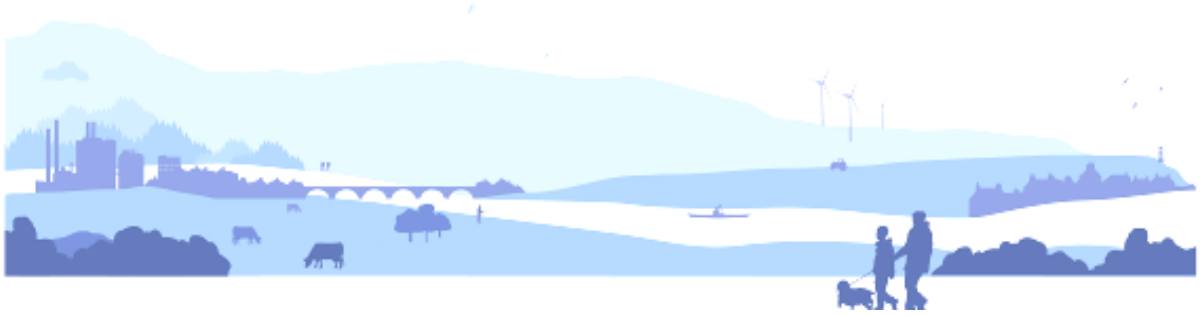


Working together to protect and improve the Solway Tweed water environment: Getting involved in developing the second river basin plan

Summary of responses

1.0 Introduction

Between 31 August 2012 and 28 February 2013, SEPA and the Environment Agency ran a consultation about the engagement required during the development of the second river basin management plan for the Solway Tweed river basin district.

This digest summarises the comments that were received during the consultation and the actions that will be taken as a result.

A consultation for the Scotland district [1] ran in conjunction with the Solway Tweed document. The Scotland summary of responses has also been published and is available on the SEPA website[2]. The Environment Agency also ran a consultation on working together to deliver river basin management and have published it on their website[3].

SEPA and the Environment Agency would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the consultation and appreciate the continued interest and support in delivering river basin planning across the Solway Tweed to protect and improve our water environment.

2.0 Summary of responses

Eleven responses were received as detailed in Table 1, copies of which are available upon request. Four responses were specific to the Solway Tweed document and seven were submissions that applied to both the Scotland and Solway Tweed river basin districts. The responses received were detailed and well informed in the river basin management planning process and its application across the Solway Tweed river basin district. The comments were very supportive of many of the ways SEPA and the Environment Agency are currently working with stakeholders but did provide additional suggestions of actions that SEPA, the Environment Agency and others could do that would improve the way we work together as we move toward the second cycle of river basin planning.

Table 1. Respondents to Solway Tweed consultation 2012-2013

Organisation - * denotes a response specific to Solway Tweed
Forestry Commission Scotland*
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Natural England*
Tweed Forum (21 members)*
Cumbria County Council*
Royal Yachting Association
Scottish Natural Heritage
Micro Hydro Association - a national organisation based in Scotland
Association of Salmon Fisheries Board and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland
Scottish Water
Scottish Land & Estates

[1] http://www.sepa.org.uk/about_us/consultations/closed_consultations.aspx
[2] http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning.aspx
[3] https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/portal/ho/wfd/working/together2012

The responses are summarised into the following three themes:

- Engagement and partnership working.
- Building on the achievements for the second cycle.
- Integration with other plans and processes.

3.0 Engagement and partnership working

Respondents to the consultation agreed that the proposed engagement opportunities for the development of the second plan were satisfactory and comprehensive. Two responses recommended that structured questions in consultations may be too constraining and respondents should be encouraged to raise ideas and comments across all areas. A suggestion to create a list of non-statutory consultees was also put forward to identify other areas of expertise and those with an interest in the planning process and its outcomes.

Response: SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to the continuous active engagement of a wide range of stakeholders. The scale SEPA engages at (river basin district, sub-basin district, catchment, sector and issue based and frequency of meetings) is being reviewed to ensure:

- engagement is timed to be effective;
- we make best use of stakeholder and SEPA resources.

The clear message about the need for both effective communication and resource efficiency from the consultation responses (including the relatively low number of responses received) has already influenced the approach to the consultation on the second river basin management plan for the Solway Tweed river basin.

SEPA and the Environment Agency now intend to prepare a consultation on the changes to the river basin management plan rather than produce a complete draft second plan. This will allow for focused and effective engagement on the areas where feedback is required so stakeholders can efficiently contribute to the development of the second plan. Non-statutory consultees were used for the first RBMPs and will be included as an option for the second plan.

SEPA and the Environment Agency have worked throughout the first cycle to ease the process with pre-consultation engagement, questions integrated into documents, an online consultation tool and extended consultation periods. Efforts will continue to be made to ease this process for future consultations.

3.1 Advisory groups

Respondents were very supportive of the two area advisory groups (AAGs) established in the Solway and the Tweed (the latter using the Tweed Forum). The key message about AAGs was that they should focus delivering action at a local level. It was highlighted that the area advisory groups (AAGs) give a sense that stakeholders are moving together towards a common goal.

It was suggested that sub-group working, already in place within the Tweed and the Solway, enables a more proactive, effective and efficient engagement with relevant local stakeholders. It was recommended that sub-groups should maintain effective

engagement. Contact details of key people should be managed pro-actively to ensure continued ownership of actions, communications and knowledge with plenty of opportunities at a local level allowing the AAGs to engage more effectively with river basin planning at different stages in preparation of the plan.

