



After the Mersey Basin Campaign, what happened next?

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Structure of Presentation

- Introduction
- The Mersey Basin Campaign 1985-2010 and partnership working
- What made the Campaign distinctive?
- Critical success factors
- What happened after the Campaign closed in 2010?
- Challenges facing the new Mersey Rivers Trust

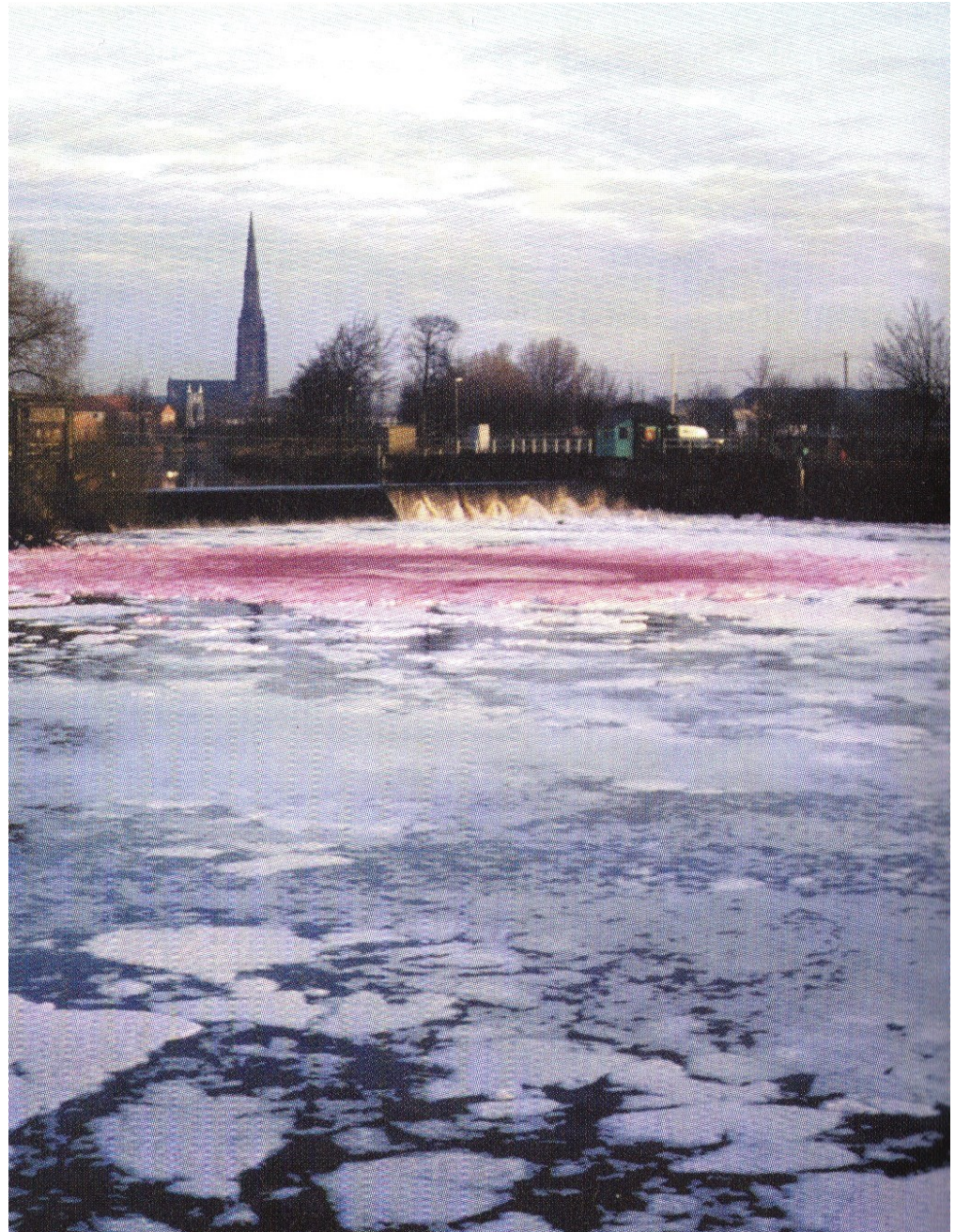
The Mersey Basin Campaign 1985-2010

