Environment Agency

ARUP



A Collaborative Approach for water planning

Rev 01 - April 2026

Introduction

Why this approach exists

To give organisations a simple way to join up surface-water and drainage planning across organisations.

To help staff and teams work across boundaries, functions,
and responsibilities with a shared understanding.

To support place-based thinking and make collaboration the default not the exception.

To be practical and easy to use, no matter where a partnership is starting from. This approach can be adopted and used at any stage of a project including mid-way through.

What it is?

A ten-stage workflow that is intended to be clear, intuitive and flexible, providing a structured way for partners to work through the approach while recognising that real-world application may not always be linear.

The approach places staff and teams first, with the intention of embedding behaviours, relationships and partnership working throughout each stage, recognising that effective collaboration underpins successful outcomes.

Three maturity pathways are included to reflect that partnerships start from different points and may progress in different ways. Organisations may move between maturity pathways as relationships develop and circumstances change. This may happen midway through projects for example due to changes in personnel.

The approach can be applied at different scales, from addressing local, project-level issues to supporting more strategic/large programme objectives. All maturity pathways begin with a recommendation for senior leader buy-in. From this point, the ‘Emerging’ pathway may place greater emphasis on more tactical or operational activity to help establish relationships, while the ‘Growing’ and ‘Mature’ pathways may help a more strategic/large programme focus where relationships are already more established.

The approach is adaptable by design and is intended to be shaped to suit local context, including culture, governance arrangements, geography and capacity for partnership working. It recognises that opportunities for collaboration rarely align perfectly between organisations and encourages potential users to adopt it and test it at any stage of a project.

At each stage, the approach provides prompts and suggested actions to help guide users through the journey. Outputs and outcomes may vary depending on context, scale and the maturity of the partnership.

The approach is informed by proven practice, with further detail, tools and case studies provided in the ‘Further information’ and ‘Detailed information’ sections. The Collaborative Approach and its associated activities are designed to integrate into typical project delivery.

Guidance for users

The following page shows an ‘Executive summary’ view, and provides an overview of the approach structure, with definitions for each of the ten stages and how they link to a typical project.

This document is an interactive PDF, please use the ‘Executive summary’ view to help navigate through out the document. Clicking on each stage of approach will take you to that section, you may then navigate back to the previous page or section using the menu bar at the top, the back and forth arrows, or the home icon (located at each section in the main diagram).White text boxes in the main approach indicate suggested or optional activities.

Introduction

Key to icons

Each icon represents a specific theme of the approach. Clicking on an icon will lead the user to more information on that theme which is relevant to the particular activity within the framework.

The ‘Ways of working’, ‘Place-based’ and ‘Signposting to case studies’ coloured circles link to supporting information in the ‘Further information’ section, which can be navigated to via the contents bar at the top of each page. The ‘More detailed information and guidance’ dots links to the ‘Detailed information’ section. Both of these sections are located below the main approach in the document.

- Ways of working
- Signposting to case studies
- Place-based
- More detailed information and guidance

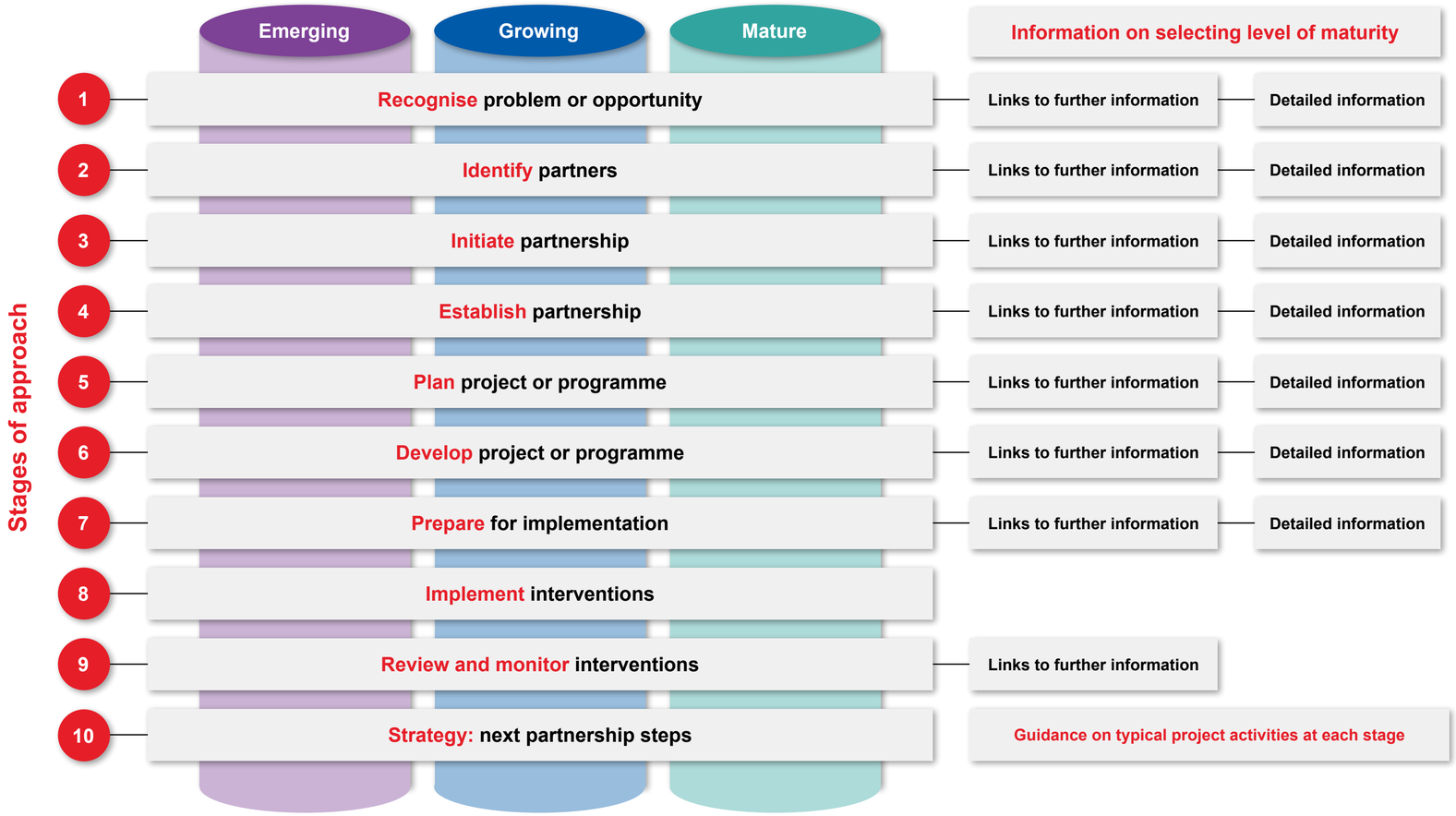
Acknowledgements

A wide range of information has shaped the development of this approach, including previous reporting, interviews, workshops and learnings from testing and trialling the approach. A list of references is included in the accompanying report, including published work by UK Water Industry Research, which this approach builds upon.

Please use the buttons

Executive summary view

The Collaborative Approach



Getting started

Overview

How to assess which pathway to start on:

The aim is to identify the level of maturity of the existing relationship and ways of collaborative working. This will help determine a starting position and to select the best approach through the workflow.

Example elements to understand and discuss include:

– do you have connections at partner organisations? (e.g. if you are a water company, at a local authority - and vice versa)

– what levels are these connections at? e.g. operational, project-level, senior level?

– do you meet in-person regularly and if so what is discussed at these meetings?

– do you understand the priorities of the partner organisations, for example spatial locations of future developments, the strategic aims set out in documents such as DWMPs and SWMPs (if present), assets, flooding risks from multiple sources?

– What are the datasets you are currently using to plan investment and manage risks - are they shared between partners?

– Do you currently implement any projects jointly?

– have you worked together in the past?

– Do the questions asked in Stage 1 lead you to a nature answer.

The answers to these questions will help answer which one you might wish to start on. Remember, you can change maturity pathways throughout the stages depending on how the project is progressing.

