

Restoring Europe's Rivers

RESTORE Events: Reporting

THEME

How can local, regional and national policy help deliver catchment landuse planning, river restoration and EU land and water environmental targets.

DATE

29th November 2011

LOCATION

The Holiday Inn Express, Canal del al Villette, Paris, France

AUDIENCE

Policy Makers

LIFE 09INF/UK/000032

The RESTORE project is made possible with the contribution of the LIFE+ financial instrument of the European Community



and works in partnership with



1. Key issues identified

- More integrated policy at the European level
- Lack of evidence base that good ecological status/potential is being achieved
- The need for better economic assessment of river restoration
- The need for better linkages between land and water management
- Local community awareness to raise public perception
- River basin planning needs improved engagement at the local level
- We should be assessing river restoration at a catchment scale

2. Background

Across Europe, how to deliver the 2nd and 3rd cycles of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) is being discussed. How effective delivery can be reached through policy and planning in the context of catchment management, land use planning and the implementation of river restoration techniques needs to be discussed. The EU LIFE+ Information and Communication RESTORE project is a mechanism through which information and guidance can be communicated. A workshop was held in Paris to facilitate discussion on existing and future policy models and mechanisms that can help deliver WFD.

3. Findings

3.1 More integrated policy at the European level required – different policies and directives are not well integrated. For example:

- The 'renewable energy' directive and WFD are potentially at loggerheads when on the issue of hydropower (e.g. 70% of Austrian rivers are failing because of hydropower-related morphological issues). Without better integration of policies (including those related to invasive species) there could be potential further deterioration of rivers
- CAP reforms: these could significantly help to drive forward catchment plans and benefit WFD requirements if the greening options are linked directly to other EU directives. There needs to be strong cross compliance between them which could result in less necessary financial investment from the EU and deliver a better Environment. It should also ensure that there is no further deterioration.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will hold events looking at hydropower (Vienna, Finland). We will collate information on our website to enable easy access to the most relevant information on hydropower in one place. RESTORE will draft a briefing paper on the importance of linking WFD measures and CAP reforms.

3.2 Better linkages between land and water management

Currently there is a lack of synergy between high level governmental planning policy and local decision and implementation. Spatial planning currently doesn't generally account for the importance of linking water and land management together and has little consideration of EU water directives.

Follow-up action: Through this workshop, RESTORE has recognised the importance of water management within the planning process. An event will be held in Arnhem to look in more detail at the complexities of this issue. RESTORE will produce a handbook that will help catchment planning information and lessons from interpreted case studies.

3.3 Lack of evidence base that good ecological status/potential is being achieved.

Without this evidence there is a concern that member states will find it increasingly difficult to demonstrate the real value of multi-benefit river and floodplain schemes that take account of environmental/WFD requirements.

Follow-up action: RESTORE is developing a wiki-database knowledge management tool for projects across Europe. This database will allow interrogation of schemes that have included monitoring and evidence of success.

3.4 Economic valuation

This is a way of increasing confidence in terms of the benefits of river restoration is through the adoption/ implementation of an ecosystem approach.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will collate any economic/ecosystem guidance that is relevant to assessing river restoration schemes around Europe. This will also identify gaps in knowledge to support research initiatives or need for new guidance or where existing guidance is transferable as necessary in this context.

3.5 Local community awareness raising and public perception

Ecological gain/improvement of river status will not be sufficient for communities to engage with WFD processes. We need to realise and put into place, policies that relate directly to community needs and understanding (e.g. access to nature for health benefits, eco-labelling of foodstuffs, the importance of water resources to reduce river pollution etc).

Development of tools that show how catchments work and the importance of understanding the linkages between different facets should benefit the whole community.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will provide information on the wider social benefits of river restoration on our website and collate case studies that have social/recreation monitoring.

3.6 Improved engagement at the local level

In some countries (outside the EU) there are incentives to encourage local communities to engage in river projects through award schemes. It was suggested that the equivalent type of scheme to that of the blue flag for bathing waters would provide a significant incentive.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will examine support for a 'Blue River Flag' award proposal for Europe's river.

3.7 Catchment scale planning

Planning at this scale with embedded specific opportunities and will result in the more cost effective and environmentally robust schemes that also take account of local issues.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will include information on this in the case study handbook. RESTORE will also provide information on the English catchment pilots and Scottish walkover assessments.