- A bold initiative started nearly 30 years ago by **Michael Heseltine** in an attempt to repair the damage done to the region's rivers by industrialisation, to facilitate waterside regeneration and to encourage community involvement.
- A **pioneering example of partnership working** – involving the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
- When it ended in 2010 it had **largely achieved what it set out to do.**
- **A great success!**

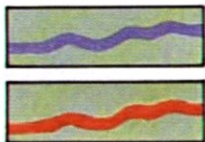
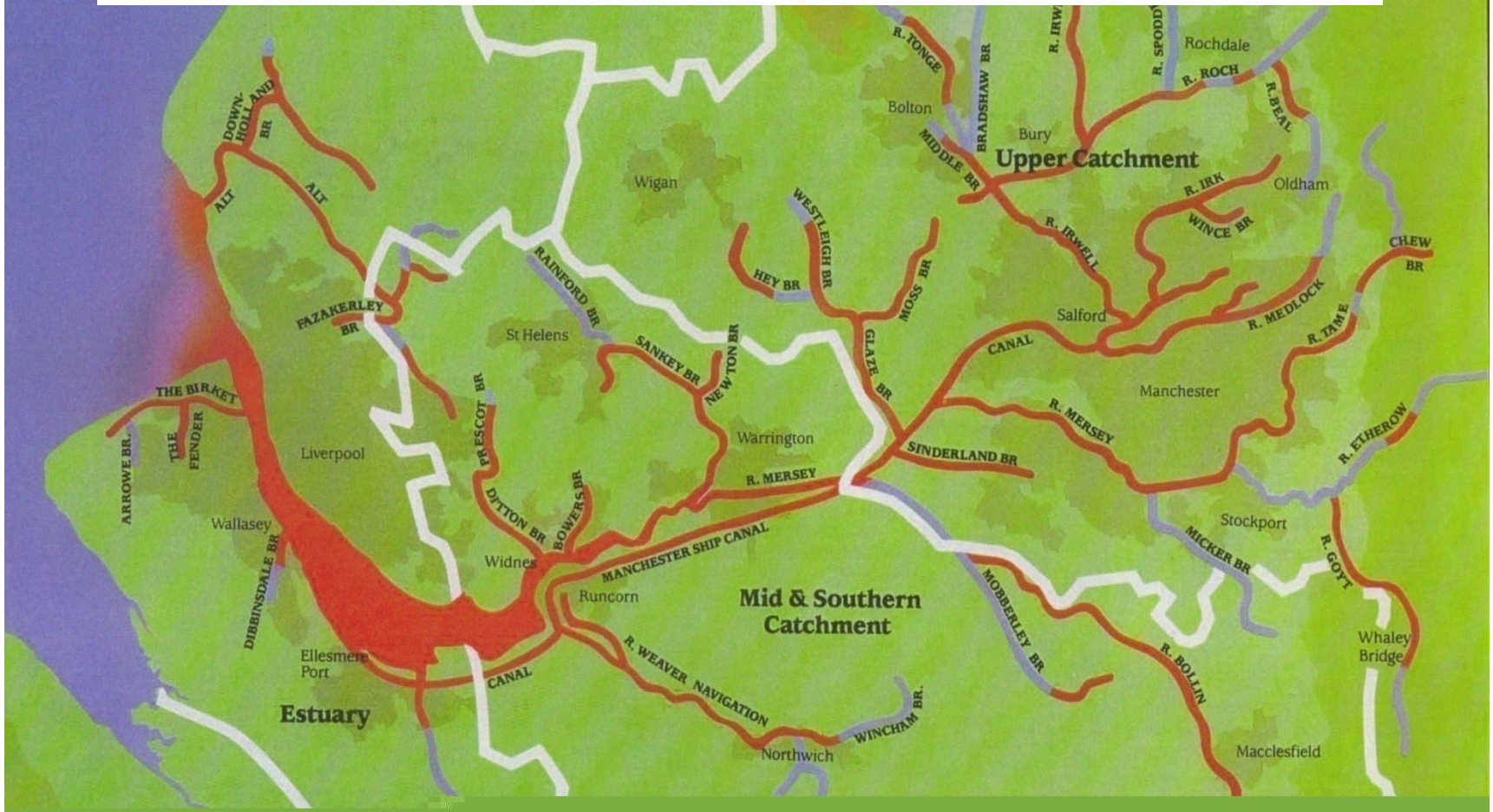
The Problem