Partnership maturity assessment

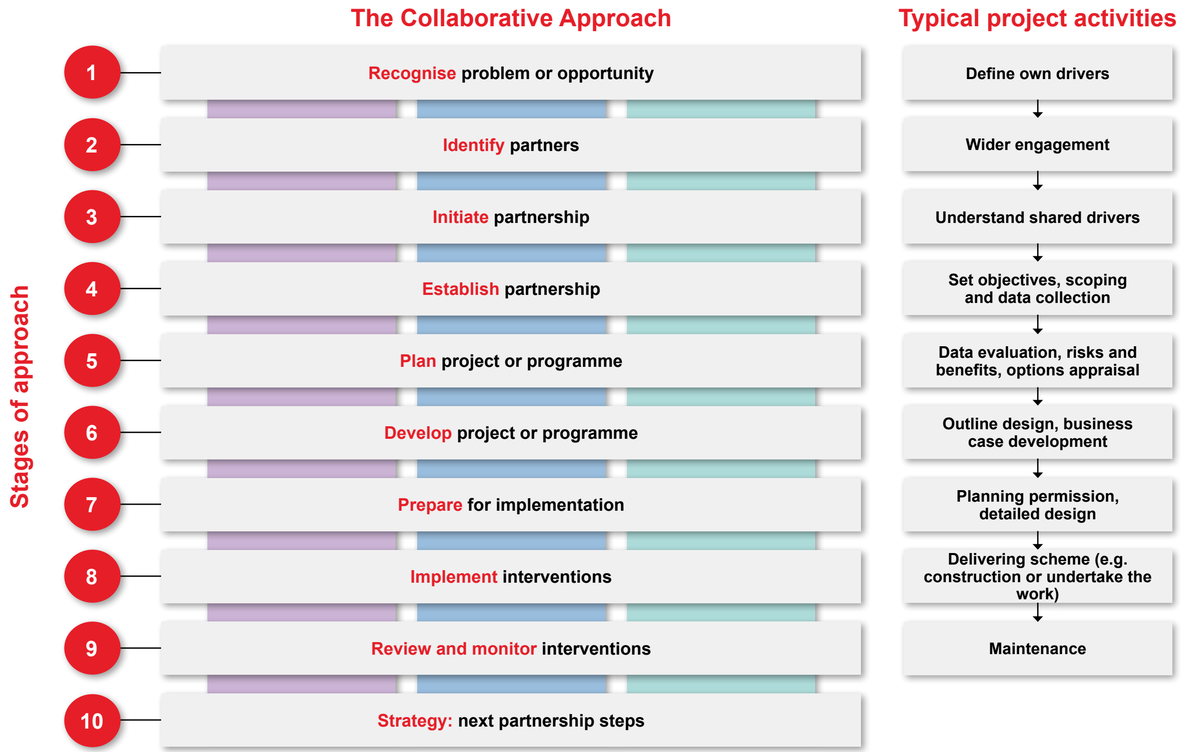
Theme	Key questions to understand and discuss	Emerging	Growing	Mature
Existing relationships	Do you have connections at partner organisations? (e.g. if you are a water company, at a local authority – and vice versa)	You may or may not have knowledge of the key organisations you could partner with, and may or may not have an existing relationship with individuals in those organisations.	You may have established relationships with partner organisations, typically built through delivery-focused interactions.	You have clear knowledge of partner organisations and strong existing personal relationships.
Level of engagement	What levels are these connections at (e.g. operational, project-level, senior level)?	Any connections are likely to be informal or limited, with no clear engagement across organisational levels.	Collaboration tends to occur at an operational level, without a fully established strategic partnership.	You have regular engagement at multiple levels (e.g. operational, project and strategic).
Ways of working	Do you meet in person regularly, and if so, what is discussed at these meetings?	You may not meet regularly, and collaboration has not yet been embedded into routine ways of working.	You may meet periodically, often focused on specific projects rather than longer-term collaboration.	You have formalised partnership arrangements with regular meetings and agreed ways of working.
Understanding partner priorities	Do you understand partner priorities, such as future development locations, strategic aims (e.g. DWMPs, SWMPs), assets and multi-source flood risks?	You have good awareness of your own organisation's objectives and problem areas, but limited understanding of partners' priorities, objectives, spatial focus or strategic plans.	You may have some awareness of partner objectives, but not a clear or shared view of where priorities align.	You have a clear conceptual and spatial understanding of where organisational objectives and priorities align.
Data and evidence	What datasets are you currently using to plan investment and manage risk, and are they shared between partners?	You may have some data to support prioritisation and problem solving, but would like to improve this information and may not be aware of what other data could be relevant. Data is not typically shared.	Data may be shared on an ad hoc basis, without formal data-sharing agreements in place.	Data is shared freely, supported by established data-sharing agreements.
Joint delivery	Do you currently implement any projects jointly?	You may choose to focus on developing a single project to begin building relationships, trust and confidence.	You may choose to develop several projects jointly, helping to grow the partnership and consolidate relationships.	You may have established, or be developing, a programme of projects delivered collaboratively.
Previous collaboration	Have you worked together in the past?	You may have limited or no previous experience of working together and recognise the need to build trust.	You have worked together previously, typically on individual projects.	There is a strong history of collaboration and a high level of mutual trust.
Strategic direction	Do the questions asked in Stage 1 lead you towards a nature-based answer?	You may recognise the potential need for a more collaborative and nature-based approach but are unsure how to progress and lack the time or headspace to explore this fully.	You may be motivated to change ways of working to achieve better outcomes, including nature-based solutions, but are constrained by existing delivery pressures.	Nature-based, collaborative approaches are embedded, though challenges may remain around funding, governance, ownership and long-term stewardship.

Getting started

Overview

Links between The Collaborative Approach and typical project activities:

The Collaborative Approach and its associated activities are designed to integrate into typical project delivery. Rather than introducing a new or separate process, it enables partners to consider the wider collaborative workflow within their existing planning processes and funding cycles. The image below illustrates how this approach aligns with typical project activities.



Emerging

You may or may not have knowledge of the key organisations 'on your patch' that you could partner with to try to achieve improved collaborative outcomes. You may or may not have an existing relationship with someone from this organisation. You have a willingness to collaborate but might not be aware of what practical steps to take to work towards improving partnership working, neither having the time nor headspace to prioritise figuring out how best to do it. You have good knowledge and awareness of your own organisation's objectives and problem areas. You might have some data to support your efforts to prioritise and solve problems, but you would like to improve this information. You might not be aware of what other data could be relevant, nor might you have particular awareness of the most significant problems facing prospective partners, what their objectives are, where their priority locations are situated and strategic aims set out in management plans. You may recognise a need to establish a strong relationship and work to build trust. You may choose to focus on developing one project, to build relationships, trust and confidence.

Growing

You may have established relationships with partner organisations and collaborate on an operational level, but not have a strategic partnership and therefore may not have a clear view of partners' objectives and priorities and where they might overlap with yours. You may share data on an ad hoc basis but not necessarily have established data sharing agreements in place. You may be motivated and willing to change your ways of working to achieve better outcomes but are unsure how to and already be stretched by delivery of other responsibilities, lacking the time and headspace to make changes to current ways of working. You may choose to focus on developing several projects, to grow the partnership and consolidate relationships.

Mature

You may have clear knowledge of partner organisations and strong existing personal relationships. You may have a formalised partnership working arrangement with regular meetings taking place at different levels between organisations (e.g. operational and strategic). You already have a clear view conceptually and spatially of where there is alignment of between organisational objectives and priorities. You share data freely and have sharing agreements in place. There is a high level of mutual trust. However, you might find it challenging to collaboratively fund and maintain, and have challenges relating to governance and ownership. You may choose to establish and grow a programme of projects, and put mechanisms in place to steward the partnership.

1. Recognise problem or opportunity

Remember these numbers click you through the further information

Emerging

1.1 If organisation's mandate or partners allow:
If it is obviously not just your organisation's responsibility* or easily resolved by a single organisation
& failed pump/blockage etc)
STOP - refer to 'Ways of working' information (1.1)

1.2 **What data/datasets are available to you?**
Understand datasets you have available in your organisation, published open data, and what data potential additional partners may have.
Consider early if data sharing agreements will be needed

1.3 **Define drivers**
Define key drivers for your organisation.
Consider potential added value of collaboration
Consider location and scale - is the problem a suitable size?* for a pilot project to be discussed?

1.4 Could you deliver drivers together?

* Something that two organisations newly working together could collaborate on. Not one small to be insignificant that not in a large/serious cross-urban context

Growing

1.1 A problem has emerged that could be tackled collaboratively or an opportunity to link up with another organisation's plans has emerged

1.2 **What data/datasets are available to you?**
Understand datasets you have available in your organisation, published open data and what data potential additional partners may have.
Consider early if data sharing agreements will be needed

1.3 **Define drivers**
Define key drivers for your organisation
Understand potential added value of collaboration
Consider location and scale - any overlaps between your own and other's policies and plans?

1.4 Could you deliver drivers together?

Mature

1.1 You are planning for a solution that is needed in your plan or a problem has emerged that could be tackled collaboratively
Explore opportunities to link up with another organisation's plans

1.2 **What data/datasets are available to you?**

1.3 **Define drivers**
Define key drivers for your organisation. Consider overlaps between plans of others
Could you deliver something together?

1.4

2. Identify partners

Emerging

2.1 Identify potential partners:
considering their drivers for partnership

2.2 Approach potential partners:
with shortlisted partners
Establish contacts
to reach out to initially

2.3 Contact potential partners
Contact people at existing partners with responsibilities at phase(s) of interest. Consider scale of area(s) of shared interest

Growing

2.1 Consider revitalisation of existing partnerships in new contexts (e.g. new plans or legislation)

2.2

2.3 Connect with potential partners

Mature

2.1 Connect with existing partners

2.2

Identify and consider if new partners could also be drawn in to a partnership.

3. Initiate partnership

Emerging

3.1 Assumptions testing workshop:
list assumptions from first stage - around drivers, locations, scale, plan overlaps. Collate and overlay data if available (e.g. showing vulnerability and opportunity areas

3.2 Assumptions testing workshop:
Test assumptions around aims, scale, resources, locations & boundaries, data, overlapping plans, funding. Consider undertaking a stakeholder mapping workshop (if external and external).

3.3 Agree to proceed and establish a project or partnership steering group

3.4 Review workshop:
Share:
focused discussions, summarise and then circulate shared understanding of priority drivers of collaboration

3.5 **Data sharing:** (optional)
If not discussed already, discuss plan for data sharing

Growing

3.1 Consider commissioning a study jointly

3.2

3.3 **Introductory workshop for project lead:**

3.4 **Data sharing workshop (optional)**
If not discussed already, discuss plan for data sharing
Consider undertaking strategic work on data sharing agreements, legal arrangements between organisations, MoU, joint dataset commission & maintenance, data portals etc. Purpose is to streamline accessibility to enable more efficient and effective partnerships.

3.5 Agree to proceed andestablish a project or partnership steering group

Mature

3.1

3.2 **Introductory workshop for project lead:**

3.3

Partnership refresh
signpost or refresh partnership steering committee consider data sharing arrangements

Data sharing:
Consider undertaking strategic work on data sharing agreements, legal arrangements between organisations, MoU, joint dataset commission & maintenance, data portals etc. Purpose is to streamline accessibility to enable more efficient and effective partnerships.

