

Answers to Strategy Group Questions and Suggested Workplan

This note on the proposed Strategy Group has been written by Thames21 and Thames Estuary Partnership, in response to questions raised at the Stakeholder Workshop on 27th June 2012. The purpose of this note is to feedback answers to people who were at that workshop, and to suggest a way forward. It is intended that this note will also form the basis of a set of Terms of Reference for the Strategy Group.

1. Q: The term strategy suggests a high level overview, not a decision making body or a steering group, so what would our responsibilities be?

A: We suggest that your responsibilities would be to provide purely expert opinion on:

- a) Draft priorities of actions suggested by stakeholders
- b) Background and context:
 - a. Key historical context e.g. TEP management guidance (1996 and 2005 review by Royal Haskoning), Tidal Thames Habitat Action Plan and other Thames strategies, WFD background and EA River Basin Management Plan – TEP has requested a student to summarise all data currently held by TEP to inform the catchment plan
 - b. Key current context i.e. WFD actions being taken now, by who and dates to be listed as part of the activity mapping e.g. Thames Tunnel
- c) Gaps where WFD actions are needed and possible projects to fill those gaps

2. Q: Terms of Reference (TOR) must clearly set out what the group is expected to do i.e. a clear remit

A: A draft TOR has been circulated with these notes and is pending approval from the group

3. Q: What structure will the strategy group take, what will be the method of communication between the group?

A: We suggest that we do not have a series of meetings. We will draft the Catchment Plan as suggested and send out to the group for comments via email. We propose a final feedback meeting in early December where we will collect levels of support and/or endorsement from the Strategy Group for:

- a) The process we used
- b) What we managed to achieve and what we couldn't in the time allowed
- c) The way in which issues were prioritised and
- d) The suite of projects we include within the plan

4. Q: There were a number of queries raised over representation on the strategy group and consultation within sectors. Some of the queries were:

- We would need to know the level of person from each organisation that would be expected or desired on the group, particularly from umbrella organisations that represent the views of other organisations.
- We would need to know who within my organisation would be the best person to attend as there is a WFD specialist within my organisation but I have wider knowledge of the area and use of the Thames
- How much consultation do you expect us to have with our sectors? If we are asked to provide input close to the end of the year it might be too much to ask to get detailed responses. However, if you just want us to provide a feel for it then it would probably be fine.

A: By asking for comment via email this enables you to send the draft catchment plan out to whomever you wish. In this way, you can circulate the draft plan within your organisation and sector. If you don't have the time to collate responses then we are happy for individuals to reply directly to the project team or you could send any responses you receive on to us for review without any extra work on your part. We can collate them and if need be check back with you on your organisation's or sector's comments.

5. Q: What will be your expectations of our time to contribute between meetings

A: The Project Team will send two draft versions of the plan to the Strategy Group before the end of the pilot project.

6. Q: We have major concerns about how you will communicate with such a large range of stakeholders in such a short period of time.

A: Our suggested way forward is to have study areas e.g. one or two in each section of the Thames (see attached map) on which we would focus and try to do as much engagement as possible in. Suggested areas are:

Section of the tidal Thames	Area	Rationale
Thames Upper	Hammersmith & Fulham	Thames Strategy Kew to Chelsea is engaged and have good links with local communities; based in the Local Authority and have a suite of projects both current and future which will deliver WFD related benefits
Thames Upper	Richmond or Barnes and Kew	Thames Landscape Strategy is keen to be involved and have good links within the local community; based within the Local Authority and scope for WFD related projects
Thames Middle	London City/Westminster	All four of these boroughs are tied together through the Cross River Partnership which is business and environment focussed. Lambeth Council are fully engaged and have solid ideas for projects to deliver WFD. Battersea is about to undergo riverside regeneration and poses a good opportunity for engagement.
Thames Middle	Lambeth/Battersea	
Thames Lower	North Kent Marshes	Ties in with the Nature Improvement Area (NIA); good chance to showcase collaborative engagement with Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway
Thames Lower	Canvey Island	Challenging area with a lot of interesting issues; also ties in with NIA.

7. Q: Do you have a process in mind for prioritising issues and projects? E.g. Severn Estuary Strategy was used to identify issues within the estuary and worked well – it could be a good case study.

A: We obtained the Severn Estuary Strategy, as well as an additional one from Peter Jones (UCL) which used the same Stakeholder Decision Analysis (SDA). The Severn Estuary SDA process took one year within the whole six year consultation. A similar process was also done for the 1996 Thames Management Guidance. Other pilots have just started their prioritisation stage and we could find out how they're doing it. However, at this stage we feel there is not enough time to do this process and it is too big a challenge for the pilot. We suggest that TEP and Thames21 devise a set of criteria as part of

the development of a draft catchment plan for the Strategy Group to comment on both issues prioritised and criteria used.

8. Q: How do these Strategy Group issues get agreed! – if we meet again we would like to get straight into work and not get into housekeeping, so the project team must work on solving these issues and send round suggestions for a prioritisation process and TOR for the group to agree in advance of the next meeting

A: We suggest that we do not meet again until the final feedback at the end of the year. If any disagreements arise after the group has reviewed this document we will try to resolve them through individual visits and/or phone calls, noting any unresolved issues.

9. Q: The plan must build on any existing or future EA projects

A: EA will give as much information as possible before the end of the pilot to include in the submitted plan

10. Q: We would like to see a timeline detailing how the project will be completed.

A: We produced a timeline at the beginning of the project which we will revise in light of these new developments and send round to the group once the way forward has been agreed.

11. Q: Sign off of the draft plan – what are we agreeing to when we sign off?

A: Not 'signing off' more an endorsement of the process as far as we went as a good start to longer term engagement and the contents of the draft catchment plan (as detailed above under Q4)

12. Q: You want the group to go on after the pilot ends – how will you do this and what will it mean? Would the group liaise with Defra or EA independently of your two organisations?

A: We think that by using 'case study areas' as (outlined in question 6) it will give weight to bidding for further money to continue funding the stakeholder engagement in the other boroughs. In the meantime, we'd like an initial commitment to end officially in December 2012 but since our ambition is to continue we'd like to keep in touch so that any who wish to continue into 2013 and beyond can do so, should funds be made available.