

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY
BUILDING TRUST IN LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Environment Agency Initiatives and Research
Summary

June 2003

INTRODUCTION

This report describes Environment Agency initiatives which are relevant to the Building Trust in Local Communities initiative, building on original research completed for the Joining Up R & D Project.

Criteria for inclusion

The main criteria for including projects and initiatives are as follows:

- projects which involved consulting, involving or communicating with the public and other stakeholders
- projects which involved partnerships with other organisations, such as local authorities, other agencies, government, educational institutions, communities
- projects which were working on social policy issues, such as health, social exclusion (including working with social groups which may often be excluded eg black and ethnic minority group and people with disabilities), regeneration, participation, education and training for sustainable development, freedom of information, social perceptions of risk
- projects related to learning, knowledge, values and perceptions.

Almost all the projects are related directly to the mainstream activities of the Agency, such as flood defences, waste, licensing, regulation, enforcement, etc.

Extent of current practice

This listing of projects and initiatives cannot be considered comprehensive, as new initiatives are being developed all the time, and further progress is being made on existing initiatives. However, it is clear from the range of initiatives included here, and the quality of the reflections of those involved in those projects, that there is a wealth of understanding and experience within the Agency of the nature and implications of the social dimensions of Agency activities. These social dimensions are recognised as covering both the way the Agency works to achieve its environmental objectives (eg consultation, partnership, education), and the social impacts of the Agency's activities (eg in setting priorities and understanding the social consequences).

It has taken considerable effort to identify these initiatives, and to obtain information on them. The people involved are extremely busy, and many of the initiatives listed in this report are seen as mainstream activities which are not recorded as they are not seen as worthy of special attention. As a result, it has become clear that much of the experience within the Agency is not widely known about, understood, or used to inform practice. There is considerable scope for the information collected here (and subsequent data collection) to be used as a basis for a system to share more widely the lessons and good practice which already exists on working on social issues within the Agency.

The Joining Up project has collated this information as the first step in developing a national learning network. The project team will be investigating the most appropriate methods for disseminating and updating the information (and additional data), and for using it to enable wider learning, during Phase 2 of the Joining Up project.

The structure of this report

The remainder of this information is structured as a simple alphabetical list, by the name of the project (where this is self explanatory). Not all initiatives have a formal project name, and these are then placed under a heading which it has been considered best summarises the issue on which they focus.

Where there is sufficient information, we have aimed to structure each entry to cover the following information:

- name
- purpose
- summary description
- timescale
- outcomes/results
- lessons learned
- written reports available
- contact name.

A full summary list of headings used follows this introduction.

It is intended that this should be an evolving document. This version needs to be checked with those who have provided the basic information before it can be distributed more widely. When these contributors have agreed the text on their project or initiative, the full report can then be disseminated more widely. It is likely that the Agency intranet will be the most effective means of distribution in the initial stages.

Diane Warburton
Joining Up project team
February 2002

SUMMARY OF HEADINGS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

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- Wellbeing power
- Sustainable Wales
- National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal
- Communities First

Greener Normanton
Health impacts of flooding
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Landcare
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Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs)
Local Outreach
Lower Lea Valley project
Millennium Project and Festivals
MXC Project
National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal

- Participatory Risk Assessment
- Social Amplification of Risk
- Communicating contaminated land
- RISCO

National Ponds Project
The Natural Step
NW Business Environment Partnership
Nuclear group

- BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue
- Sellafield Review

PENS
Policy Development Review Process
Professional Practice for Sustainable Development
Power generation application consultations (Drax and Glanford)
Public access to information
Public Involvement in Agency Activities
Recreation
Regional Assemblies
Regional Development Agencies
River Sowe Rehabilitation
Shropshire Partnership
Social Issues Network
Squeaky Clean in Burnley
Sustainable Development Model
Tees Valley Waste Minimisation Project
Thames Ahead
Training
Upper Wharfedale Best Practice Project
Urban Regeneration
Voluntary Sector Compact in Wales
Volunteering
Water abstraction consultations
Wise Use of Floodplains
Yorks and Humberside Region's SD Education Strategy

The Agency Board

The Agency Board has prime responsibility for directing the Agency's strategy in the light of guidance provided by Ministers. The Board met six times during the year 2000/2001, which was the first year that all meetings included Open Board sessions, allowing people to observe decision making processes at the highest level in the Agency. This reflects the Agency's policy of increasing the openness and transparency of its decision-making.

Angling participation

The purposes of this project, which operates throughout England & Wales, are

- To increase numbers of people fishing, particularly disadvantaged young people 'at risk' of offending
- To increase social inclusion
- To allow the EA to sell more rod licences, which will generate additional resources for the Agency to use to improve more ponds and rivers and keep up fish stocks (which is the objective of the Fisheries section): the number of applications for rod licences was reducing by 2% a year
- To increase the membership of the angling governing body

This is a partnership scheme with Sport England, and the scheme is funded by the Lottery (£4 million). Market research into public attitudes to angling and barriers to participation showed that 70% feel fishing is acceptable as a pastime, and that lots of people used to fish but have stopped because they do not have anyone to fish with, have nowhere to fish and have no equipment. The scheme involves fisheries staff all over UK. This is an important initiative for the Agency: the Fisheries function is funded by the sale of rod licences (1.2 million are sold each year).

A pilot scheme has been run in Durham, called 'Get Kids Hooked on Fishing', managed by an enthusiastic police constable. The pilot has been judged very successful, with significant community benefits including that 98% of the young people involved (who were deemed 'at risk' of offending) were not offending at all; and some of them had become angling coaches which has given them new pride and confidence.

The scheme is now being rolled out nationally, with the Agency identifying the areas and working with local authorities to provide improved fishing opportunities. The Agency has invested funds into restoring and renovating fishing areas, digging ponds etc (as around 600,000 ponds in urban areas have been filled in over the last 20-30 years). Sport England funds major capital works such as building visitor centres, lecture rooms etc; it is also advising on a formal structure for the scheme with formal coaching levels (to harmonise with other sports) and high standards of child protection. Lots of other agencies are also interested in becoming involved including angling organisations, the tackle trade, Barclays Bank and the police.

The original aim was to develop 100,000 new angling opportunities within the three years of the programme; the target now is for 10,000 in the first year. Ten pilot schemes will start in 2002: the Agency asked for ideas and were inundated with potential projects. As the scheme rolls out nationally, the Agency will approve projects and then allow them to be set up, developed and run locally. The aim is to make all the local projects self sustaining after three years.

Although it is too early to make overall judgements about the scheme, learning points and issues raised to date include:

- There are difficulties in bringing different bodies together without in-fighting; although the Agency expected that ("it's just the way things are"), it has taken a year to make the partnership work successfully.
- The scheme has lots of momentum because there is increasing awareness of the benefits of getting young people 'at risk' involved in something other than stealing cars, drugs and shoplifting.

- A lot depends on the individuals running the scheme; the major success in Durham may be difficult to repeat everywhere.
- The scheme introduces new skills and responsibilities for Agency staff (eg need to consider issues of child protection when taking children away overnight).
- The Agency's Fisheries function has very close links to communities and direct users, in contrast to many other parts of the Agency.

There are no written reports to date.

Contact Richard Whiteman, Fisheries, Water Management, Rio House, Bristol.

Annual General Meeting 2000

The Agency's AGM in 2000 focused on environmental equality. A booklet was published, summarising the issues raised at the AGM: *Achieving Environmental Equality. Highlights of the Environment Agency AGM 2000*. The key issue of HOW the Agency's work makes a difference to social justice and equality, and how the pursuit of social and economic equity will impact on the environment, was the theme of the AGM. Debates and panel presentations covered issues of rights and justice (including environmental equality), finding new ways for the public to have a voice and for the Agency to engage with people (and ensuring resources are available to achieve that), linking environmental standards with public values, and linking regulation with equality.

Sir John Harman (Chair of the Agency Board) is quoted in the report of the AGM as saying that "good regulation is in itself a force for equality. Contaminated land, water and air, the disposal of municipal, commercial and radioactive waste, flooding and climate change all have social and economic impacts, and these are not evenly distributed across communities. The potential for the Agency to tackle environmental inequalities is therefore considerable."

From the debates at the AGM, six action points for the Agency were agreed, and set out in the report:

- Mapping out and identifying where there are social and environmental inequalities and sharing this information.
- Working with business to ensure that our regulation work improves the environment for everyone.
- Providing better information and consultation techniques, to contribute to community plans, local waste strategies, local transport plans and local land use.
- Working with key national and regional initiatives which are tackling social exclusion.
- Further developing the skills and capacity of our people to work with stakeholders.
- Understanding how the international dimensions of environmental equality affect us.

Attitudes to environmentally and socially responsible investment

The Agency has co-sponsored, with DTI and CGNU, research to be conducted by Business in the Environment to survey changes since the early 1990s in attitudes in City of London financial institutions towards environmentally and socially responsible investments.

Business links

- Environment Agency Wales has proposed a three-phase approach for public bodies to engage business to take sustainable development on board:
 - Persuade businesses they can save money by being more efficient with natural resources

- Persuade businesses that being 'green' brings a marketing advantage that can bring them commercial benefits
- Encourage larger companies to exert 'supply chain' pressure on their suppliers.

All three phases require people from the public sector to work closely with business to work out a bespoke plan. The Agency's NetRegs initiative is proposed as a way of developing such a plan. See *A Regional Contribution to Europe's Sustainable Development Strategy*, by Jim Poole, March 2001.

- The Midlands Region has an Action Plan to support environmental business growth across the region. There are three components to the Plan, which are delivered through partner agencies: a stronger West Midlands economy based on growing the environmental technologies sector, a greater level of compliance among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and training local young people for potential vacancies in the environmental technologies sector.
Contact Barbara Yates, Midlands Region.
- Regional EA procurement in the Midlands is working with Advantage West Midlands (the Regional Development Agency) on their programme to help local small black and minority ethnic businesses improve their ability to tender for Government contracts.
Contact Barbara Yates, Midlands Region.
- The Agency's North West Regional Director chairs the NW Business Environment Partnership which links to investment under the Single Regeneration Budget (round 6) for training SMEs, green business parks and the development of Business Environment Associations. The Agency is also on the steering group for EVOLVE which helps organisations measure social and environmental performance.
Contact Debbie French, North West Region.
- The North West Region has provided four sessions of training for ICI on sustainable development issues over a year.
Contact Heidi Curran, North West Region.
- Partnerships with Business in the Community and others on working with disadvantaged communities (see below under Ethnic Outreach Programme).

Capacity building networks

- Thames region is working to establish a local capacity building network which will be made up of 15 trained facilitators who can contribute to local dialogue and consultation projects, including for the Agency itself.
- The Agency has around 30 personnel who are fully trained facilitators via The Environment Council training courses.

Clean Rivers

The Agency supports and participates in this multi-agency project which undertakes practical improvements such as removing litter and debris from riverbanks, and promotes ownership within the community of their local environment.

The project is led by a charity and involves social groups not often encountered by the Agency eg young offenders. The voluntary sector then maintains the momentum of the project in their area.

Contact John Harrison, St Mellons, Environment Agency Wales.

Community projects

- "The most pleasant and one of the most rewarding pieces of work I have been involved in was the Millennium Project in Reading at View Island. The island was an area of derelict land which was converted by the Agency and other partners (including the borough council) into an outdoor classroom and park. The Island had been closed to the public for 20 years but is now visited frequently. Staff really enjoyed the work involved in changing the island, in public interaction and in leaving a lasting environmental resource. The borough council receive more letters of praise

about this one park than all 120 of their other parks put together and it is held up as a model of best practice in managing parks for wildlife."

Contact Alex Fielding, Enforcement Team, Wallingford office, Thames region.

- 'Capital ideas' is an educational project with youth and community groups across London, in which the Agency supported 12 inner city clubs doing environmental projects such as river clean ups, waste awareness raising campaigns and environmental projects for special needs schools.
- Lewisham Environmental Task Force is a partnership between the Agency, the London Borough of Lewisham, Millwall Football Club, the Groundwork trust, BTCV, local businesses and young people in Lewisham. The Task Force has transformed a derelict site in SE London into a wildlife meadow that can be used safely by the whole community.

Community strategies and Local Strategic Partnerships.

National level work on community strategies work, led by Kristina Richards (and previously by Jenny Waterworth) produced early guidelines for Agency staff to link into the need for every local authority to prepare a community strategy. As the strategies are envisaged by national government as a key mechanism for involving communities in local decision-making, a particular issue for the Agency will be how the LEAPs (and the participatory mechanisms used to create them) will feed into the development of these new strategies.

These new relationships will also require the Agency to be involved in the Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), through which a whole range of agencies involved in delivering services in the area are brought together to create community strategies (among other responsibilities).

The guidance for local authorities in developing community strategies stresses the need to consider their duty to promote social, economic and environmental well-being, and it is likely that the Agency's involvement will primarily be intended to strengthen the environmental capability of the LSPs and the environmental content of the strategies. Clear indicators are being set for quality of life etc through national government guidelines.

In discussions in the internal Agency Community Strategies Workshop, held in April 2001, it was agreed that the Agency should aim for, at least:

- Sending LEAPs and related material to local authorities to inform the development of community strategies
- Internal national guidance should specify 'lines to take' and text that can be used to identify what the Agency wants out of community strategies and potential roles
- Comments on draft community strategies.

If it was possible to aim for a higher level of involvement, it was suggested that the Agency should aim for:

- A seat on LSPs, and involvement in workshops etc
- To influence Government expenditure, eg through the Neighbourhood Renewal Funds
- Getting feedback / outreach to prepare for change in Agency priorities as a result of the LSP/community strategy processes
- Concentrate on fast track LSPs ie those in the 88 poorest local authorities which will get Neighbourhood Renewal Fund assistance.

It was agreed in discussions that further action was needed on:

- Training to deal with changing needs, new competencies (eg access to external funding) and working in partnerships
- Setting up an Intranet discussion forum to share information and case studies
- Hold workshops every six to nine months
- Review and update the internal Agency national guidance on community strategies and LSPs (draft dated December 2000).

Since this guidance was issued, the Agency's Making it Happen corporate programme has identified involvement in community strategies as a key priority for the Agency's future work. There is now a clear Agency target that, by 2005, the Agency will:

"Contribute to all community strategies, focusing on the 50% where we can most benefit from social and environmental capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities".

The Agency activities to meet this target are specified as:

"Input to environmental priorities for community strategies, taking account of both the Agency's perspective and local priorities."

The Agency has already some experience of this type of involvement. Examples include the following (DC = District Council; CC = County Council; UA = Unitary Authority):

- Thames region:
 - Work with Cotswold DC
- South West region
 - Mid-Devon DC (which involved the LEAPs team in producing the first draft)
 - Devon CC (the county lead forum has worked with the Environment Agency, the Countryside Agency and English Nature to develop the community strategy)
 - Dorset CC (as Devon)
 - Pete Grigorey represents the Agency on the Local Sustainability Group SW which brings together current and former LA21 officers and contacts, mostly from local authorities, across the region, and feeds into new policy and strategy developments.
- Southern region
 - Targeted their resources on LSPs with neighbourhood renewal schemes (which have been the UK Government's top priority)
 - Wealden BC (detailed analysis of draft and input on environmental issues and implications)
 - Southampton City Council (still at an early stage)
 - Kent CC (strategy refers to LEAPs)
 - Hampshire CC (produced their strategy in December 1999; the Agency is intending to influence the review)
- North East region
 - Two areas wrote to all local authority chief executives to check progress on community strategies; 90% response in one area; awaiting analysis of responses in second area. There are high expectations of the Agency in terms of involvement and input.
 - Two regional Agency staff are leading members of the NE Region Sustainability Practitioners Network, which is the main body for LA21 officers covering the whole of the UK; one staff member is also a member of Yorks and Humber Sustainability Practitioners Network.
- Anglian region
 - Questionnaires have been sent to all local authorities in the region; no full analysis of replies yet available
 - Eastern Area has worked closely with South Norfolk District Council to ensure that messages about waste minimisation, recycling and efficient water use (and other priorities identified as part of the LEAP and the LA21 processes) are reflected in the council's new community strategy.
 - One LSP has been set up with the Agency in a central role.

