Fitness For Purpose:
English Nature's Use of Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes in the Delivery of Nature Conservation Policy.

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Abstract

The thesis explores the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs) in nature conservation policy, using England's statutory nature conservation advisor, English Nature, as the focus. While there is increasing pressure for publicly-funded organisations such as EN to incorporate DIPs into their operations, there is little understanding within these organisations of how to apply these approaches in a way that is compatible with their responsibilities.

The concept of Fitness for Purpose is presented as a structuring framework to explore English Nature's use of DIPs in the context of its statutory responsibilities and institutionalised approaches, as well as the changing socio-political and conservation agendas in which the organisation is situated. A case study of the River Avon is used to explore the influences of the institutional, organisational and local situational contexts on the design and management of a DIP to develop a river conservation strategy and deliver the Habitats Directive.

Despite the rhetoric of partnership and community involvement within EN's activities, the use of DIPs has been limited. An interview-based analysis of English Nature as an organisation identifies cultural barriers to the institutionalisation of DIPs. Nevertheless, research findings indicate that a transition is in progress within English Nature towards a culture that places greater emphasis on creative and proactive stakeholder engagement. This is in part a response to opportunities associated with 'deliberately inclusionary' policy agendas such as quality of life to integrate biodiversity objectives into wider policy arenas. However, the use of DIPs in delivering biodiversity targets and securing the management of designated sites is constrained by the influence of top-down performance targets and the 'deliberately exclusionary' nature of conservation legislation. The research questions the extent to which the use of DIPs in the delivery of nature conservation policy can ever meet normative standards of best practice in deliberation and inclusion.
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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Research Rationale and Context 14
1.2. Introducing English Nature 17
1.3. Research Themes and Questions 20
1.4. Thesis Outline 24

Chapter 2. Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes: Theory & Reality

Introduction 27

2.1. The Deliberative Turn in Policy-making 28
  2.1.1. The Shift from Government to Governance 28
  2.1.2. Environmental Problems as Classic Governance Issues 31
  2.1.3. Sustainable Development 33
  2.1.4. Democratising the Policy Process 34
  2.1.5. Calls for Deliberative Democracy 38

2.2 Introducing Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes (DIPs) 39
  2.2.1. Claimed Benefits of DIPs 39
  2.2.2. Definitions of Participation and DIPs 41

2.3. Applying the Principles of Deliberation and Inclusion 45
  2.3.1. Implementing DIPs – what is best practice? 47
    (i) deliberation 47
    (ii) inclusion 48
    (iii) The Relationship between Process and Outcome 49
    (iv) Consensus 49
  2.3.2. Observations on the use of DIPs in UK Public Policy 50

2.4. Institutionalising Participation 52
  2.4.1. Organisations and Institutions 53
  2.4.2. The Importance of Organisational Culture to Institutionalising Participation 53
  2.4.3. Institutional Barriers to DIPs 55

Conclusions 58
Chapter 3. Research Approach & Methodology. Investigating Fitness for Purpose

Introduction

3.1. Fitness for Purpose – a framework for exploring the influence of context in DIPs.

3.1.1. Approaches to Researching DIPs
3.1.2. Introducing Fitness for Purpose
3.1.3. Researching Fitness for Purpose
   (i) Top-down: An institutional analysis of English Nature
   (ii) Analysing fitness for purpose in a particular case situation
   (iii) Linking the institutional and case study analyses.

3.2. Methodological Issues and Approaches

3.2.1. The CASE Studentship.
3.2.2. Action Research.
3.2.3. Case Study Research.

3.3. Fieldwork Strategy: Methods and Analysis

3.3.1. Fieldwork Strategy – an overview
3.3.2. Investigating English Nature – Organisational Analysis
   (i) Preliminary interviews and discussions
   (ii) Semi-structured interviews
   (iii) Informal discussions
   (iv) Document analysis
3.3.3. Analysis
Conclusions


Introduction

4.1. Introducing the Culture of English Nature: Responsibilities, Structure and Approaches to Nature Conservation

4.1.1. The Remit and Responsibilities of English Nature
4.1.2. Introducing English Nature’s Structure
4.1.4. Introducing EN’s Stakeholders

4.2. Influences on the Organisation: Creating the Institutional Conditions for DIPs

4.2.1. Drivers from a Socio-political and Governmental Perspective

4.2.2. The Evolving Nature Conservation Agenda

(i) Changing values and knowledges in nature conservation

(ii) More participatory protected area management

(iii) Beyond designated sites — tackling the geographical & cultural marginalisation of nature

4.3. The Effect of these Drivers on English Nature’s Approaches and Priorities for Nature Conservation

Conclusions


Introduction

5.1. Organisational Responses to Drivers for Greater Participation: Key Developments within English Nature since 1991.


5.1.3. The Use of DIPs within EN


5.2. Examining Staff Attitudes towards DIPs

5.2.1. Objectives for using DIPs

(i) More effective communication and productive stakeholder relationships

(ii) Effective decision-making

(iii) Effective policy delivery

5.2.2. Attitudes to Inclusion
5.3. Structures, Priorities and Institutionalised Procedures.  
Organisational culture and the use of DIPs in EN  
5.3.1. The Low Priority of DIPs in an Outcome-oriented, Target-driven Culture  
5.3.2. A ‘Time-Poor’ Organisation  
5.3.3. A Lack of Emphasis on Process within the Organisation  
5.3.4. An Instrumental, Not a People-first Approach  
5.3.5. Reflective Practitioners?  
5.3.6. A Reflective Organisation?  
Conclusions

Chapter 6. Exploring Fitness for Purpose at a Local Level:  
Introducing the Case Study

Introduction

6.1. Introduction to the case study site

6.1.1. The Habitats Directive

6.1.2. The LIFE Project

6.1.3. Introduction to the Study Site - the River Avon

6.2. Case Study Methodology

6.2.1. The Interviews – Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis

6.2.2. Analysing the Interviews for a Situation Analysis

6.2.3. Analysing the Strategy’s Institutional and Project Context

6.3. Process design, observation and reflection

6.3.1. Devising a process for the strategy

6.3.2. Stepping back – observing the process.

6.3.3. Reflecting on the Process with the Project Officer and Line Manager

6.3.4. Contextualising the Findings of the Avon.

6.3.5. Reflections on the Case Study Methodology

Introducing Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

Chapter 7. Governance of the Avon: A Local Perspective

Introduction

7.1. A Governance System based on Multiple Values and Knowledges

7.1.1. Integrating Values
Chapter 7.

7.1.2. Knowledge Resources 195
7.2. Structures and Processes of Governance on the Avon. 196
7.2.1. Mechanisms of Stakeholder Influence and Involvement 196
7.2.2. Stakeholder Networks 200
7.2.3. Key Players in River Governance. 201
7.2.4. A Governance System in Transition. 207
7.3. The LIFE Strategy in the Context of Local Governance 208
7.3.1. Attitudes to English Nature, the cSAC and the forthcoming strategy 208
7.3.2. Integrating the Strategy into Local Stakeholder Objectives 211

Conclusions - Implications for the Design of a DIP 214

Chapter 8.

Designing a DIP:
Integrating Institutional and Stakeholder Objectives 215

Introduction 215

8.1. Scoping the Process 216
8.1.1. Integrating Local and Institutional Contextual Factors. 216
8.1.2. Setting the Objectives and Parameters for the Process. Comparing Local and Institutional Perspectives 218
8.1.3. Scoping the Extent of Deliberation and Inclusion 221
8.1.4. Summary of Considerations of Fitness for Purpose. 223
8.1.5. Agreeing a Broad Structure 225

8.2. Selecting Participants 226
8.2.1. The ODA Stakeholder Analysis process 226
8.2.2. A Retrospective Critique of the Use of Stakeholder Analysis in DIP Design. 230

8.3. Process Design and the Use of Deliberative and Inclusionary Techniques. 231
8.3.1. Agreeing Process Design 231
Stage 1 – Initial stakeholder consultation 231
Stage 2 – Developing a partnership 232
Stage 3 – The Topic Groups 232
Stage 4 – Stakeholder Decision Analysis 232

Introduction 237

9.1. The Conservation Strategy 238
  9.1.1. Process Overview 238
  9.1.2. Participation in the Strategy 241

  9.2.1. Introducing the Criteria of Fairness and Competence 243

9.3. Reflections on the Strategy Process 244
  9.3.1. The Effect of the Boundaries of Debate on Fairness & Competence 246
  9.3.2. The Influence of Process Design on Fairness and Competence 248
  9.3.3. The Effect of Process Management
    (i) The role of the Project Officer 253
    (ii) The influence of EN on the strategy 255
    (iii) The influence of perspective on process management 256
    (iv) Experience and expertise in running DIPs 258
    (v) The importance of facilitation 259

9.4. Deliberation and Inclusion in the Context of Wider Governance Culture 260
  9.4.1. Deliberation and Inclusion in a Highly Regulated Environment 260
  9.4.2. Looking Forward to Outcomes – Utilising and Enhancing Existing Initiatives 262

9.5. Conclusions: Reflecting on Fitness for Purpose 265
  9.5.1. Trade-offs in Process Design 265
  9.5.2. The Effect of Context on Stakeholder Participation – Lessons from the Avon 266
  9.5.3. Fitness for Purpose and The Effect of Power Relations on the use of DIPs 269
  9.5.4. The Effect of Context on Stakeholder Participation - Comparative Lessons from the LIFE Strategies 270

Chapter 10. Conclusions. Fitness for Purpose: Is there a Role for DIPs in Nature Conservation Policy?

Introduction 274
10.1. The Desirability and Feasibility of DIPs in Nature Conservation Policy

10.1.1. Trade-offs between Process and Outcome in the use of DIPs

10.1.2. Considering the Role of DIPs across EN’s Work Programme
   (i) Designated sites
   (ii) Wider countryside
   (iii) People and Wildlife / local Quality of Life

10.1.3. The Effects of Organisational Culture on the Feasibility of DIPs

10.2. Policy Recommendations: *doing nothing is not an option*
   (i) Provide a Clear Value-basis for Fitness for Purpose
   (ii) A Shift to Communicative Conservation Planning
   (iii) Rethinking the Role of EN in DIPs
   (iv) Maintaining a Commitment to Deliberation and Inclusion.
   (v) Reasserting the Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

10.3. Final Thoughts

Appendix 1 Interview Checklists and Cover Letters for EN Staff Interviews
Appendix 2 Details of three cases where DIPs have been used within EN
Appendix 3 Details of the designation of the River Avon cSAC/SSSI and the Avon Valley SPA/SSSI
Appendix 4 Interview Schedule for Stakeholder Interviews: River Avon case study
Appendix 5 Results of the ODA Stakeholder Analysis Process. Assessing Stakeholders against Influence and Importance
Appendix 6 Additional Details of the Avon Strategy Process

Bibliography
# List of Tables and Figures

## Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1.</td>
<td>Typology of Participation Indicating Communication and Control over Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1.</td>
<td>Summary of Research Methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2.</td>
<td>Exploratory Discussions within EN Headquarters January 2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.</td>
<td>Interviews with Strategic Staff, January – February 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.</td>
<td>Interviews with Staff with Experience of using DIPs, November 2001-January 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5.</td>
<td>Informal Meetings held with EN staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6.</td>
<td>Meetings attended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1.</td>
<td>The Responsibilities of Management Tiers within EN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.</td>
<td>Roles and Responsibilities of Key Committees within EN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3.</td>
<td>Resource Allocation between Programme Boards 1999-2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.</td>
<td>A Typology of EN's Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.</td>
<td>Key Processes to Deliver the Habitats Directive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.</td>
<td>An Introduction to River Avon Stakeholders – their interests and roles in governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7.</td>
<td>Key Governance Initiatives affecting River Avon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8.</td>
<td>Discussions and Interviews with River Avon Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9.</td>
<td>Meetings observed during fieldwork period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10.</td>
<td>Codes used for Situation Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11.</td>
<td>Attendance at LIFE Project Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.</td>
<td>Direct and Indirect Influences over the River Avon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.13.</td>
<td>Mechanisms of Involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.14.</td>
<td>Summary of Objectives from Three Perspectives of Fitness for Purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.15.</td>
<td>Criteria for Stakeholder Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.16.</td>
<td>The Final list of Criteria (highest rank first)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.17.</td>
<td>Participants in the Strategy Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18.</td>
<td>Review of the Avon Process Against Criteria of Fairness &amp; Competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1.</td>
<td>A Typology of DIPs across EN's Work Programme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figures

Figure 3.1. Fitness for Purpose. 62
Figure 3.2. The relationship between the two dimensions of the research - institutional analysis and the River Avon case study. 67
Figure 3.3. Research Timeline 75
Figure 4.1. EN Organogram. January 2000 91
Figure 5.1. Timeline of Initiatives discussed in Chapter 5 126
Figure 6.1. Boundaries of the River Avon cSAC 170
Figure 6.2. Action Research Timeline for the Avon Case Study 178
Figure 7.1. Key Fora relating to Management of the River Avon 199
Figure 8.1. Effect of top-down and bottom-up context on process design. 217
Figure 8.2. Map displaying the Results of the ODA Stakeholder Analysis process 228
Figure 8.3. The Strategy Process 235
Figure 9.1 Perspectives on Effectiveness - The Competing Values Approach 257
'From the beginning it has been a pathfinder; in spite of the load of statutory duties, it continues to be so. If it should ever lose its capacity to look forward and to innovate, the nation would be the poorer.'

Chapter 1.

Introduction

This thesis explores the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes in nature conservation policy and practice. Many public organisations are under intense pressure to incorporate more deliberative and inclusionary methods into their work programmes. But despite the wealth of literature on participation and the 'toolkits' available outlining specific methods and facilitation techniques, there is little guidance for organisations about how to apply the principles of deliberation and inclusion in the context of their particular responsibilities. In addition, there is little understanding of when and how publics and stakeholders should be offered the opportunity to participate.

Using England's statutory nature conservation advisor, English Nature, as the focus, the research explores the response of an organisation to the emerging participation agenda. Particular emphasis is placed on analysing the influence of English Nature's organisational culture and its operational contexts. This introductory chapter will explain the rationale for the thesis, set out the research aims and outline how the thesis is structured.

1.1. Research Rationale and Context

Public agencies operate in a very different world today than fifty years ago when English Nature's predecessor body, the Nature Conservancy, was founded. The justification of policy decisions made by organisations on behalf of society simply on the accordance of principles of representative democracy is no longer seen as adequate. Such processes traditionally operated on the assumption of unquestioned public acceptance of policy decisions, with public consent afforded to the decisions of these institutions indirectly via the expression of individual preferences through such processes as voting at elections (Munton, 2003; Schedler & Glastra, 2001). Elected representatives then developed policy and managed practice on behalf of the electorate. The decisions of such political and bureaucratic elites have, however, attracted growing criticism as being insufficiently
accountable to the public, leading critics to argue for the democratisation of expert-led
decision-making processes, including cases where the acclaimed objectivity of science had
previously justified the removal of public scrutiny (Fischer, 1993). As a result, society now
demands greater transparency in decision-making and even direct involvement in policy
decisions in which citizens have a stake, believing the full range of concerns and values of
citizens are ill-represented by a system that privileges certain types of knowledge and
interests (Fischer, 1993; Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001). It is suggested that traditional public
and scientific institutions are suffering from a 'crisis of legitimacy' (Pimbert & Wakeford,

Among the demands for reform is the democratisation of policy approaches, influenced by
the writings of Habermas, who argues that instead of privileging scientific and rationalist
arguments, policy should be based on reasoned debate designed to reach shared
understanding and co-ordinated action (Habermas, 1984). The feasibility of Habermasian
ideals for the redistribution of power remain contested (e.g. Tewdwr-Jones &
Allmendinger, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 1998), but his theory of communicative action has been
highly influential in efforts to create a new form of democracy based on the expression of
the public good through deliberation rather than the aggregation of personal preferences
(Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Dryzek, 1990). Efforts to incorporate the principles of
communicative action into policy are appearing in the form of communicative planning
(Healey, 1993), interactive policy-making (Aarts & Van Woerkum, 2000; Schedler &
Glastra, 2001) and deliberative and inclusionary approaches (Bloomfield et al., 2001;
Munton, 2003). All approaches are based on the assumption that parties with different
interests and objectives can work together to reach a shared definition of the problem and
a set of policy measures achieved through consensus (Schedler & Glastra, 2001).

The term deliberative and inclusionary processes (referred to as DIPs from now on), is
used to describe participation processes which emphasise dialogue, reflective analysis and
the active involvement of the full range of interested parties (Bloomfield et al., 2001).
Although there is no blueprint definition of DIPs, deliberation is characterised by extended
social interaction, encouraging an unhurried exchange of ideas and allowing participants the
opportunity to reflect on their own position and that of others. Through reasoned debate
participants can improve their understanding of the needs of others, and together work
towards an accepted and supported decision. The meaning of inclusion extends beyond the
opportunity for individuals to have access to a decision-making process, and includes the
influence of participants over the agenda, the structure of the process, and the debate itself, in terms of initiating discussion, challenging and defending claims, and agreeing a final decision (Webler, 1995). Proponents claim that decision-making processes that allow for deliberation between interests not only result in more efficient, effective and equitable decision outcomes, but also that these processes are intrinsically valuable in their own right, contributing to individual, social and institutional learning (e.g. Barnes, 1999; Innes & Booher, 1999; Pellizzoni, 2001; Petts, 2001; Warburton, 1997).

The development and delivery of environmental policy is an area of policy where the need for DIPs has been widely endorsed (Berkhout et al., 2003; Fischer, 1993; Owens, 2000). Environmental problems tend to be complex and frequently active across a range of spatial scales and institutional and administrative boundaries. Such problems fall into Rittel and Webber's (1973) definition of 'wicked problems' - ill-defined, tightly coupled with other sectors and resolvable only through imperfect or transitory political agreement. In other words, there may be no simple scientific or technological solutions in a situation of widely differing values and world views (Fischer, 1993, Coenen et al., 1998). Progress is only likely via flexible decisions created through a transparent process where uncertainties and risks are clearly outlined and discussed with those who may have to bear the costs of the outcome. The rise of sustainable development as the dominant narrative for environmental policy has provided further justification for the use of DIPs given the need to examine environmental concerns alongside social and economic issues through an integrated approach to policy (Owens & Cowell, 2002).

Political pressures for the use of DIPs are also linked to initiatives to restore public trust and confidence in the way public affairs are conducted through performance targets and mechanisms to increase the transparency and accountability of decisions to the public (HMSO, 2000c). It follows that organisations in the public sector are increasingly under pressure from Government and funding bodies to provide evidence that citizens are being consulted and involved in decision-making. The effect, as noted by Munton is that 'Outside the corporate domain it is, today, quite difficult to find examples of environmental decision-making where there has been no public consultation or other form of public involvement in the process.' (Munton, 2003:109).

Despite the ubiquity of consultative structures and processes (e.g. consensus conferences, facilitated workshops, focus groups), the uptake of the participation agenda in the UK is widely criticised as being piecemeal, inconsistent and over-reliant on traditional
consultation processes which do not embrace the more transformative principles of deliberation or inclusion as previously defined (Lowndes et al., 1998, Selman, 2001; Wilson, 1999). This has led others to suggest that participation has done nothing to reinvigorate local democracy, and has tended to be used as a means of legitimating predetermined agendas (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Rowe & Shepherd, 2002; Wilson, 1999). The lack of progress on mainstreaming DIPs is thought to be caused by a combination of factors including confusion and a lack of differentiation within organisations between consultation, partnership, and participation, a lack of guidance on how to effectively and legitimately incorporate such processes into existing procedures, and an inherent nervousness within organisations about devolving control (Ingram & Juni, 1998; Rowe & Shepherd, 2002). There is also a lack of empirical evidence about the effect of context on process and outcomes, how an organisation's values and procedures affect attitudes to participation; or how project management issues, such as staff skills, time and resources all influence the framing, process and outcomes of a participation process (Barr et al., 1996; Coenen et al., 1998; IIED/IDS, 2000).

1.2. Introducing English Nature

The organisation at the centre of this study is English Nature (EN), England’s statutory advisor on nature conservation. EN describes itself as ‘the Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England’ (EN, 2001:85). It is active in ensuring the protection of designated sites, as well as adopting an increasingly high profile role in the wider countryside where it acts to enable and promote the achievement of biodiversity targets. At a political level, the organisation seeks to ensure the interests of nature conservation are represented in policy debates and in the setting of Government policies for sustainable development.

The organisation provides an interesting case for the analysis of the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes for the following reasons. First, as a public sector organisation, EN must show itself to be responsive to the changing needs of society, whilst answering to Government, who provides the majority of its funding.

Secondly, EN plays a crucial role in the delivery of international and national conservation policy and legislation, providing the opportunity for the analysis of how principles of
deliberation and inclusion overlap and interact with the organisational requirement to deliver certain outcomes, particularly when these fall within statutory responsibilities. Of particular interest is the extent to which decision-making processes structured around statute can ever be truly deliberative and inclusionary.

Thirdly, an exploration of EN's use of DIPs touches on debates about the use of DIPs in policy situations where decisions are heavily influenced by scientific knowledge and the roles of professionals and experts. Nature conservation was institutionalised in the 1940s as a rationalised practice even though the conservation movement is driven by a plurality of cultural and emotional values (Adams, 1997). This has had a significant effect on the development and delivery of policy, particularly in terms of how decisions are made and what knowledges are seen as valid. The resulting situation is one where the protection of nature is framed primarily in terms of scientific importance rather than its economic, social and cultural values. The potential for DIPs to facilitate the broadening of the value base of nature conservation policy decisions inevitably challenges this rationalised project.

This leads onto the fourth point. The role of nature conservation in the public policy arena has undergone significant changes over the last ten years, most notably because of the positioning of biodiversity as a key test of sustainable development and the increasing awareness and emphasis on the contribution of nature to the social, physical and mental well being of society (see Harrison, 1993). The conservation of nature is increasingly constructed as a social and economic issue as well as an environmental one, and the political acknowledgement of the plurality of values underlying our appreciation and understanding of our relationship with nature has created an increasingly complex policy context in which English Nature has to operate. For example, efforts to adopt a more sustainable approach to land use planning has led to the opening up of a whole range of policy spaces within which English Nature can act, including urban and rural regeneration, agri-environmental policies and tourism. At the same time, nature conservation has also become an increasingly complex issue in terms of scale with the importance of biodiversity at local, national and global scales emphasised through the delivery of Agenda 21 and the Convention on Biological Diversity. From English Nature's perspective, alongside this emerging nature conservation agenda comes the opportunity to engage with new audiences, requiring new approaches to communicating and developing shared agendas.

As a result of the changing policy and institutional context in which English Nature is situated, a study of how EN is responding to the participation agenda is timely, and of
The research has been undertaken through a CASE Studentship (Collaborative Award in Science and Engineering). The purpose of these Studentships is for research to be carried out through collaboration between an organisation and academic institution, on a mutually agreed topic of relevance and importance to both organisational and academic debates. While a CASE Award bestows particular benefits in terms of access to resources and individuals within the organisation, the research is required to fulfil certain requirements set down by the organisation. This research was designed to contribute to the practice of DIPs within EN, both directly through advice on process design within a case study, and indirectly through the contribution of research findings to policy. More specifically, the research questions are a response to an identified need within the organisation for 'policy guidance on areas of EN's activities where these processes are considered to be appropriate and those where they are strongly recommended; and guidance on the appropriateness of different techniques to different situations' (EN, 1998e). As a result of a meeting of English Nature's Socio-Economic Advisory Group (SEAG), on which members of UCL's Environment and Society Research Unit (ESRU) sit, a collaboration was formed between UCL and EN to co-supervise a studentship. The following outcomes were agreed between EN and UCL prior to my involvement:

- A review of the form and use of DIPs in other environmental contexts and their appropriateness to questions of biodiversity (see Studd, 2002)
- A case study indicating how DIPs can be used by EN in real decision-making situations
- A critical examination of the strengths and limitations of DIPs for English Nature, and an appraisal of the circumstances in which they offer greatest and least potential benefits

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1 This collaboration would build on UCL's research expertise in social aspects of nature conservation and deliberative and inclusionary processes, plus previous experience of working with public agencies including EN and the Environment Agency on issues relating to sustainable development and participation (e.g. ESRU, 1998; Clark et al., 2001; Harrison & Burgess, 1994).
1.3. Research Themes and Questions

The research explores the response of English Nature to the participation agenda, and analyses the desirability and feasibility of DIPs to the delivery of nature conservation policy. In line with the nature of the CASE Studentship, the research adopts an organisational focus, linking academic debates about DIPs to the demands of organisational practice.

The term 'Fitness for Purpose' is proposed as a framework to analyse the effect of decisions made by the organising agency (both explicitly and implicitly) on the design of a participation process, thus affecting the suitability of that process to achieve its aims. 'Fitness for Purpose' is widely used in manufacturing and product design, but has also been applied to studies of participation. In this context it is concerned with 'being clear about goals and selecting the most appropriate participation technique given the circumstances and context' (OPDM, 1998: Ch. 4). In this research not only is there analysis of how Fitness for Purpose is interpreted in the design of individual processes, but how Fitness for Purpose relates to the strategic aims and direction of EN. An analysis of Fitness for Purpose can be subdivided into questions of why, who, when and how:

Why is the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes seen as desirable? (i.e. what is the purpose of the engagement?)

What factors influence who is seen as a potential participant?

What factors influence the degree of inclusion over setting the agenda and determining the final decision? (i.e. when in the decision-making process are participants included?)

What factors influence how participants are involved? (i.e. what DIPs are used?)

However, the idea of Fitness for Purpose is not unproblematic. As noted by Crow et al. (2000), Fitness for Purpose is a subjective issue – who decides how fitness is defined? And fitness according to whose purpose? This research explores the role of DIPs as a feasible and desirable means to achieve nature conservation goals, but in doing so considers and questions the targets and procedures linked to those goals and who is involved in setting the agenda for stakeholder involvement.
Within this overarching theme, three main research questions can be identified relating to English Nature's response to the participation agenda and the influence of organisational culture, project management and the local situational context on the design and implementation of DIPs. The following section explores these three questions in greater depth, and identifies more specific subquestions:

1. What factors have influenced English Nature's approaches to delivering nature conservation policy and its use of deliberative and inclusionary processes to date?

As both a public body and a nature conservation agency, English Nature is under pressure to adopt more deliberative and inclusionary approaches, working with others to secure the conservation of nature in England. As a public agency with statutory responsibilities, EN must fulfil its duties and deliver certain requirements set out by Government. However, as priorities for, and interpretations of nature conservation have changed, so English Nature's remit has broadened. The situation at the start of the research in 1999, was that EN had identified the need for the greater use of DIPs, but had limited experience of their use despite several strategic initiatives and experiments to engage more fully with stakeholders and local communities.

It is argued that an organisation's culture is the most fundamental level at which a transition to participatory working practices needs to take place (IIED/IDS, 2001), and therefore a primary objective of the research was to gain an understanding of the relationship between organisational culture and the uptake of deliberative and inclusionary processes. To understand more clearly the situation in which EN finds itself in relation to the participation agenda, and how the normative arguments for DIPs have a relevance to the objectives and approaches used by the organisation, an initial analysis of English Nature is required in terms of its remit and responsibilities, its culture and how it has and continues to be shaped by its institutional context. This is captured by the following research questions:

What are the roles and approaches used by English Nature to deliver nature conservation policy, and how are they evolving in light of a changing nature conservation and political agenda?

