

## **Inspiring and Enabling Communities – an Integrated Local Delivery model for Localism and the Environment**

At the core of the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP), is a call for a more integrated approach in the management and governance of the English countryside. This call is evident in the initiatives contained within the NEWP, such as the Local Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas where new stakeholders covering areas relating to agriculture, enterprise and health and social wellbeing are being encouraged to join strategic and delivery discussions on how the quality of the environment can be improved. Engaging new stakeholders and local communities needs to be two way exchange before a shared vision and way forward can be established. Developed in Gloucestershire there is one such example that has been developed by the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and evaluated by the Countryside & Community Research Institute (CCRI) through funding from Natural England. The resulting Integrated Local Delivery (ILD) model has also been presented to Jim Paice MP, Minister for Agriculture, included on the RDPE Network as a case study in best practice and, perhaps not surprisingly fed directly into the Natural Environment White Paper in Spring 2011.

So what is it that underpins the ILD model? Currently, environmental land management initiatives tend to be top-down, driven by large institutions citing national legislation, policy obligations and International Directives and Conventions. Local communities, including farmers, who may nevertheless feel protective of the natural assets within their vicinity (that may also make a considerable contribution to a local sense of identity), may feel alienated from the imposition of targets relating to these same assets from whose formulation they have been excluded. However, such communities frequently have essential knowledge, experience and a sense of pride and commitment to the future survival of such areas.

Furthermore the range of national organisations, strategies and policy frameworks can sometimes end up working against each other in a particular area. This is particularly true of complex sites and issues that contain a wide range of legal obligations and other 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. This 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 and, most importantly, have the capacity to assist in their management and governance.

The ILD model developed by FWAG, has been implemented in a range of situations that utilises and enables those with local skills and environmental land management knowledge that contributes to the management of sensitive and key environmental sites.

### ***Outline of the Integrated Delivery Model Approach***

There are 8 key themes to the ILD model that run through all the many case studies where the approach has been used.

The approach:

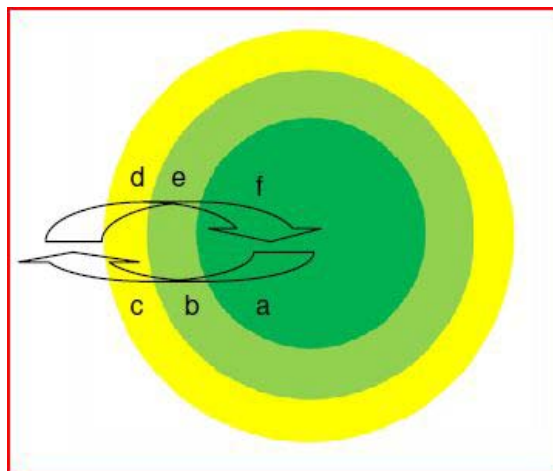
- looks to work within the lowest appropriate National and European administrative structure (i.e. parish or ward, town, county, district, region, country);
- clarifies which statutory and non-statutory partners have an interest in the area so that they can be involved and their strategic aims and objectives identified and delivered within that administrative area;
- seeks to deliver a wide range of strategic objectives within the defined area in order to maximise the wider landscape scale potential effective use of public funds;
- seeks to strongly support and value the role and knowledge of the farming community;

- promotes the use of facilitation through an independent third party to develop a local management group that acts as the collective discussion forum for the area, with clear lines of communication to those public agencies with legal responsibilities;
- incorporates the Parish Council (or other local government framework) into the communication structure of the local management group to ensure continuity beyond project timescales;
- provides a forum for all those within the defined area to take action and offer knowledge and resource to achieve multi objective delivery with an inclusive list of partners;
- identifies funding opportunities, particularly through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), and match funding through joined up partnership working.

The evaluation indicates that the ILD model uses a 6 stage process of facilitation, involving all partner organisations with an interest in a particular area to both inspire and enable action from local landowners and neighbouring communities.

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6
Once invited begin initial scoping to determine the area, individuals and statutory frameworks involved	Map the management tasks and verify these in an inclusive and open format	Develop a management group around key local and statutory stakeholders	Encourage linkages and opportunities for local contribution and adoption of responsibilities	Establish capacity and role of local management group; identify and prioritise tasks	Implement proposals and embed management group and support

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).