- Midlands region
 - The approach here is to link into the regeneration zones which are being established in this region
 - The regional office has been approached by some local authorities, and they are responding to those rather than taking a comprehensive approach
- Wales
 - Environment Agency Wales (EAW) is regarded as a key player in community strategy development across Wales by the National Assembly of Wales
 - A member of EAW staff is on the National Assembly's community strategies group
 - EAW taking a proactive role throughout Wales with those local authorities underway with community strategy processes including sharing data (GIS/mapping issues), setting targets and indicators, chairing workshops, commenting on draft plans. In addition, deeper relationships have been established with some individual councils, as outlined below.
 - Caerphilly MBC: EAW has been sharing data with them
 - Anglesey CC: EAW has chaired a workshop on community strategies
 - Powys CC: EAW gave financial support to launch the community strategy
 - Cardiff City Council: EAW involvement in their Capital Forum
- North West region
 - Written to all chief executives to ascertain progress
 - The Southern area team is focusing on the three county councils (Cheshire, Merseyside and Greater Manchester), and making links to previous LA21 groups
 - The Central area team is working with all local authorities in LEAP areas

Consultation and involvement in licensing applications

Many licensing applications managed by the Agency involve consultation with the public and other stakeholders. Some examples are outlined below, taken from the report *Public Involvement in Agency Activities* by Dr Clare Twigger-Ross and Cindy-Rose Smith, July 2000. Some subsequent data has also been included from interviews.

- **Castle Cement, Ketton**
This initiative involved public liaison processes on two separate IPC applications for tyre burning, substitute liquid fuel and processed fuel burning in cement kilns near Stamford, Rutland.

For the consultation on the first application, the Agency went in to the first public liaison meeting cold, half way through the determination of the application, when the decision was all but made. By the time of the second application, the Agency had developed extensive local liaison with local residents, had held a series of exhibitions, and the Inspector had established a good relationship with the Parish Council.

The second liaison process involved:

- Consultation process discussed with Ketton Local Liaison Committee, made up of the Agency, Castle Cement, councillors and residents
- Statutory consultees were sent copies of the applications, and the company placed the required ads
- Agency prepared consultation documents which summarised each application, and widely circulated them
- Public meeting advertised in local paper, press releases and posters in neighbouring village
- Meeting chaired by Chair of Welland and Nene Area Environmental Group (an Agency advisory committee), with presentations explaining proposals (by the company) and the Agency approach (by Agency staff). The meeting was attended by about 75 people

- Only four members of the public responded to the consultation documents, and the local liaison committee advised that the second public meeting was unnecessary
- The Site Inspector held meetings with the local authority and the local liaison committee to discuss Agency proposals
- At the time of issuing the decision, the Agency also issued press releases (and had staff available for interview), a one page leaflet explaining the decision (which was widely distributed), the comprehensive Decision Document, with copies circulated and available. and letters to the MEP and public who had written in, with copies of the Decision Document.

The result of the first liaison process was conflict, anger, near disaster, and poor reputation for the Agency. The result of the second process was good acceptance of the change. In both cases the licence was granted but in the second case the Agency's reputation was much higher (with all parties) and much difficulty was avoided.

The lessons learned from the process were primarily that a much longer term, more carefully planned involvement process created the circumstances in which the proposal could be debated calmly and without confrontation.

This case is written up in *Public Involvement in Agency Activities* (see above). Contact Keith Stonell, Brampton, Anglian region (also Gordon Holland or Aidan Whitfield).

- **Blue Circle Cement Works, Westbury, Wiltshire.**
The purpose of this initiative was to consult with the public over a change of licence; the operator wanted to burn tyres instead of coal.

The first application to change the licence was made in April 1997; the licence was issued at the end of August 2001. The process involved:

- The company applied to carry out a third tyre burning trial; pressure groups were already established and a major public protest meeting was held.
- The Agency held a public meeting, with presentations to the audience.
- The Agency held a second public meeting, having publicised the 'minded to' decision; people felt the decision had already been taken and were very angry.
- The trial went ahead, with stringent conditions. The company broke the conditions and the Agency stopped the trial. After 'lengthy time' the Agency allowed the trial to restart.
- The Agency held a public 'surgery' when individuals or groups could book slots to raise issues with particular officers. This was much more 'generally approved of'.

Staff involved included the Project team working on licence application, an Inspector, senior managers, PR staff and lawyers.

The results and outcomes of the process included the following:

- The licence was granted
- The staff involved learned a great deal about better ways of involving the public and others: the "learned as they went along"
- A research report, analysing the experience of the consultation (including data from questionnaires given out at the public meeting) was produced by Birmingham University.

Lessons learned from the process included:

- Need long term relationships with the public: "don't just try to develop one when something bad happens"
- The legal restrictions on the Agency limit what staff can do in these circumstances (some things are outside their control), even though staff want

to be open and transparent, and these limitations frustrate staff and the public

- Although the EA says it approaches these applications with an open mind, the public says: "you've never refused an application anywhere in the country" and "you've already made up your mind".
- Agency staff need skills and competencies to deal with the public including in planning participatory working, training in working directly with the public, and in dealing with a hostile atmosphere (trainers wanted)
- Agency staff need to put themselves in the public's shoes rather than just being a 'techno agency bod'

A written summary of the project is in *Public Involvement in Agency Activities* (see above), although the above also draws on separate interview. Contact Martin Weiler, SW Region.

Disability

Mary Parodi, Anglian Region is developing work with people with disabilities. The purpose of this work is to develop the Agency's experience of working with people with disabilities and forming relationships with voluntary organisations which are already providing services (eg MIND).

The work is primarily through four projects in Anglian region:

- **Suffolk Disabled Angling Forum**

This is an independent group of disabled anglers, run by a committee made up of people with disabilities. The purposes of the project are to get better access to fishing for disabled people, to increase fish stocks and to increase the number of fishing licences. The project started in April 2000 and involves Mary Parodi and an administrative assistant; this was the first project of this kind they had been involved with.

The outcomes and results of the project include the Agency helping to develop skills and improving quality of life for those involved. A more practical outcome is that independent groups of this sort are eligible for sources of funding which the Agency cannot access (such as Lottery, charitable foundations). In this case, the group raised funds to build fishing platforms to improve access, and funding to buy more fish stocks.

- **Rethink disabilities**

The purpose of this project is to provide training and transport for disabled people who want to become angling coaches to train disabled people to be anglers, and to increase the number of anglers. The project has only just begun (end 2001) and the results of bids for funding are expected in early 2002. Assuming funding is available, the project is then intended to last one year, during which time 10 disabled people (either wheelchair users or with learning disabilities) will train to become trainers. It is obviously too early to identify any results/outcomes.

However, lessons learned so far include that:

- Staff realised they needed to provide transport because many disabled people can't get to lakes and rivers, and can't afford transport.
- Basic level training is also good for life skills – eg, what to wear to go fishing, how to get there, preparing a meal to take, etc

- **Street Forge Workshops**

The purpose of this project is to work with an independent training organisation for disabled which is using recycled goods like timber, plastic, metal, to make garden furniture, jewellery etc. It is therefore providing work, training and environmental benefits. The workshops started 6 years ago, and the EA got involved one year ago.

Outcomes/results so far include:

- Established links with charities and Norwich businesses to get the stuff they throw out

- The workshops are becoming more organised, more professional, are applying for funding and are about to move to better premises
- The training courses now have accreditation for NVQs
- **East Anglia Sailing Trust**
This is a very small project which started as an opportunity for voluntary work by Agency staff early in 2001, but is now developing. Initially, the Trust had a problem with their RIB (rigid inflatable boat) and the Agency loaned them one so they could sail. The Agency also loaned out staff to go sailing with them (have to have one able bodied person to each disabled person) and the staff are now attending regularly.
No outcomes or results yet - too early.

There are no written reports, but photos are available. Contact Mary Parodi, Ipswich office, Anglian region.

Education

The Agency consultation document *The Business of Learning. Investing in a sustainable future*, was published January 2001. The document was based on the Agency's Education Pathfinder project, which has been looking at how influence and learning initiatives could help the Agency deliver its long term sustainable development objectives. The pathfinder reflected the recognition within the Agency that "effective regulation requires more than just licensing and enforcing" (Sir John Harman). Particular attention is given throughout the initiative to preventing environmental problems from arising, and so reducing the costs of enforcement to the public purse and to business.

The consultation paper suggests that most Agency initiatives have in the past been directed to the formal education sector (schools, colleges, universities) and to communities. Activities have included supporting calls for sustainable development to feature in the National Curriculum, supporting in-service training for teachers (INSET), the production of teaching materials and the establishment of award schemes. Some educational work had also taken place through social inclusion and outreach projects. However, this document recognises that wider audiences need to be reached, especially business. Partnerships are identified as the way forward for the Agency to engage in new educational initiatives, to create more robust projects with wider benefits and to develop learning by working alongside new partners in working to achieve sustainable development.

Although there have been education co-ordinators for some time, to co-ordinate educational activity in the regions, their role has been under review since the Pathfinder project. A six-month pilot was run to identify learning routes and regional staff have been monitoring and recording how they spend their time, tracking skills and identifying support needed. The data from these exercises will help identify the new roles and resources that will be needed.

Contacts: Annie Hall, Head of education; Fiona Williams, education co-ordinator NW; Jimmy Brannigan, Materials Development Manager, Bristol HQ.

Education links to schools

Education staff have enormous enthusiasm for working with schools on projects, giving talks in schools, taking school children on visits etc. Examples include:

- A partnership project involving the Agency working with the national charity Waste Watch to support the development of Schools Waste Action Clubs across the Anglian Region. The project provides advice on recycling and reducing waste, offering a waste audit and analysis, educational activities integrated with the national curriculum, visits to waste management facilities and awareness raising events for the wider community.
- Work with local infant school on using water wisely (Michael Hutchinson, Lincoln office, Anglian Region).
- Work to enable schoolchildren from disadvantaged areas, such as within Education Action Zones, to visit and learn from the National Marine Aquarium (Lesley Newport, Launceston, Cornwall, SW Region)
- Work with Year 7 of a local school to design a notice board for the Agency's Swansea office. The school linked across curriculum themes in order to deliver the knowledge

behind the designs (Julie Tate, Team Leader, Business Services, Swansea, EAWales).

These links are rarely reported, there are no written reports (unless individual staff write up their visits), and there have been no formal evaluations of benefits for the Agency from these activities. The Agency had also produced materials for schools. However, the emphasis is now being placed more on 'working smarter', such as linking to other organisations who are already producing teaching materials for schools, talking to teachers on INSET training events to give them Agency messages (rather than talking direct to pupils). It is likely that some staff will continue to go into schools in their own time, even if it is no longer an Agency priority, because of their personal commitment to these individual links.

Contact Annie Hall, Head of Education.

Education at Higher and Further levels

- The Agency is working in targeted sectors of higher and further education, particularly professional education courses in planning, engineering and agriculture, and promoting the Government Strategy for Sustainable Construction. The Agency is considering targeting business schools in future.
- The Environmental Business Game, developed by the Agency in partnership with the Careers Research Advisory Centre and the River Restoration Project is designed to introduce higher education students to the principles of sustainable development (especially environmental issues) and alongside the development of key skills. One of the modules challenges students to design a stakeholder consultation exercise to involve the local community in a multi-partner project. The game has been piloted at the University of Durham and materials will be available early in 2002, enabling the game to be made available to universities across the UK.
Contact Jimmy Brannigan, Environment Agency.

Enfys: Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities

The purpose of this initiative is to provide money for the development and improvement of green spaces and sustainable communities in Wales.

This project is the result of a successful joint bid of a partnership involving Environment Agency Wales (EAW), Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA), Princes Trust Cymru and Environment Wales. This consortium will administer a grant allocation from the New Opportunities Fund (NOF) of £7.5 million, providing grant aid to disadvantaged communities. In Wales, all NOF funds are managed by Enfys. So far, guidance has been issued and a grants advisory panel has been established (Jim Poole is a member) which met for the first time in November 2001.

The scheme started in 1991 and is due to run until 2006, but this model of award partner is one NOF will use in the future and EA will play similar role in other funding partnerships. Agency staff involved are Jim Poole, Kath Bonnington, LEAP officers in the four EA Wales areas and technical experts in St Mellons (to advise on specific projects). Eight similar staff are based in Environment Wales, and eight in Princes Trust Cymru.

Priorities for the programme will be the development of urban and rural green space, improving access to and interpretation of green space, and small community-based projects that contribute to sustainable development.

Outcomes and results so far, although it is very early days, include:

- The grants panel has begun to allocate money to projects
- The Agency is part of a wide network of people and are therefore able to increase penetration into the community
- Results on the ground, as far as the public is concerned, will come as projects are completed.

Lessons learned and issues raised include:

- People in other organisations were not clear about EA role; they now have a better idea of the extent of the Agency role and it has surprised them
- This type of programme is a good way to get into the community
- There are already some interesting projects, including one for a community owned wind farm

- There are a lot of active networks in Wales: Wales is a testbed for the Agency in identifying enthusiastic engagement in the community.

Contact: Jim Poole, Environment Agency Wales.

Engineer of the 21st Century Inquiry - Engineers for Sustainability

The Agency is a partner, with Forum for the Future, in this year long Inquiry (recently completed). The Inquiry aimed to investigate current practice within 8 - 10 specialisms, and build a critical mass of engineers for sustainability who could be a positive force for change within the profession. The focus was on 20 young, recently qualified, engineers aged 25 - 35, who would take back sustainability messages to their organisations and start to put them into action. 16 leading companies and organisations, including two government departments, support the initiative. Agency staff involved included Annie Hall, Head of Education, and two engineers from Flood Defence. Overall the project was managed by Forum for the Future.

Outcomes and results are outlined in a Forum for the Future review of the project. However, initial lessons learned include:

- Communications back to partner organisations were not as good as they could have been.
- Some older engineers were offended by the ageist emphasis on 'young'; they felt it implied that older engineers were not open-minded and were unable to take on board new ideas!

Contact: Annie Hall, Head of Education.

Equal opportunities and diversity within the Agency

There are various initiatives within the Agency to promote equal opportunities and increase the diversity of the work force, including:

- Diversity Action Plans are part of a Human Resources strategy aiming to ensure the Agency employs a more diverse workforce, to improve effectiveness, establish credibility and build trust with a wider community. DAPs identify the need to openly recognise cultural difference and to educate the organisation to build capacity to work in partnership with all parts of society. Development processes include establishing new partnerships with external organisations (eg Race for Opportunity). The Plans use local demographics data to build community maps as a benchmark against which to measure progress in achieving diversity internally and in increasing understanding of the Agency's 'customer base'.
- Facilities managers have responsibilities to work on improving access to buildings to enable people with disabilities to work there and to visit.
- The organisation Race for Opportunity has been asked to 'audit' the Agency to benchmark performance leading to establishing a basis on which to measure progress within an agreed action plan.
Contact Robin Chatterjee.

Ethnic Outreach work

The purpose of this programme is to help the Agency move towards good practice in engaging ethnic minority stakeholders, through better understanding of potential cultural barriers in developing trust and new partnerships with ethnic minority citizens and businesses.

This internal initiative (which has included running and contributing to a series of workshops), led by Robin Chatterjee, had a focus on health including around air and water quality, alongside consideration of different cultural definitions of quality of life and futurity (eg through understanding different religions).

Priorities have included:

- identifying 'gatekeepers': key local ethnic minority partners in the localities where the work is going on and, through those national networks, to identify other strategic partners
- improving access to information for ethnic minority groups (eg on waste and pollution)

minimisation for Asian SMEs, job opportunities in the Agency etc), leading to including these groups in the Agency's wider decision-making processes and operations

- health (including air and water quality), different cultural definitions of quality of life, providing a channel for messages on integrating the environmental and economic aspects of sustainable development - and particularly futurity (through understanding of different religious beliefs).

Partnerships with other organisations - including Black Environment Network, Business in the Community (BitC), and Race for Opportunity (RfO) - have been developed at national (and regional) level to identify who to consult and how to engage with in traditionally neglected constituencies eg ethnic minority and other potentially excluded communities.

Working with these organisations is intended to give the Agency access to networks which help it build trust with these communities, and access to social science and practice developed in those organisations. Work is through education, sustainable development, business improvement, consultancy, personnel, procurement, corporate affairs, planning and customer services.

At local level, projects have developed as a result of emerging local needs. There are projects in Southern, Midlands, NE and NW regions including:

- In Bradford, examining why a disproportionate number of Asians are being prosecuted for waste management offences and asking whether the Agency is not communicating messages to this community (Gerard Morris, Leeds office); and linking to QED to discuss how the Agency can support their work in addressing factors responsible for the poor economic circumstances of minority ethnic communities.
- An Agency workshop at the National Parks annual meeting on work with Asian community groups in Bradford, and on the possibility of linking with staff in the Norfolk Broads to investigate ideas for joint projects.
- Working in partnership with the Yorkshire Dales National Park on a project to look at raising awareness of the park among different cultural and ethnic groups, focusing on the South Asian community (Education, NE Region).
- Examining the extent to which flood warning messages are not reaching the Asian community (Education, NE Region).
- In Keighley, discussions with Keighley Asian Business Forum on waste issues, and plans to examine flood warnings with the Asian population.
- Building relationships through Gravesend Race Equality Council and Gudwara (Sikh Temple) including getting the Agency Customer Charter translated into Hindi, Urdu and Bengali, and a targeted mailshot on waste minimisation in takeaways in Gravesend and Medway towns.

