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Developing effective engagement with Local and Community Strategic Partnerships

Science Report SC010044/SR6

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Authors:

Sue Porter and Diane Warburton with David Wilkinson

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Shared Practice LLP, 11 Clifton Street, Brighton BN1 3PH
Telephone: 01273 774557; Fax: 01273 774557

Environment Agency's Project Manager:

Dr John Colvin, Social Policy Manager, Environment Agency, Bristol

Collaborators:

Sustainable Futures
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Science at the Environment Agency

Science underpins the work of the Environment Agency. It provides an up-to-date understanding of the world about us and helps us to develop monitoring tools and techniques to manage our environment as efficiently and effectively as possible.

The work of the Environment Agency's Science Group is a key ingredient in the partnership between research, policy and operations that enables the Environment Agency to protect and restore our environment.

The science programme focuses on five main areas of activity:

- **Setting the agenda**, by identifying where strategic science can inform our evidence-based policies, advisory and regulatory roles;
- **Funding science**, by supporting programmes, projects and people in response to long-term strategic needs, medium-term policy priorities and shorter-term operational requirements;
- **Managing science**, by ensuring that our programmes and projects are fit for purpose and executed according to international scientific standards;
- **Carrying out science**, by undertaking research – either by contracting it out to research organisations and consultancies or by doing it ourselves;
- **Delivering information, advice, tools and techniques**, by making appropriate products available to our policy and operations staff.



Steve Killeen

Head of Science

Executive Summary

Introduction

During 2001 - 2004, the Environment Agency undertook a major science study, known as the Joining Up Project, to clarify the nature and extent of the social dimension of the Environment Agency's work. The Local and Community Strategic Partnerships initiative was one of four pathfinder studies developed as part of the wider Joining Up Project.

The aim of this pathfinder was to support the Environment Agency in maximising the benefits of engaging with Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) in England and Community Strategic Partnerships (CSPs) in Wales. The work was undertaken using an innovative approach to developing guidance, staff development, and sharing of good practice.

The objectives of the LSP / CSP Pathfinder were to:

- help the Environment Agency clarify its objectives in working with LSPs / CSPs;
- prioritise work with those LSPs / CSPs that would most benefit the Environment Agency;
- build operational capacity for working effectively with those LSPs / CSPs;
- support the wider aims of the Joining Up Project, particularly the development of a social policy;
- explore the contribution of social science in the Environment Agency in achieving these objectives.

LSPs / CSPs were created under the Local Government Act 2000, which placed a duty on local authorities to prepare 'community strategies' as the overarching framework for all local plans. Community strategies were intended to "enhance the quality of life of local communities and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK through action to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area and its inhabitants" (DETR 2000). Community strategies were to be prepared through new local strategic partnerships through which the local authority could work with other partners.

The setting up of LSPs / CSPs, and the development of community strategies, therefore provided a crucial opportunity for the Environment Agency to influence priorities on local environmental issues as part of the wider sustainable development agenda. It was consistent with the Environment Agency's stated priorities of working more in partnership with other bodies to meet its objectives, to include a focus on quality of life, and to set its work within the context of sustainable development. More specifically, the Environment Agency 2002 Corporate Strategy included a target that the Agency should "contribute to Local Strategic Partnerships, focusing effort on the 50% where we can most benefit environmental and social capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities".

Methods and outputs

The LSP / CSP Pathfinder took an explicitly 'action research' approach. In practice, this meant designing a process that drew on the expertise of the consultant team working in partnership with Environment Agency staff already working on these issues. The process included:

- Researching the current state of play in the Environment Agency Areas on work on community strategies and with LSPs / CSPs. This research involved interviews with 24 of the 26 Areas, and was completed and circulated to all parties in July 2002.
- Producing initial 'Quick Tips' guidance for Environment Agency staff working with community strategies and LSPs / CSPs. This guidance took the form of ten briefing sheets that were circulated to all staff in October 2002.
- Setting up four local action research teams (based in four different Environment Agency Areas), each working on one of four priority questions. The first two teams worked as small task groups; the third held workshops to bring together Environment Agency staff working on partnerships, and the fourth brought together representatives from other bodies. These teams also worked with the consultant team and Agency Head Office staff to produce the following:
 - Clear objectives for the Environment Agency in working with LSPs / CSPs, which were agreed by all four Area teams and the Executive Group.
 - A matrix for prioritising the 50% of LSPs / CSPs the Environment Agency should work with in order to most benefit social and environmental capital and make best use of resources.
 - A model for measuring Environment Agency progress against the agreed objectives. This recommended end-of-year qualitative reports (including case studies that illustrate lessons and effective practice), and produced an LSP Content Score Matrix to enable staff to test the success of their work with LSPs / CSPs by examining the content of the LSP / CSP work programmes.
 - A framework for working with other environmental bodies on LSPs / CSPs and community strategies to ensure that a greater priority was given to environmental issues in LSP / CSP programmes. This partnership framework was developed in association with other environmental bodies in the region, and on the basis of a pilot exercise with Blackburn with Darwen LSP.
 - Guidance on developing effective two-way relationships between the Environment Agency and LSPs / CSPs to enable more effective partnership working, including identifying and addressing the challenges a partnership approach makes to the Agency as a regulatory body.
 - A full report on all the work by the Area teams, which included 34 recommendations for future Environment Agency action on LSPs / CSPs. This report was presented to, and approved by, the Executive Group.

- Assessing Environment Agency involvement in LSPs / CSPs in 2003, using the prioritisation matrix. Results were produced in July 2003. This assessment covered the level and types of involvement, such as how many LSPs / CSPs were engaged with in England and Wales, and whether that involvement was as a member of the main LSP Board, the environmental sub-group, drafting the community strategy etc. The assessment also covered which environmental issues were being prioritised by Areas in their work with LSPs / CSPs (e.g. waste management, water quality and flood management issues, etc).
- All the above work then fed into the development and production of a detailed set of guidance for Environment Agency staff on working with LSPs / CSPs that was circulated to all relevant Agency staff in April 2003.

The approach throughout was for the consultant team to lead the action research process, and to provide support and guidance for Environment Agency staff at all levels to be fully involved in deciding on and developing the different products.

Lessons from the LSP / CSP Pathfinder

Two sets of overarching lessons emerged from the Pathfinder, as follows:

- **Lessons for building capacity for effective relationships with LSPs / CSPs.** The Pathfinder itself was designed to test methods of capacity building for partnership working with some of the Environment Agency staff most involved at Area and national level. The main lessons were:
 - The Environment Agency LSP / CSP guidance to staff should be reviewed regularly with Area staff (e.g. every two years).
 - Area business and investment planning should include regular reviews (e.g. every two years) of the opportunities to match Environment Agency Area environmental priorities with the concerns and interests of local communities, based on partnership working with LSPs / CSPs.
 - New approaches to learning were needed including the development of 'learning hubs' (possibly based on the Area teams from this Pathfinder), an annual national conference for Environment Agency staff on partnership working (possibly in collaboration with partner organisations), and training in both the relevant technical expertise and 'people skills' including facilitation and outreach process design.
- **Lessons on the use of social science.** One of the objectives of the pathfinder was to consider to the value of taking an action research approach to capacity building. The main lessons were:
 - The action research approach was enthusiastically received by both Environment Agency Head Office and Area staff, enabling them to work well together and to produce extensive practical guidance and tools, and detailed recommendations for future work, based on practical experience on the

ground and with wide ownership among staff.

- However, the Pathfinder process was slowed-down by the unfamiliarity of Environment Agency staff with the action research approach, and their uncertainty about levels of autonomy and responsibility, especially in the context at the time of significant organisational restructuring.

Given the growing importance of partnership working in public service delivery in current Government policy, the benefits of policy and practice development processes that focus on experimentation, reflection and adjustment are likely to be increasingly seen as essential. The practical experience of this Pathfinder testing such approaches (particularly action research), within the complex field of local partnerships, has provided some useful learning during and since the process, that can inform future Environment Agency work in this field.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Aims of the study¹

The aim of the study was "to support the Environment Agency in maximising the benefits of engaging with Local Strategic Partnerships [(LSPs) and Community Strategic Partnerships (CSPs)], and in understanding how this is best embedded in the business. This will involve a new approach to developing practical support, 'loose' guidance, training and development, and sharing of good practice, based upon new ways of working...[between Environmental Policy (Head Office), Process and the Areas]"².

Within this overall aim, there were a number of more specific objectives. The first two focused on working with LSPs/CSPs. The second two were more generic, contributing to the wider Joining Up Project within which this pathfinder was set:

1. To help the Environment Agency **clarify the objectives** of working with LSPs in England and CSPs in Wales, and, on this basis, to **prioritise** working with those LSPs/CSPs which might most benefit the Environment Agency.
2. To **build operational capacity** for working effectively with these prioritised LSPs and CSPs.
3. To support the wider aims of the Joining Up Project, including the **development of a social policy** for the Environment Agency based on a proper understanding of (and learning from) operational needs.
4. To explore the contribution of **social science** in the Environment Agency to the effective achievement of objectives 1–3 above.

1.2 Clarifying the objectives for the Environment Agency of working with LSPs³

The Local Government Act of 2000 placed a duty on local authorities to prepare community strategies, the aim of which was:

"to enhance the quality of life of local communities and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its inhabitants" (DETR 2000, p6).

¹ The study came to be known as the 'LSP Pathfinder Project' – see section 1.4.

² Terms of reference for the LSP Pathfinder, May 2002 (see Appendix 1); text in square brackets added here to aid clarity

³ Throughout this report, whenever the abbreviation LSPs is used on its own, it should be taken to include CSPs.

The government also saw local partnership working in the form of LSPs as the vehicle for developing and implementing effective community strategies (DETR 2001). This opportunity to shape local quality of life by working closely with other organisations was recognised both in the Environment Agency's Vision and in its subsequent Corporate Plans (Environment Agency 2001, 2002a, 2003):

"LSPs provide a key influencing opportunity at the local level. We will work with those LSPs where we can make the greatest difference...to do this, we will take a proactive, collaborative approach" (Environment Agency 2003).

However, no work had been done to clarify, at a national level, how this opportunity might best be realised. The first objective of this study was therefore to clarify the opportunities for the Environment Agency to influence the environmental dimensions of local quality of life through working with LSPs. From this, a set of clear objectives for the Environment Agency's work with LSPs could be derived. These could then be used to prioritise investment across England and Wales, in order that the Environment Agency might:

"focus effort on the 50% [of LSPs] where we can most benefit environmental and social capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities" (Environment Agency 2002b).

The government and Environment Agency policy context is set out more fully in section 2, and the study outcomes and findings under this first objective are given in section 4.

1.3 Building capacity for effective partnership working

In the Environment Agency, the main route for translating policy into practice is through the development of written guidance. Following the reorganisation of the Environment Agency under 'BRITE', the task of developing guidance was allocated to 'process teams'.

However, the type of guidance and support needed to develop effective working with LSPs is likely to be substantively different to the type of guidance required to implement the Environment Agency's more traditional, technocratic activities. This was recognised early on in the LSP Pathfinder, which agreed that the outputs needed to build effective capacity should be a mix of briefings, guidance documents, and skills and confidence building.

The second objective of the pathfinder was therefore to deliver:

- a quick guide providing helpful tips on key issues identified by area staff, including key terms and jargon;
- more comprehensive guidance, providing further clarification of both the 'tight' and 'loose' requirements for achieving the LSP target as set out in the Corporate Strategy;
- confidence building: support, training and development for staff in relation to key elements of effective engagement with LSPs, particularly skills for partnership building;

- enhancement of opportunities for sharing good practice across the areas;
- gap analysis setting out where further work is needed.⁴

Outcomes and findings of the pathfinder relevant to its second objective are given in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

1.4 Contributing to the Joining Up Project

The LSP Pathfinder was developed as one of four pathfinders within the wider Joining Up science project (E2-057)⁵. Each of these pathfinder projects had three aims:

- to help the Environment Agency address opportunities and/or challenges in its operational work that had a significant social dimension (informing objectives 1 and 2 of the LSP Pathfinder);
- to draw lessons from this operational experience which could help inform and shape a social policy for the Environment Agency (objective 3 of the LSP Pathfinder);
- to explore, model and demonstrate the contribution of social science by providing learning support through facilitation and co-researching (objective 4 of the LSP Pathfinder)⁶.

In terms of the second of these aims (objective 3 of the LSP Pathfinder), the Environment Agency's guidance on how to develop policy stipulates that, if it is to be effective, policy needs to be shaped around appropriate evidence⁷. In assembling this evidence, the Joining Up Project drew both on the four pathfinders and on a range of other sources (see Christie *et al.* 2005, Warburton 2005, Warburton, Levett and Pilling 2005). This evidence was then used by the Joining Up Project Board to shape a social policy, which was signed off by the Environment Agency's directors in July 2003 (see Appendix 7).

The findings of this pathfinder that are relevant to this third objective are given in section 7.2 of this report.

1.5 How can social science help?

Finally, the LSP Pathfinder was designed to pilot a research approach that could help support the development of Environment Agency policy, process and products in such a way as to be properly informed by the practical experience of Environment Agency staff working on the ground. Therefore, a participative research approach was chosen. This involved staff from areas who were already engaged with LSPs working as members of four design teams, and linking with Head Office and senior area staff through an executive group.

⁴ See terms of reference (Appendix 1).

⁵ The overall aim of the Joining Up Project was to: "strengthen the Agency's contribution to sustainable development by delivering an Agency social policy, embedding this within operational activities and increasing knowledge and learning within the Agency through targeted support to Making it Happen".

⁶ Adapted from a paper to the Joining Up Project Board, January 2003 – Pathfinder Projects: An introduction and update (JU PB 1.7).

⁷ http://146.213.80.51/icontent/DocDir01/82_03_policydevelopment_proc.doc

Further details on the social research approach as it developed are given in section 3 of this report, with an evaluation of the approach in section 7.3.

2. The policy context for work with LSPs

2.1 Government policy context

The Local Government Act 2000 placed a duty on (most) local authorities to prepare community strategies, which were intended to "act as an overarching framework for other services or theme-specific plans and, together with other key strategic plans ... should influence a wide range of activities" (DETR 2000).

The aim of each community strategy was "to enhance the quality of life of local communities and contribute to the achievement of sustainable development in the UK through action to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area and its inhabitants".

Each community strategy was to have four components:

- a long-term vision for the area focusing on the outcomes that are to be achieved;
- an action plan identifying shorter-term priorities and activities that will contribute to the achievement of long-term outcomes;
- a shared commitment to implement the action plan and proposals for doing so;
- arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the action plan, for periodically reviewing the community strategy, and for reporting progress to local communities.

Although community strategies were not expected to cover every local issue, they are expected to affect the delivery of a wide range of services "including housing, education, transport, crime prevention, economic development, environmental health, culture and leisure".

The government guidance recognised that each community strategy would need to reflect local circumstances and needs, but outlined four guiding principles that should underpin all community strategies:

- engage and involve local communities;
- involve active participation of councillors within and outside the executive;
- be prepared and implemented by a broad 'local strategic partnership' through which the local authority can work with other local bodies;
- be based on a proper assessment of needs and the availability of resources.

This legislation and guidance introduced the LSP mechanism. It was followed by more-detailed guidance on the nature and operations of LSPs (DETR 2001). LSPs were seen by the government as an integrated approach to tackling the key issues for local people, such as crime, jobs, education, health and housing – and especially social exclusion and the renewal of the most deprived neighbourhoods. Tackling these issues was seen to require "concerted and co-ordinated effort across all sectors" and LSPs were expected to "bring the key organisations together to identify communities' top priorities and needs and to work with local people to address them".

LSPs were defined as a single body that:

- brings together at a local level the different parts of the public sector as well as the private, business, community and voluntary sectors so that the different initiatives and services support each other and work together;
- is a non-statutory, non-executive organisation;
- operates at a level which enables strategic decisions to be taken and is close enough to individual neighbourhoods to allow actions to be determined at community level;
- is aligned with local authority boundaries.

LSPs were thus seen as driving the quality of life agenda at local level. Their core tasks are to:

- prepare and implement a community strategy for the area, identify and deliver the most important things which need to be done, keep track of progress, and keep it up to date;
- bring together local plans, partnerships and initiatives to provide a forum through which mainstream public service providers (local authorities, the police, health services, central government agencies and so on) work effectively together to meet local needs and priorities;
- work with local authorities that are developing Public Service Agreements (PSAs) to help devise and then meet suitable targets;
- develop and deliver a local neighbourhood renewal strategy to secure more jobs, better education, improved health, reduced crime and better housing, closing the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest and contributing to the national targets to tackle deprivation.

In England, LSPs covering the 88 most deprived wards could apply for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (amounting to £900 million over 3 years) if they had produced a neighbourhood renewal strategy that had gained accreditation (Neighbourhood Renewal Unit 2001). Similar arrangements were created in Wales under the Communities First Programme (National Assembly of Wales 2001).

More generally, LSPs and community strategies have been central to the wider government agenda of Modernising Government. This policy initiative runs across a whole range of programmes being promoted by different government departments. For local government, the key legislation was the Local Government Acts of 1999 and 2000 and the earlier White Papers (DETR 1998; DETR 1999).

The Modernising Government approach has five key principles, which are intended to:

- ensure that public services are responsive to the needs of citizens, not the convenience of service providers;
- ensure that public services are efficient and of high quality;
- ensure that policy making is more joined up and strategic, forward looking and not reactive to short-term pressures;
- use information technology to tailor services to the needs of users;
- value public service and tackling the under-representation of minority groups.

These principles lay behind the various other government policy initiatives which closely relate to the development of LSPs and community strategies including the power of well-being, neighbourhood renewal, Best Value and Public Service Agreements.

There are also close links between LSPs, community strategies, land use planning and development control. Community strategies, and therefore LSPs, are expected to play a fundamental role in shaping local development plans/frameworks. Community strategies and development plans "need to be complementary": "Once a community strategy has been established, the development plan will provide the means of taking forward those elements of its vision and priorities that concern the physical development and use of land in the authority's area" (DETR 2000).

2.2 LSPs in practice

LSPs have generally been developed under the overall leadership of local authorities. LSP membership covers public sector bodies that provide services in the LSP area, community bodies and local people, voluntary organisations and businesses. Around 40 public bodies including the Environment Agency have been identified by government as having an interest and potentially important role within LSPs, but it was not expected that all identified organisations necessarily needed to be represented individually on the LSPs.

However, the criteria for LSP accreditation (for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding) include a requirement for local authorities to assess partners' delivery of actions proposed in community strategies. This has far-reaching implications for potential partners (including the Environment Agency), particularly in the light of the new powers for local authority scrutiny and overview (Local Government Act 2000).

By April 2003, all LSPs in the 88 most deprived areas in England had received accreditation and were proceeding with their delivery plans. Elsewhere, local authorities were enabled to establish their own LSPs. Although progress in these other areas was initially patchy and slow, most local authorities now have an LSP that is operational.

2.3 The Environment Agency and partnership working

The Environment Agency's various internal policy statements recognise that partnership working is a key means of achieving its objectives, and these have provided the internal context for the work of the LSP Pathfinder. For example, the Environment Agency's Vision identifies "working with others: action to create shared solutions", and "growing collaborative partnerships" as part of the new approaches needed for the Environment Agency to fulfil its vision (Environment Agency 2001, p17, p10).

The Environment Agency's Corporate Plan for 2002 to 2005 identified 'A better quality of life' as one of the nine themes through which the Environment Agency will "deliver real progress" and committed the Environment Agency to: "forming close and responsive relationships with our partners and contributing to community life, shifting the focus of our contribution to where we can make the greatest difference, especially in low quality and degraded environments, and ensuring that we include the interests of disadvantaged communities and minority groups in our work" (Environment Agency 2002a).

