Public Participation in the
Ribble River Basin

Case study report produced under Work Package 5

This report has been produced as part of
Workpackage 5 of the HarmoniCOP Project

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Executive Summary / Main Findings

This report considers the public participation process from March 2003 to May 2004 in the Ribble Basin, UK, focussing on the visioning process from February to May 2004. The River Ribble was selected for inclusion due to its diverse landscape and social diversity. The river and its tributaries cover over 1800 square kilometres, from high moorland to lowland plains, small villages to large urban industrial centres with a population of over 1 million people.

The Environment Agency (EA) are the responsible authority within England and Wales for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The EA have a dedicated national team for ensuring public participation in the implementation of the WFD. In the Ribble basin, a project team was established with budgetary and planning control for the process. To assist in the design of the process and engagement of stakeholders, the Mersey Basin Campaign, World Wildlife Fund and Envirocentre were engaged by the Environment Agency. WRc were invited to observe and analyse the process for the HarmoniCOP reporting process.

Active involvement of the key stakeholders in the region was conducted through the application of stakeholder analysis to identify key sectors in the basin, which could provide technical and financial input into the implementation of the final vision. Stakeholders were engaged through a number of workshops, stakeholder forums, website and one to one meetings with the EA. WRc observed the process using pre and post visioning process questionnaires based on the Social Learning Pool of Questions and conducted these with a random selection of key stakeholders. Individual events were observed based on HarmoniCOP guidance and participants provided feedback on meetings using event specific questionnaires.

The overall output of this stage of the process was a stakeholder vision for the Ribble Basin. The project has represented a significant improvement within River Basin Management Planning (RBMP). The overall view of the stakeholders was that those involved have done well to achieve so much in such a short time frame. The project has clearly demonstrated planning and engaging the public at an early stage of the process is important in gaining their confidence and trust to complete the project. There have been some reservations about aspects of the process but it must be remembered that this was a pilot project to test methods of engagement in RBMP, not simply applying a finished product and that some elements of the process will require refinement and improvement for future participation of stakeholders. In general the stakeholders were confident in the process and the people managing the process and the outcomes of the events, there are however, lessons that must be learnt from this process to ensure continued and more effective participation from these stakeholders.

The major problem highlighted in the process was the lack of sufficient time in at some stages with stakeholders indicating that they felt that the process was railroaded and important discussions were curtailed. Business interests however, preferred more focussed shorter workshops to ensure their participation within the process. The outcomes from the participation have been very positive, the key elements of the vision have been prepared and can be used in the next stage of the process. The stakeholders who have been involved in the pilot project are committed to the process and are keen to continue with the next stage. The increase in mutual trust and co-ownership of the basin have been key in maintaining this commitment.

1 Introduction and Approach

The case study is based on real-time observation (RT1 typology) of the Ribble Pilot River Basin testing process ('the Ribble Pilot'), an ongoing process being undertaken to test how England and Wales might fulfil the requirements of the WFD and part of the wider European Pilot River Basin testing phase.

The Ribble Basin is one of 3 basins in the North West River Basin District (Figure 1). There are 8 River Basin Districts in England and Wales (plus 2 shared with Scotland). The basin consists of five principle rivers: the Ribble, Hodder, Douglas, Darwen and Calder. The main River Ribble rises in the Pennines and enters the Irish Sea 25 miles (km) to the west of Preston. The Ribble and its tributaries cover 2125 sq. km. The catchment has a diverse landscape with the river moving through high rolling hills down to wide valleys that provide fertile agricultural lowlands where dairy farming is prevalent before the main River Ribble meanders through the heavily modified water bodies in the urban centres of Burnley, Preston and Blackburn, flowing out through an estuary renown for its birdlife into the Irish Sea.

The Ribble Basin has designations both for the quality of its freshwater and estuarine habitats. Industries such as fishing and tourism, important for the local economy and providing employment, are dependent on the rivers in the basin for their sustainability. The local salmon fishing industry is worth several million pounds alone. The river provides potable water for the region with several abstractions located throughout the basin. The tributaries also provide recreation opportunities such as canoeing and birdwatching for the local communities and tourists.

The Ribble pilot will in 2007 lead to the development of a prototype river basin management plan for the Ribble Basin and so is at an early stage. However, there have been several opportunities to date for participation within the process. As this process is ongoing, the HarmoniCOP project is reporting part way through the process and only considering the participation in the initial stages of this process during the period January to April 2004.

The methodology used to investigate the participation in the Ribble Basin has required real-time observation of the process since shortly after its inception to the production and launch of the Ribble vision. This involved interviews with the key actors involved in the development of the Ribble RBMP before the process commenced to investigate their perception of the issues, the implementing bodies and of participatory processes themselves. The same key actors were interviewed at the end of the Vision building process to discuss how their perceptions had changed in the elapsed time.

Observation of steering group meetings, stakeholder and public engagement events was also undertaken to assist in the analysis of the process. One of the authors of this report is an actor on the CIS steering group who are assisting the Environment Agency in the development of the participatory process. Although this author is a member of this group, he is acting independently of any of the interests involved in the process and can provide an independent view of the process and the actors involved.

The case-study uses information gathered from:

- interviews with key actors in the process at the start and end of the case-study in January and at the end in April;

- records of stakeholder engagement activities;

- observation of stakeholder events; and

- feedback questionnaires distributed at stakeholder events.

To assist in data gathering and our analysis we developed questionnaires on which to base interviews, an observation template and feedback questionnaires, all of which were based on the Social Learning Pool of Questions developed in HarmoniCOP workpackage 2.

2 Context

2.1 Environmental context

The area of the study forms one of the largest basins in the North West River Basin District of England (Figure 1). It comprises five principal rivers, the Ribble, Hodder, Calder, Darwen and Douglas and a smaller catchment called Crossens. The catchment area of Ribble Basin and its key tributaries is illustrated below in Figure 2.
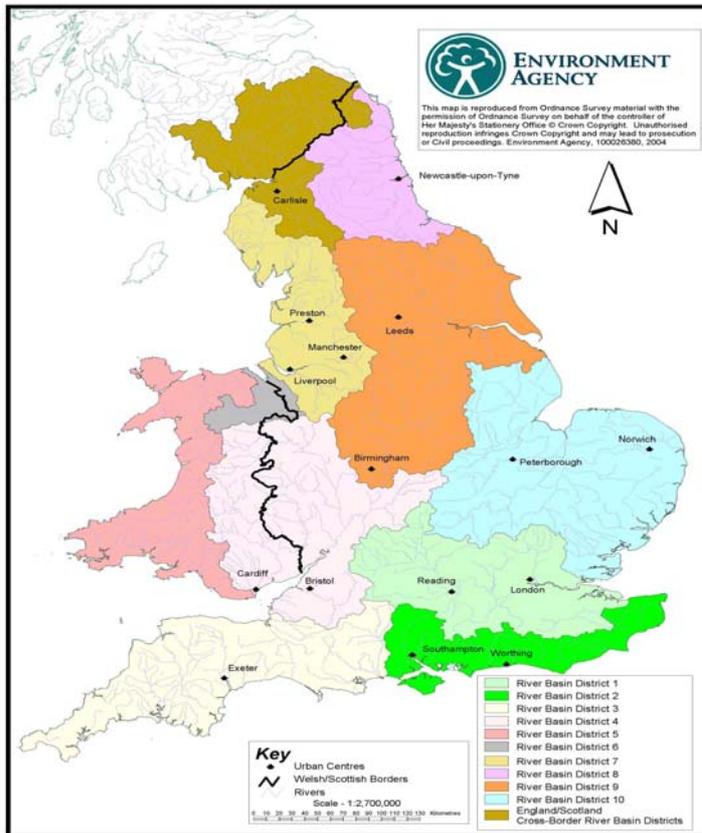
Figure 1: River Basin Districts in England and Wales (EA, 2003)

The main stem, the River Ribble, rises in the Pennines and initially runs south and then west out into the Irish Sea. Through a majority of its course, the landscape of rolling hills and wide glacial valleys provides fertile floodplains upon which dairy farming is the main land use. To the south of the Ribble runs the Rivers Calder and Darwen. Both are similar in landscape to the Ribble but for much of their length run through towns and villages that have previously used the river as a source of washing and power for large textile mills. Long lengths of these tributaries are managed to reduce flood risk and continue to receive discharges from wastewater treatments works and industry with consequent impacts on the downstream wetland ecology.