The outcomes and results of this programme are largely introspective at present, examining how the Agency is improving in getting messages across to these communities, Although it is too early to come to any firm conclusions, it is hoped that what is learned from these small initiatives will enable the Agency to take a more strategic approach in future.

It is also too early to identify any clear lessons learned, but staff awareness of cultural issues is being developed 'in pockets': it is 'bedding in but very patchy and localised', partly as a result of lack of resources and lack of understanding within the Agency of the importance of these issues.

Evaluating Methods for Public Participation

The Evaluating Participation R&D project has analysed and provided guidance for the Agency on how it could and should evaluate different participatory approaches in order to identify the most appropriate methods in different circumstances.

Following a detailed literature review, a simulation event was held with 'lay' stakeholders and others (Friends of the Earth, local authorities etc) at local level working through a consultation process to see what barriers there were to effective participation. This was followed by an internal workshop for Agency staff (in April 2001) to develop and improve practice based on two scenarios:

- existing context ie no additional resources and no change to legislative framework
- consideration of what should/could be added to the legislative framework to aid

participation eg to tackle areas which can lead to confusion eg differences between the planning regime and the licensing regime.

The final report of this project was published in January 2002, and further details will be added following review of this report. Contact Clare Twigger-Ross.

Finding Our Voices conference

The purpose of this initiative was for the Agency to be a key participant in a major Wales-wide conference, held in November 2000, to address the following questions:

- How might greater public involvement in our politics refresh the governance of Wales and the UK?
- How can the principles of sustainable development be accommodated in our globalised society?

Environment Agency Wales was co-sponsor and was a member of the planning group which organised the conference, which was aimed at a wide range of groups in Wales, and focused on working with new audiences on sustainability.

Jim Poole, of EAW, identified the following as the key messages and actions from the conference (in his report on the event dated 12 January 2001):

- Communities First: capacity building is needed for everyone, including local authorities (ie not just communities)
- Establish easily accessible information points within communities; these need to be comprehensible and linked to training.
- The 'Listening Matters' process is effective and useful because it encourages personal and accountable contact and responsibility for each other (and helps overcome barriers which can be created by talking about sustainability principles.
- Community visions are essential: without community visions, sustainable development perishes - visions seed action and re-ignite responsibility.
- Citizens' juries: protest and participation go together - the only issue is where to draw the line.
- Community strategies and LA21: need to appoint community facilitators / apprentices to help manage the process.
- Social inclusion: poverty of aspiration is as fundamental as economic poverty.
- Working with business: Government bodies, voluntary sector and businesses should place contracts with more sustainable, and more local, businesses.
- Role of new media: Increased bandwidth means anyone can broadcast and access information, which changes the balance of power.

The outcomes / results of the Agency's involvement included association with a very successful event, which has become referred to a lot by National Assembly of Wales members as a model of how to engage public participation.

Lessons learned are included in the summary of main points above, but also, as a result of Jim Poole's involvement in the steering group and its extensive evening meetings with people Agency doesn't normally come into contact with - a different sector of society eg street artists, dieticians, etc. The Agency can learn from these different perspectives, including how street artists and others communicated sustainability messages.

Written report: *Finding our Voices* conference report.

Contact: Jim Poole, Environment Agency Wales.

Flood Awareness Campaign

This is a major national annual programme to raise awareness of flooding and flood warnings, intended as a three year programme starting in 1999 but moving towards an annual 'seasonal' campaign (ie all winter). The process has been:

- National advertising to communicate to 1.3 million homes and businesses in flood plains in England and Wales
- Direct mail plastic flood kits to 311,000 homes and businesses in high risk areas
- National telephone information line - Floodline. Callers can speak to an operator for much of the time
- Flood awareness week, with a national launch in London and 75 local PR events

- Internal briefings to Agency staff (all regional PR staff are involved)
- 2000 outdoor posters and radio commercials on 50 local stations
- Fact sheets with practical advice and information produced, translated into nine languages and made available through Floodline and through Agency offices
- Flood Directory piloted in Southern region; five publications produced on a regional basis, supported by local authorities and emergency services.
- Numerous specific research activities including by the specialist campaigns adviser who has been examining which communities (or sectors of communities) are not getting the message.

Outcomes and results have included:

- High profile for issues of flooding
- High profile for the Agency
- Evaluation completed November 2001.

Contact Liz Cook, Head Office.

Flood communications in Wales

Various initiatives have been established to engage the public and other organisations in flood defence activities and to keep the public informed about what is being done to improve flood defences. These have involved close contact with the public, including numerous evening meetings, since the formal agreement to do this work following the October / November floods in 2000. As a result, the public have welcomed Agency involvement, the Agency profile is higher and feedback has been very positive: "We have found that our proposals / actions are more credible as a result and more accepted in the community" Dave Gatehouse, Wales. Two staff in the North Wales area are involved, and flood warning personnel in the Bangor office.

Lessons learned include that "not all Agency staff are able to address public meetings or are good at interacting with the public". Other lessons, and a list of recommended actions, are outlined in two written reports, including *Flooding in Wales 2000*, which is available from Cardiff PR office.

Contact Paul Reeve and Dave Gatehouse, Buckley office, North Wales area.

Flood defence improvements

Many Agency flood defence improvement projects include public and other stakeholder involvement. Three examples are given below.

- **Chadwell Cross Flood Defence Project**

The purpose of this project was to repair a culvert to ensure proper drainage in a densely built up urban area in Tilbury.

The Agency realised that improvements were needed around 1991. There was wide public consultation and then not much happened for several years. The water course went through a built up area, between the ends of gardens. In some places it had been left as a concrete slab, in others the drain was open and accessible. There was also a lot of rubbish dumped into it. Construction work began in February 2000, but the work hit a snag in September 2000 and was not finished.

The outcomes and results included:

- The flood defences were improved by renewing an essential drainage channel to prevent floods
- The area was tidied up a lot, in line with public and residents' wishes about how things should be left. On completion, the area was top soiled and seeded and incorporated into gardens if the owner/resident wanted it, or given to the nearest garden whose owner wanted it, and in this way all the area which was worked on was included in gardens. A great deal of rubbish was also removed.

Lessons learned included:

- The main lesson was considered to be: "if working in an urban area, need to consult local people widely and take into account their wishes, to ensure the project goes well".
- The team also learned not to be petty minded about things: if owners wanted an old shed removed, they did it, and if they had to move a shed to carry out work, they replaced it with a new one, regardless of whether the old one was a ramshackle worthless old thing. This meant that all the residents were happy and co-operative.

A full report was produced on the public consultation; copies may be available from Nigel Pask (current project manager).

Contact John Calthrop, Ipswich, Anglian region.

• **Cone Pill Estuary Flood Defences**

The purpose of this initiative was to assess the environmental impacts of flood defences on an unusual estuarine site with protected habitats and seven different landowners.

Individual face-to-face discussions (using an informal questionnaire) were undertaken with the seven landowners likely to be affected. English Nature wanted to retreat flood defences but that might have meant the land would be flooded more often, making the land less productive for the owners, so there was considerable negotiation needed. Two agency staff were involved (Liz Galloway and an engineer).

The outcomes of the process included the following:

- Although the landowners had very different priorities - some felt losing their home was the worst thing that could happen, others were not bothered about that if they were given replacement land in compensation. The information gained from the consultation allowed the Agency to develop a plan which mitigated the negative impacts and create a proposed solution which was acceptable to everyone.
- Broader environmental sustainability criteria were addressed successfully in that the project resulted in protection of a site of international nature conservation importance.
- The Agency's EIA process was demonstrated by open and fair dialogue, both with individuals and at a strategic level (including with English Nature and RSPB).
- Social and economic issues were addressed in relation to loss of agricultural income and opportunities for funding of habitat management were identified and pursued.
- The difficulties of the Agency role were understood and acknowledged by consultees, and there was no bitterness or criticism of the Agency.

Lessons learned included:

- It is essential to talk to consultees, as the greatest risk was that not everyone signed up, and that would cause problems later
- Choose the most appropriate way of communicating with your stakeholders: in this case, the two staff visited all the landowners, and they had informal discussions round the kitchen table, with a survey

A summary of the project was published in July 2000 in *Public Involvement in Agency Activities*, the report of an Agency seminar (available from Clare Twigger-Ross).

Contact Liz Galloway, Midlands region.

• **Humber Estuary Shoreline Management Plan**

The purpose of the project was to develop a long term plan of protection (a flood defence strategy) for the entire Humber estuary.

The Agency has been delivering plans for coastline protection for years and, initially, these were more of a collation exercise - pulling together relevant coastal information. This plan, by contrast, has involved a great deal of new research work and is a much more extensive exercise: it started in 1997 and will finish early in 2003. As well as the technical research, the Agency has developed a steering group for the exercise, which has operated from the outset. That group has 25 members, but most of the detailed work is done by a smaller liaison panel of 10 people: six external people representing different areas of expertise (including a local farmer and English Nature), plus four Agency people. In addition, thousands of documents (including newsletters) have been distributed to many other stakeholders including:

- An initial consultation document, in April 1999, to raise public awareness of the issues and provide an opportunity for those affected to voice their concern
- A second options consultation document, in October 1999, which set out improvement options available.

These documents were written and designed to be readable and attractive (full colour) to the public, and each contained a reply-paid card to allow respondents to make comments. Over 2,500 copies of each document were distributed, both directly to primary consultees and at the various meetings which were held (mainly with local authorities but also some public meetings).

The outcomes of the exercise include:

- The general reaction to the approach adopted by the Agency has been very good, with consultees appreciating the open, involving and informing approach.
- Although with such a range of organisations involved, there have inevitably been different agendas, and the potential for conflict, the approach has actually created good working relationships with a wide range of external stakeholders.
- The strategy has been modified as a result of the consultation, with the majority of the real shaping resulting from the comments of the relatively small number of key consultees (eg local authorities).
- People, including the general public, have been very clear about what the Agency is trying to achieve.
- Most of the consultees are still supporting the Agency's work, and public disquiet is low.
- Numerous reports and technical studies produced, including *Planning for the Rising Tides*, the final Shoreline Management Plan, which was published in September 2000.

Lessons learned include:

- The major lesson has been that enormous numbers of people are affected in a project like this, so it is appropriate to have a wide range of organisations involved from the start: they have found this is the right approach here.
- Although the costs of consultation were high, they were considered reasonable in relation to overall project costs. The decision to invest these resources was as a result of difficulties with another project with a 'failed' consultation, and the project team have been convinced the investment was worthwhile.
- The scheme may be moving into a difficult time, as they now want to identify areas of land where they will need to 'set back', so they will have to buy land from owners and this may be where the difficulties start. But the team hopes that being very open from the start has created a good relationship with all groups involved and this will help in through this difficult period.

A summary of the project was published in July 2000 in *Public Involvement in Agency Activities*, the report of an Agency seminar, available from Clare Twigger-Ross. Project newsletters are also produced (July and December 2001). Contact Philip Winn, Principal Project Manager, NE Region.

Flood warning and social issues

The Social Issues and Flood Warning scoping study is an R & D project which has examined two areas of literature: behaviours in emergencies and inter-organisational working as well as reviewing existing Agency reports on flood warning behaviours. The research examined how multi-organisational systems work and might be managed, and how communities and individuals respond to flood emergency communications. It did not address the socio-economic aspects of flood warnings, as these are covered under separate R&D projects.

The initial phase was completed in May 2000, from which the contractors developed five research proposals which have provided the framework for research into social issues and flood warning for the Agency over the following two years:

- Flood warnings for vulnerable groups
- Appropriate methods of improving flood warning awareness and response in low-risk flood zones
- The social performance of flood warning communication technology
- Organisations and flood forecasting and warning
- Community involvement in flood forecasting, warning and response systems.

The findings were published as *Flood Forecasting and Warning Research Programme. Social Issues and Flood Hazard Warning Scoping Study*. Vol 1, R&D Technical Report W255; Vol 2 R&D Technical Report W255A, Environment Agency, February 2001. Contact Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

Flood Warnings

A UK wide project has been developed to raise awareness of flood risks among vulnerable groups (eg elderly and frail people): the Inclusive Flood Warning Campaign.

The project started in 1999, since when the effort has focused on producing resources and disseminating information to vulnerable groups including Floodline packs in several languages, tape packs, large print documents, minicom service (for people with hearing difficulties) and the 24 hour Floodline call centre.

Emphasis shifted at the end of 2001 to begin to identify external organisations who already have experience of communicating with vulnerable groups and have systems in place to do this nationally and locally (eg Age Concern, RNIB, BBC Disability Unit, Help The Aged). The aim is that the Agency will work alongside these groups in future. It is expected that these external partnerships will also include work with local authorities such as Northamptonshire County Council which co-ordinates information on vulnerable groups in its area from various sources, including social services.

Outcomes and results are being examined in an 18 months study, the Vulnerable Group Study, by Surrey University, which is focusing on six specific geographical areas. The study began in July 2001 and is due to be completed at the end of 2002.

Initial lessons learned are outlined in an internal paper which was produced identifying key contacts and lessons, and identifies contractors to partner the Agency (eg RNIB, BBC Disability Unit) in improving its communications with certain audiences. Contact Scott Thompsett, National Flood Centre, Southern region.

Floodplain developments

The purpose of this initiative is to reconcile the Agency position on development on floodplains with the need to encourage social and economic development.

British Aerospace wants to expand their factory in Broughton, North Wales, but it is located on a floodplain and the Agency is usually against floodplain developments. However, the Agency has increasingly moved to a position where, if it is economically desirable to develop land on floodplains, they will allow it if there are emergency measures. They do not then object to planning permission being given, but they do impose conditions. They believe that factories can be controlled easily, whereas housing development is more difficult. Allowing

the company to expand was understood to mean 3000 new jobs, which is good for Flintshire socially and economically.

The process has involved the Agency Area Manager and three others meeting with the Chief Executive of Flintshire County Council and his team to agree a common way forward. The Agency had to show that they wanted to help the development process, not stand in the way, as they understood the economic and social arguments and could ensure, from their point of view, that environmental benefit was achieved whilst the project on the ground progressed.

The outcome of the process so far has been that a good relationship has been established with Flintshire County Council, who now recognise that the Agency understands the importance of job creation for the community and will not automatically oppose development. However, negotiations are continuing (December 2001) as the future expansion plans of the company are less clear following 11 September.

Lessons learned include that the Agency has to be practical and pragmatic about development and be sensitive when job creation is possible.

Contact Dave Gatehouse, Northern area, Environment Agency Wales.

Formal consultative forums

There are a number of formal consultative mechanisms which have been established to provide the Agency with long term advice and guidance from external stakeholders.

There are statutory advisory committees in each of the seven English regions and in the Environment Agency Wales - the Regional Environment Protection Advisory Committees (REPACs) and the Fisheries Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committees (FERACs). Both play a role in the Agency's relations with those affected by its work and assist regional management by providing advice and direction. Agendas and minutes from these committees are available to the public on the Agency web site.

Each committee meets four times a year. Committee members are not paid, but are can reclaim expenses and, in some cases, financial loss allowances.

- Regional Environment Protection Advisory Committees (REPACs) advise the Agency on the performance of its functions in the region or Wales. It provides the Agency with a regional perspective on its policy development and advises on regional priorities for its work, acting as a focus group which is representative of the wide range of interests affected by the Agency's activities.
- Fisheries Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committees (FERACs) advise the Agency on its performance in the region or Wales in relation to fisheries, ecology, recreation, navigation and conservation matters. FERAC advises on the maintenance, improvement and development of salmon, trout, coarse, freshwater and eel fisheries and provides a regional perspective on policy development in relation to these issues.

In addition to these statutory regional advisory groups there are also Area Environment Groups:

- **Area Environment Groups** are locally based committees providing advice to each of the Agency's 26 areas.
The AEG chairmen's conference, held on 5 February 2001, agreed there should be AEG overview of local strategies to ensure the public's understanding and acceptance of the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainable development; that there should be better publicity of the work of AEGs to ensure additional opportunities for engaging and influencing stakeholders; and acceptance that the role of AEGs should include working with the local community, and supporting the delivery of LEAPs.
Details from communique from conference by Margaret F de Wolf and Andrew Wood,

February 2001.

