

Water security through integrated local delivery

Lorraine De Souza Jenny Phelps and Chris Short explains the concept of integrated local delivery and describes its application in the Upper Thames catchment area.

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There is widespread recognition that there have been dramatic changes across UK rural policy over the past 70 years. For much of this period, environmental initiatives covering both land and water have tended to be top-down issues driven by national legislation, policy obligations and international directives and conventions.

Local communities, who may feel protective of the natural assets within their vicinity (which may also contribute to a local sense of identity), can feel alienated by the imposition of targets relating to these same natural assets, from whose formulation they have been excluded. However, such communities frequently have essential knowledge, experience, a sense of pride and a commitment to the future survival of such areas. Complex sites with a combination of land and water issues will have a wide range of legal obligations and interests. In such

multi-objective areas there is a real need for greater connectivity at all levels - local, regional and national - to enable a synergy to be possible on the ground. The lack of co-ordination, coherence and integration at the national (and even regional) level results in a series of confusing, disjointed and contradictory signals and mechanisms for those who live and work close to these areas.

A move towards a territorial or systems approach brings land and water together and has the capacity to assist in both management and governance. While it is possible to see how these tensions have developed, largely through the shift in power away from productivist agriculture and towards measures aimed at halting issues linked with environmental decline, the need to embrace a holistic multi-objective approach that inspires and enables land managers and local communities is

pressing. The perception that external goals, however worthy and legally upheld, are being imposed by national or international institutions without the engagement of local people, who feel distanced and even disenfranchised from their own land as a result, undermines the environmental imperative.

Within Gloucestershire, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and the Countryside and Community Research Institute (CCRI) at the University of Gloucestershire have developed an integrated local delivery (ILD) framework, implemented in a range of situations, that enables those with local skills and environmental land management knowledge to contribute to the management of sensitive and key environmental sites. The first project to be delivered using the ILD framework was in the parish of Uley, Gloucestershire, where the objective was to support

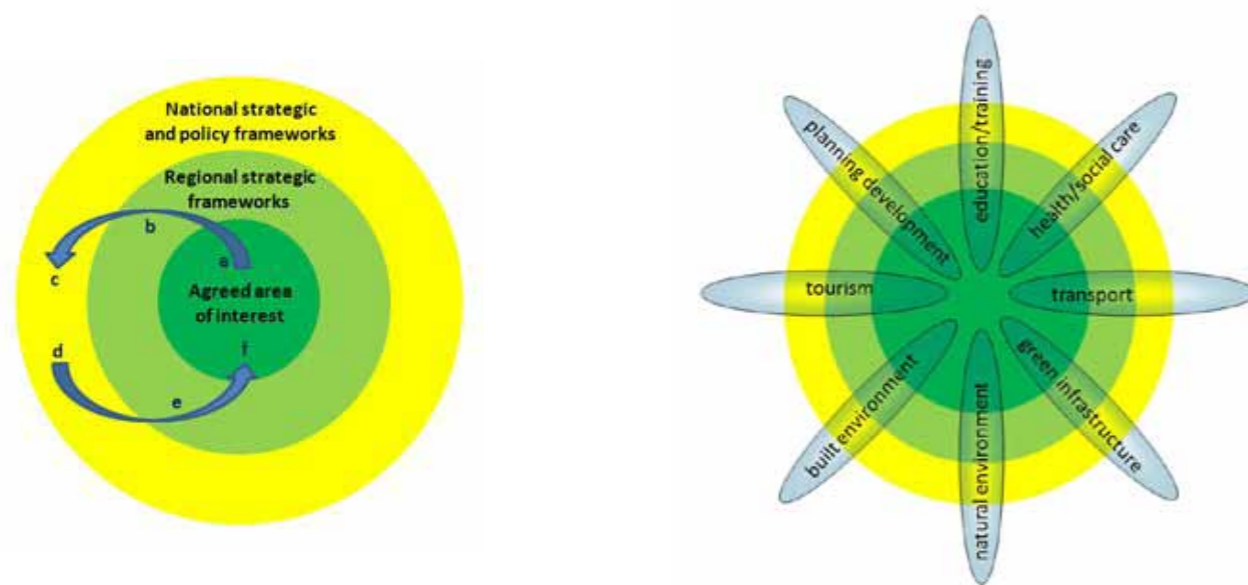
the village and local farmers in the restoration and long-term protection of Uley Bury Hill Fort and surrounding grassland.