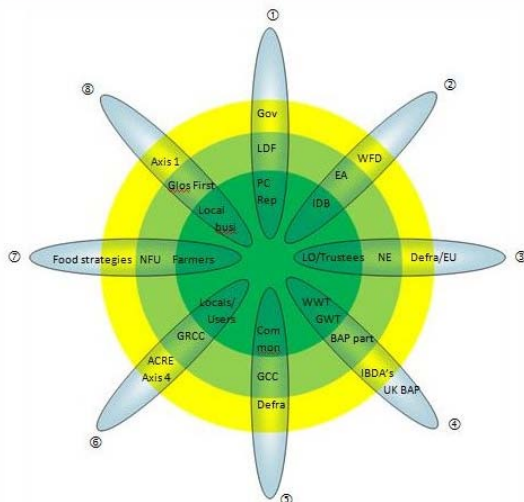
## Walmore

One such area where the ILD model have been used to secure a sustainable local management is the area around Walmore Common, near Westbury and part of the floodplain of the River Sever in Gloucestershire. The area is part of a network of smaller catchments that are low lying and close to the main river and drain into it through a series of ditches. The area has multiple designations at international (Ramsar and SPA) and national level (SSSI) due their geology (lowland submerged peat) and ecology (overwintering of Berwick Swans and nesting of wading birds).

There are two clear national interests and legal obligations, flood prevention and environmental protection, meaning that 'the State' does not speak with a single voice on Walmore. In 2008, a series of 1-to-1 discussions, open meetings, site walks and other examples of 'direct communication' between the FWAG officer, the NGOs/agencies and the local farmers were introduced. Using the ILD model the full range of assets in the wider Walmore area was established.

Each environmental feature generates a petal of integrated delivery with the defined administrative area.

E.g. Walmore Case Study ILD Flower



This resulted in the development of the Walmore Common Management group, which identified a number and range of tasks, of which the most straight forward have already been implemented. This is a clear contrast to the high level of inactivity over previous years. It is also clear that different types of knowledge, for example surrounding the hydrology, are now more widely recognised by a wider range of interests, although this is not always the case. Crucially, most people feel listened to, or at least taken seriously.

Overall, there is agreement that the current situation around Walmore is now closer to a shared vision, with both locals and agency staff agreeing that communication is clearer. The management group is seen as a source of accurate information on what is actually happening, thus replacing 'hearsay'. The actions of the group and the transparent, accountable and effective nature of the meetings mean that the agencies are more confident that their legal requirements and obligations can be met locally. Conversely, the local community is beginning to take collective responsibility for management that will meet national targets and obligations as well as meeting other concerns such as flooding and access provision.

One of the major changes that the approach has brought about is the number of surrounding landowners who have entered into Environmental Stewardship, mostly into the Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) scheme that will deliver greater environmental benefits to the area. The in depth nature of the management decisions has meant that local members of the management group have experienced a dramatic increase in their understanding of what the environmental agencies are expecting on the site and this has lead to an increased awareness of the uniqueness and complexities of this wet lowland area with its combination of both high biological and productive diversity.

### **Wider lessons**

The end result on Walmore is the introduction of a landscape scale process that is delivering far more than just the management of the designated areas within it. The surrounding areas provide a significant buffer, a key recommendation of Lawton Review and taken up by the NEWP. However, this task requires high skills of facilitation and the ability to link up various strategic frameworks.

There are international examples using approaches such as 'community-based conservation', 'co-management' or 'adaptive management', all of which start from the premise that nature conservation and community engagement can be simultaneously achieved. However, this requires shift in ecological thinking that recognises the social as part of the ecosystem and the need for participatory approaches to identify and integrate 'traditional' human activities into conservation management. The type of approach implemented by FWAG reflects the principles and process of co-management described by Friket Berkes, at the University of Manitoba as 'the result of extensive deliberation and negotiation' - meaning it is very much a process rather than a fixed state.

The experience within Gloucestershire suggests that an integrated approach can inspire and enable communities to make a significant contribution towards the meeting of national environmental targets and obligations relating to the environment. This appears at odds with the more regulatory and incentive driven approach preferred by some within the conservation movement where environmental management is determined externally and implemented using a business model rather than one more attuned to the existing custom within a landscape.

### **Next Steps**

The FWAG ILD model is now part of the wider discussion within national, regional and local fora, meaning that it will be tested thoroughly and made available more widely. For the full report, that includes a tool kit and details of the environmental scoping used in the ILD approach go to the RDPENetwork at : <http://rdpenetwork.defra.gov.uk/news-and-publications/rdpe-news/inspiring-and-enabling-local-communities-an-integrated-delivery-model-for-localism-and-the-environm>

Or contact Chris Short at the CCRI ([cshort@glos.ac.uk](mailto:cshort@glos.ac.uk)) or Jenny Phelps of FWAG ([jenny.phelps@fwag.org.uk](mailto:jenny.phelps@fwag.org.uk)). You can also keep up-to-date with developments via Twitter @deliverymodel or the FWAG website [www.fwag.org.uk/ild](http://www.fwag.org.uk/ild)