4. Establish partnership

Emerging

4.1 Partnership:
If only a single location has so far been considered, don't miss the opportunity to think bigger at this stage, in case there is a more suitable opportunity/location that may enable the first project to get implemented

4.2 Opportunities prioritised:
Shortlist a few location options that maximise solutions for the different partners

Based on previous workshops and data (use local authority and WoSC data as a basis and case study for guidance

4.3 Location selection workshop:
From the shortlist agree the location to take forward

Agree a location or several locations with mutually developed good potential (i.e. overlapping drivers) for collaborative interventions

Growing

4.1 Location selection workshop:
Test assumptions around drivers and perceived spatial priorities against those in plans. This could be high-level initially

4.2 Focused SWOT/DAMP workshop(s):
Discuss and agree criteria to prioritise in datasets.

Data overlay and screening:
Use agreed criteria to overlay datasets of interest within boundary area (high-level). Produce shortlist of Level 3 catchments

4.3 Location selection workshop:
to identify specific Level 3 catchments and locations within them. Use local authority and WoSC data (see note box and case study)

Mature

4.1 Workshop to review DAMP & SWOT for location selection:
Review and agree on shared drivers, priorities and scales.

5. Plan project or programme

Emerging

Suggest focus on growing a cluster of projects to build trust and confidence

5.1 Opportunities prioritised:
For selected location(s), overlay data to appraise constraints and identify potential opportunities

5.2 Opportunities, constraints, solutions workshop(s):
For selected location(s), identify mechanisms and potential interventions that address drivers

5.3 Meeting to discuss funding, governance, roles and the next steps:
for potential partnership scheme to deliver the types of intervention discussed at prioritised location(s). Select lead partner

5.4 The agreed partner to lead on this with in-house or external resource. Other partners reporting in agreed manner

Growing

Suggest focus on growing a cluster of projects to build trust and confidence to grow the partnership & programme

5.1 Location specific analysis

5.2 Opportunities, constraints, solutions workshop(s):

5.3 Meeting to discuss funding, governance, roles and the next steps:

Mature

Suggest focus on growing a cluster of projects to build trust and confidence to de-ambitious & long-term-ambitious

5.1 Data overlay:
Using partner and wider data, produce dynamic shortlist of priority locations. Consider use of data portals.

5.2 Programme planning workshop(s):
Review data-driven shortlist, refine criteria, update shortlist. Produce project pipeline.

5.3 Location selection and resource allocation workshop(s):
Identify multiple places to progress into development phase, allocating funding, resource and governance structures.

Interventions can be across a range of different scales with many different types e.g. intervention could be physical, educational, it could be a funded partnership which considers both and more (e.g. Ars Blue-Green Newcastle example)

May form a regular e.g. 6-monthly meeting cadence to review existing and plan new projects in pipeline

6. Develop project or programme

Emerging

5.1 Viability:
detailed consideration of funding mechanisms, costs and benefits, and apportionment

5.2 Partnership agreement:
agree funding mechanisms, costs, benefits and apportionment (high-level - in principle, not binding!). Assess level of evidence available versus required

5.3 Plan engagement with communities:
to communicate emerging vision

5.4 Workshop to develop delivery model, adoption, maintenance, risk management and develop legal arrangements:
consider new and emerging delivery models (see notes)

5.5 Shared task: agree risk management approach and develop legal agreements

5.6 Compile and submit outline business case
The case for funding will be different between organisations. The level of detail of the business case should proportionately reflect this

Potential exit ramp:
If insufficient evidence to progress consider commissioning a study that answers questions for both organisations. Could be incorporated in existing or proposed work e.g. LTNSW, Water Cycle Study, DRAIN or LNHS

Growing

5.1 Project lead and partner:
The agreed partner to lead on this with in-house or external resource. Other partners reporting in agreed manner

5.2 Partnership agreement:
agree funding mechanisms, costs, benefits and apportionment (high-level - in principle, not binding!). Assess level of evidence available versus required

5.3 Plan engagement with communities:
to communicate emerging vision

5.4 Determine delivery model, adoption, maintenance, risk management and develop legal arrangements

5.5 Compile and submit outline business case

Mature

5.1 Individual projects progress through stages - pipeline of outline designs and outline business cases produced, submitted and funded

5.2 Partnership steering group:
Meet regularly e.g. 6-monthly

Comprised of senior decision makers across organisations

Oversee and administer range of projects

7. Prepare for implementation

Emerging

6.1 Consider outsourcing for an early contractor involvement (ECI) contract:
using the outline designs to provide advice during detailed design phase

6.2 Funding agreed

6.3 Procurement and appointment:
Formally agree structure of roles and responsibilities (see note box)

6.4 Securing a suitable contractor:
either for physical or other types of intervention

Issue detailed design

6.5 Issue final construction information:
to contractor:
either for physical construction or production of other interventions

Growing

6.1 Funding agreed

6.2 Consider outsourcing for an early contractor involvement (ECI) contract:
using the outline designs to provide advice during detailed design phase

Develop detailed design

Issue detailed design, secure contractor and issue final information

Mature

6.1 Consider outsourcing for an early contractor involvement (ECI) contract:
using the outline designs to provide advice during detailed design phase

6.2 Funding agreed

Detailed Design, arrange contractor and issue final issue use established supply chain

8. Implement interventions

Emerging

Construction or production of place-based intervention

Inspections:
Plan sufficient inspection or review of work during construction or production, preferably using experienced personnel. "Only expect what you inspect"

Site inspection (if physical intervention):
to ensure contractors obligations are completed and arrange for completion certificate to be issued, in accordance with contract

Growing

Construction or production of place-based intervention

Inspections:
Plan sufficient inspection or review of work during construction or production

Site inspection (if physical intervention):
completion certificate issued

Mature

Construction or production of place-based intervention

Inspections:

Site inspection (if physical intervention):

9. Review and monitor interventions

Emerging

9.1 Undertake review meeting with partners:
to take place on site (if physical intervention)
Review completed work to celebrate
Discuss achievements
Lessons learnt
Communication of project completion

If not already done so, plan some post completion performance monitoring. Agree the extent of the monitoring and who will carry this out.
Consider involving a local university or college who may wish to research aspects of the project.

Review results and incorporate them into learning for new projects. Consider publishing results wider than the project team.

Growing

9.1 Undertake review meeting with partners:
to take place on site (if physical intervention)
Review completed work to celebrate
Discuss achievements
Lessons learnt

Implement post-completion monitoring:
measures agreed earlier in project, for example data collection, e.g. annual hydrological monitoring if physical intervention, or a review of blockage data if educational campaign. Consider involving a local university or college who may wish to research aspects of the project.

Review results and incorporate them into learning for new projects. Consider publishing results wider than the project team.

Mature

9.1 Undertake review meeting with Partners:

Implement post-completion monitoring:

Review results and incorporate them into learning for new projects.

10. Strategy next partnership steps

Emerging

Reviewing, planning and pipeling next:
Think about the next opportunity or opportunities.

Consider moving onto a higher maturity pathway, which may mean considering planning and developing multiple projects or interventions next time. Review actions that can be taken to steward partnerships over time as if they were assets (see signposting - looping back to the beginning of the process).

Growing

Reviewing, planning and pipeling next:
Thinking about the next opportunity or opportunities

Consider moving onto a higher maturity pathway, may mean considering planning and developing a programme of projects or interventions next time. Review actions that can be taken to steward partnerships over time as if they were assets (see signposting - looping back to the beginning of the process).

Mature

Reviewing, planning and pipeling next:
Individual projects end, partnership continues strongly. Review actions that can be taken to steward partnerships over time as if they were assets (see signposting - looping back to the beginning of the process).

Further information

Overview

Ways of working

Regular meetings

Key specific meetings plus the work in the build up (Agree drivers, define and agree roles and responsibilities (e.g. Responsible Accountable Consulted Informed - RACI matrix), sign MoU or contracts, agree ownership/adoption)

practical arrangements (e.g. meeting structures, shared digital platforms, decision-making protocols, Single PM, Shared CDE)

cultural aspects (e.g. trust, openness, inclusivity, flexibility)

Place-based

A place-based approach involves joining up spatial planning, infrastructure investment, and environmental management so that decisions made by partners are coherent and mutually reinforcing. Aligning water, land-use, and environmental planning for example.

It usually requires collaboration with other organisations to deliver, however can enable different funding pots to be drawn upon as different Drivers are addressed

Signposting / case studies

This section links to relevant case studies and reflects lessons learned from trialling the approach in the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor.

Further information

1. Recognise problem or opportunity

Ways of Working

1.1

A problem has emerged - what is it?

STOP

Ask yourselves, could the problem be better solved in the longer term by working with the other organisation(s) that could have some "responsibility" for that water?

or

Would a better, longer term, solution be found if you worked with another organisation?

1.1

Be aware, waiting for the "perfect time" to start working with another organisation will never present itself. The best time to start is now.

1.1

Consider alignments with other relevant approaches and ways of working. E.g. search for:

Adaptive Pathways /

CIWEM Working in Partnership Guidance /

Enabling Water Smart Communities

1.2

1.3

Be aware that data sharing agreements may take some time to set-up. This shouldn't be seen as a blocker, but rather could pave the way for data sharing between partners in the future. Starting early is important to ensure data is ready and available when needed. Note that organisations such as the Open Data Institute have useful resources, and can be engaged for guidance and good practice relating to data sharing.

See the 'Greater Manchester and Merseyside Partnerships. Collaborative Approach to Asset Management and Maintenance: Phase III Report' (reference below) for guidance and good practice relating to data sharing.

Reference: Greater Manchester & Merseyside Partnerships (n.d.) Collaborative approach to asset management and maintenance: Phase III Report. North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. Unpublished internal report. Reference available on request.

Place-based

1.4

Consider location and scale of the problem or opportunity.

List people and organisations relevant in that place

Consider which plans could impact on place. Map out the potential overlaps. For example:

1.4

A place-based approach involves joining up spatial planning. Consider any overlaps between your own and other's policies and plans:

Plan examples:

DWMP

WINEP

SWMP

Local Plan

LFRMS

LNRS

*Note that the emerging pathway may be driven by a need or a problem, but it's also useful to consider wider plans. If a need or a problem is identified, it would still be worth consulting those plans in the context of that need or problem.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details

Further information

2. Identify partners

Ways of working

2.2

Call potential partners

Purpose: Establish the correct person in their organisation and then if they can explore partnering on a project in this place. Plus establish contacts in other potential partners they may know of.

Outcome: Get interest from potential partners and establish the correct people to get at a meeting. Define who is going to lead and drive the work to begin with.