THE INTEGRATED LOCAL DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

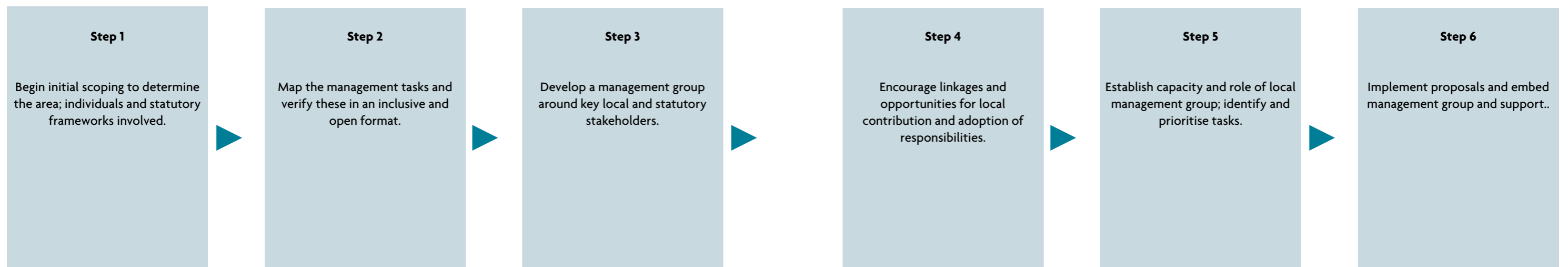
The ILD framework was developed in 2004 from a landscape-scale project that outlined the urgent need for a simple mechanism that valued local knowledge and connected this knowledge and all levels of strategy to delivery by providing local relevance through a simple transferable process. The concept of ILD is that each community could be inspired and enabled to look after its piece of the global jigsaw to deliver multi-strategy objectives at a local level. The ILD approach has been so successfully used in Gloucestershire for over 10 years, to restore key environmental protected sites, that the approach is now being applied to deliver water security through integrated catchment management.

The first part of the scoping phase is to gather information on the key natural assets and characteristics within the inner circle (a), the agreed area of interest. Next move to the middle circle (b), and record all the regional strategic frameworks that could be delivered within the defined central area. Finally move to the outer circle (c), this represents the national and in some respects international strategic and policy frameworks that have a direct relationship to the inner circle (a). This should provide you with a good grasp of the range of physical assets and the associated frameworks at the local, regional and national level.

The next part of the scoping is to identify the contacts responsible for the delivery of these frameworks. This is done in reverse order (d to f), because a secondary aim here is to make the connections from the national and regional to the local level. So the aim at the national level (outer circle) is to identify the person (d) with responsibility for delivering the legal obligation associated with a designation or policy objective (c). When completed for each asset it provides you with a number of circular connections, much like the petals of a flower.



▲ Figure 1. National, regional and local frameworks within ILD (Source: Defra³).



▲ Figure 2. Interlinked steps of the ILD framework. (Source: Short *et al.*)

The eight themes used to develop the ILD framework (adapted from Short *et al.*¹, CCRI²) are:

- **local level:** works within the lowest appropriate national and European administrative structure (for example parish or ward, town, county, district, region, country) (see **Figure 1**);
- **connect objectives:** seeks to deliver a wide range of strategic objectives within the defined area in order to maximise the effective use of public funds and resources;
- **stakeholders:** identifies statutory and non-statutory stakeholders with an interest in the area so that their involvement and strategic aims can be delivered within the administrative area in partnership;
- **local knowledge:** seeks to strongly support and value the role and knowledge of the farming and local community and inspire them to lead the protection of their own local environment;
- **facilitation:** promotes the use of facilitation through an independent third party to develop or support an existing local management group that acts as the collective discussion forum for the area, with clear lines of communication to public agencies with legal responsibilities;
- **local governance:** incorporates the parish council (or relevant local government framework) into the communication structure of the local management group to ensure continuity beyond project timescales and embed information;
- **communication:** provides a forum for identified partners and stakeholders within the defined area

to take action and offer knowledge and resources for a multi-objective benefit; and

- **funding:** identifies funding and resource opportunities for further development and delivery of the locally identified actions.

THE ILD FRAMEWORK STEP-BY-STEP PROCESS

The ILD framework is delivered through a process of highly skilled facilitation, shown in **Figure 2**.