The Douglas and Crossens both rise at relatively low altitude, they have slower flows and bed materials comprising smaller particles, mainly gravel and silt. With extensive flat land, intensive agriculture dominates land use with considerable extraction for irrigation. Also, most of the channels and especially the smaller streams have been straightened and deepened to aid faster land drainage. Parts of the south-western extreme of the basin lie below sea level and drainage for intensive horticultural management is ensured with artificial pumping.

Figure 2: The Ribble River Basin

Water uses in the region are diverse, the rivers provide potable water for the region, irrigation for agriculture and provide one of the best salmonid rivers in the UK. The region was at the heart of the Industrial Revolution in the UK during the 18th and 19th centuries and a major water use was in industry, resulting in a legacy of heavily modified water bodies e.g. canals and culverts, in the urban centres of the region. The sections of the river that are outside the industrial areas of the region provide an amenity, especially for recreational activities e.g. canoeing, walking and birdwatching.

2.2 Institutional context

The Ministry responsible for implementing the Directive in England and Wales is the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA). It has nominated the Environment Agency for England and Wales (EA) as the competent authority for the Directive. As such the EA will be responsible for organising and initiating the river basin management planning process and have organised and initiated the Ribble Pilot River Basin as a trial for this process. Although the Agency has wide ranging powers to protect the water environment, there are important powers which lie with other organisations e.g. Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

The Environment Agency (EA) are the leading public body for protecting and improving the environment in England and Wales, they are funded through 3 main routes.

1. **Income raised from charging schemes**
   Charging schemes range from those that deal with industrial and business matters, such as water abstraction licences and waste management licences, down to recreational fishing licences. The schemes are subject to the principle of cost recovery, which means the charges must cover the any costs they incur in running the scheme.

2. **Flood defence levies**

    Levies are raised on local authorities to fund flood defence activities. Flood Defence Committees, who decide the annual programme of improvement and maintenance work, approve expenditure and determine the amounts to be levied by the Environment Agency.

3. **Government grants (c.27%)**

    The EA receive grants from the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) and the National Assembly of Wales (NAW). These grants help to finance, amongst other things, flood defence capital schemes, pollution prevention and control activities, recreation, conservation and navigation. (EA, 2003a)

There are different scales at which the EA participate within the case study (see Figure 3). The EA at a national level has overall control of implementation and has set up a dedicated strategy team. The North West region EA office provide staff for the project and the regional director provides support for the process by attending stakeholder meetings to demonstrate EA support for this process at a local and regional level. The project team consists of three staff, an administrator, a technical officer and a senior manager. The team had responsibility for the organisation of workshops and meetings, developing and maintaining contacts and day to day management of the process.
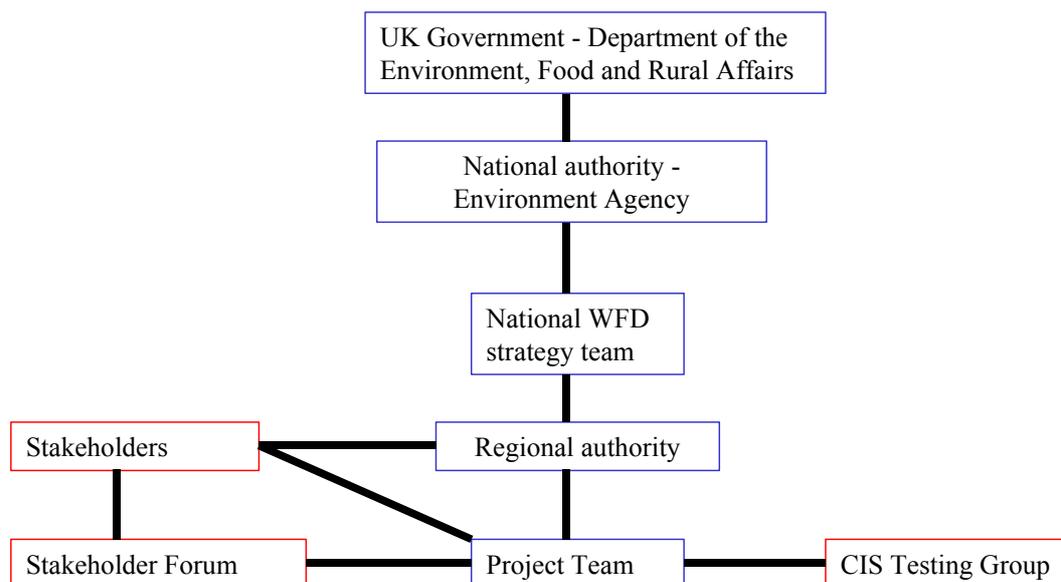
Figure 3: Scales of representation in the implementation of the WFD

A large number of land and water use plans and processes already exist in the Ribble basin. Identifying current planning activities in the Ribble Basin helps to outline the context of public participation within the Ribble. Stakeholder engagement is common to most planning initiatives. However, for Environment Agency planning engagement takes place within clearly defined boundaries and plans are rarely integrated. For example, there are separate plans for water resources, flood defence, fisheries etc., although reference is made to other pertinent plans. The nature of stakeholder engagement varies across planning initiatives; only Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies (CAMS) have a set engagement strategy (the Ribble CAMS will be initiated in 2004).

There is currently no co-ordinated approach to stakeholder engagement in the Ribble Basin with respect to environmental issues.

Important plans currently in effect in the Ribble are:

- Ribble Catchment Flood Management Plans
- Flood Defence Plans
- Shoreline Management Plan
- Catchment Abstraction Management Strategies
- Water Utilities Business Plans

A key area where the Agency will need to work in partnership is in the area of land-use control. These powers lie with Local Authorities and Regional Development Agencies after recent departmental changes this is no longer directed by the Ministry for the Environment (now the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) but by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM). The Local Authorities and regional development agencies develop regional and local land-use plans which the Environment Agency comment on but have no right to veto.

There is a need for other governmental institutions e.g. North West Regional Assembly, local authorities, to support and implement the WFD through existing plans e.g. LA21plans and regional development plans. Currently, the local authorities and the regional assemblies are content to participate in the process by attending meetings and workshops but view the implementation of the WFD as "an Agency responsibility" and are not taking any action themselves to support its implementation by combining it with existing and future planning.

2.3 Socio-economic political context

According to the 2001 national census, provided by the Office of National Statistics, 1.2 million people live in the Ribble Basin. Table 1, showing a breakdown of residents, indicates that the population is approximately evenly distributed from young to old with a slightly higher proportion of women in the population.

Table 1: Distribution of Ages in Ribble Basin

Age breakdown in years	Numbers	Average number per year
Under 10	157,040	17,448
10 to 19	166,884	18,542
20 to 29	142,977	15,886
30 to 59	514,912	17,755
60 to 89	257,135	8,866
90 + years	8,407	-
(Unaccounted)	10	-
Total Population in Ribble basin	**1,247,356**	
Males	606,292	
Females	641,064	

During the 1990s, the resident population of Lancashire as a whole grew. However, the situation in East Lancashire is contrary to this general picture where a decline has been evident, mostly due to

economic out-migration, with the districts of Burnley and Pendle being the worst affected in the basin.

The proportion of ethnic, non-white, residents in the Ribble Basin is high (see Table 2), with Blackburn and Pendle containing an ethnic population even greater than the already high levels witnessed across East Lancashire. Ethnic, non-white, groups in East Lancashire comprise 15 and 10 per cent of the population respectively. This is an important point, as the environment has traditionally been seen as a white issue and promotion of the Directive to these groups might prove more challenging. The overall picture provided by the figures suggests the basin is dominated by a low skill, ethnically diverse series of urban communities. This summary is supported by Government statistics. The Indices of Deprivation for 2000 reveal that the East Lancashire area, and Burnley in particular, has significant concentrations of deprivation.

Table 2: Distribution of Ethnic Types in the Ribble Basin

Ethnicity	
White British	1,137,580
White Irish	10,387
White Other White	10,787
Mixed White and Black Caribbean	2,936
Mixed White and Black African	802
Mixed White and Asian	3,387
Mixed Other Mixed	1,609
Asian or Asian British Indian	29,023
Asian or Asian British Pakistani	37,747
Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi	2,892
Asian or Asian British Other Asian	2,884
Black or Black British Black Caribbean	1,750
Black or Black British Black African	1,072
Black or Black British Other Black	315
Chinese or other ethnic group Chinese	2,875
Chinese or other ethnic group Other Ethnic Group	1,441
Unaccounted	10
Total	**1,247,487**

Historic Context and Background

The Environment Agency as the competent authority in England and Wales, as part of its commitment to openness and transparency, has a policy in place to ensure appropriate procedures exist for making documents available to the public. Most of its research reports, strategy and other documents are put into the public domain or are available on request by interested parties. Many documents are available on its website. Agency research reports have to include a project record which contains, as far as practical, all the materials upon which the research is based. Active involvement, however, has only been achieved in localised areas under specific projects.