2.2

Consider feasibility of meeting in person (optional):

this could be a site visit for example. Potential to accelerate trust-building compared to digital communications. However, this may be challenging to organise if involving lots of partners

Place-based

More detailed information and guidance

2.3

Ensure people being contacted are anchored in and have responsibilities in place of interest (recognising different scales).

For example director/strategic level roles and/or local delivery/operational teams. For initial partner meetings, high level buy in may be necessary, even if the focus area is local scale.

Forge links with community-led organisations at an early stage - for example catchment-based partnerships - as it is essential to develop wider buy-in for successful partnerships.

2.1

2.3

Consider the impact locally of updates in funding, policy or legislation. For example, capitalising on initiatives such as the Towns Fund or awareness of updates in SuDS Guidance or policy and potential opportunities leading from it locally.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details

Further information

3. Initiate partnership

Ways of working

3.2

3.1

Introductory workshop:

Purpose: Review drivers for partnership, agree mutual interest and alignment, build relationships and trust.

Attendees: Recommend senior leaders of each organisation present to give buy-in along with those who are to lead on day-to-day basis and/or have the knowledge of the potential.

Outcome: Refine understanding of each function/organisation's drivers and priorities from partnership. Define/Redefine shared priorities and ambitions. Define data requirements and whether a data sharing agreement is required. Consider which stakeholders to involve at different stages of the project (internal and/or external) (operational and/or programme level, depending on the aims of the project).

3.2

In-person workshops:

Strongly recommend initial workshop(s) take place in person - potential to accelerate relationship and trust building. Otherwise, digital collaboration tools (such as Miro).

3.8

Obtain the agreement to proceed in writing, along with as many details as possible or agreement when those details can be defined.

3.7

Consider commissioning a study jointly:

should cover an appropriately broad area and therefore be available for the next application of workflow. Should examine co-working (co-location), co-benefits and other outcomes as part of delivery.

Consider whether that this could be incorporated within existing or proposed work, e.g. LFRMS, Water Cycle Study or IWMS.

Place-based

3.6

3.5

Consider beginning to create a GIS type database to show where organisations have responsibilities.

This can start to reveal potential overlaps.

This can be simple (basic shapes in locations) through to more useful with importing data if partners are willing to share.

NB. Data is not only that which can be mapped. Also consider qualitative data, data which hasn't been mapped but could be, and data such as plan and funding timelines.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details

Further information

4. Establish partnership (page 1 of 2)

Ways of working

4.2

It is recommended that individuals with specific knowledge of the issues at the locations of interest are present.

Place-based

4.1

Place-based: It may be useful to use catchment levels data in DWMP to focus across location and scale.

Level 2 for more strategic, drilling down to **Level 3** for more focused.

Useful to have range of DWMP data tables, allowing dive into detail.

4.3

4.1

Be aware of research and guidance regarding having local government as an anchor to enable placed based approaches to be undertaken

Signposting / case studies

4.4

Data and information used to inform project location selection - An example from trialling the approach:

Data sharing agreements, data requests, and data sharing had been undertaken before starting this process. As such, in one GIS space we were able to visualise the following data where relevant.

West Northamptonsire LA:

- GIS & Prioritisation report (spatial layers)
- SWMPs (spatial layers)
- Draft LFRMS (document and any spatial information available)
- Integrated Water Management Strategy (document and spatial layers if available)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy (Draft document and spatial layers if available)
- Dataset containing relevant interventions that have been implemented i.e. assets
- Information layers from local plan and SFRA that are used to inform site development (e.g. see web map)
- Flood Investigation Section 10 reports
- Flooding Incidents and Type
- Local Plan Allocations
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Anglian Water:

- Level 1 to 3 (and 4) water recycling catchments datasets
- Drainage Water Management Plan
- Datasets being developed in cycle 2 (actual and modelled)
- Dataset containing existing assets
- Pollution and Blockage Incidents
- Event duration monitoring points/storm overflow data
- Flooding Incidents
- DG5 data
- Sewer network

EA/Defra/Office for National Statistics and Ordance Suvey:

- Suite of publicly available flood risk maps
- Water Framework Directive river catchments classifications
- National Receptor Dataset

Data considerations:

The datasets above were not all shared/ available in spatial format initially, some datasets (e.g: pollution incidents) were joined to the spatial postcode data to be able to display spatially.

Are the datasets up to date and have they been used to record all relevant incidents?

Further information

4. Establish partnership (page 2 of 3)

Ways of working

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Place-based

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Signposting / case studies

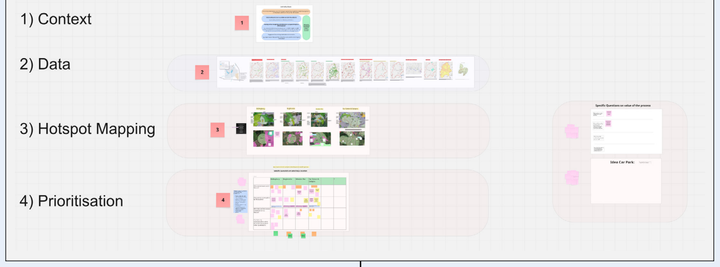
4.4

Location selection:

Displaying this data and information visually allowed the team, in combination with reviewing relevant reports, to start to identify a longlist of areas that could be considered for selection for project development. This was approached by trying to identify locations where many important spatial factors from different datasets overlapped in the same areas. This was to identify locations where surface water flooding is a risk but also trying to in combination identify locations where the impacts or benefits could be relevant to both Anglian Water and West Northamptonshire Council, not where a problem exists in isolation for either organisation.

A longlist of potential locations were identified. A series of workshops and meetings were set-up with partners to refine this list. Below is an example structure of a location selection workshop:

Example location selection workshop layout using digital interactive collaboration tool



Further information

4. Establish partnership (page 3 of 3)

Ways of working

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Place-based

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Signposting / case studies

4.4

Key lessons from location selection trials

A session in advance of location selection would've been useful to articulate the reasons for identifying the location, agreeing what the key drivers are for each organisation, what information to prioritise and a discussion of how to interrogate the available datasets (this learning has been incorporated into stage 3 of the approach - e.g. introductory workshops)

Geospatial analysis and data manipulation requires resources. Simply overlaying available data and undertaking a workshop to examine the outputs collaboratively may provide sufficient information to proceed if resources are limited.

It was not very clear from the DWMP and data available which specific locations to prioritise from an Anglian Water perspective. To aid with location selection discussions, having additional personnel with more detailed knowledge of the issues experienced at specific locations, in addition to someone with strategic oversight, would be helpful. Ensure that you have the right people in a workshop that are able to guide on specific areas and links to plans (this learning has been incorporated into stage 3 - guidance for introductory workshops and stage 4 - location selection workshop)

Workshops were an important part of the process. Emphasising the importance of local catchment knowledge and context that stakeholders have within an area.

Data sharing and licencing was a significant consideration and challenge. It's important to start early with this process. (this learning has been incorporated into stage 3 - guidance for data sharing)

Consider the benefit of the data exercise compared to using partner knowledge - in whatever format knowledge is shared between partners. This could be in something like a "catchment" workshop (a workshop where partners/stakeholders would discuss the 'catchment" or area of interest, discussing issues, drivers, opportunities, or sharing insights) or through other means.

An alternative proposal to the data exercise described above could be a workshop style exercise where both organisations prepare a list of information and maps as defined by this process and then meet in person to review and select an area – with the data processing then remaining in-house for each organisation, and hopefully something that should be in place/easy to produce due to past needs for local plans or DWMP preparation.

Further information

5. Plan project or programme (page 1 of 4)

Ways of working

5.2

Agree resource to undertake analysis.

Agree who in the partnership can produce high-level outputs between workshops. These could be in a GIS platform or screenshots on a digital collaboration tool platform such as Miro.

5.2

Post workshop review:

Outputs from the workshop can be circulated, with a request for confirmation of priority locations. This could be done by email, or preferably by arranging a short focused discussion.

Place-based

5.3

Place based optioneering

Once drivers are established and datasets are known, it is all about combining the two and looking at the location/place/catchment with the different overlays to applying solutions that work to address as many as possible.

Knowing the legal rights and responsibilities of each partner to undertake different works and what land can be used helps to bring solutions into view.

5.3

Place based optioneering

Develop a project (or programme) hierarchy of interventions that shall be followed by the designers to favour the intended outcomes of the project. This helps steer the design whilst enabling some flexibility to overcome obstacles.

E.g. first consider interventions in parks before roads. First consider basins before raingardens before permeable paving, before piped solutions.

If designers are less familiar with place based interventions, consider employing a technical expert to review designs and advise on missed opportunities to ensure design maximises opportunities.

Place based designs should follow best practices in the likes of the CIRIA SuDS Manual.

5.3

For planning the workshop and embedding placed based thinking

consider using approaches/tools such as Design with Water - to identify and prioritise wider social, environmental and economic outcomes.

Another one to consider is Rapid Adaptation Pathways Toolkit - RAPA (ADEPT, May 2025).



Signposting / case studies

5.7

Location specific analysis (data and plans review) and intervention mapping -
An example from trialling the approach is:

The data and plans provided by project partners were reviewed for the selected location to identify where surface water issues and partner objectives overlapped, to inform the potential for place-based multi-partner solutions.

Once these shared objectives and issues within the area had been identified from the data, reports and plans, the project/ programme planning stage quickly moved onto identifying place-based solutions that deliver multiple-benefits.

A design feasibility workshop was undertaken to discuss the interventions proposed.

Learnings from the process are:

An external consultant to the partner organisations was leading and undertaking this trial which introduced an element of artificiality, because in reality the approach would need to be driven by the local authority or the water company.

With hindsight, partners could have been more involved in the process of identifying shared issues and objectives to ensure that current priorities within the area were captured.

If possible, this would involve joint partner workshops, ensuring the meetings involve representatives from the different partner organisation that can guide on the specific area and, if appropriate to the aims of the current partnership, its links to strategic plans.

Feedback received from project partner indicated that having additional meetings to move towards intervention identification could be a useful addition to the approach. (this learning has been incorporated into Stage 5 - see box 5.2 within ‘Further information’ section).