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3 For the purpose of this study, organisational culture is defined as the concepts, attitudes and values present within an organisation, both formally in terms of structures and procedures, and informally in terms of the ideas and behaviour of staff (Wright, 1994).
Chapter 1

What opportunities does this changing agenda create for the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes within the organisation?

Of particular interest is how the drivers acting on the organisation steering it towards greater use of DIPs are translated into strategic motivations and objectives for the use of such processes. In addition, how do these objectives vary across the organisation, between areas of the work programme, and in response to the different responsibilities and pressures on staff at the centre of the organisation (where strategy is developed), and in the local teams (where policy is delivered)? These matters are summarised in the following questions:

What are the motivations and objectives for the use of more deliberative and inclusionary processes within English Nature?

To what extent do objectives for the use of DIPs vary across the organisation?

The second research question overlaps with, and enhances the analysis of organisational culture structured under the first question, by focusing on how the context in which a participatory process is situated affects decisions made about what sort of process is fit for purpose. Context is interpreted as the culture of the lead agency (i.e. English Nature), project management issues (the generic objectives for the project and relevant resources and time available), and the local situation in which the project is to be carried out. This theme is captured in the following research question:

2. In what ways do the institutional, organisational and local situational contexts affect the application of principles of deliberation and inclusion?

A case study was used to explore this issue. LIFE-Nature funds were secured by English Nature for the development of river conservation strategies for seven rivers in the UK designated as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSACs) under the EU Habitats Directive. Generic objectives relating to the involvement of stakeholders and local communities were set and a period of 18 months was provided for the development of a strategy to help secure the appropriate management of the sites. The analysis of one of the rivers (the Hampshire Avon) provided an opportunity to carry out an analysis of the local context in which the strategy was to be developed prior to its initiation, to gain an understanding of the existing management and governance of the site from the perspective of key stakeholders, and to explore stakeholders’ attitudes towards English Nature and the
cSAC on which the strategy would be focused. The aspirations and attitudes of the local English Nature team and Project Officer charged with developing the strategy were also explored, enabling an analysis of the influence of the centre (EN Head Office in Peterborough) and the local team of English Nature (based in Wiltshire) on process design. By then observing the strategy process as it developed, an assessment of these influences on the process could be conducted. The themes explored through this case study are summarised in the following research question:

What influences do English Nature’s culture, statutory procedures and targets, and project management have on decisions made about Fitness for Purpose?

What aspects of local context - structures and processes of governance, and stakeholder attitudes - were considered relevant to the design of a DIP for the Avon?

How does conservation legislation and the differing interests of the centre and the local interact in the setting of process objectives, in defining stakeholders and in determining where and how decisions are made?

These questions link back to broader debates about Fitness for Purpose, this time assessing the concept in terms of the institutionalisation of DIPs. Drawing on understandings of the influence of English Nature’s organisational culture and institutional context on Fitness for Purpose, a third research question is posed:

3. To what extent is the use of DIPs feasible and desirable in the delivery of nature conservation policy?

Building on the findings of Research Questions 1 and 2, this question focuses on the analysis of following two subquestions. The first considers whether EN’s culture constrains or enables a shift towards greater use of DIPs, and the second considers how the potential role of DIPs may vary across EN’s work programme:

To what extent is the existing organisational culture ‘fit’ for the institutionalisation of DIPs?

How does the desirability and feasibility of DIPs vary across EN’s work programme?
1.4. Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured in the following way. Chapters 2 and 3 set the research in its theoretical and methodological context. Chapters 4 and 5 then introduce and present an analysis of English Nature in terms of drivers for the use of more deliberative and inclusionary approaches and the organisational response to this agenda to date. The arguments presented in these chapters are centred around the first Research Question. Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 introduce and report on the case study, addressing Research Question 2. Chapter 10 builds on the arguments developed in the previous chapter, focusing particularly on the questions posed in Research Question 3 and offers some policy recommendations for EN.

Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical and socio-political arguments for the use of DIPs in decision-making processes. Particular emphasis is placed on the need for multi-stakeholder processes to resolve complex governance problems and normative arguments for the democratisation of policy processes. Deliberative and inclusionary processes are introduced as one solution to these problems. The chapter discusses the disparities between the normative principles underlying DIPs and their application in UK policy to date. This draws on arguments about the extent to which the undistorted application of DIPs will ever be feasible and discusses the complexities of institutionalising DIPs into organisational practice. The chapter concludes by suggesting that there is a need for greater understanding of the relationship between DIPs and existing policy processes, the attitudes of organisations towards DIPs and their willingness to embrace these processes, and the factors which influence how organisations are responding to and using DIPs.

Chapter 3 introduces the research from a methodological perspective. Section 3.1. examines the concept of 'Fitness for Purpose' in more detail, explaining how it is used in the research as a structuring tool to examine the relationship between DIPs and the context in which they are to be used. Particular attention is paid to explaining how the concept of Fitness for Purpose relates to the three dimensions of institutional, organisational and local context in which English Nature operates. The chapter introduces the approaches and specific used to examine the three research questions and discusses issues raised by the research methodology used.

Chapter 4 begins with an introduction to English Nature, setting out its remit and responsibilities, organisational structure and its main approaches to delivering nature
conservation policy. It describes how the evolving socio-political and conservation agendas are transforming the context in which EN operates, challenging EN's traditional approaches and demanding a more creative, people-centric and integrated approach to nature conservation. It is argued that for EN to increase its profile within Government, to raise levels of public support for nature conservation and to increase its effectiveness in the wider countryside, it is in its interests to utilise and advocate decision-making processes that engage stakeholders at an early stage and incorporate a broad range of values and interests.

Chapter 5 provides an analysis of how English Nature has responded over the last twelve years to the emerging participation agenda. Strategic initiatives since 1991 that have encouraged community involvement and partnership-working are discussed in Section 5.1. It is clear that beyond a few isolated cases, DIPs have not been used in the delivery of these programmes. However, changes observed within the organisation during the research period appear to offer significant potential for the mainstreaming of DIPs. The rest of the chapter focuses on examining why the use of these processes within EN has been so limited to date through an analysis of staff attitudes and how EN's culture may be obstructing the use of DIPs. While it is shown that staff acknowledge the potential benefits that DIPs could bring to EN, five particular aspects relating to EN's culture are suggested as reasons for the limited use of DIPs in the period up to 2002.

Chapter 6 introduces the case study of the River Avon cSAC conservation strategy. The first section focuses on introducing the Habitats Directive under which the River Avon has been designated as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), explaining the objectives of the Directive and associated procedures. The chapter goes on to introduce the 'LIFE in UK Rivers' project, which managed the project's funding, timescales and broadly set the objectives for the Avon strategy, and the study site itself — the River Avon — in terms of its special conservation features and governance. It also introduces the main stakeholders. Section 6.2. focuses on the methods used for the situational and stakeholder analysis, and details my involvement in the design of the strategy process and how I observed its progress.

Chapter 7 presents a stakeholder-based analysis of the governance of the River Avon prior to the strategy process. The complexity of the structures and processes of governance are described, emphasising the range of stakeholder interests and the complex distribution of ownership, management responsibilities and knowledge. The analysis focuses on how the
process of governing the Avon is divided between stakeholders, how decisions are made and whose values and knowledges are involved in these decisions. The chapter goes on to discuss the forthcoming strategy in the context of these circumstances, drawing on stakeholder perceptions and attitudes towards EN and the cSAC designation and aspirations for the governance of the system. Attention is drawn to particular factors relating to the local governance situation that the design of a process to develop the strategy should take into consideration.

Chapter 8 outlines the stages through which the process to engage stakeholders in the strategy was developed. It discusses the trade-offs that occurred between the process objectives emerging from the local governance analysis, those imposed through the LIFE Project, and those resulting from decisions made by the local EN team. Decisions made about the objectives for the strategy process are considered in relation to what issues were to be discussed in the process, who was identified as a potential participant, and how they were to be involved in a participation process. The final section of the chapter outlines the process as it was designed.

Chapter 9 reflects on the strategy as it evolved under the management of the Project Officer, from observation of the process and discussions with the Project Officer and her line manager. First, the key developments in the strategy process are summarised. Following this is an analysis of the process according to the extent to which it met best practice against the normative criteria of fairness and competence, considering the effect of context, framing and management on the process. Although it is suggested that procedural quality was in part traded off against productivity and short-term effectiveness, there are indications that benefits have been accrued from the process. The chapter concludes by reflecting on Fitness for Purpose in the Avon process, and considers lessons learnt in relation to the other strategies developed under the LIFE Project.

Chapter 10 draws on the findings of previous chapters and sets out conclusions about the feasibility and desirability of DIPs within EN. It goes on to make policy recommendations for the mainstreaming of DIPs into EN’s work programme.
Chapter 2.

Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes: Theory & Reality

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the arguments underlying the current academic interest in the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes in public policy and environmental decision-making, and recent changes in the political and institutional context in the United Kingdom. These changes include the current emphasis on the meta-narratives of governance and sustainable development, which has led to circumstances demanding more deliberative and inclusionary processes in the development of public policy.

The chapter is structured in four parts. The first of these discusses changes that have occurred in environmental policy and public institutions over the last 20 years, each of which have acted as a driver for more deliberative and inclusionary policy approaches. In the second section the principles of deliberation and inclusion are introduced in the context of the range of methods and approaches encompassed in the term participation. The difference between DIPs and other forms of participation is highlighted. The third section focuses on how organisations are applying these principles in the policy process. It will focus on the tensions between on the one hand, the rhetoric of participation in Government policies and the wealth of methods, and, on the other, the limited use of DIPs which go beyond controlled processes of consultation. Uncertainties over what constitutes best practice are discussed, explaining some of the difficulties in translating principles into practice. Translation is made more difficult by the multifarious influence of context on DIPs, the complex relations between process and outcome, and the difficulties of evaluation. The final section of the chapter focuses on the problems of institutionalising deliberative and inclusionary processes into the behaviour of organisations. The relationships between organisations and institutions are particularly relevant to this discussion and institutional barriers to the effective use of DIPs are presented.
2.1. The Deliberative Turn in Policy-making

This section outlines the socio-political changes and theoretical debates that underlie the demand for more deliberative forms of policy-making. There is discussion on how the decentralisation of responsibility for public policy and the creation of supra-national structures to tackle 'globalised' problems have placed increasing emphasis on processes of governance over the role of government. Associated with this change are demands for new mechanisms to ensure the accountability, legitimacy and responsiveness of these institutions to public needs. Changes to the surrounding structures and processes of environmental policy in the context of governance debates, are discussed in light of the emergence of the meta-narrative of sustainable development – bringing environment alongside social and economic considerations, and requiring effective mechanisms to integrate different interests and values across multiple scales. These socio-political changes are also discussed in light of theoretical debates about the roles of science, experts and citizens in policy and increasing calls for the democratisation of the policy process.

2.1.1. The Shift from Government to Governance

Studies of governance, defined as 'the processes through which collective affairs are managed' (Healey, 1997:296), place less emphasis on government itself and more on the formal and informal structures and processes (in which Government is embedded) through which different actors interact. This shift of emphasis reflects changes in the way public policy has been developed and delivered over the last 20 years, characterised by a move from a system where the state held the central role in setting policy and making decisions on behalf of society, to a system where responsibility is fragmented across a range of independent, quasi-independent and private bodies (Bloomfield et al., 2001). Rhodes (1997) describes how the nation state has been hollowed out by the centrifugal forces of globalisation (taking power upwards and outwards away from the nation state) and the desire for local autonomy (shifting power inwards and downwards to local service delivery agencies). In this situation, the role of the state has evolved from that of service provider, to manager and enabler of the complex networks of public service provision (Osbourne & MacLaughlin, 2002). As a result, the state increasingly has to work in partnership with a range of other organisations and policy communities in order to deliver public policy.
Indeed, differing notions of partnership have become the dominant discourse in the practice of governance.

In the UK, this ‘rolling back of the state’ was initiated by the neoliberal agenda of the Conservatives in the 1980s and continued by New Labour’s ‘Modernising Government’ agenda, decentralising power to local and regional tiers of Government, Quangos and privatised bodies. Decentralisation has occurred as part of a series of changes in public sector management that have become known as the New Public Management (NPM). Under the Conservative Government (1979-97) there was a relocation of policy responsibility to the economic market place, greater emphasis on economic, efficient and effective provision of services, performance measurement, stress on private sector styles of management and greater service user involvement (Osbourne & McLaughlin, 2002). Under the Labour Government NPM has evolved to incorporate the ideas of community governance, and decentralisation is justified in terms of a response to calls for the provision of services that are more responsive to the needs and interests of an increasing pluralistic society (HMSO, 1999b).

This transfer of functions and responsibilities to appointed and private bodies is identified as one of the causes of an increasing public mistrust of Government and public policy making (Warner, 1995). It is argued, for example, that the management of public services through private sector organisations is eroding the impartiality and accountability of the civil service (Brereton & Temple, 1999; Pratchett & Wingfield, 1994; Warner, 1995). In 1994, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Demos noted a ‘remarkable lack of clarity about how Quangos should be governed and to whom they are accountable’ (Plummer, 1994). The setting of targets, indicators and the audit-culture that has accompanied decentralisation, provide upline accountability to the Treasury and the relevant Government Department, but has done little to improve accountability and legitimacy of decisions made to the public (Bloomfield et al., 2001).

The situation exists whereby policy decisions and the organisations and institutions responsible seem much less accountable to the public through representative democratic channels of voting (Plummer, 1994). Turn-out at elections is declining, and this is asserted to be as a result of a fall in confidence that voting makes any difference (Stoker, 1997 cited in Bloomfield et al., 2001). Following high profile cases of professional misconduct, efforts
were initiated to 'restore public confidence in the way public affairs are managed' under the Nolan Committee (HMSO, 1995).

Beetham's four principles of democracy help to shed light on the problems being experienced by the current system of representative democracy (Beetham, 1996). The principles are outlined below:

- proper authorisation, or legitimacy, of power by open and willing consent;
- adequate accountability by the means of the constitutional power to remove those in power, openness of information, a free media and a separate judiciary;
- responsiveness to all shades of opinion by formal means of consultation and reaction;
- representation of all strands of social groupings through equal access to power and authority.


Criticisms of transparency in privatised and quasi-autonomous agencies, and the apparent inability of the public to influence their structure, membership or decision-making processes, indicate the limited ability of a decentralised and devolved system to meet the first two principles of legitimacy and accountability without new mechanisms to engage with the public. Similarly, in the current situation where concepts of a 'culturally homogeneous society' and a 'common public interest' are obsolete (Healey, 1997: 32), the 'one solution fits all' approach of the Welfare State is seen as unresponsive to local or specific social needs whilst tending to privilege the interests of traditionally powerful groups (see Leach & Scoones, 2002). Thus it is acknowledged by government that there is a need for greater public participation in policy making, to enhance the legitimacy of political institutions and the local relevance of policy decisions, if we are to reinvigorate democracy (e.g. DETR, 1998b; HMSO, 1999b).

Spaces and processes beyond formal governance mechanisms are identified as providing opportunities for co-ordinating the range of organisations and social networks that

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1 Although as will be discussed later in this chapter, decentralisation of policy responsibility has been accompanied by an increased centralisation of financial control to the Treasury.
represent different interests and values, whilst encouraging reflexivity and responsiveness among the more formal and 'permanent' institutions (Healey, 1997). In addition, this co-ordination is seen as necessary to increase the reach and legitimacy of these formal institutions and structures and to adapt to the increasingly complex scalar dimensions to environmental problems (Meadowcroft, 2002). Based on the belief that our values, knowledges and sense of identity (or culture) are actively constructed through webs of social relations in which we interact with other structures and actors Healey argues that by creating arenas through which different networks can interact, all legitimate voices can be heard, and new shared understandings and collective agreements can be created, these can then be mobilised into relevant and effective policy decisions (Healey, 1997). Such interactions are also seen as holding transformative potential through the development of intellectual and social capital, by allowing individuals to learn from others and to reflect on their own values, build trust and a sense of shared responsibility (Healey, 1997; O'Riordan, 1998). Placing more emphasis on informal and exploratory interactions where policy is shaped and decisions taken is seen as an opportunity to reinvigorate civil society (Wilson, 1999). DIPs are seen as providing a supportive and relevant structure for managing the public realm, as well as a forum for such civil interactions.

2.1.2. Environmental Problems as Classic Governance Issues.

Environmental problems provide a useful lens through which to focus on this change in governance and its associated drive towards more deliberative policy-making. The nature of environmental problems makes their solution unlikely to fall within the responsibility of any single agency, particularly in the UK, where responsibility for protecting the environment has always been devolved and decentralised within organisations with responsibilities divided according to function, with a notable role for non-governmental organisations (Carter & Lowe, 1998). In addition, problems tend to be complex and contested, frequently crossing institutional and administrative boundaries and at risk from problems associated with 'the tragedy of the commons' (Hardin, 1968). Such problems fall under Rittel and Webber's (1973) definition of 'wicked problems' – ill-defined, tightly-coupled with other sectors and resolvable only through imperfect or transitory political agreement. Kooiman's discussion of governance highlights clearly the relevance of understanding processes of governance to resolving environmental and 'wicked' problems. He states, 'no single actor has the knowledge and information required to solve complex,
dynamic and diversified problems; no actor has sufficient overview to make the application of particular instruments effective; no single actor has sufficient action potential to dominate unilaterally in a particular governing model.’ (Kooiman, 1993:4, quoted in Vogler & Jordan, 2003).

In the context of environmental issues, devolution of power from the state has also occurred as a result of the scaling up of governance structures and processes to an international level, with the increased role of international and global institutions in the tackling of ‘global’ problems. The recognition in the 1970s of the transboundary nature of such environmental problems as acid rain, led to the identification of a need for global institutions acting on a global agenda to set standards of behaviour for nation states (WCED, 1987). The creation of sustainable development as the new global narrative was borne out of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED). This led to the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development where governments, acting in the interest of the global citizen, signed up to the Convention on Biological Diversity and Agenda 21, setting a blueprint for sustainable development.

The European Union has also had an important and increasing influence over British environmental policy. Through the setting of standards, procedures and principles the European Union has had a notable effect on the structures, styles and philosophies of British policy (Lowe & Ward 1998). European Directives have imposed uniform standards and standardised procedures on a British system characterised as being dominated by administrative rather than judicial approaches, with a preference for negotiation and persuasion over strict enforcement (Carter & Lowe, 1998). The Europeanization of environment policy also required the UK Government to reflect on the principles and frameworks on which its environmental policy had until this point been based. On reflection, the structures and processes dominant within the UK were seen as piecemeal and lacking overall strategy, with policy-making itself frequently being conducted through closed policy communities (Carter & Lowe, 1998). The Europeanization of policy contributed to a raised political profile of the environment within government, leading to the development of a strategic statement on environmental policy – This Common Inheritance - published in September 1990 (DoE 1990). Principles, such as the precautionary principle, sustainable development and integrated pollution control, often drawn from more advanced European thinking and procedures, began to infiltrate more fully into the UK system.
As with the decentralisation of policy responsibilities within the UK, the presence of these new global and regional institutions raises issues of legitimacy and accountability of the structures and the decisions made. As noted by Vogler and Jordan, and salient to recent political debates about the role of Britain in the European Union, the EU is criticised for its democratic deficit and lack of public accountability (Vogler & Jordan, 2003). The influence of the NGO community, transnational corporations and other international agreements (WTO in particular) on global environmental governance, adds to these concerns of accountability and the question of whose interests count.

These effects of decentralisation and globalisation have created a more complex system of environmental governance. The relevance of a global agenda and supranational institutions, particularly for the cross-border nature of environmental problems, is undisputed. However, as noted in the previous section, it has become clear that despite the global presence of environmental problems, causes tend to be distinctly local (Berkhout et al., 2003). The challenge now lies in translating international commitments to more local governance levels and engaging local needs with the global agenda as captured in the slogan of Agenda 21 – ‘Think Global, Act Local’. Operationalising this concept is complicated because the causes, distribution, effects and capacity to solve the problem may be located at different levels of governance, and there could be conflicts between these different scales about what constitutes necessary action (Bressers et al., 1998). In addition, the range of state and non-state institutions involved in governance, and the integrated approach encouraged by sustainable development, means there is a need for horizontal integration across policy sectors. The key issue for environmental policy has therefore become identifying at what scale the appropriate governance levels should lie, and developing mechanisms for managing interconnections between international, regional, national and local levels of governance (Coenen et al., 1998; Vogler & Jordan, 2003). These complex interactions between multiple actors operating at different scales and levels is espoused within the concept of multi-level environmental governance (Jordan, 2000).

2.1.3. Sustainable Development

Tackling the driving forces of environmental degradation, rather than simply ameliorating and mitigating the effects of social and economic policies, underpins the concept of environmental sustainability. Efforts to institutionalise sustainable development as the
underlying principle for global governance, although far from successful to date, have aimed to mainstream the traditionally side-lined environmental policy field into the heart of public and private policy processes (Vogler & Jordan, 2003). Efforts have included initiatives to incorporate social and environmental costs and benefits more effectively into economic decision-making processes; to create integrated sustainable development plans and strategies; and to encourage more ‘sustainable’ behaviour at the level of the consumer and business (Berkhout et al., 2003).

However, the incorporation of sustainable development into policies has been criticised as having a lack of ‘coherent, *a priori* definition’ (Owens & Cowell, 2002:28). The potential for environmentalists or developers to interpret sustainability in a way that suits their interests has led to conflicts over what is sustainable, critical or irreplaceable, because of the contested moral and ethical judgements that underpin the development of any position (ibid). The emphasis given to cultural values of the environment in sustainable development (WCED, 1987) acknowledges the socially constructed nature of peoples’ interactions with the environment and the values they place on them, as well as the material benefits to be derived from ecosystem services to social and economic sustainability. It is inevitable that the diversity and individuality of values means that sustainability in place will always be contested. What is seen as irreplaceable by one individual may not be by others.

It is argued that this construction of sustainable development is ‘deliberately inclusionary’ (Healey, 1997:184). Baker et al., state that the ambiguity of the concept is advantageous because it allows potentially conflicting parties to reach some common ground (Baker et al. 1997). So, as well as arguing for the integration of multiple policy sectors, sustainable development has led to arguments for the use of deliberative processes to explore values and differences and reach an agreed way forward (e.g. Owens and Cowell, 2002; Baker et al. 1997). Thus the range of new networks, connections and ways of talking about the environment that should emerge as a result of sustainable development should also create opportunities for biodiversity conservation (see Chapter 4). However, the dominance of certain interests and values within existing institutional structures and processes, means that debates about sustainable development could easily be co-opted by existing powerful voices.
2.1.4. Democratising the Policy Process

Up to this point, the discussion has focused on the structures of governance and the complex interaction between state and non-state, local and international actors in environmental governance. However, environmental governance is also evolving in response to challenges over technocratic approaches to resolving environmental problems and the dominance of certain types of knowledge in the process of policy making. These challenges are linked to debates about the social and economic basis of environmental problems discussed previously, and to academic critiques of reductionism and the authority of science. These two factors will be discussed in turn.

Policy decisions are now understood as emerging from processes of negotiation between policy actors, collective interpretation and the dominance of certain discourses over others (Keeley & Scoones, 1999, Knoepfel & Kissling-Naf, 1998). Thus policy is seen as 'an inherently political process, rather than the instrumental execution of rational decisions' (Keeley and Scoones, 1999:4). Technocratic approaches to environmental problems based on the imposition of expert and scientifically defined solutions are increasingly seen as ineffective and inequitable (Berkhout et al., 2003) for two main reasons. Firstly, there is a need to incorporate an understanding of the historical, social, political and institutional contexts of a problem into its framing and resolution by drawing on the understandings, values and knowledges held at a local level (Gass et al., 1997). Secondly, and more fundamentally, because the claim of scientific knowledge to universality and objectivity is being challenged.

Criticisms of the objectivity and legitimacy of scientific knowledge itself reflect debates that have been going on since the 1970s in the social and political sciences about the assumptions of positivism. Post-positivists claim that 'science, like all human knowledge, is grounded in and shaped by the normative suppositions and social meanings of the world it explores' (Fischer, 1993:167). This thinking has led to questions about the distinctions often made in the policy arena between the knowledges of scientific experts and non-experts (Fischer, 1993; Leach & Scoones, 2002), and challenges the exclusive right of scientists to speak for the environment (Eden, 1998). By their elitist natures, it is argued that science and scientists have become externalised from democratic processes, and led to calls for a new expert-citizen relationship in the policy process, whereby science is seen as one form of evidence used in reasoned decision-making processes framed by citizens (Fischer, 1993). Habermas, for example, argues for a new approach to decision-making in
the public sphere whereby moral and emotive-aesthetic reasonings (those focused around values and ethics, and emotive experience respectively) have an equivalent status in debate to instrumental-technical reasoning (scientific and technical arguments) (Habermas, 1984). The thesis underlying Habermas’ theory of communicative action is that no norm can be considered valid unless all those affected can accept its associated consequences, to the extent that those consequences can be known, and that a competent agreement for action can only evolve out of a competent understanding (Weblert, 1995). In other words, decisions should be made according to ‘the power of the better argument’ (Habermas, 1984).

Greater transparency and involvement in scientific policy-making is increasingly being demanded by the public, as mistrust of science and experts increases (Irwin, 1995). It is argued this mistrust is partly due to the unexpected and damaging side-effects of social and technological developments (such as BSE), and a sense of the irony that science is used to tackle problems caused by science in the first place (Murdoch & Clark, 1996; Holmes & Scoones, 2000). In addition, the norm that scientific ‘facts’ are used by politicians to support a range of policy positions leads to the realisation that scientific findings are highly dependent on the way research is framed (Grove-White, 1999). The role of commercial and economic interests in this research agenda is, for example, particularly apparent in the GM and climate change debates. But, it is not necessarily scientific knowledge itself that is being contested (except where the rigour of scientific inquiry is itself open to question), but the rights of scientists and expert institutions to set the assumptions under which science is constructed as truth and used to justify policy decisions. It is argued that the public bring more to their definition and evaluation of risks than is recognised in the framing of these risks by scientists, who ignore the social and cultural dimensions, notably that public perceptions of risk are influenced by a judgement of the trustworthiness of the expert institutions themselves (Wynne, 1996). It is suggested that there is a role for broader public discussion and involvement in the exploration of risks and in shaping the moral and ethical basis of scientific research and policy (Stirling, 2001). The questioning of the universalism of science has also led to greater legitimacy being placed on ‘local’ knowledge, embedded in the society and culture of a single place (Murdoch & Clark, 1996). It is argued that we should move away from differentiating between the scientific and the non-scientific, focusing on the lay-expert dichotomy, and emphasise instead the relevance of different types of knowledges, linking the local and the general, the natural and the social, if we are
to devise solutions to complex environmental problems (Eden, 1996; Murdoch & Clark, 1996; Wynne, 1996).