“Today the river is an affront to the standards a civilised society should demand of its environment. Untreated sewage, pollutants, noxious discharges all contribute to water conditions and environmental standards that are perhaps the single most deplorable feature of this critical part of England.”

Michael Heseltine, 1983



Water Quality in the Mersey Basin 1984



*Good and Fair
(Classes 1 and 2).*

*Poor and Bad
(Classes 3 and 4)*



Scenes such as these are, unfortunately, all too typical in the Mersey Basin.

Waterside Dereliction

The Challenge

“To rebuild the urban areas of the North West we need to clean and clear the ravages of the past, to recreate the opportunities that attracted earlier generations to come and live there and invest there...”

*A Mersey Basin restored to a quality of environmental standards fit for the end of this century will be of **incalculable significance in the creation of new employment.**”*

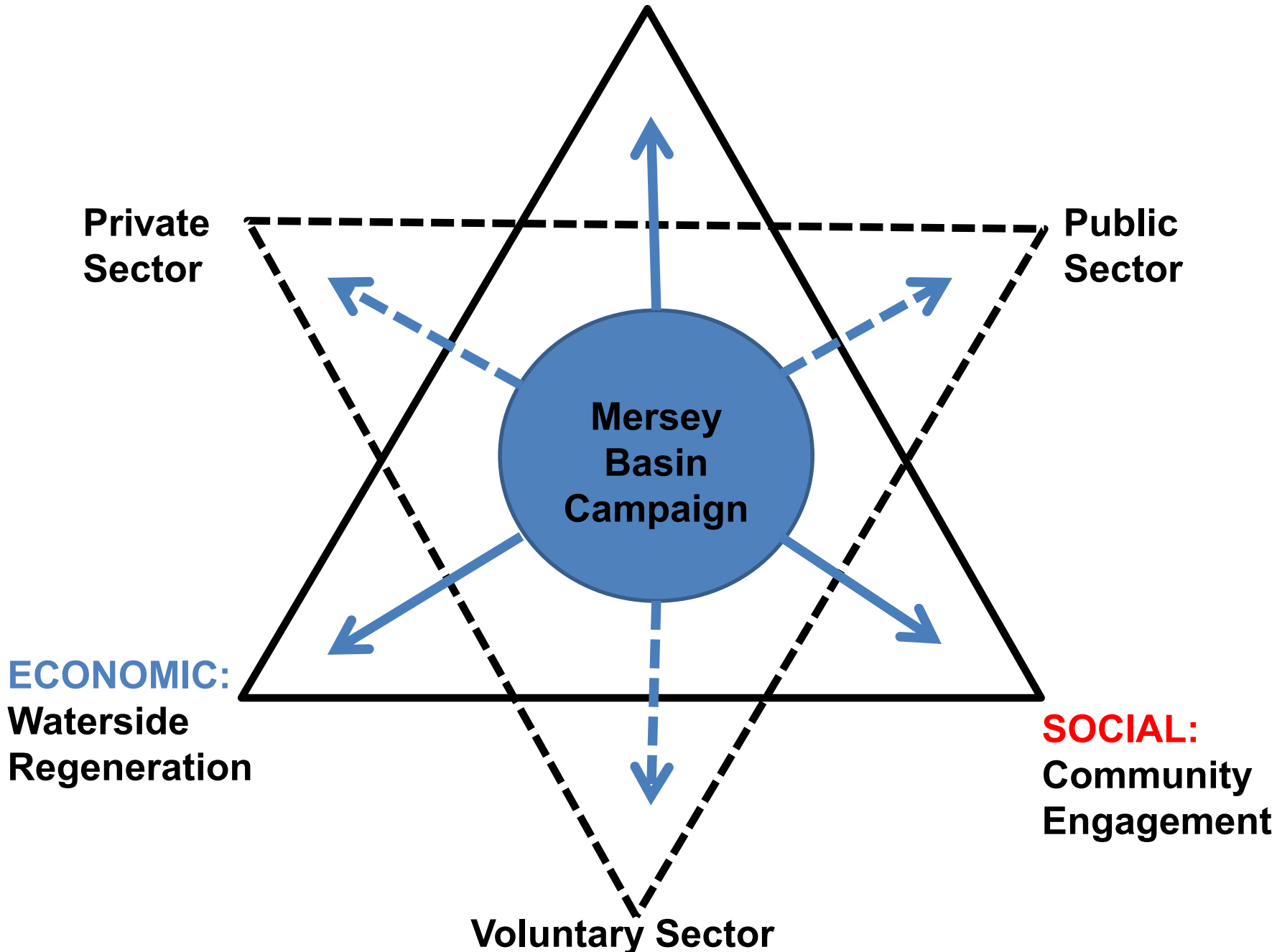


Michael Heseltine, 1983

Aims

- to improve **river water quality** across the Mersey Basin to at least a 'fair' standard by 2010 so that all rivers and streams are clean enough to support fish
- to stimulate **attractive waterside developments** for business, recreation, housing, tourism and heritage
- to encourage people living and working in the Mersey Basin **to value and cherish their watercourses** and waterfront environments

ENVIRONMENTAL: Water Quality



Private Sector

Public Sector

Mersey Basin Campaign

ECONOMIC: Waterside Regeneration

SOCIAL: Community Engagement

Voluntary Sector

Geography

- Campaign area equalled Mersey plus Ribble river basins
- Issue of river basins *versus* city regions, as topical now as in the 1980s
- River Valley Initiatives: brought the Campaign to the local scale
- Campaign worked at many geographical levels, from international to local



Timescale

- A 25-year timescale was always part of the plan, given the magnitude of the task: successive governments stuck by this
- Time was spent in gathering support and commitment from potential partners: this bore fruit later on