Traditionally, approaches to river basin management in the region have been disjointed and localised, statutory and non-statutory bodies have acted independently concentrating on localised stretches of river as opposed to a more holistic view of the basin. There are long-standing disagreements between fishermen and canoeists / farmers and the potential effects of fish disturbance and diffuse pollution.

There has been a history of limited participation within the region related to existing plans in the region. Catchment Abstraction Management Schemes (CAMS), Local Environment Agency Plans (LEAPs) and Catchment Flood Management Plans have all contained an element of consultation or

involvement but the Ribble public participation goes further than any previous plans in terms of actively involving stakeholder groups. The Brennand – Whitendale low-flow alleviation scheme public participation was considered by some stakeholders as a failure and a "box-ticking" exercise and had resulted in a degree of scepticism amongst stakeholders as to the EA's commitment to the Ribble participatory process.

3 Description of the PP process

Driving Forces and Objectives

The clear driving force for the Ribble PRB was the WFD with the EA driving the initiative as the organisation charged with effectively delivering the key requirements of the WFD. The active involvement requirements of the Directive are seen to be taking stakeholder engagement a step further than is currently undertaken in England and Wales and therefore one of the major challenges of the WFD. The Ribble PRB gave the EA an opportunity to test how this might be done.

The stated objectives of public participation in the Ribble PRB were to:

'address the requirements in for involvement detailed in Article 14 of the WFD especially to demonstrate active involvement in all steps of the work' (Fox *et al.* 2004).

By working with a wide diversity of stakeholders in the region the EA felt that a more complete identification and better understanding of river management issues requiring attention would be achieved. The Agency also perceived a need to work with stakeholders to develop their understanding of how the WFD will impact on their activities and seek input to possible solutions and Programmes of Measures. There has been a growing recognition within the implementing agency that stakeholder involvement in the planning process is required to ensure delivery of plans.

3.1 Activities / Phases

The Ribble Basin PRB was officially launched in March 2003 and lasts until May 2007. The process is conceived in 5 phases:

1. Sectorial and stakeholder analysis
2. Communications Plan
3. Development (including publication) of a vision
4. Programme of measures for the prototype RBMP
5. Implementation within the case study area

The HarmoniCOP case study started in December 2003 near the completion of phases 1 and 2. The case study has analysed the whole of Phase 3 from January 2004 – April 2004 and studied the approaches used in stages 1, 2 and 3.

The vision (end of stage 3) was published in October 2004 and the next phases of the work will begin in 2005.

Design and Testing Group

Before any of the phases began in earnest, the Agency contacted key stakeholder groups in the basin, and identified a number of specialists that could offer support and advice to the testing process. As a result a technical 'Design and Testing Group' was created in September 2003 under the chair of the Project Manager, to manage and co-ordinate the work. The role of the group was to:

- Co-ordinate this work for the project

- Provide technical input and resource to the testing and help deliver individual and specific work items (including this plan)

- Quality review outputs ahead of delivery to the European Commission (Fox *et al.* 2004)

Members of the group were: the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, the Mersey Basin Campaign (a local NGO), Envirocentre, WRc (HarmoniCOP) and an EA representative attending on behalf of the National WFD team. This served to demonstrate active involvement, and encourage a wide range of academic and voluntary sector groups to join in the planning, execution and early stage implementation of the Ribble vision.

Phase 1: Sectorial and stakeholder analysis

The key sectors and stakeholders were investigated and evaluated by the Mersey Basin Campaign (a locally based non-governmental organisation) identified early on in the testing process the value of identifying stakeholders in the Ribble Basin to support the pilot testing and volunteered to undertake this work on behalf of the Testing Group. The United Utilities' (local water company) method of stakeholder mapping was modified and developed into a consultation. The approach was developed specifically to meet the needs of the pilot but the principles could easily be applied elsewhere. Mapping stakeholders had two primary purposes. Firstly, to supply information on local groups, organisations and initiatives that will and may have involvement in the development of the River Basin Management Plan. This was then used to identify those groups and individuals that will need to be involved through the planning process. Secondly, to explore how those groups and individuals would wish to participate in the management process as it develops. The initial list of stakeholders was drawn from the Mersey Basin Campaign's Ribble Basin contacts list. For this they drew extensively upon their associated River Valley Initiatives (local partnerships for action to protect and improve the water environment, bringing together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors). Other contact names were gathered from sources including the Environment Agency, various publications and the Internet. Partner organisations were also asked to provide information. As of the end of February 2004, 370 copies had been sent out along with an explanatory letter and an information leaflet. They were sent jointly from the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Environment Agency. The questions are designed to determine the stakeholders:

- geographical area of interest, in terms of river, tributary, coastal water or waterbody
- size of group
- interests
- desired level of involvement
- preferred method of communication (website, post, etc)

The questionnaire listed 31 specific issues related to water and land management and asked which of these the person was interested in. They were then asked to select the three that are of greatest interest. Finally, they were asked to select their preferred communication route and the level of involvement they were seeking in the planning process.

Phase 2: Communications Plan

A communication plan was prepared by the EA during the early stages of the Ribble Pilot Project in order to develop key messages and set out the communication strategy in an open and transparent way. It encouraged early active involvement in the Ribble Pilot Project, with planned delivery of ongoing communications helping to inform, engage or involve the target audiences ('those we need to inform and discuss the Directive with, and those that are interested in learning about it') at the most crucial time. The communication plan ensured a co-ordinated approach for specific communications.

The communication plan aimed to:

- . generate and maintain awareness, interest and enthusiasm in the Ribble Pilot Project;

- build support among the target audiences;

- ensure the delivery of the project through effective proactive dialogue between interested parties.

The principles used in the development of the plan were:

- . non-technical language was used to ensure messages were easily understood by all;

- . appropriate routes of communication were devised to encourage communication with different and diverse audiences (e.g. the website excludes those without access but provides a fast, effective and efficient communication route to a wide audience);

- key audiences were invited to edit and comment on the plan, to ensure that the messages were understood;

- the key messages were used as a core reference for all communication material, to ensure consistent delivery. Key messages (see below), particularly supporting the structure and objectives for the project, formed the central plank of the plan .

For each message key Agency and external audiences were identified, thus providing a focus for early involvement in the work. The plan drove the delivery of early communications, ensuring the right messages were communicated throughout the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) testing phase of the project. The plan will be reviewed on an annual basis during the life of the project.

Key messages (for year one) were:

- the WFD is a major opportunity to improve the whole water environment and promote the sustainable use of water for the benefit of people and wildlife;

- the Environment Agency is carrying out a pilot in the Ribble area which will help define how the Agency will implement the WFD; and

- . the Ribble Pilot Project gives you the opportunity to influence the future management of the water environment of the Ribble area.

Phase 3: Development (including publication) of a vision
The vision was developed using a blank sheet approach, several different techniques were applied to ensure a wide diversity of input into the vision. A series of active involvement workshops were held throughout February and March 2004. The six events, geographically distributed throughout the Basin were attended by a total of 138 stakeholders. The workshops lasted between ½ day and 2 days and were facilitated by external consultants to ensure their independence and avoid them being led by the Environment Agency. The feedback on the process has indicated that this was seen as being vitally important in increasing mutual trust and encouraging social learning.

IC Tools
IC tools were seen as vital in achieving a successful process in the Ribble, a number of different IC tools were tested in an attempt to engage as wide a diversity of stakeholders in the region as possible. Techniques used included:

- StakeholderMapping
  A survey of 370 identified relevant stakeholders were sent background information with 120 questionnaires completed by the Mersey Basin Campaign in conjunction with the EA.

- Stakeholder Forum
  A group of key stakeholders were brought together into a forum to follow the policy and process closely, to advise the Environment Agency regularly about decisions to be taken, and to learn about the Directive and support decision making.

- Meetings in person
  The EA Project Team conducted a number of meetings with individual key stakeholders, especially during the first months of testing. This gave people the feeling that someone was listening, and provided direct input during project planning. An in-depth conversation was considered a valuable investment.

- Presentations
  A series of presentations for formal committees and other groups were undertaken by the Environment Agency to communicate the key messages, raise awareness of the project and increase the chance that key stakeholders took note of it.