Following on from this, the government's Section 4 guidance for the Environment Agency provides 12 objectives for the Environment Agency's work, one of which focuses on partnership working:

"Reflecting on and building upon the principles of public accountability, develop a close and responsive partnership with the public, local authorities and other representatives of local communities, regional chambers and other regional bodies, other public bodies and regulated organisations, and adopt effective procedures to manage these relationships" (Defra 2002).

A more recent Corporate Plan outlines the need for partnerships equally strongly:

"We cannot secure the environmental outcomes we want on our own. Local authorities, landowners, businesses, voluntary organisations, the public, and Government have a significant role to play in helping achieve our objectives. Our goals and activities fit into a wider policy context, which we must understand and, where appropriate, influence. In recognition of this we will, as a key part of our business, work with others to understand how we and they can contribute to a better environment alongside these wider goals" (Environment Agency 2003, page 7).

The Environment Agency's commitment to partnership working enabled the organisation to respond rapidly to government proposals for LSPs as they emerged, most specifically by including a target in the Corporate Strategy that committed the Environment Agency to:

"Contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships, focusing effort on the fifty per cent where we can most benefit environmental and social capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities" (Environment Agency 2002b).

The means to meet the target were identified in the Corporate Strategy as being:

- input to environmental priorities for community strategies, taking account of both the Environment Agency's perspective and local priorities;
- influence partnership investments by others on new opportunities to increase enjoyment of the environment (Environment Agency 2002b).

This target was to be regarded as important both in its own right and as a means of achieving other targets (e.g. work with others to influence a reduction in household waste). It was also seen as an integral component to some of the change initiatives outlined in the Corporate Strategy (e.g. communicating and influencing, developing

people, tracking corporate progress and shaping the future). The Environment Agency's Corporate Plan for 2003 to 2006 makes the desired approach to this work clear:

"Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) provide a key influencing opportunity at the local level. We will work with those LSPs where we can make the greatest difference, especially in low quality and degraded environments, and we will ensure that we include the interests of disadvantaged communities and minority groups in our work. To do this we will take a proactive, collaborative approach. We will work with LSPs to ensure that environmental issues are addressed in LSP plans and community strategies, and ensure we play a full role in their implementation" (Environment Agency 2003).

2.4 Opportunities for the Environment Agency in working with LSPs

Potentially, there are numerous benefits for the Environment Agency in ensuring effective engagement with LSPs, particularly opportunities for influencing agendas and raising the profile of environmental issues and the Environment Agency's core activities. Such links may also be a useful means of improving the Environment Agency's capacity for constructive engagement with local communities and for integrating our environmental work with local social and economic development. Specific opportunities include:

- LSPs provide a vehicle for highlighting the work of the Environment Agency as a champion for the environment in the context of sustainable development and as a source of information and advice, improving understanding of environmental issues, and showing how environmental action can contribute to achievement of outcomes in other areas (e.g. health). An important dimension of this is the scope for work with LSPs to highlight the value of preventative approaches to local problems alongside more immediate and reactive delivery of services. For example, LSP work offers the opportunity to influence planning processes at early stages and build in greater awareness of environmental issues (such as air quality, water management) in a proactive way.
- The work of LSPs and the development of community strategies are related to the new power of well-being for local councils, allowing councils to do anything they consider to be likely to improve the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area. This opens up opportunities for local contributions to national policy goals, such as action to mitigate climate change and to promote the conservation of biodiversity.
- LSPs are encouraged to rationalise many existing plans, partnerships and initiatives. This provides scope for integrating existing Environment Agency plans into community strategies.
- Neighbourhood renewal strategies include commitments to improve local environmental quality and health, focusing, for example, on air quality and waste recycling. There are important opportunities for the Environment Agency to

highlight the role of environmental protection, waste management and pollution prevention in local quality of life and the links between these issues, health and regeneration.

- LSPs offer a route into influencing local Public Service Agreements (PSAs) and thus to improve the environmental outcomes within PSAs.
- LSPs offer a route to influencing local networks of business, community and voluntary bodies, and public sector delivery bodies by giving access to a set of networks which may allow the Environment Agency to reach groups that it has often found hard to reach (e.g. disadvantaged communities in urban areas).
- Through LSPs, the Environment Agency can identify and create other new opportunities for joint working and for mutual learning.
- LSPs provide a forum through which potential conflicts between organisations can be avoided or reduced and can allow for improved understanding of environmental, social and economic issues at strategic and operational levels.
- Work with LSPs can enable more efficient delivery of the Environment Agency's own agenda through understanding more about, and influencing, the plans and delivery mechanisms of others.
- LSPs can offer scope for accessing additional funding streams and other resources – such as sub-regional regeneration funds and the neighbourhood renewal Community Empowerment Fund.

2.5 Challenges for the Environment Agency in working with LSPs

There are also challenges for the Environment Agency in this way of working. For many LSPs the environmental agenda has a relatively low priority since their preoccupations, especially in deprived urban areas, may well be on improvements in core public services, social inclusion and economic regeneration.

In addition, in many areas LSPs have been formed from existing partnership bodies, and draw on existing partnership links, initiatives and strategies in their areas. As many of these existing partnership bodies were focused on health and social welfare services, these have often become the dominating concerns for the LSPs that replaced them. Awareness of environmental policy issues and of the wider framework of sustainable development among LSPs may thus be very low.

The key challenge for the Environment Agency in such areas, where it has a strategic interest in local environmental issues, is to influence LSP agendas in order both to raise the profile of environmental concerns *and* to emphasise their linkages with the social and economic priorities of LSP partners. The Agency could thus help to devise creative initiatives for tackling environmental, social and economic issues together within a sustainable development framework. This will require careful

assessment of priorities for LSP relationships and for the issues on which the Environment Agency seeks to exercise influence. It will also require planning for how to make use of other external networks to maximise the positive impact the Environment Agency has on LSPs and community strategy processes.

3. Design and development of the pathfinder

3.1 Approach

The objectives of the pathfinder required a research process that could help shape both policy and practice in working with LSPs and could ensure a good fit between the two. Drawing on the review of social science approaches undertaken elsewhere in the Joining Up Project (Warburton, Levett and Pilling 2005), a participative research approach known as 'action research' was chosen.

Action research is participative in a number of ways. Firstly, it is based on the idea that the social world (in this case, the world of engagement with LSPs) can only be understood by trying to change it⁸ (in this case, looking at how to improve the Environment Agency's policy and practice of working with LSPs). Secondly, it is based on the idea that "human systems can only be understood and changed [for the better] if one involves the members of the system in the inquiry process itself" (after Kurt Lewin, in Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003, page 14). Thirdly, it holds that greater social effectiveness can best be engendered by involving members of that system both in trying to improve it (the 'action' bit of action research) at the same time as learning how they might become more aware of what they did – in order to do it better next time – by reflecting together on the outcomes of their actions (the 'research' bit of action research). In short, action and research are connected rather than being held separate (Brydon-Miller *et al.* 2003).

Action research is particularly useful in situations – like working in partnership – where there are no 'easy answers', because these situations are complex, multi-dimensional and dynamic. Rather than addressing these situations using a research process that produces expert codified knowledge (as might be found in a typical Environment Agency guidance document), a rather different approach is taken – drawing on the diverse expertise of those involved in the institution within which these situations are embedded.

Finally, action research is more 'emergent' than most other research approaches, as each step of the research process is heavily dependent on the outcomes of the previous step (Reason and Bradbury 2001). Thus, while the stages of the pathfinder are set out below in an apparently orderly fashion, this order only emerged during and after the research process, and is in part a function of wanting to develop a clear research narrative through which to express the findings of this report.

⁸ Robin McTaggart in Brydon-Miller *et al.* (2003, page 15): "Fundamental to action research is the idea that the social world can only be understood by trying to change it".

3.2 Who was involved in the pathfinder? Roles and responsibilities

Selection of participants (or 'co-researchers') in the pathfinder was determined by its objectives. Given a key focus both on developing operationally sensitive direction and guidance from Head Office (objective 1), *and* on building operational capacity (objective 2), an executive group and a series of design teams were set up early in the pathfinder, drawing on staff from both Head Office and Environment Agency areas, but mainly the latter.

The Executive Group was established to take a convening and influencing role. The Executive Group included John Colvin (Joining Up Project Manager) and Kristina Richards (Local and Regional Relations Policy Manager) and was chaired by Chris Mills (the Environment Agency national champion for LSPs and community strategies). The group also included Head Office policy and functional staff, and area managers from four regions.

In addition, as Environment Agency engagement with LSPs is undertaken by area staff, four design teams of area staff were developed to draw on existing practical knowledge and experience. Each team considered one key issue for the Environment Agency in its work with LSPs. The design teams were encouraged to work with external partners where appropriate. As well as working on their individual issues, the four design teams held joint meetings, to allow them to reflect together on what works (or not), to agree what was needed in terms of detailed guidance for Environment Agency staff, and to agree recommendations for future Environment Agency action on working with LSPs.

The Executive Group and design teams were supported throughout the LSP Pathfinder by the Joining Up Project consultant team, in particular by Sue Porter. In leading the action research for the pathfinder, the role of the consultant team was to:

- work with the Executive Group and design teams to help them structure and reflect on their ways of working, and to prioritise and assess their work;
- support the work of the local design teams through national work to develop models and criteria, and guidance on working processes with others;
- provide in-depth support at a local level where appropriate to national learning;
- draw on the outcomes of the pathfinder to produce a research narrative and recommendations of value to the science community both within the Environment Agency and beyond it.

Finally, governance arrangements for the pathfinder were determined not only by its specific objectives (1 and 2) but also by its more generic contribution to the Joining Up Project (objectives 3 and 4). Thus, while the pathfinder's governance was defined by the LSP Pathfinder Executive Group, the four area-based design teams and consultant support, the pathfinder was also accountable to the Joining Up Project Board. These arrangements, together with membership of each group, are shown in Appendix 2.

The action research approach adopted in this pathfinder supported experienced Environment Agency staff in working together to pool their knowledge and identify what was needed to take Environment Agency work with LSPs forward more effectively, and to develop and test new approaches and tools. This involved five main stages of work.

3.3 Stage 1. Agreeing terms of reference (January to May 2002)

The Environment Agency was working on its links to LSPs and community strategies before the LSP Pathfinder was established. The following list summarises the work that had already taken place.

- 130 Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) had been produced by 1999, and there was concern that the data collected for these plans, and the relationships developed through the extensive consultations involved, should feed into any new work on community strategies⁹.
- Initial draft guidance for Environment Agency input to community strategies had been produced by Jenny Waterworth (then leading this work), recommending a targeted approach based on agreed criteria and providing a task checklist for Environment Agency staff¹⁰.
- There had been two national internal Environment Agency workshops on involvement with community strategies (in April 2001 and January 2002). The first workshop agreed that further action was needed on:
 - training to deal with changing needs, new competencies (e.g. access to external funding) and working in partnerships;
 - setting up an intranet discussion forum to share information and case studies;
 - holding workshops every 6 to 9 months;
 - reviewing and updating the internal Environment Agency guidance on community strategies¹¹.
- The second workshop identified some of the problems being encountered, which helped guide the work of the Joining Up LSP Pathfinder. These problems were:
 - externally, the flexibility in the guidance on community strategy preparation given to local authorities (e.g. on deadlines);
 - internally, the lack of a national position on our involvement in community strategies (before the Local Contributions were launched);
 - subsequent varying levels of area management team support to take a proactive stance on engagement with community strategies;
 - time taken over the transition from LEAPs to engagement with community strategies, leading to uncertainty and loss of staff morale;

⁹ See Warburton (2005) and the presentation by Roger Vallance to the Environment Agency's National Community Strategies Workshop in January 2002.

¹⁰ *Environment Agency Input to Community Strategies. Interim Guidance and Checklists*. Draft. December 2000.

¹¹ From the draft cited in the previous footnote.

- significantly different amounts and styles of engagement by the Environment Agency across areas and the local authorities these cover.
- The need identified by the 26 Group, at its meeting on 30 April 2002, for 'loose' guidance on Environment Agency work with LSPs¹².
- The setting of the Making it Happen target in the Environment Agency's 2002 Corporate Plan, which specified that the Environment Agency should "Contribute to Local Strategic Partnerships, focusing effort on the 50% where we can most benefit environmental and social capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities".

As a result of this earlier work, the following terms of reference for the LSP Pathfinder were established:

To support the Environment Agency in maximising the benefits of engaging with Local Strategic Partnerships and community strategies, and in understanding how this is best embedded in the business. This will involve a new approach to developing practical support, 'loose' guidance, training and development, and sharing of good practice, based upon new ways of working between different parts of the Agency¹³.

The required outputs for the pathfinder were:

- a quick guide providing helpful tips on key issues identified by area staff, including key terms and jargon;
- more comprehensive guidance (developed *between* the Head Office Policy Unit and area staff), providing further clarification of the 'tight' elements of this target (i.e. the underlying policy positions) as well as clarifying possible options and approaches under the 'loose' agenda for this target;
- confidence building: support, training and development for staff in relation to key elements of effective engagement with LSPs, particularly skills for partnership building;
- enhancement of opportunities for sharing good practice across the areas;
- gap analysis of where further work is needed.

Each of these outputs was to focus on addressing four key questions, identified by many Environment Agency staff as vital for supporting more effective dialogue with LSPs and community strategies. These were as follows (outputs highlighted in *italics*):

- Q1 What are the main objectives of contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships? What percentage of our work might be delivered through this mechanism? What evaluation processes (e.g. balanced scorecard) should be set in place to enable the Environment Agency to measure the success of our engagement with LSPs and to learn from the process? *Advice and guidance on measurement and evaluation process for contribution to LSPs.*

¹² Memo from Chris Mills accompanying the detailed guidance produced by the LSP Pathfinder, April 2003.

¹³ Full terms of reference set out in Appendix 1.

- Q2 What criteria should the Environment Agency use in selecting those 50% of Local Strategic Partnerships "where we can most benefit social and environmental capital", including resource implications? *Advice and guidance on how Environment Agency areas can select the 50%.*
- Q3a How can engagement with Local Strategic Partnerships best be managed to achieve an acceptable two-way relationship – i.e. a balance between the input of the Environment Agency's priorities and responsiveness to local priorities including local perspectives on the 'environment'? *Advice and support to staff on efficient and effective input (and internal sign-up) to community strategy targets.*
- Q3b How might these priorities and actions best be worked back into the Environment Agency's priorities?¹⁴ (e.g. by embedding within Local Contributions/Business Plan?) *As Q3a above.*
- Q4 How might the Environment Agency best work with other environmental agencies and other partners to ensure: (i) more efficient and effective input of environmental and sustainable development issues to community strategies; and (ii) better joint understanding by these agencies/partners of each other's roles and contribution to community strategies, to enable effective cross-representation? *Advice, guidance and support on how we may work most efficiently and effectively with other environmental partners/agencies on contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships.*

3.4 Stage 2. Research and Quick Tips (May to July 2002)

Between June and July 2002, Helen Chalmers (of the Environment Agency's Social Policy Team) conducted research with 24 of the 26 Environment Agency areas (two could not participate within the timescale of the research), mostly through detailed interviews¹⁵. This research was designed to establish the current state of play of community strategies and LSPs within each area (e.g. numbers existing, levels of development and extent of Environment Agency involvement), and to start to address the four questions identified above.

The research identified six areas of need:

- **Guidance to reassure the areas they were heading in the right direction in their work with LSPs.** This was likely to require guidance including a statement that the work is valued by the Environment Agency, clarity about Environment Agency objectives for working with LSPs, guidance on how to balance

¹⁴ LSP accreditation includes in its criteria for local authorities to assess partners' delivery of actions proposed in community strategies. This has far-reaching implications for the Environment Agency, particularly in the light of the new power for local authority scrutiny and overview (Local Government Act 2000).

¹⁵ *Developing Agency Engagement with Local Strategic Partnerships and Community Strategies*. Short-term research. Interviews with Areas – Key Findings. Helen Chalmers, 16 July 2002.

Environment Agency and external priorities, and criteria for measuring success of engagement with LSPs/CSPs.

- **Examples of good practice and mechanisms for sharing good practice.** This was expected to include annual workshops to share learning and experience and emerging issues, examples of/guidance on opportunities for building the environment into other local priorities, identification of staff skills required to engage effectively with LSPs/CSPs and community strategies, and examples of funding opportunities.
- **Generic materials and templates for external communication.** Materials were needed for influencing, and for briefing on Environment Agency positions on key issues (e.g. waste): such as updates on national strategy and debates, frameworks to translate Environment Agency strategy for LSP partners, training to develop Environment Agency staff understanding of sustainable development issues, a toolkit and training to develop Environment Agency staff awareness of social inclusion issues and engagement.
- **Information and data,** particularly in relation to reviews of the 88 most deprived areas; baseline data to help identify areas entitled to funding, and key area contacts for LSPs/CSPs.
- **Signs of support and commitment from area management teams and Head Office for work with LSPs,** including clarity on who is championing this work in Head Office; a realistic assessment of resources needed to engage effectively; clarity on links and communication between areas and the rest of the Environment Agency post-BRITE; clarity on how to manage external expectations (e.g. for funding); multi-functional awareness of the opportunities and value of this work; views on how the Environment Agency could be flexible in its working in partnership with others; the support, commitment and involvement of area management team members; integration of this work into the role and core activities of customer services teams and area environment managers; and internal communication materials.
- **More information about the LSP Pathfinder itself.**

As a result of this research, 'Quick Tips' guidance in the form of ten briefing notes was produced to meet all the immediate needs identified. This guidance was circulated in October 2002 to all staff working with LSPs and community strategies¹⁶.

3.5 Stage 3. Design teams (May to November 2002)

Four design teams were set up, each taking one of the four issues identified in the terms of reference for the LSP Pathfinder and working on these using the

¹⁶

http://intranet2.ea.gov/Organisation/df/Water_Management/environmental_policy/Planning_and_Customer_Services/local_government/working_with_local_government_/community_strategies,_lsps_/5.LSP&CS-InterimGuidance-Oct02-v1.doc

information from the Quick Tips guidance. Each team was based in an Environment Agency area. The four teams and their focus of work are outlined below.

- **Thames North East** (Julie Nunn and Emily Connolly) looked at the Environment Agency's objectives for contributing to LSPs and evaluation processes for measuring success. The team included partnership team members, a flood defence strategic planner, a planning liaison team leader and a strategic planner. The findings of this team are set out in sections 4.2 and 4.4.
- **Northumbria** (John Hogger) examined criteria for selecting the 50% of LSPs through which the Environment Agency can most benefit social and environmental capital. The team included members of the local LSP as well as Environment Agency staff. The findings of this team are set out in section 4.3.
- **Wales South East** (Cath Beaver and Claire McCorkindale) explored how the Environment Agency's engagement with LSPs can best be managed to ensure an effective two-way relationship. The findings of this team are set out in section 5.2.
- **North West, Central** (Stephen Hemingway) looked at how the Environment Agency might best work with other environmental agencies and partners to influence LSP strategies and work plans. The findings of this team are set out in sections 6.2 and 6.3.

In Thames North East (Thames NE) and Northumbria, this work involved a small design team/task group. In Wales South East (Wales SE) and the North West Region Central Area (NW Central) workshops were held which brought together staff working on partnerships from other areas, and representatives from other environmental bodies, respectively.

