you have questions please contact Sue Morris: sue.morris@hutton.ac.uk 01224 395219 (direct line)

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2. Problem diagnosis:

a) In your view, why do problems with connections exist?

Can you identify specific barriers to making better connections, in the context of:

b) Sharing expertise?

c) Sharing data?

d) Integrating planning and/or regulatory processes?

e) Anything else?

3. Problem solving:

a) Is anything already happening that is helping to, or could help to make connections?

b) Is there anything else that could help to make connections better in future?

If you have questions please contact Sue Morris: sue.morris@hutton.ac.uk 01224 395219 (direct line)

4) <i>And finally ...</i> there are many challenges - yet finite resources - for achieving integrated catchment management. Bearing this in mind, do you think it is important to focus on improving connections?				
	Not at all a priority	A low priority	A fairly important priority	The number one priority
a) Improving connections should be:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
b) Can you explain your answer?				
c) Does your answer refer to any particular types of connections or issues?				
d) Is there any other information you think it would be useful for us, or that you would like us to know?				

5. Your details (so we can send you details of the workshop on 8 March and circulate our report)
Name:
Organisation:
Job title:
<u>Your role in water management in Scotland:</u>
Address:
Email:
Telephone:

Thank you ☺ for giving your time to complete this questionnaire.

Please return it to Sue Morris sue.morris@hutton.ac.uk
 Social Economic and Geographical Sciences, James Hutton Institute, Craigiebuckler, Aberdeen AB15 8QH

Questions for CATCH-II: Coastal – Catchment Integration Survey

Only for completion by:

Project Officer/Coordinators/board members of catchment planning partnerships or Area Advisory Groups

1. What kind of interaction, if any, does your catchment management process have with a local or regional coastal partnership?
2. What are the major issues that impact the coastal/estuarine parts of your catchments? Do you specifically consider these impacts in the management of the catchment?
3. Do you engage in knowledge transfer activities, projects, data exchange, or staff exchange with coastal management groups? If yes, please clarify what activities.
4. What issues aid or obstruct collaboration with those working in the coastal zone?
5. Are you aware of any particular projects developed by coastal partnership teams in your catchment area?
6. Is the integration of coastal and catchment planning and management desirable or feasible? If it was to occur, what would it look like? What are the key challenges?
7. What do you think is the appropriate scale for integration of catchment and coastal initiatives?
8. If money, resources and time were no obstacle, what kind of work would you want to see the catchment partnership do in the coastal zone?
9. What do you think are the best opportunities for collaboration with organizations involved in coastal management?
10. In your understanding and experience what constitutes an ecosystem approach in catchment and coastal management?

Thank you ☺ for giving your time to complete this additional questionnaire.

Please return it to Sue Morris sue.morris@hutton.ac.uk
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