- Scenario/vision building
  Meetings facilitated by Envirocentre were conducted with small numbers of key actors to deepen the insight in perceptions and challenges and to map possible solutions. These workshops were observed and recorded by WRc for inclusion in this report. Vision building workshops held were geographically distributed throughout the entire basin to ensure wide actor participation in the region

- Expert meetings and workshops
  Meetings were held between the project team and groups of experts to provide an opportunity for specialist input to assist with developing solutions to technical problems. For example, a series of four meetings were conducted to support the development of the proposed planning process.

- Website
  Project pages were established within the Environment Agency Website to focus initial enquiries for advice and to support the provision of basic understanding of the work. It developed an additional role as the primary route for dissemination of information about forum meetings.

- Electronic newsletter
  Summary information of key milestones provided on approximately two sides of A4, updated every 8 weeks. It was directed at Agency staff, those people more deeply involved in the subject or the project (co-operators/workers and co-thinkers, sometimes co-knowers) and organisations contributing to the Stakeholder Map that expressed an interest in knowing more. The newsletter was posted on the Website and recipients were sent an email containing the web-link.

- Perceptions study – questionnaire survey
  A survey of random selection of 1,001 households in the basin   was conducted to identify citizens' values, perceptions and interests in becoming involved in river basin planning.

  The process was independently evaluated for HarmoniCOP by WRc, WRc used a range of IC tools to gauge the level to which stakeholders felt they were being participated, these included:

3.3 Outcomes

The criteria on which the process was to be evaluated were developed in conjunction with the EA not at the beginning of the process but in January 2004. The criteria developed were utilised to test if the key facets of participation had been achieved i.e. seeking involvement of major sectors, communication, investigation of a range of techniques and enhancement of mutual understanding.

Responses from stakeholders interviewed at the end of the case-study period demonstrated that the process to date had been worthwhile and that all the objectives of the process had been in part, or mostly, achieved. Some stakeholders from the Stakeholder Forum suggested that certain objectives had not been achieved at all e.g. to improve the capacity of the Agency and other stakeholders in the

basin to make joint decisions on complex issues in the development of a RBMP. Table 3 summarises feedback on the extent to which each of the objectives for PP were achieved classifying success as either:

- Fully achieved
- Mostly achieved
- Achieved in part; or
- Not achieved.

Table 3: Summary of success in relation to objectives

Objective	Success measure	Results
To seek involvement of all major sectors, interests and geographic areas in the basin.	Type and numbers of stakeholder reached by PP activities Type and number of stakeholder involved in PP activities	**Mostly achieved** - Stakeholder analysis showed 150 invited to workshops with 88 attending - Stakeholder Forum- on average 'mostly achieved' - High inclusivity - Missing sectors: business (despite considerable attempts to involve this sector) economics, under 30 year olds
To effectively communicate the process and role of stakeholders in that process so that stakeholders understand their role and what is expected of them	Number of stakeholders reached with information about process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process	**Mostly (but for limited number)** - 88 stakeholders attended initial workshops - >80% of attendees at events reported having a greater awareness of issues relating to the Ribble and RBMP - 1001 telephone interviews to understand wider views about the environment and extent of knowledge about the Agency and WFD. - 42 1:1 meetings - Over 6000 hits on web-site - Stakeholder Forum On average in/part – mostly
To test a range of PP methods so as to identify those which provide stakeholders and the Agency with effective participation at an acceptable cost to all parties.	Number of stakeholders reached with information on process and role Number of stakeholders understanding the process and their role in that process Feedback on lessons and suggestions for improvements	**In part (limited approaches used to actually engage the public)** - 88 SH attended initial workshops - 1000 telephone interviews to understand wider views about the environment and extent of knowledge about the Agency and WFD. - 42 1:1 meetings - Over 6000 hits on web-site - Time limited range of methods to meetings, workshops, Stakeholder Forum, telephone survey and web - Stakeholder Forum - On average in part recognising time limits
To improve the capacity of the Agency and other stakeholders in the basin to make joint decisions on complex issues in the	No of stakeholders thinking the process worthwhile No of stakeholders believing contribution	**In part** - 95% of stakeholders from events deemed worthwhile - <5% not being interested in attending future

Objective	Success measure	Results
development of River Basin Management Plans	made a difference No. of stakeholders showing willingness to be involved in subsequent stages	events. • Stakeholder Forum - On average in part – tendency to cherry pick stakeholders
To increase the desire of stakeholder to take action to implement River Basin Management Plans.	No. of stakeholders showing willingness to take action to implement	**Mostly (albeit for limited number and range of stakeholders)** • <5% not being interested in attending future events • Stakeholder Forum - On average mostly – good start to the process
To enhance the mutual understanding of the views and stances of stakeholders in the basin.	Level of understanding of others viewpoints Way in which conflicts are reported	**In part (only at the start of the process)** • Growing understanding reported in events • Growing understanding reported through process • Stakeholder Forum - On average in part – recognised this has just started

Notes:

Stakeholder feedback: It was rare that stakeholders thought objectives were not achieved at all, even in the limited timeframe (one vote each in 2,3,4 and 6). Several stakeholders thought objective 1 was fully achieved. Isolated stakeholders thought 3, 4, 5 and 6 were fully achieved. Views from the Agency tended to be more positive than from other stakeholders. There was a concern among some stakeholders that the process changed throughout the course of events from public participation to public consultation in that, the EA took an increasingly active role in the direction of and discussion within workshops.

The EA appointed WRc under the auspices of HarmoniCOP to independently evaluate the process to date and provide feedback by way of a report. The report provided information on how successful the process had been in developing and ensuring actor participation in the process. The report investigated the interaction between stakeholders, between stakeholders and the EA and between the stakeholders and process. It provided information and feedback on how successful the different participatory methods had been, perceptions of the importance of public participation in the region and how it could be more effectively used and the role and focus of the implementing organisation in the process from a stakeholder perspective. The report was incorporated into the final EA report on the Ribble Basin participation as an independent evaluation of the process. There were no other formal feedback measures incorporated into the process. Informal feedback was collected by the World Wide Fund for Nature and, after the vision workshops by Manchester University.

4   Analysis of the Process

4.1 Framing/reframing

According to the stakeholders who attended workshops and developed the vision (which is the overall frame enabling the stakeholders to be brought together) for the Ribble, the key goals to be achieved and related benefits were:

- Improved water quality
    - Enhance and stimulate tourism
    - Education
    - Diversification of habitats

- Improved partnerships
    - Shared knowledge
    - Reduce conflict
    - Inclusion of different social groups

The issues to be addressed to achieve these goals included:

- Run off from agricultural land
- Point source pollution
- Physical structure of the watercourse
- Population increases
- Time
- Facilitation of partnerships
- Finding relevant expertise

Examples of framing in the initiative under study are for instance:

- "Integrated policy preparation through involvement" is the frame of the implementing body

- "Technical study" is the frame used for consultants and by all actors who consider themselves as specialists or experts in one way or the other

- "Ensuring conservation" is the frame used by actors identified with nature

- "Development of an integrated plan for the Basin" is the frame used by regional and local government

The existence of different frames results in the potential for paradoxical tension between actors. There is a need for cohesion and having one clear frame within which all the actors remain, that of producing a vision for the Ribble Basin. Conversely, there is a need for divergence so that the different technical abilities and competencies of the different actors can be taken into account to develop innovative and creative solutions for the Basin and enhance the legitimacy and feasibility of the results.

The major issue at the start of the process for most participants was actually the public participation itself and the chance to discuss the issues of the catchment as a whole. The possibility of fundamental reframing in the process to date has been limited by the constrictive timescale within which the process has occurred. However there has been a re-definition of the issues. The issues in the process did not significantly change, however, their packaging did, from initially categorising them as to

where they occurred in the basin (upper, middle, lower basin or estuary) to categorising them related to achieving different goals (e.g. diffuse pollution in the lowland areas of the basin to the general goal of improving water quality in the basin and considering diffuse pollution as a challenge to this). This presented the domain to stakeholders with more clarity as they could define the issues to be addressed to achieve their desired goals. The clear understanding of issues by the stakeholders has contributed to an increase in co-ownership of the basin.

During the visioning process, the actual approach the stakeholders took was subject to dynamic re-framing, i.e. it became a fluid process until a system for deciding issue importance was almost universally accepted. The facilitator would suggest a method of determining importance, the participants would question the method and suggest an alternative which the facilitator would develop.