The design teams developed a number of products described in more detail in later sections of this report, together with a set of 34 recommendations for future Environment Agency action on LSPs (the full list is given in Appendix 3). A full report was produced covering all this material. This was considered by the LSP Executive Group on 21 November 2002, when the work of the teams and their recommendations were discussed and approved. The Executive Group then passed on these recommendations to the 26 Group for implementation.

3.6 Stage 4. Detailed guidance (February to April 2003)

The work of the design teams and the Executive Group (Stage 3), together with the earlier findings from the research with the areas and the initial Quick Tips guidance (Stage 2), fed into the drafting of detailed internal guidance for Environment Agency staff on links with LSPs. The production of this guidance was undertaken by Ian Christie, who led the consultant team for phase 1 of the Joining Up Project. The final version of this guidance was published internally in April 2003 and circulated to all

Environment Agency area managers, customer service managers and partnership team leaders¹⁷.

This guidance covered:

- the Environment Agency's goals in working with LSPs;
- identifying which LSPs to work with;
- working with other environmental partners locally, regionally and nationally;
- evaluating success (against the corporate scorecard, and in relation to corporate social responsibility and social appraisal issues);
- national co-ordination and cross-area learning;
- future planning (priorities for research and learning, and priorities for national policy and planning).

3.7 Stage 5. Assessing Environment Agency involvement with LSPs (June to November 2003)

After the pathfinder was completed, an assessment of the levels of Environment Agency involvement in LSPs and CSPs was undertaken by Helen Walker, who was seconded to the Environment Agency from June to November 2003 from her role as Chair of the Department of Urban Development and Regeneration at the University of Westminster.

The findings of this exercise are reported in more detail in sections 4.4 and 5.3 below (with full details in Appendix 6).

¹⁷ *Environment Agency links with Local Strategic Partnerships. Guidance and LSP Prioritisation Tool*. April 2003. http://intranet.ea.gov/Organisation/df/water_management/environmental_policy/policy_promotion/documents/LSPguidance.doc

4. Strengthening the Environment Agency's policy narrative for working with LSPs

4.1 Introduction

Initial conversations with area staff during phase 1 of the pathfinder confirmed that they were looking to Environmental Policy in Head Office for a clearer rationale, or *policy narrative*, to direct and support the focus of their engagement with LSPs. This was expressed in a number of ways, including requests for guidance, particularly in relation to the 'tight' requirements of achieving the LSP target set out in the Corporate Strategy (Environment Agency 2002b) and reinforced in the Corporate Plans for 2002–2005 and 2003–2006 (Environment Agency 2002a, 2003).

This need for a stronger policy narrative around working with LSPs determined the first objective of the pathfinder, which was "to help ... clarify the objectives of working with LSPs ... and on this basis, to prioritise working with those LSPs ... which might most benefit the Environment Agency" (section 1.1).

4.2 Agreement of Environment Agency objectives for working with LSPs

The Thames NE Area Design Team identified three primary and four secondary objectives for the Environment Agency in working with LSPs. These were agreed at a joint meeting of all four design teams and subsequently confirmed by the Executive Group.

The **primary** objectives for contributing to LSPs are:

- to harness efficiencies in delivering the Environment Agency's environmental targets;
- to help deliver wider environmental objectives that underpin local quality of life in the context of sustainable local communities;
- to help shape local development (planning) frameworks.

Secondary objectives facilitate the delivery of the primary objectives. These are:

- to promote the Environment Agency and understanding of its work;
- to build effective external relationships;
- to extend the learning of all involved in LSPs;
- to pursue local external funding opportunities.

These objectives were further qualified in a number of important ways, also agreed by the Executive Group (Appendix 3, recommendations 3–9). Many of these qualifications are quite subtle, for example:

- "recognise that the development of the LSP work programme ... is an ongoing process, and that opportunities to influence may not arise immediately"¹⁸;
- "recognise that involvement with LSPs requires creativity, flexibility and opportunism so that we both create new opportunities for joint working and are able to grasp them fully when they arise"¹⁹.

4.3 Development of a framework for prioritising LSPs

Even before the agreement of a national target, the Environment Agency had some involvement with LSPs and CSPs throughout England and Wales (see section 3.3). The selection of LSPs with which to work is not straightforward, and the workload and level of involvement for Environment Agency staff in dealing with them varies considerably. A heavy concentration of LSPs in urban areas, and in particular in metropolitan areas, means that there are wide variations between different Environment Agency areas (e.g. there are 6 LSPs in the Northern Area of North West Region, compared to 46 in the Thames NE Area). In addition, local authority boundaries are not coterminous with Environment Agency area boundaries, so cross-area working may be required in some cases, adding to the need for resources for communications.

The overall approach to prioritisation developed by the Northumbria Design Team was risk-based, with the aim of targeting resources to where they could make the greatest difference. Initially the design team reviewed existing systems and approaches in use across different areas. From this it was concluded that a simple matrix assessment tool would meet the Environment Agency's needs. The model that was developed built on a concept and proposals developed within the Midlands Region.

The criteria used in the assessment matrix were developed iteratively within a small design group and then tested within and outside the organisation. Each criterion was assigned a weighting, based on perceived importance to the Environment Agency of the overall decision. Then, for each criterion, three levels of local importance were allocated. These are expressed as 'value' in the matrix (i.e. how important is that particular criterion in this specific locality). Each 'value' is also assigned a score.

The matrix allows staff to allocate points to LSPs on a range of criteria, building up a total score that illustrates the degree to which they reflect priority environmental issues and high sensitivity in relation to the Environment Agency's goals and outcomes. In reality, in some cases this scoring system was applied after LSP relationships had been developed and a more pragmatic approach had to be taken.

The detailed guidance on working with LSPs, issued to all relevant Environment Agency staff in 2003, recommended that the Prioritisation Matrix should be regarded

¹⁸ Appendix 3, recommendation 7.

¹⁹ Appendix 3, recommendation 8.

as 'tight' guidance (i.e. implemented by everyone) in identifying the 50% of LSPs that area teams should be working with. It was also proposed that matrix criteria should be reviewed every two years to ensure they reflect developments in the field of LSP/CSPs. The Prioritisation Matrix is given in Appendix 5.

4.4 A framework for evaluating progress against objectives

The Thames NE Area Design Team also worked on developing a model for evaluating progress in meeting the objectives set out in section 4.2. Their recommendations emphasised:

- the need for flexibility in measures of success for engagement with LSPs, to encourage local flexibility and responsiveness to the opportunities that emerge through involvement with LSPs;
- the need for a balance between evaluation that supports learning about effective practice for individual practitioners and evaluation that supports corporate learning throughout the Environment Agency. Therefore, evaluation measures needed to be combined with a range of learning activities through area Business Plans and Local Contributions reviews.

Many areas had already identified difficulties in measuring the qualitative long-term success of working in partnership and building relationships with local communities. It was therefore proposed that, in order to evaluate and learn more broadly from the process of engagement with LSPs, the Environment Agency should:

- recognise the long-term benefits of partnership working;
- understand that improvements to the environment (as a result of working with LSPs and community strategies) may not be evident in the short term;
- conduct customer surveys among its key stakeholders and service providers to capture the impact of the Environment Agency's engagement with LSPs and community strategies;
- share staff experiences of partnership working and its benefits within area management team meetings;
- encourage regional meetings of Area Partnership and other staff involved in working with LSPs;
- share and learn from areas' experiences through an annual national conference;
- produce an annual report and newsletter to highlight and review the Environment Agency's activities and impacts on LSP areas.

These recommendations were used to shape the detailed guidance on Environment Agency work with LSPs (2003)²⁰. This recommended that Environment Agency practitioners involved in the LSP work should produce an end-of-year *qualitative* report including case studies that illustrate lessons and effective practice. It was proposed that this should be written for fellow practitioners and used in networks for sharing information, experience and ideas within the Environment Agency and among environmental partners engaged in LSPs and community strategy processes.

²⁰ See footnote 17.

However, it was recognised that *quantitative* measures were also needed, and the Thames NE Area Design Team developed an LSP Content Score Matrix (see Appendix 4) to enable staff to measure the success of their engagement with LSPs by examining the content of LSP work programmes (e.g. through the community strategy or neighbourhood renewal plan).

This matrix allows for assessment against a series of Indicators of Progress based on the Environment Agency's own objectives within its priority themes (e.g. better quality of life, enhanced environment for wildlife, improved and protected inland and coastal waters). The matrix was also designed to enable staff to assess the relationship between *effort invested* in LSP influencing and the inclusion and delivery of *environmental outcomes* reflecting Environment Agency corporate goals (value added).

4.5 Assessment of Environment Agency involvement in LSPs in 2003

In June and July 2003, the Prioritisation Matrix was used to structure an assessment of Environment Agency involvement with LSPs (Stage 5 of the pathfinder process). The full results of this exercise are given in Appendix 6, but in summary the findings were:

- area staff were contributing to 284 of the 403 (approx.) LSPs in England (70%);
- of this total, area staff were involved in 62 of the 87 LSPs funded through the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, and with 92 which fell within the top 50% most deprived local authorities;
- area staff were contributing to 19 of the 24 CSPs in Wales (79%), which covered some 90 of the 100 Community First Programme Pockets of Deprivation.

In addition, the assessment exercise found that the Environment Agency was involved in the following ways (often in more than one way):

- as a member of the main LSP board with 76 LSPs;
- as a member of the LSP environmental sub-group with 126 LSPs;
- directly in drafting the community strategy with 53 LSPs;
- as a consultee on the draft community strategy with 95 LSPs;
- with work on LSP projects with 30 LSPs.

4.6 The environmental issues prioritised by Environment Agency areas in their work with LSPs

The 2003 assessment exercise also looked at the environmental issues being prioritised by areas in their work with LSPs (Table 4.1). The assessment revealed that the three priority environmental issues for working with LSPs were:

- waste management and regulation (86 references);
- water and flood risk management issues (80 references);

- environmental improvement as part of urban regeneration schemes (31 references).

By contrast, seeking to influence land use planning was only mentioned in 15 cases.

Table 4.1 Priority environmental issues in working with LSPs/CSPs (September 2003)

	<i>No. of references</i>
Agricultural issues:	9
Nitrate vulnerable zones	2
Pollution	6
Biodiversity	15
Climate change	7
Coastal defence	2
Development issues:	15
Affordable housing	4
Brownfield sites/contaminated land	4
Floodplain development	8
Energy efficiency/generation	7
Environmental education	1
Environmental protection	3
Environmental quality	11
Flood risk/defence	32
Funding – Objective 1	1
Open space – recreation:	7
Access	4
Quality and maintenance	2
Pollution:	13
Air quality	5
River management – water quality	3
Rural land use	5
Sustainable buildings	2
Sustainable communities	1
Sustainable development	7
Tourism impacts	1
Transport issues:	8
Cycling	1
Urban regeneration/environmental improvement	31
Waste management/regulation	52
Fly-tipping	23
Recycling	6
Landfill	5
Water management – resources	21
Drainage/sewage discharge	10
Water quality	8
Bathing water quality	3
Surface water run-off – flooding	3
Surface water run-off – pollution	3
Wildlife habitats/nature conservation	3
World Heritage Sites	2
<i>Specific issues identified:</i>	

Heathrow airport
Humber Estuary management
Ketton Cement IPPC
London Olympic bid
Lower Lee Valley
River Brent restoration
River Stour conservation
River Wharfe over-abstraction
Roding Valley
Rye Harbour management/navigation
Salmons Brook restoration
Stansted Airport

4.7 Work with disadvantaged communities

The Environment Agency's target on working with LSPs refers specifically to work with 'disadvantaged communities'. The assessment exercise in 2003 therefore undertook further analysis to determine the level of Environment Agency work in this area.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation gives scores for all 354 local authorities in England from which local authorities with scores of 1 to 71 are defined as the 20% most deprived, and those with scores of 72 to 128 are the next 30% most deprived. Of the 284 LSPs to which the Environment Agency is contributing, 92 fall within the top 50% most deprived local authorities and, of these, 57 fall within the 20% most deprived communities in England.

The 87 LSPs in receipt of Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) also form a useful proxy to gauge the level of Environment Agency engagement with disadvantaged communities. The areas are engaged with 62 of these and the reasons for non-involvement with the remaining 25 NRF LSPs were sought. The key factor appears to be the uneven spread of NRF-supported LSPs among Environment Agency areas: of the Environment Agency's 23 English areas, 10 have either none or only one NRF LSP, whereas individual areas of the North, North West and Thames regions have as many as 15 NRF LSPs each.

In 2001 the Welsh Assembly launched the Communities First Programme as a comprehensive approach to area-based regeneration for Wales' most deprived communities. At the time of the assessment there were 100 communities eligible for Community First Funding defined by their level of deprivation identified in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation²¹. The Environment Agency's Welsh areas are involved with 90 of the 100 Community First Pockets of Deprivation.

²¹ National Assembly of Wales (2000) *Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation*.

4.8 Conclusions

Reflecting on progress nationally by the end of 2003, it was clear that through the pathfinder process a reasonably coherent policy narrative on working with LSPs had begun to emerge. A good policy narrative should fulfil a number of functions. Firstly, it should set out a particular (new) way of thinking and/or acting on an issue, highlighting where the priorities lie. Secondly, it should signal that an issue is important to the organisation, and why it is important. Narratives are communicated both through relevant documents and through the actions of those responsible for co-ordinating/leading on that policy.

On the first of these, the recommendations of the design teams were shaped into guidance issued in April 2003 (and subsequently updated in April 2004) that produced a much clearer rationale for working with LSPs and gave details of how to prioritise this work. The assessment exercise in the summer of 2003 showed that the Environment Agency areas found this guidance useful and were drawing on it to focus and prioritise their work with LSPs, particularly around waste, water and regeneration issues.

The coherence (and value) of this work would have been considerably strengthened, however, if it had been brought together into an end-of-year qualitative report including case studies that illustrate lessons and effective practice. This was a recommendation in the 2003 guidance that has yet to be acted upon by Environmental Policy in Head Office. This is unfortunate, as a report of this type, perhaps produced with other environmental organisations (section 6), could play an instrumental role in consolidating the Environment Agency's rationale for working with LSPs. We recommend, therefore, that:

R1: A short annual report should be produced on the Environment Agency's work with LSPs, in the style of the Agency's urban and other 'environmental assessment' reports²². It should include case studies that illustrate lessons and effective practice, to reinforce to staff and to outside organisations including LSPs the focus, priorities and value of the Environment Agency's work with LSPs.

Such a report could also be used to influence, at a national level, government thinking on the role of LSPs in promoting environmental and sustainable development outcomes. A recent study undertaken on behalf of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) suggests that for too many LSPs these are still not seen as significant issues:

"In general ... sustainability did not emerge as a key issue for LSPs so far, nor did Agenda 21 partnerships appear to figure strongly in the family of LSP partnerships" (ODPM and DoT 2004).

However, it is not just reports that are needed to raise the profile of this work; as noted above, leadership is also important. Here the experience of the pathfinder was mixed. While the *process* of the pathfinder, including social policy (Helen Chalmers)

²² Environment Agency (2002c).

and consultant (Sue Porter/Diane Warburton) support linking Head Office with area-based thinking was clearly a valuable asset in building leadership (see section 6), this was potentially weakened by mixed signals from Environmental Policy over Head Office commitment to this area of work.

During 2000 and 2001 co-ordination of (emerging) LSP work was managed by Jenny Waterworth in the Water Management Directorate's Local and Regional Relations (LRR) team. At the same time the 'Local Outreach' study (Clark *et al.* 2001), managed by Pete Grigorey, was looking at ways to better manage and evaluate 'close and responsive relationships' with local stakeholders, in anticipation of the review of LEAPs. In 2002 Kristina Richards in LRR took over co-ordination of LSP work and developed the LSP Pathfinder in partnership with John Colvin in the Social Policy Team. By early 2003, however, Kristina had been redeployed to work on planning issues, leaving co-ordination of LSP work in the hands of Helen Walker, reporting to John Colvin, but only on a short-term (6 month) assignment from the University of Westminster.

Thus, Head Office leadership of LSP work became progressively fragmented and, after November 2003, had minimal resources allocated to it. We therefore re-endorse the recommendation from Helen Walker's assessment report that:

R2: Priority should be given to the establishment of a permanent post at Head Office level to provide strategic leadership, co-ordination and oversight of Environment Agency engagement with LSPs/CSPs, its contribution to community strategies and, in the future, Local Development Frameworks.

5. Building operational capacity for effective relationships with LSPs

5.1 Introduction

As discussed in section 2.1, the Environment Agency is operating in a wider (national and European) political climate in which there is an increasing emphasis on working in partnership as part of the general trend towards joined up governance. Government agencies and local government organisations, as well as NGOs, have recognised that working in partnership will require new skills and different styles of leadership as well as new infrastructures.

However, developing this capacity for partnership represents a considerable challenge for regulatory organisations like the Environment Agency. Whereas for much of its operational business the Environment Agency is able to implement new policy in a technocratic way through the development of new guidance, this approach has limited effectiveness in implementing new, softer measures such as partnership working.

This was recognised within the second objective of this pathfinder, which was to build operational capacity for effective working with LSPs not only through guidance, but also through a range of other approaches including:

- confidence building: support, training and development for staff in relation to key elements of effective engagement with LSPs, particularly skills for partnership building;
- enhancement of opportunities for sharing good practice across the areas;
- gap analysis setting out where further work is needed.

One way in which these approaches were explored in this pathfinder lay in the design of the pathfinder itself. As discussed in section 3, considerable emphasis was placed on the design of opportunities to share good practice between Environment Agency areas (particularly those involved in the design groups), and on other ways of working that demanded good partnership.

In addition, drawing on the findings from the interviews in Stage 2 of the pathfinder, the Wales SE Design Team was asked to examine the issue of developing effective two-way relationships between the Environment Agency and LSPs.

5.2 What makes for effective relationships with LSPs?

To take this work forward, the design team ran a workshop that brought together 11 staff in Environment Agency Wales with experience of, and responsibility for, partnership working. The workshop was held in September 2003 and led by an independent facilitator with specialist knowledge of relationships between public

agencies and LSPs (Lynn Wetenhall). The aim was both to achieve some clear lessons about partnership working for the Environment Agency, which could then be fed into the detailed guidance, and to incorporate capacity building for Environment Agency staff into the process.

The participants identified the following as vital for effective relationships between the Environment Agency and LSPs (and other partnerships):

- high level support is needed for partnership working;
- local level relationships are crucial;
- partners need to develop shared objectives/outcomes and be flexible in their response to local priorities;
- the Environment Agency should be prepared to take on board other organisations' priorities if it is also to ensure that its own are taken on board;
- the Environment Agency's approach to communication needs improving internally and externally;
- knowledge is needed about roles, aims and objectives of other partners;
- trust needs to develop between partners, and this takes time;
- skills for partnership working need developing (influencing, communication, facilitation, engaging communities);
- consistent representation is needed at the appropriate level – someone able to make decisions (flexibly) and with a good knowledge of Environment Agency position and priorities locally and nationally;
- all staff need to understand the potential of LSPs/CSPs and to be encouraged to link with partners;
- partnership working needs resourcing: time, staff and budget.

These conclusions confirmed the findings from the earlier interview research about the types of guidance and other resources needed for building effective relationships between the Environment Agency and LSPs. These findings fed into the detailed guidance produced in 2003, and to the recommendations agreed by the LSP Pathfinder Executive Group (see Appendix 3, especially recommendations 21–25).

5.3 Discussion and recommendations

Drawing on the above conclusions and our own observations of Environment Agency working practices in the context of this pathfinder (some of which were supportive of partnership, while others inhibited it), it is clear that substantial further capacity building is needed in this area. We suggest this should involve consideration of at least the following areas.