IMPLEMENTATION OF ILD IN THE UPPER THAMES

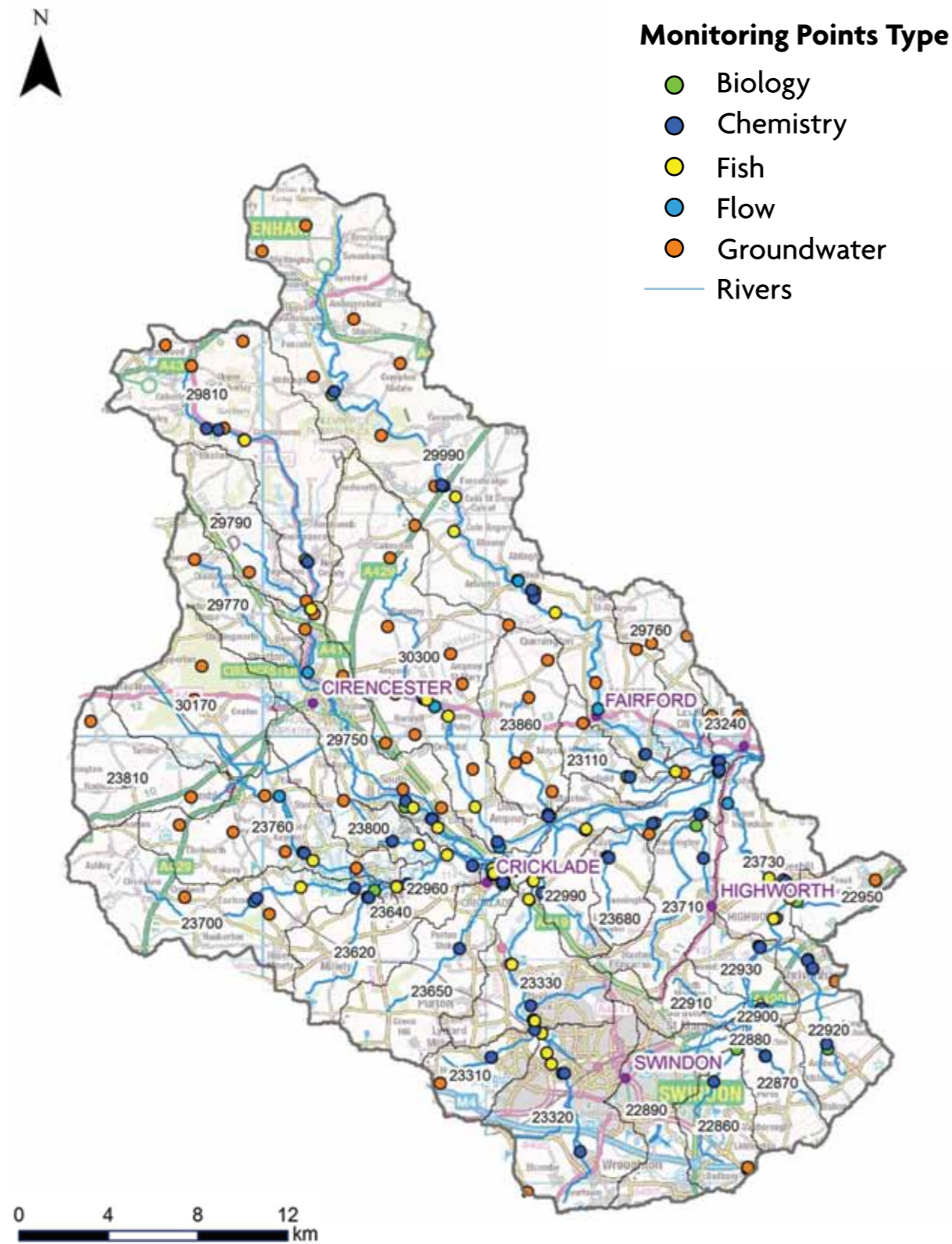
Government policy aims to secure multiple benefits from integrated approaches to improve water quality, supply water, and protect and enhance the natural environment. It aims to integrate programmes that address wider environmental issues with Water Framework Directive programmes at a catchment scale. For this to be achieved, a delivery framework is required that can locate and pull together the different strategic frameworks, and different stakeholders.

UPPER THAMES IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Upper Thames catchment covers approximately 30,000 hectares of the Cotswolds, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in the UK, and is drained by the River Thames and its tributaries (see **Figure 3**). The catchment supports a wide range of economic activity in industries such as farming, recreational fishing, tourism and recreation and is a source of drinking water.

At first glance this attractive area would appear to be in perfect condition due to the wide range of wildlife it supports. However, monitoring and consultation suggest otherwise, for example:

- the ecological status of parts of the river system is not as healthy as it should be;



▲ Figure 3. The Upper Thames Catchment area (Source: Environment Agency).



▲ Figure 4. Siddington Meadows taking water away from the village down the natural flood plain after four road under drains had been unblocked — a simple act by a landowner that helped to reduce flood risk to the village flooding and improved ecological status for both meadow and water quality. (© Jenny Phelps)

- fish, invertebrate and macrophyte populations in some rivers are below what would be expected in a healthy river;
- non-native invasive plants grow within the catchment;
- there are issues with water quality and low flows on some of the rivers and groundwater bodies;
- some communities are at risk from flooding and the risk may increase if climate change predictions are realised; and
- long-term economic development of some areas is well advanced and spreading.