- **Local Flood Warning Groups** liaise with emergency services and local authorities on flood warning services, to improve inter-organisational understanding and working.
Contact, for example, Tony Harris, Anglian region.

Furniture disposal

The Agency's policy on furniture disposal was challenged, and it was suggested that the Agency should quickly and sustainably allocate unwanted assets into the community. A successful trial was done in Swansea.

Contact Julie Tate, Team Leader, Business Services, Swansea, Environment Agency Wales.

Government consultations on social issues

The Agency responds to many Government consultations on a wide range of issues.

Examples which related to social issues include responses to consultations to the DETR on Community Strategies, to the Treasury on Local Strategic Partnerships, and to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST) in response to their document Open Channels: developing public dialogue in science and technology (EA formal response 12.2.2001, by Paula Orr, NCRAOA). Contact Richard Streeter, Parliamentary, for details.

In addition, detailed responses have been made to consultations on Wellbeing (DETR), Sustainable Wales and Communities First (National Assembly of Wales) and the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (Social Exclusion Unit). These responses are summarised below.

- **UK Government consultation on wellbeing power**

The Agency made a formal response to the Government's (DETR) consultation document on Part I of the Local Government Act 2000 which creates a new discretionary power for principal local authorities in England and Wales to do anything they consider likely to promote or improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area.

The Agency warmly welcomed the proposals for a power to promote or improve well-being. John Harman responded to the formal consultation paper by saying the Agency saw the power as a positive move to further joined up thinking and action on the ground, and that "Many of the issues facing local communities today, including environmental issues, can only be tackled effectively by working together at the local level with a variety of partner organisations".

Letter to DETR, 6.2.2001, via Jenny Waterworth.

- **National Assembly of Wales consultation document *A Sustainable Wales - Measuring the Difference*.**

The Agency response was submitted in October 2000, and suggested that issues of governance and fairness need to be taken into account in assessing sustainability: "For sustainability purposes, it is important to look at the way decisions are being reached as well as the decisions themselves."

- **National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal**

The Agency's response to the consultation on the National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal (2000) points out that, although the Agency broadly supports the Strategy, it is concerned that the draft is "strangely silent on environmental issues. It misses not only the environmental dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, but also the key part to be played by environmental issues - and the agencies that deal with these - in developing joined up solutions." Particular reference is made throughout the Agency's response to policy priorities for Government already agreed in the UK Strategy for Sustainable Development (1999), and sustainable approaches to development more generally.

Specific proposals in the Agency's response include:

- The Environmental Agency should collaborate with the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) to enable cross-checking of the Agency's pollution and quality of the environment inventories with SEU data on ward-level deprivation.
- Adding a fifth to the four principles the Strategy outlines for the overall programme:
 - reviving local economies
 - reviving communities
 - ensuring decent services
 - leadership and joint working
 - **protecting and enhancing local environments.**

The rationale for adding this fifth principle is the psychological importance of environmental improvements (in the sense of local amenity) to neighbourhood renewal - both in tackling problems of degraded environments, and in the special benefits of making immediate and very visible improvements to the area; as well as tackling some of the particular environmental problems experienced by poorer neighbourhoods (see separate section on social inclusion).

- Ensuring that economic development is sustainable by focusing on using local renewable resources, local goods and services and turning local problems into opportunities such as tackling fuel poverty through insulation and renewable energy projects, waste management through recycling, community transport etc. The Agency signals its interest in working with Government to research and provide support in setting up environmental micro-businesses in some of these areas.
- In discussing the National Centre for Neighbourhood Renewal, the Agency expresses its preference for a network of regional centres, "connected through strong mutual learning links" and using an action learning approach.

Environment Agency (2000) *National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal - A framework for consultation. Response from the Environment Agency.* June 2000.

- **National Assembly of Wales consultative document on *Communities First***
Communities First is the programme for dealing with social exclusion in the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. The Environment Agency Wales response was very detailed but made three overall points:
 - The emphasis in the proposed policy framework is on methodologies, and the strategic objective needs to be stated clearly and concisely. EAW proposed that the strategic objective should be "To work in partnership with disadvantaged communities throughout Wales, developing their confidence and capacity, so they can play a full, active and sustainable part in the life of Wales."

The emphasis in the EAW response is that "We must help these communities devise their own solutions to their problems, so they can become integrated into the mainstream life of Wales".

 - There must be an explicit objective to achieve solutions which are fully sustainable in economic and environmental, as well as social, terms.
 - The strategic framework for managing the programme as a whole needs to be spelled out, and "will not deliver sustainable solutions unless it is managed by a strategic partnership involving organisations with expertise in social, economic and environmental issues".

The response identifies the Joining Up project as an opportunity to build Agency capacity in working on social issues, and proposes liaison with the National Assembly of Wales to discuss how the EAW traditional work and social policy input could best be structured to contribute to sustainable development in Wales.

The environmental benchmarks proposed by EAW for the programme were:

- clean environment
- safe play areas
- comfortable housing
- clean transport
- good neighbours.

In the evidence given by Environment Agency Wales to the House of Commons Welsh Affairs Committee inquiry into social exclusion, in December 1999, the Agency identified social exclusion around the following environmental issues:

- environmental regulation
- environmental crime
- targeting of environmental investment
- making the most of the environment
- access to basic services
- participation in environmental decision-making
- access to environmental data
- taking the long term view.

Based on the analysis in this earlier evidence, EAW proposed a series of benchmarks for the Communities First programme:

- The community is treated fairly with respect to issues of environmental regulation, and does not have to put up with the consequences of other people's activities.
- The community is treated fairly with respect to issues of environmental enforcement, and is not allowed to become a dumping ground.
- The community receives its fair share of environmental investment, according to its needs, rather than its ability to pay. Such investment relates to flood protection, water quality, air quality, land quality and biodiversity.
- Most is made of the local environment, particularly in helping to meet the economic and recreational needs of the local community.
- The community has ready access to basic services such as water, energy and public transport, according to its needs rather than its ability to pay.
- The community is involved in all decisions regarding the management of the local environment.
- The community has ready access to information regarding the local environment, in a form that is easy to understand.
- When appraising any proposals for the community, the long term impact on the local environment is always considered.

However, the paper also stresses that these are 'top down' benchmarks and that the community should be encouraged to identify the issues which are most important to them, and those issues should be addressed as a matter of first priority.

See *Communities First - The Way Forward. Consultation on the Proposed Policy Framework. Response from Environment Agency Wales.* Jim Poole, 2001.

Greener Normanton

The purpose of this initiative is to encourage recycling in a very deprived inner city area of Derby with a high Asian population and many elderly people, and to use landfill tax funding to develop and support the project.

This project is run by a consortium made up of the Agency, Derby City Council, the Onyx Environmental Trust, the University of Derby and Tidy Britain Group. The consortium employs the project manager (Aziz Reyman).

In beginning to tackle domestic waste, the project began by contacting all councillors within the project boundaries, the mayor, the relevant council officers, schools, faith groups (including the Mosque, Sikh Gurdwara, Hindu Temple and Christian church), community centres, youth clubs, business organisations, housing associations. Research has been undertaken by interviewing local people in a pilot area, especially about why they do not recycle at present. 'Hotspots' for flytipping, graffiti and pigeon feeding are being identified and targeted for urgent action. A Planning for Real exercise was undertaken to focus attention on the range of problems within a small geographical area.

In addition, a waste analysis was undertaken, by following a lorry over a planned route to get a representative sample from about 40 houses and then hand sorting and analysing the waste in order to find out what is being discarded so that the appropriate recycling facilities can be provided (no point in bottle banks if no bottles). The analysis was not as expected, with a high proportion of vegetable waste and very little packaging (eg from ready meals), unlike other areas. Compost bins were therefore considered appropriate but there were logistical problems: it would be impossible to have a large one on the streets as the streets are so narrow, and most gardens are too small to have their own individual bin.

All surveys showed low recycling rates for the area, though residents and businesses are all very keen. Elderly people also want to recycle, but the very narrow terraced streets made recycling with wheelie bins difficult – residents did not want huge wheelie bins on pavement outside their windows. Kerb side collections were also difficult as all material has to be carried through the house and left at front for collection.

The project started in 2000, was formally launched in May 2001 and is about half way through. The team is now at the stage of deciding on what types of recycling banks should be used and where they should be located. The aim is that the community will take ownership of the project so that any money raised through sales of discarded materials can be ploughed back into the community.

A draft of the plan is available.
Contact Stuart Hodkin, Derbyshire area office.

Health impacts of flooding

There have been two stages of research into this:

- Two studies (1999, 2000) provided qualitative data on the aftermath of the floods in Banbury and Kidlington areas at one year and two years after. These are unique studies as they provide longitudinal data on health impacts. Health is interpreted as meaning both physical and psychological well-being. The findings feed into the Intangible Health Effects study detailed below.
- The Intangible Health Effects of Flooding project is an economic appraisal project aimed at developing a way of valuing (in monetary terms) the intangible impacts of flooding so as to be able to provide a monetary figure to put into the project appraisal process. The project is funded by MAFF through the joint MAFF / Environment Agency Flood Defence R&D programme.

The project began in October 2000 and was intended to continue for two years. It seeks to develop a method for evaluating the impacts caused by flooding and fears of future events - including stress, illness, disease and possibly reduced life expectancy through contact with flood water and related debris, as well as worry and anxiety, including loss of personal security and other aspects of well-being.

As well as aiming to provide a greater understanding of the underlying social issues, the research will propose monetary economic values of impacts for a range of typical

flooding and socio-economic situations, indicating sensitivities and ranges. The methodology will involve considerable survey work, to ensure the results are grounded in real data. The proposed values will be anchored to accepted valuations in other fields of government economic appraisal, for example, road safety, fire safety, crime prevention and health impacts.

Healthy Living Centres

The purpose of the links to Healthy Living Centres is to identify links between the Agency priorities and the work of the centres in Wales, including identifying ways of working with stakeholders.

Healthy Living Centres are part of the New Opportunities Fund programme, funded by Lottery money. They are being located throughout the UK, including one being established in St Mellons (near the Agency office and Jim Poole's home). Healthy Living Centres are not necessarily focused on a building or centre - they are a wide ranging initiative to persuade people to adopt a more healthy lifestyle and involves environment, nutrition, exercise, play, youth work and more. It is a five year programme, from 2001.

It is too early to assess outcomes or lessons.

Contact Jim Poole, Environment Agency Wales, or David Beuzeval at Head Office.

Human Health Project

This is a national programme of R & D to identify and address the Agency's needs regarding the impact of the environment on human health. The Agency has legal responsibilities (eg under the Landfill Directive and IPPC) to take account of impacts on human health; it has health-related duties in respect of contaminated land; and the Agency's Vision states that the Agency is working for "a healthy, rich and diverse environment". There is also increasing public pressure on the Agency to deal with health impacts of the industries and facilities they regulate.

The overall objectives of this project are:

- "to create an integrated, coherent and consistent body of work that will clarify the Environment Agency's role with regard to human health protection, and enable effective communication of environment and health-related information to Agency staff and the general public", and
- "to provide the Agency with sound scientific data and information to enable it to quantify the risks to human health from pollution in the environment, and to develop techniques to manage and reduce these impacts".

At November 2001, the projects involved in the programme are:

- **Human Health Umbrella R & D Project.** The objective of this is to identify the Agency's responsibilities with respect to human health and co-ordinate, disseminate and implement human health R & D.
- **Human Health - review of incineration and combustion techniques,** with the objective of contributing to further knowledge and understanding about the impacts of environmental pollution on human health. This project is being run by the universities of Birmingham, Sheffield and Leeds and the Institute of Environment and Health.
- **Health Impact Assessment, Landfill Directive and UK Waste Strategy 2000,** with the objective of ensuring that human health is adequately and robustly protected by regulation, and to address the implications of new legislation for health protection. This will develop a methodology for carrying out Health Impact Assessment at a high level on a policy instrument and the accompanying strategy to critically evaluate potential health impacts.
- **Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) collaborative contract,** with the objective of contributing to further knowledge and understanding about the impacts

of environmental pollution on human health. This is a wider project for which the Agency is on the steering group, and to which the Agency contributes funding.

- **Interdepartmental Group on Health Risks from Chemicals (IGHRC) collaborative contract**, with the objective of contributing to further knowledge and understanding about the impacts of environmental pollution on human health. this project is being run by the Institute of Environment and Health, within with the IGHRC is located. This is also essentially a funding contribution by the Agency.
- **Human Health Advisory Service**, with the objective of providing expert advice on health issues to Agency staff. The research for this is being undertaken by the Centre for Research into Environment and Health. The service operates by responding to questions (via email, telephone, written) from Agency staff. Questions are filtered by Agency staff and then put to a panel of experts, which writes a report or briefing note to answer the question. Questions have included the effect of emissions from a waste site, toxicological effects of dioxins, etc. There will also be presentations, information packs and an internet site, and maintenance of the Agency database of human health advice.
- **Human Health Epidemiological Tools and Techniques Workshop**, with the objective of developing expertise within the Agency in understanding, addressing and communicating health issues. This was a two day workshop (of which a report is available), followed by a guidance document for wider dissemination.

It is envisaged that these projects will be added to as environment and health research develops within the Agency. The timescale for the full package of research is three years, from February 2001 to March 2004, although individual projects are likely to run for shorter periods.

Although it is still at a very early stage, initial lessons include:

- Many issues are media driven and activities need to understand that the media is a powerful influence.
- It is important that Agency staff know their own role clearly, and where to draw the line.
- Good communications with the public are essential, although this can be difficult when issues are very technical.

Contact Emma Hayes, R & D Project Manager; Steve Humphrey, National Project Manager for Human Health; Danielle Ashton, National Centre for Ecotoxicology and Hazardous Substances, manages the human health advisory service.

In addition to this R & D programme, there are a number of other initiatives within the Agency, including:

- Health effects of composting (EP / Waste)
- An assessment of the risks to human health of material recovery facilities: a framework for decision makers (EP / Waste / European BIOMED2 programme)
- Assessment of risks to human health of waste transfer stations: a framework for decision makers (EP / Waste)
- Human health risks from scrapyards (EP / Waste)
- Investigation of health impacts in the vicinity of well characterised landfill sites (EP / Waste / DEFRA)
- Investigation of the composition, emissions and effects of trace components in landfill gas (EP / Waste)
- Health effects of flooding (Water Management - several projects)
- Contaminated land exposure assessment model (EP / Land Quality)
- Development and delivery of technical training materials for the evaluation of third party human health risk assessments that relate to soil contamination (EP / National Centre for Groundwater and Contaminated Land).

Incineration national policy

National policy on incineration is being developed, including through a one-day facilitated event for stakeholders to develop policy on implementation including regulation, consultation etc. The event was attended by four Agency staff and the remainder were external stakeholders including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, waste management companies. The event was facilitated by The Environment Council.

Incinerator application consultations

There is currently considerable public disquiet about the construction of incinerators to burn waste, with an estimated 50 active protest campaigns currently in progress (Guardian, 16.1.02). Some examples of Agency involvement are outlined below.

- **Killamarsh waste treatment and disposal site**

The Agency has become involved in this local campaign to secure closure of a waste treatment works and incinerator near Sheffield and Rotherham which involved the Agency working with the media, local authority, MP and MEP. Although there had been constant pollution over the local community for many years, there were no major protests because the facility provided jobs. However there were two major incidents in two weeks, in May 1998, with an orange nitrous oxide gas cloud, which sparked off major media and national government interest, and local protests including direct action to try to prevent waste entering the site.

The Agency and the HSE jointly brought charges against the operator (Sarp UK Ltd) for breaches of the relevant legislation. The Agency had been requested many times before, during regulation of the site, to take actions against the operator which were beyond its legal powers or duties. The Agency invested considerable resources in the site, following the major incidents, because of the severity of the problems: up to five full-time staff were involved, compared to a planned input of 10% of one officer's time. A high level of public concern, focused around health fears, generated many requests for information.

The Agency set itself the task of communicating the facts of what had occurred and actual risks involved. Communications were through Agency attendance at the regular Works Liaison Meeting and a Community Liaison Meeting. At both, all sides of the community were represented through elected representatives and other interested community groups including the protest group Residents Against Sarp Pollution. The Agency was the target of much local anger, as some residents wanted the plant closed down, which was beyond the Agency's powers in the circumstances. The Agency was also criticised in an independent 'action audit' report by the Environmental Consultancy of Sheffield University (ECUS), commissioned by the company.

However, on examining this report, all the recommendations relevant to the Agency had already been identified by the Agency and had already been carried out or were programmed for action.