- **The role of guidance.** The importance of partnership working to the government's wider modernising agenda has led to the development of extensive guidance and examples of good practice for working through partnership by many agencies and umbrella organisations. These include the Improvement and Development Agency for local government (IDeA), the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit at ODPM and many national voluntary sector organisations.

One particularly useful analysis (Lander and Booty 2002) is based on research with members of crime and disorder partnerships, which share with the Environment Agency the fact that much of their remit is based on regulatory responsibilities. This analysis has identified organisational 'enablers' and 'inhibitors' to effective partnership. These align well with the learning from the LSP Pathfinder as summarised in Table 5.1²³.

However, the practical value of this type of guidance, and of the Environment Agency's own 'Quick Tips' and more detailed guidance produced in 2003, needs to be considered carefully. A first step would be to review with area practitioners the value of the LSP guidance produced to date, and compare it with the value of other forms of capacity building. Guidance could then be updated as necessary. We therefore recommend that:

R3: The Environment Agency LSP guidance should be reviewed with area staff on a regular (e.g. every two years) basis and updated as necessary.

- **The role of the area management teams.** From discussions among the pathfinder design teams and with the Executive Group it was clear that area management teams have a pivotal role to play in enabling or inhibiting partnership working with LSPs. It was therefore proposed that "area management teams should be accountable for engaging with LSPs, managing that accountability in the ways that best suit local circumstances"²⁴. Following from this, area business planning and realignment of resources were both seen as critical to supporting effective engagement:
 - The Environment Agency should use engagement with LSPs to find out the concerns and interests of the community in our regions and areas ... and be more responsive to their needs, i.e. by developing policies and process that more accurately reflect their needs²⁵.
 - Area work programmes should be appropriately adjusted in response to our commitment to LSP work programmes, and this should be incorporated into area business plans. Area business planners should review business planning processes to ensure their responsiveness in this area²⁶.
 - The Environment Agency needs to realign its resources (including people) to deliver on Local Contribution target 5. There needs to be an adequate pot of money set aside alongside other resources for partnership working²⁷.

In the light of these recommendations, we recommend that:

R4: An internal review should be undertaken on a regular (e.g. every two years) basis to evaluate the effectiveness of area business planning and investment in relation to opportunities to match area environmental priorities with the concerns and interests of local communities, based on

²³ See also Porter *et al.* (2005).

²⁴ Appendix 3, recommendation 26; also, recommendation 3 from the report by Helen Walker, November 2003.

²⁵ Appendix 3, recommendation 27.

²⁶ Appendix 3, recommendation 28.

²⁷ Appendix 3, recommendation 29.

partnership working with LSPs. This internal review could be used to supplement the annual corporate scorecard measure.

- **New approaches to learning.** Capacity building is not only about guidance, managerial support and resources, but also about providing opportunities for learning and development. The work reported earlier in this section – and elsewhere in the Joining Up Project (Porter *et al.* 2005) – provided an initial exploration of different approaches to learning, including both the more traditional 'training' approaches and other more recent 'developmental' approaches.

The partnership agenda generally, and the LSP agenda more particularly, is changing rapidly due partly to a stream of new initiatives from central government and other partners. In this context, the Environment Agency needs to keep its learning about working through such partnerships live' and responsive. This would suggest that opportunities for reflecting on and sharing good practice may be as, if not more, important than more traditional learning approaches. Offering a mix of options is likely to be preferable and below we consider three of these.

- **The role of learning hubs.** Firstly, as a means of sharing good practice, there is potential for the pathfinder area design teams to act as 'learning hubs' for a wider network of staff involved with LSPs and other partnerships across areas and regions.

We therefore recommend that:

R5: The LSP Pathfinder area design teams should be resourced to act as learning hubs for staff across the Environment Agency involved in partnership working.

- **The role of an annual conference.** An annual conference for area staff working with LSPs would provide a further opportunity to learn from experience, as well as to discuss new guidance and tools.

Two national workshops were held in the past for Environment Agency staff working in this field, but there were insufficient resources to continue these after 2002. One of the recommendations made by the LSP Pathfinder Executive Group was that an annual national conference be held for national, regional and area Environment Agency staff who have been engaging with LSP processes, with involvement from counterparts in other environmental bodies and from LSPs, to inform decisions about the co-ordination of resources. This national event could also provide an opportunity for senior Environment Agency staff at Head Office level to affirm the importance of engagement with LSPs and community strategy processes to the Environment Agency, and their commitment to securing the resources needed for effective work at area level. Such a national learning conference could also focus on mechanisms for ensuring that lessons are shared effectively across areas in England and Wales.

We therefore recommend that:

R6: A national learning conference on partnership working should be held annually, possibly in collaboration with partner organisations, as an opportunity for joint learning.

- **The role of training.** The Environment Agency already makes a substantial investment in more traditional 'training' approaches to staff development. In relation to effective working with LSPs, there is a role for training in "generic skills of facilitation, communication and outreach process design"²⁸, provided that these are used to complement the other forms of learning and capacity building set out above, and not substitute for them. Building on the recommendations of an earlier Environment Agency science report, we therefore recommend that:

R7: The Environment Agency should require all local level staff whose work involves interaction with stakeholders to be multi-skilled, possessing not only relevant expertise but also well-developed 'people skills'²⁹, including facilitation and outreach process design.

Table 5.1. Organisational enablers and inhibitors for partnership working

Issue	Summary of findings from the Home Office study ³⁰	Relevant findings from the LSP Pathfinder
ORGANISATIONAL ENABLERS		
1. <i>Commitment from the top</i>	A strong champion at a senior level drives the ethos of partnership working from top to bottom of the organisation.	The LSP Pathfinder also identified the need for high level support, and for this to be reflected in an understanding of the potential opportunities offered by partnership working throughout the organisation and in all guidance.
2. <i>Clear purpose and rationale</i>	A partnership approach must be embedded in the Agency's operating culture.	Agreeing the objectives for working with LSPs, and clarifying corporate commitment to working in partnership through LSPs, has been an essential product of the LSP Pathfinder.
3. <i>Devolved authority</i>	Individuals need clear authority to take forward issues, i.e. devolved responsibility and resources. More hierarchical organisations are less likely to manage this well. Partners may view this as a lack of trust either in the individual concerned or in	The Wales SE workshop identified the conditions for developing trust as including consistency, openness, authority, time.

²⁸ Clark *et al.* (2001, page 74, recommendation 3).

²⁹ Clark *et al.* (2001, page 74 recommendation 5).

³⁰ Lander and Booty (2002)

	the partnership approach <i>per se</i> . Either way the organisation appears uncommitted.	
4. <i>Formal signing up to principles</i>	Agencies need eventually to move beyond informal arrangements and flexible working practices towards a 'statement of common purpose' either for the partnership itself or for the various processes it utilises (e.g. data sharing).	The joint Environment Agency/Local Government Association national concordat on community strategies is likely to enable progress on this issue.
5. <i>Partnership working is viewed as opportunity</i>	One of the basic arguments for adopting a partnership approach is to address (environmental) issues from various perceptions and differing skill bases. Therefore, the ways in which different organisations believe and internalise this view are likely to subsequently influence their level of support to their representatives. Clearly, if an agency considers more joint working as an 'opportunity' to provide a better service for their specific client group or functions, then their support to it will be positive.	The Wales SE workshop identified the need for clear top-down commitment and also for a wider staff group than just those directly involved to recognise the opportunities presented by LSPs.
6. <i>Wider view of available services</i>	Again representing a positive view of the potential of partnership working, breaking down previous insular attitudes.	
7. <i>Recognition that, as an ethos, partnership is still developing</i>	True partnership is viewed as a goal yet to be achieved, with opportunities such as those presented by the Local Government Act 2000 being viewed as the starting point rather than the end. Many inhibitors have to be addressed before the true benefit of partnership work will be realised. Optimism regarding the potential of such work is a distinct enabler.	Issues 5, 6 and 7 clearly link to the potential for delivering Environment Agency agendas through partnerships (including LSPs) identified in the LSP Pathfinder, and the concerns that a wider group of staff need to understand these benefits and be linked into LSPs.
8. <i>Early success provides impetus</i>	Measurable and marketable outcomes play a significant part in levels of continued support for partnership.	The Content Score Matrix developed in the LSP Pathfinder is one mechanism for identifying and tracking success (see section 4.3 and Appendix 4).
9. <i>Joint training</i>	Joint training (and secondments) have great potential for evolving the work of partnerships and can open the door for positive interactions including considering	The Wales SE workshop participants identified the value of opportunities for joint training. Also, the first national internal conference of Environment

	different agency cultures and perceptions beyond a live issue.	Agency staff working with LSPs identified the benefits of inviting workers in other partner organisations with a similar role to this conference in future. This approach would align with the approach taken by the ODPM Neighbourhood Renewal Unit through the Learning Curve joint development strategy for organisations working with regeneration agendas.
ORGANISATIONAL INHIBITORS		
<i>10. Different strategies and core business among partners</i>	When agencies have very different core businesses it can take time and significant structural shifts in order to work to a shared agenda.	The Wales SE Design Team identified the need for flexibility regarding priorities and budgets, and business cycles, as affecting levels of potential responsiveness on shared agendas.
<i>11. Balancing local, regional and national agendas</i>	Managers are faced with conflicts when designating priorities for their organisations as pressures often come from all of these three levels.	The NW Central Design Team of the LSP Pathfinder identified a need to work in a partnership approach at all three levels.
<i>12. No joined up government</i>	The rhetoric from central government requires agencies to co-ordinate their efforts, but there are contradictory demands made by different government departments, which suggests that they do not take account of the work or direction of others.	
<i>13. Power and influence imbalance</i>	The perceived differences in power and influence between statutory agencies means in practice that less influential agencies have a limited capacity to influence the discussion.	This is an issue for the Environment Agency in taking its agenda forward through LSPs. It was identified as a problem by both the Wales SE and NW Central design teams, and both aimed to provide guidance for managers working to influence LSPs.
<i>14. Individual agency reluctance to commit finance and resources</i>	Competing demands often reduce available human and financial resources. Agencies in the study were not inclined to hand over their assets lightly. A joint fund was seen as one way forward, alongside joint administrative capacity.	The LSP Pathfinder identified that contributing to a joint fund sometimes appeared to be a condition of a seat at the LSP table and that the Environment Agency needed to consider the implications of this. Membership of sub-groups of LSPs may not incur the same direct costs.
<i>15. A lot of time spent chasing small amounts of</i>	Both within agencies/organisations, and when vying for external funding,	By contrast, the LSP Pathfinder identified several examples of joint funding opportunities,

<i>money</i>	the process for gaining monetary support was viewed as complex and counterproductive.	particularly focused on regeneration, which would offer benefits to the Environment Agency in collaborating on some joint funding bidding processes and in supporting other types of organisations (e.g. community groups) to access funding for which statutory agencies are ineligible.
<i>16. Organisational scale and complexity causes confusion</i>	Agencies have varying degrees of departmentalisation and bureaucracy, which can cause problems for those external to the agency who are attempting to navigate into and through them.	The LSP Pathfinder Wales SE Design Team identified the need for clear communication with other organisations about the Environment Agency's role, remit, structure and priorities, including what was open to influence.
<i>17. Lack of dedicated time</i>	Time given is an indicator of true partnership. Many respondents were expected to do their partnership working as an adjunct to the 'day job', which leads to difficulties in releasing sufficient time to give proper support to the partnership. Competing work demands and crises distract attention from sustained active involvement.	Similar concerns were voiced throughout the LSP Pathfinder. The solution identified was a combination of high level support for partnership working through LSPs, plus allocating sufficient time for the individuals involved as a part of the task and time management processes within the Environment Agency.
<i>18. Agencies recruit in their own image</i>	Traditional organisational culture and insular working practices do little to enhance the more lateral approach espoused by the partnership approach. In the study of crime and disorder partnerships, it was noted that police promotion processes now required officers to display some form of partnership involvement or problem-orientated approach. If agencies wish to espouse partnership and joined up thinking as integral to their core business then there is a requirement for a fundamental shift in organisational culture and working practice.	
<i>19. Effective and honest data exchange</i>	This can be a stumbling block for some types of partnerships (e.g. sharing of data between the NHS and the police was a problem).	By contrast, the LSP Pathfinder revealed another aspect to data sharing. This was that local authorities often needed more and better environmental information than they had

		available, which the Environment Agency could provide to mutual benefit. As LSPs extend their potential for enhancing quality of life and public health, the NHS and other partners are likely to increasingly value data held by the Environment Agency. Such data may then become an important resource that the Environment Agency can bring to the partnership.
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6. Working with other environmental partners

6.1 Introduction

In 2002, at the start of this pathfinder, few LSPs had made environmental issues a priority, and some were barely considering them at all³¹. The NW Central Design Team considered the potential for joining with other environmental bodies to ensure that a greater priority was given to environmental issues. Their work drew on a previous joint initiative by English Nature, RSPB and The Wildlife Trusts on nature conservation. This group of environmental organisations had produced a briefing document³² on the wildlife issues relevant to community strategies, highlighting information sources, explaining jargon, offering brief guidance for strategy, explaining key issues in wildlife conservation and highlighting benefits for LSPs of working with conservation bodies.

This section reports on work by the NW Central Design Team to develop a framework for working with other environmental bodies on LSPs and community strategies. It also reports on a subsequent development of this work with an LSP in Blackburn with Darwen.

6.2 Ensuring effective input of environmental issues to LSPs

The issue of working with other environmental organisations was split into two, dealing with how the Environment Agency might best work with other environmental agencies/bodies to ensure:

- more efficient and effective input of environmental and sustainable development issues to community strategies;
- better joint understanding by these agencies of each other's roles and contribution to community strategies, to enable more effective cross-representation.

The design team worked on the issues by reflecting on local experience and by working with local representatives of national environmental bodies in a half-day workshop. Their conclusions were:

1. How might the Environment Agency best work with other environmental agencies/bodies to ensure more efficient and effective input of

³¹ This was identified in the pathfinder research interviews (Stage 2), and confirmed by attendance at the 'Local Strategic Partnerships: Lessons Learned So Far' conference, London, June 2002, hosted by the New Local Government Network, IDeA, NCVO and Municipal Journal.

³² English Nature et al 2001.

environmental and sustainable development issues to community strategies? Three key points were identified:

- **The need to be proactive.** The experience of LSPs in the design team's operational area was that the LSPs had developed their membership by inviting representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors, but environmental groups were not included in these pre-existing networks and therefore the environment sector was poorly represented on LSP boards. No LSP in the area had developed its membership to reflect social, economic *and* environmental well-being.

A proactive approach was needed to improve involvement by environmental bodies including:

- meeting with Local Agenda 21 co-ordinators to consider how Environment Agency local plans could support local authority plans;
 - sending letters to local authority CEOs from Environment Agency area managers offering support, followed up by a meeting to explore strategic links.
- **Working through thematic groups.** Involvement in a thematic working group of an LSP was seen to offer opportunities to develop influence within and across working groups and on the LSP itself.
- **Influencing the agenda on multiple levels.** One way of influencing LSP agendas to deliver social, economic *and* environmental well-being was seen to be through a communication strategy which sought to influence on local, regional and national levels of government through the national, regional and area levels of environmental organisations, including the Environment Agency itself.

- 2. How might the Environment Agency best work with other environmental agencies/bodies to ensure better joint understanding by these agencies of each other's roles and contribution to community strategies, to enable more effective cross-representation?** The design team recommended that areas should work with their Regional Support Unit to develop a communications network to co-ordinate the development of a joint understanding of environmental priorities between organisations.

The design team also hosted a half-day workshop in which environment groups came together to share experiences of attempting to influence LSPs and community strategies, including sharing resources developed for this purpose. Three key areas were identified for further investigation:

- **Communication and networking.** The workshop was valuable in establishing contacts between the groups, all of whom represented national bodies. It was agreed that a similar initiative was needed to focus on bringing together groups regionally, making the best use of existing systems and forums.

- **Sharing environmental data.** Groups needed to make better use of existing systems, nationally and locally, to collect, share and interpret environmental data between organisations. LSPs often lack this type of data. In particular, the environment sector needed to improve the understanding of the links between the environment and society, particularly to enable better links with the regeneration agenda.
- **Resourcing work with LSPs and community strategies.** Resourcing involvement in LSPs is an issue for both statutory and voluntary sector organisations. Many environment organisations are within the voluntary sector and they find it particularly difficult to allocate funding to activities such as participating in strategy development that have no easily identifiable practical outcome in the short term. The Community Empowerment Fund offers funding to resource involvement in Neighbourhood Renewal Areas but many LSPs are outside these.

Two specific actions were agreed at the workshop:

- To develop relationships with the regional Environmental Sector Network for the North West, a forum set up for voluntary sector organisations to support the regional assembly.
- The Wildlife Trusts and the Environment Agency made a commitment to work together to explore external funding to resource local co-ordination of environmental support for LSPs within the area.

6.3 Work with Blackburn with Darwen LSP

Following the initial work by the design team, further work was developed by Stephen Hemingway with the Neighbourhood and Environment Group of Blackburn with Darwen LSP. The membership of the group included the Environment Agency (with Stephen Hemingway as Vice-Chair of the group), Groundwork, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and representatives from the Primary Care Trust and the local authority (including planning, regeneration, environmental health, etc.). The group was facing some particular problems, namely:

- evolution from a small membership to a group of over 30 people. This led to meetings developing long agendas that concentrated on organisations presenting issues they considered to be relevant to the group, rather than the group agreeing and prioritising its aims and objectives;
- the group inherited the Neighbourhoods and Environment section of the Community Plan with no sense of ownership of the targets;
- the group received no additional resources to co-ordinate/manage the working group;
- the relationship with the LSP was unclear for some group members.

To overcome these problems, a workshop was held with members of the group, who considered it to be very successful. There were several specific outcomes from the workshop, including some specific benefits for the Environment Agency³³:

- the full Neighbourhood and Environment Group agreed to set up a small group to turn the workshop outcomes into specific recommendations that could be implemented;
- a small core group of the wider group was established, with its own terms of reference and membership, to deliver on priorities and to organise two forum events each year for the wider Neighbourhood and Environment Group membership;
- the Environment Agency was able to take a facilitation and support role in relation to the group, including helping to develop a consensus on environmental and neighbourhood priorities, which was seen as more useful than pursuing Environment Agency environmental outcomes in isolation.

Taking this approach has led to Environment Agency involvement with Blackburn Council on the development of a sustainable design framework for the East Lancashire Sustainable Communities Project³⁴, which had been one of the top priorities for future work identified at the workshop. In addition, the Environment Agency was working with the council to implement three Flood Warning Areas, with the support of Blackburn's Neighbourhood Wardens.

6.4 Discussion and recommendations

As recognised in the recommendations approved by the pathfinder Executive Group, working with other environmental partners provides a key opportunity "to influence LSPs and outcomes for the environment and sustainable development. Joint working can encourage efficiency and avoid duplicating effort. This can be achieved through various tools for shared involvement. These tools include developing guidance for LSPs, LSP accreditation, sustainable development indicators, networks, capacity building, holding joint seminars and workshops, and sharing information"³⁵.

Many Environment Agency areas are already exploring such approaches. However, there is also a valuable opportunity to promote this type of collaboration on a national scale. We therefore recommend that:

R8: The Environment Agency should build on the concordats it already has in place with a number of environmental partner organisations nationally, including English Nature, Groundwork and The Wildlife Trusts, to develop a joint approach to influencing and working with LSPs.

³³ Reflections on January Development Workshop. Note by Stephen Hemingway, May 2003.