Further information

5. Plan project or programme (page 2 of 4)

Ways of working

5.2

Workshop(s):
Consider ways of running an effective workshop(s) to:
- understand challenges/needs at selected locations,
- find overlapping objectives and priorities at locations,
- understand and map range of potential benefits,
- identify range of potential solutions.

Often in-person workhop(s) can be most effective.
Ensure the workshop(s) involve different colleagues from the partners to link to plans/drivers/ needs for the location (e.g: both someone at the DWMP strategic level as well as someone with the local tactical/operational teams).

It is likely that several workshops may be needed to reach agreement move towards intervention identification.

There are resources to help plan effective collaboration and workshops that can enable more place based thinking. See notebox 5.3

5.3

5.4

Examples of an effective workshop series could be characterised as below - the number of workshops is to be agreed is entirely dependant on the scale of the location/needs. A workshop could cover several of the examples below i.e. 4 workshops is not a prerequisite:

1) Baseline & shared understanding workshop

Purpose: Create a single, agreed picture of the place across sewer, surface water, environment, and growth.

Key Topics: Current risks (flooding, spills, capacity, WFD, environmental constraints), existing evidence (models, asset data, historic incidents), planned growth and land-use change, known “pain points” and local knowledge.

Potential attendees can be drawn from: Water company DWMP team (strategy + ops/ modelling), Lead Local Flood Authority (SWMP leads), Local planning authority (policy + development management), Environment Agency (flood risk + WFD), Highway authority / SuDS approving body (if applicable), Internal asset planners / operations, Catchment partnership or environmental NGO (optional but valuable).

Outputs: Agreed locations of problem areas including early identification of shared issues, log of any known data gaps.

Place-based

Signposting / case studies

5.8

Workshop to discuss potential governance and funding structure, roles and responsibilities - an example from trialling the approach is:
A workshop to discuss the design feasibility workshop outcomes, what governance, funding, and roles and responsibilities could look like in relation to the interventions proposed and to consider additional blockers to progress.

Learnings from the process are:
An emerging reflection was that the location selected as the area of focus did not appear to be a significant priority for Anglian Water. This was highlighted by an individual from Anglian Water particularly familiar with the specific area, who attended the workshop. This identified two things:

that this was not picked up in the location selection exercise undertaken using the data we had available; and

that it would have been useful if individuals with specific knowledge of the issues at locations of interest had attended the location selection workshops held previously in the trial of the approach, so that this could be picked up sooner in the approach.

(this learning was incorporated into the approach)

Further information

5. Plan project or programme (page 3 of 4)

Ways of working

5.2

2) Opportunities & Constraints Mapping Workshop

Purpose: Identify where interventions could realistically happen and what might limit them.

Format: Interactive mapping (GIS or large printed maps).

Key themes: Physical constraints (topography, utilities, ownership, heritage), Environmental constraints (designations, habitats, water quality), Policy constraints (planning allocations, protections), Opportunity areas (regeneration sites, open space, highways, retrofit zones), Existing or planned schemes to align with.

Suggested attendees can be drawn from: Same core group as Workshop 1 plus: Parks/ green infrastructure teams, Major landowners or developers (if appropriate), Transport/highways design teams, Urban design or masterplanning leads.

Outputs: Opportunity map, Constraint map, Long list of intervention zones.

3) Workshop to identify potential interventions to address needs/problem

Purpose: Identify and review potential place-based interventions.

Approach: Break into groups by sub-area or theme. Use types (e.g. source control, conveyance, storage, treatment, operational, policy).

Consider solutions across: Use DWMP to inform this. Interventions may include: Blue-green infrastructure / NbS, Operational changes, Grey infrastructure (network upgrades, storage), Planning policy or developer contributions.

Suggested attendees - all with specific knowledge of area of interest: Water company engineers & planners, LLFA technical team, Urban designers / landscape architects, Environmental specialists (ecology, water quality), Operations teams representative.

Outputs: List of intervention solutions, Initial feasibility and qualitiative co-benefits assessment, Initial assessment of risks.

Place-based

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Further information

5. Plan project or programme (page 4 of 4)

Ways of working

5.2

4) Prioritisation workshop

Purpose: Move towards identifying opportunities to deliver interventions aligned with both DWMP and local authority equivalent.

Key activities: Examples include - qualitative multi-criteria assessment (risk reduction, cost, carbon, environment, deliverability), identify “quick wins” vs long-term schemes, assign ownership and next steps, check alignment with planning cycles (AMP, capital programmes, local plan timelines). See note box 4.4 as an example.

4.4

Suggested attendees: Senior decision-makers: water company strategy/investment, LLFA leadership, local authority planning leadership, EA catchment lead, finance / business case specialists.

Outputs: Prioritised intervention list to take into next stage, delivery roadmap, inputs for DWMP options appraisal and SWMP action plan.

5.7

Now is the time to:

Finalise drivers for project.

Select lead partner.

Agree broad budgets and the likely funding streams to secure.

Sign MoU or contracts for the partnership.

Define and agree roles and responsibilities (RACI).

Start thinking about long term ownership/adoption approach.

Establish a common data environment (sharepoint/ projectwise etc) - if appropriate.

To get these agreed, you may need a separate meeting, once the planning workshop has taken place and agreed the way forward.

Place-based

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Further information

6. Develop project or programme

Ways of working

6.1

Outline design reviews

Agree and plan in when design reviews will be undertaken to ensure no surprises occur

→

6.1

Note: design stage approvals for outline design

Agree which organisation's design review process to follow. Quite likely to be the lead organisation.

Place-based

6.2

Place based outline design

Ensure the views of the community can be captured or communicate to them. For example links with catchment-based partnerships or equivalent organisations - important to ensure full engagement

Signposting / case studies

6.7

Partnership steering committee examples

Affinity Water 'Project Zero' Steering Committee: Led by Affinity Water, this project was aiming to minimise water demand and offset water consumptions with new technologies, to ensure the total water use in the community remains the same as it was before new homes are built. An independent steering committee of industry experts and academics oversees the project to ensure the projects stays credible and deliverable, to review progress and tackle emerging challenges and to share best practice across the UK water industry. (Our water neutrality project | Affinity Water)

Regional Water Resources Groups (E.g: Water Resources South East): This is an alliance of the six water companies in South-East England taking a collaborative, regional approach to planning long-term water resources. It provides steering and strategic oversight.
(Home | WRSE - Water Resources South East)

Northumbria Integrated Drainage Partnership: This is a partnership between Northumbrian Water, the Environment Agency and all Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) across the North East focussed on collaborating to manage flood risk across the North East of England. The partnership provides strategic oversight, prioritisation, decision making and alignment of funding for integrated drainage and flood-risk management across the North East.

Further information

7. Prepare for implementation

Ways of working

7.3

Detailed design reviews

Agree and plan in when design reviews will be undertaken to ensure no surprises occur

7.3

Note: design stage approvals for detailed design

Agree which organisation's design review process to follow. Quite likely to be the lead organisation.

7.3

Lighter touch collaboration required across latter phases as most decisions have been made. Following process of typical project. Regular project steering group meetings likely sufficient. Therefore the flow pathways for the three maturity levels are similar.

Place-based

7.1

Place based contractor procurement

Consider and agree the contractors experienced in the types of design being proposed.

Consider tendering for the work after outline design employing the winning contractor on an Early Contractor Involvement (ECI) role.

7.1

Definition: place based contractor procurement

A procurement approach that selects and manages contractors based on their ability to deliver services, works, or projects within a specific geographic area. It focuses on local context, community needs, and long-term relationships, rather than one-off contracts.

7.1

Definition: Early Contractor Involvement (ECI)

A construction procurement and delivery approach where a contractor is engaged early in the project - during planning or design - before main construction begins. This may improve efficiency, reduce risks and support better cost and programme outcomes.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Further information

9. Review and monitor interventions

Ways of working

9.1

Following completion of works on site - hold a site visit with all partners to see the works together.

Consider a “team photo” and social media posts to advertise outcome.

Hold a meeting with all partners, or at least key partners, to reflect on achievements and detail lessons learnt, in a positive manner.

If it has not already been discussed, earlier in the project, discuss the next/future projects that could be undertaken together, building on the lessons learnt.

Place-based

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Signposting / case studies

No further information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

1. Recognise problem or opportunity

Emerging

1.2

Recognising a problem or opportunity and identifying drivers:

Identify an existing need, problem or problems which affect the community you serve. These can be related to flooding and/or pollution and/or environmental or ecological. Or, identify an opportunity arising from a regeneration development project. The emerging pathway may be driven by a need or a problem, but it's also useful to consider wider plans (e.g: DWMP/SWMP). If a need or a problem is identified, it would still be worth consulting those plans in the context of that need or problem.

If you do not have a clear view on the problems or which problems to approach collaboratively, this can be picked up in the project planning stage.

Local authority driver considerations

- What are your priorities or key drivers in the LFRMS?
- If LPA where are the priority areas or key growth areas? i.e. areas with significant development planned

Wasc driver considerations

- what stage of the DWMP are you at?
- what data tables do you have available ?
- for different catchments (e.g. at level 3), what do you assess to be the ideal point at which prospective partners could feed into options? What are the preconditions of viability - for example, what stage of study from risk-based planning through to preferred plan. what planning horizon? what risk score?
- i.e. is there some early screening that could be done with the DWMP to eliminate areas where investment is not being proposed? Or perhaps it is precisely this space where collaboration makes options viable that would not otherwise be viable - is there WaSC appetite?

1.2

Example drivers and opportunities:

- Flooding where the public sewer network is part of the source or pathway
- Managing pollution to the environment to meet legislative drivers e.g. WFD
- Resilience of WaSC assets, where they are at risk of flooding or erosion
- Creating capacity within wastewater networks and treatment plants to accommodate future development

Growing

No detailed information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Mature

No detailed information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

2. Identify partners

Emerging

2.1

Identify potential partners:

Prompting questions could include:

- is there an opportunity to work with another partner here to deliver a place based approach and share costs?
- Is the problem one that involves aspects outside your responsibility?
- Will a better solution (e.g. longer term or cheaper or wider benefits) be possible if you had powers or funding that another partner could help you with?