3.8 Climate change

The importance of building in climate change resilience in to river restoration and WFD-led projects is not always recognised.

Follow-up action: RESTORE will insure that this is included with our handbook and on our website. It will also be discussed in the RRC's next river restoration manual update.

4. Further detail on outcomes

Table 1 below provides an overview of the key obstacles, drivers and initiatives that were identified during the workshop. It is a summary of the discussion that evolved throughout the day. Some of the obstacle and drivers/initiatives were identified as country specific, other were more generic and are stated as such. The PowerPoint presentations associated with this workshop can be found at http://www.therrc.co.uk/rrc_restore.php

Table 1: Obstacles, Drivers and Initiatives

Country	Obstacles	Drivers/ initiatives
Netherlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in government has resulted in priority change to economic growth focus: environmental factors have been significantly downgraded. Delivery of the EU environmental regulations are challenging since little support to regions from central government. • WFD delivery at the regional water authority level (disparate approaches). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River enhancement projects aim to take account of what is occurring both upstream and downstream. This is seen as an important concept that is auctioned. • EU conservation directives are often used to deliver RR but it is recognised that do not necessarily result in GES/GEP. • Water conservation is important and RR and WFD is often delivered under this auspices.
England and Wales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current aim is to move from WFD planning to action – but there is a limited capacity (i.e. people) with expertise to deliver. • Funding – in particular carrying over from one financial year to the next. • Bureaucracy – makes it hard to deliver action through small local groups. • Need to integrate multiple sectors. • Better link between silos of government. • Impenetrable river basin management plans. • The use of language (between government and local community) is not always appropriate. • Planning system not robust enough to deliver river restoration projects – limited understanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local groups are interesting in RR concept including land owners. • New funding mechanisms available (but still need to deliver by year end). • New WFD-focused ‘pilot’ catchments that are facilitated by 3rd parties with support from government are seen as a helpful way forward. • Ecosystem concept (multi-benefit approaches to river restoration) being adopted at government level.
France	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural shift needed. Attitudes and ingrained views of what the rivers should be: this should have changed through the 1992 Water Act but hasn’t been successful everywhere. • Obscure land rights: limits opportunities for river restoration • Future funding appears to be limited: no clear financial mechanism to deliver or equally important monitoring RR and WFD. • WFD delivered at the local level which can limit catchment approaches. This can 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WFD – as a European driver: people had no choice but to deliver. • Water Act • Ecosystem tools to help judge and defend the rationale • The Water Agency is now discussing issues at the river basin level so better buy-in to catchment approaches.

	<p>hamper RR understanding and catchment water quality improvements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accountability of project delivery is held locally, and hence river enhancement and WFD delivery may not necessarily always be high priority. • Local delivery can take a long time to achieve because of local and national ‘red’ tape and agreements needed. • Agricultural sector will <u>not</u> invest in anything related to River Restoration – only option is through targeted CAP reforms or other funding mechanisms. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SDAGE process is the key link between local decision making and government in terms of ensuring delivering of the river basin management plans.
Scotland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The benefit of RR and WFD are still not totally appreciated by the local community and landowners: still need some influencing. • Once funding was available, found that little evidence of what the specific problems were within catchments and now in process of putting together catchment plans. Therefore, currently, limited delivery on-the-ground. • No coordinated approach from the government means it is difficult to demonstrate benefits more widely. • Walk over surveys are being carried out and these have identified bigger problems than initially anticipated so need more resources to deliver. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now looking at catchment-wide strategies. • New rules and powers for government agency (SEPA) means that is guidance and the ability for SEPA to review new river projects and give/withdraw consent as appropriate. • Catchment walkover surveys provided a lot more understanding of issues. • NEW funding strand from Scottish Government has raised the profile of river restoration. • Decisions on WFD/ RBMPS made by central body so takes account of catchment issues. • Fisheries trusts are strong and can help to deliver on barriers to fish movement • Natural Flood management is helping to deliver and provides a good hook on which to deliver environmental improvements
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to look at buying land
Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement can be difficult and result in significant conflict. • Hydropower is high on the agenda and potentially in direct conflict with river restoration ambitions. • Sometimes the Fisheries Boards need to close the river to angling because of low fish stocks (e.g. due to hydropower issues) and this can cause reputational issues to the board. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries supports restoration • Pots of funding available for local groups • Birds and habitat directive – allows for projects to be put forward. • Aware of climate change issues and looking to fund projects that will future proof the environment against