The outcome of the Agency's involvement included that:

- The company was successfully prosecuted and had to pay a total of £120,000 fine plus prosecution costs of £150,000
- A great deal of Agency effort went into explaining what the Agency could do, and why it did the things it did
- The majority of significant concerns about the plant "have now been alleviated".
- The Agency is not aware of any lasting impact on human health. The authorisation for the incinerator has been revoked, at the company's request, but close scrutiny of the other operations at the site will continue.
- The Agency is in discussions with the council about the future use of the site, which may involve a waste recycling centre.

Lessons learned from this engagement include:

- The public does not understand the limits to the Agency's powers, and it takes considerable investment of time to explain these limits.
- The Agency can be caught in the middle of disputes between facility operators and the public, and can be attacked from both sides.
- It is worth investing in staff time to deal with these issues thoroughly as early as possible, so that misunderstandings do not grow into major conflicts.

A report, *Killamarsh Waste Treatment and Disposal Site. A summary of the Environment Agency's regulatory involvement since May 1998*, has published in January 2001.

Contact John Housham, Rotherham.

- **Neath-Port Talbot Waste Reclamation and Energy Centre.** This new development will include a refuse-derived fuel unit and combustion units (incinerators). There has been significant local opposition even though only about one third of waste entering the site will be burned. Key issues appear to be health concerns, although Agency staff stress that the incinerator will have to meet Waste Incineration Directive emission limits, and that incinerators (MSW) contribute less than 3% national dioxin inventory now. The Agency has received communications (letters, pre-prepared letters, petitions etc) from over 3,000 people on this initiative.

Agency staff took part in a meeting (April 2001) set up by the local National Assembly for Wales Member. They felt that the meeting was not adequately controlled, was stressful for staff and was of questionable value, although it did give Agency staff an the opportunity to explain their roles and work on the application. An associated exhibition carried some detailed information on reductions in dioxin releases from industry over the past ten years and statutory consultee responses to the Agency. Some protestors met and discussed the issue with the Chairman, Chief Executive, Directors and some Board Members in May. There was a protest outside the Agency office in April 2001. A meeting with a small group (six) representing two protest groups (STIC and PAIN) on 6 July was calmer and allowed the Agency to answer some questions and receive more.

Contact Roy Caughlin, Swansea office, Environment Agency Wales.

- **Coalite Chemicals incinerator.** Major problem from dioxin contamination in 1994 to 1996 from an incinerator at Coalite Chemicals, Bolsover, NE Derbyshire, which affected local people and farmers. The campaign involved the MP and MEP, media, public meetings and a major prosecution. Continuing interest (2001) in annual monitoring results.
- **Guildford incinerator applications.** This was a major campaign against the proposals to build three incinerators in and around Guildford, which started in summer 2000 and generated over 11,000 letters to the Agency (and an estimated 42,000 written objections overall). The pressure on Agency staff was intense as the campaign grew.

The specific application for the incinerator at Slyfield Green is an example of the overall consultation processes which were applied. The consultation period lasted seven months and the protests included a petition of 7,500 letters, and 2,500 separate individual letters of objection. The Agency process involved:

- A preliminary consultation, facilitated by The Environment Council, to establish how the Agency should best consult. This was for a different application nearby, but the principles were relevant to others. This began to identify who the relevant stakeholders may be, and which issues were the key focus of concern. It also gave the Agency an opportunity to begin to increase understanding about which issues the Agency could act on and which it could not (and whose responsibilities those other issues were).
- The application was sent to the statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees (including the local authorities, parish councils and residents associations), and the statutory advert was placed. A significant number of

representations were received and the initial consultation period was extended.

- Two public meetings were held, at a local school. Almost 1000 people attended. Both meetings were tape recorded and transcripts were made and sent to those who requested them.
- The Agency also attended meetings with GAIN (Guildford Anti Incinerator Network) and other local residents. "These forum style meetings allowed a continuing dialogue for the Agency to inform the public about the process itself and progress of the application as well as providing the Agency with more responses from the public on their issues".
- The Agency reviewed all responses received, and did an analysis of the issues raised, all of which were addressed in the final Decision Document. The full analysis was given as Appendix to the Document.

Lessons learned included:

- The statutory consultation period is very short for the public and other stakeholders to consider complex and weighty submissions by the operator. Even though the deadlines were extended in this case, the Agency also agreed to take account of all representations right up to the date of the issue of the final Decision Document.
- The protest groups campaigned on a huge range of issues: for the use of the precautionary principle, rights under the Human Rights Act 1998, risk, interaction with IPPC and IPC regimes, the national Waste Strategy 2000, health effects, visual intrusion, effects to nearby farmland, dioxins and furans, VOCs, consideration of other disposal options, traffic, ecology, operational concerns, air dispersion modelling, noise and odour, building on a floodplain, status of the applicant, particulates, experience from other countries, and others. The Agency had to respond in detail to all these issues.

In the Joining Up workshop on social issues, held in Thames region in July 2001, the outcomes of the campaign were further reviewed and points made included:

- Consultation implies dialogue, which does not always exist
- Unbiased facilitators are not always present
- 'Environment' Agency conveys image that is not always clear or helpful
- The Agency has the ability to inform public on environmental impact
- There is considerable scope to improve communications skills: need to do more to build staff skills and pass on specific officers' experience
- The Agency could use consensus-building techniques more, and deploy independent facilitators
- More focus needs to be placed on involvement which can influence processes at earlier stages, eg in the planning system

Contact Colin Chiverton, Frimley, Thames region.

Joining Up Project

The Joining Up Project is a national Research and Development project for the Environment Agency. The project aims to raise awareness, internally and externally, of the social dimensions of the Agency's work, particularly within the context of sustainable development. Internally, the project aims to enable staff at all levels to use social knowledge and social science, and consider social priorities, more effectively in their work.

In summary work on social issues is taken to include:

- consideration of the social impacts of the Agency's work (eg the needs of people in poverty who often live in the most polluted neighbourhoods)
- social processes (eg working in partnership with others and working generally in more collaborative and participatory ways), and
- linking the Agency's environmental priorities to social policy initiatives through a working understanding of sustainable development in practice.

Phase 1 of the Joining Up Project was designed to introduce social issues on a broad basis to Agency staff, through a range of activities including desk research to produce a literature review and summary of existing Agency activity (this report), plus a series of five interactive regional workshops to identify and debate how social issues impact on current Agency work. A draft Social Policy Framework was produced (in November 2001); and an interim R & D report (January 2002). Phase 1 of the project is due to be completed in January 2002.

Phase 2 is intended as an action research phase, building on the concepts and processes introduced in Phase 1 and working in more depth with a limited number of Agency regions to investigate and demonstrate the Agency's role in relation to social issues.

Since the Joining Up Project began, an additional dimension (opportunity) has emerged in that all regions and areas are being invited to make Local Contributions to the Agency's national corporate strategy, and proposals for Phase 2 take this new dimension into account.

The project is managed by John Colvin, Social Policy Manager, with a team of consultants, plus a Project Board and national Design Team (of Agency staff). Copies of all materials will be placed on the Agency intranet once approved.
Contact John Colvin, Social Policy Manager, head office.

Landcare

The aim of this initiative, in the upper Hampshire Avon area, is "to raise awareness amongst land managers in the upper Hants Avon of diffuse farm pollution" and "to influence wide-scale adoption of measures to control it".

The Landcare Partnership involved the Agency, English Nature, Wessex Water plc (both of which gave funding), National Farmers Union and Country Landowners Association. The Agency staff manage, implement and monitor all activities which have included working to raise awareness through the media and communication networks of partner organisations, through the development of land managers workshops and through field scale demonstrations of better practice.

The outcomes and results include:

- "Evidence suggests that land managers in the upper Hants Avon are adapting practice to control diffuse pollution, and are now much more aware of the issues" although "quantifying the degree to which this is happening is difficult". However, "there has not been wide-scale implementation of the Agency's 'Best Farming Practices' and diffuse pollution remains a serious problem within the catchment. The lack of widespread uptake is believed to be due to poor economic conditions which have made many land managers feel that the risk of changing practices is too great, and any costs incurred in a failed departure from tried and tested practice could result in disaster for their business."
- A follow-up study was commissioned in November/December 2001 to assess the performance of Landcare based on a 1998 baseline survey of land managers knowledge; that study is due to report in March 2002.
- Future plans aimed at increasing effort are based on learning to date, including:
 - a dedicated project manager is needed
 - facilitating demonstration of Best Farming Practices through workshop days as "the need to intimately involve land managers in the decision-making process of determining best practice was clearly identified"
 - farm visits are needed to assess diffuse pollution and encourage involvement in the programme
 - integrated farm plans are needed, but it is "essential to interface the needs of a multitude of other organisations (eg RSPB, English Nature, FWAG)" so that integrated plans are developed in collaboration with partner organisations
 - need to identify and secure grant funding to encourage changes in practice.

Lessons learned include:

- Funding is a key issue, both for project management and delivery and to use to support changes in practice.
- The Agency image as a 'hard regulator' can conflict with working in partnership.
- Best practice advice from different agencies can be contradictory; need to work in collaboration with others to ensure clear messages are given to those on the ground.
- Recognition of the difficulties of getting busy people in relatively precarious economic situations to risk changes away from 'tried and tested' (albeit unsuccessful) approaches.
- Demonstrations of good practice worked best in participatory workshops, rather than the 'lecture format'.

A draft internal report, *Landcare Future Strategy 2002-2007* (dated 5 November 2001), is available. Contact Paul Bryson.

Landfill site consultations

This is another highly contentious area of work for the Agency. The examples given below are simply those which have been identified in the course of the research to date.

- **Pen-y-Bont landfill.** A joint Agency, operator, community group liaison group has been established to discuss the issues arising from the Pen-y-Bont landfill site in Wrexham. The local Assembly Member has got involved as well, and the outcome is that the local pressure group is more reassured that both operator and regulator are working to resolve problems.
Contact Dave Gatehouse or Ann Weedy, North East area, Environment Agency Wales.
- **Nantygwyddon Landfill.** In the late 1980's the then local authority granted planning permission to itself as the operator for a landfill, and then issued a licence. Since 1996, EA has been responsible for the licence. If the Agency or the operator wants to modify the licence, EA can do that without the need for public consultation, although this will change in 2002. In this case, the operator amended the working plan, and EA has held public consultation on this matter separately. Public perceptions of low standards of regulation of Nantygwyddon landfill led to the National Assembly of Wales setting up an independent investigation in to the history of the location, issuing of planning permission and waste licence.

Although the process was not a formal public inquiry, hearings were held in public and the public is able to see any information that is publicly available. David Purcheon was appointed as the external, independent investigator. The Agency made all files available to the investigator, and gave lots of data and information as well as written answers to written questions from the investigator.

There was a series of presentation sessions, split into subjects: permitting, policy, history of waste policy, monitoring, health, liaison with other bodies, etc. EA wrote papers and reports for all these sessions – these are available on the Nantygwyddon landfill website. The Agency also made files available. At the end of the session, the public could make observations, but couldn't ask questions. Occasionally the investigator would turn the observation into a question which he would write to the Agency and the Agency would give a written answer, or sometimes he would ask the question there and then if it was for clarification. At the public meetings, the investigator would read out the question and someone from the Agency would read out the answer. Occasionally the investigator also asked supplementary questions.

Results and outcomes are not yet clear. The investigator's report was due in December 2001, and the results of the public consultation held by the Agency on the operator's amended working plan were only provided to the Agency in November 2001. However, Government guidance now recommends having local residents' liaison groups which the operator should attend to answer questions.

Lessons learnt mainly relate to communication, public perception of Agency, how to deal with enquiries, investigations etc, and issues raised about trust in the Agency and its competency as a regulator.

Contact Philip Saunders, St Mellons, Environment Agency Wales.

Liaison groups and forums

- **Anglian region forum**

A forum has been organised in Anglian region to illustrate the shared values of local authorities and the Agency involving senior officers, and members, from the authorities. Valuable discussions followed joint local authority and Agency presentations on a number of issues of joint interest eg strategic planning, biodiversity, waste etc.

Contact Stewart South, Brampton.

- **Northamptonshire liaison**

Regular local liaison meetings are held with Northamptonshire County Council planners, local residents, parish councils and site operators specific to individual waste management sites, usually landfills. There are also liaison meetings with planners to discuss issues and sites where both planners and the Agency have an interest, identify how they can help each other and work together or explain and promote understanding where there are differences.

Contact Claire Poole, Kettering.

- **Anglian region local authority liaison**

The Agency is involved in local authority liaison groups on reducing household waste and Best Value reviews. The Agency has provided 'neutral' territory to encourage local authorities to work together, which is going well. Issues arising include:

- beginning to encounter problems where waste contracts are being discussed involving operators the Agency regulates
- there is political resistance to plan beyond election periods eg where the Agency is encouraging groups to consider incineration but elected representatives feel this would make them unpopular with the communities that elected them.

Contact John Sweeney, Lincoln.

Local Environment Agency Plans

LEAPs (Local Environment Agency Plans) are designed to produce a local agenda of integrated action for environmental improvement so that the Agency could deploy its resources locally to best effect and optimise benefit for the environment. LEAPs provide a framework to enable:

- setting of local targets for improving environmental quality
- translation of national policies and priorities into local actions
- assessment of the costs and benefits of proposed actions
- partnerships for solving environmental issues, in connection with LA21 initiatives
- promotion of the Agency's own work through education and interface with local planning authorities.

Each LEAP is an integrated plan for identifying, assessing, prioritising and solving local environmental issues related to the Agency's work to protect and enhance the environment, taking into account the views of local government, communities and industry.

130 LEAPs have been completed, with complete coverage of England and Wales. These exercises have involved consulting around 30,000 local organisations, including environmental organisations, voluntary bodies, local authorities, trade associations and industry (Environment Agency *Annual Report 1999-2000*).

A report on community involvement in LEAPs (by Baker Associates, 1997), entitled *A Method for Community Involvement in LEAPs*, expressed concerns about the 'top down' approaches being used by the Agency (quoted in ESRU for Environment Agency 1999, 42):

"The majority of participation work has been focused on 'information giving' and 'consultation'. There has been some input to 'deciding together' (consensus building), but the lack of on-going commitment has made this rather weak. Input to 'joint action' (partnership building) has been primarily through the functional staff, but the relationship of this to the overall process has been unclear to partners."

That report concluded that more focus should be placed on consultations with "those organisations whose interests are directly affected by the issues and with whom the Agency is likely to have to work to implement the LEAs, with much less effort directed towards consulting the 'person in the street'" (ESRU for Environment Agency 1999).

Specific initiatives around LEAPs include:

- Environment Council consensus building techniques were used for six LEAPs which were considered by Agency staff to be enormously successful and received excellent external and internal feedback.
Contact Kristina Richards, Thames region.
- Wey river catchment area. Written consultation exercises, individual face to face consultations, consultation draft, formal consultation period, stakeholder dialogue day run by The Environment Council, next consultation draft, final plan.
Contact Juliette Chan and Nicola Pinnington, Thames region.
- Lodden and Mole river catchment areas. Working group (with external organisations), workshop to identify key issues, action planning day (workshop), circulated draft to working group, published draft and environmental overview, formal public consultation, final plan.
Contact Juliette Chan and Nicola Pinnington, Thames region.
- West Norfolk, used a stakeholder decision analysis process devised and evaluated by the Environment and Society Research Unit at University College London. The process involved a first workshop including site visits and presentation, a second workshop to identify issues and the top 12 criteria for assessment, a third workshop to prioritise issues according to those criteria, and a fourth workshop to discuss prioritised issues and reflect on process.
Contact Rona Chellew and Adam Nichols, Anglian region.
- West Cornwall. A single event was held to establish an annual review forum with about 50 stakeholders to review progress and effectiveness of actions taken, identify new stimuli and directions, keep stakeholder interest and produce an action list.
Contact Cathy Dodge, SW region.

A summary of these initiatives was included in the report of an Agency seminar held in February 2000; the report is *Public Involvement in Agency Activities*, and it is available from Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

Local Outreach R & D

This research project was aimed at establishing the meaning of 'close and responsive relationships with local communities' and developing criteria to evaluate different methods for the development of those relationships.