- Over 25 years a lot changed
- Maintaining momentum required periodic changes in leadership

Pioneering Partnership

“The task of cleaning up the Mersey is a comprehensive and formidable one. (It) calls for a team effort, in which the inputs of all sectors encourage each other and generate a momentum of improvement greater than could be achieved otherwise.”

Peter Walton, 1983

Pioneering Partnership

- Partnership was the essence of the Campaign but in 1985 few knew what it meant
- Calling it a Campaign gave it clarity of purpose
- Breadth of the partnership was a strength: all sectors had a role in achieving Campaign aims
- Key relationship was with the privatised water company
- Campaign never tried to do what others could do by themselves

How the Campaign worked: five verbs

- **Influencing** opinion and priorities across all geographical levels
- **Enabling** projects to be implemented both by the Campaign and other partners
- **Mediating** between different partners to provide common ground
- **Enhancing** projects to enable added value and encouraging partners to aim higher
- **Communicating** the message of the Campaign and listening to new ideas and concerns

What made the Campaign distinctive? 1

1. Recognised as a world leader in demonstrating the benefits of close **partnership working**.
2. **Linking strategy and delivery** in a balanced way.
3. It attracted the **long-term support and commitment** of a full range of stakeholders

What made the Campaign distinctive? 2

- **Resources:** The scale of investment in water quality improvements has been massive since the water industry was privatised in 1989
- **Action at every spatial level:** local, sub-regional, regional, national and international
- The Campaign left an **important legacy** of successful completed projects which were often the result of productive collaboration between partner organisations. In doing so it nurtured a remarkable **'can-do'** attitude.
- Undoubtedly, however, **people** were its greatest asset.

