Current condition and challenges for the future: Solway Tweed river basin district



Summary of responses

Introduction

This digest summarises the responses provided to the consultation on the challenges for the second river basin management plan for the Solway Tweed river basin district.[1]

The aim of the consultation was to seek feedback on potential options required to make a step change to address challenges identified for the district to meet the Water Framework Directive targets for 2021 and beyond.

The challenges are:

- rural diffuse pollution;
- changes and impacts on the physical condition of the water environment;
- toxic substances and urban diffuse pollution.

Summary of responses

Nineteen responses were received to the consultation from a variety of stakeholders including many with a key role in delivering improvements for the water environment. A full list of respondents is availiable in Appendix 1.

Overall, the responses were highly supportive of the proposed options to tackle the significant challenges outlined in the consultation. This is extremely encouraging, and reflects upon the common understanding reached between key players in the water environment. The respondents were clear that, to tackle these challenges, we will have to build upon the partnerships developed to date. This increased collaboration is necessary to help address the step change needed to meet the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

Views received on how to tackle rural diffuse pollution

Respondents commented favourably on the current rural diffuse pollution work happening across the basin and were strongly supportive of the proposals to tackle this issue further.

There was a call for the expansion and further development of engagement and education to broaden the current approach to include agricultural contractors, suppliers and consultants and, in Scotland, all members of Scotland's Environmental and Rural Services (SEARs) partnership[2]. Others recommended that advice programmes should align business and environmental best practice to demonstrate cost savings and efficiencies. It was suggested that advice that incorporates investment planning for capital works would be a useful approach. It was also suggested that advice programmes like these would be discussed and may help develop peer education within the land use community.

Many responses called for increased resource and funding to tackle diffuse pollution. One of the core principles under which public funding schemes for environmental improvements

[1] A consultation ran in conjunction for the Scotland River Basin District. Both consultations ran between 19 December 2013 and 22 June 2014.
[2] http://www.sears.scotland.gov.uk/

operate is that they do not fund measures needed to comply with legislative requirements. The latter include the Scottish Controlled Activities Regulation (CAR) general binding rules for activities that can give rise to diffuse source pollution. Comments in some responses suggested that not all stakeholders are aware of this. It was recommended that funding should deliver multiple benefits, for example improvements for biodiversity, flood risk management and protection of ecosystem services.

Further data sharing between partners, and involving land managers in developing the evidence base, was advised to reinforce the science-led nature of this work and embed understanding and ownership within the agricultural community.

Suggestions for phosphorus control included focussing effort on precision farming, strategically placed wetland treatment systems and improving discharges from small scale drainage systems.

Views received on restoring the physical condition of the water environment

It was acknowledged by many that, given the complexities of delivering measures to tackle physical impacts, including barriers to fish movement in the water environment, effective partnerships are essential to achieve our targets while realising common goals and multiple benefits.

Respondents recommended thorough scoping studies should be carried out to ensure full consideration of feasibility, ecological need, conflicting interests, opportunities for multiple benefits and cost benefit analysis**.** They suggested this would help provide greater confidence, enable prioritisation and result in cost effective and proportionate environmental improvements. Thorough scoping will also help align work with other projects and policies such as development plans, flood risk management and sustainable land management.

Some advised the use of best practice workshops, sharing knowledge and demonstration sites to provide confidence and gain commitment, as well as demonstrate multiple benefits for environment, economy and society, would be useful.

Views received on tackling toxic substances and urban diffuse pollution

There was strong support for a partnership approach to promote cessation and integrate policies, planning and advice to tackle urban diffuse pollution. There was call for increased education and engagement to prevent pollution through misuse of drains in urban areas, and to ensure the appropriate use and disposal of hazardous substances. All respondents supported the installation of sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs), but acknowledged that they must be properly designed, constructed and maintained to be effective. It was also suggested that the retrofitting of SUDs should be incentivised to tackle existing hot spots. It was also hoped that this work could integrate common goals and achieve multiple benefits including flooding, improvements to biodiversity and developing green networks.

Views received on other topics

Concern regarding the potential risks posed by invasive non-native species (INNS), was raised by several respondents. There was call for clarity in funding streams to tackle this issue, and it was suggested that funding should target catchment scale projects. Respondents reinforced that a robust approach to surveillance, monitoring and early detection of invasive non-native species combined with rigorous biosecurity measures will be needed to protect against the multiple pathways for invasion.

There were several comments raised around the potential impacts of climate change, for example, by exacerbating existing pressures. Respondents reinforced that increasing the understanding of the environment is imperative to support environmental characterisation and the subsequent identification of measures that are proportionate to the problem and deliver clear benefits.

Next steps

Given this strong level of support received, the proposals outlined in *Current condition and challenges for the future: Solway Tweed river basin district* are now being taken forward to develop the second river basin plan.

Ongoing engagement[2] and formal consultation on the second plan development will provide further opportunities to influence what can be achieved for the water environment over the next twelve years. The consultation will be published in November 2014.

To support the second plans in Scotland, the Scottish Government will also consult on proposed delivery mechanisms to improve the physical condition of the water environment in November 2014.

[2] Details of the engagement can be found at http://www.sepa.org.uk/water/river_basin_planning/how_we_work_with_others.aspx

Appendix 1. Respondents to the CCCF Solway Tweed consultation

Convention of Scottish Local Authorities
Eden Rivers Trust as a host of the Saving Eden Coalition
Environmental Protection Scotland
Galloway Fisheries Trust
Mid Lothian Council
National Farmers Union Scotland
National Farmers Union
Natural England
Nith District Salmon Fishery Board and Nith Catchment Fishery Trust
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, RSPB
Scottish Land and Estates
Scottish Natural Heritage
Scottish Water
Scottish Woodlands
Solway Firth Partnership
The Coal Authority
Tweed Forum
United Utilities
Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust