

# Evaluation of the Environment Agency's workshop programme on Water Protection Zones

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## Final report

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In 2008-9, the Environment Agency started work in anticipation of new legislation to enable the declaration of Water Protection Zones to tackle diffuse pollution in urban and rural areas. In March 2009, the Agency held a series of five workshops for their own staff, plus one for external stakeholders, within their South East region. The purpose of these workshops was to brief staff and explore the concept of the WPZs, share knowledge and explore the potential boundaries of the proposed pilot WPZs, and identify good practice for regulation. The report of the findings of these workshops was produced in April 2009.

This report presents an evaluation of the WPZ workshops. In particular, the evaluation focuses on the internal staff workshops as these were the elements of the process that potentially had the most lessons for future Environment Agency work on WPZs.

The evaluation has concluded that the workshop programme worked very well to increase participant awareness and understanding of the benefits of the WPZ approach, provided participants with a way to input their own knowledge and experience at this relatively early stage and thus influence the future development of the WPZ programme, and provided the national WPZ project with valuable local feedback on the boundaries of potential WPZ pilot areas, specific local issues of diffuse pollution, and greater understanding of the local context in terms of links between the WPZ and existing good practice.

The evaluation has also found that the workshop programme met all its objectives fully, met the agreed principles of good practice in engagement (with some ideas on improvements for the future), and was cost effective overall.

This report summarises the methodology of the evaluation, the purpose and objectives of the workshop programme, feedback on the main activities in the workshops, identifies the elements of the process that worked particularly well and less well, considers the extent to which the objectives have been achieved and criteria met, and identifies some lessons for the future in the light of these findings.

## **2. THE EVALUATION STUDY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The Environment Agency is increasingly using interactive workshops as part of their work to develop thinking and roll out implementation of new programmes. In this case, the Agency was taking a more developmental approach to the workshops, asking for staff input on the concept and implementation as well as sharing information. The Agency was therefore particularly interested in identifying lessons from these workshops to inform future programme development.

The evaluation was designed to focus on the internal workshops and makes only brief reference to the external workshop as that took a different form.

The evaluation does not assess the policy or implementation implications of the WPZ programme in any detail; it focuses on the workshop processes and assesses the extent to which the activities met the objectives set. Policy issues are touched on in this report, but only where relevant to assessing the effectiveness of the engagement.

The evaluation was commissioned in February 2009, and was completed in April 2009. Details on the methodology are given in section 2.4 below.

### **2.2 Aims and objectives of the evaluation**

There were no formally agreed objectives for the evaluation other than to assess the workshop programme by considering the extent to which it met its objectives, agreed criteria and provided lessons for the future.

### **2.3 Approach to the evaluation**

Evaluations of engagement can range in approach from a mechanistic 'audit' approach, focusing on quantitative assessment of achievement against formal targets or goals, to approaches that focus much more on 'learning' from the experience, focusing on qualitative description and interpretation of more 'subjective' data (e.g. from interviews, stories, observation etc) to explain why and how certain outcomes were achieved.

The audit approach can be summarised as asking questions such as:

- have we done what we said we were going to do?
- have we met our targets (e.g. numbers of participants; reaching a representative sample of the population)?

The learning approach is more likely to ask questions such as:

- were the objectives we set ourselves the right ones?
- what have the impacts been on the participants, policy outcomes, our decision-making processes, etc?
- what have we learnt for the future?

The approach to this evaluation has used elements of both approaches. It focuses on a learning approach, while ensuring that the quantitative and audit elements required are also delivered (e.g. objectives and criteria met). Therefore both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analysed. In this way, clear lessons can be distilled from the evaluation research as well as measuring the effectiveness and the overall achievements of the workshop programme.

In summary, the four key questions for the evaluation were:

- whether the workshops met the agreed objectives
- whether the workshops were designed and delivered in accordance with good practice for engagement
- whether the process was cost effective, and
- what are the lessons for the future.

The style Shared Practice adopts for evaluation is collaborative, to ensure maximum transparency, and maximum access to relevant information. However, the evaluator also has responsibility for ensuring the independence and rigour of the evaluation process, and to reporting findings openly and honestly to appropriate audiences at appropriate times.

## 2.4 Methodology for the evaluation

The evaluation methodology was made up of the following elements:

- **Detailed design and planning of the evaluation.** This involved work with the Environment Agency and Dialogue by Design (contracted to design and deliver the workshops) to agree the detailed parameters of the evaluation and the programme of work, especially the main themes and questions for the evaluation.
- **Evaluation research.** This included the following:
  - **Data collection** on target audiences and numbers, and attendance at each workshop.
  - **Observation** of one of the five workshops, including informal interviews with several participants.
  - **Development and use of questionnaires at all workshops.** Questionnaires were distributed at all the workshops. An initial quantitative analysis of the workshops from each event was completed by Dialogue by Design. The evaluator then completed a further quantitative and qualitative analysis which combined the findings from the workshops overall. The full analysis is given in Appendix 1.
  - **Interviews.** Interviews were used to complement the data gained from questionnaires, and provide deeper and richer data on some of the key issues. Interviews were carried out with:
    - **Workshop participants.** This is particularly important to examine their learning from the exercise, as well as to test the quality of the process from their perspectives. Telephone interviews were carried out with five participants, one from each of the internal workshops, using an agreed interview schedule. The interview questions for participants are shown in Appendix 2.
    - **Those commissioning and delivering the process** (Environment Agency and Dialogue by Design), to more fully understand the approach to the design of the process, what happened in practice, and the lessons identified by those involved. Informal interviews were conducted with one facilitator and a support facilitator, plus more formal telephone interviews with the one person from each organisation most heavily involved in commissioning, designing and delivering the process.
  - **Analysis of data.** Quantitative and qualitative analysis of questionnaires and interview transcripts has been undertaken to provide statistics, overall qualitative feedback and some illustrative quotes from those involved.

- **Reports.** An interim report was produced for the Environment Agency before the end of March 2009. In addition, the evaluator circulated summaries of the questionnaire analysis produced by Dialogue by Design to regional leads soon after the workshops so they could see questionnaire feedback immediately on their specific events. As the workshops had only just been completed at the time of the interim report, that focused only on feedback from questionnaires (not interviews). A full report was completed in April 2009.

## 2.5 Background and context

The Environment Agency calculates that a substantial proportion of rivers, lakes and groundwater bodies are at risk of not achieving good ecological and chemical status by 2015, as required by the Water Framework Directive, because of diffuse water pollution. Water Protection Zones are being proposed as an additional measure to strengthen the Environment Agency's regulatory powers as a 'last resort' to protect and improve the most valuable and vulnerable waters such as drinking water protected areas, bathing waters and areas of high conservation value in urban and rural areas.

The changes to regulation are themselves subject to wider consultation by Defra at national level, the initial stages of which were expected to be completed in spring 2009. In the meantime the Environment Agency has been undertaking preparatory work through a project team. The Agency's project on WPZs has been working to clarify the concept and to identify a small number of sites (eight or nine) in which to trial the implementation and effectiveness of WPZs during 2009-10.

The programme of workshops being evaluated here was designed to discuss the potential sites proposed by the region's WPZ leads, particularly potential pressures on those sites and ways forward that complement existing voluntary and other control mechanisms available to the Agency.

These workshops have been using a new and more collaborative approach by the Environment Agency to developing and rolling out a new regulatory framework, and it was therefore felt to be useful to invest additional resources in evaluating this approach.

### 3. AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

#### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides a brief overview of the aims and objectives of the workshops, and an overall picture of the activities that took place.

#### 3.2 Aims and objectives of the workshops

The aim and objectives of the two sets of workshops were as follows:

- Internal staff workshops:
  - Brief staff on current thinking on WPZs, including pilot programme
  - Clarify the concept of WPZs
  - Share knowledge of pilot WPZs and explore potential boundaries
  - Identify good / best practice which might be suitable for regulation
  - Build staff buy-in to Environment Agency approach to WPZs.
- External stakeholder workshop (to be confirmed in continuing discussions):
  - Brief stakeholders on current thinking on WPZs, including pilot programme
  - Identify at an early stage any issues or concerns.

#### 3.3 The programme of workshops

The initial programme of workshops was planned to be a mix of internal (Environment Agency staff) and external stakeholder workshops, with roughly equal numbers of each. After much discussion the programme was revised and five internal workshops and one external workshop were run. The programme of workshops and numbers of participants was as follows:

Location and date of internal workshop	WPZ covered	Number participants invited & expected	Number participants in attendance
West Malling, 17 March	Isle of Thanet WPZ	20 staff invited; 15-20 expected	29 staff attended, including 2 staff as presenters
Reading, 18 March	Cherwell and Lower Lee WPZs	24 staff invited; 20 staff expected	21 staff attended, including 3 staff as presenters
Birmingham 19 March	Cropston Reservoir WPZ	29 staff invited; 25 expected	27 staff attended, including 2 staff as presenters
Southampton, 25 March	Bow Lake WPZ	27 staff invited; 20 expected	20 staff attended, including 3 staff as presenters
Reading, 26 March	Boxall's Lane and Fognam Down WPZs	18 staff invited; 15 expected	16 staff attended, including 2 staff as presenters

Location and date of external workshop	WPZ covered	Number participants invited & expected	Number participants in attendance
West Malling, 24 March	Isle of Thanet WPZ	20 invited with a mix of NFU, Natural England, Southern Water, Thanet DC, Highways Agency etc; 20 expected	xx participants attended, including x Environment Agency staff as presenters

As this analysis shows, the attendance was excellent, with expectations of attendance exceeded at almost all events.

Each internal workshop was facilitated by a Dialogue by Design facilitator, with one or two support facilitators. The same facilitator ran four of the workshops, and the lead project manager ran the fifth.

During the initial planning for the workshops, there had been discussions about the potential to use Environment Agency staff as support facilitators. In practice, the Agency was not able to offer support facilitators who had been through the appropriate training (the M77 and M78 training programme). Also, there was not sufficient time, given the tight deadlines for planning and delivery of the workshops, to provide a coaching session to prepare staff for the workshops. In future, with more time and a wider pool of (appropriately trained) staff available, these types of workshops could provide a valuable opportunity for Agency staff to practice support facilitation skills in a safe environment.

It had also originally been planned that Dialogue by Design would also design and deliver the external workshop, as well as the internal workshops. However, the day before the event the Environment Agency decided to use their own staff in this instance because the Agency lead felt they could handle the final design and facilitation on their own. Dialogue by Design had developed an initial design for that workshop but that was significantly changed before the event was held. No information on the external workshop has been provided to the evaluator, and it is therefore not included in this evaluation analysis.

### **3.4 The main activities at the internal workshops**

Each of the five internal workshops followed a similar pattern, and took place over a single day. In practice, the initial detailed programme of activities was customised in various ways at the different workshops to enable the most productive discussions, although the overall pattern remained the same. In summary, the programme for the internal workshops was:

- 11.00 Coffee etc from 10.30am. Welcome and introduction to the day by the regional lead, and then handover to the facilitator who summarised the agenda and managed the remainder of the day
- 11.15 Presentation introducing WPZs by a member of the national WPZ Project Board (or support for the Board), covering what a WPZ is and why they are being set up, plus an overview of the pilot programme, the decision making process, timing and funding. These presentations were largely based on materials provided by the WPZ project nationally and all these speakers were briefed individually by the WPZ project. This session was followed by detailed Q & A.
- 11.50 Presentation by the regional lead (or other regional staff involved) providing an overview of the WPZ or WPZs in the area, why those were selected, main sources of pollution and timetable. These presentations were devised by the regional staff responsible based on a minimal brief from the WPZ project nationally. Followed by Q & A.
- 12.30 Discussion in small groups at tables on the boundaries of the proposed WPZ(s), focusing on the task of checking and adding data on pollution in and around the WPZ, and then considering what the boundary of the WPZ should be. Groups were asked to mark their conclusions on maps provided, with notes explaining reasoning. Followed by feedback and discussion in the whole group, if time. Followed by Lunch at 13.10 (30 minutes).



- 13.40 Discussion in small groups at tables on moving from good practice in managing diffuse pollution to regulation, covering what good practice there is in the WPZs identified and how it could be effectively regulated; how it could be monitored, and what problems could arise if good practice was regulated (e.g. how might regulation affect voluntary schemes).
- 14.00 Feedback and discussion in whole group on findings from group exercise(s).
- 14.30 Discussion in small groups at tables firming up thinking on the WPZ concept.
- 15.00 Discussion in whole group, with opportunities to ask further questions and reflect on the day's discussions. Evaluation forms completed. Details presented by Project Board member on next steps and communications. The workshop closed at 15.30.

### **3.5 Reporting of the workshops**

Dialogue by Design produced detailed reports (15-20 pages) of each workshop, summarising the agenda for each and providing detailed notes on all Q & A sessions, photos of the maps worked on and the notes made by each small group showing boundary proposals and issues raised, and notes made by groups and facilitators in other small group and plenary sessions including worksheets completed on linking good practice and regulation.

These workshop reports were checked with the WPZ team and the regional lead for each workshop, and then circulated electronically to all workshop participants.

Dialogue by Design also produced an 'Overview of Comments' from all five workshops. This report (25 pages) summarised the key points from the three sessions that were common to all five workshops: on the concept of WPZs, linking good practice to regulation, and final reflections. This report provided some quantitative analysis to show the number of comments on specific issues although the overall analysis was qualitative. A significant part of the report (15 pages) is annexes listing all the comments from the five workshops and showing how those comments were grouped.

The Overview report was checked with the WPZ team, and then the plan was to circulate that report electronically to all regional leads, who were expected to pass on key points to participants in their workshops.

## 4. FEEDBACK FROM THE WORKSHOPS

### 4.1 Introduction

The assessment that follows is based on quantitative and qualitative analysis of all questionnaires, qualitative analysis of telephone interviews and observation of one of the workshops including informal interviews with several participants, the facilitator and support facilitator and the regional lead.

Questionnaires were distributed to all participants in the workshops, and there was an 85% return rate for the workshops overall which provides an excellent sample for analysis. The figures given below are the percentage of respondents giving those answers. A full analysis of the questionnaires from all five internal workshops is given in Appendix 1, and the overall results are outlined in summary below.

Overall, this analysis shows positive feedback from participants, who clearly enjoyed and valued the experience. They clearly learnt a lot and the experience helped clarify their thinking. They could understand and use the information provided and found it fair and balanced.

### 4.2 Attendance

As shown in section 3.3 above, the response to the invitations to the workshops was very good, with numbers attending being higher than expected in almost all cases. Significant resources were invested by the Environment Agency in ensuring good attendance, with one full-time person working for one month on administration for the workshops, in addition to work by Dialogue by Design.

The large numbers of participants does indicate real interest in the subject and in participating in this type of event. However, the numbers did cause some problems in the delivery of the workshops as the design was based on smaller numbers. More people in the group meant that each discussion took longer than expected as more people spoke. This added to the time pressure and facilitators had to push discussion forward more quickly than they would have liked in an ideal world.

The types of participants were those that were sought, being essentially Environment Agency staff who knew or needed to know about the WPZs and related issues. However, there were some issues about the dual aims of the event - to spread awareness of WPZs and to discuss the nominated sites in detail. Some participants who really knew the sites had a lot to contribute and seemed to get more out of the workshops, while those who knew less sometimes struggled with the specific tasks and tended to be less satisfied overall. Some feedback suggested that, in future, it may make sense to split the day, with a general introduction for all those interested, and then a smaller group working on the detail.

### 4.3 Overall satisfaction

The questionnaire feedback was that 92% of respondents were **satisfied with the workshop overall**; 28% were very satisfied; 64% were quite satisfied. Only 3 respondents were dissatisfied and those were in the first two workshops; none of the respondents was 'very' dissatisfied. This is a very positive response overall to the whole workshop process. In addition, feedback from interviewees shows that all five felt the workshops delivered what they wanted.

There was also very positive feedback on the benefits of workshops of this type as a good way of sharing knowledge and exploring issues because of the opportunity to meet face to face with local and national colleagues, and have time to consider issues in some depth.

Comments from questionnaire respondents included:

"Very useful and informative. Good mixture of people from across the Environment Agency"

"Very well run workshop"

"Thought it was very useful workshop overall"

"Good to meet other colleagues and discuss all concerns / issues"

Comments from interviewees included:

"It was good to listen to others' views and able to hear about it from a national perspective ... to actually meet people face to face is really good"

"Its good to speak to different people and get different views"

"Its a good opportunity to discuss issues with other teams who are often remote. Just to sit round a table with all of these people is good"

"Definitely [a good approach]. It was good to chat to other people about the issues"

"With new stuff like this it is very important that people at all levels get to talk about it"

#### **4.4 Timing and locations for the workshop programme**

There was generally positive feedback about the timing of this workshop programme in terms of its place in the development and implementation of the WPZ project, although some felt they could have been held slightly earlier, particularly given the pressure to start the pilot programme. Comments from interviewees included:

"It possibly could have been done a bit earlier. We are already heavily involved so six months earlier may have been better"

"It could have been a bit earlier but I think there is enough time between these workshops and when things will be put in place, although the timescale is very tight"

"These things need to be ironed out and there needs to be another meeting fairly soon. If we are looking at October 2010 for implementation then even if they get things rolling now it could be pushing it"

There is always be a trade-off between holding workshops at a point at which there is less certainty about the concept, and thus involving people very early on, and waiting for greater certainty. As it was, the workshop programme was felt to be well timed: it was early enough for there to be scope to change things, with some decisions still in flux, but late enough for there to be sufficient clarity about the concept to have a productive discussion.

There were some problems in the timing to the extent that planning and delivery had to be done very quickly, so detailed planning was rushed. For example, there was not time to run a pilot workshop to test the design and then reflect and change the design before the remaining workshops; some small changes could be made based on experience but there was not time for the overall design to be reconsidered and changed.

Also, the lead facilitator for the project, who was in charge of the design, was not in practice available to run more than one workshop, so another facilitator was brought in. That facilitator was not involved in the planning sessions and was therefore not as fully briefed in the detail of the plans as would have been ideal with more time.

Finally, it was felt that it would have been ideal to bring all the regional leads together, with representatives of the Project Board, to plan the workshop programme, including clarifying how the results and inputs from participants would be used in coming to a final decision about the WPZ project and the location of its pilot sites. That would have enabled presentations to include more detail on the next steps after the workshops, especially on the decision-making processes on the overall plans and identification of pilot sites, which several participants identified as lacking clarity.

One point that has been made to the evaluator is that the planning for the workshops did help those in the WPZ team clarify the concept because it was being presented more widely. For example, the concept that the WPZ was a 'measure of last resort' became much clearer as the workshops were being planned. This reflects wider lessons of engagement - that having to take ideas and plans to a wider audience helps challenge those within teams to clarify thinking so that coherent information can be presented to others.

In terms of the choice of overall locations for the workshops, this was generally seen to have worked very well, with the WPZ team responding to feedback from regional lead officers and changing workshop locations on their advice to gain maximum attendance and convenience (and thus satisfaction and buy-in). The only negative comment on locations has been that not all the venues were convenient for public transport, which is not good in terms of environmental impacts; an issue that does need to be taken more into account in future.

#### 4.5 Design and facilitation

The questionnaire feedback was that:

- **95% agreed that all participants were treated equally and respectfully**, with 44% agreeing strongly and 51% agreeing. No-one disagreed.
- **94% agreed that there were enough opportunities for participants** to raise the issues and questions they wanted, with 28% strongly agreeing and 66% agreeing. Only 2 respondents disagreed.

These are very high levels of satisfaction and suggest that participants were very well-treated, and felt they had sufficient opportunities to have their say and raise the issues they wanted. The feedback on the design and facilitation was very positive overall:

- **91% agreed that the facilitation and design** of the workshop ensure fair and full discussions; with 38% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing. Again, no-one disagreed.
- **88% agreed that facilitated workshops** were a useful way of learning and developing understanding, with 33% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing. Only 1 respondent disagreed.
- **84% agreed that what participants were expected to do** and contribute was clear; with 15% strongly agreeing and 69% agreeing. 5 respondents disagreed.

There were some comments (from 3 respondents) that the workshops did not need to be facilitated by external facilitators and/or that they could be facilitated by Environment Agency staff. In addition, one interviewee pointed out that although "the facilitation was very good but ... it was clear that the facilitators were not as well informed as the local people. Which is to be expected I suppose."

Overall, therefore, it seems that the feedback on using external facilitators was very positive. As well as the questionnaire feedback, an informal interview with one participant suggested that there was particular value in using external facilitators because they had clearly helped create a very clear design, structure and tasks for the day, and because they were more able to control discussion and ensure that participants did not go off at tangents, which may be more difficult for internal facilitators to achieve if they were dealing with colleagues. Also, formal interviewees suggested that:

"Having independent chair people for the meeting worked well and it allowed everybody to have their say."

"I thought they held it all together well, directed it and did a good job"

"I think it is probably quite good to have someone independent facilitating it as they don't have an axe to grind of a particular view. If it was presented from head office there might have been a certain spin on it. Also you are not thinking 'I'd better be careful what I say about this'. It's good having a third party there."

Significant time was put into the design of the workshops, and there were meetings between the Dialogue by Design lead facilitator and every regional lead to plan the workshops. That was felt by all concerned to have worked very well and ensured that, within a generic design, each workshop could be tailored to local needs; regional staff were very pleased that such tailoring was possible.

The questionnaire feedback on clarity of roles and tasks for participants is also positive overall, but the relatively small proportion agreeing 'strongly' is backed up various other questionnaire responses and responses by interviewees, particularly on the tasks for the small groups.

There was fairly positive questionnaire feedback overall on the small group sessions. 78% of respondents found the group working on the WPZ and its potential boundaries useful (of which 34% found it 'very useful'). 78% also found the discussion in small groups on the potential for regulation useful (of which 26% found that 'very useful').

To some extent, feedback suggests that the specific instructions during the workshop on the tasks for the small group working was not always completely clear. One interviewee said "The individual group chats weren't very focused - that could have been better"; another suggested that a lesson for the future was to "really think about what you want people to discuss in the small groups"; another suggested that "a bit more forethought into the smaller teams" would have improved the workshop. It was also felt that the 'flow' of the meeting did not work quite as well as expected, with each session not always clearly following on from the previous discussion.

Also, some would have liked the participants to have been allocated specifically to the small groups so there was a better spread of knowledge and experience in each one, which would require a better understanding of the people attending and their levels of knowledge.

There was also some feedback that, as the small group working was not facilitated, in some cases the discussions meandered slightly which meant that the time was not used as well as it might have been. Given the tight timing of the day overall, this did mean that some discussions had less time to explore some of the implications in depth.

This links to the slightly less positive feedback on timing, which also relates to earlier comments about the large numbers of participants. The questionnaire feedback was that:

- **78% agreed that there was enough time** to discuss the issues properly; with 15% agreeing strongly and 63% agreeing. However, 13% disagreed and comments included that some topics could not be fully aired, and that some discussions were restricted because of time. One questionnaire respondent suggested that the workshop could have started earlier. Another commented:

"Getting such useful people together should have been given more time."

Generally, there was positive feedback on the information provided but with some caveats:

- **63% agreed that there was sufficient relevant information**; with 10% strongly agreeing and 53% agreeing. 6 respondents disagreed and 22 were uncertain. The main comments in questionnaire responses ranged from the problem that there was a lot of information to take in, to the need for more information (e.g. geology maps, rain data, more background information on WPZs and more information on sites).

Comments from interviewees provide a bit more insight into this apparent contradiction between too much and too little information. Several suggested that they would have liked more information before the meeting, so that those who knew little about the subject could get up to speed and it would have removed the necessity for some of the very detailed information that was presented which was hard to take in at the event.

However, the feedback also suggests that the presentations at the beginning were the element of the workshop that the largest number of respondents found useful, with 95% of respondents finding these sessions useful and over half finding them 'very useful'.

The feedback on the small group sessions is outlined above. Feedback on the other sessions is more difficult to compare as the activities at the different workshops did differ slightly. For example, the West Malling workshop feedback suggests that they did not have the final session on communication and next steps (although 84% then reported that it was useful). Even where this session clearly did happen, only 60% found it useful and only 18% of those found it very useful. This was the session that the biggest number of respondents did not find useful, although that was only 7 in total.

#### 4.6 Recording and reporting

Recording and reporting on participatory workshops of this sort is complex and difficult to do well. The main aim of design and facilitation tends to be on ensuring that the discussions in the room work well for those involved, with recording and reporting being carefully managed not to interfere with those discussions. The content of these workshops was, in some cases, highly technical and with a lot of internal jargon, that was not always shared across the Agency, let alone more widely.

Each workshop did have a support facilitator whose main role was recording the main points of the discussion. In most cases, these points were recorded on flip charts; in one case the points were recorded on a laptop and the results projects on to a screen as they were typed. This latter approach had the advantage of the notes not needing to be typed up afterwards. However, the disadvantage was that it was not possible to see the overall record, which is possible when using flip charts as the completed flip charts are left on display as the discussion moves on, allowing participants and the facilitator to refer back to points made earlier. One interviewee made exactly that point:

"The bit with the typing stuff onto the board - I didn't get that at all as you didn't read it. It might have been distracting for some people and you couldn't review or reflect on it. Blu-tack around the walls might annoy the people who painted them but at least it gives you the chance to reflect on what's been said."

The main points from the discussions in the small working groups were recorded by the group on the maps or worksheets provided, and typed up (with photos of the maps) presented in the workshop reports by Dialogue by Design. However, there was some sense that, although this provided useful data through a well documented list of comments, it did not provide the detailed level of information and analysis that the Environment Agency had been hoping for. There was also some disappointment in the Agency that there was not more 'statistical' feedback from the workshops, although they recognised that was not possible given the design used. In future, it may be possible to consider some way to meet the Agency's need for more statistical and analytical feedback by ensuring the design allows for that sort of information to be generated, recorded and reported.

#### 4.7 Outcomes

Questionnaire feedback on the outcomes from the meeting in terms of understanding the WPZ concept and programme, clarity about how the results of the workshop would be used and the extent to which those results would influence the Environment Agency's decisions, and whether they personally were more enthusiastic and committed to the WPZ concept as a result of participating in the workshop was that:

- **77% of questionnaire respondents agreed that they understood the Environment Agency thinking on WPZs** more clearly as a result of attending the workshop, with 21% agreeing strongly and 56% agreeing. 4 respondents disagreed. Here the main comments were that this was still early days so it is not entirely clear how a WPZ would work.

Feedback from interviewees was also very positive about the amount they learnt about the WPZ programme, especially for those who knew little in advance.

- **74% agreed that the purpose of the workshop, and how the results would be used were clear;** with 9% strongly agreeing and 65% agreeing. 7 disagreed (1 strongly) and 13 were uncertain.

From the comments it seems that there was generally clarity about the purpose of the workshop but less clarity about how the results would be used. One interviewee pointed out that no information had been presented about the final decision-making process, or when and how the final choice of sites would be made, or by whom; to the extent that participants were left 'baffled' by what would happen next.

- **66% agreed that there were opportunities to influence** the Environment Agency's decisions on WPZs, with 11% strongly agreeing and 55% agreeing. 20% were uncertain, and 8 disagreed.

The main comments from questionnaire respondents here were essentially that it was 'too early to tell' whether the workshops had had any influence, although some 'hoped so'. There was a view that there were opportunities "as long as feedback taken back to decision makers at EA and Defra", suggesting that it will be important to show participants that this has happened, when and how.

The feedback from interviewees was very similar, with an overall sense that the Environment Agency was listening but the extent to which input made at the workshop would be taken into account in future planning was much less clear. For two interviewees, the feedback was that they expected that their input would make a difference in the local area, but not necessarily at national level. More general comments included:

"I think the views will be listened to. It is still at an early stage and whether our views will actually be used or not I don't know"

"It felt like people were actually listening - whether it will be taken into account I don't know"

The potential to have an input and influence future plans were one of the key benefits for participants, as described below in section 4.x.

- **54% agreed they were more enthused and committed to the WPZ concept** after the workshop, with 10% strongly agreeing and 44% agreeing. 38% were uncertain and 6 disagreed. Some of the comments focused on the remaining lack of certainty about the concept and the sites, and that it was too early to tell how they would work in practice.

The caveats were therefore largely about needing evidence that WPZs worked before there was real enthusiasm and commitment. This could be seen as a slightly disappointing result as it was one of the objectives of the workshops to 'build staff buy-in' to WPZs, although these figures show that over half of the participants went away more enthused and committed than they were when they arrived. Feedback from interviewees illuminates this more, with several clarifying that the workshop created a change in understanding rather than attitude. For example:

"[Understood] a heck of a lot more ... I wouldn't say more enthusiastic and committed, rather more knowledgeable ... I do feel more able to answer questions about it"

"It hasn't changed my attitudes, just my understanding"

#### 4.8 What worked best

The aspects of the workshop process that worked best, and provided the greatest benefits to participants, were as follows:

- **Better understanding of WPZs.** For questionnaire respondents, finding out and understanding more about WPZs was the best aspect for the largest number of respondents. This included learning and understanding about the aims and process of WPZ designation, clarification about what a WPZ is and understanding how a WPZ can be used. The benefits identified were often general ('understanding of WPZs') but some specific comments were:

"Rounded perspective on the range of issues"

"Got better understanding of the issues affecting the [specific] catchment"

"Increased understanding of the potential within the wider environment and regen challenge"

"Seeing the link to wider concerns on tackling diffuse pollution and sensing how we could tap into that"

"I'm in a better position to contribute to WPZ process in future, especially in terms of evidence gathering"

"Knowing who's dealing with what and what's going on and trying to see if any of my day job / team can help in delivering better environmental outcomes"

"Understanding the scope of WPZ and potential as a regulatory tool"

"A much better understanding of WPZ and how potentially beneficial it could be"

Interviewees agreed, with comments including:

"Getting a good understanding of WPZs and what the potential benefits for our area would be"

"To understand what WPZs can offer us"



- **Presentations.** The two presentations (the regional and local input), and the discussions, were the aspects that were the best for the next biggest group of questionnaire respondents.

One thing that does emerge is that the quality of presentations reflects on satisfaction with the workshop overall. For example, there was a high level of satisfaction at the workshop in West Malling, with very positive feedback on the presentations; compared to much lower levels of satisfaction with the first workshop in Reading, and also lower satisfaction rates with presentations. Although it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions, it does seem clear that the quality of presentation does affect satisfaction rates significantly.

- **Listening to and talking to each other in that mix of local and national people.** Almost as important to questionnaire respondents was the chance to listen to the views of others, and to hear different ideas and views. The discussions both in the small groups and also in the Q & A sessions after the presentations were clearly highly valued. Lots of comments were just 'discussions' or 'dialogue'. Comments from questionnaire respondents included that the best aspects were:

"Opportunity to hear and discuss different views"  
 "Hearing the local perspective and local officers concerns"  
 The opportunity to listen / discuss views of others"  
 "Discussion groups to exchange ideas from different regional staff"  
 "Discussing ideas with colleagues and getting new ideas about what could be done to solve the problem"  
 "Other people's input - very informative"  
 "Learning more about the issues and perspectives of other colleagues"  
 "Useful to have chance to just brainstorm the problem and plenty of time for group discussion very important"

Similarly, there was enthusiasm for the opportunity to meet with and talk to different Environment Agency colleagues, and especially with all relevant colleagues, with comments such as the best aspect being:

"Opportunity to discuss with Area / Regional / National leads"  
 "Discussion of local issues ... with all relevant team members present"  
 "For everyone to get together and talk about the issues"  
 "Discussion on implementation: opens up greater dialogue between EA departments"  
 "Learnt a lot about WPZs - useful discussions with people from different parts of EA"  
 "Right people in one room, talking about the future"  
 "United approach to problems"  
 "Working with allies and a joint approach to a long lived problem"  
 "Finding out from Head Office about WPZs. Also finding out other departments views and level of understanding"  
 "Good to get Head Office / region-wide perspective on this issue right at the beginning of the WPZ process - not half-way through which is often the way it happens"  
 "Good to communicate between local and head office (Defra)"

Feedback from interviewees was very similar, including:

"The view from the national perspective as the most useful thing followed by having the local perspective from the people on the ground. It was good to hear both"

"Listening to people's views, both local and national. It was a good piece of communication, finding out fears, being kept well-informed. There are others from our department who would have benefited from it and could have been invited."

"I got a lot out of it. It is a worthwhile exercise as a lot of new strategies are developed at head office and sent down. For us to get the chance to get together and discuss at this stage is very valuable."

The enthusiasm for this sharing of ideas, especially with other Environment Agency colleagues was clearly important for many participants. It also suggests that there is significant enthusiasm for better relationships and communications between staff at different levels in the Agency.

- **Opportunity to input and influence.** Finally, there was clearly some real interest in being able to input, give views and have an influence at an early stage in the development of a new concept like this. Comments from questionnaire respondents included:

"An ability to offer differing views on the creation of something that is not yet finalised"

"Ability to input / discuss. Facilitation helped"

"Being able to influence WPZ policy"

"The opportunity to talk to the leads about the area, and hopefully, to influence inclusion of communication and influencing benefits being as great as regulatory through a designation"

"Opportunity to learn and perhaps influence"

For those interviewed, this opportunity to input views and influence was probably the most important benefit (and best aspect) of the workshop overall. Comments from interviewees included:

"I like the fact that we were involved in solving the problems and coming up with solutions. They made it very clear they were looking for ideas and it was good to have input positively received ... The most important benefit was to feel as though I was able to contribute to the development of ideas"

#### 4.9 What worked less well

There were far fewer comments on the 'worst' aspects, and the biggest single group of answers was the 'nothing' or 'none' of the aspects were worst. The comments that were made were generally about 'lack of clarity' on two fronts: on some technical information and on what happens next. Comments included:

- Lack of clarity, about some technical data and the details of regulation, and a demand for more evidence and data. There was quite a strong recognition that some of this lack of clarity was because it was still very early in the process. Comments included:

"Lack of clarity. Perhaps its too early"

"Still very early days in the development of WPZs so still lots of unknowns"

- Lack of clarity about what happens next and what is expected next of those who have taken part in these workshops. Comments included:

"Lack of clarity re actions I need to take locally as a result of discussions (if any)"

"Not sure what happens next"

"Finalising of action planning -wasn't clear who was leading on this"

"Not being fully aware of what I was supposed to do"

This feedback suggests that it would be very valuable for follow-up communications to be sent to participants as soon as possible, explaining next steps and what is expected of them.

#### **4.10 Overall conclusions on the workshops feedback**

Overall, the feedback from questionnaire respondents and interviewees was very positive indeed. The participants clearly learnt a great deal about WPZs and very much appreciated the chance to discuss these issues at an early stage in the process and, potentially, to have some influence over how the project is rolled out.

There was also significant positive feedback about the opportunity to work with other Environment Agency colleagues, to exchange ideas and listen to each other's views. There was particularly positive feedback about the mix of people including Head Office, Regional and local staff, which does not seem to be a usual approach to these projects.

However, there were also lots of outstanding questions. One respondent said "How to gather evidence? Who is going to pay for it? Time scale? Is it going to be a model base scenario?". Another said "Need clarification of policy".

Several pointed out that further clarification would be needed before taking the idea to external stakeholders:

"We need to be clear before external consultation", and

"Not ready for external workshops - need time to collect data on where exactly ... to know what measures to put in place".

## 5. ASSESSMENT OF WPZ WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES

### 5.1 Introduction

This section provides an assessment of the workshop activities against the objectives, against agreed criteria of good practice in engagement, and in terms of cost effectiveness. This assessment only covers the internal WPZ workshops, not the external workshop as that has not been subject to the same evaluation research.

### 5.2 Assessment against objectives

The objectives for the internal WPZ workshops were as follows:

- Brief staff on current thinking on WPZs, including pilot programme
- Clarify the concept of WPZs
- Share knowledge of pilot WPZs and explore potential boundaries
- Identify good / best practice which might be suitable for regulation
- Build staff buy-in to Environment Agency approach to WPZs.

<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Indicators of success</b>	<b>How each objective has been met</b>
Objective 1: Brief staff on current thinking on WPZs, including pilot programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations made on WPZs</li> <li>• Feedback from participants on satisfaction with presentations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations were made by the national WPZ project, and by regional staff on local issues.</li> <li>• Participants were very satisfied with the presentations, with these being the 'best' aspects of the workshop for the biggest group of questionnaire respondents.</li> </ul>
Objective 2: Clarify the concept of WPZs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations made to clarify the concept</li> <li>• Opportunities for participants to ask questions for clarification</li> <li>• Feedback from participants on satisfaction with clarity of the concept</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As above; presentations were made to clarify the concept.</li> <li>• There were numerous opportunities to ask questions, both immediately after presentations and at the end to identify any outstanding areas of confusion.</li> <li>• Participants were satisfied with the opportunities to ask questions and raise the issues they wanted to.</li> <li>• Overall, there was increased understanding of the concept and knowledge about it was relevant to participants' work.</li> </ul>
Objective 3: Share knowledge of pilot WPZs and explore potential boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations made on the issues and locations for the pilot WPZs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentations identified the proposed pilot WPZs and the implications.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to discuss these issues and locations and share knowledge</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction with the workshop coverage of these issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small group work allowed participants to fully discuss the potential boundaries and share knowledge.</li> <li>• Participants were satisfied with the discussions on the pilots and potential boundaries; there were suggestions about how this could have been done more effectively in the small groups but there as a good level of satisfaction overall.</li> </ul>
Objective 4: Identify good / best practice which might be suitable for regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workshop session to cover these issues</li> <li>• Participant satisfaction with this session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This workshop session was part of the agenda for the day, so there were opportunities for discussion of the issues.</li> <li>• This did not work as well as other sessions, partly through time pressures (this was later in the programme for the day) and partly because participants were less clear about the tasks they were asked to do on these issues.</li> <li>• However, the outputs from the small group working did identify good practice that might be suitable for regulation.</li> </ul>
Objective 5: Build staff buy-in to Environment Agency approach to WPZs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from participants on whether they did 'buy-in' to the approach to WPZs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than half the participants went away more enthusiastic and committed to the idea of WPZs as a result of participating in the workshop.</li> <li>• Feedback from participants showed higher levels of understanding of the benefits of WPZs in their areas and for their work, which indicates a good level of 'buy-in'.</li> <li>• This feedback does demonstrate a good level of 'buy-in' from staff at the workshops.</li> </ul>

As can be seen from the analysis above, all the objectives were fully met. The outputs from the workshops in terms of detailed notes on potential boundaries and identifying good practice suitable for regulation were not as comprehensive as the Environment Agency staff had hoped, and there were suggestions about how these sessions could have worked more effectively to achieve these objectives.

However, overall, the workshops clearly did meet all the objectives set and did generate an excellent level of increased understanding and goodwill.

### 5.3 Assessment against principles of good practice for engagement

The evaluation plan identified a series of principles of good practice for engagement that it was expected that the workshops would meet. These principles are based on general good practice for facilitating stakeholder engagement. The following analysis is based on those agreed principles.

<b>Key principles of good practice</b>	<b>Indicators of success</b>	<b>How each principle has been met</b>
The design and delivery of the workshops was appropriate to the objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The design and delivery ensured that the objectives were met</li> <li>• The feedback confirmed that the design and delivery achieved the objectives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The objectives were fully met by the design and delivery.</li> <li>• Feedback from all those involved confirmed that the design and delivery worked well to achieve the objectives.</li> </ul>
There was enough time at workshops to meet the objectives and to enable participants to formulate and input their views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timetable allowed time for the sessions needed to meet the objectives</li> <li>• Feedback confirmed there was enough time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timetable did allow time to enable sessions to take place to cover each element of the objectives.</li> <li>• Although overall feedback was that there had been enough time (78% agreed), some discussions were curtailed and rushed. Feedback was that time was tight at the workshops partly because it was a short day (11am to 3.30pm), partly that there were more participants than had been expected at the design stage (so discussions took longer), and partly because the complexity of the issues took longer to discuss than expected.</li> </ul>
There was sufficient relevant information to enable participants to participate fully	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sent out in advance, and feedback on that</li> <li>• Information provided on the day, and feedback on that</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information was sent out in advance but feedback suggests that participants would have liked more background information in advance so they could have prepared more for the workshop, and possibly brought more information into the workshop themselves.</li> <li>• Information was provided on the day in the form of formal presentations, handouts giving background to the WPZs concept, and maps showing potential boundaries. Overall, these materials worked very well and there was good positive feedback on all these elements.</li> </ul>

<p>There was an appropriate number and type of participant to meet the objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance met targets in terms of numbers and types of people attending</li> <li>• Feedback from participants on satisfaction with the number and mix of people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The target numbers and types of people were met or exceeded in every case.</li> <li>• Participants found the mix of people ideal for the discussions. There were some suggestions that greater knowledge about the levels of specific knowledge and experience of participants would have helped allocate people to small groups to spread around different expertise and so enable discussions in those groups to be more effective.</li> </ul>
<p>The design and facilitation of the workshops ensured fair and full discussions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timetable allowed time for full discussions</li> <li>• The facilitation ensured that everyone could have their say</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The timetable plan did allow good time for discussions, although more time would have enabled fuller discussions (see above on timing).</li> <li>• From observation and feedback, it is clear that the facilitation worked very well to ensure that everyone could have their say, ask questions and raise the issues that participants wanted to raise. This did ensure that discussions were fair.</li> </ul>
<p>All participants treated equally and respectfully</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation and feedback from participants that they were treated equally and respectfully</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observation and feedback from participants showed that they were treated equally and respectfully, with 95% of participants agreeing this had been the case.</li> </ul>
<p>There was a good level of participant satisfaction with the process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 92% of participants were satisfied with the workshops; 28% were 'very' satisfied. This is a very good level of participant satisfaction.</li> </ul>
<p>There was clarity about the objectives, boundaries, outputs (e.g. reports) and how outcomes (results) would be used</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• These issues were dealt with in the information provided, and there was participant satisfaction with levels of clarity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information materials were clear about the objectives of the workshops, and the boundaries of what would be discussed. Feedback from participants confirmed they were clear about these issues.</li> <li>• There was not clear information about the outputs from the workshop (whether there would be reports), beyond the collection of maps and notes made at the events. As a result there was a lack of clarity among participants</li> </ul>

		<p>about what would be produced to summarise the workshop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The next steps session at the end of each workshop summarised what the overall plans for the WPZs were but did not go into any detail about how the results of the workshop would be used, nor about how or when decisions about future plans and pilot sites would be made, nor who would make those decisions. As a result, participants were very unclear about how this would be done.</li> </ul>
There were opportunities for participants to raise issues and questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agenda allowed time for this, and participant feedback on their satisfaction with how this worked</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The agenda did allow time for Q &amp; A sessions, and for a final session to allow for any outstanding questions to be resolved.</li> <li>• Participant feedback was that some of the Q &amp; A sessions were a little rushed but that, overall, they did have good opportunities to raise issues and questions.</li> </ul>
There was clarity about the roles and responsibilities of participants (what is expected of them)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information provided, and feedback from participants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information provided was clear about the objectives of the workshop and participants were clear about their roles overall.</li> <li>• Participants were less clear about some of the specific tasks they were asked to do in the small groups, and suggested that clearer instructions would have helped, although they did fulfil these tasks with enthusiasm and goodwill.</li> <li>• Participants were less clear about what was expected of them as a result of the workshop; what they may need to do next.</li> </ul>
There was an opportunity for participants to influence Agency decisions on WPZs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from participants, and feedback from Agency staff that input from the workshops would influence decisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from participants was that they felt the Agency was listening carefully to the issues and questions raised at the workshop; there was less confidence that this input would influence future decisions. This may have been because there was a lack of clarity about how those</li> </ul>



		<p>decisions would be made and by whom.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback from the WPZ project staff is that they would take the inputs from the workshops into account in future planning.</li> </ul>
There was appropriate follow-up feedback to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports of the workshops were distributed, and participant satisfaction with feedback</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At the time of the evaluation, no reports had been completed. However, there were plans to circulate reports of each workshop to all those participants, and to circulate the Overview report to regional leads with the expectation that they would pass on the overall conclusions to their local contacts. Generally, it would be ideal for all reports to be sent (or made available, by letting participants know they could get copies) to all participants.</li> <li>• Given that reports had not been circulated, it was not possible to test participant satisfaction with those reports.</li> </ul>

Overall, this analysis shows that the principles of good practice were met. There are some lessons here for future practice, and aspects of the design and delivery that could have been improved but, overall, the quality standards were high.

#### 5.4 Assessment of cost effectiveness

Key questions	Answers														
What were the main costs (e.g. broad costs for Agency staff time, contractor costs, costs of events e.g. rooms, materials)?	<table> <tr> <td>Design and delivery contract:</td> <td>£ 26,524</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Expenses for contractors:</td> <td>£ 1,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Evaluation design and delivery:</td> <td>£ 7,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Venues, catering etc:</td> <td>£ 8,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>EA staff costs (50% 2 people for 3 months, plus one person f/t for a month):</td> <td>£ 4,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Materials etc (by regions)</td> <td><u>£ 250</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>£ 46,774</td> </tr> </table> <p>To put this figure into context, the overall annual budget for the WPZ project for 2008-9 was £210,000, so the workshops represented about 23% of the total budget.</p> <p>However, the overall budget for the development and implementation of the WPZ will be significantly higher than that single annual figure, and the costs of the workshops will need to be assessed in relation to that total cost when it is known.</p>	Design and delivery contract:	£ 26,524	Expenses for contractors:	£ 1,000	Evaluation design and delivery:	£ 7,000	Venues, catering etc:	£ 8,000	EA staff costs (50% 2 people for 3 months, plus one person f/t for a month):	£ 4,000	Materials etc (by regions)	<u>£ 250</u>		£ 46,774
Design and delivery contract:	£ 26,524														
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EA staff costs (50% 2 people for 3 months, plus one person f/t for a month):	£ 4,000														
Materials etc (by regions)	<u>£ 250</u>														
	£ 46,774														
What were the main benefits (for Agency and participants)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased understanding and awareness of the WPZ programme among key Agency staff who attended</li> </ul>														

<p>What were the main benefits (for Agency and participants)? <i>continued</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The WPZ team were able to draw on the knowledge and experience of local Agency staff on the thinking and planning to date</li> <li>• Testing the proposed boundaries of these WPZs with local staff who know the area in detail</li> <li>• Providing an opportunity for Agency staff to influence WPZ planning</li> <li>• Identifying specific problems and implications of the proposed WPZs with local staff who know the local area in detail</li> <li>• Identifying the implications of the links between regulation and existing good practice (including voluntary arrangements)</li> <li>• Building relationships between Agency staff who will be working on the WPZ programme by bringing staff together from different teams and from national and regional levels</li> <li>• Providing a focus and impetus for the WPZ project team to clarify details about the WPZ concept and pilots prior to the workshop</li> <li>• Improving the WPZ concept and plans by testing the thinking and planning with key staff</li> <li>• Piloting the workshop approach as a way of rolling out the WPZ programme across the Agency</li> <li>• Getting buy-in (and increased motivation) from key Agency staff</li> <li>• High quality design, with appropriate regional tailoring, which helped build support and buy-in from the regions</li> <li>• Good facilitation by external contractor who could better design and deliver productive workshop interactions</li> </ul>
<p>Could the same benefits have been achieved for less cost?</p>	<p>No. Alternative methods may have achieved some level of awareness (e.g. electronic communications) but none of the other benefits could have been achieved without interactive workshops.</p> <p>Also, the costs for the design were essential to get as good a product as possible.</p> <p>The only potential for saving costs is that the plans for the workshops were changed at the last minute (e.g. cutting the numbers of internal workshops, and cancelling all but one external workshop which was in practice run by internal facilitators). This meant that time and effort was spent designing a larger programme than was actually delivered.</p>
<p>Could more benefits have been achieved for the same cost?</p>	<p>Yes, if there had been more time to plan and pilot the workshops. The very short timescale meant that only very minimal changes could be made after the initial workshop was run. For example, the workshops may have been more productive if they had been slightly longer (to reduce time pressure), if the tasks for the small working groups had been clearer, and if the outputs from the small working groups had been recorded and reported more fully.</p> <p>Also, greater clarity at the start about the Agency's expectations from the final report could have fed into an amended design that would have provided the statistical feedback and analysis that was desired.</p>
<p>Could significantly more benefits have been achieved for slightly higher costs?</p>	<p>There could have been benefits in ensuring that an Environment Agency regional person attended all workshops, to hear discussions first hand and thus contribute to the analysis and conclusions in the Overview report. The only additional costs would have been that person's salary and travel costs).</p> <p>There could also have been benefits in bringing together all the regional leads, and the WPZ project team (and possibly Project Board) to plan the workshops. This may have ensured a clearer picture about how (and when) the results of the workshops would be used in future planning and decision-making.</p>
<p>What is the overall balance of costs and benefits for design and delivery of the workshops?</p>	<p>The conclusion of the internal Agency team is that it was 50/50 as to whether it was money well spent. The positives were that the whole workshop process was very well-designed and worthwhile.</p> <p>The feedback from interviewees was that it was very definitely money well spent. There were some suggestions for the sorts of adjustments to the design identified above but, generally, there was a very strong feeling that it was 'money well spent'.</p>

	<p>The only exception to this view was one interviewee who suggested having the workshop at their own offices. General comments on whether it was money well spent included:</p> <p>"For something with national roll-out it was appropriate. For a lesser subject it might not need to be so grand."</p> <p>"The amount of resource put into it was quite extravagant but perhaps it was the only way to do it."</p> <p>"Perhaps not to be done too regularly but on balance yes"</p>
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This analysis shows that the costs of the workshops were **quite large** and a significant proportion of the annual budget for the WPZ project (around 23%). However, the benefits were **very important** to the future development of the programme, and it is expected that these benefits will make a major contribution to the ease and speed with which the programme can be implemented at later stages and thus, potentially, save resources in the longer term.

It will be very interesting to revisit these conclusions at later stages in the programme to test what the longer term impacts of the workshop programme has been in terms of cost effectiveness.

## 5.5 Conclusions

The analysis above shows that the objectives of the workshops were fully met, that the agreed principles of good practice in engagement were met (with some ideas on improvements for the future), and that the workshop programme was cost effective overall.

## **6. LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This section summarises the main lessons from the evaluation of the internal WPZ workshops, drawing on the analysis throughout this evaluation report.

### **6.2 Lessons for the future**

- This type of workshop was an excellent approach to engaging local and national Environment Agency staff in a national initiative. It successfully increased participant awareness and understanding of the benefits of the WPZ approach, provided participants with a way to input their own knowledge and experience at this relatively early stage and thus influence the future development of the WPZ programme, and provided the national WPZ project with valuable local feedback on the boundaries of potential WPZ pilot areas, specific local issues of diffuse pollution, and greater understanding of the local context in terms of links between the WPZ and existing good practice.
- With significant effort and dedicated resources, significant numbers of Environment Agency staff can be encouraged to attend this sort of workshop.
- A good mix of local and national staff is important so that the necessary knowledge and experience can be drawn on in coming to conclusions. In future, it may be useful to find out more about the exact knowledge and experience of those taking part, so the design of the workshop and the information provided on the day can be better tailored. For example, there could be a general session for a wide audience for part of the day, and then a smaller group could continue working on issues that need specific local knowledge.
- Participants generally want sufficient information in advance so they can do any necessary preparatory work and thinking. Not everyone will look at this information but many will and those that need the briefing will complain if it is not provided. Ideally, basic briefing will be circulated to all participants in advance, with links to further detail for those that want to know more.
- Investment in professional external design is very worthwhile, in terms of providing specific design expertise, providing dedicated resources for local negotiation and tailoring based on an agreed generic design, and in providing an 'independent' facilitator to negotiate and deliver the workshop process.
- A longer timescale for design and delivery would have enabled the workshop design to be piloted and then changed in the light of a review of experience. This could have overcome some of the problems of timing and lack of clarity in this case. For example, the length of the workshop could have been extended to allow more time for discussion.
- With more time for planning and preparation, and if this workshop model is rolled out in other Environment Agency regions, it may be possible to recruit or specially train Agency staff to act as support facilitators. Although this would not reduce external costs in the short term (as training / coaching would need to be provided), it may reduce costs in the longer term as well as providing a relatively safe environment for Environment Agency staff to develop these skills.
- In future, greater clarity is needed at the start on the exact requirements for the final report from the workshops, so that the workshops can be designed, delivered and recorded to achieve those requirements. In this case, the workshops were not designed to deliver the outputs that the WPZ project team wanted (more statistical details, wider analysis and conclusions).

- Within the workshops, small group working is excellent for developing detailed input. However, the specific tasks and outputs required from participants needs to be very clear so this time is used most effectively, and the necessary outputs are achieved.
- The stated objectives worked well to frame the workshop process, setting out clear and specific issues that needed to be addressed, and the outcomes that were to be achieved.
- In future, greater clarity is needed about how the results of the workshops will be used, as well as how, when and by whom future decisions will be made about the WPZ programme and the pilot areas. This information can then be given to participants at the start of the workshop (or before), so they can see how their input fits in.
- Feedback to participants is vital to maintaining goodwill. Any 'buy-in' at the event will be lost if appropriate follow-up feedback is not provided. Such feedback should summarise the issues that have been taken forward as a result of the workshop, a response from the WPZ team about whether and how they will use those outputs in future planning, and a timescale for next steps and key future developments.

### **6.3 Conclusions**

This evaluation has been designed to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the workshop programme, and to identify lessons for the future possible roll-out of a workshop programme more widely. The lessons above are intended to provide some initial guidance to support this extended programme of work.

It will be useful to continue monitoring the feedback and interest in the national WPZ project from the local contacts that have taken part in this initial programme to test the longer term impacts of this approach to spreading awareness, understanding and involvement among Environment Agency staff.