1999 International River Prize



- In Brisbane Australia, in 1999, the Campaign won the Inaugural River Prize as **the world's best river-management initiative.**

Critical success factors 1

- **Leadership:** the Campaign benefited from enlightened and ambitious leadership.
- **Vision:** The vision must be clear and unshakeable. 'Mission drift' was avoided by sticking to its three main objectives throughout its existence.
- **People are more important than structures:** Organisational structures and process have their place but ultimately people are what count in making progress.

Critical success factors 2

- **The big idea:** In the case of the Campaign, sustainable development – with its social, economic and environmental dimensions - proved to be the big idea and helped it avoid being pigeon-holed as a single issue, environmental organisation.
- **Realistic timescale:** Politics often dictate a short timescale for initiatives. The 25-year lifespan of the Campaign was exceptional but realistic given its ambitious aims.
- **Government backing:** Successive governments, both Labour and Conservative, backed the Campaign. The Campaign's chair was government-appointed, conferring status on the role, and reassuring business partners and sponsors that the Campaign was a serious force.

Critical success factors 3

- **Resources:** The scale of investment in water quality improvements has been massive since the water industry was privatised in 1989, both in relation to what went before and to other forms of infrastructure. The roles of OFWAT, the economic regulator, and the Environment Agency, the environmental regulator, have been key in driving these unprecedented levels of investment.
- **Action at every level:** The Campaign operated at different spatial levels: across the Mersey river basin but also at a more local scale in its Action Partnerships. It was able to learn from its collaboration with European partners and to offer them the benefits of its own experience of programme implementation.

Critical success factors 4

- **Ways of working:** The Campaign had no power and very limited resources, it was not a regulator and it was not driven by profit. Instead it had a specific mission to lead massive change which it did by exercising influence far beyond its authority. To do this it needed to work in different ways, as expressed in the five verbs : influence, enable, mediate, enhance and communicate.
- **Professionalism:** The Campaign set high standards for itself in whatever it did, whether it was projects, events or communications. It encouraged its partners to do the same.

Critical success factors 5

- **Communications:** The Campaign adopted a carefully targeted communications strategy ranging from face to face forums through to state-of-the-art social media.
- **Partnership:** The Campaign was a pioneer in partnership working, demonstrating clearly the benefits of cross-sector activity when other organisations, including government departments, continued to work in a compartmentalised, disconnected way.

Job Done! Closing Down the Campaign

- In November 2008 the Campaign decided, on my recommendation after consulting key partners, to end after 25 years, the period it had been planned for; this allowed the final 17 months, up to closure in March 2010, to be used for legacy planning
- The final year or so was used to identify new champions for many of the Campaign's current activities
- The staff – the Campaign's greatest asset – continued to play an important role in whichever organisations they moved on to
- Three months later, a newly elected government introduced swingeing public expenditure cuts and brought many regional and sub-regional partnerships to an end

What Happened Next?

- The **Healthy Waterways Trust** – the Campaign's charitable trust arm – continued to run and, in an important development in 2017, merged with other organisations to form the **Mersey Rivers Trust**, part of the national Rivers Trust movement.
- A **legacy website** was created with support from Shell, <http://www.merseybasin.org.uk/> , recording in detail the experience of the Campaign and the lessons learnt.

But wait.....!

