

CATCH II: FULLY INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

Introduction

In the last decade, catchment management has seen a wealth of new “top-down” legislation and policy initiatives, such as the EU Water Framework Directive, to take forward emerging demands for better integration and delivery of multiple benefits for society and the environment at the catchment scale. In parallel, there has been a growth of “bottom up” initiatives, some of these now representing advanced integrated approaches to Integrated catchment management (ICM), for example, Tweed Forum, the Westcountry Rivers Trust and the Rivers Trusts. The *CATCH-II* project represents a key opportunity to further learn from existing ICM experience, and contribute to the challenge of making catchment management relevant to practitioners.

Key Points

Overall, ICM initiatives surveyed differ widely in size, drivers and organisational structure. Variety in the characteristics of ICM projects suggests that there is not one type of solution for ICM, and that, to be effective, ICM must respond to the particular needs of the catchment, and the governance arrangements in which it occurs. However, diversity may come at a cost. Different drivers and organisational structure may create risks for the delivery of national water policies, and skew the quality and depth of implementation.

Working at different levels remains a challenge everywhere, but no ICM initiative has opted for either further centralisation and control, or for full decentralisation. Instead, many countries have complemented traditional top-down policy instruments, characterised by delivery control internal to statutory agencies and strictly aligned national policies, with further external delivery by providing catchment-wide contractual tools, planning processes and economic incentives to local communities, voluntary organisations and the corporate sector. These instruments embrace the multi-level nature of ICM and aim to overcome competition between national and local priorities through greater partnership, integrating local priorities in national policy and further subsidiarity of decision-making.

No ICM initiative presents a single strong integrative framework. Rather, the distributed model, where policy frameworks operate mostly independently, dominates. However, some success in integration and delivery occurs in many ICM projects surveyed. Differences and conflicts between priorities and policy processes can be overcome by collective learning and creating inter-dependence in decision-making. Partnership-working is essential, for example through better communication, collaborative projects, and joint policy planning and implementation.

All ICM initiatives engaged widely with local communities and landowners. Local voluntary groups appear to be a powerful way to create a “local champion” for ICM, although vulnerable to shifting funding cycles, lack of core funding and local interests.

Research Undertaken

This research assessed selected, on-going ICM experience, in particular with regards to linking national “top-down” policy processes with local “bottom-up” catchment scale

initiatives. The focus is on opportunities and challenges to delivery of policy commitments for water management at the catchment level, in particular issues of 1) working across scales; 2) aligning policy planning processes; and 3) engaging with stakeholders and communities. Experiences of 16 ICM projects outside Scotland reflecting a diversity of scales, issues and governance arrangements are reviewed.

Policy Implications

- Governance arrangements for ICM should be adapted to the context in which it operates.
- Successful leadership for ICM can be assumed by statutory organisations, civil society, local communities or the corporate sector.
- Public policies may successfully support non-governmental ICM by setting up voluntary management planning processes and contractual agreements, and resources to support stakeholder collaboration.
- Time for collective learning should be built into decision-making processes, for example through resources for liaising and meeting and allowing rolling partnership projects.
- The statutory and policy framework should create a sense of inter-dependence among people involved, for example through co-responsibility in policy planning and delivery, and the use of policy instruments formalising co-management (e.g. contractual agreements, joint service delivery).
- Partnership working should be facilitated simultaneously at multiple levels of governance, i.e. national, regional, local.
- A mix of policy instruments (e.g. strong, clear regulatory framework, economic incentives) associated with strong local engagement is the most effective way to foster behaviour change for ICM.
- Devolution of decision-making to the lowest level is a powerful method for change, as it creates a sense of ownership and responsibility, but the process needs to be accompanied by an adequate policy framework to be effective.
- A policy framework encouraging locally-led delivery of ICM would focus on providing the resources and building the capacity of “local champions” to interpret ICM principles locally, engage with local stakeholders, deliver projects with multiple partners and act as a mediator between conflicting interests.
- A policy framework encouraging locally-led delivery of ICM would also encourage the active involvement of statutory organisations where local stakeholders fail to take forward national priorities for water management.

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