The environment is also notable as a policy area as one where there has been considerable innovative experimentation in ways to engage the public and those who have a stake in the outcomes of the decision-making process. This can be linked to a number of factors. Firstly, environmental problems are increasingly understood as being embedded in local cultural, social and institutional systems, with consideration of these factors crucial to identifying the causes of environmental decline and devising sustainable solutions (Berkhout et al., 2003). Environmental problems tend to be characterised by local complexity and uncertainty, making the reliance on expert knowledge (based on assumptions of universalism) to make decisions and predictions about a situation without the incorporation of local knowledges and understandings of the problem potentially ineffective (Wynne, 1996). Secondly, top-down approaches are also criticised as being inequitable, with political motives outweighing scientific judgement so the costs of a decision frequently falling on the communities with least capacity for resistance (Halfacre & Matheny, 1999).

Thirdly, the use of the market as the appropriate institution through which to determine environmentally sustainable solutions is questioned, particularly in terms of the market’s ability to capture and represent values of nature. Well-documented criticisms of processes of contingent valuation, cost-benefit analysis and willingness to pay exercises are summarised below:

- values are expressed as the individual preferences of consumers, whereas the environment is a public good reliant on judgements of what is best for all of society (now and future generations), not just individuals

- the process assumes that public preferences are well informed and formulated

- the complex array of values and motivations held by people are reduced to a single monetary figure which may not truly reflect their positions

(Niemeyer, & Spash, 2001).

These criticisms have led to calls for new non-market procedures through which values of nature can be fully explored, articulated and decisions made (Jacobs, 1997). Jacobs argues
for the use of 'deliberative value-articulating' and 'decision-recommending' institutions whereby people debate issues in the public sphere, leading to a greater understanding of the complexity of meanings, reasons, values and arguments surrounding environmental valuation, which can then be reflected in the final decision (ibid). All these factors, including the complexity of environmental governance and its local situatedness, the rising demands of the environmental justice movement, and critiques of market-driven valuation processes, have led to greater exploration of the use of participatory processes as discussed in Section 2.2.

2.1.5. Calls for Deliberative Democracy.

Concerns about the ability of a democratic system based on representation and the crisis of legitimacy in expertise have led to calls for more deliberative and inclusionary forms of democratic practice, based on the principles of deliberative democracy and Habermas's theory of communicative action. In simple terms these theories call for the 'repoliticisation of the public sphere' (Fischer, 1993) and decisions made according to reasoned argument rather than the reliance on systems of representation and expertise. This is a transformative and radical agenda, demanding the redistribution of power to civil society, the tackling of political inequality, and a shift to a system where governance processes are embedded in the public sphere encouraging a form of civic self-governance (Bohman & Rehg, 1997; Dryzek, 1999; Smith & Wales, 2000).

The theory of communicative action is based on a move away from decisions being made according to instrumental rationality (where participants select and effect the most appropriate means to a defined end) to communicative rationality (where the emphasis is on the achievement of consensus through reflexive and undistorted communication) (Dryzek, 1990). As such, communication is placed firmly at the heart of the process (Schedler & Glastra, 2001). In addition, deliberative democratic processes engage citizens directly in the creation of public policy through deliberative processes to consider issues from a 'common good perspective', rather than through the use of methods to capture and aggregate the views of the public expressed from a primarily individual perspective, as dominates the systems of representative democracy (Bohman & Rehg, 1997). Advocates of deliberative democracy are therefore concerned with creating the best conditions for public debate and reasoning which would lead to the best policy solution. Deliberative and
Chapter 2

inclusionary processes, with their basis in such principles of democracy, form the basis of operationalising deliberative democracy. However, most commentators assume that the use of DIPs will not replace the traditional structures and processes of representative democracy, but will enhance them (Bloomfield et al., 2001; Munton, 2003; Wilson, 1999). However, this leads to questions about the most appropriate ways to link the structures of representation and deliberation, and the role of experts and representatives in this system (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002; Smith & Blanc, 1997).

Efforts to implement the principles of communicative action are appearing in the form of communicative planning in the UK (Healey, 1997), interactive policy-making in the Netherlands (Aarts & van Woerkum, 2000; Schedler & Glastra; 2001), deliberative planning (Forester, 1999) and consensus building in the US (Innes, 1996). These approaches are similar in their emphasis on the provision of new spaces through which parties with different interests and objectives can work to reach a shared definition of the problem, and to develop policy measures based on negotiation and the exchange of resources (Schedler & Glastra, 2001). Healey argues for the use of collaborative approaches in the creation of strategic plans, transforming the predominantly technical planning process (which sets out the norms and criteria to manage conflicts between development and environmental interests), to an interactive strategic 'place-making' exercise, where principles and criteria underlying the plan are based on local understandings and values of place (Healey, 1998). It is in the creation of these spaces that the principles of deliberation and inclusion come alive. However, as will be discussed later in the chapter, it is the relationship between these fora and the local and national institutional contexts that determines whether the policy will be seen as democratically legitimate.

2.2 Introducing Deliberative and Inclusionary Processes (DIPs)

2.2.1. Claimed Benefits of DIPs

In light of the above changes in society and governance practices, deliberative and inclusionary processes are seen as having an important role to play to facilitate the direct involvement of citizens and stakeholders in the policy process. They can help to strengthen the relationship between people and institutions, increase organisational reflexivity and accountability, while developing more equitable, legitimate and sustainable policy outcomes
(Barnes, 1999; Rossi, 1997). In addition, the use of DIPs are a mechanism to facilitate the development of collaborative capacity between organisations and policy actors to tackle problems in a society where power and knowledge are both widely distributed (Beierle & Konisky, 2001; Castells, 1996). The use of such processes of participation are seen as beneficial from both a normative and substantive perspective – making the policy process more democratic and equitable, whilst increasing the legitimacy of the decision by including a broader range of values and knowledges into the decision-making process, resulting in a decision based on shared understandings and consensus (Webler & Renn, 1995). It is claimed that processes that have included the whole range of perspectives relevant to the issue will deliver solutions that are more effective because they are more relevant to the local situation and needs of the community (Beierle & Konisky, 2001, Coenen et al., 1998; Warburton, 1997). The pooling of information, resources and ideas can result in more creative thinking, innovative and integrated solutions, and efficient delivery (Innes & Booher, 1999; Sidaway, 1998). In addition, the process of involvement is perceived as engendering local support and a sense of ownership of the decision amongst the participants, thus increasing the likelihood of a sustainable solution (Warburton, 1997).

It is argued that the benefits of DIPs are not only in terms of a 'better' decision, but that the use of participatory processes has a value in its own right, i.e. benefits are accrued from the process itself (Petts, 2001). These are referred to as process outcomes (DETR, 1999b), and tend to be knock-on benefits from the development of intellectual, social and political capital as a result of the interaction between participants (Innes & Booher, 1999). Individuals may benefit from being able to develop, express and explore their own ideas, and gain a greater sense of agency. Through the process of listening to and trying to understand the perspectives of others, particularly those whose voice is traditionally excluded, it is argued that participants will reflect on their own assumptions and start to think beyond their own interests and become 'better citizens' (Barnes, 1999; Pellizzoni, 2001). Through the process of interacting with others in a participatory process and the emphasis on transparency and exchange of knowledge, it is thought that participation can improve trust and confidence between participants (Beierle & Konisky, 2001; Jones et al., 2001). Process outcomes can be tangible in terms of spin-off partnerships or joint action initiatives, or more intangible transformations such as in the way that future policy processes are tackled, and even changes in the underlying norms and discourses to policy formulation (Pestman, 1998). The fair and competent application of such processes can contribute to a more deliberative approach to public policy and enhance the functioning of
representative democracy by increasing public confidence and the perceived legitimacy of governance institutions (Barnes, 1999; Bloomfield et al., 2001).

2.2.2. Definitions of Participation and DIPs

The dictionary definition of participation is ‘to take part’ (OED, 1994). In light of this definition, it is unsurprising that the use of this term, although now ubiquitous in policy documents and legislation, has become almost meaningless. Under the theme of participation lies an abundance of objectives, rationales and beliefs of who should be involved, why, where, when and how (Barnes, 1999). Participation is used to describe processes ranging from agencies involving volunteers, public meetings (which I refer to as passive participation because of the absence of any direct or indirect influence over policy, and beyond the scope of this research), written consultation exercises, to exercises empowering local communities to define and deliver their own plans. Without further clarification the use of the term participation can be misleading and confusing. Arnstein's ladder was the first attempt to categorise types of participation (Arnstein, 1969), and has been used and modified in many subsequent discussions of participation (e.g. Wilcox, 1994; Sidaway, 1998; Harris, 2001). A modified version of this ladder is presented below emphasising how different ‘types’ of participation vary according to the flow of knowledge between agency and participants, and the extent to which responsibility for decision-making and implementation is shared between the organising agency and the participants:
### Table 2.1. Typology of Participation Indicating Communication and Control over Decision

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Type</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Knowledge flow</th>
<th>Control over decision</th>
<th>Control over implementation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Information Giving</td>
<td>Agency provides information about decision already made</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Gathering</td>
<td>Participants provide information which input into a decision made by the agency</td>
<td>←→</td>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Participants provided options to comment on, draft decision, asked for feedback</td>
<td>←→ ←→</td>
<td>Agency + Participants</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deciding Together</td>
<td>Interests brought together to decide best way forward</td>
<td>←→</td>
<td>Agency + Participants</td>
<td>Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Together</td>
<td>Deciding and sharing responsibility for implementation of decisions</td>
<td>←→</td>
<td>Agency + Participants</td>
<td>Agency + Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Citizens empowered to make and implement their own plans</td>
<td>←→</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Studd, 2002)

The flow of knowledge can be one-way - provision of knowledge with little concern over response; partial - with inclusion of a feedback mechanism about the extent to which the message has been received and accepted, with the initial message coming from either the
agency (e.g. consultation documents) or the consultees (e.g. focus groups / visioning); or full - a completed message is received in reply, leading to dialogue (Rowntree, 1992).

The extent to which agencies involve participants in the decision can range from informing them about decisions already made, listening and learning from participants, inputting outcomes into a decision made by the agency, to exchanging ideas and views and making the decision together (DETR, 1998a). Table 2.1. illustrates the changing relationship between agency and participants as participation moves from processes of information provision to empowerment, with an increasing emphasis on dialogue and the sharing of decision-making power. The end point of the continuum is where agency involvement is reduced to an enabling role and citizens are empowered to take and implement their own decisions.

The phrase deliberative and inclusionary processes (DIPs), on which this research focuses, is useful as a means of adding clarity to discussions about participation. Referring back to Table 2.1., the use of deliberative and inclusionary processes can be found in all types of participation except information giving where the agency provides no opportunity for those outside it to input their ideas and knowledges, and remote consultation exercises where 'participants' provide responses to a document, but with no further interaction with those who prepared it. The key features distinguishing DIPs from other forms of participation is the focus on social interaction and agreement by consensus rather than the aggregation of individual responses. The relevance of the terms deliberation and inclusion to participation is explored in more depth below.

Deliberation - ‘careful consideration’, ‘discussion of reasons for and against’ (OED, 1994)

Bloomfield et al., (2001) acknowledge the difficulty in coming up with a consistent definition of what constitutes a deliberative process. Instead, they identify a series of characteristics which Holmes and Scoones (2000) have summarised in the following six points:

- social interaction (usually face to face, but increasingly practitioners are exploring the potential role of Information and Communications Technology)

- processes based on language - usually verbal discussion and debate

- processes require respect for the different views held by participants
processes have a reflective capacity - designed to encourage participants to evaluate and re-evaluate their own position in relation to the statements made by others

- the emergence of mutual understanding and/or a consensus, by a process of reasoned dialogue

- discussion is encouraged to take a relatively open-ended and unhurried approach to allow time for discussion and learning.

Inclusion - 'the act of involving others.... An inclusionary decision-making process is based on the active involvement of multiple social actors and usually emphasises the participation of previously excluded citizens' (Pimbert & Wakeford, 2001:23).

Inclusion extends beyond the opportunity for people to have access to a process, to the influence people have within a process (Barnes, 1999). This links to what Webl er (1995) refers to as fairness - the degree to which participants have an influence over the agenda, the structuring and moderation of the process, and the form of the debate in terms of initiating discussion, challenging and defending claims, and decision-making. In other words, Webl er argues not only for allowing a wide range of viewpoints access to the debate, but also for empowering the participants within the process to act, influence and shape the process. Inclusion raises the issue of who to include and how to include them, and raises particular challenges such as how to represent the values of those unable to represent themselves such as future generations and non-humans (O'Neill, 2001).

The relationship between deliberation and inclusion is complex. These two aspects bring different values and benefits to a process. 'Inclusion encourages breadth in decision-making, (i.e. broadening the range of experience and knowledge involved) and deliberation is more concerned with depth' (i.e. exploration of values and perceptions in detail to develop mutual respect and understanding) (Holmes & Scoones, 2000:31). A process can be inclusionary without being deliberative. For example, public meetings and referenda are widely used as a method to provide a large number of citizens the opportunity to comment on a proposed plan/decision, without providing the opportunity to discuss the issues in any depth, or to develop relationships and understanding between decision-makers and stakeholders. A process can also be deliberative without being inclusionary when a small group of people, not seen as representative of all the relevant interests, are brought together to discuss and decide on a course of action. However, according to Holmes and
Scoones (2000), only when deliberation is linked to inclusion can participatory processes start to tackle problems of democratic deficit, decreasing public trust in institutions and concerns that centralised policy decisions do not meet the needs of all sections of an increasingly diverse society. They claim that the legitimacy of an outcome in terms of acceptability to the public and the suitability of that decision to the local situation, can be compromised if the process is not seen as representative of all stakeholders, and if relevant information and knowledge is overlooked. Nevertheless, for practical reasons such as time and resources, the principles of deliberation and inclusion are often traded off against each other in process design.

2.3. Applying the Principles of Deliberation and Inclusion

Participation is not a new phenomenon in the development of public policy. In the UK, the idea of public participation became institutionalised in the land-use planning system as a means of providing information to the public and engaging in limited consultation over planning decisions through public meetings and planning inquiries (Bloomfield et al., 2001). Although the recent increase in demand for deliberative forms of participation was developing before the arrival of New Labour (Select Committee on Public Administration, 2001b), there has undoubtedly been an increase in the emphasis placed upon their use by central government since 1997, in line with 'Third Way' politics. As a result, Government policies and access to funds increasingly encourage, even demand, the use of participation and consultation processes (Select Committee on Public Administration, 2001b).

Public involvement is regarded as essential for sustainable development (DETR, 1999), and is an integral part of the Modernising Government agenda particularly in local government (Wilson, 1999). The White Paper, 'Modern Local Government: In Touch with the People', records the Government's wish to see consultation and participation embedded within the culture of all local councils (DETR 1998b, para 4.6). This agenda has furthered its profile following the requirement placed on local authorities to develop community strategies for 'promoting or improving the economic, social and environmental well-being of their area and contributing to the achievement of sustainable development in the United Kingdom', the development of which require consultation and participation of appropriate persons (HMSO, 2000b: Section 1, para. 4).
Deliberation with the public is also seen as an integral part of science-based policy making (Select Committee on Science and Technology, 2000; Kass, 2001), and as a means of capturing and incorporating public values into biodiversity decision-making (Select Committee on Environment, Transport & Regional Affairs, 2000). The legal imperative for organisations to take the participation agenda seriously has come through the Aarhus Convention on 'Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters' (European Commission, 1998). The Convention, ratified by the UK in 2002 and in the process of being transposed into European and domestic law, includes demands for greater public access to information about, and involvement in, environmental decision-making. Although not clearly defined, 'public participation' is used to mean that the public are given the opportunity to 'express, and the decision-maker to take account of, opinions and concerns which may be relevant to those decisions' (EC 2001/ C 154:123). The Convention gives the legal right for individuals to challenge an environmental decision on the basis that there was inadequate opportunity for participation.

There are a bewildering array of different techniques and methods that can be used to engage stakeholders and citizens in policy-making. Such processes include Citizen's Juries, Consensus Conferences, focus groups, Participatory Appraisal, Stakeholder Decision Analysis, visioning exercises and Stakeholder Dialogue (see Studd 2002, for an analysis of these processes). The extent to which these processes adhere to the principles of deliberation and inclusion varies according to method and the context in which they are applied. In addition, there is a wealth of advice and guidance available on promoting public and stakeholder participation from government and non-government sources (DETR, 1998a; Audit Commission, 1999; Cabinet Office, 2001; Wilcox, 1994; Young, 1996), plus several websites set up specifically to share best practice (e.g. IdeA, Service First).

However the extent to which the application of DIPs is living up to expectations of democratising the policy process is increasingly questioned (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Wilson, 1999). The following sections discuss reasons for the cautious and relatively nontransformative use of DIPs in UK policy processes to date. The discussion will focus on uncertainties about the translation of theory into practice, the complexities of

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2 However this definition could incorporate traditional consultation procedures as well as more innovative deliberation, so it is unclear the extent to which this legislation will drive greater use of deliberative and inclusionary processes.
Chapter 2

institutionalising DIPs into the culture of organisations and the difficulties of overcoming barriers to change.

2.3.1. Implementing DIPs – what is best practice?

There is still a great deal of uncertainty over what constitutes best practice in the use of DIPs, and especially how to tackle some of the complexities involved. This section discusses these debates and where the emphasis for DIPs should lie in relation to the wider policy process.

(i) deliberation

Many commentators raise questions as to whether undistorted communication is possible (e.g. Holmes & Scoones, 2000). Habermas’ ideal speech situation where decisions are made on the basis of undistorted communication, is regarded as an unattainable and unrealistic goal (Flyvbjerg, 1998; McGuirk, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). Critics of communicative action argue that power determines what counts as knowledge and therefore what interpretation attains authority as the dominant interpretation (Flyvbjerg, 1998). The power of the best argument (i.e. power internal to the process of communication), can be distorted by the effect of external power relations affecting what interests and knowledge are afforded legitimacy during the debate (Pellizzoni, 2001).

Bryson and Crosby refer to three dimensions of power which stakeholders can use to maintain and enhance their status (Bryson & Crosby, 1993). The first dimension is the ability to mobilise resources, status, knowledge and skills to support their position during the discussion itself. This can include the use of expert language, differential communicative competencies, and strategic coalition-making (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). Traditionally disempowered interests may find it hard to challenge existing and powerful discourses through debate (Burgess & Harrison, 1998; O’Hara, 1996). Cooke (2001) discusses the effect on decision-making of being part of a group. Drawing on the social psychology literature he identifies the potential for more risky decisions, groupthink, coercive persuasion, and false agreements (the Abilene paradox) as a result of being part of a group. Mosse (2001) emphasises how knowledges expressed in Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises reflect local power relations and participants’
perceptions as to how best to present their needs in order to secure attainable (rather than necessarily desirable) outcomes.

Bryson and Crosby's second dimension of power is the manipulation of what comes up for decision and action, i.e. influencing the agenda, rules, methods and modes of argumentation, which bias attention towards some matters and not others. This is particularly influenced by the agency with control over implementing the outcomes and their particular interests and biases. By framing a DIP in very narrow terms inadequate attention may be paid to issues of real concern to participants (Leach & Scoones, 2002). The third dimension refers to the basis worldviews underlying the debate, determining how issues are framed, and even whether something is defined as a 'problem' in the first place. By the powerful controlling this framing process, the marginalised remain unaware of their interests (Keeley & Scoones, 1998).

(ii) inclusion

Enactment of the principle of 'inclusion' is also problematic. Questions over who to involve, how to select them, and what interests are being represented remain key challenges in the DIPs literature (Holmes & Scoones, 2000; Munton, 2003). Inclusion is frequently traded-off against deliberation, as deliberation is less likely to be effective the larger the number of participants, or the size of groups involved (Bloomfield et al., 2001). There are also concerns that involving too many different viewpoints at any one time in a process can lead to confusion over aims and judgements, hinder decision-making, make the clarification of issues impossible, and only produce defensive arguments of one standpoint against another (Rowe & Frewer, 2000). Willingness and capacity to say and be heard are unevenly distributed across class, gender and ethnicity, and such inequities must be taken into consideration during process design (O'Neill, 2001).

More fundamental questions are also asked about how deliberative processes can be perceived as politically legitimate and accountable to all interests, particularly when a participant has a role representing the public(s). As noted previously, it is understood that the identity, beliefs and knowledge of any one individual is constructed from a complex network of social relationships in which they are embedded. It therefore follows that at any one time a participant could be representing themselves, a particular community of interest or place, or acting as a bearer of a particular identity (O'Neill, 2001; Leach & Scoones, 2002). In which guise they are speaking may not always be clear, and may change through
the process. Current debates and practices about participation and deliberation are challenged because of 'overly static and essentialised notions of the 'public', 'community', 'interests' and 'knowledge' (Leach & Scoones, 2002:12). A further complexity is added by the representation of future generations and non-human nature under the principle of sustainable development (O'Neill, 2001).

Other observers comment on problems arising as a result of the 'discretionary nature of participation' – i.e. whether people are able or willing to participate (Rydin, 1999). Public choice theory suggests that actors may make a rational decision not to participate in situations where they perceive that the costs of participating outweigh the potential benefits, even when it would be in the collective interest to do so. This raises the possibility of free-riding, where individuals benefit from the participation efforts of others without incurring the costs (Rydin & Pennington, 2000). This is known as the collective action problem. However, some people disagree that non-participation is based purely on the rational analysis of costs and benefits by the individual, and argue that participation is affected by levels of trust in the institution promoting the action (Macnaghten & Jacobs, 1997).

(iii) The Relationship between Process and Outcome

There is disagreement amongst proponents of DIPs over whether the emphasis should be on process or outcome – some argue that an outcome will automatically gain legitimacy as a result of a fair and competent process, whereas others emphasise the importance of some standards by which to judge the validity of the decision (Bohman & Rehg, 1997). Whether the outcomes have an influence over policy is thought to be important to maintain citizen motivation to participate and to prevent further disillusionment with policy-making institutions (Holmes & Scoones, 2000). But, making a generalisable statement that deliberative processes lead to substantively better decisions is an unrealistic and impossible task (Beierle & Konisky, 2001; Coenen et al., 1998, Munton, 2003).

(iv) Consensus

Disagreement also exists over the extent to which processes should aim for consensus as interpreted within communicative rationality - i.e. agreement not just on a course of action, but also on the reasons for it (Dryzek, 1999). Although some sort of agreement is necessary for decision-making, some commentators ask whether in a pluralistic world consensus is
either necessary, attainable or desirable (ibid). A further concern is that in the current world of value pluralism, incommensurable values may lead to intractable controversies, and it will become impossible to reach agreement without imposing one set of values as a framework onto the discussion (Rydin, 1999; Pellizzoni, 2001). Poncelet suggests that a preoccupation with consensus can lead to conflict avoidance, whereby participants avoid tackling inherently contentious issues or underlying disagreements over how society should function, by giving into powerful discourses such as ecological modernisation (Poncelet, 2001). He also questions whether consensus-seeking processes delegitimise the role of conflictual approaches in resolving environmental conflicts (a role played particularly well by NGOs) (ibid). Similar concerns are raised by Bloomfield et al (2001), as to whether striving for agreement will result in 'lowest common denominator' solutions. It appears that a more pragmatic interpretation of consensus is one which strives for agreement on practice, whilst acknowledging this agreement may be based on different underlying values (Pellizzoni, 2001).

2.3.2. Observations on the use of DIPs in UK Public Policy

In response to drivers for DIPs there has been a notable increase in the use of participatory processes by organisations involved in public policy. This increase is most obvious at the level of local government through Local Agenda 21 initiatives (Lowndes et al., 1998; Selman, 2001) and more recently community planning processes. However, the extent to which organisations have institutionalised the principles of deliberation and inclusion into their culture is heavily disputed. Participation strategies still include traditional consultation processes, such as public meetings and market research type surveys, although there is an increase in deliberative approaches (Lowndes et al., 1998). Despite the increased use of such processes, it is claimed that application has tended to be one-off, biased towards certain groups and issues, and poorly evaluated (Lowndes et al., 1998; Selman, 2001; Wilson, 1999).

From the perspective of the organisation, there is a hint of uncertainty about how they should be responding to the participation agenda, as a result of mixed messages coming from central government (which will be discussed later), but also limited knowledge of 'what works for them'. The plethora of methods available to select from can be confusing and due to a lack of investment in evaluation, organisations are frequently unable to learn from their experiences (Barnes, 1999; Clark et al., 2001, Lowndes et al., 1998). As a result,
there is little empirical evidence or guidance as to which processes are effective and in which different contexts (Barnes, 1999).

There have been attempts to compare different participatory methods, and a range of criteria have been developed based on normative ideas of what a participatory process should involve (e.g. Webler, 1995; Barnes, 1999; Rowe & Frewer, 2000), although the influence of context on inputs, process and outcomes makes the link between process and outcome difficult to prove (Barr et al., 1996; Chess & Purcell, 1999; Clark et al., 2001; Coenen et al., 1998, Munton, 2003; Rowe & Frewer, 2000). As noted by Rowe and Frewer (2000:25): 'the intrinsic features of any one participation method will not act alone...Rather, a variety of contextual and environmental factors will interact with the characteristics of a method to determine effectiveness.' Whether outputs from DIPs will lead to long-term transformation in processes of governance depends on the attitude towards their use by the initiating organisation, and the relation between process and the wider policy context (Bloomfield et al., 2001; Healey et al., 1999, Holmes & Scoones, 2000). It is difficult, if not impossible, to isolate a change in organisational behaviour or policy to a single participatory exercise; any transformative changes as a result of a participation exercise are likely to be incremental and diffuse (Chess & Purcell, 1999). As an added complication, evaluation is an inherently subjective process. The results of any evaluation will depend on whose perspective and what criteria are used to judge 'effectiveness' (Clark et al., 2001). Any one process will score differently depending on whether the emphasis of the evaluation is on process or outcome, benefits to participants or to wider society, or the achievement of a task or more diffuse transformative goals (Cowie & O'Toole, 1998).

Following perhaps overambitious claims about the ability of participation to transform civic society, improve society-state relations and lead to 'better' decisions, there is an increasingly cautious and cynical attitude amongst many observers of the use of participation (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001). It cannot be assumed that greater participation will automatically lead to greater legitimacy and ultimately better democracy (Hajer & Kesselring, 1999; Wilson, 1999). It is argued that there needs to be far greater emphasis on the nature of the institutions in which the process occurs, and particularly the relationship between the process and the structures and procedures of its formal governance (Owens, 2000; Owens & Cowell, 2002).
2.4. Institutionalising Participation

The interaction between deliberative and inclusionary processes, the policy process and the wider institutional context in which they are embedded, is increasingly the focus of academic research. The work of Patsy Healey in the UK, and Bryson and Crosby in the United States are particularly influential here. They work from the premise that between the formal structures of government there are institutional ‘spaces’ where actors can influence the principles and knowledge upon which policy decisions are made. Bryson and Crosby suggest a framework whereby the planning process is broken down into fora (where ideas and shared meanings are constructed), arenas (where policy-decisions are made), and courts (where conflicts are resolved by drawing on societal rules and norms) (Bryson & Crosby, 1993). By dividing a policy process in this way, ‘spaces’ can be identified where DIPs can be integrated into the policy process – by setting the underlying ideas on which the policy is based, by taking part in the actual decision-making process, or by influencing the norms and rules which determine on what basis conflicts are managed.