³⁴ Known as Elevate, one of the housing market renewal pathfinders.

³⁵ Appendix 3, recommendations 32.

7. Evaluating the broader contribution of the LSP Pathfinder to the Joining Up project

7.1 Introduction

The LSP Pathfinder was conceived (along with three other pathfinders) as part of the wider Joining Up Project (Christie *et al.* 2005, Warburton *et al.* 2005). While the main aim of each pathfinder was to help the Environment Agency address opportunities and/or challenges in its operational work that had a significant social dimension, there was also a broader aim, which was to inform the overall Joining Up Project by:

- drawing lessons from this operational experience that could help inform and shape a social policy for the Environment Agency (objective 3 of the LSP Pathfinder);
- exploring, modelling and demonstrating the contribution of social science to the work of the Environment Agency (objective 4 of the LSP Pathfinder).

7.2 Contributing to the development of the Environment Agency's social policy

While the process of drafting the Environment Agency's social policy through to sign-off was the responsibility of John Colvin, the Environment Agency's Social Policy Manager, the Joining Up Project provided a valuable vehicle for supporting this process. Key contributions included shaping an initial social policy framework (Christie *et al.* 2005), reviewing key themes of the framework in the light of lessons from the pathfinders, advising on drafts of the policy, and reviewing these at meetings of the Joining Up Project Board. The process of signing off the policy took over 18 months from the publication of the initial social policy framework in November 2001, through to agreement of the policy at the July 2003 meeting of the Environment Agency's Policy Steering Group.

The initial social policy framework covered 12 themes, one of which focused on the importance of partnership to achieving the Environment Agency's environmental objectives. This framework was then used in the development both of the social policy and of a set of social appraisal criteria. The final version of the social appraisal tool consisted of 14 criteria grouped into six themes, of which the fifth is:

Increased access to information and participation
--

- | | |
|-----|---|
| E.1 | Ensure effective engagement with stakeholders, citizens and communities (e.g. respectful, timely, efficient, cost effective, proportionate) |
|-----|---|

- | | |
|-----|--|
| E.2 | Develop appropriate partnerships with shared goals |
| E.3 | Support independent external activities which advance Environment Agency objectives (e.g. self help, community projects and schemes by other organisations). ³⁶ |

The final version of the social policy focuses on three principles, of which the third is: "transparency, information and access to participation". This essentially collapses E1–E3 of the social appraisal criteria into a single phrase. However, additional explanation of this phrase is then given at the end of the social policy:

(3) Transparency, information, and access to participation: The way in which the Agency communicates with and involves others in the delivery of its objectives can be critical to their effective implementation. This reflects a move across the public sector towards engaging with others, rather than telling them what to do. Furthermore, transparency is a key to building trust with stakeholders. Providing high quality environmental information enables citizens to take better informed action on behalf of the environment. And effective stakeholder and citizen involvement is increasingly key both to good policy making and to effective delivery on the ground.

The Agency is already working actively in this area. The new Corporate Affairs programme, 'Building trust in local communities', the work in Environmental Protection on 'effective engagement with special interest groups' and the development of a public participation strategy to underpin River Basin Planning (Water Framework Directive) are all current examples.

The level of engagement with stakeholders and the public needs to be proportionate to the environmental objectives we are seeking to deliver. However, this is now a business-critical issue for many of our functions, including flood defence, waste, process industries regulation, recreation and navigation, and the Water Framework Directive.

While discussion of the LSP Pathfinder was only one of many activities that contributed to the shaping of the social policy, it is clear that effective partnership working comes across as a key theme within the policy. This is also reflected in the social appraisal criteria.

7.3 Evaluation of the research approach

The pathfinder used a different approach to the development of policy and practice guidance for Environment Agency staff from normal Environment Agency (research) methods. Although it conformed to the model of including both 'tight' and 'loose' guidance, the principles and proposed actions from the pathfinder were based directly on the experience and expertise of operational Environment Agency staff. So how well did this action research approach work?

Drawing on reflections from the last meeting of the Executive Group, some of the lessons from this experience of an action research approach are shown in Table 7.1.

³⁶ Warburton *et al.* (2005).

On the positive side, the process was enthusiastically welcomed by both Head Office and area staff, enabling them to work well together and produce guidance and recommendations that they were both signed up to.

On the other hand, the fact that the process was unfamiliar – and to some unclear – resulted in some area teams being reluctant or slow to fully realise their autonomy within the action research approach taken (see learning points marked with an asterisk in Table 7.1). This should not be viewed as a failure on the part of individual staff, but as a symptom of the culture and practices within the Environment Agency. Some participants in the pathfinder were nervous of 'getting it wrong'. This meant that they were slow to seize opportunities to experiment and take risks for fear of making mistakes. This is not surprising in a risk averse organisation, and the Environment Agency as a regulator is risk averse.

Table 7.1 Lessons from the pathfinder concerning its research approach³⁷

What worked well?	What worked less well?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews provided a national picture • Action research and learning developed in areas through the design teams' work • Areas and Head Office worked well together • Enthusiasm of Executive Group members for the project (e.g. "A brilliant model – and the products reflect that", Chris Mills, Thames SE Area Manager and Environment Agency champion for LSPs and community strategies) • "Effective air traffic control by HO", with Head Office taking an enabling role • Useful support from Joining Up consultants from which areas and Head Office benefited 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Timing difficulties due to organisational and personnel changes • New ways of working for areas and Head Office – getting a balance between the local and national was hard • Communication between individual area design teams – collaboration was difficult initially as some people were unused to working in this way* • Integration of research and recommendations made by the area design teams was made harder by resistance to collaboration*
What could we have done differently?	Wider implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination and feedback on the Quick Tips guidance, which took too long to develop • Review and reflection on areas' progress – expectations that areas would manage their own process was optimistic in some cases as staff appeared unused to this degree of autonomy* • Better communication between the four areas* • Clearer expectations of the products to be developed by the area design teams* • Greater involvement of Joining Up consultants, although offers were made, some areas were resistant to accessing assistance* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency role in local influencing and working with local communities • Balancing Environment Agency priorities and those of others • Integrating the 'environment' into local priorities and community strategies • Environment Agency policy development processes* • Relationship between Head Office and Regional Support Units, and RSUs and areas in developing policy* • Prioritisation of Environment Agency activities

³⁷ These points are based on a presentation by Helen Chalmers, of the Environment Agency Social Policy Team, to the Joining Up Project Development Group in January 2003.

However, new thinking about approaches to regulation and leadership tend to suggest that, in this respect, being a risk averse organisation is likely to be a considerable disadvantage. Staff should be encouraged to experiment in non-critical situations, and should know that getting something wrong in some situations is acceptable if they are learning from it. This can then be seen as learning from one's own (interesting) practice, rather than always learning from the (best) practice of others - developing an inquiring approach to issues and challenges, including around one's own professional practice.

Some participants in the research were also nervous of 'overstepping the mark' and unsure of how the recently revised organisational structure in the Environment Agency worked in practice. This sense of active hierarchy, even in a group explicitly brought together as peers, impaired some participants' ability to collaborate as they were either overly deferential or competitive and had little sense of being part of a shared endeavour for mutual benefit.

In addition, staff in Environment Agency areas tended not to be encouraged to look beyond the area boundary, so it became difficult for them to gain an overview – even in relation to who else is working on the same issues in another part of the country. Making these connections is not currently seen as part of people's day job, which makes collaboration and social learning very difficult to practise.

In order to change this defensive and risk averse behaviour in collaborative projects the Environment Agency will need to demonstrate a clear commitment to action research and social learning. However, better communication about roles and relationships within the Environment Agency following the organisational restructuring may have ameliorated some of the structure and hierarchy related problems.

7.4 Conclusions

Taking an action research approach to developing guidance and tools to embed policy has produced identifiable benefits. These include:

- Head Office and area staff working collaboratively (making horizontal and vertical connections);
- widening ownership of the LSP agenda;
- robust products – tools and guidance, informed by the experience of operational staff and staff developing policy;
- increased skills and awareness in participants;
- the value of people developing and learning, through tackling real problems – the value of action research.

Recent research on leadership for the delivery of public services suggests that "the old linear models of policy formation, consultation and implementation need to be replaced by a process where policy creation, experimentation, reflection and adjustment occur simultaneously, or at least iteratively, and the process of talking, listening, thinking, working and acting together demand a very different sort of leadership" (Chesterman and Horne 2002).

The lessons from this pathfinder are that the benefits of a simultaneous or iterative process applies to the formation of policy process and products (e.g. guidance and tools) within the Environment Agency and relates closely to the action research approach taken and piloted through the pathfinder. It is likely that similar conclusions have led to action research becoming an increasingly favoured approach across many government departments (e.g. Department of Health, Defra, ODPM, Department of Trade and Industry, the Home Office). We therefore recommend that:

R9: The Environment Agency should make further use of the action research approach to developing guidance and tools to embed policy.

8. Summary of recommendations

In summary, the recommendations from sections 4, 5, 6 and 7 of this report, on how the Environment Agency should take forward its work on LSPs, are as follows:

- R1: A short annual report on the Environment Agency's work with LSPs should be produced, in the style of the Agency's urban and other 'environmental assessment' reports. It should include case studies that illustrate lessons and effective practice, to reinforce to staff and to outside organisations including LSPs the focus, priorities and value of the Environment Agency's work with LSPs.
- R2: Priority should be given to the establishment of a permanent post at Head Office level to provide strategic leadership, co-ordination and oversight of Environment Agency engagement with LSPs/CSPs, its contribution to community strategies and, in the future, Local Development Frameworks.
- R3: The Environment Agency LSP guidance should be reviewed with area staff on a regular (e.g. biannual) basis and updated as necessary.
- R4: An internal review should be undertaken on a regular (e.g. biannual) basis to evaluate the effectiveness of area business planning and investment in relation to opportunities to match area environmental priorities with the concerns and interests of local communities, based on partnership working with LSPs. This internal review could be used to supplement the annual corporate scorecard measure.
- R5: The LSP Pathfinder area design teams should be resourced to act as learning hubs for staff across the Environment Agency involved in partnership working.
- R6: A national learning conference on partnership working should be held annually, possibly in collaboration with partner organisations, as an opportunity for joint learning.
- R7: The Environment Agency should require all local level staff whose work involves interaction with stakeholders to be multi-skilled, possessing not only relevant expertise but also well-developed 'people skills', including facilitation and outreach process design.
- R8: The Environment Agency should build on the concordats it already has in place with a number of environmental partner organisations nationally, including English Nature, Groundwork and The Wildlife Trusts, to develop a joint approach to influencing and working with LSPs.
- R9: The Environment Agency should make further use of the action research approach to developing guidance and tools to embed policy.

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Appendix 1. Terms of reference for the LSP Pathfinder

Working with Local Strategic Partnerships³⁸

Target 5 of the 46 priority targets in Making it Happen reads: "contribute to all Local Strategic Partnerships, focusing effort on the 50% where we can most benefit social and environmental capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities".

As well as target 5 being a priority target in its own right, it is also a key means to achieving many of the other 45 targets (e.g. target 36: work with others to influence a reduction in household waste). It should also form an integral component to some of the change projects, including 'communicating and influencing', 'developing people', 'tracking corporate progress' and 'shaping the future Agency'.

All local authorities have a duty to promote the 'well-being' of their area through preparing a community strategy. The mechanism for co-ordinating the preparation and delivery of the community strategy is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)³⁹. The LSP is a single body that brings together at a local level different parts of the public sector, private, business, community and voluntary sectors.

In England, LSPs covering the 88 most deprived wards can also apply for Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (amounting to £900 million over 3 years), provided that they have produced a neighbourhood renewal strategy which has gained accreditation⁴⁰. Similar arrangements exist in Wales under the Communities First Programme⁴¹.

Community strategies – and therefore LSPs – are also expected to play a fundamental role in the shaping of local development plans/'frameworks', as outlined in the recent Planning Green Paper 'Delivering a Fundamental Change'⁴².

Why do we need this pathfinder?

To date, Environment Agency engagement with community strategies has met with varying success. A national internal workshop (January 2002) identified several reasons for this:

- externally, the flexibility in the guidance on community strategy preparation given to local authorities (e.g. on deadlines);
- internally, the lack of a national position on our involvement with LSPs and community strategies (before the Local Contributions were launched);
- subsequent varying levels of area management team support to take a proactive stance on engagement with LSPs and community strategies;

³⁸ See Appendix 1D for full context.

³⁹ DETR (2001).

⁴⁰ Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2001).

⁴¹ National Assembly of Wales (2001).

⁴² DTLR, Dec 2001.

- time taken over the transition from LEAPs to engagement with LSPs and community strategies, leading to uncertainty and loss of staff morale;
- this has led to significantly different amounts and styles of engagement by the Environment Agency across areas and the local authorities these cover.

The clear position and expectations communicated through target 5 of Making it Happen offers a significant opportunity to consolidate the Environment Agency's approach to LSPs and community strategies, and to maximise the considerable cross-cutting opportunities these offer in delivering a number of the other Local Contribution targets.

Terms of reference (1): Purpose

The overall objective of the project is: To support the Environment Agency in maximising the benefits of engaging with Local Strategic Partnerships and community strategies, and in understanding how this is best embedded in the business. This will involve a new approach to developing practical support, 'loose' guidance, training and development, and sharing of good practice, based upon new ways of working between different parts of the Environment Agency.

Terms of reference (2): Outputs

The key outputs of this project will be:

- a quick guide providing helpful tips on key issues identified by area staff, including key terms and 'jargon';
- more comprehensive guidance (developed between the Head Office Policy Unit and area staff), providing further clarification of the 'tight' elements of this target (i.e. the underlying policy positions) as well as clarifying possible options and approaches under the 'loose' agenda for this target;
- confidence building: support, training and development for staff in relation to key elements of effective engagement with LSPs, particularly skills for partnership building;
- enhancement of opportunities for sharing good practice across the areas;
- gap analysis of where further work is needed.

Importantly, existing sharing of good practice will continue across all areas and regions in parallel with this project.

Each of these outputs will focus on addressing four key questions, identified by many Environment Agency staff as vital for supporting more effective dialogue with LSPs and community strategies. These are as follows (outputs highlighted in **bold**):

- Q1 What are the main objectives of contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships? What percentage of our work might be delivered through this mechanism? What evaluation processes (e.g. balanced scorecard) should be set in place to enable the Environment Agency to measure the success of our engagement with LSPs and to learn from the process? **Advice and guidance on measurement and evaluation process for contribution to LSPs.**

- Q2 What criteria should the Environment Agency use in selecting those 50% of Local Strategic Partnerships "where we can most benefit social and environmental capital", including resource implications? **Advice and guidance on how areas can select the 50%.**
- Q3a How can engagement with Local Strategic Partnerships best be managed to achieve an acceptable two-way relationship – i.e. a balance between the input of the Environment Agency's priorities and responsiveness to local priorities including local perspectives on the 'environment'? **Advice and support to staff on efficient and effective input (and internal sign-up) to community strategy targets.**
- Q3b How might these priorities and actions best be worked back into the Environment Agency's priorities?⁴³ (e.g. by embedding within Local Contributions/Business Plan?) **As Q3a above.**
- Q4 How might the Environment Agency best work with other environmental agencies and other partners to ensure: (i) more efficient and effective input of environmental and sustainable development issues to community strategies; and (ii) better joint understanding by these agencies/partners of each other's roles and contribution to community strategies, to enable effective cross-representation? **Advice, guidance and support on how we may work most efficiently and effectively with other environmental partners/agencies on contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships.**

Terms of reference (3): Outcomes

	Short term	Medium term	Long term
1. An efficient programme for the Environment Agency based on effective sharing of good practice and resources	✓	✓	✓
2. Environment Agency staff feel more confident about selecting and working with LSPs	✓	✓	✓
3. Improved internal Environment Agency mechanisms for supporting effective working with LSPs		✓	✓
4. Prioritised community strategies include more elements relevant to the Environment Agency's key targets			✓
5. Environment Agency programmes more responsive to local need and priorities			✓
6. Demonstrable benefits to disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities			✓
7. Staff feel more confident in working with diversity			✓
8. Environment Agency recognised externally as having a significant role in LSPs			✓

⁴³ LSP accreditation includes in its criteria for local authorities to assess partners' delivery of actions proposed in community strategies. This has far-reaching implications for the Environment Agency, particularly in the light of the new power for local authority scrutiny and overview (Local Government Act 2000).

Terms of reference (4): What will the project look like?

See Appendixes 1A and 1B for full timetable.

Short term: During June 2002, the project (Policy Unit/consultants) will work with all 26 area managers/customer services managers (1 hour interview/area) to identify each area's current position in relation to the four questions (above) and their current needs in relation to working with LSPs. These interviews will be used to develop a quick guide providing helpful tips on key issues identified by area staff – a useful resource for areas in the short term.

Medium term: Four areas (Thames NE, NW Central, Northumbria and Environment Agency Wales SE) will then use this information as the basis for more in-depth medium-term work on each of the issues in order to deliver further advice, guidance, training support and sharing of good practice, which areas can use as a national resource. It is planned that this more in-depth work will involve a small design team/task group (e.g. a customer services manager, a customer services team leader and members from functions) in each area. This will enable staff working with community strategies to work on the real issues and needs facing them.

Each design team will consider one or more issues in depth, using the material from a range of sources, including:

- the national interviews;
- their own experience;
- other research, knowledge and capacity already held within the Environment Agency, particularly within the Joining Up Project, the community strategies workshop and 'Working Better Together'⁴⁴;
- looking externally towards partner organisations engaging with LSPs/community strategies, including the IDeA;
- sharing good practice and learning with the other pathfinder areas;
- undertaking further research and learning, as needed.

Links will also be sought with other relevant research being carried out by the Environment Agency (e.g. the Water Framework Directive research project, which is assessing opportunities to link consultation on River Basin Management Plans with external local and regional consultation processes, including community strategies)⁴⁵.

Head Office will provide consultant support to the work of the design teams, as needed. Based on the work of these four design groups, a clear draft report will be developed and shared with all 26 of the Environment Agency's areas in order to check for understanding and to gain wider agreement.

⁴⁴ Environment Agency/Local Government Association Joint memorandum of understanding. Agreed in 2000, and continually reviewed through the joint LGA/Environment Agency forum twice yearly.

⁴⁵ Water Framework Directive – Proposal for research to assess opportunities to link consultation on River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) with external local and regional consultation processes. The research was put out to tender; it is anticipated this will be undertaken during the period June 2002 to February 2003.

Long term: Longer term, there is a need to share continually evolving good practice across the 26 areas. For instance, the area design teams could act as 'learning hubs' for a more widely networked process over all areas and regions for local reflection and sharing of practice. The January 2002 workshop for all Environment Agency community strategy practitioners held in Birmingham indicated that a yearly meeting is one method that would be welcomed for doing this.

Who will be managing the project?

This proposal has been developed by members of the Environment Agency's Environmental Policy Unit in order to support areas in sharing and agreeing good practice. The Environmental Policy Unit will co-ordinate the overall project and project outputs, in collaboration with four area-based design teams, reporting to one nationally based Executive Group (see Appendix 1C for membership details).

The **role of the Executive Group** is to agree the project objectives and specification, to agree these with the local design teams, and to review and evaluate progress on a regular basis.

The **role of the local design teams** is to deliver the outputs and outcomes listed above over the medium-term period of the project (and drawing on consultant support if needed). Design team members for each area pathfinder will be nominated by the end of May.