4.2 Basic role of Assumptions / definition of roles

The EA staff involved in the project are a dedicated team containing an administrator, a technical officer and a senior manager with budgetary control over the project and overall responsibility for decisions about and delivery of the project within this budget. The senior manager can make decisions on a local/regional level (with approval) but the decisions made are in accordance with national policies and procedures. The project team can commit resources both financial and technical to the project within the constraints of their annual budgets. The regional assembly and local authority staff are present within the process in a stakeholder role, highlighting issues and plans in place at a regional / local level but providing no financial support for the implementation of the process. The other local and regional stakeholders represent the key interest groups in the region, farming, fishing, conservation, environmental NGOs, tourism / recreation and to a lesser extent, business. Although they are involved in the stakeholder forum and visioning workshops, their contribution to implementation will be mostly non-financial. The stakeholders present from organisations such as the angling trusts demonstrate a viewpoint that is representative of their members, and while they provide feedback to their respective groups on the decisions made during meetings, these may not be unilaterally accepted. The eventual implementation of the RBMP will rest ultimately with the EA but that implementation of some measures by local stakeholders was desirable.

The Stakeholder forum decided to elect a smaller committee drawn from the members of the forum to review the outputs of the vision, this committee then presented the main findings and an overview of the process to a stakeholder forum meeting and collated feedback to present to the EA. The key list of organisations to be contacted and the members of the stakeholder forum were developed for the EA by the Mersey Basin Campaign, a small NGO established by the government in 1985 after social unrest in Liverpool. The organisations contacted represented the key interests within the region, this stakeholder mapping process had a good degree of inclusivity, though stakeholders interviewed suggested that some sections of the community i.e. business and minority groups were under-represented. This highlights the difficulty of 1) including hard to reach groups and 2) getting business involvement as staff attending the meetings are a cost to the business through lost productivity etc. Once the stakeholder forum was formed, participants identified other stakeholders at a local and regional level that should be invited to join the process. Some individuals were known to be sceptical of public agencies and had long standing issues with some of the organisations involved. However, it was felt important to include these individuals within the engagement process in order that they could be encouraged to gain some ownership of the outcome rather than be a critical observer from the sidelines.

All stakeholders recognised that while their participation in the process was important, the final decision of implementation of measures rested with the implementing body (the Environment Agency). Most (but not all) stakeholders recognised that the EA were the lead body for this process. The stakeholders believed the facilitators employed by the EA for workshops were necessary as it made the process more neutral than if it had been facilitated by the implementing body. The

facilitators were important actors in the workshop process and the absence of one particular facilitator in a workshop caused some consternation amongst stakeholders who attended as they believed the process had gone backwards as a result of their absence.

4.3 Boundary management

Prior to the implementation of the RBMP process, the relationships between the individual actors were positive. There was evidence of some historic tensions between groups such as farmers and anglers but their individual representatives set aside such differences to build positive working relationships to benefit the process. This was highlighted in a pre-process interview with a stakeholder who highlighted the potential impact of diffuse agricultural pollution but during the events developed a positive relationship with the National Farmers Union representative and demonstrated mutual understanding for the other's viewpoint. Working relationships have also been fostered through participation in schemes organised by farming groups, river valley trusts and initiatives. This has been suggested as a potential drawback of the process that only "the usual suspects" have been engaged in the process and that not enough time has been spent in engaging hard to reach groups. Some stakeholders were slightly suspicious of the process and why the EA had instigated it, they questioned whether the process was EA recognition of the importance of stakeholder input to planning processes or simply a box-ticking exercise. Some stakeholders were also concerned that this new participation and policy directive would negate previous work done in region under different planning processes.

There was a concern from stakeholders that ultimately the decision would be based on the financial resources of the EA and that measures would not be implemented if they did not represent the overall Agency goals. Conversely, the EA were concerned, especially in relation to the vision building process, of producing unrealistic expectations of what the process could deliver in terms of environmental benefit related to technical capability or financial resources. The failure to achieve unrealistic expectations may prejudice future stakeholder engagement and breed mistrust of the implementing agency amongst stakeholders.

There are two major power criteria acknowledged by the actors, financial and technical expertise. All actors recognise that the EA has both of these and would therefore be a clear selection as the lead body. Interest and pressure groups provide expertise on specific issues and often, within specific areas of the basin, this local expertise provides significant background material to better define issues, aims and goals within the vision building process.

The relationships between the actors have been perceived by the stakeholders (non EA actors) as very important and beneficial to the process, as far as this report covers in the process, actors have avoided conflict to maintain impetus in the process. Stakeholders consider that the EA is more focussed on the process of participation and the technical content than the outcomes and relationships between the actors. Tensions have been managed so far in the process, some actors are of the disposition to reach a solution and implement it while others take a longer-term holistic approach. An example of this was the desire of stakeholders to implement scenario modelling to determine the potential effects of implementing defined areas of the vision. They were keen to know if the EA had financial means dedicated to the implementation of projects at an early stage to raise interest in the process. Some actors believed the process would not be required if there were more EA staff on the ground, doing their job although this represents a minority view (given by a member of an Environmental NGO)

4.4 Evolution of interests, functions and strategies

River basin management planning is a core activity for a number of the stakeholders involved in the process. This applies to the EA, United Utilities, local and regional authorities, river valley trusts and

initiatives and fisheries groups. Other key stakeholders such as farmers and business do not have core activities in river management but their operational activities may have direct impacts on river management. Within the voluntary organisations, such as the Ribble Fisheries Groups, there is often debate at meetings on the implication of policy often resulting in conflict between members. The representatives who attend from these groups are usually the elected officials e.g. the chairman or a committee member. However, actors from environmental NGOs, business and local authorities attend as the project is within their remit / employment area and are not elected. The actors from these groups often occupy middle management positions within the organisation and have been suggested by more senior members of the organisation as being the most suitable to attend due to their expertise and experience within the region.

Although the individual actors attending may have their own point of view, their expressed opinion reflected current policy within their organisation any personal views expressed were attributed as such. There is no formal requirement for actors to provide feedback and gain input within their organisations but within local and regional authorities, environmental NGOs and most businesses, feedback and input are given through scheduled team meetings. In the voluntary organisations, feedback is often provided at normal meetings and input, is often given by members whether it is requested or not.

There was good continuity in the representation of the different organisations at meetings and substitutions were usually the result of conflicting business meetings or holidays etc. At the inception of the process, actors were keen to participate but were guarded as to giving too much information and would maintain their organisational interests. As the process developed there was an increase in mutual trust, increased information sharing, an increase in the awareness of the views of other stakeholders and co-ownership of the issues. The commitment of the stakeholders has increased and in turn they have sought increased commitment to the process from the EA through the attendance of senior regional and national figures at meetings.

The stakeholders were receptive to others at the meetings and although some members of the group were louder than others, exclusion from discussion was rare and when this did occur, stakeholders would re-introduce themselves into the conversation by sharing related expertise. This occurred throughout the visioning process in the smaller group discussions, actors would re-introduce themselves by taking part of the argument being made e.g. pollution in the estuary, and taking the pollution issue and moving it into the lowland areas of the catchment to discuss the pollution effect on fish and the potential downstream effects. On the isolated occasion when there was direct conflict between two actors, the situation was calmed by other members in the group and an apology issued and accepted enabling the discussion to continue. Actors have indicated through post process interviews that the relationships developed between organisations in this process have helped in understanding wider issues and other points of view within the basin.

4.5 Critical points analysis

The first critical point in the process to date has been the establishment of the Ribble Basin as the prototype RBMP, the regional EA office view the selection of the region as beneficial and providing the area with an opportunity to shape future policy. The selection of the Ribble provides the whole basin with an opportunity to market and promote itself within the UK and Europe.

The second critical point was the launch of the vision at the Ripple Effect conference held in Bolton on 11 / 12 October. The publication of the work of the stakeholders and the outlining of the next steps of the process has maintained interest in the process and the desire of stakeholders to remain involved

4.6 Mechanisms that foster Social Learning

Different aspects of the process and the people involved in the process have been highlighted by the stakeholders as being vital for the development of mutual trust and encouraging social learning.

Linking to issues of high public interest/concern. There was significant flooding in the region in the year 2000 which has focussed public attention on the importance of the river basin planning and increased desire for members of the public to participate in the region. Public debate has also been stimulated by the controversy surrounding emissions from an industrial site and incidences of respiratory conditions in the vicinity. Potentially racially motivated disturbances within the urban communities in the region have also fostered a desire to increase social learning.

Terms of reference for the Stakeholder Forum. Within the process to date, the early establishment of the Terms of Reference for the Stakeholder forum and the development of the Communications Plan were significant in demonstrating the EA commitment to public participation in this process.

Delegated leadership. The EA invited stakeholders to take a primary role in the forum and in the visioning events, this supported the Agency strategy of the need to develop public participation.