Healey’s work on institutional capacity building extends Bryson and Crosby’s framework. Adopting an institutionalist perspective, she focuses on the interaction between the ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructures of governance, particularly how formal structures, such as institutions, influence the framing of local governance initiatives, and the potential for these initiatives to transform the formal structures of governance. Collaborative initiatives result in the sharing of knowledges between participants, leading to individual learning and mutual understanding. In addition, new networks and relationships between interests are created. The transformative potential of these ‘knowledge’ and ‘relational’ resources can be sustained over the long term by transforming established structures and processes of governance. Yet, this advance is dependent on identifying ‘windows of opportunity’ in established power structures and having the support of ‘change agents’ (Healey et al., 1999). In other words, the willingness and receptivity of organisations and institutions to listen, learn and change in response to deliberative processes are critical if DIPs are to play a transformative role in governance. It is this relationship between organisations, institutions and DIPs that is the focus of the remainder of the chapter.

3 In each of these governance dimensions actors can influence the outcome through the three dimensions of power discussed previously.
2.4.1. Organisations and Institutions

At this point it is useful to distinguish between organisations and institutions, two terms frequently used interchangeably in the literature but with different meanings in the context of this research. Institutions are interpreted as norms and rules that shape and control social interactions, and organisations are defined as groups of individuals working within a structure of divided responsibilities and tasks 'bound by some common purpose to achieve objectives' (Taylor & Buttel, 1992, cited in IIED/IDS, 2000:6). Organisations operate within the context of institutions and through their actions help to reinforce or challenge the norms of these institutions (Giddens, 1984). Institutions do not have to be formally established in law, and the definition includes traditions and routinised practices.

How organisations are interpreted and analysed varies depending on the aspect of the organisation that is being examined and the theoretical position adopted. At a general level, organisations can be understood as formal and informal systems operating in relation to the environment in which they are situated. Formal systems relate to organisational structure, hierarchy of decision-making, goals, rules and polices, whereas informal systems focus on interactions between individuals and groups within the organisation (Wright, 1994). Some studies focus on the mechanisms through which organisations dominate and control the actions of individuals. Post-structuralists and those interested in actor-networks focus on how knowledge and skills are formalised and reproduced through organisational structures and procedures. A third area of inquiry is more concerned with democracy and justice within, and as a result of, organisational action (see IIED/IDS, 2000).

2.4.2. The Importance of Organisational Culture to Institutionalising Participation

This research focuses on how DIPs relate to the practices and approaches through which an organisation acts to achieve its goals. These practices are underpinned by certain concepts, values and knowledges that gain ascendancy and are operationalised within the organisation through the informal behaviour and attitudes of staff, and formally through the structures, procedures and policies of that organisation. These values, attitudes and procedures are embraced under the term organisational culture (Wright, 1994), referring to how the organisation makes sense of its roles and responsibilities. To understand organisational culture, it makes little sense to visualise the organisation as a bounded unit,
and culture as a internally constructed issue. For the purpose of this research, English Nature and its behaviour is understood in terms of its position within a broader context of institutionalised procedures and structures, including national and international nature conservation laws, rights of the private landowner, and the central roles of the market and scientific knowledge in UK policy-making and regulation. The approaches of English Nature are explored in terms of how its culture has been negotiated and organised in response to the broader historical, socio-political and institutional environments within which it is situated. This institutional context permeates the operations of English Nature, influencing its constructions of nature conservation as a policy issue and what constitute relevant procedures for decision-making. Critical to the study of organisational culture in public policy, and the institutionalisation of DIPs, is the relationship between the participants, organisations and external structuring institutions such as laws and government-imposed procedures and operating targets.

As a result of this process of organising, assumptions become embedded within the organisation about how problems are constructed, what is relevant knowledge, and what sort of policy solutions are acceptable. This process of prioritising certain knowledges and values through specialisation is understood as necessary for an organisation to be effective and efficient, but creates a ‘mobilisation of bias’ (Hanf & Jansen, 1998). This links with Chamber’s (1997) concept of normal professionalism, where the higher the ‘status’ of the profession (characterised in terms of power, income, and extent of education and training required), the more specialised the discipline. Such specialists tend to focus on only one or two aspects of the situation and measure the world in specific ways.

These assumptions and values affect organisational motivations for adopting more participatory approaches, who is identified as a stakeholder, how decision-making processes are framed (i.e. what issues are seen as negotiable), and the knowledge and values which are seen as valid in a process. Hence, it is argued that an organisation’s culture is the most fundamental level at which a transition to participatory working practices needs to take place (IIED/IDS, 2000:18).

Conditions under which organisations are best equipped to support and institutionalise participation include a flat, flexible and responsive organisational structure where staff are empowered to innovate and be responsive to local conditions, plus an internal system which encourages participation and learning between the staff (IIED/IDS, 2000). The organisational learning literature is particularly relevant to such discussions (Argyris &
Schön, 1996; Forester, 1999; Schön, 1991). A learning organisation is one which encourages innovation and risk-taking, and where there is an emphasis on sharing experiences and reflexive mechanisms which encourage the organisation to change as a result of these experiences. According to Argyris & Schön (1996:20), there are three types of organisational learning — single loop learning (or instrumental learning) where errors are noted and new strategies identified to improve effectiveness in the performance of organisational tasks; double loop learning through which an organisation reflects on existing practices, rules and assumptions, and restructures the values and criteria through which it defines improved performance; and thirdly, learning through which the organisation enhances its capacity for single and double-loop learning. It is suggested that if the potential for DIPs to transform the governance of public life is to be realised organisations will have to be willing to enter into a process of double-loop learning to reflect on how its assumptions and approaches relate to the interests and values of those seen as important stakeholders, and to develop the internal capacity to learn.

2.4.3. Institutional Barriers to DIPs

Participatory processes, by giving a voice to formerly excluded needs and experiences, and making assumptions visible in the policy process, may lead challenge dominant discourses and the power relations underpinning policies and embedded within organisations. Such learning processes are likely to be destabilising and come up against powerful forces unwilling to change. For example, professionals may see participation as diluting their specific expertise, and elected representatives may see participation as undermining their legitimacy as a representative in the community (Smith & Blanc, 1997). In addition, organisations may be nervous to run DIPs because of concerns that participatory processes will result in raised public expectations of what can be delivered by the organisation.

As a result, the majority of cases where organisations have used DIPs in the UK have been dominated by an instrumental approach, whereby these processes are used as a way of identifying the most appropriate means to achieve a policy outcome (i.e. policy implementation), rather than using DIPs as the fora and arena where outcomes are shaped and decided. For example, in a review of 35 case studies from the ‘north’ and ‘south’ there was a prevalence of implementation-driven approaches to DIPs where the organising agency maintained control of the agenda and left their ‘imprint’ on the outcomes (Holmes
& Scoones, 2000). Using an instrumental approach DIPs can be utilised by organisations as a means of increasing the legitimacy of policy decisions already made (see Goodwin, 1998, for an example), or as a containment mechanism to co-opt potentially problematic stakeholders, thus minimising disruption to pre-conceived policy goals (Few, 2001).

The effects of such an instrumental approach is that any wider reflection of values and assumptions is minimised, threats to powerful interests are reduced and existing power imbalances are maintained and reinforced between the framing of policies within an expertly-defined discourse and those who are expected to play a role in their delivery (Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Taylor, 2001). According to Mosse (2001:18), the application of DIPs in this way is indicative of organisations who 'seek to secure the benefits (financial, political and symbolic) but avoid the costs of participation'. However, such an approach may exacerbate the same socio-political problems of public mistrust in formal institutions and organisations and the ineffectiveness of top-down policy approaches, to which the use of DIPs is meant to contribute. Participants may be left feeling like 'hired hands' to deliver predetermined solutions (Goodwin, 1998). The use of a top-down, instrumental approach in the delivery of the UK's Agenda 21 agenda was heavily criticised as failing to take into account how people relate to their environment (Eden, 1996). By adopting an educative, information-deficit approach to public involvement it is argued that initiatives to encourage the public to adopt environmentally benign behaviour have had limited success (Myers & Macnaghten, 1998).

From the perspective of the organisations, particularly those with responsibilities set by the state, some nervousness of opening up the policy process to a broad range of knowledges and values is understandable. However a balance has to be achieved between caution through not wishing to raise undeliverable expectations through the use of DIPs, which could further alienate participants from the policy process, and being willing to enter into an open reflection on underlying assumptions and policy framings, giving participants some influence over the process and subsequent policy outcomes. However, the ability of organisations to frame policy decisions at a local level, and be responsive to community agendas is frequently constrained. Concerns over over-emphasising the role of the local include the shifting of responsibilities on to individuals and groups who may not have the appropriate resources or abilities, preference being given to local over nationally valued

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4 The authors note that the 'south' is interpreted as Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the 'north' as the rest of the world.
issues, and issues over the co-ordination of scales (Murdoch & Abram, 1998). This is particularly an issue for organisations with statutory responsibilities and a remit to act in the public good. At what level should the ‘public good’ be determined, and who should be involved in this decision? This is a very real issue in relation to nature conservation where definitions of what is important and rare vary over different spatial scales from a global, European, national and local perspective.

But, as noted above, the ability of an organisation to respond to the participation agenda is not just an internal issue, it is a matter embedded in how the organisation engages with different institutions and its ability to influence their behaviour. In the UK the ability for organisations to adopt more deliberative and inclusionary approaches is constrained by an institutional policy context which still tends to privileges the values and influences of experts such as planners and scientists, and scientific ‘evidence’ over non-scientific knowledges (Harrison & Bedford, 2002, Holder, 1999). Norms and rules formalised through the law are particularly stable and are likely to be slow to change.

In particular, in terms of the UK public sector, the ability of organisations to adopt anything other than an instrumental, implementation-driven approach to participation is seen as difficult due to the tight financial control and target culture of the government. On the one hand, organisations are expected to increase the use of participation exercises and work in partnership, and on the other, their activities and outcomes are closely controlled by narrowly defined performance targets (such as Public Service Agreements - PSAs) and pressures for administrative efficiency (Ferlie & Fitzgerald, 2002; Newman, 2002).

Flynn (1999) explains how managers are

‘asked to take risks and innovate whilst delivering a large number of performance targets and processes, both of which are subject to detailed audit and scrutiny. They are asked to consult widely and in detail and still to follow central directions. Staff are to be committed and devoted while having their reason for delivering the service frequently scrutinised as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review.’ (Flynn, 1999:582)

While there are clear arguments as to why it is in the interests of the public and institutions and organisations of government to adopt more deliberative and inclusionary approaches to policy-making, it is clear that some significant challenges must be overcome for DIPs to be used in anything other than an instrumental way. Whether these issues are tackled will be a key test of society’s and government’s commitment to participation.
Conclusions

This chapter has set out the key theoretical arguments and socio-political drivers underlying current interest in deliberative and inclusionary processes. The complexities of environmental governance, challenges to traditional approaches to policy-making and public decision-making institutions have led to a situation where deliberative and inclusionary processes are seen as an important means by which a range of interests, values and knowledges can interact and influence policy. As a result of drivers from government and other stakeholders, and the need to secure their own legitimacy, organisations are keen to be seen to be engaging with the participation agenda. However, throughout the chapter several key questions keep arising:

- How can the principles of deliberation and inclusion be applied in ways relevant to the particular policy situation?

- To what extent are organisations really willing to embrace deliberative and inclusionary processes as a means of widening democracy within the policy process?

- What aspects of organisational culture, and the institutions within which organisations act, influence how organisations are responding to and using DIPs?

The next chapter will explain the approach taken towards the research and the methods used to explore the research questions outlined in the Introduction.
Chapter 3.

Research Approach & Methodology.

Investigating Fitness for Purpose

Introduction

Chapter 2 discusses the challenges faced by an organisation when trying to integrate deliberative and inclusionary processes into its working practices. Attention is drawn to the importance of context in the design and evaluation of DIPs, whilst acknowledging there is still only a limited understanding of how context affects the design of a DIP and the outcomes achieved. Chapter 3 takes forward these ideas and presents the framework and methodological approaches through which the interaction between context and process design have been investigated and analysed.

As a collaborative exercise between UCL and English Nature, this studentship has provided the opportunity to undertake an analysis of EN’s attempts to apply DIPs within their work programme. The CASE Studentship allowed a closer relationship with EN than might be awarded other researchers. It has certainly enabled an in-depth and case specific analysis of how DIPs interact with the structures, processes and values of the organisation. The concept of Fitness for Purpose is presented as the theme running through the research, and formed the operating basis upon which the research methodology was designed. A discussion of the methodological approach adopted towards the research follows, which considers the implications of being a CASE Student on access and the positionality of the researcher.

In terms of methodological design, the study is divided into an interview-based analysis of the organisation from the perspective of its staff and an action research case study examining the design and implementation of a DIP in one aspect of English Nature’s work programme. Although the methods used to undertake both stages of the research are
introduced here, a detailed introduction to the case study is provided in Chapter 6 with information provided about who was interviewed and how research material was analysed.

3.1. Fitness for Purpose – a framework for exploring the influence of context in DIPs.

The thesis adopts an approach to researching DIPs that focuses on the interface between context and process design under the theme of Fitness for Purpose.

3.1.1. Approaches to Researching DIPs

Over the last five years there has been widespread research into the methods, outputs and outcomes of participation, accompanied by much theorising about the rights and wrongs of deliberative democracy and the practicality of true deliberation and inclusion (see Chapter 2). Much of this research has focused on the following aspects of DIPs:

- Abstract and theoretical analyses of the principles underlying DIPs, for example, in relation to governance and planning (Bloomfield et al., 2001; Healey, 1997; Munton, 2003); and critiques of the normative principles underlying DIPs, in terms of willingness to participate (Rydin & Pennington, 2000); representation (O’Neill, 2001); and power relations (Flyvbjerg, 1998; McGuirk, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998).

- Qualitative commentaries reporting on the use of DIPs, detailing the methods used and the outcomes noted (e.g. Beierle & Konisky, 2001; Coenen et al., 1998; Petts, 2001).

- Devising new methods for use in different policy areas, or to deliver specific requirements from the process. Examples include Stakeholder Decision Analysis (Clark et al., 1998), deliberative mapping (PSI/UCL/SPRU/The Wellcome Trust), DEMOCs© (NEF, 2002), the three-step procedure (Renn et al., 1993), and multi-criteria mapping (Stirling, 1997).
• In-depth analysis of the application of DIPs against evaluative criteria to determine the extent to which they meet normative principles such as fairness and competence (Renn et al., 1995) or ideals of best practice (e.g. Barnes, 1999; Rowe & Frewer, 2000).

This research adopts an innovative approach, moving the analytical emphasis to the front-end of the process in order to investigate how local, institutional and organisational contexts influence judgements made about process design (why, who, when and how?), and to explore the effects these judgements have on the subsequent process.

3.1.2. Introducing Fitness for Purpose

The phrase ‘Fitness for Purpose’ was introduced in Chapter 1 as a series of judgements about how a DIP should be designed and applied to ensure the process is suitable for the purpose intended. In other words, decisions must be made about the purpose of the participation exercise, who is identified as a potential participant, how the process relates to the wider policy process and governance structures, and what types of methods should be used. In the analysis of many DIPs, there is little discussion of why certain decisions about the nature of the process were made, and what factors influenced these judgements, many of which are likely to have been made implicitly, based on unquestioned assumptions and conventional approaches to developing or delivering policy. This research aims to gain a greater understanding of the causes and effects of decisions made explicitly and implicitly by EN about the use of DIPs.

The term ‘Fitness for Purpose’ was first encountered in government literature on enhancing the use of public participation in local government (DETR, 1998a). The term provides a framework that can encompass a practical, delivery-focused perspective that would fit into English Nature’s ‘management speak’. It also allows an analysis of the geographical issues relating to governance, space and place, while contributing to a gap in the participation literature about the institutionalisation of DIPs. In other words, Fitness for Purpose is a means of framing the research in terms of ‘how DIPs can work for EN’, as well as ‘how organisations are reacting to the participation agenda’. Fitness for Purpose in relation to English Nature’s use of DIPs is conceptualised in Figure 3.1.
Figure 3.1. Fitness for Purpose.

Institutional level analysis

Global discourses – sustainable development, biodiversity

European policy

Government funding, policies, targets

Organisational culture

Remit & Responsibilities

Resources

Targets

Institutionalised values and processes

Structures / Division of responsibilities

Project level analysis

Relevant legislation, project funding

Organisational culture

Project objectives & management

Objectives

Resources (time, funds, skills)

Local context analysis

Local Governance – structures, processes, cultures

Social & political structures and processes

History of issue and stakeholder relationships

Socio-economic, political barriers to change

Physical / environmental nature of problem

Problem context,

Stakeholder attitudes - willingness to participate & change behaviour

Available stakeholder resources

Nature of problem

Fitness for Purpose

Process objectives

Who participates?

Link to policy process

What techniques?
Developed from the review of the literature presented in Chapter 2, Figure 3.1. provides a simplified illustration of the complexity of factors which interrelate across space and time to influence how a DIP could be designed for use within English Nature's work programme. The culture of the organisation is defined as the division of responsibilities and resources within the organisation, the procedures and approaches used, and the values of nature institutionalised within these processes. This culture is negotiated in relation to international discourses of sustainable development and biodiversity. European Directives on nature conservation set objectives and targets for the protection of biodiversity which are translated into domestic legislation and statutory procedures. The Government then sets the roles and responsibilities of the organisation, agrees Grant in Aid, sets policy targets and determines the strategic approaches to be adopted. The organisational culture represents the response to these external drivers, although the organisation is not without agency itself. EN's Council, staff and advisers and have some degree of autonomy over the organisation's structures and procedures, and the organisation is able to influence policy decisions made about nature conservation at national and international levels.

The next dimension of the model focuses at the level of the project in which the process is embedded and through which the process will be managed. The culture of the lead organisation plays a central role at this level too, however it cannot be assumed that an organisation has only one 'culture', different aspects of the work programme are likely to encourage different approaches, prioritise different values and require different staff skills, even if embedded within the overall remit of the organisation. Projects may also secure external funds or be managed in partnership with agencies with their own agendas and conditions. These considerations will influence the time and funds available for a DIP to run, the amount of staff-time allocated, the specific objectives and targets of the process, and who is identified as a stakeholder.

The final dimension of the model focuses on the specific problem context. Every 'problem' is likely to differ according to the extent to which causes and effects are understood, the spatial and temporal scales over which it functions, and the degree of underlying conflict. In addition, the number of stakeholders will vary, as well as their degree of motivation and capacity to resolve the problem. The character of the problem and stakeholder attitudes will be embedded in the local historical, social, cultural and political contexts. For the sake of clarity Figure 3.1. presents these dimensions as discrete, but they are likely to overlap and interact in complex and unpredictable ways.
3.1.3. Researching Fitness for Purpose

To understand what factors influence Fitness for Purpose the analysis must cut across multiple levels of governance. This scalar aspect to the research is reflected in my focus on the centre of the organisation (i.e. the organisation’s headquarters where EN’s strategy is directed), and its interface with local conservation problems and people (i.e. local teams). These issues are also captured within the research questions reiterated below:

1. What factors have influenced English Nature’s approaches to delivering nature conservation policy, and its use of deliberative and inclusionary processes to date?

2. In what ways do the institutional, organisational and local situational contexts affect the application of principles of deliberation and inclusion?

3. To what extent is the use of DIPs feasible and desirable in the delivery of nature conservation policy?

There are also significant time and space dimensions to the research which have affected the choice of methodologies. It is particularly salient that the research took place over a period of three years during which EN was evolving rapidly in relation to the use of DIPs, and in a situation where the research was commissioned in response to an identified need within the organisation to change and to learn. The approach adopted to the research reflects this, and emphasised the importance of gaining an understanding not only of ‘what is’, but also ‘what may be’, and ‘what could be’ (Schofield, 1993), with links to organisational learning (see Arygris & Schön, 1996).

To capture these elements, the empirical work is structured through a top-down organisational analysis, and a context-specific case study.

(i) Top-down: An institutional analysis of English Nature

The institutional analysis of English Nature focuses on gaining a strategic understanding of Fitness for Purpose, investigating organisational aspirations, motivations, and attitudes towards deliberative and inclusionary working practices. Through interviews, informal discussion, and document analysis the institutional analysis examined the following aspects:

- gaining an understanding of the history of English Nature, particularly past events identified as important in shaping the organisation as it is today
• Understanding the roles and responsibilities of English Nature, how these responsibilities are organised and divided across the organisation

• Current strategic directions of the organisation, particularly in terms of the people-nature agenda

• Understanding the arguments promoting the use of DIPs in the work programme, how EN is responding to these drivers, and evaluating the structures and initiatives in place to further the use of DIPs

• Gaining a picture of the attitudes towards DIPs and experiences of their use within the organisation.

(ii) Analysing fitness for purpose in a particular case situation

This second research question examines how Fitness for Purpose is negotiated in relation to a particular case study. The case study is a situation where English Nature saw an opportunity to use deliberative processes to develop a high profile project relating to European conservation legislation. This project enabled the analysis of all three dimensions of Fitness for Purpose as defined in Figure 3.1. The LIFE in UK Rivers Project with a core objective to develop river conservation strategies on seven UK rivers designated as candidate Special Areas for Conservation (cSAC) under the EU Habitats Directive (a Directive requiring protection of sites identified as having European importance for biodiversity) provided the project context. The Habitats Directive provided an interesting legislative context, plus a series of institutionalised processes and values within which the strategy would sit; while the River Avon in Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset provided the local 'problem' context.

My involvement in the LIFE Project stemmed from a meeting with EN's Senior Freshwater Officer on January 27th 2000. Although the Officer was supportive of my involvement, it was made clear that access had to be negotiated directly with English Nature's Wiltshire team. Therefore on 20 March 2000 a further meeting took place with the General Manager for the Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset teams; the Conservation Officer from EN's Wiltshire team who had responsibility for taking the strategic lead for River Avon issues; and the Wessex Chalk Streams Project Officer who was a key liaison point between EN and riverine stakeholders. It was at this meeting that my involvement in the project was negotiated and agreed.
Chapter 3

The LIFE in UK Rivers project was seen as a suitable framework for the case study particularly because it was viewed from within English Nature as an opportunity for the organisation to learn more about different ways of engaging with stakeholders, and it was hoped that each strategy in the project would do this in a slightly different way. Another more practical factor was the timing of the project in relation to my work. My involvement at the start of the project enabled me to play an active part in the strategy design, thus fulfilling the research requirement of contributing to EN’s experience using DIPs within the organisation (see Chapter 1).

The following 3 research objectives were agreed:

- Analysing stakeholders’ perceptions of English Nature
- Providing advice on how EN could engage stakeholders in the development of the cSAC strategy
- Identifying transferable lessons and processes that could be used more broadly within the organisation.

An action research approach was adopted involving qualitative interviews and process observation to understand the effect of context on English Nature’s willingness and ability to use participatory processes in the delivery of statutory policy. Analysis focused on understanding how actors, processes and structures operating at the local, project management and organisational levels affected process design. Further details on the methods used to capture, record and analyse information is provided in Chapter 6, which introduces the project in terms of its context and methods.

(iii) Linking the institutional and case study analyses.

These ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches are inter-related and were not intended to be carried out in a discrete way. Figure 3.2. illustrates how the top-down institutional analysis and bottom-up case study are linked in terms of their contribution to the research questions. The diagram shows how the research methodology attempted to integrate the context-specific learning from a case study with a more extensive analysis of the organisation. In this way it is hoped the research findings will provide lessons relevant to the whole organisation.
3.2. Methodological Issues and Approaches

The design and undertaking of a research project, and the interpretation of findings is not a value-neutral process. It is influenced by the personality and experiences of the researcher, the institutional context in which the research takes place (in my case UCL and EN), expectations of outcomes, and the level of access of the researcher to information sources (Punch, 1994). This section will discuss these issues in the context of this research,
particularly in terms of the nature of research through a CASE Studentship. There will also be discussion of the principal methodological approaches adopted - action research and the case study. The nature of the CASE Studentship, my active involvement in the Avon case study and EN's strategic interest in my work meant the research process was an interactive one of learning and sharing rather being 'extractive' research.

3.2.1. The CASE Studentship.

The background to the Collaborative Award through which this research was undertaken is discussed in Chapter 1. A CASE Studentship raises particular methodological issues about the research process, and the relationship between researcher and researched. Despite the pre-negotiated research proposal there remained a considerable degree of flexibility in methodological design and the focus of the research. Throughout, there has had to be continual negotiation of the research between the agendas of English Nature and UCL. The outcomes have had to reflect a balance between contributing to English Nature's policy development and organisational learning, and contributing to academic debates about DIPs where English Nature is viewed as a case study, embedded in broader debates about governance and democracy. English Nature's agenda centred on gaining outputs that were directly transferable into policy development, whereas the academic research agenda has placed greater emphasis on the contextual nature of research findings and the interpretative, personal interaction between subject and researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

This tension draws on wider arguments about human geography as practice and its ability to influence policy. Martin (2001) argues that there is a danger of overemphasising the epistemic relativism of postmodernist human geography research to the extent that researchers are unable to make any meaningful statements to policy because everything is interpreted as subjective and contextualised. As a researcher, I have to acknowledge the influence of my own positionality and the subjectivity of the knowledge constructed through my interactions with others, particularly through the case study, and on my interpretation of English Nature presented here (Russell & Kelly, 2002). By being transparent about these issues and by providing a descriptive account of the particularities of the case study, I have attempted to expose some valid policy-relevant lessons for English Nature.
EN staff with a strategic interest in DIPs were very keen to enter into the research as a process of reflexive, institutional learning. It was apparent that these staff members were particularly hopeful that through the discussions held between myself and other staff, the research process itself would help to raise the profile of DIPs within the organisation and encourage their use. It was also hoped that the case study would increase in-house experience of applying DIPs, and provide insights into how the organisation should move forward in relation to the issue. Another advantage coming from the CASE approach was the additional understanding I was able to acquire about the organisation by operating within it. As discussed in Chapter 2, the concepts of deliberation and inclusion are embedded in ideals about democratic structures and organisations that encourage learning. By being part of the organisational learning process on DIPs, I gained an understanding of whose ideas count within English Nature i.e. who is listened to, and how the organisation is learning about participation. This experience would have been less vivid if I had been operating from outside the organisation.

One of the most obvious benefits of this situation was the access afforded to individuals and reports within EN. Through the role of my EN supervisor as gatekeeper, and the personal interest of interviewees in the research topic I had access to senior executive staff, including the Acting Chief Executive, two Directors and two General Managers.

My approach to the research was influenced by my personal beliefs about nature conservation and the role of deliberation in policy-making (both of which are at least in part moral and ethical issues). However, I also had a particular identity within the organisation which will have influenced relationships within the interviews and therefore the type of conversations held. As I have a background in ecology and nature conservation, I was identified as having common interests, ideas and values as those I was researching. I also was not seen as having a value-neutral position in relation to the issue I was studying, for two reasons. Firstly, the organisation approached the research from the assumption that English Nature ‘needs’ to use DIPs, and the issue to be decided was when, who and how, rather than whether such processes were suitable. This agenda was exacerbated through my role in the River Avon case study where my involvement led to a DIP being used. As such I frequently felt my role within the organisation was constructed as an expert and advisor on DIPs, rather than a researcher into DIPs. The risk of being associated with a particular position is that interviewees shape their responses on the basis of what they think the
researcher wants to hear, what they think the researcher should not hear, and what they want the researcher to hear (Macdonald, 2001).