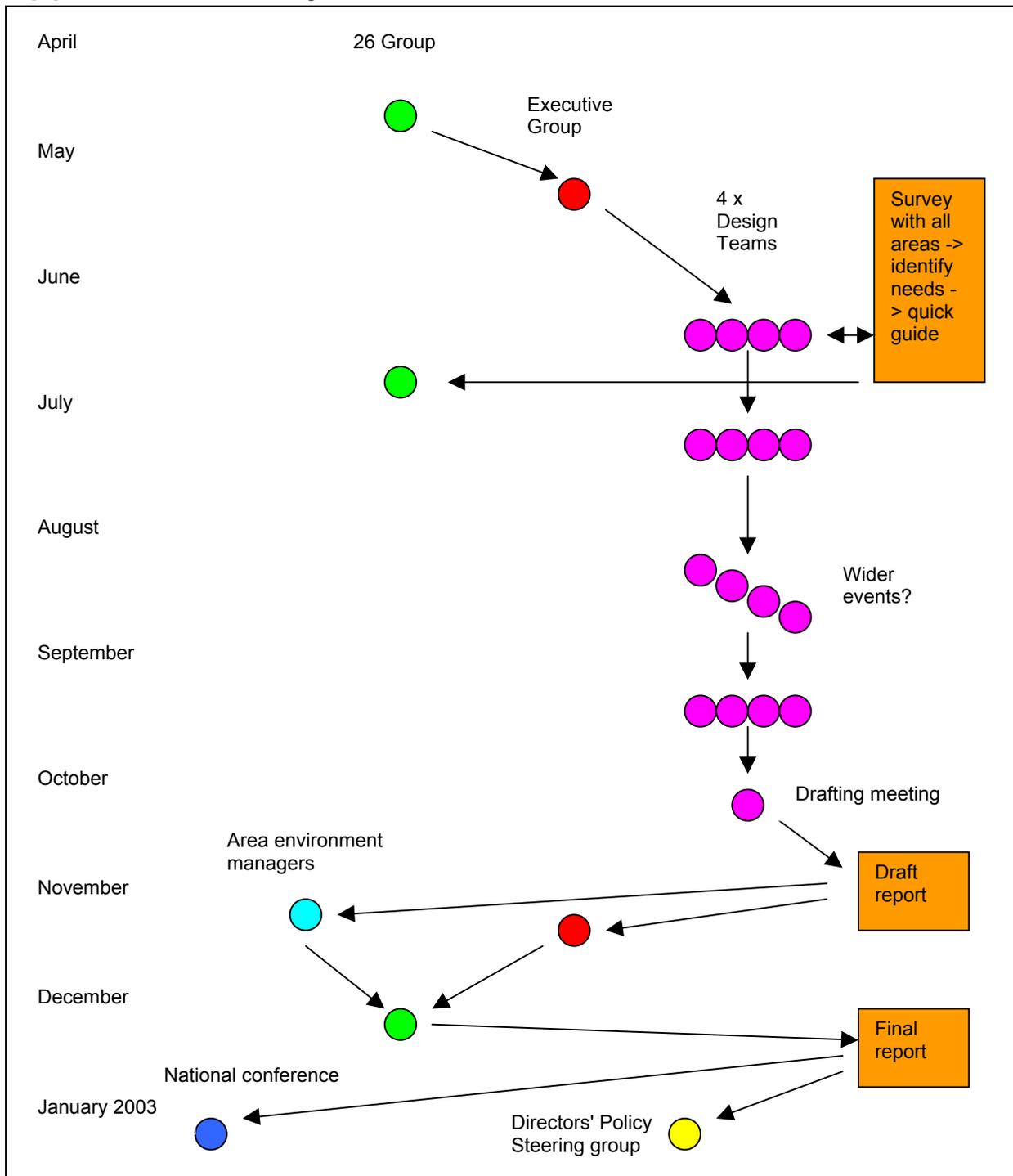
The **role of the consultant team** is to provide research, facilitation and evaluation support to the project, working with the Executive Group and design teams as needed.

Funding

Funding for consultant support will be provided through phase 2 of the Environment Agency's Joining Up Project (Project Manager – John Colvin); this project will therefore also be accountable to the Joining Up Project Board.

Dr Kristina Richards and Dr John Colvin
23 May 2002

Appendix 1A. Project outline



Appendix 1B. Proposed timetable – detail

Time (2002)	Who	Activity
By 15 March	John Colvin (JC) and Kristina Richards (KR) and Chris Mills	Confirm Area Offices
By 22 March	JC + KR + area managers and CSMs	Initial meetings with four area managers and customer services managers (CSMs) to introduce project proposal, and to request area design group nominations
By 15 April	26 Group/Chris Mills	Initial survey of area needs for support
30 April	KR, JC and 26 Group	Feedback on survey, and discussion of project
23 May	Executive Group	First meeting: agreement of project objectives and specification; agree which of the four questions provide the primary focus for each area
By end June	Consultants (with design team leaders)	Further survey work with all areas, leading to development of quick guide
By mid June	All design teams Consultants	First meetings: make sense of project objectives and specification; initial design and/or research work
By mid July	All design teams	Second meetings: continuing research and/or design work including for workshop events (as needed) so that outputs of project will be achieved
By end August	All design teams Area staff External stakeholders	Learning event/workshops in each area as needed. Outputs: * practical advice and suggestions for national guidance; * support and training; * gap analysis; * identify what is needed to make it happen
By mid September	All design teams	Third meetings: review of learning process/events in order to make recommendations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national advice and guidance on LSPs; • further research; • continuing programme of training, development and sharing of good practice
23 October	Design team leaders	Joint review of work; drafting of report
By mid November	Executive Group	Second meeting: review and agree recommendations made by design groups on guidance, research and learning; evaluation of pathfinder
End December	Consultants/Joining Up Project Board	Consultant report to Joining Up Project Board
1 December	Policy Unit/relevant staff	Report to all staff engaged in community strategies nationally
Ongoing	Consultants/design teams	Consultants, working with design team members, to identify ongoing work and research throughout the Environment Agency and beyond which is relevant. Also resources, and links to local sources of training and development

Appendix 1C. Executive Group membership

See Appendix 2 of this report of the LSP Pathfinder.

Appendix 1D. Full context for project

On 29 November 2001, at an Executive Manager's Conference in Birmingham, the Environment Agency launched its strategy for implementing its Environmental Vision (2001). This strategy, known as Making it Happen, is composed of two complementary parts:

- 46 priority outcome targets which the organisation needs to achieve over the next 5 years;
- the organisational changes (conceived in terms of eight 'change projects') that will be needed to facilitate this.

All area offices, regional offices and Head Office directorates must submit their individual 'local contributions' to Making it Happen by June 2002.

Target 5 of the 46 priority targets reads: "contribute to all Local Strategic Partnerships, focusing effort on the 50% where we can most benefit social and environmental capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities".

As well as target 5 being a priority target in its own right, it is important to note that it is also a key means to achieving many of the other 45 targets (e.g. target 36: work with others to influence a reduction in household waste). In other words, the contribution to LSPs is a key 'cross-cutting' target within Making it Happen. It should also form an integral component to some of the change projects, including 'communicating and influencing', 'developing people', 'tracking corporate progress' and 'shaping the future Agency.

All local authorities now have a duty to promote the social, economic and environmental well-being of their area, in such a (joined up) way as to contribute to sustainable development⁴⁶. Further, local authorities have a duty to achieve this through working with their local communities to prepare a community strategy. The mechanism for co-ordinating the preparation and delivery of the community strategy is the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)⁴⁷. The LSP is a single body that brings together at a local level different parts of the public sector, private, business, community and voluntary sectors.

The key task for LSPs in the context of neighbourhood renewal is to prepare a local 'neighbourhood renewal strategy'. These strategies set out an agreed vision and plan for positive change in as many neighbourhoods as are in need of renewal. Further, those LSPs which have produced a neighbourhood renewal strategy, cover the 88 most deprived wards in England⁴⁸ and gain accreditation⁴⁹ can also apply for

⁴⁶ Local Government Act 2000.

⁴⁷ DETR (2001).

⁴⁸ DETR (2000).

⁴⁹ Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2001).

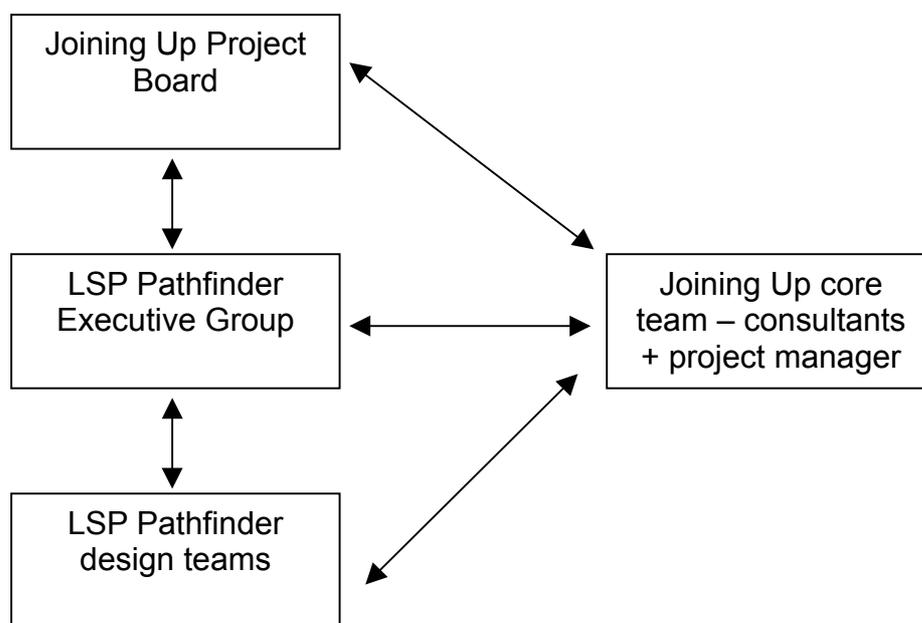
Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (amounting to £900 million over 3 years). Similar arrangements exist in Wales under the Communities First Programme⁵⁰.

Significantly, community strategies – and therefore LSPs – are also expected to play a fundamental role in the shaping of local development plans/'frameworks', as outlined in the recent Planning Green Paper 'Delivering a Fundamental Change'⁵¹.

⁵⁰ National Assembly of Wales (2001).

⁵¹ DTLR, Dec 2001.

Appendix 2. Governance arrangements for the LSP Pathfinder



Membership of the Joining Up Project Board		
Name	Job title/role	Representing
Peter Madden <i>(Chair)</i>	Head of Environmental Policy	Environmental Policy
Pam Gilder <i>(Project Executive)</i>	Head of Policy Development and Promotion	Environmental Policy
John Colvin <i>(Project Manager)</i>	Social Policy Manager	Environmental Policy
Andrew Skinner	Director of Environmental Protection	Environmental Protection
Graeme Warren	Area Manager	Operations, Northumbria Area
Howard Pearce	Head of Environmental Finance and Pension Fund Management	Finance
John Thompson	Strategy Manager	Operations, North West Region
Liz Thompson	Head of External Relations	Corporate Affairs

Membership of the LSP Pathfinder Executive Group		
Name	Job title/role	Representing
Chris Mills (<i>Chair</i>)	Area Manager and National Champion for community strategies and LSPs	Thames, SE Area
John Colvin (<i>Project Sponsor</i>)	Social Policy Manager	Environmental Policy
Alex Fielding	External Development Funding Officer	National External Funding
Annette Pinner	Area Manager	North West, Central Area
David Wardle	Area Manager	Thames, NE Area
Graeme Warren	Area Manager	North East, Northumbria
Kristina Richards	Local and Regional Relations Policy Manager	Environmental Policy
Martin Mills	Acting Area Manager	Environment Agency Wales, SE Area
Stephen Biddle	Strategy Development Programme Manager	Chief Executive's Office
Valerie Hastie	Secondment to IDeA	

Name	Representing
Julie Nunn	Thames, NE Area
Emily Connolly	Thames, NE Area
John Hogger	North East, Northumbria
Cath Beaver	Environment Agency Wales, SE Area
Claire McCorkindale	Environment Agency Wales, SE Area
Stephen Hemingway	North West, Central Area

Sue Porter	Sustainable Futures
Diane Warburton	Shared Practice
David Wilkinson	Whole Systems Development

Appendix 3. Full list of recommendations from the LSP Executive Group

The full list of recommendations developed by the Area teams and agreed by the LSP Pathfinder Executive Group were as follows:

Environment Agency objectives for working with LSPs should be:

1. The **primary** objectives for contributing to LSPs are:
 - to harness efficiencies in delivering the Environment Agency's environmental targets;
 - to help deliver wider environmental objectives that underpin local quality of life in the context of sustainable local communities;
 - to help shape local development (planning) frameworks.
2. **Secondary** objectives facilitate the delivery of the primary objectives. These are:
 - to promote the Environment Agency and understanding of our work;
 - to build effective external relationships;
 - to extend the learning of all involved in LSPs;
 - to pursue local external funding opportunities.

In support of the above the Environment Agency should:

3. View LSPs as forums that can reduce the potential for conflict between organisations and allow for an improved understanding at both strategic and operational levels.
4. Resource building healthy partnerships through LSPs, to address often complex community issues. Building these relationships provides an opportunity for the pooling of resources to maximise the delivery of environmental outcomes.
5. Aim to influence through LSPs in order to optimise the environmental outcomes of local Public Service Agreements (PSAs).
6. Recognise the value of preventative ways of working as well as immediate performance based delivery
7. Recognise that the development of the LSP work programme including the community strategy is an ongoing process, and that the opportunities to influence may not arise immediately.
8. Recognise that involvement with LSPs requires creativity, flexibility and opportunism so that we both create new opportunities for joint working and are able to grasp them fully when they arise. To support these new ways of working,

staff should seek opportunities to share their approaches to partnership with a view to developing their skills and competencies.

9. Promote the utility of other funding opportunities (e.g. Community Empowerment Fund) including those available to local community groups, to deliver environmental outcomes.

Evaluating success

We need to be flexible and responsive to the opportunities that emerge through our involvement with LSPs; therefore, any success criteria need to be equally flexible. There also needs to be a balance between evaluation that supports practitioner learning and evaluation that supports corporate learning.

For the practitioner:

10. Adopt an end-of-year *qualitative* progress report containing case studies illustrating lessons learned and good practice. This would be written by practitioners for practitioners.
11. Adopt the 'Content Score Matrix' as a *quantitative* tool to track progress on Target 5 of the Local Contributions. This focuses on the content phase of LSPs, but may be adapted for the delivery phase.
12. Use the 'Content Score Matrix' to indicate the correlation between effort and inclusion/delivery of environmental outcomes in LSP work programmes.

To support corporate evaluation:

13. Drawing on the 'Content Score Matrix', work with area balanced scorecards to develop a *quantitative* measure to be used in the Environment Agency balanced scorecard. Currently this measure reads as: 'Percentage of Regional Strategies and LSP work programmes that include actions from Local Contributions'. This measure should be reviewed yearly to reflect the developing stages in the LSP/community strategy process.
14. Use the 'LSP Prioritisation Matrix' (see below) to track/measure success of involvement in LSPs/community strategies through identifying shifts in the matrix criteria (i.e. local circumstances) over time.

Prioritising the 50%

15. Adopt the 'LSP Prioritisation Matrix' for identifying the 50% of LSPs that area staff should be engaging with. There should be a biannual review of the criteria within the tool. This is an open and transparent tool that allows decisions to be justified to our partners.
16. Use this tool to inform a more rational decision about the percentage of LSPs that we should be engaging with (i.e. there may be a certain score beneath which it would not make sense to invest effort).

17. Use this tool to inform a rational decision about how we focus resources across all areas (i.e. which are the (50% of) priority LSPs we should be investing in across England and Wales?). Reach a decision on this by autumn 2003.
18. For those LSPs that the Environment Agency prioritises, staff should aim to take a proactive role in influencing those tiers of the LSP structure (e.g. the LSP Board and sub-groups), and those working groups that offer us most benefit (i.e. not necessarily just the 'environment' sub-group).
19. Use the 'LSP Prioritisation Matrix' as a tool for two-way involvement and awareness raising internally and externally. For example, use with area management teams, area environment groups, and local authorities (e.g. "*why we have prioritised LAX over LAY?*").
20. Investigate the value of the tool for other (wider or more locally focused) processes of engagement.

Influencing LSP priorities

21. Ensure Environment Agency environmental priorities are locally relevant by matching with identified local environmental needs, drawing on the 'LSP Prioritisation Matrix'.
22. Ensure Environment Agency environmental and quality of life priorities are locally relevant by matching with significant local quality of life issues, using the 'Quality of Life Matrix' supplemented by Environment Agency positions from the Briefing Zone. Target the LSP's priority quality of life issues, explaining both the synergies and constraints offered by our environmental priorities and avoiding jargon.
23. Know where you might expect to compromise and where you will want to stand firm.
24. Do your research: to be an active partner within the LSP, the Environment Agency will need good environmental information that clearly describes the environmental priorities for the locality and how these relate to the social and economic conditions.
25. Planning reforms predict community strategies having a strong influence over the content of Local Development Frameworks and the town and country planning system. Staff should therefore ensure that relevant policies and influencing opportunities are raised now.

Responding to LSP priorities

26. Area management teams should be accountable for engaging with LSPs, managing that accountability in the way that best suits local circumstances.
27. The Environment Agency should use engagement with LSPs to:

- (i) find out the concerns and interests of the community in our regions and areas, particularly those of disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities;
 - (ii) be more responsive to their needs, i.e. by developing policies and process that more accurately reflect their needs; and
 - (iii) encourage the development of inclusive ground level networks with community groups.
28. Area work programmes should be appropriately adjusted in response to our commitment to LSP work programmes, and this should be incorporated into area business plans. Area business planners should review business planning processes to ensure their responsiveness in this area.
29. The Environment Agency needs to realign its resources (including people) to deliver on Local Contribution target 5. There needs to be an adequate pot of money set aside alongside other resources for partnership working.
30. The Environment Agency should promote the value of the resources and services it can provide (e.g. technical information and advice) in order to help manage partners' expectations of its ability to provide funding to deliver LSP priorities.

Working with partners for environmental and sustainable development outcomes

31. The Environment Agency should use the 'LSP Prioritisation Matrix' to decide where it will and will not work with other environmental partners to influence an LSP. It should seek to define 'environmental partners' in a broad sense, i.e. to include local authorities and pro-environmental businesses as well as agencies, NGOs and community organisations. If other environmental partners are already working with an LSP and it is felt that they are able to represent Environment Agency priorities, then we should not get involved.
32. Where appropriate, the Environment Agency should work with other environmental partners to influence LSPs and outcomes for the environment and sustainable development. Joint working can encourage efficiency and avoid duplicating effort. This can be achieved through various tools for shared involvement such as developing guidance for LSPs, LSP accreditation, sustainable development indicators, networks, capacity building, holding joint seminars and workshops, and sharing information.
33. To demonstrate evidence-based decision making, and in order to identify environmental priorities, the Environment Agency should develop new and existing systems in partnership with other organisations in order to collect, share and interpret environmental data.
34. Successful influencing of LSPs will involve a flexible multi-level strategy: the Environment Agency should use its involvement in different tiers of governance (national, regional, sub-regional) to maximise its support for partnership arrangements at the LSP level.