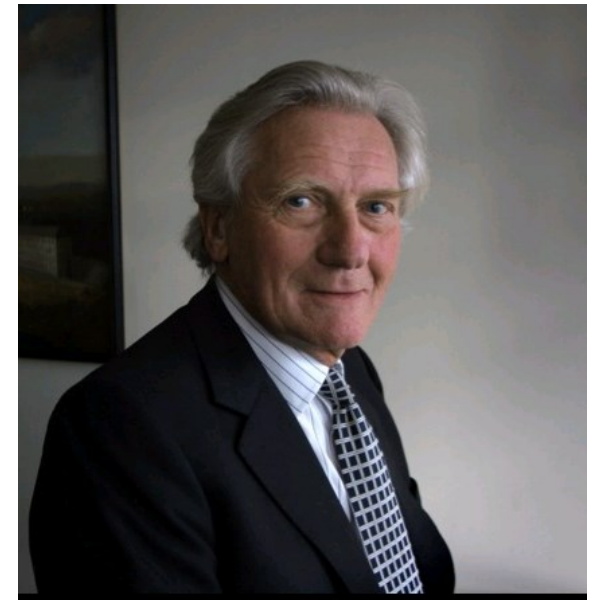
Lord Heseltine continues to challenge the Mersey



Published 2011:

Lord Heseltine and Sir Terry Leahy
Rebalancing Britain: Policy or
Slogan?

*Liverpool City Region – Building on its
Strengths: an independent report to the
Prime Minister*



Heseltine and Leahy **2011**

- The Mersey: ‘a natural asset in which we need to invest and exploit for national economic and environmental gain.....’ (p54)
- Liverpool’s port and the River Mersey are incomparably better shape now than they were thirty years ago. That confirms what history repeatedly tells us: the situation today does not mean the future is already written. Within a generation Liverpool could once again be a genuinely important global port’ (p54)
- The Government should establish a Task Force comprising representatives relevant Departments, experts and private companies to establish how a multi-purpose Mersey Barrage can be funded and how the River Mersey can become **the world’s cleanest river in an urban setting by 2030 (p53)**

The Challenge **1983**

“To rebuild the urban areas of the North West we need to clean and clear the ravages of the past, to recreate the opportunities that attracted earlier generations to come and live there and invest there...”

*A Mersey Basin restored to a quality of environmental standards fit for the end of this century will be of **incalculable significance in the creation of new employment.**”*



Michael Heseltine, 1983

Combined Authorities, Metro Mayors and Governance Reform

- In May 2017, Greater Manchester and the Liverpool City Region used new legislation to elect a "metro-mayor", a role similar to that of the Mayor of London.
- The mayor has powers over transport, housing, strategic planning and policing.
- Under a devolution agreement with central government, the Combined Authorities are acquiring new powers.
- **In the Liverpool City Region, the River Mersey is seen as a key asset for economic development and for the generation of renewable energy**

Liverpool City Region City Deal: the ‘Mersey Ask’

The quality of River Mersey was transformed through the Mersey Basin Campaign. The EU Water Framework Directive aims to bring all inland and coastal water to 'Good Ecological Status' by 2015. However, only a quarter of English water bodies achieve this, and the Mersey is not one of them. A further transformation to make the Mersey the cleanest river in an urban setting globally would put the City Region at the leading edge of technical best practice. And, as water security becomes a major global issue, the attraction of having a global centre for improving water quality would be a significant economic asset, generating business and technological know-how that could be exported.

City Region Offer to Government	City Region Ask of Government
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commission a Task Force to examine how the Mersey can become the cleanest and most ecologically diverse river in an urban setting by 2045• Subject to the report of the Task Force concluding that this is achievable, commit to making the Mersey the cleanest river in an urban setting by 2045	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Commit to work through relevant Departments and agencies to examine how the Mersey can become the cleanest river in an urban setting by 2045• Subject to the report of the Task Force concluding that this is achievable, work with local interests through relevant Departments and agencies to make the Mersey the cleanest river in an urban setting by 2045