The report's conclusions supported the need for more social science in the Agency, and the development of more staff who can undertake facilitation and engagement effectively at local level. It also stressed the importance of learning from experience and recommended a nationally co-ordinated programme of evaluation (of 'outreach' activities) to enable organisational learning and sharing of good practice. In addition, the report:

- Suggests various methodologies for consultation, participation and dialogue, aimed at different levels of stakeholders for different decision situations, and all relevant parts of a community
- Recognises that action will be limited (and therefore less effective) unless the EA is

- involved in partnerships
- Recommends inclusion as part of community strategies as one vehicle for close and responsive relationships between the EA and others
- Recognises that greater trust (between institutions and between them and others) is needed to secure genuine long term environmental improvement, and recognises that this needs time and therefore resources, and is dependent on staff resources
- Supports the need for more social science in the Agency, and staff who are better at facilitation and engagement at the local level
- Recommends a 'model' for targeted engagement with stakeholders, so that the Agency can integrate its concerns with all the other initiatives currently being developed at the local level
- Supports the need for a nationally co-ordinated programme of evaluation of 'outreach' activities to enable organisational learning and sharing of good practice

Report published as *Local Outreach*, EA R&D Technical Report SWCON204, by Judy Clark, Andy Sterling, Kate Studd and Jacquelin Burgess of the Environment and Society Research Unit (ESRU), UCL (020 7679 5548).
Contact Pete Grigorey, SW region.

Lower Lea Valley project

This project is dealing with urban regeneration in a very disadvantaged area of East London covering issues of contaminated land, poor water quality and airborne pollution using a variety of methods including possibly partnership initiatives.

Proposals for action are based on the completed research by Barbara Carroll: *Lower Lea Study*.

Contact Thames region (Hugh).

Millennium Project and Festivals

The Agency's Millennium Project was designed to:

- foster new partnerships
- develop new skills for staff
- enhance the Agency's PR activity
- increase awareness to new and existing audiences
- realise value for money.

It was also intended to stimulate community involvement and to identify and initiate contact with new audiences. The programme has strengthened existing partnerships and started new ones (eg with the Confederation of Indian Organisations and Black Environment Network). It has also aimed to reach other under-represented groups including disadvantaged urban groups, disabled people and others with special needs. Special work has been done with children at festival events, and the Millennium Challenge aimed to communicate concepts of sustainability in practical ways.

Festivals were held all over the country. Examples include:

- Cornwall and Devon Area Millennium Festival 2000, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. Funding was used to provide a pond and education facilities at the NMA, and to subsidise entry and transport to the National Marine Aquarium (NMA) especially for children from disadvantaged areas.

The relationship the Agency has built up with the NMA in Plymouth is an example of partnership working well. The catalyst and enabling factor behind this and other partnerships has been the 'Make a Difference' pot of money in the South West. A proportion of budgets was top-sliced to provide a pot for collaborative projects which enabled many partnerships to be formed, and enabled the development of trust and stability in these relationships.

Contact Lesley Newport, Launceston Depot, SW Region.

- The Dales Area Festival involved the Agency working with Middlesbrough Environment City to do a visioning exercise with the local communities to consider

potential future environmental improvements, with Tees Forest to manage practical improvement work by volunteers in a local park, a 'green' market day in the town centre, local heritage walks, environmental story-telling for children in a local library, and a festival day.
Contact Jean Varley, NE Region.

According to the final report, *Millennium Project. End of Project Conference, 2 November 2000*, the Project achieved:

- 157 locations visited
- 387 days of activity
- 180,000 people reached
- 584 schools involved
- 18 physical sites created
- 15 projects 'unlocking heritage'
- Most festivals attracted at least 10 external partners, of which 3 - 6 were commercial sponsors
- 21 out of 26 festivals left a legacy of physical improvements "in addition to educational value of activities".

In addition to these quantitative indicators of the achievements of the Project, a qualitative research study examined how effectively messages were delivered, and concluded:

- Nearly all visitors enjoyed the activities at festivals
- One of the main suggestions for improvement was improved publicity and signage in and around events
- The broader environmental messages were clearly understood and remembered after the events although a disappointing number of people in fact took any actions as a result of this
- It was suggested that some of the activities could have been more clearly linked to the environmental messages
- Although recognition of the Agency was high, knowledge of what the Agency actually does was low, even after the festivals.

In addition, it was suggested in the internal Agency report that the staff had gained valuable skills in:

- Seeking partnerships and working in partnership
- General project management
- Team-working - especially in multi-functional teams
- Education and communications.

Partners included local authorities, voluntary organisations (eg Water Aid, Groundwork, BTCV, Going for Green, Ramblers Association, The Wildlife Trusts), local community organisations, national and local companies (eg IDEA, Mars, Tesco, Barclays), other Government agencies and departments.

The festivals were also seen to have reached new audiences, including

- Successfully targeting urban audiences.
- Greater social diversity than expected from normal activities..
- "Where identified, visitors more likely to be in the C2 grouping and then C1 at levels broadly comparable to the population average. Although we attracted lower percentages from the DE groups, they were still in greater numbers than from the AB groups. As a comparison, the research from shows indicated - as expected - a broader spread, with more ABs than the national average and fewer DEs."
- More than 16 festivals actively involved disability groups..
- Although "went some way toward including ethnic communities it is an area where we were less successful", although valuable lessons were learned.

Lessons learned included:

- Timescales. Takes time to build relationships and trust with communities and partners; and need to find out what they want first rather than impose ideas.
- Staff training. "Staff do not currently have the skills to work with new communities.

They were faced with issues of language, culture, disability, geography, unusual hours and hostile locations. Either we need staff training or we need to work with other partners who have the experience." One idea was to have a group of highly trained staff within the Agency who travel around projects and develop local backup, passing on skills, which would strengthen the expertise within the Agency.

- Working with minority ethnic communities required staff who understood the different cultures, which has implications for the Agency's own workforce.
- Targeting very disadvantaged communities created very high costs including "real problems of vandalism and unruly behaviour so messages were often lost". Indeed, "The effort for the result was deemed to be too high to be practical."

Key issues arising included:

- Resources. Staff and time are needed to find and maintain partner relationships; long lead times may be needed; can commission third parties for delivery but this has cost implications, and will be less likely to build skills within the Agency.
- Ownership/branding. Questions about who 'owns' the initiative, and whether the Agency is promoting the event / initiative or its own identity.
- Early involvement. Target audiences need to be involved in creating materials, to ensure the messages are relevant to their peers.
- Partners for delivery. Need to link to appropriate organisations and networks to deliver key messages; those messages need to be brief, simple, clear.
- Follow-up. Need time allocated after events to have continuity, and to establish the relationships which can create 'platforms' for future work.

MXC project

The Agency was aware that they were not reaching minority groups at public consultations: attendees always seemed to be white middle-aged men. They needed to find out what they were doing wrong, why they were failing to reach these groups, and how to communicate with minorities.

A research project was established which centred around how to improve communication with environmentally disadvantaged groups, drawing on FOE pollution injustice data but recognising that, overall, data on environmental exclusion was poor and existing research was limited. The research was carried out by MXC, a market research company with experience of this kind of work, who carried out face-to-face research.

The research conclusions included identifying health as a key tool for engaging disadvantaged groups on wider environmental issues, such as through the health impacts of air quality, industrial emissions, fly tipping, graffiti and noise. The report's recommendations included establishing an Advisory Panel of stakeholders to help devise a central policy for engaging the excluded, commissioning research to build on the FOE Pollution Injustice data cross-tabulating demographic with pollution inventory data, devising and launching a public involvement policy and code of practice backed by a comprehensive training programme, and seeking opportunities to encourage Government to look at environment and exclusion as an issue.

Contact: Elaine O'Donnell, Corporate Affairs.

National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal (NCRAOA)

The NCRAOA was established "to lead the Environment Agency in the development of key techniques such as risk analysis, environmental forecasting, economic appraisal, policy evaluation and options appraisal. The National Centre also addresses strategic overarching issues such as transport, energy and land use which are critical to the delivery of sustainable development" (*A Guide to the National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal*).

The Centre "is also the Agency's focal point for developing techniques by which social issues, and the public's perceptions and aspirations, can be considered in the decision making process. This includes advice on establishing dialogue with various sectors of society."

For the Centre, social issues within the Agency cover three categories of activity:

- Social processes. Relationships and communications between the Agency and others eg consultation and participation, risk communication, decision making processes.
- Social impacts. Impacts on quality of life from environmental and social changes and pressures eg flood hazard, energy consumption.
- Group and individual perspectives. Understanding the range of environmental values, perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in society, the distribution of environmental impacts and community responses.

These approaches are closely interrelated, and require social science disciplines, and input from non-technical sources, to inform the Agency's decision making processes. There is a focus within the Centre on the development and use of specific techniques which allow the Agency to:

- identify and screen options
- identify, predict and assess environmental, economic, social and technological innovations
- manage public participation and dialogue
- trade-off analysis of implications of options.

Techniques include:

- opinion surveys
- interviews, focus groups and questionnaires
- stakeholder dialogue
- 'surgeries' with Agency staff

The role of the Centre has been to "take a technical lead on social issues throughout the Agency to ensure development of best practice and national consistency of tools and techniques as appropriate", including through research and development.

At present there is one part-time member of staff in the Centre responsible for social issues: Dr Clare Twigger-Ross, social policy officer.

In terms of the development of the social policy framework, the Centre sees its role as further developing "tools, support and information ... training and support".

The Centre has undertaken a wide range of projects relevant to the consideration of social issues within the Agency's work, including the following:

- Participatory Risk Assessment Project
- Social Amplification of Risk
- Industrial Pollution Communication Research
- Communicating Understanding of Contaminated Land Risks
- RISCUM.

- **Participatory Risk Assessment project**

The purposes of this R & D project were to better understand how to involve the public and lay people in risk assessment work, and to follow calls from learned bodies to open up assessment to scrutiny by lay people and organisations.

The research aimed to review experience in involving non-expert audiences in risk assessment work in order to examine opportunities and mechanisms for lay involvement in the context of the Agency's activities. The study began in September 1999 and was expected to be completed by July 2002. A report on phase 1 was due to be completed by the end of 2001, with case study and guidance materials to follow by July 2002.

Contact Simon Pollard, NCRAOA.

- **Social Amplification of Risk project**

This is a collaborative R&D project co-funded by the Agency, HSE, DoH, MAFF, DETR, ESRC and the Cabinet Office. Four projects have been funded and they are looking into how and why some hazards are 'amplified' and others 'attenuated' by social processes, with quite an emphasis on the media.

The four projects are managed by teams in universities looking at different issues:

- Surrey University looked at BSE, pill scare, oil pipeline
- Birmingham examined GM foods, radar, Millennium bug, train crashes
- Loughborough University examined the media
- Queen's University Belfast also examined the media, and other issues.

The teams collected existing data and carried out interviews including with the public and the media. Reports on the findings of the four projects were produced early in 2001. The HSE is planning to produce a summary report at some point. In April 2001 a workshop was held to update Agency staff on the findings from the research and to encourage debate on how the Agency can anticipate and interpret public opinion and perception of sensitive issues in order to make effective and efficient use of resources in regulatory decision making.

- **Communicating Contaminated Land Risks**

The Agency took over national responsibility for contaminated land under the new contaminated land regime in April 2000, which enables the Agency to establish a national framework for identifying, managing and communicating the risks arising from the assessment, treatment and after-care of contaminated and previously contaminated sites.

This initiative, on communicating contaminated land risks, was intended to inform Agency staff, to provide guidelines so they could respond effectively to the new contaminated land regime. The guidelines were intended for use in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A handbook was produced in 1999, drawing on work from the previous two years (including a full literature review), to provide a simple four-step guide to who to talk to, why, when and how, when communicating risks.

Staff involved included Valerie Forster in Land Quality, Sarah Gillman in SEPA Head office, Samantha Fishwick in Chemicals Policy, and a project board of technical experts.

Lessons learned from this process included the need to make reports and guidance as interesting as possible, even if intended for internal use. The handbook is an A5 glossy, full colour, booklet which "doesn't look like a boring Agency technical report", and written to be "short and snappy". This was very well received: 10,000 copies were printed and "it goes like hot cakes". It has also become popular with local authorities.

Paula Orr is starting new research project in Spring 2002, measuring baseline knowledge on risk perception and risk communication among staff. She will be evaluating the handbook, and how well staff on the ground communicate risk.

Contact Samantha Fishwick, Chemicals Policy, Head Office.

- **RISCOM**

RISCOM is the European Fifth Framework dialogue project on enhancing transparency and public participation in nuclear waste management. The Agency, through NCRAOA, initiated a project with NIREX and European partners (coordinated by Kijell Anderson, Sweden) to look at different methods of engaging the public on radioactive waste.

Contact Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

In addition, the Centre has been responsible for commissioning other research, some of which is covered under separate entries within this report:

- Establishing lessons from Flood Defences and Incinerator consultations, listed under these headings in this report, some of which were presented at a seminar in February 2000, the report of which was published as *Public Involvement in Agency Activities*, July 2000.
- Participatory processes in LEAPs, again some of which are reported in the above report.

National Ponds Project

The Agency has seconded Jonathan Brickland, Leeds office, to this project, which is led by former Agency Board Member Anne Powell. The aim of the project is to encourage the restoration and development of village and agricultural ponds.

The Natural Step

The Agency seconded Dr Mark Everard to The Natural Step (TNS) as TNS Director of Science; and TNS have worked with a developer to make the Princess Margaret Hospital in Swindon 'Britain's most sustainable building'. This is also a demonstration project under the Government's M4I (Movement for Innovation) scheme to promote sustainable construction.

The project includes increasing sustainability awareness among all partners, a longer term emphasis on value rather than minimising costs and maximising profit at each phase, prioritising waste reduction during construction, doubling the insulation efficiency to create long term savings in energy use and costs (estimated at £250,000 over 27 years), cut-offs of board recycled to eliminate waste and reduce costs (estimated savings of £50,000), on-site composting to reuse waste and reduce demand for topsoil, use of local labour and training of all workers in sustainable development principles, and negotiations to promote the use of more sustainable forms of transport by hospital staff and visitors.

TNS have worked with the same developer on a development of a 'green village' of 64 units housing 299 people, alongside regeneration of the whole of the Ravenscliffe estate in Bradford (ibid). Energy conservation, waste reduction, the natural environment, social concerns and training were all key components. For example:

- 1000 tyres were cleared from the site and staff found a local company to recycle them into footwear and underlay
- Resource efficient timber from sustainable managed forests was used in houses (suppliers approved by the Forestry Stewardship Council)
- Local unemployed people hired as security staff; contributing to an estimated 50% reduction in theft and vandalism on the site
- Local unemployed people trained on-site for building work
- Negotiations to improve bus connections from the estate
- Waste managed on and off site to minimise disposal and maximise reuse of materials
- Lorry deliveries and removals co-ordinated to minimise traffic movement and reduce fuel use
- Local priorities identified with local people, and tackled.

North West Business Environment Partnership

This is a partnership between the Agency, Groundwork UK, North West Chambers Ltd, BNFL, North West Water and others. The project aims to enhance the environmental performance of SMEs in the North West and, as a result, develop their sustainable competitiveness in the wider marketplace. The project includes an advice and support service, beacon 'Green Business Parks', creating an environmentally competent workforce, and reduction of the environmental 'footprint' of businesses in the programme. The partnership is managed by Groundwork UK.

Nuclear energy participatory events

- **BNFL National Stakeholder Dialogue.** Since 1998, the Agency has been taking part in this process, facilitated by The Environment Council. Although there have been problems (including dissatisfaction by some environmental groups about BNFL's handling of the shutdown dates for the Magnox stations), the Agency has been prepared to continue.

Jim Gray has been the Agency's representative on the main group; Clive Williams, Policy Development Manager, head office, produced a briefing page on 20 November 2000.

- **Sellafield review.** The Agency has a remit to review all nuclear site authorisations every four years. Legally, the Agency is not obliged to do public consultation: the 1993 Radioactive Substances Act specifies the need to make information available but is not prescriptive. However, the Government now recommends that important reviews should have three months' public consultation. The Agency decided to use a modified version of the Selected Licence Application Procedure to consult on the re-examination and its scope, and on the proposals the Agency was making for the limits and conditions in any revised authorisations. This was chosen in order to provide information that all people concerned could understand (including the public, organisations, etc), and to provide information on the Agency's proposals for changing a particular authorisation, covering why the Agency wanted to do it, and to explain limits and conditions.

The process was as follows:

- Identified stakeholders including Agency employees, BNFL, statutory consultees, residents, local authorities and other organisations (including Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, MAFF, health authorities, MPs etc).
- PR plan developed to include news releases, public surgeries with exhibitions, scope and methodology documents, explanatory document and decision document, Agency web site, Grassroots, Focus and Environment Action (three Agency newsletters).

There were then three public consultations:

- Three months consultation on scope and methodology, which had never been done before ("and wouldn't do it again!")
- Consultation driven by Government. Six month time scale to consult with local authorities, parish councils, NGOs, statutory consultees, other local authorities outside the area (consulted nationally as Sellafield is so important, normal requirement is within a 25km radius).
- Three month consultation on the remainder, which started in July 2001. As August is hopeless for public consultation, it was decided to do four months, which was due to end in December 2001.