A number of responses commented that the groups should be more focused on implementation to tackle specific issues. Use of local scale information to target and plan delivery within catchments could improve effectiveness of planning and targeting. One respondent suggested undertaking a gap analysis (at a catchment level) of priorities for delivery against current and planned projects. This will help identify where further targeting is required for resourcing or the development of delivery mechanisms.

Response: SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to continue and (where appropriate) expand the work of sub-groups, including catchment groups. This will be achieved though continuing to work with advisory group members to make more effective use of partnership events, their contact networks and investigate the delivery of larger scale awareness raising events at key points as SEPA and the Environment Agency work to produce the updated plan. SEPA and the Environment Agency are also working on providing more support for measure delivery.

3.2 Engaging wider stakeholders

Respondents suggested their involvement with existing groups and networks could help create dialogue for integration and opportunities for joined up planning and delivery for multiple benefits with these other groups. It was suggested that expanding to a broader audience would benefit from effective and simple language, local evidence and interpretation to communicate local issues and opportunities.

During the first cycle, the use of workshops was identified as a really useful way to engage stakeholders and partners generating really positive feedback from those involved. It was stated that they were excellent for sharing ideas and networking.

Respondents agree that this work should be expanded upon in the second cycle[4]. It was also suggested that (where possible) workshops should be geographically focused and include all relevant stakeholders. It's useful to target particular sectors in meetings but one response highlighted that the workshops should have multiple interest groups because delivery of water body targets is most often dependent on a cross-sector, holistic approach.

Approximately half of the respondents stated limitations, such as resources, staff time, conflicting workload priorities and funding, were constraining full participation in the groups set up to gather their views. This highlights the necessity to continue to strive for increased efficiency and effectiveness of engagement as we move to the second cycle.

There were clear messages around the need for effective communication and the consideration of resource efficiency.

Response: The geographical scale at which we engage at (river basin district, sub-basin district, catchment), the frequency of meetings and potential topics (sector

[4] A list of suggested workshops is available on request by emailing rbmp@sepa.org.uk

and/or issue) are being reviewed to ensure engagement is timed to be effective, efficient and fits the available stakeholder, SEPA and Environment Agency resources.

4.0 Building on achievements for the second cycle and plan

The consultation document outlined four key areas that SEPA and the Environment Agency would like to continue and develop during the second cycle. They are as follows:

- Sharing river basin data.
- Working at the catchment scale.
- Benefits to people and climate change.
- Integration with other plans and processes.

4.1 Sharing river basin data

SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to improving data sets and increasing accessibility to this information for stakeholders to inform their involvement in river basin planning[5].

Response: While some constraints around licensing or data protection will take time to remedy, SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to reviewing the information available online, with any changes proposed to be implemented during 2013 to 2015. The feedback received during this consultation will be used in the review, supplemented by the establishment of an external stakeholder group to help scope data needs and appropriate presentation techniques to ensure they are fit for purpose.

4.2 Working at the catchment scale

The benefits of working at the catchment scale are already evident across many parts of the Solway Tweed (e.g. Tweed, Eden and the catchment working in the North Solway). The proposal to expand working at the catchment scale is greatly supported by all respondents. Reponses highlighted that downgraded water bodies are often affected by multiple pressures within the catchment and, to secure improvement in status, multiple measures must be put in place. The proposed approach works well with other spatial strategies and enables increased efficiency by integrating policies and linking interested parties to identify multiple issues, therefore delivering multiple benefits.

Response: SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to the continuation and expansion of the catchment approach and taking forward the outputs of existing and emerging catchment initiatives across the district.

4.3 Benefits to people and climate change

We all enjoy the benefits of a clean, healthy water environment for the economic, social and environmental benefits it provides. We are increasingly aware that these benefits are under pressure from climate change and the demands of an increasing population. Respondents are in agreement that there must be increased effort to

[5] A list of suggested changes to data is available on request by emailing: rbmp@sepa.org.uk

protect and improve the health of the water environment in a sustainable way in order that these benefits continue. Respondents welcome the proposed approach to develop an analysis of the benefits that our water environment provides, so this can be achieved. Respondents also encourage the consideration of the impact of climate change on the targets set.

Response: SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to adoption of the ecosystem services approach for river basin planning and will continue to consider the impact of climate change.

5.0 Integration with other plans and processes

All the respondents agreed that integration facilitates the delivery of multiple benefits whilst maximising efficiencies in stakeholder efforts. Respondents also agreed to the importance of linking specifically with flood risk management, marine spatial plan and water shortage plans. The importance of integrating with the marine objectives within the *National marine plan* was also highlighted and a recommendation to form links with the Marine Strategy Forum was put forward. A suggestion was also put forward to the sharing of information to help develop forest plans. It was proposed that more integrated, sophisticated Geographical Information Systems would help to make integration easier.

Response: SEPA and the Environment Agency are committed to the continued integration of the RBMP targets within the relevant plans, processes and policies of our partners to create a joined up approach.

6.0 Next steps

Overall the respondents agree that the suggested way forward proposed in the consultation is the appropriate way to engage during the development of the second river basin management plan. SEPA and the Environment Agency will be working with the Scottish Government, National Liaison Panel, the Solway and Tweed area advisory groups, responsible authorities and others to develop the suggestions from the consultation responses and integrate them into the second plan.

There are two key milestones before the publication of the second river basin management plan in 2015:

- In December 2013 SEPA and the Environment Agency will publish a consultation document on the current condition of the water environment in relation to its target condition (*Current condition and challenges for the future report*).

- In October 2014 SEPA and the Environment Agency will consult on the changes that are proposed for the second river basin plan that will be published in 2015.