Personal Qualities of leaders. The basin management team selected for this process were identified based on their open-mindedness and strong communication skills, so that they were approachable, which in turn enhanced relationships with participants and helped develop mutual trust.

Use of facilitators. The inclusion of facilitators in the process built mutual trust in the process as participants trusted the facilitators and also viewed them as neutral. The facilitators were particularly effective in reframing small sections of the process to find a common language and method of defining issues that were acceptable to all the actors present.

High level of commitment from the leaders. The leader of the project basin team was present at each visioning workshop, stakeholder forum, for 1 to 1 meetings and presentations. The regional manager of the EA was also present at the largest of the workshops. The presence of senior figures from the EA demonstrated their commitment to this process and their desire to obtain public participation in the process and that it was more than a simple "box-ticking" exercise. This level of commitment from the EA encouraged a similar degree of commitment from the participating actors.

Early involvement of publicly accepted partner organisations in process design. The early involvement of partner organisations in defining the process fostered social learning through making the process appear more transparent and neutral for those who were to become involved. It gave stakeholders confidence in the potential success of the process.

Visioning, starting from a blank page, publishing results as equivalent to technical assessment. The blank page approach, where no guidance or steering on the issues to be addressed, goals to be achieved or actions required was very important in enhancing social learning as participants were encouraged to discuss the broadest range of issues possible and all actors felt their contribution was important and made a difference. This also made the process more neutral from the actors' viewpoint as they believed the process was not being steered by the EA away from complex issues.

4.7 Barriers to Social Learning

The problems of social learning in the Ribble Basin participation are both intrinsic to the process and to the region. There have been difficulties for some stakeholders relating to the visioning process in terms of what is trying to be achieved. There are contradictory expectations of some stakeholders related to their involvement in the study. The EA have clarified to these stakeholders their position

within process and their expectations of the process. An example of this is some stakeholders wanting scenario modelling to investigate the potential outcomes of implementing parts of the vision, they believed that this would invigorate the process as tangible results would be clearly visible.

The difficulties were most clearly demonstrated in the final visioning workshop when there was conflict between facilitators and stakeholders over what was seen as a stagnation of the process. A clear example of this was the vocal disagreement between one the discussion groups of stakeholders and the facilitators / EA during the final visioning workshop which took most of the session to resolve. Feedback from the stakeholders in this group demonstrated clear annoyance with the facilitation of the session and the thought that a backward step had been taken and the EA had attempted to discard previously agreed goals.

A regional problem that the process has faced is one of inclusion. The region has high ethnic diversity (see Table 1.3) with up to 50% of some communities coming from ethnic minorities where English is often a second or third language. There are also cultural divisions in the region and the attendance in the process has not reflected the cultural and ethnic diversity of the region with some stakeholders suggesting that the "usual suspects" were attending and that there were no new opinions. The absence of what can be described as "hard to reach groups" is to be re-addressed in the next stages of the process to try to further develop co-ownership of the basin. Some stakeholders felt that their views had not been taken into account in the Ribble Vision and that their participation had not been acknowledged (English Heritage). This lead to a question of "are ideas being discarded" and if so, why?, stakeholders wanted to know the process of accepting comments which has led to some dissent towards the process and the concern that the vision may be "watered down" to provide easily achievable targets.

Stakeholders were worried that there seemed to be a lack of notes / minutes available. Participants wanted these so that they could be given to colleagues and people who may have to attend meetings in place of the normal representative so that better continuity could be maintained. Attending stakeholders were also looking for guidance as to the correct level of knowledge transfer within their own organisation, what should they be passing on. This presents a significant barrier to social learning as the attendance of new representatives of organisations may result in parts of the vision not being implemented as new members follow personal rather than altruistic goals.

4.8 Specific role of IC Tools

Early results of the characterisation of river basins exercise required under the WFD were used very effectively at a SHF meeting where participants were asked to discuss with their neighbour whether the early results seemed to 'make sense' from their local knowledge of the area. Overheads of the maps highlighting areas not meeting, or not likely to meet good quantitative status (overriding objective of the WFD) were presented enabling participants to immediately relate to the area and the issues. Discussion in pairs was lively allowing intensive discussion and learning within the pairings. The pairs then formed into larger groups of around 6 people to discuss issues at a room-sized map of the basin where they could put into context discussion points by highlighting regions on the chart. The risk and characterisation maps developed by the EA were less effective as they were considered to be too general and the local knowledge of stakeholders had not been allowed to influence them. As a result of the feedback from stakeholders, a period of stakeholder review of future maps will be placed with the planning process.

5 General Reflections

Overall, the PP employed in the Ribble was successful compared to previous approaches applied in the Basin. But, as a pilot project, designed to investigate and test methodology so as to improve, modify and analyse the process so that similar future processes are completed efficiency, the Ribble has identified many lessons to learn. These are summarised below:

The concept of social learning has received increased support as the process has developed, initially actors involved in the process were slightly sceptical of what the process was endeavouring to achieve. Applying the concept of social learning, mutual trust has developed throughout the process and stakeholders have become more engaged with the process and feel a sense of ownership for the process. The early engagement of stakeholders has been acknowledged both by the implementing body and the other actors in the process as vital.

The inclusion of a wide diversity of stakeholders has caused the process to have a broad understanding of all issues and has increased acceptance amongst the actors of other stakeholders' viewpoints and key issues. Engaging stakeholders at an early stage has resulted in them having a sense of ownership of the process and avoiding a sense of being included because the implementing body had a legal responsibility to do so. Allowing actors a voice in the design and the development of the especially the vision has increased their desire to be involved in the next stages of the process and the final implementation. This benefits the EA as it will be able to utilise technical and financial support in the implementation of the WFD in the region.

The early engagement of stakeholders and the resultant increased desire to be involved in the process has developed a sense of sustainability in the public participation. The EA are already implementing measures to maintain stakeholder involvement and outline the next phases of the process and the key points at which active involvement of the actors is necessary. Maintaining the momentum of the process is considered by the EA and other actors as very important if the overall aims of the process are to be achieved.

The utilisation of IC tools in the process to date has been limited, but those used have fostered social learning amongst the actors participating, particularly those attending the vision building workshops. The use of large scale maps provided a focal point for the attendees and initially served to bring actors together in the process and avoided participants remaining with other actors with whom they had long standing relationships. This promoted interaction between actors often with conflicting viewpoints and gave each an opportunity to more clearly define arguments and issues. This contributed to sharing knowledge both technical and non-technical about the Basin. The key indicator of this knowledge sharing was the ever increasing interaction between the actors. While discussing issues other actors would enter the debate to share knowledge while others would leave one debate when they had provided everything they believed they had to offer and would join another debate. As a result there were very few occasions where individual stakeholders were not contributing to the overall debate.

There were no fundamental institutional changes as a consequence of social learning, the EA has constantly reviewed the process of engaging stakeholders throughout the process to integrate the lessons learned at each workshop making the process more acceptable to the actors. The EA had, before the process inception, understood the importance of stakeholder participation in RBMP, preparation for ensuring social learning may have resulted in a degree of change within the implementing institution and there is the possibility of further change as the process develops with time.

The have been virtually no changes in the power relations amongst the actors throughout the process to date. The EA are perceived as the lead organisation but they have devolved leadership on some

aspects of the process to facilitators and the Mersey Basin Campaign. No power groups have formed amongst the actors, all the participants have worked together for the good of the process, it will be interesting to see how the power relationships develop in the ongoing process. In the stakeholder forum, a smaller group has been elected as a review panel and to act as an interface between the EA and the wider stakeholder group. This group does not have power to change or influence decisions but reports to the EA Project team.

The use of the stakeholder forum, the visioning workshops and the involvement of several groups in the decision making process has demonstrated to the actors the importance placed by the EA in polycentric decision making. The blank-sheet approach used in the vision workshops has clearly demonstrated this as actors believe their contributions will be included and make a positive difference in the basin.

The major lessons to be learned from the Ribble Basin PP are listed below:

Planning Time
o   The most important factor in this PP process has been time, with the pilot being completed with very restrictive deadlines meaning that considerable effort was needed to organise a limited number of events.
o   Increased planning time, coupled with the "piggy-backing" of other events to raise awareness of workshops would have enabled:
  o   a more diverse range of stakeholders to be contacted and involved in each event;
  o   attendees to schedule work around events to ensure continuity in participation from key organisations;
  o   participation of schools as they need to fit events in with tight school schedules. The Ribble pilot intended to include an visioning event at a secondary school with children at GCSE level in the Blackburn area. Despite showing interest in principle, schools were unable to schedule in such an event at short notice.