The Catchment-based Approach, 2013-

- The **Catchment Based Approach** (CaBA) is a community-led approach that engages people and groups from across society to help improve our water environments.
- **CaBA Partnerships** are now actively working in 100+ catchments across England and Wales.
- The **Mersey Rivers Trust** is responsible for three of these: Upper Mersey; Lower Mersey and Alt-Crossens
- The **Catchment Based Approach website** is designed to showcase the work of catchment partnerships across England and Wales and to encourage the sharing and adoption of best practice in stakeholder-led catchment management planning, delivery and evaluation.
- In many respects, the **Campaign's Action Partnerships** (20 in number) represent the best source of urban catchment management experience

The Mersey River Basin: CaBA catchments



The CaBA catchments in the Mersey river basin are:

- **Alt/Crossens** hosted by the Mersey Rivers Trust
- **Lower Mersey** hosted by the Mersey Rivers Trust
- **Weaver Gowy** hosted by Groundwork CLM
- **Irwell** hosted by Groundwork MSSTT
- **Upper Mersey** hosted by the Mersey Rivers Trust

The Mersey Rivers Trust Founded in 2017

June 22, 2017:
The Mersey Rivers Trust became a member of the national network of Rivers Trusts.



The new trust operates in Greater Manchester, Cheshire and Liverpool City region, focussing on cleaning up the River Mersey and its tributaries, including the Rivers Irwell, Goyt, Bollin and Alt. It coincides with the Mersey Basin.

Partnership working continues

Paul Henbrey, Director of the Mersey Rivers Trust, said:

“The clean-up challenge in the Mersey corridor is huge and presents many opportunities for collaboration and partnership working.”

Going forward, Mersey Rivers Trust will continue to support the Catchment Based Approach, whilst strengthening its links with local communities and volunteers through the delivery of river clean-ups and its River Guardian volunteering programme.

The trust will continue its awareness building campaign with Love my River – Call of Nature – which raises awareness on the impact of septic tanks, whilst continuing to deliver river walkovers to identify and report pollution sources.

“We are really keen to work with regulators, industry and other partners to deliver more water quality improvements on the North West rivers and to help meet the challenges of the Water Framework Directive.”

Challenges facing the Mersey Rivers Trust 1

- Carrying forward important lessons from the Campaign
- Understanding the big changes in the institutional and funding context post-2010 (and post-Brexit) and their potentially adverse effects on partnership working
- In the early years especially, being realistic about what the Trust could expect to achieve given its almost complete lack of resources
- Being pragmatic in building and re-building partnerships; working alone is unlikely to produce the desired results
- Adopting a patient, diplomatic approach in bringing new partners on board

Challenges facing the Mersey Rivers Trust 2

- Ensuring that projects are properly costed and make an appropriate contribution to core funding
- Paying careful attention to the need for rigorous project management
- Learning how to promote and develop the Trust without trespassing on other partners
- Nurturing good working relationships between the Trust and key partners such as the Environment Agency, the water company and a large property development company and being prepared to take on a mediating role, if necessary

The Mersey Basin Campaign Legacy Website

<http://www.merseybasin.org.uk/>



1985-2010 | MERSEY BASIN CAMPAIGN

Archive Collections

MERSEY RIVERS TRUST
WATERS | REGENERATION | ENVIRONMENT | SUSTAINABILITY

Search archive with Google

1985-2010
25 years of inspiration.

The Rivers Trust for the Mersey

<http://www.healthywaterwaystrust.org.uk>

The Mersey Rivers Trust is a charity working in partnership with all those interested in improving our local rivers and waterways. As a member of the national Rivers Trust movement, it is the Rivers Trust for the River Mersey and its catchment.

The Mersey Rivers Trust formed from the merger of the Healthy Rivers Trust and the Mersey Basin Rivers Trust. The Trust hosts 3 Catchment Partnerships under the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) and will proactively engage with local communities, land owners, regulators and other stakeholders to help clean up the rivers in the Mersey Catchment.



Thank You!