The Upper Thames Catchment Pilot is a pioneering initiative, supported by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), set up

to develop ways to achieve these aims. A number of key organisations, including public, private and third-sector organisations, have come together to develop ways of adapting, protecting and improving the quality of water, reducing flood risk, and protecting wildlife while benefiting the social and economic well-being of communities within the catchment.

There is now an established Upper Thames partnership that aims to work towards delivering a healthy, functioning water environment for people and wildlife across the catchment through a shared vision. The partnership is committed to identifying related actions, many of which are already in progress in the catchment, and linking them together through the steering group to deliver integrated management of land and water. The partnership used the ILD framework to embed this collaborative working both in the development of strategic priorities and on-the-ground delivery through a shared problem-solving approach.



▲ Upper Thames River. (© Simon Grieg)

THE WILD PROJECT

There was a particular desire to develop a project that implemented a partnership approach within the catchment-based approach, and an opportunity arose across 20 parishes within the Upper Thames catchment around the Cotswold Water Park, an area of many lakes created after gravel extraction. The aim was to demonstrate the benefits of linking together community, environmental and agricultural interests to provide a test bed for localised problem-solving and cost-benefit analysis using ILD.

The WILD project (Water with Integrated Local Delivery) was developed in partnership with four organisations working together to facilitate and improve the ecological status of the rivers and watercourses in the Cotswold Water Park. The WILD project partnership was established in January 2012 and is led by Gloucestershire FWAG and includes Gloucestershire Rural Community Council, Cotswold Water Park Trust and CCRI.

The WILD project has been engaging with local communities and landowners since May 2013 by encouraging them to get involved in understanding their local watercourses and the management of them. Through local community participation, delivery plans are being produced that will see enhancements over a three-year period.

The ILD framework has been used in the WILD project by discussing and mapping water-related

issues in parishes/towns with both communities and landowners, including walk-over surveys of ecologically failing water bodies. This fundamental information is compiled together and used to generate improvement projects and recommendations that are then discussed and implemented by stakeholders, and embedded in local parish and neighbourhood plans.

An example of the WILD project has taken place in Siddlington parish in the Upper Thames Catchment. The parish did not experience flooding from the River Churn during the extreme weather during the 2013/14 winter because of a few key local actions identified through the ILD process: in September 2013 the local community and landowners unblocked silt from road drains and culverts, allowing the water to flow naturally in ditches and meadows (see **Figure 4**).

The River Churn that flows through Siddlington parish has been failing on its ecological status. By reconnecting the river to its natural flood plain (with the support of the farming community), the ecological status will be improved, together with the health of the farmland, and also flood risk within the community has been reduced.

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Helping improve community-led management of water resources in Uganda

Oscar McLaughlin, Francis Kazooba and **Alan Terry** outline the problems facing Water User Committees in Uganda and describe how participatory techniques helped to resolve them.



▲ Lake Bunyonyi, Uganda. (© Palenque)

The Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target on access to drinking water, to “halve, by 2015, the proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural” and the “proportion of urban population with access to improved sanitation”, is now considered to have been achieved. However, 768 million people still lack access to potable water, and in sub-Saharan Africa the numbers without access to potable water actually increased by 63 million between 1990 and 2011¹.

As Skinner² points out, while progress has been made on access to water, definitions as to what that means are inconsistent. The apparent success in reaching the target fails to take into account factors such as whether the water source is still operational, whether

the costs preclude the poor from accessing it, whether certain groups are denied access by others and whether marginalised groups who are not officially counted are included in the official statistics.

This vagueness results in Uganda claiming that it has achieved this part of the MDG despite the fact that, in a population of approximately 36 million, only 1.5 million have access to piped water.

THE POLICY CONTEXT: THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Since the 1990s, many governments in the Global South have decentralised the management of water resources. This process was driven initially by the fallout of the Third World debt crisis of the 1980s, in which governments were forced to adopt structural adjustment policies by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund in return for financial support to overcome indebtedness to the commercial banking system of the Global North. Like the countries affected by the 2007 – 2008 banking crisis in the Global North, indebted countries were required to cut back on government expenditure and encourage other stakeholders such as communities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society groups to take responsibility for the running of public services.

This move to decentralisation coincided with a growing trend in development thinking that encouraged bottom-up development through participation with those groups in the Global South that had traditionally been omitted from decision-making, namely the economically and politically marginalised poor³. Participatory development and decentralisation of decision-making of services such as water simultaneously managed the rare feat of appealing to the political right through its transfer of resources from the public to the private sector and the replacement of big government by small government, and the political left, who were in favour of empowering the poor.