The action-oriented nature of the research meant that the traditional divide between data collection, analysis and outcomes became blurred. The strategic organisational desire for outputs and outcomes was apparent throughout the research period. The nature of the CASE Studentship demanded an ongoing dialogue with English Nature staff about my findings through reports, presentations and informal conversations. Defining the research as a process of interactive dialogue constructs the interviewees as co-researchers (Russell & Kelly, 2002), particular in this case because they frequently had an interest in the research findings. In this way, I was able to use interviews and discussions as an opportunity to reflect on outcomes so far. However, as the research process went on, there were tensions over the discussion agenda in cases where I wanted to ‘learn’ certain things about the organisation, and interviewees wanted to ‘learn’ about DIPs. Care also had to be taken that, in my apparently influential position within the organisation, ideas raised by me for discussion were not necessarily interpreted as conclusions. As noted by Russell & Kelly (2002) the pressure on researchers to find early answers can limit the time available to researchers to ‘listen to the data’.

Another effect of the explicit policy focus of such a CASE Studentship is that the research audience spans the academic research community, EN staff and, potentially, other organisations with an interest in designing and institutionalising DIPs. As the research is linked to policy development within EN it was particularly important that research findings were accessible to staff (at a strategic and local team level), both in terms of the language used and the relevance of the findings to their own interests. Thus in addition to the production of a thesis, two reports were written for the organisation during the research process, plus an additional report for stakeholder interviewees in the Avon case study, and a summary report of the thesis is in preparation, as a means of communicating the research findings back to the organisation. In addition, I presented a number of seminars. These reports are:

1 These reports are:
- Summary report on findings of case study stakeholder and situation analysis for non-EN/EA interviewees in the Avon case study
- Deliberative Methods of Stakeholder and Public Participation (Studd, 2002). EN research report
- Summary of thesis findings for EN (in preparation)
Chapter 3

included one for an EN team interested in using DIPs, one for the Socio-Economic Advisory Group, and one at a Board meeting for the LIFE Project. I was also involved in the production of a paper on stakeholder participation for EN’s Executive Committee.

3.2.2. Action Research.

Action research is defined as research where the aims of the investigation are to understand a situation as relevant to a particular research question, but to do so by explicitly influencing and changing the system — thus pursuing action and research outcomes at the same time (Allen, 2000). Despite encompassing a range of methods, action research can be identified through the following commonalities.

- Firstly, and most obviously, the research is interventionist, based on the premise that by influencing the phenomena being studied the nature of the phenomena become more evident (Allen, 2000). As a result the action researcher becomes part of the system being studied, blurring the boundaries between the researched and the researcher and making the relationships a key interface for reflection and learning.

- Secondly, this form of research is often ‘collaborative’ in that it requires other people to be involved and supportive of the process being undertaken, and to be willing to take part in reflection and learning.

- Thirdly, action research adopts an iterative approach to data collection and analysis, learning with project partners as the process unfolds and responding to issues as they arise.

Such a methodology is particularly suitable for research into DIPs as it adopts principles of open and inclusive reflection as encouraged by participation theory. In addition, in the case study, an action research approach enabled me to experience the process in the present rather than through post-process written or verbal communications (Mosse, 1998). This reduces biases that may occur due to historical revisionism by interviewees.

Through the Avon case study I was able to adopt an active research role, and the support of the Project Officer and the local Conservation Officer (her line manager), were critical
to this. My role evolved from that of a researcher, analysing the governance of the Avon through the eyes of stakeholders, to a more active, interventionist role influencing the design of a DIP to develop the River Avon Special Area of Conservation (cSAC) Strategy. The final stage of my involvement required a shift to a more passive role as process observer, as the Project Officer took control of co-ordinating and managing the strategy process. This approach has overlaps with ‘process documentation research’ (PDR), developed in the 1970’s by social scientists for the analysis and evaluation of development projects (see Mosse, 1998).

The relationship between EN and myself in the Avon study raises interesting issues about the tensions between the different roles an ‘action’ researcher plays during the research process. The relationship between myself and the project had to be continually negotiated through the process and included consideration at each stage the extent to which I should be engaged with or detached from the process, whether to adopt a position as an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’, when to be active and when to be reflective, whether to be principally a practitioner or a researcher, whether to support or criticise the process, and whether to base oneself in ‘management’ or the ‘field’ (Mosse, 1998). Although I progressively withdrew to a role as a reflective researcher, I could never be an ‘outsider’ to the strategy, given my involvement in its design.

3.2.3. Case Study Research.

The analysis of English Nature represents a case study of the issues that public sector organisations face in engaging stakeholders (including the public) in policy-making and delivery. Therefore the process of developing the River Avon conservation strategy was a case study within a case study. Although the results of the interviews carried out, and my observations of the process are valuable and useful to the local team, the primary value of the case study in terms of the thesis is as an instrument to explore the issues surrounding EN’s use of participation, and as a foundation for further interviews within the organisation (see Stake, 1998).

I decided to focus on a single case study rather than exploring multiple situations. There are arguments for and against carrying out a single in-depth study (Dopson, 2003; Stake, 1998; Yin, 1994). The rationale for spending time and effort looking at one case are:
Firstly, it allowed me to spend more time in the field, with my involvement in the Avon case spanning over two years. This amount of time enabled me to gain a good understanding of the complex ecological, administrative and socio-political system surrounding matters on the Avon, right through from my initial stakeholder analysis interviews, to the development of the strategy process, and its implementation. Over this time I built up productive relationships with local English Nature staff as well as interviewees and participants in the strategy process. Throughout the lifetime of my involvement in the case study my relationship and rapport with the Wiltshire EN team and the LIFE project team has been crucial. I found these relationships helpful when it came to interviewing people whom I had met previously at meetings, and in my later role as observer during the strategy process, where people did not feel uneasy by my attendance.

The disadvantage of using a single case study potentially lies with the problem of typicality - how transferable or 'generalizable' will the findings coming from a single situation be for the rest of the organisation (Schofield, 1993)? By focusing on a single case, there is a danger that although the study findings will have value as a descriptive account, wider learning or policy relevance will be small. One solution suggested by writers on methodology is to use 'thick description' to allow the research audience to make their own judgements about the extent to which findings apply to their experiences (Schofield, 1993).

The methodology used in this research acknowledges the limitations and opportunities of focusing on one particular case study, and a thick description approach, endorsed by Schofield, has been used to report the case study findings. However, the research was also able to utilise opportunities to contextualise and triangulate case study findings by drawing on the experiences of others within the LIFE Project and EN. As a way of extrapolating lessons from the Avon, discussions were held with the other four LIFE Project Officers who were also been given the task of developing a conservation strategy for a river SAC within the same timescale, but in a range of different environmental, social, political, cultural and institutional contexts. These discussions were held over the telephone and informally at meetings of the LIFE Rivers Project Board meetings. More generally, through interviews with EN staff, my research findings were triangulated with the experiences of other EN staff who had used participatory processes, or were in the process of trying to design such a process through interviews. However, as these experiences took place in different times in the organisation's history and had different objectives, a direct comparison was not possible.
3.3. Fieldwork Strategy: Methods and Analysis

3.3.1. Fieldwork Strategy – an overview

Multiple methods were used to gather empirical evidence ranging from observation, discussion and semi-structured interviews. Although as noted previously, the organisational analysis and case study overlap in the methods used for data collection, for the sake of clarity these two stages are discussed separately. Table 3.1 summarises the methods used and Figure 3.3 how the different stages were conducted over time (a more detailed timeline of the case study is provided in Figure 6.2).

Table 3.1. Summary of Research Methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Focus</th>
<th>Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Analysis</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interviews –</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic Staff &amp; Staff with experiences of DIPs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Discussions with strategic staff in EN Headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document Analysis of EN reports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Study Analysis</td>
<td>Interview-based Stakeholder Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Design of Conservation Strategy Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Process Observation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semi-structured interviews with Project Staff</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3.3. Research Timeline

- **January 2000**: Fieldwork in EN
  - Exploratory interviews – EN Headquarters. Negotiating case study

- **July 2000**: Fieldwork in EN
  - Semi-structured interviews – staff with experience of DIPs

- **January 2001**: Case study Fieldwork
  - Semi-structured interviews EN Headquarters

- **July 2001**: Case study Fieldwork
  - Semi-structured interviews – Avon EN staff

- **January 2002**: Strategy process – observation & reflection
  - Introductory interviews Avon
  - Stakeholder interviews - Avon
  - Interview analysis & strategy design
3.3.2. Investigating English Nature – Organisational Analysis

To explore English Nature's reaction to the participation agenda, alongside attitudes, ideas and opportunities within the organisation for the use of DIPs, qualitative research techniques were used to capture the attitudes and experiences of English Nature staff through formal and informal conversation. These conversations ranged from informal discussions with staff over lunch or at a social event, to informal un-taped meetings and semi-structured interviews. This multiple approach to data collection was useful. Although semi-structured interviews allow an in-depth exploration and analysis of issues, informal conversations create opportunities to discuss issues without an imposed agenda. Throughout these conversations I had my researcher 'hat' on, and at all times I was explicit about my role in relation to the organisation and my research interests. All forms of data collected contributed to my research findings and records of untaped discussions were kept in a research diary which also contains my ongoing reflections about the research. EN corporate reports and minutes from Council meetings were also examined to provide insight into strategic changes within the organisation since 1991, and how the organisation presented itself to the outside world during this period.

(i) Preliminary interviews and discussions

To develop my research interests and scope my subsequent involvement with the organisation, I spent the first few months of the PhD familiarising myself with EN. Part of this process involved exploratory discussions carried out from January to March 2000 with staff in English Nature's headquarters in Peterborough. These discussions had several objectives. First, they were a way of improving my understanding of how English Nature operated. Secondly, they were a means of gaining familiarity with terminology used within the organisation, relating to structures, procedures and approaches to nature conservation. Thirdly, they allowed me to raise the profile of my research across different sectors of the organisation. The PhD was closely linked to one particular area of EN, and these conversations enabled me to understand how the research sat in relation to other areas of the organisation. Fourthly, the discussions were an opportunity to scope potential case studies. During this period, two semi-structured interviews took place. These interviews were exploratory and relatively unstructured.
Table 3.2 Exploratory Discussions within EN Headquarters January 2000 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Theme of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 January 2000</td>
<td>Urban Programme Co-ordinator</td>
<td>Interview - History of EN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 January 2000</td>
<td>Head of Coastal Conservation Team</td>
<td>Informal discussion - DIPs in the coastal environment, scoping potential case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 January 2000</td>
<td>Senior Freshwater Officer</td>
<td>Informal Discussion - DIPs in riverine environments, scoping potential case study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 January 2000</td>
<td>Advisor to Chief Scientist</td>
<td>Interview - History of EN, role of science in policy, European Directives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 January 2000</td>
<td>Director – Gaining Supporters business process</td>
<td>Informal discussion – structures and processes within EN; issues community involvement within EN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 January 2000</td>
<td>Strategy Manager</td>
<td>Informal Discussion - structure &amp; processes within EN</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At all other times when I was interviewing or having meetings in Peterborough, I was based in the Environmental Impacts Team where I was able to meet and learn about the organisation through day to day discussions with staff. In April 2000, I attended English Nature's three-day Induction Course for new employees. This course provides an introduction to all the different sections of the organisation through presentations and discussions. It was also an opportunity for me to meet other staff.

(ii) Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews have a central role in the research methodology. The method is seen as suitable as it enabled me to enter into an in-depth exploration of issues pertinent to my research with those employed by the organisation, drawing on their personal beliefs and experiences, as well as their professional knowledge of nature conservation and English Nature. A semi-structured interview provides participants the opportunity to express their responses in their own terms through recounting stories based on their own experiences and ideas. In terms of this research, the discussions were framed according to an interview checklist of topics, but a conversational approach was favoured because it provided

2 In this, and all subsequent tables, interviewees will be introduced in terms of the position they held at the time of the interview, regardless of any subsequent changes.
interviewees the opportunity to take the conversation in a particular direction if they felt it was relevant to EN's use of DIPs (Burgess, 1982). This was important because each interviewee, although belonging to the same organisation, had different responsibilities, knowledges and experiences of EN.

The interview was seen as an interactive learning process, acknowledging the effect of the interview process on the researched as well as the researcher. Through the exchange of ideas and ways of looking at a particular situation, knowledge is constructed through the process of conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). My role as a interviewer was to 'make active the respondents' stock of knowledge and bring it to bear on the discussion at hand, in ways that are appropriate to the research agenda' (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997:123). As an interviewer I was able to gain insights into issues relevant to my research questions, whilst the interviewee gained the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the context of the subject in which the conversation was framed\(^3\). In addition, by the time these interviews were held (between November 2001 and February 2002), much of my fieldwork for the Avon case study had been completed, and I was able to introduce ideas and issues raised by the case study. In this way the interview became a two-way dialogue.

An interactive approach to interviewing raises particular methodological implications as I wanted to ensure participants were able to discuss the idea of DIPs in their own terms. The interview schedule therefore started from an exploratory discussion about how EN approaches its roles, what role stakeholders should play in EN's decision-making processes, becoming more in-depth and interactive in the latter stages of the interview. At this stage, the aim was to share my knowledge and experiences of DIPs with their situated experiential knowledge of English Nature and conservation policy. (A copy of the interview checklist and cover letter is provided in Appendix 1). Another methodological issue relates to the use of language and terminology. Participation is a multi-faceted issue, it can be interpreted and applied in a variety of ways. In addition, because of the frequency within which 'participation' appears in policy literature, and as it was understood by those being interviewed to be a key issue for English Nature, there was a risk that discussions could be caught up in rhetoric. Capturing the full array of meanings and assumptions underlying an individual's discussion about the role of participation was found to be a

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\(^3\) Indeed, many participants were appreciative of the opportunity created by the interview to think about the issue of DIPs in English Nature, bemoaning the fact they had limited time to engage in such reflective behaviour in their busy administrative schedules.
complex issue. To try and get round the pitfalls of interviewing about DIPs, I ‘talked around’ as well as talked directly about the subject with interviewees. Based on the resulting thick descriptive data, I analysed attitudes and ideas about participation based on the principles of deliberation and inclusion.

English Nature is a complex organisation in terms of its different governance levels and the range of activities within its work programme. The principles of deliberation and inclusion are such that they could be applied to a greater or lesser extent throughout the organisation’s work programme, including internal policy development (and arguably this should be so). A strategy was needed to focus my analysis of the organisation. As my involvement in the Avon case study was initiated before the organisational analysis had commenced in any detail, the issues of the Habitats Directive, river conservation and the LIFE Project subsequently provided a lens through which interviewees were selected4. However, in light of significant changes within EN during the research period, some interviewees were also selected according to their role in EN’s strategic development. The position held by those people interviewed and their relevance to the Avon case study and the strategic direction of EN is set out in Table 3.3. The table also indicates how comments from these interviewees will be referred to throughout the rest of the thesis - as ‘specialists’ or ‘managers’.

Most of those interviewed had a broad overview and understanding of the organisation, and were able to talk in-depth about English Nature from a historical and strategic perspective, as well issues relating to the Avon case study. These interviews therefore served a dual purpose – to understand the approaches, procedures and inherent values of nature embedded within the organisation and how these influenced the Avon case study, and to understand how the organisation was thinking more generally about the use of DIPs.

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4 The knowledge and understanding I had gained through the case study of the Habitats Directive and river conservation was also a useful means of structuring interviews and framing discussion with staff based in EN’s headquarters.
Table 3.3 Interviews with Strategic Staff. January – February 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 January 2002</td>
<td>Project Officer for Guidance on Implementing Conservation Objectives (also regional role). Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 January 2002</td>
<td>LIFE in UK Rivers Project Manager. Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 January 2002</td>
<td>Head of Policy (involved in strategic development of People &amp; Policies programme; sustainable development, lead on freshwater policy). Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 January 2002</td>
<td>Senior Freshwater Officer (responsible for developing policy and technical approaches to freshwater sites management; setting conservation objectives for designated sites; principal author of LIFE Project Bid) Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 January 2002</td>
<td>Head of Designated Sites Unit (responsible for development and implementation of policies associated with statutory management and protection of designated sites). Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January 2002</td>
<td>Head of International Casework (guidance on casework relating to Habitats Directive and advice on management plans for international sites). Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 February 2002</td>
<td>Acting Chief Executive / Director of Operations (oversees all operations on designated sites, and key role in setting organisational culture). Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 February 2002</td>
<td>General Manager – Lowlands Responsible for policy on Terrestrial Habitats / SSSIs. Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 February 2002</td>
<td>EN Economist (EN supervisor to the Studentship, co-ordinator of SEAG, involved in DIPs debate). Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 February 2002</td>
<td>Director of Policy Head of People &amp; Policies Programme, chair of SEAG, key role in strategic direction of EN. Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 November 2002*</td>
<td>retired Director of Operations Now involved in the delivery of the Habitats Directive in Eastern Europe. Manager</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This interview was held after we met at a SEAG meeting where I was presenting my findings of the Avon case study. The individual expressed an interest in understanding more about my work and agreed to participate in the research.

Semi-structured interviews were also held with staff who had experience of using DIPs within their work for English Nature. Based on advice from individuals within EN, five
staff were identified. All these individuals were based in local teams. One was in the process of exploring how DIPs could be used within his project. The interviews focused on staff experiences of developing and using participatory approaches, lessons of good practice, and cross-cutting issues relating to organisational culture, and the effect of context on process design and outcomes. These discussions also drew on broader issues about the approaches EN is using to tackle biodiversity decline. The interview checklist is provided in Appendix 1.

Table 3.4 Interviews with Local Staff with Experience of using DIPs. November 2001- January 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Experience of DIPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 November 2001</td>
<td>Lifescapes Project Officer</td>
<td>Chilterns Lifescapes Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 November 2001</td>
<td>Team Manager – North &amp; East Yorkshire Team</td>
<td>Focus groups in Natural Areas project, Community Involvement Key Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 December 2001</td>
<td>Team manager – Cornwall</td>
<td>Volunteers on Nature Reserves, Community Involvement Key Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 December 2001</td>
<td>Conservation Officer on secondment at time of interview</td>
<td>PRA in developing Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 January 2002</td>
<td>Conservation Officer – Kent team</td>
<td>Stakeholder Dialogue in the development of the Thanet Coastal Management Scheme</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iii) Informal discussions

The rationale for the selection of individuals for in-depth, semi-structured interviews was set out in the previous section. However, my ideas and understanding of the organisation also developed through more informal discussions held with individuals from other areas of the organisation who had a particular interest in developing English Nature’s relationships with stakeholders and the public, and the potential for DIPs to achieve this. These discussions took place in a variety of locations and formats – either at meetings arranged during my time based in Peterborough or at English Nature events (see Table

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5 Although other EN staff had had training in DIPs or experience of being part of a process where DIPs were used, only five individuals were made known to me as having used these processes within English Nature’s core work programme. In fact one of these individuals had only been involved in running volunteer schemes.
Chapter 3

3.5), or through discussions over lunch or coffee during my time in Peterborough. Although not recorded formally, notes were taken from these discussions and contributed to my thinking even though they could not be analysed as interviews.

Table 3.5 Informal Meetings held with EN staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting with...</th>
<th>Key Themes of Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23 August 2001</td>
<td>Lifescapes Project Officer</td>
<td>Designing a DIP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29 January 2002</td>
<td>EN Urban Officer</td>
<td>EN's attitude to people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 February 2002</td>
<td>Project Manager - People &amp; Wildlife</td>
<td>The new People and Wildlife team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 March 2002</td>
<td>Community Officer</td>
<td>People &amp; Wildlife, community involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 August 2002</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
<td>Community Strategies &amp; the potential role for DIPs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6. Meetings attended

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meetings Attended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 September 2001</td>
<td>Presentation Chilterns team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 December 2001</td>
<td>EN council meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 January 2002</td>
<td>EN People &amp; Wildlife launch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-31 October 2002</td>
<td>People and Wildlife Conference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(iv) Document analysis

As part of the empirical research, a review of documents produced by English Nature was undertaken. The primary purpose of the review was to provide context and detail to projects and issues raised through the interviews. It was also useful to improve my general understanding of how English Nature had evolved since its creation in 1991. By referring back to Annual Reports I could review how the structures, priorities and types of projects undertaken have changed over the last 10 years, as well as considering how the organisation presented itself to the external world. Minutes and reports from Council meetings were also reviewed as a means of gaining an insight into strategic discussions during that period. A more focused analysis was undertaken around key issues in the organisation's history raised during interviews. I was also able to contextualise anecdotes made during interviews.
with staff about their experiences of using DIPs by referring to any written record of the process (although this was not always detailed). It must be acknowledged, that any documents produced for external audiences may be subjective, however this provides an insight into the image the organisation wants to display to its audience (Fetterman, 1989).

3.3.3. Analysis

To develop the arguments presented in the following chapters of the thesis, all the different types of information were analysed through an iterative and reflective approach. As ideas were developed, I revisited interviews and research notes and analysed them from a range of different perspectives. The computer software package ATLAS/ti was used to code and analyse the semi-structured interviews held with strategic and local team staff. This software facilitates the analysis of text by enabling the researcher to assign codes to portions of text and group these codes to start to develop lines of argument. My interviews were analysed in several different ways and I differentiated between different types of knowledge. Firstly, I collated 'factual' information about EN's structures and projects, and details about the legislative process. This information was collected from the relevant ‘specialist’ within English Nature. Secondly, I collated 'experiential' knowledge relating to DIPs, which was gained through staff's experiences of using or taking part in a DIP, and of working for English Nature. This type of knowledge was predominantly (but not solely) located in the interviews with staff who were interviewed specifically because of their experiences. The third type of knowledge is 'attitudinal', capturing the ideas, values and attitudes of the interviewee.

Coding is a long and iterative process. Because of the breadth of issues covered in the interviews I adopted a grounded approach, allowing issues to appear from the text, rather than imposing codes. To answer the research questions the interviews were examined under the following themes:

- Changes observed in the organisation over time
- Drivers and motivations for the use of DIPs within EN
- What individuals felt could be achieved through the use of DIPs and increased engagement with stakeholders more generally

http://www.atlasti.de
• Issues of organisational culture identified as influencing EN's uptake and application of DIPs
• Lessons learnt from experiences of using DIPs
• Aspects relating to the use of DIPs alongside statutory procedures, particularly the Habitats Directive

Notes made from other meetings, informal discussions and my own thoughts recorded in my research diary, could not be analysed in such a rigorous way. Particularly important meetings were recorded in as detailed a way as possible, and codes coming from the interview data were applied to these records, to see if my notes contained any supporting statements or observations. Likewise, any particularly interesting observations led to a re-examination of the interviews. Documents tended to be analysed as a secondary supporting material for issues arising from the conversational data.

Certain factors had to be considered during the analysis. Firstly, the interviews spanned a 2½ year period, during which time the organisation underwent a change in structure, a change in Chief Executive and Chair, and new initiatives relevant to my research began. Any effect of the date of the discussion on the statements made was taken into account. A second factor was the position of the individual within the organisation. Depending on their position, staff would have different responsibilities and their perspective on DIPs varied accordingly. However due to the limited number of individuals interviewed no generalisable statements can be made about the distinction.

Conclusions

A complex methodology was adopted for the study of English Nature, based upon ideas taken from ethnography and action research. The approach of interviews carried out within the EN Headquarters, and a case study based in a local team, enabled the factors affecting Fitness for Purpose in the use of DIPs, to be analysed from a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' perspective.

This chapter has focused on the broad methodological framework adopted to the research and the methods used to examine issues within the organisational headquarters at Peterborough. The main issues raised through these interviews are reported over the next two chapters.
Chapter 4.

Introducing English Nature:


'English Nature is the Government funded body whose purpose is to promote the conservation of England's wildlife and natural features. We achieve this by taking action ourselves and by working through and enabling others.' (EN 2002a:1)

Introduction

Chapter 4 introduces English Nature in terms of its formal structures and procedures, in the context of its history and the institutions which have influenced the organisation's development. The discussion focuses on the organisation as it was during the research period, 1999-2002. More recent changes within EN\(\) that are of relevance to the discussion are presented as footnotes only. The first section views the organisation in terms of its roles and responsibilities as determined by Government through legislation, and outlines how English Nature is structured and how it distributes responsibilities among its staff to deliver its objectives. It goes on to discuss the key approaches used by English Nature to achieve nature conservation targets.

The institutional context in which English Nature is embedded is changing. Socio-political changes, such as the move to multi-stakeholder governance and democratisation of the policy process, have already been discussed in Chapter 2 and will not be reiterated. However, they have had an influence over the culture and strategic direction of the organisation. In addition, the conservation agenda is changing in response to new understandings of why nature is important and how nature conservation problems should be addressed, and these are examined in the second section of this chapter. The third section examines the influence of these driving forces, from inside and outside the conservation movement, on the approaches and objectives of English Nature.
4.1. Introducing the Culture of English Nature: Responsibilities, Structure and Approaches to Nature Conservation

4.1.1. The Remit and Responsibilities of English Nature

In response to calls for areas of Great Britain to be set aside for nature in post-war planning for the protection and enhancement of wildlife populations (Wildlife & Conservation Special Committee, 1947), nature conservation became institutionalised as a legitimate land use through the passing of the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act. This Act gave birth to English Nature's predecessor body, the Nature Conservancy. The organisation was created by Royal Charter with responsibilities to provide scientific advice on the conservation and control of natural flora and fauna; to establish, manage and maintain nature reserves; and to undertake any associated research. Under this Act the organisation was also given the powers to notify areas considered to be of ecological, geological or physiographic special interest as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)\(^1\). Subsequent changes in the organisation's remit have been marked by Acts of Parliament, which have over time fragmented the geographical and political scope of the organisation. For example, the research function of the Nature Conservancy was detached to form the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology through the Nature Conservancy Act (1973).

English Nature (EN) is the most recent incarnation of the Nature Conservancy, formed after the split of the Nature Conservancy Council into country-based agencies in 1990. The organisation's responsibilities are detailed under the 1990 Environmental Protection Act (c. 43 Part VII). The staff of the 22 local teams and 10 national teams are responsible for discharging the following functions as written in the Environmental Protection Act (1990) and augmented by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000):

i. To establish and maintain and manage nature reserves
ii. To advise Ministers on policies for, or affecting nature conservation
iii. To provide advice and disseminate knowledge about nature conservation
iv. To commission and support or, if necessary, carry out relevant research
v. Various duties, under other statutory provisions, notably:
   a) to notify Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and to take such steps as are open to it to protect them
   b) to issue or advise Ministers on the issue of licences affecting protected species

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\(^1\) Until the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), designation as a SSSI only required the Nature Conservancy to notify the planning authorities of the site's importance.
c) to take account of actual or possible ecological changes as appropriate in the discharge of its functions.

(Taken from EN, 2001:44)

As Government agents, EN’s duty is to ensure that the UK Government fulfils its responsibilities under international agreements and laws (e.g. global agreements like the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention; and European Directives such as the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive), as well as protecting habitats and species of local and national significance through designating Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). Beyond its work on designated sites and protected species, English Nature has an increasingly important role in the wider countryside as a specialist and advocate for nature conservation in local, national and increasingly international policy-making. Key mechanisms through which EN operates in the wider countryside include the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Species Recovery Programme plus the provision of grants to local communities for nature conservation works. Its operations in the wider countryside are based on Natural Areas which provide an ecological framework for conservation planning (EN, 1994).