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fisheries Boards tend to lead restoration initiatives so may be more focused on fish habitat rather than wider ecological benefits. • Identifying who owns the land can be difficult. • Need to be able to identify value for money to land owners to gain agreement to complete work. • Limited buffer strips: farming historically extends to the river edge and landowners are reluctant to change land management. • Funding options are limited. 	<p>change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recreational angling is very important. The landowners are paid directly for the use of the river and in turn they are required to re-invest in the river to provide better habitat.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAP is not currently set up to encourage landowners to specifically improve rivers. • Communication should be improved to empower stakeholders (note: first steps being completed in some countries, but need to get the balance right otherwise it can take too long to deliver a project). • Guidance/ evidence base about what has worked is limited. Addressing this would help to influence people to do more. • Conflicting landuse requirements are often difficult to address (note: this includes hydropower lobbying/requirements). • Political cycles don't fit with European Directive delivery dates which can significantly hamper progress. • Lack of opportunity (ease) to compulsory purchase land for large scale river restoration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review current CAP reforms to ensure that they are adequate to better deliver land and water management. • Some countries are looking to generate tools to improve stakeholder engagement as outlined by Laurence Cauldrick in his presentation.

5. Attendance

16 people attended almost entirely from the policy makers sector with the exception of the West Country Rivers Trust and the Fédération des Conservatoires d'espaces naturels (ENF). In these cases, however, participants had significant understanding of policy needs and linkages to on the ground delivery. Countries represented included: England, Scotland, Netherland, Belgium, France and the Republic of Ireland

List of attendees:

First Name	Surname	Organisation	Country
Antonia	Scarr	England and Wales Environment Agency	England
Bart	Fokkens	Wetlands International/ European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR) Chairman	Netherlands
Bernard	De La Court	Service Public de Wallonie	Belgium
Giles	Neveau	International Network of Basin Organisations	France
Heisse	Joanna	England and Wales Environment Agency	England
Hudin	Stephanie	Fédération des Conservatoires d'espaces naturels	France
Ian	Barker	England and Wales Environment Agency	England
Jenny	Mant	River Restoration Centre	England
Joyce	Carr	Scottish Government	Scotland
Julie	Tuck	SEPA	Scotland
Klaas-Jan	Douben	Regional Water Authority Brabantse Delta	Netherlands
Laurence	Couldrick	Westcountry Rivers Trust	England
Mervyn	Bramley	RRC Board member	England and Wales
Mooney	Amanda	Fisheries Ireland	Republic of Ireland
Richard	Cole	Defra	England
Thierry	Davy	French Water Agency	France

6. Support for Restoration Practices

As identified under 'Key Outcomes and Future Actions' there needs to be better integration between land and water policy and EU directives to help deliver sustainable river restoration outcomes. Future actions that the RESTORE project can action have been identified.

7. Building on Network Capacity

Feedback forms identified that a lot of networking was carried out with new contacts made in all cases. There was a general view that we all tend to be country-centric in terms of how we deliver projects and view policy. This workshop provided an opportunity for all participants to learn from what was being done elsewhere. The RESTORE project will be able to consolidate this information and where applicable, will ensure that new information is updated on the project's website, wiki-database and with the case study handbook for all to access.

8. Promoting Effective Knowledge Transfer

The audience was made up primarily of policy makers. By ensuring discussion was carried out in small groups with a mixture of different country's participants with each group, this enabled effective transfer of knowledge to be completed on an informal basis. A key facilitator was assigned to each group and the key outcomes and future actions were synthesised to make up the core information in the 'Key Outcomes and Future Actions' of this report. All debates and in particular, the actions associated with each item, will ensure that knowledge will now be transferred to a wider audience through RESTORE dissemination methods. Some of the key elements will also be picked up again in future RESTORE workshops across Europe.

9. Dissemination of Event Outcomes

Outputs were initially emailed to all attendees of the workshop. Comments were invited and a request made for other people that would be interested in receiving outputs made. If you have further questions or are interested in the outputs described for this event please contact either the:

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10. Workshop photographs