Appendix 4. LSP Content Score Matrix

LSP Content Score Matrix					
No.	Indicators of Progress (IOP) <i>Will the work of the LSP lead to...?</i>	<i>For example</i>	Does the IOP feature in LSP work programmes?		Effort/ value added
			Yes	No	
Better quality of life					
1	Increased Environment Agency influence on planning issues (including flood related issues)	<i>Increased number of Agency conditions attached to planning conditions</i>			
2	Increased waterway regeneration	<i>Disused waterway reopened</i>			
3	Increased access and biodiversity on waterways and watercourses	<i>Development of new walking/ cycling routes along rivers (e.g. Thames path)</i>			
4	An increased participation in fishing	<i>Installation of disabled fishing platforms</i>			
5	A reduction in the levels of fly-tipping and litter	<i>Inter-agency enforcement action with local authorities and others</i>			
An enhanced environment for wildlife					
6	Improved quality of UK BAP habitats	<i>Wildlife and conservation areas created in parks and public places</i>			
7	Improved river habitat quality	<i>Deculverting</i>			
8	Increased plant diversity	<i>Green roofs; habitat creation</i>			
9	A more sustainable fisheries resource	<i>Installation of fish passes</i>			
10	Reduced emissions to air	<i>Green transport promotion, such as moving waste by water</i>			
Improved and protected inland and coastal waters					
11	Improved water quality (estuarine, groundwater, coastal and river)	<i>Targeted pollution prevention campaigns, promotion of Sustainable Urban Drainage, mis-connection</i>			
Restored, protected land and healthier soils					
12	Sustainable remediation of sites so that they are fit for specific use and the landscape is enhanced				
A greener business world					
13	An increase in the number of businesses with accredited environmental management systems	<i>The promotion of Environmental Business Clubs leading to accreditation – such as ISO 14001</i>			

14	A reduction in the number of pollution incidents	<i>Proactive campaigns to raise awareness and promote best practice (e.g. oil care campaign)</i>			
Wiser use of natural resources					
15	A reduction in waste arisings and disposal routes	<i>Promotion of waste minimisation clubs</i>			
16	An increase in levels of recycling and composting	<i>Provision of composting facilities</i>			
17	A reduced demand for water	<i>Water conservation schemes in public buildings</i>			
Limiting and adapting to climate change					
18	A reduction in the emission of all greenhouse gases	<i>Green transport policies/ renewable energy sources</i>			
19	Consideration of the impact of climate change				
Reducing flood risk					
20	Reduction in the impact of major flooding incidents by increasing the effectiveness and coverage of flood warning	<i>Flood Forums promoted through LSPs, develop concordat on flood warning issues</i>			
A	Total number of indicators applicable	20			
B	Total numbers of indicators featured in LSP work programmes				
C	IoP content score (B as a percentage of A)				

Appendix 5. Prioritisation Matrix

LSP/Community Strategy Assessment						
Criteria	Description	Weight	Value			Score
			High 3	Medium 2	Low 1	
Environmental issues	Does the CS offer an opportunity to tackle key/priority environmental issues	3	Significant number of priority environmental issues in this locality	Most of the environmental issues in this locality are not Agency priorities	Few significant environmental issues	
	Will new environmental legislation be significant in this locality	3	Major new environmental priorities will emerge	Minor/few new environmental priorities	Unlikely to be new environmental priorities	
Connection to Agency plans and priorities	Is there a clear link to our Local Contribution outcomes and prospects for joint delivery	3	Very clear commonality with LC	Some commonality with LC	Little commonality with LC	
Current opportunities to influence	Are we already able to influence the LSP/CS or LPA through other means	1	No influencing or partnership work ongoing in this locality	Some ongoing influencing and local partnership projects	Strong partnership already exists with LPA; Agency exerts real influence	
Deprived or ethnic communities	Does the locality covered by this CS include deprived, ethnic or other minority communities	3	Locality includes significantly deprived or large ethnic community	Locality includes minor ethnic community or mid-range deprivation	Locality includes neither deprived nor significant ethnic community	
Geographic scale	What geographical coverage is the CS aimed at	District	1	Broad spatial area, includes several authorities	Major urban district	Local area, single authority
		Unitary				
		County				
		Sub-region				
Strategy integration	Is the CS linked, overlapping or integrated with other strategies we can influence	1	No alternative strategies to influence	Little Agency influence on strategies in this locality	Agency already influencing strategies affecting this locality	
	Do issues in this locality impact on adjacent localities	2	Strong links/impacts in adjacent localities	Some minor/indirect impacts in adjacent localities	Issues in this locality have little impact elsewhere	
Timetable	What stage has the CS development currently reached	1	Development of the CS just beginning	Some community debate/first drafts prepared	Community plan already published	

Funding sources	Will the CS release or influence funds which can be used to tackle environmental issues	3	Linked to NRF or RDA funding	Linked to EU, HLF, etc	No clear funding links	
	Is there a good record of securing funding in this locality	2	Significant funding previously secured	Some limited success at securing extra funding	No major extra funding secured	
Willingness to engage Agency	Is the Agency likely to be regarded as a key player	1	We have been approached to become involved	Agency involvement likely to be nominal (there because of our name)	Has our involvement been 'refused'	
Current representation	Are other environmental organisations already involved and will they represent Agency views/priorities	2	No opportunity for others to represent Agency view	Good environmental representation but no confidence that Agency view can be represented	Strong environmental representation trusted to promote Agency view	
Reputation building	Are there political, reputation or other relationship building issues linked to this CS	2	Agency reputation will be significantly damaged by not participating	Damage to Agency reputation unlikely	No prospect of damage to Agency reputation; strong relationship with LPA	

Total score.....

Abbreviations:

- CS Community Strategy
- EU European Union
- HLF Heritage Lottery Fund
- LC Local Contribution
- LSP Local Strategic Partnership
- LPA Local planning authority
- NRF Neighbourhood Renewal Fund
- RDA Regional Development Agency

Appendix 6. Findings from the 2003 assessment

Local Strategic Partnership Assessment Exercise: England

As at 5 November 2003

Index of Multiple Deprivation (ID2000) gives scores for all 354 local authorities in England.

Scores 1–71 = 20% most deprived; scores 72–128 = next 30% most deprived.

The Environment Agency is working with 284 of the 403 (approx.) LSPs* including 62 of the 87 NRF LSPs.

92 of these local authorities are in the top 50% most deprived.

20/23 English Environment Agency areas are working with local authorities in the top 50% most deprived.

(* ODPM estimated 365 LSPs at June 2002)

Supplementary analysis of area involvement

1. Involvement code

The level of area involvement with each LSP is coded as follows:

- 5 Membership of main LSP board
- 4 Membership of LSP environmental sub-group
- 3 Direct involvement in drafting of Community Strategy
- 2 Consultee on draft Community Strategy
- 1 Work on LSP projects/other (please specify)

2. Corporate Score Card/Local Contributions

✓✓ = LSPs which will be included in Corporate Score Card/Local Contributions response

3. Key environmental issues

List of the key principal environmental issues or areas of work with each LSP

ANGLIAN								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/ job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Keith Stonell	Central	Brampton	Jackie Sprinks PTL	Bedford BC ✓✓ Bedfordshire CC ✓✓ Breckland BC ✓✓ Cambridge City C ✓✓ Cambridgeshire CC ✓✓ E Cambridgeshire CC ✓✓ Fenland DC ✓✓ Huntingdonshire DC ✓✓ King's Lynn and W Norfolk BC ✓✓ Mid Beds DC ✓✓ Milton Keynes C ✓✓ S Cambridgeshire DC ✓✓ W Suffolk Strategic Partnership ✓✓ 13 LSPs: working with 12 3 LAs in 50% most deprived	123 n/a 175 204 n/a 318 144 273 97 341 116 340 n/a	No NRF	2 5,4,3 2 4,2 0 5,4,3 5,4,3 5,4,3 5,4,3 2 5,4,2 4,2 5,4,3	Waste resource use; open spaces Waste; development; access to green space Waste; flood risk Development; transport; waste; open space No LSP formed as yet Waste; access/transport; development Climate change; resource use; waste; access Floods/droughts; waste/resources; devt Flood risk Climate change; waste; development; wildlife Flood risk; waste; green space; biodiversity Trpt / access; waste/energy; habitat/green space Climate; waste/resources; c'side biodiversity; devt

ANGLIAN								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/ job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Bill Forbes	Eastern	Ipswich	Jenni Hodgson PTL	LSPs not individually identified in BSC response				
			Kirstij Davies PO	Essex CC	n/a	5	Fly-tipping; water resources	
				Basildon DC	117	1	Pitsea landfill	
				Braintree DC	269	2	Surface water runoff – flooding	
				Brentwood	333	1	Surface water runoff – pollution	
				Castle Point DC	223	5,3	Surface water runoff – flooding	
				Chelmsford BC	307	5	Water resources	
				Colchester BC	178	2	Flooding	
				Maldon DC	257	4	Flooding	
				Rochford DC	287	2	Flooding	
				Southend-on-Sea	201	1	Water quality	
				Tendring DC	64	5,3	Bathside Bay; fly-tipping	
				Thurrock BC	103	5	Shellhaven; surface water runoff pollution	
				Uttlesford DC	347	1	Stanstead Airport	
				Norfolk CC	n/a	5	Water resources	
				Broadland DC	288	5,3	Flooding	
				Gt Yarmouth BC	5	4	Brownfield redevelopment flood risk	
				N Norfolk DC	220	4,3	Coastal erosion	
				Norwich BC	83	1	Brownfield redevelopment	
				South Norfolk DC	291	5	Agriculture – diffuse pollution	
				Suffolk CC	n/a	5	Agriculture – diffuse pollution	
				Babergh DC	226	5,3	Conservation – River Stour	
				Ipswich BC	134	5,3	Brownfield redevelopment flood risk	
				Mid Suffolk DC	326	5,3	Surface water runoff – pollution	
				Suffolk Coastal DC	279	5	Agriculture – diffuse pollution	
				Waveney DC	82	1	Flood risk	
						27 LSPs: working with 25 2 LAs in 20% most deprived 4 LAs in next 30% most deprived		

ANGLIAN								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/ job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Ron Linfield	Northern	Lincoln	Roger Ashford CSM Matthew Ross Ext Rel Officer	BSC response tbc in November Boston BC 52 Corby 167 East Lindsey 67 East Northants 289 Kettering 211 Lincoln 146 Northampton 149 N Kesteven 258 N Lincs 122 NE Lincs 55 Rutland 348 S Holland 249 S Kesteven 200 S Northants 352 Wellingborough 151 W Lindsey 100 18 LSPs: working with 17 2 LAs in 20% most deprived 2 LAs in next 30% most deprived		NRF	5,2 5 5 5,4 4,2 - 5,4,2 2 4,2 5,4,2 2 5,4,2 4,2,1 5,2 5,4,2 5,2	Development; flood risk MKSMS Development; flood risk MKSMS MKSMS Agency involvement tbc; development; flood risk MKSMS Groundwater Humber Estuary SMP Development; flood risk Ketton Cement IPPC Development; flood risk Development; flood risk MKSMS MKSMS Development; flood risk

MIDLANDS								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Harvey Bradshaw	Lower Severn	Tewkesbury	John Mills PTL	Cheltenham (Coventry) ✓✓ 195 Forest of Dean ✓✓ 217 Gloucester ✓✓ 101 Gloucestershire CC ✓✓ n/a Redditch 174 Stratford-on-Avon 344 Tewkesbury 239 Warwick ✓✓ 224 Warwickshire ✓✓ n/a 13 LSPs: working with 10 1 LA in 20% most deprived 1 LA in next 30% most deprived		(NRF)	0	Reminder sent 20.08
Bob Branson	Upper Severn	Shrewsbury	Shelly Beckett CSM Dave Throup EM Mags Cousins PO	Bridgnorth DC ✓✓ 303 Bromsgrove DC ✓✓ 299 Dudley MBC ✓✓ 112 Herefordshire CC ✓✓ n/a Malvern Hills ✓✓ 237 N Shropshire DC ✓✓ 254 Oswestry DC ✓✓ 197 Powys CC n/a Shrewsbury and Atcham BC ✓✓ 222 Shropshire CC ✓✓ n/a S Shropshire DC ✓✓ 241 Worcestershire CC ✓✓ n/a Wyre Forest DC 166 14 LSPs: working with 13 1 LA in 50% most deprived		NRF	4,3,2 3,2 4,2 4 2 2 3,2 3,2 4,3 5,4,3,2 3,2 4,2 3,2	Worfe over-abstraction; maintenance of env qual. Pollution on Aston Fields Estate Fly-tipping; Dudley Community Pride SD; Waste minimisation; biodiversity Not known Nitrate Vulnerable Zones; biodiversity; fly-tipping Discharge from Oswestry into R Morda Agric. impact; landfill capacity; recycling targets Flood risk Agric. impact; Nitrate Vulnerable Zones; flood risk Maintenance of environmental quality Fly-tipping Waste minimisation

MIDLANDS									
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involve-ment Code	Key environmental issues	
Mark Sitton	Lower Trent	Nottingham	James Freeborough PTL	Amber Valley DC		177		1	Biodiversity; recreation
				Ashfield DC	✓✓	96	NRF	4	Energy efficiency; waste minimisation
				Bassetlaw DC	✓✓	58		4	Biodiversity; recreation
				Blaby DC		330		2	Fly-tipping
				Bolsover DC	✓✓	44	NRF	4	Waste minimisation
				Broxtowe BC		192		4	Sustainable communities
				Charnwood BC		214		2	Energy efficiency; waste minimisation
				Chesterfield BC	✓✓	104		4	Pollution
				Derby CC	✓✓	39	NRF	4	Climate change
				Derbyshire Dales DC		274		1	Agriculture
				Derbyshire CC	✓✓	n/a		2	Derwent World Heritage Site
				Erewash BC		157		2	Waste minimisation
				Gedling BC		205		2	Pollution
				Harborough		296		2	Agriculture
				High Peak		187		2	Nature conservation
				Hinckley and Bosworth BC		296		2	Fly-tipping
				Leicester CC	✓✓	36	NRF	4	Fly-tipping
				Leicestershire CC	✓✓	n/a		4	Fly-tipping
				Mansfield DC	✓✓	59	NRF	4	Environmental education
				Melton BC		306		5	Climate change
				Newark and Sherwood DC		99		4	Biodiversity; recreation
				NW Leicestershire		183		4	Waste minimisation
				Nottingham CC	✓✓	22	NRF	2	Fly-tipping
				Nottinghamshire CC	✓✓	n/a		4	Sustainable building
				Oadby and Wigston BC		240		1	Fly-tipping
				Rushcliffe BC		314		2	Sustainable building
				South Derbyshire		228		5	Pollution
								28 LSPs: working with 27 6 LAs in 20% most deprived 3 LAs in next 30% most deprived	

MIDLANDS																									
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involve-ment Code	Key environmental issues																	
Philip Burns	Upper Trent	Lichfield	Paul Slater PTL	Birmingham CC ✓✓	15	NRF	4,2,1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone																	
				Cannock Chase	147					2	Waste management; landfill														
				East Staffordshire	124					4	Flood risk														
				Lichfield	218					3	Protecting groundwater														
				Newcastle under Lyme	130					1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone														
				Nuneaton and Bedworth	154					4,2	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone														
				Sandwell ✓✓	52					NRF	4,2,1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone													
				Solihull ✓✓	88									4,2,1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone										
				South Staffordshire	276									4	Agricultural issues										
				Stafford	261									1	Flood risk										
				Staffordshire CC	n/a									4,2	Waste management										
				Staffordshire Moorlands	172									4,2,	Agricultural issues										
				Stoke on Trent ✓✓	85									NRF	4,2,1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone									
				Tamworth	153													3	Flood risk						
				Warwickshire CC	n/a													1	Agricultural issues						
				Walsall ✓✓	33													NRF	2,1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone					
				Wolverhampton ✓✓	41																	NRF	1	Linkg env enhancmt to urb regen process. Regen Zone	
				18 LSPs: working with 17																					
4 LAs in 20% most deprived																									
2 LAs in next 30% most deprived																									

NORTH EAST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Craig McGarvey	Dales	York	Graeme Hull CSM	(Easington) Darlington ✓✓ Hartlepool ✓✓ Middlesbrough ✓✓ N Yorks ✓✓ Redcar and Cleveland ✓✓ Scarborough ✓✓ Selby ✓✓ Stockton-on-Tees ✓✓ York ✓✓	(8) 76 10 1 n/a 7 106 156 26 232	(NRF) NRF NRF NRF NRF NRF	0 5,2 5,4,2 2 5 tbc 4,3,2 5,3,1 5,3,1 4,3,2 4,3	Waste reg, fly-tip; poor env qual; biod enhancemt Waste reg, fly-tip; poor env qual; biod enhancemt Waste reg, fly-tip; poor env qual; biod enhancemt Upland mgt; flood mgt; biodiversity; water quality Waste reg, fly-tip; poor env qual; biod enhancemt Bathing water qual; biodiversity Waterfront regen partp; fld risk; coalfield abandmt Waste reg, fly-tip; poor env qual; biod enhancemt Flood risk
				19 LSPs, working with 9 4 LAs in 20% most deprived 2 LAs in next 30% most deprived				
Graeme Warren	Northumbria	Newcastle	Julie Teall CSM Paula Buchan PO	Alnwick DC ✓✓ Berwick-upon-Tweed BC ✓✓ Castle Morpeth ✓✓ Derwentside ✓✓ Durham City C ✓✓ Durham CC Gateshead ✓✓ Newcastle-on-Tyne CC ✓✓ Northumberland CC N Tyneside ✓✓ (Sedgefield) (S Tyneside) (Sunderland) (Wansbeck) Wear Valley ✓✓	138 164 132 45 135 37 6 40 (70) (54) (25) (47) 28	 NRF NRF NRF NRF NRF	4 4 4 4 4 5 3 3 5 4 0 0 0 0 4	Transport of waste to landfill; SD; eco regen Transport; affordable housing; economic regen Flood defence; town centre regeneration Biodiversity; SD; waste management Safeguarding Durham's env; SD; waste mgt Climate change Local environmental improvement Carbon Neutral City (launch Sept 03) Brownfield development; waste management LSP only recently formed Redevt of site as renewable energy centre; cycling
				19 LSPs; working with 11 5 LAs in 20% most deprived				

NORTH EAST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involve-ment Code	Key environmental issues
Paul Tullett	Ridings	Leeds	Karen Byrom CSM Amanda Green CS Team	(Barnsley) Bradford ✓✓ Doncaster ✓✓ Hull ✓✓ (Kirklees) Leeds ✓✓ (Rotherham) (Sheffield) Wakefield ✓✓ 13 LSPs: working with 5 6 LAs in 20% most deprived 4 LAs in next 30% most deprived	(32) 17 62 12 (90) 78 (31) (14) 72	(NRF) NRF NRF NRF (NRF) NRF (NRF) (NRF) NRF	tbc 4,3 4,1 4,3,1 tbc 4 tbc 4 4,3	Information not supplied

NORTH WEST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Bernadette Carr	Central	Bamber Bridge	Steve Devitt CSM	BSC measure tbc Blackburn with Darwen (Blackpool) (Burnley) Hyndburn Pendle Preston Ribble Valley 13 LSPs: working with 6 5 LAs in 20% most deprived	16 (34) (21) 35 19 46 295	NRF (NRF) (NRF) NRF NRF NRF	4,3 tbc 4,3 5,4,3 0 4,3 5,3	Waste management Waste management Canal regeneration Waste management Biodiversity protection + enhancement
Kim Nicholson	North	Carlisle	Hilary Carrick CSM	BSC measure tbc (Allerdale) (Barrow in Furness) Cumbria CC Carlisle and Eden South Lakeland CC 6 LSPs: working with 4 0 LA in 50% most deprived.	(50) (29) n/a 131, 267 277	(NRF) (NRF)	0 0 2 4,3,2 4	No key env issues identified Ensure env damage is reduced; pollution monitoring Membership of Health Task Gp; no specific env. Issues Pollution monitoring; mgt of indust impact in natural env.