English Nature is funded by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. As an executive Non-Departmental Public Body (or Quango), the organisation is able to operate ‘to a greater or lesser extent at arms-length from Ministers ... preserving independence in [its] day-to-day decisions from Ministers and their civil servants’ (Cabinet

As of 2001, EN was responsible for 4,115 SSSIs, covering 1,097,766 ha (1,400 of which are wholly or partly designated for their geological interest); 212 cSACs designated under the Habitats Directives and 85 SPAs designated under the Birds Directive; 202 NNRs covering 83,703 ha (68 wholly or partly managed by approved bodies).

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (DoE, 1994) sets out the goals – including targets and costs for conservation of species and habitats in the UK.

The Species Recovery Programme aims to save rare or threatened species from extinction in England. It operates through partnership with other organisations.

In the financial year 1999/2000 EN’s Grant in Aid totalled £39.528 million (EN, 2001d), by 2002/3 this had risen to £68.696 million, including £5m from the Capital Modernisation Fund (EN, 2002b). It is predicted to rise to £80,497 by 2005/06 (EN, 2003).

A quango has been defined by the Select Committee on Public Administration as a body ‘responsible for developing, managing or delivering public services or policies, or for performing public functions, under governing bodies with a plural membership of wholly or largely appointed or self-appointed persons.’ (Select Committee on Public Administration, 2001:para 5).
Quangos operate in a role which allows them independence in decisions taken to execute Government policy and in the expert advice they provide to Ministers and government departments on specialised issues. However, as discussed in subsequent sections, as a publicly-funded body English Nature has to be responsive to Government agendas and is affected by the political climate in which it is situated.

As part of the 1990 Act that created EN, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the Countryside Council for Wales (CCW), the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) was set up as a mechanism to co-ordinate the activities of the three agencies. Through this committee, the three national agencies work collaboratively to carry out special functions relating to nature conservation in Great Britain as a whole, such as setting Great Britain-wide conservation objectives, common standards for monitoring and research, and generally sharing expertise and experience.

In terms of government agencies, EN’s nature conservation focus is seen as complementing the heritage, landscape and rural development focus of the Countryside Agency, the more broad environmental focus of the Environment Agency (whose responsibilities include managing land, air and water pollution, water resources and quality, flood defence, waterways recreation and waste management), and the quality of life and environmental well-being focus of local authorities. Together these organisations (plus increasingly the Forestry Commission and DEFRA’s Rural Development Service) work together to secure environmental protection. Recent Acts of Parliament have increased the extent to which other Government Ministers and departments must have regard to the purpose of conserving biological diversity (Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000. Part III 74 (1)).

Throughout its existence, the UK institution for nature conservation has had a close and reciprocal relationship with the nature conservation NGO community, particularly those groups who played a key role in the rise of the nature conservation movement in England at the start of the 20th century – The National Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and county wildlife trusts. These organisations own and manage land for nature conservation, act as policy advocates, work closely with local communities and the farming community, and through their memberships play a vital role in raising the profile of nature conservation amongst the general public.
4.1.2. Introducing English Nature's Structure

The design of an organisation determines how strategic goals are administered and executed. The structure provides a visual representation of reporting relationships and hierarchies, illustrating how individuals and issues are grouped together, and indicating formalised mechanisms set up for intra-organisational communication and integration (Maund, 1999). Analysis of the structure of English Nature therefore provides an insight into how the organisation 'sees' itself. In addition, analysis of how resources are distributed and how effectiveness is judged provide insights into the strategic priorities of the organisation and how these are translated across its work programme. The structure of EN as of 2000 is presented in Figure 4.1.

Restructuring and reorganisation was seen as important tasks in the creation of a new identity and culture for English Nature after the split of the NCC. After a period of strategic reflection in the early 1990s, English Nature made a decision to 'alter its organisational shape to improve the delivery of its nature conservation goals and enhance its effectiveness both internally and to its external customers and partners in nature conservation' (EN, 1996:2). The subsequent changes were broadly in line with the agenda of the Conservative government of the day - emphasising a managerialist culture, decentralisation and emphasis on customer / service user consultation. Indeed, a corporate commitment to a customer-oriented conservation agenda was proclaimed in English Nature’s 'Strategy for the '90s' (EN, 1993). Under management themes, called 'Business Processes', strategic responsibilities among Directors were divided according to key customer groups, rather than functional focus as had previously been the case. For example, one Director took the lead for policies on engagement with EN’s 'strategic allies' (particularly Government departments and other national level organisations), one Director led on community and promotion issues and one led on statutory relationships with stakeholders. In this way, each Director had a ‘portfolio of customers’ (EN senior staff pers. comm.6).

In line with decentralisation, regionally-based teams were replaced by county teams which, due to their more local focus, were able to develop closer links with local stakeholders. In

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6 This division changed again in 2001 back to a situation of function-based Directorial responsibilities with the creation of Programme Boards.
addition, local teams were awarded greater control over their budgets and the approaches they adopted to delivering targets.

The structure outlined in Figure 4.1. shows EN’s structure it stood in early 2000 - the time when the research was initiated. Subsequent changes in key appointments and the management of initiatives have occurred since 2000, but the overall delegation of responsibility between the bureaucratic tiers has remained unchanged.

7 However, this process of subsidiarity was accompanied by a strengthening of the centre through target setting and monitoring (WWF-UK, 1997).
Figure 4.1. EN Organogram. January 2000.

- Suffolk
  Essex, Herts & London,
  Sussex & Surrey,
  Norfolk,
  Devon & Cornwall

- Hampshire & IoW
  West Midlands
  Thames & Chilterns

- Maritime
  Environmental Impacts

- General Manager Maritime

- General Manager Influencing Strategic Allies

- Strategy Manager Direction & Reporting

- Director Maritime, Influencing Strategic Allies

- Strategic Development & Reporting

- General Manager Uplands & Finance

- Director HR Lowlands

- Finance

- General Manager Lowlands

- Three Counties
  Beds, Cambs & Northants

- E. Midlands
  NW Team
  Peak District & Derbyshire
  N & E Yorkshire

- Uplands

- Information & Marketing
  Information Systems
  Human Resources

- General Manager Uplands & Information

- General Manager HR & Information

- General Manager Gaining Supporters

- Director Uplands & Information

- Director Gaining Supporters & Finance

- Information & Marketing

- General Manager Chief Surveyor

- Kent
  Wiltshire
  Dorset
  Somerset

- External Relations

- Chief Executive

- Chairman

- Council

- Local Team

- Service Team - Peterborough

- Specialist Team - Peterborough
Table 4.1. The Responsibilities of Management Tiers within EN.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Tier</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
</tr>
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</table>
| Chair                 | Chairs Council  
Strategic lead and visionary for the organisation and represents the organisation at the highest political levels. |
| Chief Executive       | Operational and financial management of the organisation  
Chair of the Executive Committee  
Strategic and visionary leadership for staff |
| Directors             | Work with council members to plan and manage EN’s business  
Provide strategic leadership to staff |
| General Managers      | Ensure strategic objectives are communicated and translated into team plans and actions  
Managing specific team managers – local and national level |
| Specialist Team       | Specialist Teams provide advice to Local Teams and external stakeholders on particular aspects of nature conservation (e.g. uplands, lowlands, freshwater, marine), or particular issues affecting nature conservation (e.g. pollution, climate change, planning). These teams play an important role in ensuring there is continuity between Local Teams on advice given and how complex issues are tackled. |
| National Service Team | Responsible for staff welfare, publicity and external relations and other support functions.                                                    |
| Local Team            | Discharge EN’s functions within a particular locality on a day to day basis.  
Deal with the notification and negotiation of management for designated sites (known as case work), although in controversial cases the Chief Executive or even the Secretary of State can become involved.  
Have a considerable degree of autonomy over the approaches taken to achieving nature conservation targets within their area. |

(Taken from EN, 2001b)
Table 4.2. Roles and Responsibilities of Key Committees within EN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee</th>
<th>Membership</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Council         | 14 individuals selected by the Secretary of State with a range of expertises linked to nature conservation. Chief Executive and Directors also sit on the Council | Statutorily responsible for everything done by and in the name of English Nature  
Approves the strategy, programmes and targets for the organisation  
Advises, through an annual strategy session, on issues that need consideration |
| Executive       | Chief Exec., Directors, Strategy Manager                                     | Advises Council on all aspects of EN's statutory responsibilities  
Responsible for ensuring all actions agreed by Council are implemented  
Ensures a balanced programme of work across the full range of EN's activities  
Allocates expenditure  
Sets targets and outcomes  
Devises the Corporate Plan and organisational culture |
| Performance     | Chief Exec. General Managers, Chief Surveyor, Strategy Manager                | Monitor financial performance and target achievement  
Ensure integration of issues into local plans  
Draws together relevant lessons from local teams for future strategic direction |

(From EN, 2001b)

Figure 4.1 clearly shows how roles are divided within English Nature between strategy and management, the 'expert' advisors and the decentralised local team policy deliverers. Managerial staff and specialist teams are based in the organisation’s headquarters in Peterborough, whereas local teams operate from county-based offices. However, staff based in both the organisational headquarters and the local teams have responsibilities for managing the interface between how EN sees its world and the agendas, interests and values of local actors through which the nature conservation agenda must be delivered.

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8 In 2000, Council members included professionals involved in agriculture, industry, marine conservation, botany, wetland conservation, law, and representatives of the Country Landowner and Business Association and the farming community.
Those staff based in Peterborough tend to spend their time in dialogue with government departments and other strategic staff from key stakeholder organisations such as the Environment Agency or RSPB, whilst also providing a support basis for local teams through management and / or advice on specialist conservation issues. Local team staff have more dealings with local offices of key stakeholder organisations, local authorities, and owners and managers of land. There is a notable difference between the strategic and science-focus of the Peterborough-based teams, and the policy delivery and operational focus of local teams. General Managers and Team Managers play a vital role in mediating between the strategic management aims of EN and those whose role it is to deliver these aims. The EN Directors and the Chief Executive are seen as responsible for defining and role-modelling English Nature's management style and establishing and nurturing an appropriate corporate culture for the organisation (EN, 2001b). However, this power tends to be seen as lying particularly with the Chair and Chief Executive (WWF-UK, 1997; Sheail, 1998). During the course of this research both the Chair and Chief Executive were replaced (a new Chief Executive was appointed in February 2000\textsuperscript{9}, and a new Chair in April 2001). The changes these individuals would bring to the organisation was a key issue for debate within EN at this time, particularly in terms of their perceived favouring of a more people-oriented approach.

In its strategy document Beyond 2000 (EN, 1997) English Nature identified seven management themes reflecting the core roles of English Nature towards which staff would work. These business processes were:

- **Direction and Reporting** – determining priorities and reporting on progress
- **Uplands, Lowlands & Maritime Natural Areas** – progressing the achievement of targets within these issue and geographically defined areas
- **Influencing Strategic Allies** – securing contribution to EN’s objectives from key stakeholders within Government and other sectors
- **Gaining Supporters** – developing support for EN’s approaches, image and reputation as an organisation.
- **Making English Nature Work Better** – improving the effectiveness of EN’s internal processes.

\footnote{Following the death of the new Chief Executive, a new Chief Executive was appointed in February 2003, having been acting in the post since December 2001.}
As shown in Figure 4.1., each General Manager had an overseeing role for a particular Business Process and had responsibilities to manage staff to work more closely together towards the objectives and common goals of that process. The teams overseen by each General Manager tend to reflect the focus of the particular business process, for example the Environmental Impacts Team (who predominantly deal with Government departments and other stakeholders) fell under the responsibility of the ‘Influencing Strategic Allies’ General Manager.

At the end of 2000, these Business Processes were replaced by four themes managed within Programme Boards:

- Designated Sites: protecting and enhancing the wildlife value of designated sites;
- Wider Countryside: improving the wider environment and the sea for wildlife;
- People & Policies: influencing peoples, hearts, minds, policies and actions in support of nature conservation at an international, national and local level; and
- Modernising and Managing English Nature: developing EN’s ability to be more efficient, joined-up and responsive.

Science and Communications were added as cross-cutting themes, representing the importance that EN’s decisions are based on sound science, and that the organisation sends out clear and consistent messages about conservation (EN, 2001). Each Programme Board is constituted of two to three General Managers, relevant local and national team managers, and is chaired by a Director. Steering groups set up for the Science and Communications cross-cutting themes include Council members. The Executive Committee ensures there is a balance of resources across the programme boards, and the Performance Committee ensures that local teams implement work plans that deliver the intended balance of themes and monitor progress. This change was initiated by the previous Chair who felt the Business Process structure was overly complex. The simpler Programme Board structure is perceived to fit EN’s operations better, and allows a greater level of delegated authority to the Boards from the Executive Committee (EN Manager, pers. comm.).
The division of resources between these programme boards during the research period is presented in Table 4.3 (figures adjusted for the year 1999/2000 from business processes to programme boards):

**Table 4.3. Resource Allocation between Programme Boards 1999-2002. (£'000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated Sites</td>
<td>23,300</td>
<td>24,042</td>
<td>28,226</td>
<td>37,082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider Environment</td>
<td>3,494</td>
<td>4,614</td>
<td>6,628</td>
<td>8,670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People and Policies</td>
<td>2,804</td>
<td>3,297</td>
<td>4,476</td>
<td>4,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modernising &amp; Managing English Nature</td>
<td>9,224</td>
<td>9,611</td>
<td>11,272</td>
<td>9,759</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1,645</td>
<td>1,867</td>
<td>1,865</td>
<td>1,845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>1,967</td>
<td>2,158</td>
<td>1,920</td>
<td>1,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Grant-in-Aid spent on EN Programmes</td>
<td>42,434</td>
<td>45,589</td>
<td>54,388</td>
<td>63,960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Grant-in-Aid</td>
<td>45,490</td>
<td>48,712</td>
<td>58,010</td>
<td>68,696</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(from EN, 2001; EN 2002b, EN, 2003)

Funding levels are communicated to English Nature through Grant-in-Aid letters, which also give an indication of where DEFRA expects resourcing to be focused. The objectives and targets of EN give a good indication of how the organisational priorities have evolved in line with Government priorities. Since the development of spending related Public Service Agreements (PSAs) in 2000\(^\text{10}\), EN's operations have become increasingly focused on achieving their relevant PSA targets. The key PSA targets over the research period were for 95% of SSSI land to be in favourable condition by 2010, and to reverse the long-term decline in the populations of farmland and woodland birds by 2020 (EN, 2001). Other targets include delivering changes associated with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (HMSO, 2000), the EU Habitats and Birds Directive, the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, and EN's Earth Heritage Strategy. In addition, the UK Sustainable Development Strategy (DETR, 1999) has influenced EN by encouraging partnership approaches and efforts to

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\(^{10}\) PSAs evolved from the 1999 Comprehensive Spending Review, as a means of creating measurable targets for the full range of Government public spending priorities, to improve public sector efficiency and accountability (Treasury, 1999).
integrate biodiversity into wider policy processes, and the Modernising Government agenda (HMSO, 1999b) which sets out a programme of reform for public agencies.

Unsurprisingly within the audit culture of the current Government, an increase in internal performance targets and monitoring was observed during the 1990s, which greatly affected the flexibility of local teams. These tend to be quantitative targets based on the number of sites visited, events run, achievement of target conditions on designated sites, owner-occupier contact etc. (EN, 1999). It was also noted by one EN specialist interviewed in January 2000, that the management tiers of the organisation were becoming increasing top-down in their approach, continually scrutinizing and readjusting the organisation's strategic direction according to their interpretation of Government trends and funding possibilities. The EN specialist felt that this bureaucratisation of organisational management was leaving local teams with an increasing administrative workload, a decreased ability to be flexible, and continually having to adjust their priorities 'at the whim of central office' (EN Specialist, pers. comm.).

General and Team managers, with their responsibilities to local teams, are a key link between the headquarters and the local teams, communicating strategy issues and ensuring they are incorporated into the local work plan. Specialist teams also maintain an important link with local teams through their liaison with local staff over particular conservation issues. However, it was noted by an ex-Local Team Manager, and a Peterborough-based Specialist, that the links between the centre and the local had decreased since the move to local-based teams and the loss of regional staff, and central staff faced increasing difficulties to understand all the day to day issues faced by staff at the local level11. In addition to this it was observed that there is decreased levels of horizontal networking and sharing of experiences between local teams12.

Internal policy development and consultation within English Nature tends to occur through focused workshops on particular policy issues (such as setting freshwater policy or science strategy) and informal communications between Head Office and local teams. Standardised organisational positions on certain issues are produced as short Position Statements. These are produced by one of EN's 'specialists' and approved by the Council.

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11 General Managers were awarded regional responsibilities in 2001, notably to engage with the Government's regional agenda, but also to encourage more regional networking between teams.

12 Recent attempts have been made to improve communication within EN through Conservation Focus Groups and regional meetings.
They are subject to internal consultation with local team staff prior to the Council’s approval and an external consultation afterwards. Who is consulted and the extent to which they are involved in the development of policy appears to be based around the author’s own personal networks – there is no formal process of representation. Beyond these focused workshops and position statement consultations, which involve a limited number of staff and occur irregularly, my discussions with staff suggest that knowledge appears to flow around the organisation predominantly through informal day to day phone calls and emails between specialists and local team staff (although this led to the observation by one staff member that specialists have a tendency to hear more about ‘problems’ than successes).


(i) An overview of EN’s approaches to nature conservation

Section 10.1.2. showed how EN’s work is structured around three functional areas – securing the favourable condition of designated sites; delivering biodiversity in the wider countryside; and influencing the policies and actions of people to build support, influence policy change and increase external funding for the delivery of conservation targets (EN, 2001). As it does not tend to be a landowner, the organisation uses four approaches to deliver policy across these functional areas: advising, regulating, enabling (i.e. funding) and promoting (EN, 1998b). These can be seen as organisational strategies or ‘policy instruments’ (Aarts & van Woerkum, 2000). Whilst EN has specific statutory requirements it must fulfil, local staff are given a fair amount of flexibility as to the strategies they use to achieve organisational priorities (refer to Moralising the Environment).

The following sections examine three factors embedded in EN’s history which are salient to the approaches it takes to delivering its goals:

\[\text{\footnotesize Although the Position Statement is circulated to external stakeholders, this occurs effectively when the strategy has been signed off by council and is therefore very unlikely to be amended in light of any comments.}\]
(ii) English Nature’s institutionalised nature

The nature conservation movement rose to prominence at the start of the twentieth century, driven by concern about the perceived threat to the countryside and England’s heritage from urbanisation and industrialisation, as well as distress about the welfare of species as a result of collection and hunting (Lowe 1983). Thus, the various origins of the movement drew on a range of aesthetic, cultural and ethical values. Several decades later however, the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act formally institutionalised nature conservation in a form distant from these roots, lying firmly within a discourse of scientific research and the discipline of ecology. It is argued that this occurred not because of a belief that scientific values should be separated from aesthetics and recreation (Sheail, 1998), but as a result of a mutually beneficial political relationship between the relatively new discipline of ecology and proponents of conservation, both of which were struggling to gain legitimacy and government commitment (Adams, 1997). Sheail suggests that those arguing for nature conservation in the government debates at the time may ‘have sacrificed the larger goal of a unified rural policy encompassing landscape, wildlife and recreation for the more limited goal of “scientific perception of wildlife protection”. ’ (Sheail, 1998: p 23).

The effect of this political manoeuvring throughout the formation of the Nature Conservancy had the effect of creating a major division in the structure of nature and heritage in this country, with the conservation of species and habitats falling under the remit of the Nature Conservancy and the conservation of natural beauty and open countryside being the responsibility of the National Parks Commission (now the Countryside Agency). This has major implications for how these organisations identify and engage with people over the management of nature, which will be discussed in more detail in later stages of the thesis.

Science has always underpinned the operations of the Nature Conservancy, which had an original function as a research organisation, and applied the results of ecological research carried out on nature reserves to the management of land and for policy advice for government (Duncan Poore, 1987). Despite the fact it no longer has a research function, English Nature continues to emphasise the centrality of science to the advice and action

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14 It has been said that because of these mixed and sometimes conflicting value bases the nature conservation movement has and will always remain fragmented and parochial (Evans, 1997).
for nature conservation (EN, 1996, 1997, 2001g). However, English Nature now see themselves as 'consumers of science' (Specialist staff pers. comm.)

The institutionalisation of nature conservation as a scientific concern has had a huge impact on the approach taken to nature conservation in the UK. Principally, it has resulted in nature being 'objectified' - constructed and valued in terms of habitats and species. For example, nature is described in terms of codes through the National Vegetation Classification system, sites are identified as worthy of protection according to their scientific interest or because of the presence of a 'special' rare species, and favourable condition of these sites is determined according to ecological parameters such as levels of phosphate or ideal sward height. In other words, the protection of ecosystems and species is legitimised through their 'scientific' interest or on meeting certain 'objective' criteria. Even work focused on nature outside designated areas is subsumed within a scientific-objective agenda, as observed in the Biodiversity Action Planning process (Green, 2000). Such a scientific value-basis for nature conservation downgrades the value placed on common species and more transient habitats. This has had a particularly deleterious effects on the urban wildlife conservation movement, which has tended to be under-resourced, although receiving increased funding over the past three years. Despite increased knowledge about its contribution to quality of life, the social and cultural values of nature which dominate concerns about urban wildlife have been given limited recognition in the policy process (Frith, 2001; Harrison & Bedford, 2002).

The dominance of science within English Nature is also reflected in the skills and aptitudes of its employees, most of whom have a scientific training in ecology or environmental sciences, an interest in natural history, and a strong personal belief in the importance of protecting species and habitats. These factors have connotations for the way staff within the organisation communicate with others on a day to day basis about nature conservation (see Chapter 5). A personal interest in natural history is also suggested as one reason why EN's efforts are inherently drawn to scientifically interesting rare sites (Felton, 1993).

By basing decisions about the importance of nature on common standards informed by science, English Nature is able to construct some degree of legal defensibility and

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15 Since the division of the research and conservation management arms of the NC in 1973, English Nature has had limited funds for research and has been accused of lacking a proactive research base (WWF-UK, 1997). Indeed, the organisation itself admitted their limited ability to enter into or commission speculative research (EN head office staff, pers. comm.)
legitimacy for the decisions it makes, using scientific knowledge to legitimise judgements and provide a common consistency for decisions (Felton, 1993). This is particularly important when outcomes of those decisions affect the management of privately owned land (of which most designated sites are in the UK). However, despite the objective face of nature conservation, such judgements of what is important and how sites should be managed are in fact based on culturally loaded assumptions about what constitutes naturalness, where nature 'belongs' and who should be involved in its conservation (Adams, 1997; Goodwin, 1999; Grove-White & Michaels, 1993). This recognition of the socially constructed nature of conservation is fuelling a demand for wider community participation in defining local values of nature (HMSG, 1995b).

(iii) The protected areas approach

The backbone of the approach to deliver nature conservation in the UK has traditionally been a strategy of creating 'spaces for nature', i.e. notifying and agreeing the management of sites seen as special for nature (Adams, 1997). Indeed, an approach based on protected area management still dominates nature conservation globally (Groombridge, 1992). It is only over the past ten years that EN has dramatically increased its presence in the wider countryside. Since the 1949 Act, the number of tiers for protection has increased from local and national nature reserves and SSSIs to include areas designated under the Ramsar Convention, Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, as well as a series of non-statutory sites such as County Wildlife Sites and Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCsv. Whilst the rationale for each of these designations is slightly different, for example between the scientific focus of the SSSI and the role of the Local Nature Reserve for peoples' enjoyment and local value, there is effectively a hierarchy of protection from the scientific to the social and cultural, and from the international to the locally important. European sites are offered greatest legal protection, whereas local sites which are not even formally notified.

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16 SSSIs are designated according to criteria such as rarity, representativeness, size, fragility and naturalness and are seen as the finest representative sites for wildlife and geology. SPAs & SACs are designated on the basis of the presence of rare species (birds in the case of the Birds Directive) or habitats listed in the Annexes of the Habitats Directive. National Nature Reserves are seen as the most important sites for nature in England (all are SSSIs), and have a role in encouraging public experience of nature. Local Nature Reserves are sites of special interest for nature locally and are designated for people to enjoy. They are designated and administered by local authorities. SINCs are non-statutory designated sites, seen locally as holding valuable natural features.
Chapter 4

The dominance of semi-natural habitats in the UK means that the majority of designated sites require continued management. As a result, the exclusionary approach that has dominated the management of many protected areas has not occurred. In fact a particular challenge for EN is to maintain traditional management practices on sites in upland areas where a decline in sheep grazing is causing biodiversity decline (EN, 2001).

(iv) Legislation and the voluntary principle

Until the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act, English Nature and its predecessors had limited statutory powers to enforce management change on designated sites, and relied on advice, negotiation and incentives to secure favourable management\(^{17,18}\). However, there is disagreement over the extent to which this approach should dominate English Nature's efforts to protect special sites. Some argue that the voluntary principle is a political message to landowners and the public that nature conservation does not need to be taken too seriously (Ratcliffe, 1995), whereas others argue that the only sustainable way to achieve nature conservation, is to foster a stewardship ethic towards nature amongst landowners and managers (Reid, 2002). Supporters from the latter camp state that use of law would only result in minimum compliance, and would hinder nature conservation efforts beyond designated sites. The extent of the decline of the quality of SSSIs and cases of deliberate damage by owners and occupiers throughout the 1980s and 1990s is evidence that the voluntary approach alone is not effective. However, the major problem was, and remains so, that the limited powers and political influence of EN could not compete with the agricultural subsidies and other development pressures acting on the land (EN, 1998c)\(^{19}\).

The legal system in place to protect SSSIs was accused of giving too much weight to the interests of private landowners, to the extent that under the Wildlife and Countryside Act

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\(^{17}\) The organisation was reluctant and financially limited in its ability to resort to invoking compulsory purchase orders on SSSIs under the 1949 Act.

\(^{18}\) Key changes brought about under the CROW Act include the offence of any person intentionally or recklessly damaging the special interest of an SSSI, or disturbing any of its special fauna; the imposition of stronger penalties for damage; the right of the Courts to order the restoration of damaged land; new duties for public bodies to take reasonable steps to further conservation and enhancement of SSSIs; new rights to appeal to the Secretary of State when owner-occupiers are aggrieved about a decision made by EN about consent to do management works (EN, 2001).