Examples of partners or stakeholders to engage with on place-based planning:

- Water and Sewerage Companies,
- Local Authorities across multiple functions i.e. Local Planning Authority, Highways Authority, Open Spaces Services, Housing Services & Lead Local Flooding Authority
- Combined Authorities,
- Environment Agency,
- Internal Drainage Boards,
- Non-departmental public bodies e.g. Network Rail, National Highways.
- NGOs i.e. Rivers and Wildlife Trusts, Canal and River Trust
- Businesses, developers, and other beneficiaries
- Catchment Partnerships i.e partnerships that sit within the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) framework

To assess potential partners also consider existing operational meetings for example on DWMP or CSO programmes and the local issues which may be brought up across different forums. Note that collaborative approaches may be more challenging for organisations with no prior history of working together.

Growing

No detailed information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Mature

No detailed information.
Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

3. Initiate partnership (page 1 of 2)

Emerging

3.1

Example actions to initiate contact:

Identify the key organisation(s) to engage with e.g. for WaSCs this could be a map of local authority boundaries falling within water company boundaries - maintaining an awareness also of water management area boundaries.

Identify the key person to contact in the organisation(s) in preference to using a generic email address. In terms of Surface Water Managment, typical role descriptions can be described as follows:

- Local authorities: (Senior) Flood Risk Officer / Flood and Water Manager / Drainage Officer
- WaSCs: DWMP Lead / Partnerships Officer

In the absence of a national database of individuals holding these posts, use a search engine with “role description” + “organisation name”. Often, it is easy to find a relevant person because similar results will appear from LinkedIn. If they have a contact number call them, email if not and LinkedIn message as a third option.

Suggest an initial conversation to discuss (e.g. a problem or opportunity) how you can work together more collaboratively to achieve better shared outcomes. Identify the most appropriate person(s) to involve. In the first instance, this could be the team lead of the local authority flood team or a collaborative partnerships officer in the water company, plus another resource (for each organisation) with good knowledge and skills of the each organisation’s data.

Suggest an inception meeting, in-person if practicable. e.g. this could involve 4 people: team leads and data specialists at both organisations.

Note that the above has assumed just two organisations, but it may be appropriate for multiple local authorities to attend, also considering other organisations over time (e.g. NGOs such as Catchment-based Approach).

3.1

Example prompting questions for workshops:

- thoroughly understand (based on available information and knowledge) the problems that each partner has at the selected location i.e. in terms of sources, pathways and receptors?
- How could a place-based approach help with solving these problems and delivering multiple wider benefits?
- what types of interventions could be considered to solve the problem? could early feasibility, optioneering and shortlisting be undertaken?
- what data are needed to progress?
- what are the remaining data sharing challenges between organisations?
- what are the potential funding options available?
- Check the DWMP Level 3 dataset for the location - what is proposed here? Is it a known partnership opportunity?
- Check SWMP, LFRMS or other available strategies and plans for the location - are there any current plans?
- Who would lead on the project, based on who has most to gain in terms of benefits?
- Which stakeholders should be involved at each stage of the project (internal and/or external) E.g: specialists within stakeholder organisations - operational and/or strategic level depending on the aims of the project, external actors, catchment partners?
- Could an additional stakeholder-mapping workshop help identify who to engage and when?
- who are the landowners across the location of interest? Are they willing to engage?
- If a mature partnership, could a programme be established?

3.5

Optional data sharing workshop

- Discuss plan for data sharing
- Be aware that data sharing agreements may take some time to set-up. This shouldn’t be seen as a blocker, but rather could pave the way for data sharing between partners in the future.
- Starting early is important to ensure data is ready and available when needed.
- Data specialists/consultants could be brought in to assist with this (e.g: data specialists such as internal expertise, Open Data Institute or consultants, if budget allows)
- Consider using a data API to access data vs a data platform which may be less flexible
- Be aware different organisations might have different definitions for data (e.g. flood risk). How each organisation views data is important to avoid misinterpretation.
- Anonymising data can make data easier and quicker to share between partners, although it may reduce the level of detail available for analysis. Using anonymised data may be valuable, as it allows initial analysis to begin while full data-sharing agreements are being finalised.

Growing

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Mature

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

3. Initiate partnership (page 2 of 2)

Emerging

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Growing

3.3

Improving partnerships:

Example activities to consider include:

- scoping work jointly to investigate problem and opportunity areas for potential collaborative projects. e.g. a workshop to pool data and information to identify problems/opportunities
- Forging links with different departments within own organisations
- Joint site visit to a known mutual problem area to better understand problems, develop the relationship and build trust
- Initiating a strategic review discussion to better understand and drive forward routes to greater collaboration - using this guiding approach
- Inviting other partner organisations (water companies, local authorities across multiple functions e.g. LPA & LLFA) and combined authorities, EA, IDBs, Network Rail, National Highways. Also considering involvement of NGOs e.g. Rivers and Wildlife Trusts. Also consider businesses, developers and any other beneficiaries
- Setting up a 'Director-level' (could be team leader level) governance meeting e.g. 6-weekly
- Opportunities to physically co-locate resources regularly (e.g. 1-2 weekly) and if not by Teams or similar. These could be regular technical meetings with clear agenda that are set our informed but team leaders. The first of these meetings could be attended by a team leader.

3.3

If not already in place, consider the following actions:

- What data are needed to progress?
- Set up data sharing arrangement between organisation(s)
- Allocate resource (preferably from more than one organisation) to investigate further
- Facilitate physical co-location of resource 1-2 weekly
- Empower resources to collate and analyse datasets from within each partner organisation and more widely that will help with understanding
- Consider which stakeholders to involve at each stage of the approach (internal and/or external) E.g: specialists within stakeholder organisations, external actors, catchment partners.
- An additional stakeholder-mapping workshop can help identify who to engage and when.
- Partners can work together to identify locations of common interests at a common scale.
- Consider source / pathway / receptor analysis
- Prioritisation of opportunities based on service impacts, economic damages, legislative compliance.
- Discuss and agree shared priorities and an approach for prioritisation using defined criteria
- Determine and agree next steps, such as commissioning a joint investigation, undertaking project development or placing the future investment into business planning

3.3

Consider commissioning a study jointly:

should cover an appropriately broad area and therefore be available for the next application of workflow. Should examine co-working (co-location), co-benefits and other outcomes as part of delivery.

- Consider whether that this could be incorporated within existing or proposed work, e.g. LFRMS, Water Cycle Study or IWMS

Mature

3.4

Improving partnerships:

Example activities to consider include:

- cross-organisation secondments (See case study Southern Water)
- Celebration of joint achievements
- Establish or update Memoranda of Understanding (MoU)
- Joint site visits to understand problems
- Consider joint training opportunities where there is alignment in objectives
- Partnership health checks - regular reviews of effectiveness, trust and delivery progress
- Lessons learnt reviews following the completion of a project or key activity
- Capture and share best practice
- Annual planning and objective setting
- Initiating a strategic review discussion to better understand and drive forward routes to greater collaboration - using this guiding approach
- Inviting other partner organisations (water companies, local authorities across multiple functions e.g. LPA & LLFA) and combined authorities, EA, IDBs, Network Rail, National Highways. Also considering involvement of NGOs e.g. Rivers and Wildlife Trusts. Also consider businesses, developers and any other beneficiaries
- Setting up a 'Director-level' (could be team leader level) governance meeting e.g. 6-weekly
- Opportunities to physically co-locate resources regularly (e.g. 1-2 weekly) and if not by Teams or similar. These could be regular technical meetings with clear agenda that are set our informed but team leaders. The first of these meetings could be attended by a team leader.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

4. Establish partnership (page 1 of 2)

Emerging

4.3

DWMP and SWMP (or equivalent local authority related) specific guidance:

The emerging pathway may be driven by a need or a problem, but it's also useful to consider wider plans (e.g: DWMP/SWMP). If a need or a problem is identified, it would still be worth consulting those plans in the context of that need or problem.

DWMP:

- consider how to use DWMP data to identify the strongest opportunities for collaboration.
- catchments at which stage of DWMP should be prioritised? e.g. risk-based planning, main scenario, short-term scenario, longest term scenario, preferred plan - should some of these stages be screened out?
- should resilience risk score be used as a metric for prioritisation? (e.g. 0, 1, 2)
- should a particular strategy window be prioritised e.g. medium or long term?
- what strategy objectives should be prioritised? e.g. removal of surface water? if so, is the percentage important (10% - 50%)? Infiltration reduction? Main solution SuDS?

SWMP:

- consider how to use SWMP data to identify the strongest opportunities for collaboration.
- What are the key surface water issues they identify, in what locations?
- Does modelling identify any key surface flow pathways?
- What recommendations do they suggest taking forwards, are there any focus areas?
- Would any of these recommendations provide mutual benefits?

4.3

At an early stage of business planning organisations should bring together a wide range of data and knowledge to enable a shared discussion of the problems and challenges facing each partner organisation. This could include data and knowledge on flood history & risk, pollution incidents, future development, and asset data (including models).

Partners should work together to identify locations of common interests at a common scale, such as a drainage catchment. The source-pathway-receptor approach may be helpful:

- Source: are our assets a source of floodwater or pollution?
- Pathway: are our assets a pathway for floodwater or pollution?
- Receptor: do we have customers and communities at risk? Are our assets at risk? Is the environment affected?

Prioritise the catchments based on service impacts, economic damages, and/or legislative compliance. Establishing prioritisation approaches using defined criteria is important, but it is equally important for partners to discuss priorities.