Inclusivity
o   The use of Stakeholder mapping to develop a diverse coverage of interests is key in effective participation. The response rate in this project, 30-40%, was thought to be good, but it indicates how important it is to contact as many stakeholders as possible.
o   **The Stakeholder Forum** developed for the Ribble was considered by those involved to be inclusive, but some difficulties/omissions were mentioned as follows:
o   The SHF did not include riparian landowners.
o   The SHF was dominated by professional middle-aged people, and it was suggested that a younger audience be engaged so that the vision is continued in future years especially from 2015 onwards.
o   Initially it was difficult to get representation from education e.g. universities and colleges but these groups became engaged as the process developed.
o   **At specific events**, the main groups not well represented were:
o   industry, despite considerable effort by the Agency to engage with this sector. Further discussion is required on how best to engage industry in RBMP.
o   urban community groups from ethnic minority backgrounds, a considerable omission given the social, economic and cultural diversity of the pilot area. Engagement with these groups may be difficult but could be attempted through community leaders and publishing the leaflets and information in languages other than English.

Web and Interactive Tools
o   **The Web-site engaged more people than any other method**. It had over 6000 visits.
o   **Electronic media, web-sites and interactive tools were thought to be particularly good at reaching a younger audience**, the web-site could be accessed through public information points

in libraries and interactive tools which could be used in school classrooms without the need for facilitators.

o **Interactive tools could also be used to engage business and industry** who may not have the time or resources to attend workshops and meetings. Using an online forum or even a video-conferencing approach where industry would be included but not feel they were giving up large amounts of time to the process.

o **However, information is needed through traditional routes** as the web-site is less appropriate for other groups, for example those involved with agriculture pointed out that farmers will not "surf" the internet to find this information.

o **Web-sites need to be 'hot-linked' to related sites.** Some stakeholders also stated that they found information on the site difficult to find and that a "hot-link" should be present on the EA home page rather than going to regional site and then find the information.

The Events

o **The regional visioning and planning events were more successful than local visioning events**. Local events were less cost or time efficient and different approaches of engaging the general public at this level may be more appropriate, for example engagement in shopping centres or through the media.

o **The use of facilitators during events enhanced the process** and prevented discussion groups becoming dominated by individuals or groups becoming question and answer sessions with EA staff who were present.

o **Senior EA representation is required** to make a statement of commitment to the process which in turn would increase commitment from the other participants.

o **Representatives from the EA should remove themselves from discussions**, as far as is reasonably practical, as on occasions EA representatives were seen by participants in group discussions to be leaders to whom, opinions should be directed, this may reduce effective participation by marginalising others in the group.

o **It is very important to allocate the right amount of time for events.** Too little time, can make participants feel that they are being 'rail-roaded' into decisions. This was noticeable in the Ribble Basin workshop 2 where the programme was too ambitious for a half day event. Too much time however, may further deter participation by busy stakeholders particularly business / industry. Also a longer timescale may have resulted in focus and impetus being lost and the development of a "talking shop" where issues, goals and aims were not decided, hampering the process. Increasing discussion may have disaffected stakeholders, some of whom have already voiced the opinion that if action was taken rather than being discussed there would not be a requirement for a participation process.

o **Blank-sheet approaches must allow time for participants to develop and explain ideas and goals**, and further develop relationships between the actors. When groups were defined in workshops, the time allowed to discuss the selected topics was often shortened by the need to discuss what the expected output required was, reducing discussion time. Although the time needed could be reduced by explaining before the event the type of outcome required. This would place constraints upon the process which, the EA attempted to avoid by employing a "blank sheet" approach.

> o **The "blank sheet" approach adopted in developing the vision for the Ribble** (i.e. stakeholders defined the issues, aims, process and goals without interference from statutory bodies) **had both strengths and weaknesses**:
> > o On the positive side, it was seen to be important in increasing mutual confidence and trust both amongst the stakeholders and towards the process.
> > o On the negative side some stakeholders wanted more background information about the process, its requirements and the objective of each event.
> o Conversely, **provision of information to stakeholders about the aim of each event has potential positive and negative effects** on the process. It has the positive effect of the participants being prepared and enthusiastic for the event but on the negative side, some participants may feel they are being directed to a pre-determined outcome.

Raising Interest to Participate

o **Marketing and advertising of the project is required** to increase public enthusiasm and desire to be involved, in the pilot project, the EA website served this purpose effectively receiving over 6000 "hits".

o **Stakeholders expected to see more coverage in local press and television.** Many stakeholders reported seeing no local press or television coverage and others a single article in a local paper (Clitheroe Advertiser) giving general background and contact details for further information. Stakeholders commented that greater press coverage was needed to explain where the general public fit into the process and to increase interest in local visioning events leading to greater attendance of these events.

o **Early engagement of stakeholders is vital** in building confidence in the process and as a result of this people are more willing to give time and remain involved in the process.

o **Timing of events is important**. The timing of the PP made it difficult for landowners and farmers to be involved due to lambing and other agricultural requirements. Future engagements should take account of the external time pressures on the stakeholders that are being engaged so that they can give time to the process.

o **The Stakeholder Forum provided an effective mechanism for building partnership** and an important platform to build on during the remainder of the process.

Overall Conclusions

1. The Ribble Basin pilot project has represented a significant improvement within RBMP. The overall view of the stakeholders is that those involved have done well to achieve so much in such a short time frame. The project has clearly demonstrated that public participation is vital in planning and engaging the public at an early stage of the process is important in gaining their confidence and trust to complete the project.

2. The outcomes from the participation have been very positive, the key elements of the vision have been prepared and can be used in the next stage of the process. The stakeholders who have been involved in the pilot project are committed to the process and keen to continue with the next stage.

3. There have been some reservations about aspects of the process but it must be remembered that this was a pilot project to test methods of engagement in RBMP, not simply applying a finished product and that parts of the process will require refinement and improvement for future participations.

4. In general the stakeholders were confident in the process and the people managing the process and the outcomes of the events, there are however, lessons that must be learnt from this process to ensure continued and more effective participation from these stakeholders.

5. Dissemination of feedback from the project to stakeholders is required to maintain their interest in the participation. This feedback should contain the conclusions from this part of the process as well as information on the next stage of the participation as most felt that more information was required before meetings. There is a risk of losing new stakeholders if there is no follow up within a short time frame.

6. More time should be allowed for discussions and meetings to allow relationships between stakeholders to develop further and hopefully a clearer final vision to be developed.

7. Financial resources permitting, there should be increased marketing and advertising of the project to improve its image and increase accessibility to it. The EA website does provide a point of contact for information, this should not represent the sole contact route for the project and the use of more traditional methods should not be discounted.

8. The EA website represented a cost effective way of reaching a high number of stakeholders, however, the Visioning events were perceived as most effective in terms of public participation. The "piggy-backing" of events represented another cost efficient means of engagement

9. An important concern raised by some stakeholders and the EA is that of raising expectations too high. Clear and effective management of the process can avoid this so that all stakeholders involved clearly understand the process, their role, what has been discussed and the next step.

10. So far the process has achieved an increased motivation and desire within stakeholders to be more involved in the River Basin management planning process.
11. There is an increased acknowledgement within the EA of the importance of active engagement and importantly an increasing acknowledgement amongst many stakeholders that the EA is changing its approach to environmental management.
12. Considering the CIS Process criteria, the Ribble PRB has established a good quality process and this needs to be maintained throughout the remainder of the project.
13. Against the CIS context criteria it has established a good basis from which to develop a good process, using the lessons learned from the initial stage will develop the process in a positive way to achieve a widely accepted RBMP.
14. Appraising the Ribble PRB project against the CIS guidance for implementing a successful public participation demonstrates that the process contains all the key elements for success and that the ongoing process needs to be carefully organised and managed to ensure a successful conclusion.