\(^{19}\) In 2001, 58% of SSSIs were classified as favourable recovering, 27% as unfavourable no change, 15% as unfavourable declining, and 0.5% destroyed or part destroyed. (EN, 2001)
(1981), the NCC were required to provide compensatory payments for profits forgone, making implementation of the Act a bureaucratic and costly exercise (Ratcliffe, 1995).\(^{20}\)

Yet, it was not just the lack of enforcement powers that led to the dominance of the voluntary principle. English Nature was heavily criticised in the 1990s as being reluctant to use the powers it had, and being more concerned with its public image than tackling wildlife loss (WWF-UK, 1997). There was great disappointment amongst the NGO community, that when English Nature published its Strategy for the 1990's (EN, 1993) its role as a regulator or statutory enforcer was effectively ignored (Box, 1994). Instead, the organisation emphasised its role as being to 'achieve, enable and promote nature conservation throughout England' (EN, 1996:p2).\(^{21}\) The NGO community had long campaigned for the conservation agencies to be given greater 'teeth' (e.g. WWF-UK, 1997), and the consortium of NGOs making up the Wildlife and Countryside Link played a key role in ensuring EN gained additional powers through the Countryside and Rights of Way Act in 2000. However, the voluntary principle continues to be at the heart of English Nature's approach to securing nature conservation, both in corporate publications:

"We must not rely on the new legal provisions (the CROW Act) to achieve favourable condition on SSSIs, they are there to be used when partnership approaches break down or are unachievable. Many of the powers are very much powers of last resort, which if exercised inappropriately could embroil us in expensive litigation." (EN, 2001b para.5.4.2)

and among the attitudes of staff:

'I think it is still the best way to secure conservation through the voluntary approach. If you are taking someone to court you've lost them, so if you've got their support you can achieve a lot. If you lose that support you can achieve very little, so it is in our interest that owner-occupiers and other statutory bodies actually are on side and we work with each other to try and achieve and secure the conservation of the site.' (Specialist)

The above quotes illustrate EN's position on the voluntary principle, namely the importance of maintaining good relationships with stakeholders and concerns over expensive and reputation-damaging legal proceedings. In addition, the following interviewee drew attention to a more pragmatic argument about the importance of the voluntary principle:

\(^{20}\) This compensation has since been replaced with payment for positive works through grants.

\(^{21}\) It is only over the last 5 years that EN has stated its role as a regulator and enforcer of legislation and some staff members were still nervous of this role and its potential to heighten conflict with those groups EN wants to develop positive working relationships with (Specialist pers. comm.).
Chapter 4

'The strength of EN is working with people. You know, achieving their co-operation, because in the last resort the majority of SSSIs are privately owned and will be privately managed. And we don't have the staff resources to go out there and check up on them on every month - or very often at all, to be honest.' (Specialist)

Another interviewee noted how staff see the voluntary approach as being part of a process of installing a broader attitudinal change amongst the owners and occupiers of designated sites:

'We want something more than compliance. We want engagement, and conversation, and interest, and understanding, and for them to act as ambassadors on our behalf, and to explain to their pals and relatives and friends what a good thing it all is and how marvellous EN have been! And for them to act as our proxy in that regard. And extend the circle of influence not just by our own actions but by people with whom we deal feeling good about the way we deal with them.' (Strategic staff)

In the current climate with stronger powers to fall back on, increased funding and complementary policies in the form of agri-environment and forestry schemes, plus the requirement that all tiers of Government take some responsibility for the environment, it is argued that the voluntary principle now has the opportunity to work properly (Reid, 2002). EN's work to protect designated sites is increasingly focusing on developing good strategic relations with key sectors such as the water industry and farming with the hope of influencing their policies to help secure sustainable management of all land, including SSSIs. English Nature see this as moving to a position of tackling the causes of SSSI decline rather than simply regulating the symptoms through individual sites (EN, 2001b).

4.1.4. Introducing EN's Stakeholders

The concept of 'working through and enabling others' used in the opening quote of this chapter, and the continued dominance of the voluntary principle, illustrate the centrality of people to EN's work. Table 4.4 highlights EN's key stakeholder groups:
Table 4.4. A Typology of EN’s Stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding Sources – Grant in Aid and Charitable Sources</td>
<td>The Treasury, DEFRA, Other funds – Heritage Lottery Fund, New Opportunities Fund, LIFE-Nature, Capital Modernisation Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Institutions</td>
<td>Natural Environment Research Council, Centre for Ecology &amp; Hydrology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy-makers – Strategic level</td>
<td>European Parliament, national, regional and local civil servants, other Government departments and statutory agencies, plus those who influence policy – business and industry, lobby groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners and managers of statutory sites plus those whose activities influence favourable condition</td>
<td>Owner-occupiers, landlords and tenants, local authorities, statutory agencies, interest groups, business and industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owners, managers and influential bodies in the wider countryside</td>
<td>Business and industry, local authorities, other statutory agencies, Government departments, interest groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Communities and Interested Individuals</td>
<td>Communities of interest and of space – members of the public seeking grants, visiting special sites, seeking information about nature / environmental issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The general public</td>
<td>Taxpayers to whom EN, as a public body, is ultimately responsible; potential ‘consumers’ of nature and wildlife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from EN, 1995)

English Nature identifies its key stakeholders as laying within the Government:

‘Understanding who your stakeholders are and knowing what they want from you is a corporate survival issue, and our biggest stakeholder is ministers.’ (Strategic staff)

There is a complex relationship between central Government and EN. Governmental departments have multiple roles and influences over EN as the source of EN’s Grant-in-Aid, providing strategic direction to the organisation, and passing legislation which EN must deliver. As Section 4.2. will discuss, EN are strongly influenced by a top-down Governmental agenda – not only in terms of meeting conservation targets, but also wider issues about the modernisation of public bodies and sustainable development. However, at the same time, strategic and specialist staff based in English Nature’s headquarters spend much of their time engaging with Government departments and public agencies, with the aim of influencing their policies to favour the nature conservation agenda.

105
NGOs (most notably WWF, RSPB and the Wildlife Trusts) are also key strategic stakeholders. The roles of these groups as pressure groups, publicists, and enablers of conservation on the ground has been central to securing additional powers for English Nature and delivering nature conservation on the ground, particularly through the Biodiversity Action Plan.

In terms of delivering nature conservation, English Nature has traditionally focused its attention on engaging with those it has a statutory duty to consult and negotiate with over the management of designated sites – i.e. the owners and occupiers and those whose activities may affect the quality of these sites. This was particularly the case in the 1980s after the passing of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (HMSO, 1981), which required EN to notify all owners and occupiers of the existence of a SSSI on their land, a bureaucratic exercise leaving few resources for wider stakeholder engagement. Relationships with this stakeholder group has remained dominant in the 1990s with the notification of SACs and further SSSIs.

Beyond designated sites, English Nature works with strategic allies, local authorities and other conservation groups (professional and voluntary) to secure the delivery of conservation targets in the wider countryside. Local communities and the general public are also identified as stakeholders by English Nature and various programmes have been run to increase the participation of these groups in conservation activities (see Chapter 5), but within the organisation it is accepted that efforts to engage with these stakeholders, beyond those with a pre-existing active involvement in conservation issues, has been poor and under-resourced despite rhetoric to the contrary within strategic documents. Recent market research has suggested that, unprompted, 2% of the population are aware of EN (Manager, pers. comm.). The following quote summarises a sentiment revealed by several staff members that English Nature has a tendency to engage with those stakeholders who share the same agenda as them:

'And I suspect we tend to go for the comfort zone in that we tend to invite or think of people to work with us ...who we are familiar with and we've worked closely with before. And you know the whole thing ends up in a fairly sort of comfortable area where there isn't too much wide divergence of view... you actually got onto a sort of lunch circle of the great and the good in that particular area who are keen and interested in conservation issues and kept bumping into each other at all these different functions. And we were still viewed in the context of all the people out there – we are still a white middle class, largely male-dominated preserve which only actually directly impacts a tiny proportion of the population.' (Manager)
Several staff also referred to the role of ‘the public’ as stakeholders, because of their status as taxpayers, and as a public agency EN is ultimately responsible to delivering actions that are in the public interest. However, ‘the public’ is a contested issue — who are EN’s public?

It was observed by one individual, that EN have done little to explore who their ‘publics’ are and how they can engage them:

‘I think the problem for us is that it is very hard to identify who our public is — who is the public — is it the people who visit nature reserves? Or is it people who see wildlife on television? It’s potentially everybody. Everybody is too big isn’t it? ... in an ideal world, we want them all to be sympathetic to nature conservation, to vote for politicians that are being positive about the environment, to make sure we get our grant in aid — you know to be sensitive tourists and so on. But you know the challenge of that is unless you can break it down into smaller pieces, it is too difficult to get hold of.’ (Specialist)

and what they want in terms of nature conservation:

‘But what the people in Peterborough think about EN sitting here, and what they want from EN and what they would like to see on the 3 or 4 nature reserves immediately around Peterborough, and what would encourage them to visit those nature reserves more often, is probably something we haven’t touched on yet.’ (Manager)

The following conclusions can be drawn about who English Nature identifies as its stakeholders, and who it prioritises its engagement with: First, that English Nature is driven by a top-down agenda coming from Government and international Directives and agreements on biodiversity conservation. Second, in terms of conservation delivery, three primary objectives underlying English Nature’s engagement with their stakeholders can be identified:

- **Policy Leverage.** To influence the policies and decisions made within Government and by key economic sectors to minimise negative effects of their policies on wildlife and maximise wildlife gain (EN, 2000).

- **Organisational Effectiveness.** To develop positive and productive relationships with land managers and decision-makers in the protection of designated sites and the delivery of biodiversity in the wider countryside.

- **Winning Hearts and Minds.** To make nature conservation and the work of English Nature understood and relevant to a wide audience, raising awareness and understanding about nature conservation, and gain support for EN and its work.

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22 This is one of the objectives of EN’s People and Wildlife programme initiated in 2002.
EN focuses most of its attention on achieving the first two of these objectives, and still has a tendency to prioritise stakeholders in terms of their ability to deliver EN’s targets. In addition, engagement with stakeholders tends to be focused on EN’s constructions of nature and their priorities. Despite the rhetoric in strategic documents about the importance of engaging local communities and winning hearts and minds that has appeared since 1993, in reality little resources have been allocated to this\(^\text{23}\), and at a local level still EN tends to engage with the existing organised conservation community. However, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, strategic programmes initiated during the research period to ensure nature conservation activities contribute to peoples’ quality of life, are giving greater legitimacy to local meanings of nature and have resulted in greater resources being allocated to community engagement.

The following section highlights how the nature conservation agenda is evolving, highlighting why EN attaches increasing importance to engaging in dialogue with a wider range of stakeholders, and playing a proactive role in delivering the sustainable development agenda. These new priorities are driving English Nature not only to change the way it engages with its stakeholder groups and the stage at which they are involved in the policy process, but also to alter the priorities it places on these groups.

4.2. Influences on the Organisation: Creating the Institutional Conditions for DIPs

Section 4.1.3 outlined the key institutionalised procedures underpinning EN’s approach to nature conservation, notably the dominance of a scientific-objectified construction of nature, the central role played by designated sites, and the voluntary principle. These themes are particularly interesting because they illustrate the extent to which English Nature, despite its forward-looking agenda and new legislation, is still very much a product of its past. In other words, there is evidence of institutional ‘sedimentation’ within the organisation’s culture - layers of values and understandings still present within the organisation from earlier times (Guy Peters, 1999). However, alongside the relative institutional stasis in the values and procedures underpinning its legal responsibilities,

\(^{23}\) In 1999/2000 £2,132,000 was spent on community grant schemes (EN, 2000)
English Nature has shown itself to be responsive to the political climate of the time, evolving to take advantage of emerging opportunities for nature conservation as well as the current Government agenda.

The second section of this chapter examines those forces that are driving the organisation forward, particularly in terms of creating the conditions where the use of DIPs is seen as both necessary and desirable within the organisation.

### 4.2.1. Drivers from a Socio-political and Governmental Perspective

A reading of English Nature's Corporate Plans and Annual Reports reveals how the organisation's objectives and priorities are increasingly determined by conservation targets and policies derived from European environment policy and the UK Government. Among the latter are demands for the greater use of more participatory approaches to policy-making, including those encapsulated in the Modernising Government agenda and the Sustainable Development Strategy (HMSO, 1999; DETR, 1999), not to mention the impending transposition of the Aarhus Convention into domestic law (European Commission, 1998). These socio-political trends encourage more 'joined-up' policy making and the provision of opportunities for the public and stakeholders to participate in the policy process. As a NDPB, EN must also respond to the Government's agenda to increase openness and accountability of Quangos, including the publishing of annual reports and accounts, operating a complaints procedure and holding open meetings whereby the public can observe how the organisation makes decisions (Select Committee on Public Administration, 2001). EN has responded to this modernising agenda through the 'Modernising & Managing English Nature' Programme Board.

The importance of being responsive to the Government's wider social and political agenda is seen as critical to the future of EN. Many senior staff see it as a primary driver for the greater use of DIPs, notably suggesting that wider engagement with its stakeholders is linked to organisational survival and competition for funds. If, for example, EN can demonstrate how it meets the Government's agendas of contributing to sustainable development, helping to tackle social inclusion, and operating in an open and inclusive way, EN will secure greater support and funding from Government. This is captured in the term 'corporate survival' used by a senior strategic staff member:
‘So there’s an issue of our profile with our sponsor department... And we’ve got to be sufficiently relevant to the Minister’s agenda for them to want to fund English Nature, and to maintain us as an organisation. So the whole issue about who we work with and how, and our positioning relative to other organisations in the same field, is what I’d refer to as a corporate survival issue, ultimately.’ (Manager)

The desire for political support is linked to a strategic motivation to raise political profile and build a constituency of support amongst the public for English Nature as a public agency, and for nature conservation:

‘Ultimately, of course, we are funded by government. If people don’t know what EN’s about, they don’t care about us; if they don’t care about nature conservation we have a declining profile with Government and politicians and they put the money somewhere else, we don’t achieve our aims.’ (Specialist)

‘Because if we can build a broader constituency of support amongst the general public by sharing the wonder and awe of the wildlife and geological resources of England with that very broad constituency then we increase the support and the relevance of English Nature to them, and they will want to ensure that we move forward into the future.’ (Manager)

Despite the fact that funding for EN has been increasing since 1998 (EN, 1998b), and that EN is probably more politically influential today than at any time in its past, EN staff are aware that they could easily go out of political favour. DIPs are seen as one way to raise the profile and the relevance of nature conservation to a wider range of political agendas and the interests of the publics.

The organisational insecurity underlying this attitude is not unfounded. Throughout its history the Nature Conservancy and its subsequent reincarnations have spent much of their time as under-resourced agencies, with limited statutory power, restricting their ability to expand their influence beyond the notification and management of designated sites (Sheail, 1998). Some argue that the organisation suffered from frequent and purposeful marginalisation, particularly as the NCC found itself increasingly in conflict with powerful political interests throughout the 1970s and 1980s, including private landowners and the then Ministry of Agriculture. The extent to which Government is able to exert its power over the organisation is illustrated most visibly in the decision made in 1989 by the then Secretary of State to split the NCC into three separate country agencies. It has since been claimed that ‘the deliberate intention (to split the NCC) is to ensure that henceforth the NCC causes fewer problems to the landowning, farming, forestry and development interests’ (Ratcliffe, 1989). Likewise Evans (1997:211) declared it was a ‘cynical weakening of the conservation base’. Since this time a merger with the Countryside Commission was proposed in 1994, but later abandoned.
The influence of the Government over EN's approaches and agendas is also illustrated by the attempts to induce a shift towards a customer-orientation in its work in line with the Government agenda of the day, as discussed in Section 4.1.2. This is described below by an interviewee working in the organisation at the time:

Local Staff - 'English Nature, I think was good, because it did come out and say in the early stages really, you know —  we need to change, we need to become more approachable, we need to be more outgoing, we need to sell our messages better —  I don't think they really knew how they were going to do it. But they knew that they needed to do that. One of the reasons we got broken up as a GB organisation is because we didn't do that kind of thing. The public perception of the organisation was as introverts, scientists who don't tell us what they're doing, don't care, you know what goes on outside their own boundaries.

Kate —  and what were the drivers for that?.

Local Staff —  It was political without a doubt. Government told us, you know, you're lucky to still exist almost. There was a Commons Committee, that sort of looked at us and everything else, and said “you know the perception of you is that you're just working for yourselves. This isn't good enough, modern government doesn't want that. You've got to been seen to have a public persona”. But we didn't know how to do it. And we weren't very good at it, even English Nature.'

Although appearing with immediate effect in English Nature's strategy documents—

'Nature conservation is not only an activity undertaken by people, it is an activity undertaken for people.' (EN, 1993) -

underlying this customer-orientation was a deeper philosophical debate within the organisation about whether EN’s role was to protect nature for people or for its intrinsic worth, and who had the right to decide what was best for nature. The culture change initiated at that time is still going on today, and the extent to which it has pervaded the organisation is a key issue in the debate over the institutionalisation of DIPs (see Chapter 5). Despite changes that have occurred within the organisation since 1991, there is still a feeling that the organisation is struggling to find the ‘public persona’ demanded of it. This issue relates directly to EN’s motivations for the use of DIPs:

‘One of the reasons that the NCC was done to was that it was perceived to be remote, ivory-towered. Well if EN is going to avoid that fate, either this year or next year and some other point down the line we've got to do these things — engage our stakeholders.’ (Manager).
4.2.2. The Evolving Nature Conservation Agenda

Alongside the aforementioned socio-political influences on English Nature, encouraging a more inclusive engagement with stakeholders at both a strategic and delivery level, drivers for change can also be identified from within the nature conservation movement itself. These drivers may not always lead explicitly to the use of DIPs \textit{per se}, but may force EN into a situation where new forms of engagement and communication are necessary.

\textbf{(i) Changing values and knowledges in nature conservation}

Understandings of nature conservation have developed since its institutionalisation in 1949, which has had implications for the practices of English Nature. These developments occurred within the discipline of ecology itself, and in the values underpinning the processes of conservation management.

Developments in the ecological sciences over the past 50 years, have led to challenges of the protected area approach and increased emphasis on the importance of protecting conservation in the wider countryside (Owens & Cowell, 2002; Pinton, 2001). The SSSI system was founded on the equilibrium model of ecology prevalent at that time, based on concepts of climax communities, succession and stable population dynamics. As a result, conservation management focused on controlling nature by 'freezing' succession, and basing its decisions on models of the carrying capacity of a system and the relationship between species diversity and area (see Scoones, 1999). Subsequently, in the 1970s and 1980s, ecological research illustrated the importance of nonlinear relationships, unpredictability and the reliance of some ecological systems on spatial and temporal dynamics (e.g. Connell & Slayter, 1977; Pickett & White, 1985). The resulting 'new' ecology questions the interventionist approach to conservation and encourages management to work with rather than against nature. This has led to an increased emphasis on protecting not just species and habitats but natural ecosystem processes (including processes of evolution). A system of conservation that acknowledges and allows natural ecological processes to occur, enhancing ecosystem resilience is demanded (Walker, 1995). In addition, the application of lessons from the study of island biogeography to habitat fragmentation have increased conservationists' understanding of the causes of species decline, which, in light of concerns about the effect of climate change, has created an identified need to provide spaces for the migration of species and adaptation in response to changing conditions (Holdgate, 2001).
These developments in ecological thinking are reflected in changing conservation practices. The term ‘biodiversity’ incorporates concepts of genetic, species and ecosystem diversity and the ecological complexities of which they are a part (CBD, 1992: Article 2). Efforts are made to provide habitat corridors for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species between designated sites (Kirby, 1995), and there are calls for more ‘Large Areas’ for conservation where viable populations can be supported and natural ecological dynamics can occur (Harvey, 2001). Nature conservation now involves activities to restore and recreate degraded habitats and the creation of new areas for nature altogether (Avery 2001; Thomas 2000). Thus, nature conservation is increasingly seen as a creative and imaginative practice to find innovative ways to integrate conservation benefits into other land uses to prevent biodiversity loss and to create new opportunities for nature.

The practice of nature conservation has not only evolved as a result of developments in ecology, but in response to global trends towards integrated environmental management and ‘people-oriented conservation’ (IIED, 1994; Jeanrenaud, 1999; Margerum, 1999; Venter & Breen, 1998). This new conservation approach focuses on integrating environmental management into the surrounding local social, economic and environmental context. The prevalence of such models has become more popular as a result of the concept of sustainable development and Agenda 21, which emphasise the integration of economic, social and environmental policies and utilising local knowledges to create locally devised solutions.

New thinking on environmental management calls for an inclusive research agenda linking social scientific understandings of human-environment interactions from human geography, sociology, anthropology, politics and economics with the analysis of environmental problems coming from the natural sciences (Bryant & Wilson, 1998). In practice, integrated environmental management requires interaction between a range of agencies, groups and individuals with an interest in the strategic management of an area. Stakeholder collaboration and public participation are therefore seen as a key component of this model (Margerum, 1999). People-oriented conservation and the use of participatory processes are called for, not just in terms of more effective environmental management,

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Habitat restoration is defined as the positive management of existing habitat to increase its nature conservation value. Habitat creation is identified as the planting, seeding or natural regeneration of new areas which had previously been managed for other purposes (Thomas, 2000).
but are linked to moral arguments of social and environmental justice (Bowen & Wells, 2002; Halfacre & Matheny, 1999; Hillman, 2002).^{25}

There has also been a notable change in the values and the purposes of nature conservation in the UK. The original rationale for the creation of nature reserves posed by the Wildlife Conservation Special Committee was distinctly anthropogenic: ‘biological survey and research; experiment; education; and amenity’, likening reserves to living museums and outdoor laboratories (1947:14). This has been replaced a greater emphasis on the intrinsic value of nature, for example within the European Habitats Directive, whereas the Convention on Biological Diversity refers to the importance of intrinsic, ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values in the protection of biodiversity (Wilkinson, 1999).^{26} The practice of nature conservation as a social and cultural project as well as a scientific project is increasingly called for (Adams, 1997; Harrison & Bedford, 2002; Jepsom & Schmitt, 2001).

(ii) More participatory protected area management

Despite being embedded within a static value framework (NCC, 1989), the procedures for protecting designated sites have changed dramatically since 1949. A particular stimulus for change was the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act which, for the first time, required the NCC to enter into a dialogue with the owner or occupier of an SSSI about the undertaking of Potentially Damaging Operations (now referred to as Operations Likely to Damage). This piece of legislation was responsible for taking ‘the organisation into the outside world in a very intimate way’ (Specialist pers. comm.). The break up of the NCC in 1991 and EN’s desire for a culture change, added to this emphasis on dialogue:

‘Beforehand the organisation drove management and protection of sites through the science. It was the science that was important, that was the focus. Whereas in the move to EN in 1991 it was twisted round …the focus changed from being the science to the actual management through the owners and occupiers.’ (Specialist)

This trend has continued in recent years. For example, recent guidance on the management of SSSIs, the Government expressed its desire that English Nature staff develop ‘mutually

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^{25} The environmental justice movement emerged in the USA about 20 years ago and encompasses the ideals of procedural and distributive justice, i.e. that all people, regardless of race, colour, national origin or income, have a meaningful involvement in decisions that affect their quality of life, and that environmental hazards are fairly distributed across society.

^{26} However little mention is given to how to resolve conflicts between these different values (Wilkinson, 1999).
supportive and constructive relationships ... to secure positive management' (DETR, 2000: para. 8). In addition, English Nature are expected to ‘recognise and respect the knowledge and expertise of individual owners and managers, and of the local community who may be familiar with the history of the area, in the context of delivering favourable conservation management’ (DETR, 2000: para 9). This position is in part a response to criticisms made in the mid-1990s that conservation professionals were not taking on board local and geographically specific understandings in decisions about appropriate land management practices from those that manage the land every day (e.g. Harrison et al., 1998; Burgess et al., 2000)^27, contributing to a transformation in protected area management from a top-down science-dominated approach to one that places greater emphasis on dialogue and engaging local knowledges.

A particular emphasis on participation is placed on the management of what one interviewee referred to as ‘multi-stakeholder, multi-issue sites’ (Local Team Staff, pers. comm.). Such designated sites are characterised by complex ownership patterns, multiple site uses and users, and ecological complexity, and therefore have much in common with the ‘wicked problems’ referred to in Chapter 2. Marine, estuarine and riverine ecosystems are classic examples of such complex sites, and are areas where EN has increased its activities over the past ten years, particularly since the Habitats Directive (EC, 1992)^28.

For example, Jones (2002) explains the complexity of securing the conservation of marine protected areas, where there is greater connectivity between spatially separated areas, limited scientific understanding of ecological processes, greater variability and complexity of ecological conditions than terrestrial sites, multiple users, no ownership and little societal awareness of conservation issues. Such situations where no-one organisation holds all the power and authority to resolve problems, requires collaboration between the key stakeholders. The emphasis on participation and partnership is reflected in the legislation on marine protected areas; the Habitats Regulations identify the importance that owners and occupiers, users and local interests are all involved in developing management schemes

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^27 The importance of considering the local knowledge of land managers was clearly shown by Wynne’s (1996) study of the misinformation provided to Cumberland hill farmers by scientists following the Chernobyl disaster.

^28 By 1992 only 8 rivers had been designated as SSSIs, partly because rivers tended to be seen as the remit of the NRA, and as privately owned systems EN had limited capacity to undertake ecological survey work to determine their ‘importance’ (EN staff pers. comm.). Before the Habitats Directive EN had no statutory powers to designate sites below the low water mark, therefore it is only since 1994 that EN has had an active involvement in marine conservation. EN focused its attention on Estuaries through the Estuaries Initiative commencing in 1992.
(DETR, 1998). The development of social capital through participation is one way to build local institutions to encourage stakeholders to act collaboratively, particularly in a situation of common pool resources (Ostrom, 1999; Rydin & Pennington, 1999), but also to resolve conflicts between users and conservation objectives (Jones et al., 2001; Jones, 2002; Ledoux et al., 2000; O’Riordan & Ward, 1997).

(iii) Beyond designated sites – tackling the geographical & cultural marginalisation of nature

It is widely accepted that biodiversity protection cannot be sustained through a system based on protected sites alone (Adams, 1996, Bishop et al., 1995; Tilzey, 2000). As noted by Owens & Cowell (2002:106), ‘site protection remains necessary, but seriously insufficient’. The rationale for conservationists to adopt approaches that are integrated into wider countryside management and policy debates, is part of a more creative conservation agenda that encourages a move away from small, static sites where nature must be actively managed, to larger sites where natural processes can occur and nature conservation is integrated into local economies, societies and cultures. This shift has the effect of broadening the range of audiences that English Nature has to engage with, and the political and spatial arenas through which conservation targets can be delivered.

Criticisms have been made of the UK’s SSSI system in particular. It has been suggested that to base England’s biodiversity conservation efforts on these small sites is ineffective, and the SSSI system itself is fundamentally flawed (Green & Hyde, 1998). This is for the simple reason that SSSIs were not designed with the intention of protecting the totality of England’s biodiversity resource; the system was set up merely to protect representations of England’s faunal, floral and geological heritage and to act as ‘jewels in the crown’ (Evans, 1997; Green & Hyde, 1998). It was only when the effects of agricultural intensification on biodiversity as a result of UK Government and European subsidies became clear in the 1960’s and 1970’s, did these small, protected areas become geographically marginalised in the landscape, and at the same time increasingly important for the survival of species and ecological communities. SSSIs are frequently too small to maintain viable populations and too static to allow species and habitats to adapt to localised extinctions or long term climatic changes, particularly in the coastal regions (Holdgate, 2001; ERM, 2000). Thus it is argued that this system is unable to protect all habitats and species at risk in the UK (Pritchard, 1998; Smart et al., 2001). Initiatives that integrate nature conservation into the broader policy arena and its landscapes and tackle the generic causes of biodiversity decline
Chapter 4

are required (Tilzey, 2001). Much of EN's work today is focused on trying to secure the necessary policy changes in the economic sectors, and forms one of the aims of EN's People and Policies Programme Board.