Determine and agree next steps:

- Commission a joint investigation into the problem and/or;
- Undertake project development, and/or;
- Put the future investment into your business planning

One example approach is outlined as follows, linked to the image (below)

- The example approach below shows a catchment with multiple drivers, and where partners could programme a joint investigation to consider existing flooding in the catchment, and the impacts of future development on the sewer network and wastewater treatment works.
- Mapping areas of existing problems and future proposals collaboratively is a good mechanism for understanding where partnership opportunities exist
- Assuming limited information exists from project partners, use publicly available datasets where possible. Information on these can be found below

Growing

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Mature

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

4. Establish partnership (page 2 of 2)

Emerging

4.3

Shortlisting opportunities

Data/datasets useful for this exercise include national products such as:

- National Receptor Database
- Risk of Flooding from Surface Water
- Storm Overflows - Event Duration Monitoring
- Planning information (e.g. infrastructure projects)

And where possible, organisational data such as:

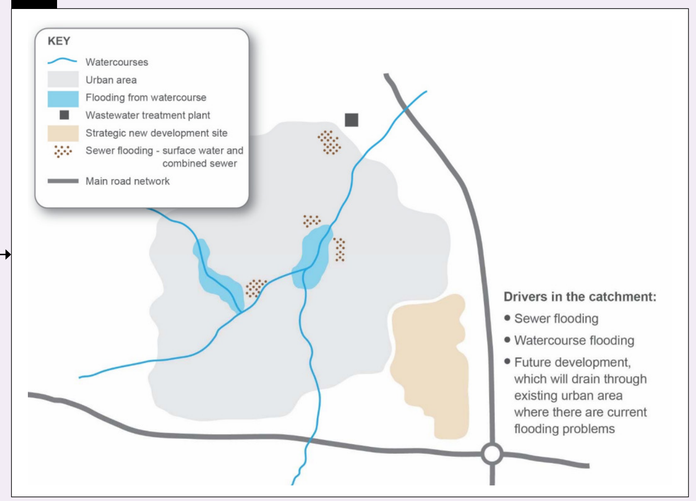
- Level 3 and Level 4 catchments from prior or draft DWMP
- local hydraulic models showing flood risk locations (modelled and actual, with levels of confidence)
- areas of current and future development (local planning authority)
- information on flood mechanisms (e.g. pluvial, fluvial, groundwater, sewer)
- information on pollution incidents

Other useful information may also found in the following locations:

- DWMPs (prior or draft)
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) and appended reporting
- Integrated Water Management Strategy
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy - e.g. to identify areas with overlapping biodiversity priorities or sensitivities
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) - e.g. to identify opportunities where development may help to reduce the causes and impacts of sources of flood risk
- Local Development Planning (Local Plans) - e.g. for identifying locations of proposed development sites
- Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP) - if recent, likely contains key information to inform joint discussions

It may be useful to prioritise spatial data which can be visualised using GIS platforms to aid discussions, then any other information. This will all help to inform discussion between partners.

4.3



Note the adjacent image is from “How best to align the funding processes with the various bodies involved in resolving flooding”.

Growing

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Mature

No detailed information. Please populate with relevant details.

Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

5. Plan project or programme (page 1 of 2)

Emerging

5.1

Location specific analysis:

There are many different approaches to select the location for a suitable project. For example it could be purely based on discussion between knowledgeable members from each organisation. Or it could be entirely driven by data, or anywhere in between. All are valid in terms of moving towards greater collaborative outcomes.

Note Box 4.3(2) is available as an example of how visualising data on a map of could be used as an aid to the discussion.

Set up a space for a workshop (in person or virtual). Consider using a free digital collaboration tool such as Miro to run the workshop.

Agree an area to focus on for the workshop (could be as wide as the local authority boundary area initially).

Before the workshop, consider which areas are your biggest problem areas within the agreed boundary area and why?

Consider and potentially bring along any data to support you with decision making.

List the locations that you've brought along and identify if there are any overlapping areas.

Using a simple map can be very effective to facilitate discussion. If you have any spatial data to visualise, this can also be very useful to stimulate discussion.

For any overlapping areas, briefly discuss each of them and prioritise e.g. consider RAG rating the areas.

Discuss the areas that appear to have greatest overlapping interest.

The source-pathway-receptor approach may be helpful, which can be summarised by:

- Source: are our assets a source of floodwater or pollution?
- Pathway: are our assets a pathway for floodwater or pollution?
- Receptor: do we have customers and communities at risk? Are our assets at risk? Is the environment affected?

Agree which area to take forward as the project location to trial the collaborative place-based approach.

5.4

Opportunities, Solutions and Constraints Workshop:

Collaborative workshop to:

- agree project location to trial The Collaborative Approach (if not already known)
- understand balance of responsibility for the problem(s) or opportunities encountered
- start conversation on how this would translate financially between partners
- start conversation around possible funding routes
- start conversation about who might manage any potential solution into the future and how it will be maintained
- understand what powers each organisation has and how they might leverage their own powers to the benefit of the collaboration
- understand what resources are available and what might be needed
- start conversation around data: e.g. availability, usefulness, elements comprising data quality (accuracy, completeness, consistency, uniqueness, validity) and data sharing
- discuss different potential elements of a project and ownership of different interventions or assets e.g. different elements of one project could be owned by different organisations, even if funded predominantly by one organisation.

Growing

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Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

5. Plan project or programme (page 2 of 2)

Emerging

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5.6

Identifying constraints:

Before progressing to project development phase, it is important to understand any constraints to collaborative funding that are not possible to overcome. To identify these it may be useful to undertake a series of challenge questions such as those in the example below:

Challenge Question	WaSC	Local Authority	EA / NRW
Does the scheme align with one or more outcome?	Yes	No	Yes
Are we wholly / partially responsible?	Uncertain	No	Yes
Does the programme align with our business needs?	Uncertain	Uncertain	Yes
Result: Pass or Fail Challenge Questions	**Pass**	**Fail**	**Pass**

Because partners have different business priorities and outcomes, each organisation may need to answer a different set of challenge questions. However, the intention is that partners will openly discuss the challenge questions to build trust and maximise opportunities to pursue a collaborative project.

At this stage it may become evident that a partnership scheme with joint funding is not possible, but that should not rule out partnership working and in kind benefits such as sharing of information and models. This will help to foster trust and develop maturity in the relationships.

5.6

Collaborative advantage assessment:

It is also useful at this early stage to identify what might be the advantages of a collaborative project, and consider at a high level the potential value contributions from each partner based on an appraisal of the potential benefits. Certain questions may be useful, noting that at this early stage high-level estimates may only be possible. Example questions may include:

- how might the whole life costs of a project that is developed in isolation compare to a collaborative scheme?
- can the flooding problem actually be solved by one partner in isolation?
- how important is resolving the problem(s) at this location to each of the organisations involved?
- which outcomes will be addressed by the project?
- what are the delivery risks associated with partnering?

An example of a collaborative advantage assessment is shown on pages 41-43 of the UKWIR publication on unlocking collaborative funding opportunities (report), from which the tables on this page have been extract and/or adapted.

5.6

High-level appraisal of likely partner contributions:

Type of collaborative project	Core benefits which can readily be monetised during a high level appraisal	Wider benefits which should be identified[41]
Sewer flooding linked to other sources of flooding (e.g. surface water, groundwater, watercourse)	• WaSC: Sewer flooding (internal or external) benefits • Public bodies: Reduction in flood risk from surface water / groundwater / fluvial / coastal	• Amenity • Biodiversity & Ecology • Carbon reduction or sequestration • Disruption (to road/rail, businesses, electricity) • Economic growth (will the scheme unlock growth through new development and/or job creation) • Health • Reduced pumping or treatment costs of wastewater • Recreation • Improved reputation for partners seen to be cooperating to deliver better results for the public
Resilience of WaSC assets, where they are at risk of flooding or coastal erosion	• WaSC: Value of supply disruption (measured through customer WTP) • Public bodies: Reduction in flood risk from surface water / groundwater / fluvial / coastal	
Managing pollution to the environment to meet legislative drivers	• Likely to be driven by regulatory requirements rather than purely monetised benefits[42]	
Creating capacity within wastewater networks and treatment plants to accommodate future development	• Likely to be driven by a least whole life cost approach to providing the necessary infrastructure	

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Detailed information and guidance behind each activity

6. Develop project or programme (page 1 of 3)

Emerging

6.3

Project appraisal workshop:

Develop a more detailed understanding of what the project could look like. E.g.:

- fleshing out understanding of problem and/or opportunity in more detail
- understand other initiatives taking place within the spatial footprint of the project e.g. work involving transport, highways, utilities, businesses and any other stakeholders
- understanding each organisation's current plan (if any) for the location and how collaboration could enhance outcomes and reduce cost
- improve understanding of the dominant investment drivers
- further discussion and agreement of lead partner and potential contributions
- funding sources
- consider other potential funding partners and links to other organisations or functions/teams within own organisation
- available resource for project management
- experience of project delivery
- what are the potential interventions to address problems and respond to opportunities (e.g. development areas)
- potential benefits/outcomes (social, environmental, economic) to each organisation and the community. Consider also benefits-in-kind, for example if one of the partners owns the land that could be used to deploy a solution this value to the collaborative project should be captured
- consider modelling requirements
- consider community and political engagement
- access to supply chain for appraisal, design and build
- discuss at a high-level: delivery model, adoption and maintenance, risk management approach, legal arrangements and detailed design.

Use the discussion to agree lead and support organisations.

It is important to recognise that the progression from project planning to project development is flexible and different aspects may have been discussed in less detail at the planning stage which can then be developed out in more detail. There is a recognition of the complexity and that the various strands comprising a project may develop at different rates. The important thing is to create the space for discussion and deeper mutual understanding at different stages of The Collaborative Approach.

6.3

Appraise benefits:

There is onus on each organisation to understand and appraise the benefits accruing to its organisation. This is because cost-benefit type approaches may be different between organisations and sectors. There may not naturally be a way to compare across these different methods, but there are general principles which may help enable partners to apportion suitable funding contributions towards a preferred option.

1. Focus on shared outcomes

Partners should define and agree the outcomes they are collectively aiming to achieve. For example, reducing flood risk, improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity, or supporting local growth.

Each organisation should contribute towards the outcomes it can legitimately claim and evidence within its own duties or investment frameworks.

2. Value benefits to people, places, and the environment

Funding decisions should be based on who benefits - communities, assets, and ecosystems - rather than only on where problems originate or which asset is affected.