6 References

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Appendix A   Participation techniques used in the process

Stages in participation process:
1 = Sectorial and Stakeholder analysis
2 = Communications Plan
3 = Development of Vision
4 = Programme of Measures for Prototype RBMP
5 = Implementation of measures

Level of involvement and tools used

Level of involvement/ Participation	PP Methods/ Techniques	Phase of process where used				
		1	2	3	4	5
Information Supply	2.1 Leaflets/Brochures	X		X		
	2.2 Mailings	X		X		
	2.3 Media e.g. press releases or conferences	X	X	X*		
	2.4 Specific Information centres					
	2.5 Repositories e.g. libraries, town halls			X		
	2.6 (Travelling) Exhibitions	X	X	X		
	2.7 Information hot-lines/contact persons	X	X	X		
	2.8 Open house					
	2.9 Field trips	X	X	X		
	2.10 Briefings (at other conferences, associations, etc.)	X	X	X		
	2.11 Internet and other ICT Tools (see later template)	X	X	X		
	2.12 Cultural events			X		
	2.13 International Events					
Consultation	2.14 Reply forms	X	X	X		
	2.15 Opportunity for written comment	X	X	X		
	2.16 Public hearings and meetings			X		
	2.17 Interviews	X		X		
	2.18 Opinion polls					
	2.19 'Stakeholder analysis'	X		X		
	2.20 Gaming					
	2.21 Internet discussions					
	2.22 Advisory commissions/boards or focus groups	X		X		

Participation in planning and implementation	2.23 Methods 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10 and 2.11 could be used in this context as well (please state if this is the case)					
	2.24 Other (please list)					
Discussion	2.25 Small group meetings (e.g. workshops, roundtables, brainstorming sessions, etc.)			X		
	2.26 Large group meetings, involving splitting up into smaller groups (e.g. working groups, open space meetings)			X		
	2.27 Methods 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.11, 2.20 and 2.22 may also be used in this context (please state if this is the case)					
	2.28 Other (please list)					
Shared decision-making	2.29 Negotiations e.g. resulting in 'voluntary agreement'					
	2.30 Stakeholders represented in governing bodies			X		
	2.31 Methods 2.26 and 2.27 (please state if this is the case)					
	2.32 Other (please state)					
Self Determination	2.33 Water users' associations and other NGOs performing public functions					
	2.34 Popular initiatives					
	2.35 Methods 2.26 and 2.27 (please state if this is the case)					
	2.36 Other (please state)					

Information supply

2.1.1 Leaflets / Brochures
A 25-page brochure "The Ribble Vision" has been published and flyers advertising individual visioning workshops have been circulated at relevant times.
2.1.2 Mailings
A 2-page newsletter has been sent out to some stakeholders with less access to web-based information
2.1.3 Media press release & conferences
Press article released in official newspapers: Clitheroe Advertiser, stakeholders want to see more of this approach.
2.1.4 Specific information centres
At the present stage there are no specific information centers.
2.1.5 Repositories e.g. libraries, town halls
Information on the project is available at local borough council offices and the Preston library

2.1.6   Exhibitions
There has been a Nationwide roadshow on the WFD by the EA including the Ribble case study, the EA also had a stand at a local community exhibition where input was sought from the public.
2.1.7   Informations hotlines / contacts persons
A full-time contact project team, with some background in Public Participation is presently in charge of coordinating participation and of the setting up of the PP program.
2.1.8   Open house
So far no Open House events have been organized.
2.1.9   Field trips
Guided field trips are occasionally organized for members of the wider stakeholder forum and conference attendees.
2.1.10   Briefings (at other conferences, associations, etc.)
A 3 day conference "Ripple Effect" was organised to launch and publicise the Vision for the Ribble was held, Over 40 one to one meetings with individual stakeholders have been held with the EA Project team.
2.1.11   Internet and other ICT Tools
A website www.environment-agency.gov.uk/regions/northwest/501317/?lang=_e can be visited. The website contains essentially:

- the report of the Early Experiences of Public Participation

- Ripple Effect conference information

- The aims of the project and maps of the case study area

- electronic copies of the Ribble Newsletter

- a reply mail address inviting the readers to formulate questions and comments.

There are plans to gradually expand the website.

2.1.12   Cultural events
A stand at a local community event, there were plans to hold vision events in schools but these have been postponed until later in the process.
2.1.13   Other- International Forums
None

Consultation
2.1.14   Reply forms
The website and newsletter invites readers to: i) express their views and send comments in written: ii) ask for questions and iii) forward any sort of useful documentation, including photographs concerning also the preceding undertakings.
2.1.15   Opportunity for written comments
Same as 1.2.1 and 1.2.11.
2.1.16   Public hearings and meetings
Public consultation meetings have been held at communal an level as part of the vision process. Routine information meetings are being held with municipal and regional representatives (generally the municipal or regional secretary)
2.1.17   Interviews
Telephone interviews have been conducted with over 1000 stakeholders in the region.
2.1.18   Opinion polls
Opinion polls are not conducted systematically.
2.1.19   'Stakeholder analysis'
A stakeholder analysis was conducted with two primary purposes. Firstly, to supply information on local groups, organisations and initiatives that will and may have involvement in the development of the River Basin Management Plan. This was then used to identify those groups and individuals that will need to be involved through the planning process. Secondly, to explore how those groups and

individuals would wish to participate in the management process as it develops. The initial list of stakeholders was drawn from the Mersey Basin Campaign's Ribble Basin contacts list. For this they drew extensively upon their associated River Valley Initiatives (local partnerships for action to protect and improve the water environment, bringing together representatives from the public, private and voluntary sectors). Other contact names were gathered from sources including the Environment Agency, various publications and the Internet. Partner organisations were also asked to provide information. As of the end of February 2004, 370 copies had been sent out along with an explanatory letter and an information leaflet. They were sent jointly from the Mersey Basin Campaign and the Environment Agency. The questions are designed to determine the stakeholders:

- geographical area of interest, in terms of river, tributary, coastal water or waterbody
- size of group
- interests
- desired level of involvement
- preferred method of communication (website, post, etc)

- The questionnaire listed 31 specific issues related to water and land management and asked which of these the person was interested in. They were then asked to select the three that are of greatest interest. Finally, they were asked to select their preferred communication route and the level of involvement they were seeking in the planning process

2.1.20   Gaming
No gaming applied so far
2.1.21   Internet discussions
Is envisaged by extending the capacity of the existing site
2.1.22   Advisory commissions/boards or focus groups
Focus groups are to be employed to discuss technical issues coming from the Risk characterisation process
2.1.25   Large Discussion groups
This has been used in the large Basin wide vision workshops held in Preston
2.1.26   Small Discussion groups
Small vision workshops held throughout the basin with between 4-10 attendees
2.1.29   Negotiations e.g. resulting in 'voluntary agreement'
None as yet
2.1.33   Water users' associations and other NGOs performing public functions
None
2.1.34   Popular initiatives
None

Appendix B   ICT Tools template

Stages in participation process:
1 = Sectorial and Stakeholder analysis
2 = Communications Plan
3 = Development of Vision
4 = Programme of Measures for Prototype RBMP
5 = Implementation of measures

ICT tools used and phase in process when used
(- Types of tools as listed by WP3)

ICT Tool	Phase of the process where used					Objectives and description of how used
	1	2	3	4	5	
3.1 Questionnaire	X	X	X			Used to test stakeholder engagement and to provide feedback
3.2 Opinion polls						
3.3 3D landscape scale model						
3.4 More general maps			X			Risk characterisation maps
3.5 Paper model (e.g. diagram, mental map, actor mapping, systematic poll, etc.)			X			Large scale drawing of basin used in vision workshops
3.6 Movie						
3.7 Role game						
3.8 Board game						
3.9 Internet (if used for two-way communication, e.g. electronic poll, on-line meeting)	X		X			Website: Information Internet: 2-way information
3.10 Interactive board (to display digital information, record writing/drawing)						
3.11 Information system (tool to organise the information)						
3.12 Spreadsheet (e.g. Excel)	X		X			Updated as a project record listing stakeholders, attendance, type of contact
3.13 GIS						
3.14 Visualization						

tool						
3.15 Scenario tools			X			Desired by stakeholders
3.16 Multicriteria analysis tool						
3.17 Simulation tool						
3.18 Decision support system						

3.19 Aim of using each tools
Facilitate consultation

3.20 What training (if applicable) is provided?
None

3.21 Description of how the ICT tools are deployed and generally managed, and by whom
Deployed and managed by the Environment Agency and to a lesser extent the Stakeholder forum.

3.22 Role of tools in collaborative management of process
Not yet tested

3.23 Role of tools in communication and mutual understanding
Not yet tested

3.24 Approach to integrating ICT tools into river basin planning process
Not yet tested

3.25 Ease of use by stakeholders
Risk characterisation maps are available through the EA but can be slow to download, stakeholders have requested these on CD rom.

3.26 Problems/Limitations identified
No reports available so far

3.27 Any suggestions for improved use of ICT tools made by participants, and made through general observation?
Less internet reliance, use of more traditional methods

3.28 Feedback: Impact of ICT tools on stakeholders
No reports available so far

3.29 Feedback: Impact of ICT tools on practitioners
No reports available so far