After the public consultations, they collate all the responses and answer all queries in the decision document, which goes public. However, the Agency "rarely moves from its original position".

The review involves a project team of 14 (not all working full-time on project), including Ian Parker, Inspector in charge of Sellafield and team leader NW region; John Marshall, area manager North; Bob Smith, team leader and policy on nuclear issues; Clive Williams, Policy Development Manager, Bristol HQ; Elaine O'Donnell, who did Magnox consultations for the Nuclear Group.

The outcome/result is that documents are modified as a result of public opinion.

Lessons learned and issues raised include:

- May not get many responses (50-100), but those which are sent tend to be very well argued documents that take weeks to go through
- The Agency is under significant political pressure to do extensive public consultation
- Those involved are questioning the value of the consultation. Analysis yet on completed on the benefits derived from all the work involved in public consultation – the thousands of pounds spent, scores of staff hours etc, organising meetings, public surgeries, presentations to local authorities, multi-party discussions with organisations like Friends of the Earth to help

- people understand the issues. There is also questioning of whether the Agency is doing the right things. The cost is huge for little public response.
- At the first open meeting, 110 people attended; a meeting towards the end of the process was attended by 25 people; public surgeries were attended by a handful of people
 - Generally, Agency contact with the public is limited
 - It is a learning process. After each event they look at the results and see what they could do better next time.
 - One of the pressures is that public responses take a long time to analyse and the Agency is under strong pressure from business to shorten the review process or do away with public consultation. Without consultation, the review time could be shortened by six months.
 - There is conflicting advice from different government departments: DEFRA says cannot shorten public consultation; DTI says it is taking too long and the nuclear power industry needs certainty.
 - Documents produced tend to be very legal as Agency lawyers say they have to protect themselves, and are difficult for lay person to understand. They have published a non-legal summary as an aid to the consultation document to help the public understand it. This is the first time this has happened, and it has been very well received.
 - The public may say they do not want nuclear power, but it is not the Agency's remit to stop it. However, the Agency can investigate valid objections, eg amounts of chemicals.
 - Sometimes the Agency fails to get the message over to the public: the public still see it as a voting exercise on nuclear power.

No written reports yet on the whole public consultation, but one will be produced at the end of the exercise.

Contact Ian Parker, NW Region Team Leader.

PENS

PENS provides guidance to authors and editors within the Agency on dealing with issues of social inclusion which could help 'pave the way' for dialogue with new audiences, including translation, publicising partnerships and good practice, equality etc.

PENS publications are intended for internal and external audiences, and aim to show stakeholders that the Agency does have a social dimension to its work and is pursuing environmental equality

Policy Development Review Process

A review of the policy development process in the Agency is being undertaken. The review aims to strengthen the consultation stage of policy development within the Agency, with reference to the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on written consultation which is binding on Government agencies. The review is working on the following issues:

- Addressing the need for joined up policy, and the need for policy outcomes that matter to people, driven by the Modernising Government agenda, which must encourage the Agency to produce integrated policies in partnership with others with shared objectives.
- Integrating policy appraisal (developed by NCRAOA) into the policy development process, so that the social, economic and environmental impacts of policies are all weighed up.
- Ensuring that policies are built not only on sound traditional science, but also on robust social science.

All policy authors in the organisation will be required to work differently, and broaden their considerations. A reinforced feedback loop will ensure that lessons learned from implementing policy (at the operational end) will be fed back into the process.

Contact Robin Chatterjee, head office.

Professional Practice for Sustainable Development Project (PP4SD)

The purposes of this project are:

- to establish an agreed framework for professional practice within the principles of sustainable development
- to produce publications and materials about the project and its goals, and for educators within professional institutions to give guidance and help develop courses
- to produce a tutor manual and course materials for a foundation course for sustainable development.

The idea for the project grew out of early discussions in 1998/99 with eight or nine professional bodies. In March 1999 the Agency held a workshop with the Council for Environmental Education (CEE) which led to a funding bid and the establishment of the PP4SD project at the Institution of Environmental Sciences (IES). The partnership now running the project is the Agency, IES, WWF UK, The Natural Step, the Professional Association Research Network (at Bristol University). The group operates primarily as a virtual network which also meets face to face several times a year.

The outcomes and results so far are the production of printed materials and the piloting of the foundation course across several institutions. These concrete achievements have generated interest in other institutions and professions across the UK and internationally.

Lessons learned include:

- It is difficult to get dialogue started, and good relationships established, between different professional bodies. PP4SD involves 14 professional bodies and five partners and it took six months for everyone to be able to work together and realise that there was a lot more to be gained from working together rather than being in fierce competition "though obviously they are still all very competitive!").
- Strong facilitation by the management group was needed to move it beyond discussion. It took "ages and ages" to decide what they meant by sustainable development and in the end the management group had to say that they must stop talking about it and move on.
- It was essential to have a practical goal to achieve, otherwise they would just discuss the philosophy.
- Financial support is crucial. Nothing would have happened without it. Professional bodies are reluctant to put financial support in until there are results (eg reports etc). They are now very keen, but at the beginning were not.

Reports available include reference documents (available on IES website: www.ies-uk.org), two publications (PP4SD book 1 and book 2), a tutor manual (Professional Partnership 4 SD). These are available through the Agency internet site (and are priced). Contact Annie Hall or Jimmy Brannigan, Education.

Power generation applications involving stakeholders

- **Drax power station.** This was an Enhanced Public Consultation (EPC) process, which was used to help determine the application from National Power for variation in the authorisation at Drax Power Station (1998). The consultation was based on the Agency's model for contentious applications, and included widening the boundaries of the consultation area. The process involved:
 - The usual statutory notifications for applications.
 - Two public meetings. The first was an opportunity for the operator to explain the application and answer questions, and for the Agency to explain the processes of decision-making. It was essentially a 'listening' session for the Agency. The second meeting allowed the Agency to indicate its responses to the issues so far, explain the decision it was minded to make, and hear further comments before a final decision was made. MPs, AEG members, officers and members of local authorities and other interested parties were invited.
 - Concerns raised included health issues about emissions, the effect of emissions on the historic buildings of York, and the impact on the coal industry.
 - A meeting was also held with the eight local authorities involved (between the two public meetings).

Outcomes and results included:

- The meetings were attended by MPs, councillors and others and "received generally favourable comment".

Lessons learned included:

- "The objective of the consultation is important in deciding its format".
- "The need to ensure the public can have confidence in the Agency's decisions highlights the importance of the longer term development of the Agency's standing as a regulator and expert".
- "Where a major authorisation is an issue, a public relations strategy should be developed immediately for it".
- "Local politics need active management. In part, local authorities may not wish to be seen to be supporting the Agency, but their understanding of the Agency's position can be vital."
- Roles and relationships with external stakeholders (including politicians and government departments) need clarity, including how responsibilities are split between Agency area, region and head office.
- It may be useful to make the 'technical trail' available for public examination to ensure the Agency's position is transparent from the start.
- Authorisations of this sort need extensive technical expertise, political awareness, organisational and managerial input. These demands can cause resource problems and overload staff.
- The 'consultation' process is an important part of how the Agency projects its role.
- The Agency needs to be able to understand that its responses to political or public concerns may increase the expectation of changes in existing relationships and practices.
- "The interrelationship between public trust and independent monitoring is likely to be an increasingly sensitive issue and perhaps the Agency needs to educate the public more on its preferred approach to industry regulation" (ie whether auditing/quality checking of monitoring by industry of itself has become inconsistent with political considerations).

All the above are quotes (where marked) from internal Agency documents reviewing the process.

Contact Fiona Pickard, NE regional customer services manager and Lara Dalton in Leeds PR.

- **Glanford Power Station**, North Lincs. An application was made by Fibrogen Ltd for authorisation for incineration of meat and bone meal, and tallow oil, to replace poultry litter at its power station to generate electricity. The Agency used the Selective Licence Application Procedures in order to
 - more widely publicise that an application had been submitted
 - explain the application to the public, and the Agency's role in determining it
 - enhance public confidence and a wider understanding and acceptability of the Agency's decision.

The process was:

- A special team was set up, chaired by the Area Manager and involving officers involved in the application, PIR/RSR team leader, area solicitor, regional PIR/RSR manager, press officer, project technical officer and others. This group met regularly to review progress and jointly plan activities. This group also dealt with other SLAPs.
- When the application was received, copies were distributed to statutory consultees and others; the company placed ads; the Agency distributed a press release
- A full consultation document was prepared and circulated to all statutory consultees.
- A public meeting was planned, was widely advertised, invitations were issued to parish councils and a mail shot went to local businesses. A leaflet was prepared summarising the consultation document and distributed to all participants, plus a booklet introducing Integrated Pollution Control.
- The meeting was chaired by the local MP and attended by over 100 people.

- The meeting was fully recorded, a transcript was produced and all questions and answers scrutinised.
- Further written representations were answered in writing.
- The Decision Document sent to all statutory consultees, and a Decision Leaflet (summarising the Document) published and distributed.

The outcomes and results included:

- All written representations were answered in writing.
- The Agency provided a forum where the applicant could address public concerns.
- The Agency provided an efficient and professional service to industry and this avoided a judicial review of its decision, and appeal by the company.
- All issues and representations were addressed in the Decision Document.
- No complaints or representations were received about the decision.
- One councillor described the Agency's approach as 'brilliant'!

Lessons learned included:

- It is important to do one's homework before receiving the application ie know the area, know whether there are any groups set up to protest the issue, be aware of any local specialist who may be used to advise these groups, find out about local parish councils, MPs, MEPs etc, decide who needs to be consulted, enquire about local venues for public meetings, and make contact with the local area health authority and planners.
- The nature of some issues are unlikely to be disposed of by any amount of consultation, eg public concerns about BSE, in which case there may be no point in holding additional public meetings.
- Although the Agency encouraged people to write to confirm the details of their concerns, eg about BSE, very few did. This suggested, to those involved, that different methods may be needed to find out this level of detail.

This initiative is written up as a case study in *Public Involvement in Agency Activities*; copies from Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

Contact John Collins or Jackie Willems, Midlands region.

Public access to environmental information

The Agency has taken public and other stakeholder access to environmental information seriously for some years, and has produced a variety of publications for the public and other stakeholders throughout England and Wales including:

- Access to Environmental Information
- Public Registers of Environmental Information
- Environment Agency Customer Charter
- Guide to Information Available to the Public
- Charging for Information.

There are moves towards electronic public registers available to view through Agency offices. Contact Chris Jarvis on national Agency policy on public access to information.

There are also activities at regional level. For example, in the North West Region state of the environment reports for the region are available online, and there are links with the Regional Intelligence Unit in the North West to turn information into intelligence. Contact Heidi Curran, NW Region.

Public Involvement in Agency Activities

In February 2000, the Agency's National Centre for Risk Analysis and Options Appraisal held a seminar on Public Involvement in Agency Activities. The seminar was an opportunity to hear about and reflect on existing Agency experience with public involvement. The report of the seminar was produced by Clare Twigger-Ross and Cindy-Rose Smith, in July 2000 (Report No 22). The overall conclusions of the event were:

- Members of the public were willing to take part in decision-making processes
- Members of the public were able to handle uncertainty in that "they are willing to balance information from different sources, are able to deal with complex science if

given sufficient time, understand uncertainty if openly acknowledged, and are happy to balance risks and benefits" (Petts 2000).

- Once involved, it is vital to keep all interested parties informed and up to date on project development. Trust can easily be eroded and there are major benefits in long term relationships and structures (eg forums, liaison groups etc)
- Processes must be carefully designed, and tailored for circumstances, with enough time for debate and dialogue, and appropriate practical arrangements (eg location accessible, space, refreshments, timing)
- Key outsiders may need to be involved (eg national staff, MPs etc) who can give the process credibility and legitimacy
- Never take silence for consent; nor the absence of protest as acquiescence
- Involve partners in meeting costs
- Record comments, feedback responses, explain decisions and be prepared to change (decision, conditions etc) as a result of consultation
- Agency staff need more support, training and guidance in this field.

Nine lessons which could be applied to future public involvement activities by the Agency emerged from the workshop:

- Fairness: to allow participants to agree the agenda and process
- Purpose: clear statement of the purpose of the process to avoid misunderstandings
- Competency: importance of using trained and experienced facilitators
- Inclusiveness: of all relevant stakeholders, to avoid compromising the process
- Planning and early involvement: involve potential participants early in the process, and build in understanding of the wider context within which the process is taking place
- Develop over time: need to build long term relationships so everyone can become familiar with local cultures and understand local perceptions
- Flexibility: willingness to make changes in response to stakeholder requests
- Evaluation: processes need to be evaluated against 'success criteria', including views from participants, Agency staff, etc to help articulate and learn from lessons
- Support: "internal support from senior managers is essential if the Agency is to successfully implement the outcomes of any public involvement initiative and obtain credibility in the eyes of stakeholders.

An evaluation of this workshop showed very high satisfaction levels, but participants felt strongly that before further events were considered, the Agency overall needed to be clearer about the role and purpose of public participation (and where it fits with broad Agency priorities), and that there needed to be further engagement from senior managers. For participants, these internal structural and management problems were much greater barriers than lack of staff skills. In addition, the participants felt that although the findings from research initiatives were useful, it was more important to translate the theoretical into practical initiatives.

Following on from the workshop, a set of objectives (against which activities can be evaluated) for future work by the Agency on public participation were proposed; a separate list of principles for future work (ie underlying values) is also being developed. These objectives are specifically for the Agency, not general objectives for participatory working, nor necessarily for other stakeholders. These documents are currently being revised. Contact Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

Recreation

The Agency is involved in a wide range of projects to improve recreation facilities which involve local people. Two examples which have come to the attention of this review were suggested by the Newcastle office:

- Regeneration of a small lake in Gateshead in partnership with the council, people from a housing estate and a special school
- Scheme on the Northumberland coast to identify less sensitive sites for recreation use to preserve habitat.

Contact Barbara at the Newcastle office.

Regional Assemblies

There may be increasing pressure on the Agency to become engaged in the English regional assemblies in the near future, possibly through appointment as an observer (the Countryside Agency has been appointed as an observer to the Yorkshire and Humberside Assembly). This may have implications for scrutiny by and of the Agency. It also seems possible that the Government will press ahead with elections for regional assemblies before the end of this parliament, increasing the status and visibility of these institutions (Financial Times, 21.11.01).

In the meantime, some Agency staff are already involved including through secondments. For example, Alison Hepworth, Regional Technical Planner in Midlands region, has just returned from a 19 month secondment to the East Midlands Regional Assembly. Secondments have also been made to the Greater London Authority and regional assemblies in the North West and South East.

Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)

It has been recognised that the Agency "has a very important role to play in encouraging sustainable development in the regions" and in "encouraging the promotion of environmentally sustainable development by the Regional Development Agencies" (House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee Report on the Environment Agency, May 2000).

Examples of Agency involvement in issues related to RDA activities include:

- The development of regional development strategies in Wales (Better Wales), the National Economic Development Strategy for Wales, regional economic strategies, regional planning guidance, EU Structural Fund programmes, regional sustainable development frameworks and regional waste strategies. For example, the Agency's North West Region has undertaken sustainability appraisals of the NW Regional Economic strategy and of the NW Regional Planning Guidance (which has a strong focus on urban regeneration). This region has also helped develop the regional sustainable development framework: Action for Sustainability. Contact Peter Fox or Heidi Curran.
- Developing regional round tables for sustainable development eg in London and West Midlands.
- 'Environmental economy' studies in the South West, North West, West Midlands, East of England, North East, London and the East Midlands.
- Regional and Welsh climate change studies.
- Regional renewable energy strategies.
- Partnerships to co-ordinate projects to support environmental improvements in industry, which general environmental improvements and enhance industrial competitiveness eg in the Horizon South West initiative, Wales Environment Centre and waste minimisation projects throughout England and Wales
- Projects to support the growth of environmental industries eg in the 'green jobs' study in London, and the WDA's programme to support environmental businesses in Wales
- Sustainable construction guide, with partners, in the North East
- Advice to RDAs and local authorities on the development of sites in relation to land remediation, environmental impact and flood risk issues.
- Agency secondees to RDAs including to ONE , and to the South West RDA to help develop projects in relation to the region's 'environment driver'.

Outcomes and results from the engagement have been seen to be:

- Helping to promote environmental benefits through Welsh and regional development activities and spending.
- Improved relationships with funding and scrutiny bodies.
- Improved recognition and understanding of the positive economic and social benefits of environmental improvement and protection.

Lessons from this include:

- Potential for developing shared agendas at English regional level and in Wales, and for closer involvement in projects on the ground
- Need for greater understanding of Welsh and English regional economic development issues.
- Need for active, early involvement (not just passive response).
- Need for easier access to the relevant Agency contacts for external organisations; they need to know who to speak to.
- Implications for different Agency and government regional boundaries.
- Need for more formalised Agency involvement, rather than ad hoc and fragmented responses.

The report details further immediate opportunities for involvement with RDAs and other regional institutions. It is called *Environment Agency Engagement with Economic Development in English Regions and Wales*. Summary of findings for external partners.

ERM Ltd for the Environment Agency, 2001.

Contact Henry Leveson-Gower, head office.

River Sowe Rehabilitation

The purpose of this initiative was to re-meander and rehabilitate a previously straightened water course in a park in a deprived area of Coventry. The project had multiple objectives including to clean the water, be a community initiative and have educational benefits (especially through work with schools).

The process involved a memorandum of agreement between the Agency and the city council covering objectives, responsibilities and outputs. Activities included a mailshot to 6000 local residents with an invitation to a staffed exhibition; a group was formed to monitor progress and involve local residents; a staffed exhibition was on site for three days before work started; the local education authority involved schools in using the site; a site notice board was put up to explain the works; volunteers and local authority leisure services team planted trees on site; local councillors were involved in tree planting day; press releases; a GAP initiative took place, including local children planting marginal plants around the water level.

The project started early in 1997 and was completed with one financial year. It was run by Liz Galloway, as project manager, working with consultants and a Project Board which included external consultancies.

The outcomes and results included:

- The works were completed successfully with a restored habitat (lots of flora and fauna), trees planted, sculptures along the river and interpretation boards on display.
- The PR was good
- Tree planting initiatives
- People are using it and they like it

Lessons learned included:

- However hard you try, you cannot control what will happen during a consultation process, particularly political aspects
- The project was almost ruined by one resident, who returned after a year away and started complaining about a reed bed which was part of the design, saying it would attract rats, was unsafe etc. So they moved it away from her house and dug it. There was a local election a month later, and she lobbied a local councillor, and they were forced to scrap it.
- The project was in a high crime area and there were serious problems with vandals including difficulty keeping contractors' vehicles safe on site, some willow sculptures made with school kids were completely destroyed, interpretation boards were defaced.
- The project manager wanted to talk to secondary schools about issues involved in environment management but, although the Education authority was keen, no-one had time to do it.

- Always have written memoranda of agreements
- In spite of all the difficulties, the project manager would do it again – "it was well worth it!"

Contact Liz Galloway, Midlands region.

Shropshire Partnership

The Agency is involved in this sub-regional partnership working on environmental, economic, community and education issues, including work on regeneration zones, community strategies, EU Structural Fund programme delivery. The Partnership aims to ensure that Shropshire benefits from and engages with European funding and government funding.

It began in 1996 and the Agency became involved in June 2000. One Agency staff member (Jenny Comerford) sits on the partnership, but she involves other Agency experts when needed.

The main outcome for the Partnership was to access European funding. It was originally set up to bid under Objective 5B because a strategic partnership was needed in order to meet bidding criteria. They were also successful in getting funding under Objective 2.

Outcomes include much better relationships with external bodies, both through this partnership and others. Lessons from this involvement include:

- It is very helpful to have a member of staff who is specifically responsible for linking to these sorts of initiatives, and who has experience of working with other bodies.
- Although the Agency stresses, in various national policy documents, that it wants to build regional networks, this may not be reflected in area priorities and business plans.
- The Agency is regulation driven, which can make it difficult to change local priorities to make work on influence and prevention a priority.

Contact Jennie Comerford, Shrewsbury

Social Issues Network

The Social Issues Network is intended as a mechanism to enable Agency staff to share learning and experience on social issues. An Intranet skeleton site was established in January 2001, following initial work by Clare Twigger-Ross (social issues officer, NCRAOA) and Robin Chatterjee (who had established the social inclusion group). The site is to be developed and maintained by NCRAOA.

Further development is planned throughout the Joining Up project, but already includes:

- Definitions (eg of social processes, impacts, values)
- Projects (past and present)
- Resources (from outside agencies eg Environment Council, University of Birmingham, training courses etc.
- Contacts within EA (by region and by theme (eg community planning)
- Possible developments include discussion groups

Contact Clare Twigger-Ross, NCRAOA.

Squeaky Clean in Burnley

The Agency is a partner with Burnley Borough Council, the Sustainable Action Partnership, Tidy Britain Group, Lancashire Constabulary and Jinnah to tackle the varied problems of vandalism, heart disease, litter and flytipping. An initiative has been developed which tackles these problems while meeting the identified need for involving young people in an active interest in their area. The focus is on Daneshouse and Stoneyholme, where unemployment is twice the national average, heart disease is twice the national average and 98% of the residents being concerned about vandalism. The area has a high black and minority ethnic population.

Working with local groups, play leaders and others, the project has provided community skips, painted by the after school club and promoted by posters in two languages, to reduce rubbish being tipped; video surveillance on one area; and all schools in the area participating in producing posters for public display, and receiving kits to help keep their own grounds clean and tidy.

Contact Susan Dean, North West Region.

Sustainable development model

A new model of sustainable development is being developed as an R & D project for the Agency. It is intended that the model should take into account national and international government thinking, and the priority placed by the current UK Government on social welfare and public involvement. The research is being undertaken for the Agency by the Environment and Society Research Unit at University College London.

This new model is one "which is dynamic rather than static, and which conceptualises sustainability as a process of negotiation which seeks to identify the correct trajectory society should take". This is "a new, socially informed model of sustainable development ... [which] is underpinned by principles of inclusion, equity, precaution and the polluter-pays principle".

A new decision pathway is created in this model to ensure that the social benefits of the environment are reflected in their policies and working practices, which will involve the Agency in (all direct quotes from ESRU report):

- i) building partnerships including those with business where involvement with environmental issues remains highly variable
- ii) ensuring that disadvantaged groups are not further disadvantaged by sustainable development policies
- iii) engaging regional and local interests in decision-making processes, and
- iv) promoting a higher profile for LA21 in local communities.

The focus of the ESRU report is that the Agency needs to augment existing approaches and tools with new methodologies especially "new forms of dialogue and institutional responses to secure the increased participation of communities at international, national, regional and local levels", and points out (p17) that "the least well developed aspects of sustainable development models are those of 'society' and 'governance'".

The report of the project is *An Analytical and Descriptive Model of Sustainable Development for the Environment Agency*. Series 13. R & D Project E2/006/1. Carried out by the Environment and Society Research Unit at UCL, for the Environment Agency.

Tees Valley Waste Minimisation Project

This initiative is taking waste minimisation techniques to SMEs on a large industrial estate. It is a two year project with partners including Newcastle University. Contact John Burns, Newcastle or Leeds office.

Thames Ahead

This is a project to encourage, through inward investment, 10 million visits per year to sites along the River Thames. It is a partnership between the Agency, local authorities, boat owners and others.

Contact Eileen McKeever.

Training

- EA Wales is working to promote Environmental Policy and Management activities with other National Assembly of Wales sponsored bodies, including the Careers Advisory Service. The aim is to help build environmental considerations into education, training and career development skills. Contact Graeme Maughan, Rivers House, EA Wales.
- The Agency is a partner with Groundwork UK, Black Environment Network, RSPB, Wildlife Trusts and others in this project to develop, pilot and accredit a certificate in sustainable development (level 1 - NVQ equivalent). The qualification has had one pilot but will be trialled further with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), members of the voluntary sector and community leaders. Standards have been presented to the QCA and final approval is awaited. Once approved, funding is available to develop materials for courses. Contact Jimmy Brannigan, Education.

- Green Apprentices is a project which was established in 1998 in the North West Region, with funding from the Single Regeneration Budget, to provide employment and training in the environmental sector throughout Merseyside, as part of the Government's New Deal programme. Work and skills development includes horticulture, landscaping, conservation, youth work and environmental business services. The Agency is a member of the board of the project.
Contact Susan Dean, North West Region.

Upper Wharfedale Best Practice Project

This is an upland/moorland management scheme run in partnership with English Nature, the Dales National Park, Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group and farmers. The aim is to stop erosion of upland drainage channels, and implement new moorland management practices to slow rainfall run-off (flooding) and still provide good conditions for grouse breeding. It started in 1998 and is continuing.

Contact Liz Chalk, NE Region.

Urban regeneration

Examples of Agency involvement in urban regeneration issues are given below.

- Riverside regeneration in a deprived housing area in Darlington in partnership with a national charity, the local council, Northumbrian Water and local community. This was an international pilot project for restoration in an urban area and has been seen as a great success, with visitors from all over the world. A 2km stretch of river has been regenerated including improving access, habitats, flood protection, fisheries, and improved surface water drainage. Local kids were involved in planting, and there was little vandalism during the work and since.
Contact Jean Varley, NE Region.
- Involvement in a project in Liverpool run by Dingle 2000 Regeneration Partnership to use a disused, covered, listed reservoir as a regional exhibition and conference centre. The reservoir was given to the Partnership, which is a community development trust, by NorthWest Water, and the development is funded through SRB6. A stakeholder day was held to decide what to do with the site and building, and the need to create local employment opportunities was identified.
Contact Susan Dean, NW Region.
- The Urban Fisheries Development Programme is a national programme which was established after a survey of anglers in 1994 identified the need for more good quality fisheries near large centres of population. The programme has been running in the regions, and work includes building platforms for anglers with disabilities, improved access (eg bridges and footpaths), interpretation, and improved conservation and management.
Contact Susan Dean, NW Region; and Jean Varley, NE Region.
- The Agency is on the Environmental Sustainability Advisory Group, and the programme management group, for the Merseyside Objective 1 Programme, which aims to promote the economic and social regeneration of disadvantaged regions, sectors and social groups (with EU funding). The programme includes land regeneration and improvement, improving the quality of townscapes, bringing buildings back into productive use, woodland planting, energy-saving initiatives, and SME waste management advice.
Contact Susan Dean, NW Region.
- The Agency made a small contribution (£5,000) to the water management strategy of Sherwood Energy Village. The Village is a community-led project to create a zero emission development on an old mining site in the middle of Ollerton, Nottinghamshire. The Agency contribution was towards Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) and rainwater harvesting, with the aim of no net reduction in the underlying aquifer, alongside a reduction in surface pollution.
Contact Susan Dean, NW Region.

- The Agency is involved in the Plymouth 2020 Environmental Foundation Group which is working as the sustainability 'conscience' of regeneration programmes, sustainability appraisal of strategies etc and linkage into wide network of sustainable development players.
Contact Cathy Dodge, South West region.

Voluntary sector compact in Wales

Environment Agency Wales has been involved in the development of a 'compact' between statutory environmental organisations and the voluntary sector in Wales. This follows the development of a comprehensive UK Compact between the UK Government and the voluntary sector. The Agency is a member of the project team, which is running a participative approach to developing a 'compact'. Discussions are going well and the Assembly has endorsed the Agency's approach. The whole process will take over a year, to be as inclusive as possible, involving workshops, seminars, focus groups, written consultations, etc.

Contact Cath Beaver, St Mellons, Environment Agency Wales.

Volunteering

Examples of individual staff initiatives to volunteer in their local communities include Michael Hutchinson (schools, parish councils etc), Claire Poole (teaching St John's Ambulance cadets for their environment badge), and Madeline Cowland (involved in local Red Cross).

Water abstraction consultation

The purpose of this work was to communicate to the public that traffic problems are a planning issue, and outside the Agency's remit.

A local water bottling company near Oxford had applied to the Agency to increase abstraction from a bore hole, and the application led to a protest campaign which resulted in 450 letters of objection. The main issue of concern to local residents was the possibility of increased traffic, and they saw this as an environmental issue and therefore that the Agency should deal with it.

The Agency held public meetings to communicate to the public that the Agency gives licences for water abstraction and there were no reasons to refuse increased abstraction in this case. The plant had planning permission from the local authority, with no restrictions on the amount of traffic.

The outputs and results included:

- It was a good exercise in involving the public, who felt they had a fair hearing. there were threats of a judicial review, but that did not happen.
- Even though the protests were unsuccessful, ie the plant did increase abstraction, most of the local residents were happy with the way the issue was handled.

Lessons learned included:

- Not to make assumptions about levels of public knowledge. In this case, the "locals were very good at it" and were well informed, educated and some were Oxford professors. They asked awkward questions such as 'Define environment'.
- The public tried to draw the Agency into something that was not its concern.
- Allow people to explain where they are coming from.
- Agency staff must be able to be clear cut about what their job is and what they are able to do
- It is sometimes difficult to justify Agency position. The Agency was prosecuting the company at the time for over abstraction, but legally they were unable to use this to prevent further abstraction.
- Be open and transparent in dealings with the public
- "Be able to explain away agency PR material", which can lead the public to believe that the Agency can do things they cannot legally do. The law takes precedence over PR material.

- The Agency tried to work with the local authority, not always successfully.
- Must demonstrate that the Agency listens to what people say, even if they cannot do anything

Contact Geoff Bell, Reading office.

Wise Use of Floodplains

This is an international research project on the Wise Use of Floodplains, being managed with a range of other agencies and funded through the EU LIFE programme. The Agency has been involved in both projects in England: the Fens Floodplain Project, and the Somerset Levels and Moors (Parrett) Project.

Overall, the project aims to demonstrate how best floodplains can be used within integrated and multi-functional river basin management, to provide economic, social and environmental benefits. The benefits were expected to include improved water quality, alleviation of flood risks, recreational facilities and enhanced wetland habitats.

A specific aim of the project was to use a range of stakeholder participation techniques to generate and appraise diverse scenarios for integrated floodplain restoration and management, and the project also aimed to evaluate the 'success' of the implementation of different participation methods. The requirements of the EU Water Framework Directive provided a key context for the project: Article 14 (1) of the Directive requires "the active involvement of all interested parties in the implementation of this Directive, in particular in the production, review and updating of the river basin management plan."

The project is a partnership between statutory environmental and water management agencies, the water industry, local authorities and NGOs in five countries (England, Scotland, Ireland, Northern Ireland and France). It began in April 1999 and is due to be completed in April 2002.

In the Fens coastal floodplain (covering about 4000 sq kms), the project built on an existing partnership of organisations called Wet Fens for the Future. Over 100 stakeholder organisations were involved and it is planned that the project will culminate in a strategic Water Forum. The methods used here included a stakeholder workshop, and adapting the Planning for Real technique (used mainly in urban neighbourhoods) for use with two sample villages. The participants commented on key issues and features in the area by placing cards on a large scale map. Local communities were highly enthused, and there was good participation including youth and elder groups. The results were used to develop actual projects.

The outcomes of the participation were, for the community, an involvement which led to changes in real projects based on issues they cared about, including flood risks and recreation opportunities. For the partner organisations, the outcomes were verification of research findings (legitimacy) and confidence to pursue integrated management without fears that the public wanted something quite different.

In the Somerset Levels, there was a series of informal meetings (12 in eight months), mostly facilitated by a team of two. This allowed for a gradual, evolutionary process which led to a good deal of local consensus, which built on existing initiatives and partnerships, including the Levels and Moors Partnership (LAMP). As the area covered was so large, it was decided to focus on a smaller area which could be considered representative of the whole catchment. A wide range of community and sectoral stakeholders were involved: Agency staff have pointed out that a typical LEAP meeting may attract 10-20 people; typical for this project was 70-100 across the whole rural community.

Outcomes included reaching a consensus (not a compromise) about actions and priorities, and opportunities for the project to run future participatory activities for partner organisations. In addition, the draft evaluation report states that "there has been no widespread criticism of the Environment Agency during some of the most severe flood events in recent years - a significant contrast to only 12 months before". Although this may not be

solely due to the participatory processes in this project, those involved clearly believe there was a very positive impact.

An external evaluation of the participatory processes of the Wise Use of Floodplains project has been completed, with a draft report produced in September 2001. The evaluation has been managed by RSPB, using the framework for evaluating participatory processes developed by InterAct. The project is based at Somerset County Council (www.somerset.gov.uk/levels)

Contact Andy Hickling or Richard Horrocks, South West Region.

Yorkshire and Humber Region's Sustainable Development Education Strategy

The Agency is a partner with the government office and the regional assembly to develop the strategy for 2000 - 2001. The strategy focuses on developing the sustainable development competence of the region's existing and future workforce, developing the ability of everyone in the region to take responsibility for personal impacts on the quality of life of others, and to develop sustainable learning environments.

Diane Warburton
June 2003