This helps ensure that investment decisions are risk-based and aligned with wider resilience and place-making objectives.

3. Capture the full range of benefits

Appraisals should include all relevant benefits - including environmental, social, and economic ones - using appropriate methods such as natural capital or ecosystem service valuation.

This ensures nature-based and blue-green options are fairly valued alongside traditional engineered solutions.

4. Take a whole-life, whole-system view

Contributions should reflect the total cost and benefit over the lifetime of a project, including maintenance, carbon, and adaptive management.

This encourages investment choices that deliver best value in the long term and optimise across the wider system.

6.3

5. Ensure fairness and transparency

Funding contributions should be equitable and proportionate to the benefits received, with clear documentation of assumptions, responsibilities, and risk-sharing arrangements.

Open dialogue and joint governance help to build trust and accountability.

6. Consider affordability and timing

Partners should align their investment planning with respective funding cycles (e.g. AMP periods, local government budget years, FDGiA allocations) and explore flexible or phased approaches where affordability is a constraint.

7. Demonstrate added value through collaboration

Partnership working should aim to deliver:

- more benefits for the same total cost,
- the same benefits for lower total cost, or
- solutions that would not be viable if delivered separately.

Partners should be able to benchmark collaborative outcomes against business-as-usual delivery.

8. Reflect carbon, resilience, and wider public value

Investment decisions should take account of carbon impacts, long-term climate resilience, and wider public value outcomes in line with national policy and regulatory guidance.

9. Build in flexibility for future change

Funding arrangements should be adaptable, allowing partners to respond to new evidence, funding opportunities, or changing local priorities.

Periodic review helps ensure the partnership remains fair and effective over time.

10. Embed these principles within partnership governance

The principles should be applied consistently through shared governance and decision-making processes. For example, through local flood risk partnerships, catchment forums, or shared investment programmes to ensure transparency and continuity.

Growing

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6. Develop project or programme (page 2 of 3)

Emerging

6.3

Example benefits table

Partners could use this table as a starting point to agree which benefits are relevant to the project and which organisation can legitimately claim them (examples shown with ticks but should be reviewed by each project). Early discussions should identify all potential economic, environmental, social, and resilience benefits, including both monetised and non-monetised outcomes, and consider how these align with each partner's statutory duties, regulatory obligations, and investment frameworks.

Category	WaSC Benefit?	LA Benefit?	Other Partners / Notes
Property damage reduction	☑	☑	—
Damage to road network	—	☑	National Highways, Local Transport Authorities
Disruption to road network	—	☑	Transport operators
Damage to water/wastewater treatment works	☑	—	—
Disruption to water/wastewater services	☑	—	Impacts on customers, regulators (Ofwat, DWI, EA)
Disruption to local businesses	—	☑	Chamber of Commerce
Damages to vehicles	—	☑	Insurance sector
Loss of life / reduced flood risk to people	☑	☑	Public health authorities, emergency services
Emergency services response costs	—	☑	Local Resilience Forums, Police/Fire Services
Development land unlocked / increased land value	☑	☑	Homes England
Amenity improvements (e.g. greenspace, access)	☑	☑	Community groups, developers
Public health and wellbeing	☑	☑	NHS, Public Health England, Active Travel initiatives
Recreation opportunities	—	☑	Sports England, community organisations
Biodiversity & ecology enhancement	☑	☑	Wildlife Trusts, Natural England, NGOs
Carbon reduction / sequestration	☑	☑	Alignment with Net Zero strategies
Climate resilience (infrastructure, community, ecosystems)	☑	☑	National Infrastructure Commission, Resilience Forums
Reduced CSO spills / improved water quality	☑	☑	EA, NGOs, local river trusts
Natural capital enhancement	☑	☑	DEFRA, Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)
Education and community engagement	—	☑	Schools, community groups
Operational and maintenance cost savings	☑	☑	Shared asset management benefits
Reduced insurance premiums / improved insurability	☑	☑	Insurance sector, property owners
Contribution to performance commitments (e.g. ODIs, WINEP)	☑	—	Ofwat, regulatory benefit
Economic growth / inward investment	☑	☑	Regional development bodies
Cultural and heritage asset protection	—	☑	Historic England, heritage trusts
Reduced heat stress / improved microclimate (urban greening)	☑	☑	Public health, planning, developers
Social equity / levelling up benefits	—	☑	Local government, DLUHC
Reduced operational carbon and energy use	☑	—	Ofwat, WaSC internal net zero target

6.3

Funding and benefits apportionment

An example of funding and benefits apportionment is shown on pages 55-58 of the UKWIR publication on unlocking collaborative funding opportunities (report).

6.4

Adoption and maintenance:

Beyond the construction phase of the project, partners will need to agree who will adopt and maintain the infrastructure. For WaSCs there may be complications associated with investing in assets that do not become part of the company's asset base, or future maintenance requirements associated with assets that have been constructed in partnership.

Partners may determine that different components of a project are adopted and maintained by individual organisations. This approach may be used where there are above and below ground assets as part of a scheme, in which the WaSCs may adopt and maintain the below ground assets and a local authority may adopt and maintain the above ground assets. Alternatively, one organisation may adopt and maintain the scheme over its whole life. Under these circumstances partner organisations would contribute towards a proportion of the whole life maintenance costs, either as annual payments or an upfront commuted sum.

6.4

Preparing towards implementation:

When considering a collaborative project the delivery model for construction and maintenance of the scheme should be agreed. This may result in a different lead partner than agreed earlier on in the project life cycle.

There are different delivery models available for the construction phase, which could be:

1. a WaSC makes a contribution to a partner organisation who then leads on the construction;
2. a partner organisation makes a contribution to the WaSC who then leads on the construction phase, or;
3. an integrated delivery model is used, whereby resources and skills are shared during the construction phase and where multiple organisations assume responsibility.

The preferred delivery model will depend on a number of factors, which partners should consider before determining the most appropriate approach.

An example of a collaborative advantage assessment is shown on pages 60-61 of the UKWIR publication on unlocking collaborative funding opportunities (report).

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6. Develop project or programme (page 3 of 3)

Emerging

6.5

Develop legal agreements:

During this phase partners should enter into legal agreements to secure contributions and manage risks and liabilities. The legal agreements of entering into a partnership may be significant and time consuming, and legal advice will be required for each partner organisation on a project by project basis. Different stages of partnership working may require different types of legal agreements. A Memorandum of Understanding or data sharing protocol may be suitable during early stages of planning and understanding of risks, but as projects move towards delivery more detailed legally binding documents will probably be required. Whilst legal agreements will be bespoke to each project they may cover some or all of:

- payment terms, timescales and financial contributions over the whole life of the project including maintenance;
- obligations of the partners
- working arrangements or personnel, including project management and governance;
- compensation claims;
- liability;
- confidentiality and intellectual property rights;
- change management and resolution of disputes
- public availability of information;
- security of payment, including the consequences of default, and;
- securing access to the site for construction and maintenance.

It should also be noted that land ownership agreements may be required for use of third party land. This should also be considered at this stage of the project life cycle.

6.5

Risk management approach:

Partnerships go through different stages, and the degree of risk management will change as partners move into a delivery phase of the project. With respect to the risk management approach for design, construction and maintenance, there are a range of important risks to be identified and discussed, including:

1. how partners should equitably share any cost over-runs;
2. how contributions for future operation and maintenance costs will be paid for, either through commuted sums or periodic cash contributions;
3. how governance during design and construction should be established (NB: this is also covered in legal agreements);
4. how construction risks such as environmental or archaeological issues will be managed;
5. how changes during detailed design (e.g. for technical or economic reasons) will be managed, and/or;
6. how public relations, public expectations and communications will be managed between partner organisations.

6.6

Compile business case:

The outcome from this stage should form the basis of the business case. This would be sent to funders (i.e. internal governance and approval routes or independent assurance and approval).

The maturity of a partnership will likely be reflected in the time/work needed and number of workshops required to develop the project sufficiently to enable funding decisions to be taken. Less mature partnerships may require more time because the processes are new.

Presenting the case to agree the funding will depend on the organisations being approached and could vary significantly from a very formal process to processes which require less evidence.

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7. Prepare for implementation

Emerging

7.2

Detailed design:

The lead organisation might be responsible for coordinating this process or another arrangement could be agreed. Here is an example of one way of setting up detailed design process:

Lead organisation: coordinates the design and commissions specialist work. Unless agreed otherwise, design process to follow this organisation's design review process/gateways to ensure design develops with the correct oversight and to the programme and budget agreed.

Partner organisations: provide input, approvals, and specialist expertise aligned with their responsibilities.

Principal designer (in-house or external consultants): carry out technical work under the lead, integrating multi-disciplinary and multi-benefit requirements. Principal designer under CDM Regulations will coordinate if more than 1 design team.

Joint governance: ensures collaboration, alignment, and transparent decision-making throughout detailed design.

External review organisations: May be required to sign off the design is safe and suitable in public spaces, e.g. Highways Authority, if immediately adjacent to a highway.

7.4

Securing a suitable contractor:

The lead organisation might be responsible for coordinating this process or another arrangement could be agreed, for example if another partner has mature contracting relationships that could be utilised. Here are some key points that need to be undertaken:

Tenderer list preparation: Due diligence on contracting organisations that may be approached for a tender. These may come from existing frameworks. However, note that the type of project and therefore type of work being asked for should inform the selection e.g. a scheme that involves a lot of landscaping type work, may not be best served by contractors just familiar with heavy civil engineering.

Undertake a tender process: Issuing all available information and providing sufficient time to enable all approached contractors to provide sensible, well considered, prices with appropriate amounts of risk.

Tender assessment and award

Growing

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Mature

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Project Team:

EA: Brianne Vally (Project Manager), Ceri Lewis (Programme Manager), Daniel Curtis (Integrated Water Management Lead)

Arup: Michael Pollock (Project Manager), Catherine Nicholas (Consultant), Daisy Droogmans (Engineer), David Wylie (Designer), Peter Holt (Specialist), David Hetheringon (Project Director)

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