NORTH WEST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involve-ment Code	Key environmental issues
Annette Pinner Regional Social Deprivation Champion	South	Birchwood	Anita Cogdell PO	<p>LSPs not individually identified in BSC response</p> <p>Bolton MBC 23 NRF</p> <p>Bury MBC 126</p> <p>Cheshire CC n/a</p> <p>Ellesmere Port and Neston 65</p> <p>Halton MBC 38 NRF</p> <p>Knowsley 3 NRF</p> <p>Liverpool CC 2 NRF</p> <p>Manchester CC 4 NRF</p> <p>Oldham MBC 18 NRF</p> <p>Rochdale MBC 13 NRF</p> <p>Salford MBC 30 NRF</p> <p>Sefton MBC 43 NRF</p> <p>St Helens MBC 42 NRF</p> <p>(Tameside) (74) (NRF)</p> <p>(Wigan) (66) (NRF)</p> <p>(Wirral) (9) (NRF)</p> <p>24 LSPs: working with 13 11 LAs in 20% most deprived 1 LA in next 30% most deprived</p>				<p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Regeneration</p> <p>Air quality</p> <p>Planning issues</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Transport</p> <p>Urban renewal</p> <p>Flooding issues</p> <p>Urban renewal</p>

SOUTHERN								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSPcontact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Peter Midgley	Sussex	Worthing	Aprile Biggs PO	<p>Individual LSPs not identified in BSC response</p> <p>Adur 236 Arun 170 Brighton and Hove 92 Chichester 280 Eastbourne 213 East Sussex n/a Hastings 48 Horsham 349 Mid Sussex 342 Rother 190 Wealden 275 West Sussex n/a Worthing 210</p> <p>14 LSPs: working with 13 2 LAs in 20% most deprived</p>		<p>NRF</p> <p>NRF</p>	<p>5,3 5,3 5,3 5,3 4,2 5,3 4,3 4,3 5,3 nyk 5,3 5 5,3</p>	<p>Urban; port issues; contaminated land Flood defence; waste; housing devt Water supply; air quality; fly-tipping Water supply; air quality; flood defence Fly-tipping; rural drainage; water quality Waste mgt; fly-tipping; rural drainage Resource; air pollution; waste mgt Rural drainage; landfill; fly-tipping Pollution; sewage discharge; rural drainage Navigation; Rye Harbour mgt; fly-tipping Poltn, bthing, river water qual; floodplain devt Fly-tipping; rural drainage; water quality Bthing water qual; fly-tipping; rural drainage</p>

SOUTH WEST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSPcontact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Geoff Boyd	Cornwall	Bodmin	Cathy Doidge PTL	<p>BSC will not be used for further prioritisation</p> <p>Caradon Carrick DC Cornwall CC North Cornwall Plymouth CC Restormel West Cornwall</p> <p>7 LSPs; working with 100% 1 LA in 50% most deprived</p>	256 155 n/a 182 86 198 n/a	NRF NRF	2 3,1 5,4,3 4,3 4,3,1 2 2	Information not supplied
Geoff Bateman	Devon	Exminster	Penny Amraoui CS Team Caroline Trevaskis PO	<p>BSC response tbc</p> <p>Devon CC Exeter CC Mid Devon N Devon South Hams Torridge E Devon W Devon</p> <p>10 LSPs: working with 8 1 LA in 50% most deprived</p>	n/a 129 n/a 111 230 181 266 242	No NRF	5,4,2 5,4,3,2 5,4,2 5,4,2 5,2 5 4 5,4,3	Rural land use Waste and diversity Waste Climate change Sustainability tbc tbc tbc

SOUTH WEST								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSPcontact/job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Tony Owen	North Wessex	Bridgwater	Andy Hicklin CSM	Bath + NES Bristol CC ✓✓ N Somerset N Wilts Sedgemoor ✓✓ Somerset CC ✓✓ S Gloucestershire S Somerset ✓✓ Taunton Deane W Somerset 14 LSPs: working with 10 1 LA in 20% most deprived; 1 LA in next 30% most deprived	244 71 107 278 185 n/a 297 234 140 184	NRF	4 5 2 5 5 5 4 5 2	River corridor devt in World Heritage Site Urban watercourse; waste management Coastal defence devt. IDBs River corridor enhancement; agricultural issues Somerset Levels – flooding Somerset Levels – flooding Urban fringe development Somerset Levels – flooding; diffuse pollution Flooding; diffuse pollution Nuclear Pwr stn; National Park, tourism
Graham Green-Buckley	South Wessex	Blandford	Neil Kermod CSM	BSC response tbc Bournemouth BC Christchurch BC Dorset CC E Dorset CC Kennet DC New Forest DC N Dorset DC Poole BC Purbeck DC Salisbury DC W Dorset DC W Wiltshire DC Weymouth and Portland BC Wiltshire CC 14 LSPs: working with 100% 1 LA in 50% most deprived	84 203 n/a 317 304 308 312 229 271 248 290 247 158 n/a	No NRF	4 4 5 4 2 2 2,1 5 3,2 5 2 2 4 1	Waste mgt; water supply; pollution prevention Waste mgt; water supply; flood defence Waste mgt; water supply Waste mgt; water supply Waste mgt; water supply; land mgt; biodiversity Waste mgt; water supply Waste mgt; water supply; pollution; flood defence Waste mgt; water supply; land mgt; biodiversity Waste mgt; water supply; land mgt; pollution Waste mgt; water supply; land mgt; biodiversity Waste mgt; water supply Waste mgt; water supply; flood defence Waste mgt; water supply

THAMES									
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/ job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues	
Dave Wardle	North East	Rickmans Worth	Vivienne Stewart Acting PTL David Hobbs PO	Epping Forest DC	✓✓	235		tbc	Regeneration
				Hertfordshire CC	✓✓	n/a		4	Environmental indicators
				LB Barking + Dagenham	✓✓	109	NRF	4	Development pressures
				LB Camden	✓✓	56	NRF	tbc	Regeneration
				LB Barnet	✓✓	216		tbc	Poor water quality
				LB Brent	✓✓	60	NRF	4	R Brent restoration – Phase ii
				(LB Ealing)		(133)	(NRF)	0	
				LB Enfield	✓✓	93	NRF	4	Salmons Brook river restoration
				LB Hackney	✓✓	20	NRF	4	London Olympic Bid; regeneration
				(LB Hammersmith + Fulham)	✓✓	(77)	(NRF)	tbc	Regeneration
				LB Haringey	✓✓	27	NRF	4	Waste; fly-tipping
				LB Havering	✓✓	176		4	Development pressures
				LB Hillingdon	✓✓	221		tbc	Heathrow impacts
				LB Hounslow	✓✓	179		tbc	Heathrow impacts
				(LB Islington)	✓✓	(81)	(NRF)	tbc	Regeneration
				(LB Kensington and Chelsea)		(95)	(NRF)	0	
				LB Newham	✓✓	24	NRF	4	Waste; fly-tipping
				LB Redbridge	✓✓	161		4	Roding Valley Enhancement Project
				LB Tower Hamlets	✓✓	11	NRF	4	Regeneration of Lower Lee Valley
				(LB Waltham Forest)	✓✓	(105)	(NRF)	tbc	Regeneration
				(LB Westminster)		(110)	(NRF)	0	
				Luton BC	✓✓	91	NRF	4	Regeneration
				Stevenage BC	✓✓	202		4	Town centre regeneration
				44 LSPs: 20 identified for involvement 6 LAs in 20% most deprived 6 LAs in next 30% most deprived					

THAMES								
Area Manager	Area	Location	LSP contact/ job title	LSPs identified in assessment response	ID Rank	NRF LSPs	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Chris Mills	South East	Frimley	David Nummey PTL	BSC response tbc				
			Hanna Strom PO	Basingstoke and Deane BC LB Bexley LB Bromley LB Croydon LB Greenwich (LB Lambeth) (LB Lewisham) LB Merton LB Richmond LB Southwark LB Sutton LB Wandsworth Runnymede BC Slough BC Surrey CC Windsor and Maidenhead BC 30 LSPs: 16 identified for involvement 2 LAs in 20% most deprived 2 LAs in next 30% most deprived	259 160 196 159 63 (87) (89) 208 343 49 199 165 322 189 n/a 350	NRF NRF (NRF) (NRF) NRF NRF	2 2 0 4 4 0 0 4 0 2 4 2 4 0 4 4	Devt of good stewardshp of env; recycling; climate chg High qual green spaces; waste/recycling; energy efficiency Affordable hsg; env protection; waste mgt//recycling Clean streets/open spaces; env sustain; sust transport Env issues: graffiti, litter, cars; nat res; sust regen + devt No draft CS yet Sustainable regeneration; sustainable local public services Env issues: graffiti, litter; parks/os; air qual and traffic cong Recycling; envi issues, public areas; os and street scene Waste mgt; sust devt; natural resources Env issues: graffiti; air quality; waste min. recycling Transport; waste mgt; development issues Recycling; env sensitive plg and devt; flood alleviation Regen poor hsing; better public spaces; regen, hsing, plg No response Protection of nat env and cons; env awareness; transport
Innes Jones	West	Wallingford	Sally Coble A Env M Jane Puzey Ext Funding O	Bucks CC ✓✓ Oxon CC ✓✓ Reading BC S Oxfordshire DC ✓✓ W Berkshire ✓✓ Wycombe DC ✓✓ 14 LSPs: working with 6 5 LSPs in formation 0 LA in 50% most deprived	n/a n/a 169 320 324 225	No NRF	5,4 5,4 5 4 5,4 5,3	Broad range of issues Broad range of issues

Community Strategy Partnership Assessment Exercise: Wales As at 5 November 2003

Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2000) gives scores for all 856 electoral districts.

Scores 1–171 = 20% most deprived; scores 172–428 = next 30% most deprived.

Communities First Programme (CFP) is not comparable with NRF as does not directly fund CSP

Environment Agency Wales is working with 19 of the 24 CSPs including 90 of the 100 Communities First Programme Pockets of Deprivation.

Area Manager	Area	Location	CSP contact/job title	CSP	ID Rank	CFP Pockets of Deprivation	Involvement Code	Key environmental issues
Steve Moore	North	Bangor	Ken Jones CSM Veronica Sulyak PO	Anglesey ✓✓	40–812	4	2	In formation
				Conwy ✓✓	77–827	2	2	
				Denbighshire ✓✓	1–790	2	5	In formation
				Dyfi Valley ✓✓	n/a	1	3/4	
				Flintshire	31–860	1	0	In formation
				Gwynedd ✓✓	6–836	1	4	
				Wrexham	3–858	4	tbc	
				7 CSPs in total: working with 5; 2 in formation				
Martin Mills	South East	St Mellons	Claire McCorkindale PTL	Blaenau Gwent	43–317	7	2	No information supplied
				Caerphilly	9–739	13	2	
				Cardiff	37–865	4	5,3	
				Herefordshire ✓✓	??	-	2	
				Merthyr Tydfil ✓✓	4–249	6	2	
				Monmouthshire ✓✓	296–861	1	5,2	
				Powys ✓✓	94–781	1	2	
				Rhondda, Cynon, Taff ✓✓	2–802	17	5,3	
				Vale of Glamorgan	112–853	2	5,3	
Roy Fowles	South West	Haverford West	Pippa Sabine PTL	Carmarthen ✓✓	10–734	5	5,2,1	Environmental aspects of Objective 1 bids
				Ceredigion ✓✓	201–794	1	5,4	
				Neath Port Talbot ✓✓	8–773	12	5,2	
				Pembrokeshire ✓✓	14–731	2	5,2,1	
				Swansea ✓✓	7–855	4	5	

Appendix 7

Environment Agency Social Policy

**Environment Agency Policy JU PB 3.4
Social policy**

Policy Number: 22_04

Policy Statement (This should be read in conjunction with the attached explanatory note and implementation plan for 2003/04)

The role of the Agency is to champion the environment in the context of sustainable development. This is reflected in the explicit duty placed on the Agency through the revised Defra Section 4 guidance to 'protect or enhance the environment in a way which takes account of [economic and] social considerations'. (The Section 4 guidance agreed with the National Assembly of Wales requires the Agency to 'develop approaches which deliver environmental requirements and goals without imposing excessive costs...on society more widely'). (This guidance is relevant to the formulation of approaches that the Agency should take to its work, decisions about priorities for the Agency and allocation of resources. It is not directly applicable to individual regulatory decisions of the Agency.)

The aim of this policy and explanatory note is to set out further clarification of these "social considerations", so that staff can work within a clear set of boundaries.

The Agency's social responsibilities are defined through three principles:

1. Understanding and communicating the social impacts of our work, including opportunities to deliver combined environmental and social benefits.
2. Addressing environmental inequalities.
3. Transparency, information, and access to participation.

Each of these principles is further detailed in the explanatory note attached.

To demonstrate our social responsibilities we will:

- Formulate policy for our regulatory and operational activities in ways which, where appropriate, minimise any negative social impacts and maximise positive social benefits;
- Develop our advice to Government and others in ways that takes account of people, whatever their backgrounds;
- Ensure that our policy development process takes account of the social dimension of the Agency's business;
- Develop evidence to support our work on social considerations;
- Report progress to others, including Government.

Policy Author: John Colvin

Policy Sponsor: Peter Madden

Signature of Authorisation by Policy Sponsor:

Version: 1	Date: July 2003	Available from: (e.g. Intranet location)
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Explanatory Note

Social Policy

Background

The role of the Agency is to champion the environment in the context of sustainable development. The recent revision of the Section 4 guidance (December 2002, under the Environment Act 1995) makes explicit the role of the Agency in contributing to sustainable development. While it is for Government to take the eventual policy decisions which will integrate social, economic and environmental needs (Section 4 guidance, para 3.8), the Agency nonetheless has two key roles to play:

1. "To protect or enhance the environment in a way which takes account (subject to and in accordance with the 1995 Act and any other enactment) of [economic and] social considerations" (para 3.4).
2. In "framing its advice and views to Government, the Agency should...bring its knowledge of the interactions between environmental practice and social [and economic] factors" (para 3.8).

The Government places a strong emphasis on the relationship between environmental and social conditions. The importance of recognising and addressing these links in the UK was highlighted in a recent speech by the Prime Minister (February 2003).

There is also a strong emphasis within the Corporate Strategy on the Agency's role in contributing to quality of life for people. This commits the Agency to:

- taking a more proactive, collaborative approach to building understanding, informing and influencing on environmental issues;
- forming close and responsive relationships with our partners and contributing to Local Strategic Partnerships;
- placing a greater emphasis on environmental awareness, and how people experience and perceive the environment;
- contributing to community life, shifting the focus of our contribution to where we can make the greatest difference, especially in low quality and degraded environments, and ensuring that we include the interests of disadvantaged communities and minority groups in our work.

Principles defining the Agency's social policy

The aim of this policy and explanatory note is to set out further clarification of what social considerations are most relevant to the Agency, so that staff can work within a clear set of boundaries. Based on the environmental benefits to be derived from taking social considerations into account, and on the political risks of failing to properly understand these considerations; and drawing on the guiding principles of the UK Sustainable Development Strategy, set out in the section 4 guidance (para 3.3), the Agency's social policy covers three key themes:

- understanding and communicating the social impacts of our work, including opportunities to deliver combined environmental and social benefits;
- addressing environmental inequalities;
- transparency, information and access to participation.

Reflecting section 4 guidance (para 3.11), the way we apply these principles will vary across the business. 'The requirement to take account of [economic and] social considerations must be seen in the context of the specific activity the Agency is engaged in, and the degree of discretion it has under its statutory powers and duties'.

(1) Understanding and communicating the social impacts of our work: A broad understanding of the social impacts of our work can help deliver environmental benefits, in at least two ways. First, in situations where delivering social improvements also delivers environmental benefits. There are many such areas, for example in recreation, health, education, reducing crime, regeneration and reducing deprivation. In some of these areas – for example recreation and health - the Agency has already established an active programme, whereas in others – for example reducing deprivation - it is at an earlier stage of clarifying the linkages and understanding more precisely where the combined benefits lie.

Second, we also need to engage with and gain leverage over other agendas which carry greater political resonance in which environmental priorities are sidelined, but could be 'mainstreamed' by connecting them with politically more popular social agendas. To succeed requires an understanding of the relevant social agendas and of how environmental priorities can connect to these.

(2) Addressing environmental inequalities: While 'combating poverty and social exclusion' (one of the guiding principles of the UK sustainable development strategy) is not a primary responsibility of the Agency, the Agency does have a contribution to make to tackling environmental inequalities. At the very least, the Agency should be able to demonstrate that we have considered any potentially negative social impacts of our work and clarified our responsibilities for mitigating these.

(3) Transparency, information, and access to participation: The way in which the Agency communicates with and involves others in the delivery of its objectives can be critical to their effective implementation. This reflects a move across the public sector towards engaging with others, rather than telling them what to do. Furthermore, transparency is a key to building trust with stakeholders. Providing high quality environmental information enables citizens to take better informed action on behalf of the environment. And effective stakeholder and citizen involvement is increasingly key both to good policy making and to effective delivery on the ground.

The Agency is already working actively in this area. The new Corporate Affairs programme, 'Building trust in local communities', the work in Environmental Protection on 'effective engagement with special interest groups' and the development of a public participation strategy to underpin River Basin Planning (Water Framework Directive) are all current examples.

The level of engagement with stakeholders and the public needs to be proportionate to the environmental objectives we are seeking to deliver. However, this is now a business critical issue for many of our functions, including flood defence, waste, process industries regulation, recreation & navigation and the Water Framework Directive.

Policy - Implementation Plan (2003/04)	
Policy Number: 22_04	
AGENCY SOCIAL POLICY	
1. Overall strategy	This is a high level, cross-cutting policy which needs to be understood and applied across the Agency. During 2003/04 we will disseminate the policy internally and externally and provide support and further interpretation as required by different parts of the business.
2. Support to Areas working with Local Strategic Partnerships to deliver environmental gains by getting environmental objectives into Community Strategies	We will complete the national co-ordinating role for our work on LSPs (supporting the Corporate Strategy target*) by: helping Areas identify which LSPs they should work with, agreeing with OMT and the Areas on how we report this corporate scorecard measure, and supporting Areas to share experience and good practice. * The target is: "contribute to LSPs, focusing effort on the 50% where we can most benefit environmental and social capital, including disadvantaged communities and ethnic minorities"
3. Report on links between environmental quality and social disadvantage and make recommendations to the Agency and others	We will complete research into the links between environmental quality and disadvantage, requested by PSG in 2002. We now have some early findings on air quality, flood hazard and IPC sites which we will report to PSG in September along with proposals for the next steps. We aim to bring a draft Agency policy and position statement on environmental equality to Policy Steering Group in January 2004. In parallel we are working to shape a bigger piece of work on environmental exclusion being undertaken by the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (ODPM)
4. Provision of specialised advice and guidance to the River Basin Planning public participation strategy	We are supporting work under the Water Framework Directive to design the public participation element of River Basin Planning. A 2-year programme of work in this area has been agreed with the WFD programme board.
5. Provision of specialist advice and guidance on stakeholder engagement to the waste function	We are providing advice to the waste function in support of its bid to Defra for regional strategic waste advisors. We have also recently provided advice on approaches to re-licensing contentious landfill sites.
6. Contribute to the integrated appraisal tool which is currently with PSG members	We have been working with Heads of Function to develop the social component of the integrated appraisal tool which will be used to assess the wider impacts of emerging policy.