The task of bringing nature conservation practices out from designated sites and into the imagination of policy-makers and the general public is not easy, simply because for so long nature conservation efforts have focused on the designation and management of isolated reserves and SSSIs. By focusing on 'special sites', the effects of other land use policies and practices on nature was largely ignored for many years and nature conservation had a low political profile. Wildlife was also associated with rural rather than urban areas, and rare and inconspicuous species predominantly of interest to 'experts' and scientists, rather than the common and charismatic species valued by the public (Adams, 1996; Macnaghton & Urry, 1998). The effect was not only the geographical isolation of nature but also its cultural and political marginalisation (Adams, 1996; Crouch & Matless, 1996). This marginalisation was exacerbated by the disparity between nature as institutionalised by EN (focusing on objects - species, habitats, sites), and the nature experienced by the public (nature as process, nature as experience) (Adams, 1996). Research has clearly shown that the public value nature in different ways to the nature conservation agencies (Harrison & Burgess, 1994; Goodwin, 1999). The importance of promoting the common, local and everyday experiences of nature and giving weight to values other than the scientific are cited as driving the formation of the organisation Common Ground\textsuperscript{29} and the urban wildlife movement in the 1970s and 1980s (Crouch & Matless, 1996; Harrison, 1993). The urban nature conservation movement in particular was seen as a challenge to the dominant values underpinning the institutional basis of nature conservation and reappropriating nature for non-specialists (Harrison, 1993).

4.3. The Effect of these Drivers on English Nature's Approaches and Priorities for Nature Conservation.

Together the influences described in Section 4.2. are seen to be driving English Nature towards an approach which encourages integrated environmental management, the use of

\textsuperscript{29} Common Ground was set up in 1983 to promote and reinvigorate people's awareness of their relationship with the natural world, linking nature to ideas of local distinctiveness.
partnerships and fuller engagement with societal values of nature. Furthermore, over the past few years the organisation has adopted an increasingly outward-facing and innovative approach, as explained by one interviewee:

'If you take nature conservation to be essentially about negotiating what kind of future we want as a society, it is very forward-looking, it accepts change, and it has to be a process of engagement with people in order to negotiate that future. If you come from the old school of nature conservation - which you know 15 years ago I would characterise as dreaming about some golden age in the past and wanting to put things back to what they were before industrialisation came along and messed up the whole environment - then you don't need to worry too much about engagement - you are just trying to put the clock back and it's a fairly backward looking and negative approach.' (Manager)

Since its creation, English Nature has become increasingly active in the wider countryside, through biodiversity initiatives such as the Species Recovery Programme and the UK Biodiversity Action Planning process (both of which focus predominantly on endangered species). More recently EN staff have played a role in partnership initiatives to integrate biodiversity benefits into larger scale habitat creation and recreation exercises. The Lifescapes initiative, introduced in April 2001, is EN's most recent attempt to work with communities and land managers in the countryside, and reflects the organisational priorities to integrate conservation targets into a broader set of policy agendas. The aims of the initiative are to 'facilitate a debate amongst regional and local partners about a more holistic view of countryside issues and interests', to create 'effective partnerships that will deliver biodiversity goals as part of sustainable activities that support local socio-economic needs.' (EN, 2001c: 1).

The sustainable development agenda has been particularly influential in facilitating EN's move into the wider countryside. The core rationale of integrating environmental considerations into social and economic policies has created fora and arenas where EN is invited to engage more broadly and more closely in Government policy, particularly as industry, government and public agencies are gaining environmental responsibilities and are expected to adhere to sustainable development principles. When the second UK Sustainable Development Strategy was published, which focused on the contribution of social, economic and environmental issues to 'quality of life' (DETR, 1999), it was seized upon by EN as an opportunity to construct biodiversity as an intrinsic part of sustainable development (EN, 2001d) and to link biodiversity objectives into economic and socially-
focused initiatives (EN, 1999c). In effect, sustainable development has provided institutional ‘spaces’ (Healey et al., 1999), providing the opportunity and the legitimacy for EN to participate and potentially incorporate biodiversity considerations into a wide range of policies and the actions of a wide range of organisations and individuals. As such sustainable development is seen as an extremely important agenda for EN in its work. But, to integrate biodiversity concerns into the environmental governance of the wider countryside requires English Nature to also play a proactive role in setting the agenda for policy discussions and decision-making. This is a very different approach to the narrowly-focused and reactionary engagement its Conservation Officers often have with other organisations and interest groups over designated sites case work (EN Regional Coordinator, pers. comm.). It requires English Nature to be proactive and imaginative in its engagement. Staff must learn to speak a range of new conservation languages and listen and respond to the agendas and values of others. Regional sustainable development strategies and community strategies in particular are now seen within EN as opportunities to link biodiversity into wider initiatives and build constructive relationships with other organisations. This quote from a staff member involved in regional sustainable development strategies, highlights how different this way of working is for EN:

‘So we've used the sustainable development agenda which has been shared in this context, and we've had to learn the language of economists and sociologists and we've had to begin to talk about biodiversity in ways that we would never have contemplated before. Because banging on the table about how great biodiversity is, wears a bit thin after 5 minutes to these people unless they can see the economic benefits - that it helps with jobs, you know or helps with social inclusion. You know they can’t relate to it....’ (Specialist)

Through these relationships EN should be able to incorporate biodiversity considerations into an earlier stage of the development of economic and social policies, rather than simply in the latter stages through environmental impact assessments:

‘So, whereas in the past we would have just waited until they had more or less formulated their strategy, and sent us something to comment on, and we would have said ‘ah this bit doesn’t take account of the environment, or you could do more if you took account of the environment’. We're now in at an early stage before they've even

30 Opportunities for EN in the wider countryside were also identified as a result of recent political debates about the future of rural land management and development, particularly following the Foot and Mouth crisis in 2000-1 (see for example King, 2001; Potter, 2001).

31 The Local Government Bill (HMSO, 2000b), placed a statutory responsibility on local authorities to develop community strategies with the aim of enhancing the well-being of local communities. DETR guidance encourages the use of processes which allow local communities to articulate their aspirations, needs and priorities, and which take into consideration local biodiversity.
written the strategies. And in many cases actively listening. So we are actually getting our messages in and trying to change the rules of the game sort of thing.' (Specialist)

Sustainable development has also been influential in reinvigorating EN’s efforts at building relationships with its stakeholders at the very local level, emphasising the role of citizens taking action to tackle society’s problems, either through participation in decision-making or through more sustainable patterns of behaviour (UNA, 1995). Through sustainable development, new funding sources have become available to EN, particularly focused on integrating nature conservation activities into the needs and aspirations of local communities. The dissemination of these grants forms a key part of English Nature’s People and Wildlife initiative, launched in January 2002. This initiative is based on three underlying tenets; that a long-term future for biodiversity requires peoples’ recognition and support, that biodiversity is a key part of quality of life, and the need to ensure the benefits from nature are enjoyed by all (EN, 2002f). A central part of this project is to tackle the cultural marginalisation of nature conservation by engaging people with nature where they live and work and by increasing people’s access to and involvement in local wildlife sites. These aims are captured in the project’s slogan of ‘reconnecting people and nature’ (EN, 2002f):

‘We believe people are losing their links with, and their understanding of the natural environment. There is a danger of people losing sight of why it is important, why we need to look after it and how they can participate in this process’ (EN, 2002c).

The People and Wildlife agenda also has connotations for EN’s approaches and priorities for conservation. It encourages EN to engage in a wider range of conservation activities for the benefit of gaining public support which may have only limited direct impact on tackling biodiversity decline:

‘And so there is a feeling now that a kind of strategic steer – an acceptance that we need support, we need the support of the general public for our work. Now what that will require is involvement of the general public in either nature conservation decisions or nature conservation activities. And that may not be on the rarest and the most special. So it is quite clear now that … there is an acceptance that if you got conservation work involving less than completely rare species, if it gains mass participation and support for nature conservation then it is sensible in its own right.’ (Specialist)

English Nature has recently secured funds from the New Opportunities Fund’s ‘Green Spaces and Sustainable Communities’ programme which focuses on helping urban and rural communities care for their environment (NOF, 2003) for EN’s Wildspace! Local Nature Reserve Grant Scheme. In 2002/2003 additional funds for conservation came from Lottery Grants, the Aggregates Levy Fund, and Landfill Tax, totalling £8.483 million (EN, 2003)
In addition, it requires EN to move away from its expertly-defined nature based on species and habitats and engage with nature as experienced and valued by people. This effectively broadens the biodiversity agenda from the rare to the common, from nature as habitats and species to nature as experience. As noted at the conference held by EN and BANC on the issue of people and nature, 'we're connected with nature already... although perhaps not in ways that nature conservationists might like' (Hayhurst, 2003:43).

Thus, alongside these opportunities for English Nature come new challenges. Bringing the process of nature conservation out of designated sites and embracing the sustainable development agenda, places English Nature in a situation where they are just one of a number of stakeholders in the process of making land management decisions. In this environment English Nature has no legal rights or formal mechanisms to determine the behaviour of other land users. In fact, there is no individual agency with authority or total control, expertise, skills or resources. Therefore organisations and other stakeholders need to work together, and for decisions to be sustainable in the long-term requires the establishment of common goals, mutual understanding and trust between stakeholders.

A key challenge for English Nature is mediating its role among the interests that inhabit the wider countryside, and the range of values and constructions of nature that emerge from opening up policy about nature conservation through stakeholder participation. Beyond protected areas, English Nature's institutionalised procedures for valuing nature stand alongside many other socially constructed and contested values of nature, such as its role in providing economic benefits, ecosystem services or intrinsic and cultural values. Such values are not always compatible with EN's values. For example, one analysis of public participation in conservation programmes found that the process of exploring values and interests encouraged local people to define and promote new conservation discourses which were sometimes incompatible with, and questioned the validity of the vision of conservation held by the experts (Goodwin, 1998). In this analysis, Goodwin goes on to suggest that the use of participation processes risk undermining the national conservation vision, where consensus up till now has been maintained through the exclusion of cultural values in nature conservation (ibid). If EN is to fully embrace the quality of life agenda and effectively engage with the values and knowledges of their stakeholders, it is suggested that it must devise processes to marry their expert discourses of nature with local values of how nature contributes to 'sense of place' and 'quality of life' (Harrison et al., 1998; Goodwin, 1999).
EN has attempted to capture these broader values of nature, notably through the Environmental Capital approach developed with the Countryside Agency, English Heritage and the Environment Agency (CAG/Land Use Consultants, 1997). This appraisal tool allows the integration of scientific and subjective values of the environment, and encourages the exploration of 'what matters and why'. In this way it encourages decision-makers to capture of the less tangible cultural and social attributes of nature — in terms of ecosystem functions, and contribution to local distinctiveness as well as the more traditional focus on species and habitats. However despite trials of this approach being run in 1998, EN has not integrated the method into work programme, and still retain its scientific focus. More recently a report has highlighted the relevance of social values of nature to EN, but again as yet, these values have yet to be operationalised (EN, 2002d).

**Conclusions**

English Nature's core responsibilities of notifying protected areas and securing mechanisms to protect their special interest, and acting as an advisor and source of expertise on nature conservation issues, have changed little over the fifty years since nature conservation became institutionalised. However, as this chapter has shown, there have been major changes during this time in the approaches adopted by EN to fulfil its remit. Particularly salient to this research has been the change in emphasis of nature conservation away from an expert-oriented process towards a more people-centric approach, and the rise of wider countryside initiatives to augment EN's work on designated sites. In particular, these initiatives have provided staff greater flexibility to enter into exploratory dialogue with other organisations, and identify creative opportunities for nature conservation.

In terms of Fitness for Purpose then, this chapter has shown that EN's traditional approaches to engagement with its stakeholders (based around the delivery of scientifically determined biodiversity targets) is inadequate under the new agendas of sustainable development and people-oriented nature conservation. In particular, it is argued that these changes requires EN to revisit its analysis of who its key stakeholders are, and why, when and how they should be engaged in nature conservation policy-making. The chapter has examined how the Nature Conservancy's traditional key stakeholders of owner-occupiers of designated sites and the existing conservation community, has now broadened to include a wide range of Government departments and representatives from key economic sectors,
as well as local communities and 'the public'. Broadening EN's stakeholder base is seen within the organisation as key to maintaining organisational legitimacy and developing a constituency of support for nature conservation. For EN to take advantage of the sustainable development agenda at a policy and public level, requires EN to engage with stakeholders at an earlier stage in the policy process and to incorporate social and cultural values of nature into its discourses. How English Nature has responded to these opportunities and how staff have used DIPs to engage more closely with stakeholders will be explored in Chapter 5.
Chapter 5.


Introduction

The previous chapter described how the context in which nature conservation as a practice and policy issue is situated has dramatically changed over the past 50 years. These changes have caused English Nature to undergo a period of reflection on the approaches used to conserve nature and on what basis. Today's nature conservation is constructed as a key test of sustainable development and a public interest concern, whilst retaining a focus on applying ecological principles. These changes, alongside others discussed in Chapter 4, have led English Nature to become more outward-facing and people-oriented, including a strategic interest in understanding the role that deliberative and inclusionary working practices could play in delivering nature conservation objectives.

Chapter 5 examines how English Nature has responded to the participation agenda since 1991, based on an analysis of interviews carried out with English Nature staff between 2000 and 2002. Key developments within the organisation's work programme that encouraged the use of DIPs are discussed. However, despite the rhetoric of participation appearing within strategic documents, by 1999 there had been little field experience of such processes within English Nature's core work programme. Observations made by EN staff working are analysed to provide insights into why DIPs have not become normalised within these programmes. The question posed in the final section of the chapter asks whether the organisation is ready to institutionalise DIPs now. Conflicting answers lead to a debate over the culture of English Nature as seen by interviewees at the start of 2002, and the opportunities and constraints that today's culture provides for the future institutionalisation of DIPs.
Chapter 5

5.1. Organisational Responses to Drivers for Greater Participation:

Key Developments within English Nature since 1991.

This section reports on key initiatives developed within English Nature’s work programme, which were either a direct response to calls for greater stakeholder/community engagement, or incorporated aspects of collaboration within them. What these initiatives have in common, therefore, is that they created the opportunity for English Nature to use DIPs. The initiatives discussed are the Community Involvement Key Initiative, the Biodiversity Action Plan, the Estuaries Initiative and the marine SACs management schemes. This analysis not only considers whether DIPs were used within these programmes, but also whether efforts were made by EN to enter into greater dialogue with stakeholders, and/or engage a broader range of interests than those seen as EN’s traditional stakeholders (as discussed in Chapter 4). Figure 5.1. illustrates the timing of the initiatives which will be discussed in more detail through the chapter.
Figure 5.1. Timeline of Initiatives discussed in Chapter 5

- **1991**: Local cases of DIPs
- **1994**: Community Involvement Key Initiative
- **1995**: UK Biodiversity Steering Group Report
- **1996**: UK Marine SAC Project 1996-2001
- **1997**: Natural Areas Focus Groups
- **1998**: Bucks BAP PRA
- **1999**: NE Kent Marine Management Scheme Stakeholder Dialogue
- **2001**: Lifescapes Initiative 2001 -
- **2002**: People & Wildlife Programme 2002-
- **2003**:

Chapter 4 explained how, following the break-up of the NCC, EN felt under pressure to redefine its culture and adopt a customer-oriented, people-focus to nature conservation. In its ‘Strategy for the ‘90s’, EN declared that:

'Unless the community is sympathetic and supportive, and especially local communities that are directly involved in particular issues, nature conservation cannot succeed. (EN, 1993:12)

The strategy identified areas of its work programme where community involvement was suitable, including:

- The role of National Nature Reserves in encouraging the involvement of local communities in nature conservation;

- Involving local communities in identifying the extent of Natural Areas and in setting nature conservation objectives for them⁠;

- Community grant schemes;

- Linking local conservation activity with environmental education;

- Communicating nature conservation in more understandable and relevant terms.

To help establish the principles of community involvement in the working practices of the organisation, English Nature set up a Community Involvement Key Initiative led by one of EN’s directors. As a result, several research exercises were set up to trial community involvement processes and to develop EN’s understanding of best practice (e.g. Hedges, 1994; Warburton & Whitmore, 1994). A seminar was held to share experiences (EN, 1995), and a Position Statement on Local Community Involvement was devised, setting out EN’s commitment to community involvement (EN, 1995a). However, by 1998, EN’s approach

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¹ The objective of EN’s Natural Area programme is to relate natural patterns of biodiversity to the sense of place felt by local people, and thus bring together the national and local conservation visions to create shared conservation targets within a particular locality (EN, 1994).
to engaging with the general public or local communities remained limited to media and education campaigns, publications, encouraging visitors to NNRs, and community grant schemes (EN, 1998). In the words of one individual closely involved in the Initiative:

'it withered on the vine... it didn't really get off the ground'

Through discussions with EN staff who were closely involved in this Key Initiative, it is clear that there are important lessons to be learnt about why community involvement did not become a core part of EN's work programme during this period.

The key reason appears to be simply that this way of working was not seen as a priority for EN. As a result, when EN suffered a series of significant cuts in Government spending in the mid 1990s, community involvement was one of the first things to be cut, alongside EN's urban officers and several community-focused grant schemes. Working within EN during this time was summarised by one local team interviewee:

'We got so squeezed in the mid '90s that although people recognised that it [community involvement] was a good thing to do, they just couldn't, really couldn't see the wood for the trees. Just heads down, manage SSSIs, do your statutory stuff, and you've got no time or space to do anything more inventive.' (Local Team).

At the same time, new responsibilities and roles for EN were arising through the Habitats Directive and the Biodiversity Action Plan, and EN was being criticised by other nature conservation agencies for not doing enough to safeguard designated sites and under-investing in scientific research to support arguments for site safeguard (WWF-UK, 1997). There were also discussions of a possible merger of EN and the Countryside Commission. Although this was a move supported by some within the organisation, it was suggested by one interviewee that under the threat of merger, EN wanted to maintain and protect its 'mobilisation of bias' that gave it an unique role in environmental governance of the countryside:

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2 Between 1994 and 1996 Grant in Aid fell from £40.177 million to £35.076 million. It remained at this level until 1999 where it rose to £40.579 million and has continued to rise since.

3 It is interesting to note that this report does not refer to EN's roles in the wider countryside or to its attempts to engage the local community in their work, suggesting that these roles were not seen as a priority by the conservation NGO community at the time. Indeed, it was suggested in another report that EN should primarily leave engagement with local communities to local NGOs such as the Wildlife Trusts (Warburton & Whitmore, 1994).
'There was an issue about if we start doing this what's this going to mean in terms of the Countryside Commission. And I think at the time EN were trying very hard to say this is what we do and we are unique in doing this. And if there was something that the Countryside Commission was doing that we picked up, then that might be an area that would be lost if there was a merger. So it was very political, so almost choosing not to do people was an attempt to give us a stronger identity to stop the merger.' (Local Team)

This combination of reduced resources and pressure for EN to focus more on designated sites work and the Biodiversity Action Planning process, played an important part in marginalising community involvement work in the organisation. However, resources and politics were not the only reasons for EN's conservatism; there is also evidence of a strong cultural bias against it. The following two quotes from EN staff heavily involved in the Community Involvement Key Initiative illustrate the extent to which, in retrospect, they felt the organisation was not ready to embrace the necessary culture shift:

'So I think we lost the momentum and there were a number of reasons for that, but the basic reason was that it just wasn't our way of working, and it does require a major sort of culture change in order for us to sort of move to that sort of approach.' (Local Team)

Although there were a core group of people at a strategic and local team level actively trying to push community involvement within the organisation, it was clear that priority was not given to this agenda across the rest of the organisation, particularly at a local level:

'I think that it [the Community Involvement Key Initiative] was probably seen within the organisation as not being particularly important, and certainly the implications of it were not liked. For example, I recall a few conversations. One was something like "We can't get people involved in the production of management plans for nature reserves", "Why not?", "Because that's our job". And the benefits of what could come to the organisation were not recognised, nor were the threats of not doing it recognised adequately'. (Manager)

One individual noted how she felt she was regarded as a 'maverick' because of her enthusiasm to engage local communities in conservation priority setting:

'...which amuses me because I don't think I'm very maverick like, but [I was] regarded as bit of an odd person because I like people and communities work' (Local Team)

Another possible explanation suggested by some interviewees for the demise of the Community Involvement Key Initiative mechanism was the rise to prominence of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (HMSO, 1994). This was despite the fact that the UK Steering
Group report stated that the UK BAP needed to be delivered through Local BAPs, which should 'include targets which reflect the values of local people, and which are based on the range of local conditions, and therefore cater for local distinctiveness' (HMSO, 1995b:6). Guidance devised for the production of local BAPs stressed the importance of partnership and community involvement processes (LGMB, 1997). However, the extent to which local BAP processes actually engaged people from beyond traditional conservation partners was highly variable. Some areas undertook innovative approaches to develop community targets, whereas others emphasised the more traditional ecological focus on rare species and diminishing habitats (Serjeant, 2000). One example where English Nature staff initiated and led a community-focused BAP process was in Buckinghamshire, where a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise was used to capture local values and priorities. But, overall the BAP process has been criticised as being dominated by bureaucracy, a resource intensive exercise with less significance given to the people-side than to the production of technical action plans (see contributions by Green, Marren & Serjeant, in Ecos 2000). Several interviewees acknowledged that the Biodiversity process, instead of being the focus for community participation, put EN several steps back in the move towards community involvement and participation, because it frequently focused around scientifically-derived, top-down targets:

"At heart it seems to me to be a very old-fashioned reductionist approach, and it doesn’t start from where people are, it says the environment is broken down into all these boxes and each one has now got a target and we’ve got to meet the target. And at heart it doesn’t seem to be about building engagement with the subject amongst stakeholders. It’s about saying … “Here’s the science, here’s the targets, now we can talk to people about how we get to the targets, but we don’t really want to talk about the targets”. They are somehow delivered or received from on high. So I find the Biodiversity approach, is possibly a step backwards.’

(Manager)


Alongside the proclaimed commitment to community involvement, partnership-working was seen as a key part of EN’s new corporate approach to conservation (EN, 1993). Partnership-working, although never defined within corporate documents, became seen as a key means of EN becoming a more outward-facing and high-profile organisation, and being more effective at delivering conservation targets, particularly in the wider countryside. For example, to a greater degree than before, EN formally entered into
consultation with strategic partners, including RSPB, MAFF and EA in developing its strategy for nature conservation (e.g. EN, 1997). In addition, Joint Statements of Intent were developed with key partners such as the National Trust, the Game Conservancy Trust and Forest Enterprise, and a Concordat with the Environment Agency, to encourage closer working relations and joint initiatives.

In terms of delivery of conservation objectives, the partnership ethos extended to include engagement with owner-occupiers over SSSI management, particularly through the process of developing Site Management Statements (DETR, 2000). The Species Recovery Programme (SRP) and the BAP process were also seen as approaches through which organisations could work together to achieve conservation gain.

At the same time, new mechanisms to engage users and managers of conservation areas in the development of integrated management plans for the coast were being trialled. The Estuaries Initiative, launched in 1992, developed Estuary Management Plans through a consultative-participation model involving local communities, organisations and statutory authorities. The strategy for plan production emphasised the importance of involving local people who used and managed the estuary in discussions on the need for management, and to incorporate their individual needs and aspirations into decisions about taking estuary management forward (EN, 1993). A two-tier model of participation was recommended, based on a steering committee formed of statutory agencies, financial backers and representatives of user groups which made the decisions, and user and community interests contributing through topic groups, the findings of which were to be taken ‘into account’ by the steering committee (Edwards et al., 1997). A review of these strategies found that efforts to engage the community more closely resembled consultation than true participation, and were ‘generally of a relatively low profile in that the effort put into outreach exercises is relatively limited and the number of resulting responses relatively small’ (Edwards et al., 1997: 163).

A similar two-tier approach to stakeholder involvement was recommended by DETR for the development of statutory Management Schemes to secure favourable condition of marine SACs (mSACs) (DETR, 1998). This consultative model was criticised as falling short of the joint-planning approach whereby all interests are involved in decision-making, recommended by international experts in marine nature reserve planning (Jones, 1999). Jones argues that lessons from attempts to impose Marine Nature Reserves on local communities show that despite EN’s statutory obligations for these sites under the
Habitats Directive, a participatory and inclusive approach is desirable for effective policy delivery (ibid). A review of the approaches used by the UK nature conservation agencies to engage stakeholders in the development of these mSAC Management Schemes revealed a range of different structures and processes. Only three formalised DIPs were found, and of these two were effectively information gathering exercises and only one enabled local interests to take part in the decision-making process (Jones et al., 2001).

5.1.3. The Use of DIPs within EN

So to what extent did EN's partnership and community involvement agenda in the early and mid-1990s encourage greater deliberation and inclusion around nature conservation policy? Pressures to adopt these approaches appear to have come from two directions. One was a response to the perceived complexity of managing complicated ecosystems such as marine and estuarine areas (see Chapter 4), and the other a desire for greater public support for English Nature and nature conservation. That English Nature is a more open organisation than its predecessor is undeniable, and over the last decade it has actively engaged in dialogue and joint initiatives with its partners and local stakeholders about conservation issues on a more frequent basis. However, beyond a few isolated cases, EN has been less effective at increasing the involvement of local communities in making decisions about nature conservation. Initiatives such as the BAP, SRP and developing Natural Area targets tended to be effective only at engaging the existing conservation community.

This is partly because these initiatives operated from a starting position of pre-defined targets - either statutory in the case of designated sites, or set at a national level by experts. As a result, stakeholder engagement processes were framed in terms of traditional technical values of nature and left local interests little opportunity to incorporate their needs and interests into the agenda, or even acknowledge they had an interest in the outcomes. Based on a study of local participation exercises in 1995-6, Goodwin (1998b:16) concluded that conservation professionals viewed the role of participation as a means of securing 'public

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4 Future Search was used to develop the Essex Estuaries Management Scheme, Participatory Appraisal was used in the Plymouth / Solway schemes and a Stakeholder Dialogue approach was used to develop the NE Kent Management Scheme (Jones et al., 2001)
support whilst maintaining their control over the direction of national conservation thinking and ideas.\(^5\)

In terms of process, traditional meeting styles and consultation processes have remained dominant. Staff based within EN’s Headquarters were only able to identify three local team staff who had used DIPs in the delivery of EN’s work programme in the period before this research was commissioned.\(^6\) Staff who ran these processes were interviewed about their experiences. Although these were isolated experiences, occurring in different situations and using different participatory techniques, commonalities emerged from their stories. The cases examined were:

- the use of focus groups in Natural Area programmes (1997),
- Participatory Rural Appraisal in the development of the Bucks BAP (1998), and
- Stakeholder Dialogue in the development of the NE Kent European management scheme (1998-1999).\(^7\)

All three of these cases were in areas of EN’s work programme where EN had stated a role for local community or stakeholder participation in its strategic documents, but in practice no guidance was provided to staff about what was meant by phrases like ‘partnership’, ‘participation’, or ‘community involvement’, or what participatory processes could or should be applied in a given situation. Indeed, as suggested by one interviewee, this was indicative of the fact that those at the top of the organisation were themselves unclear about how these phrases should be interpreted:

'It betrays that they themselves don’t know what they are really suggesting. Because it doesn’t give any further guidance – are there any limits to community involvement? You could move from “we will decide and get them to agree”, right through to “we don’t care what they say”.’ (Manager)

\(^5\) Goodwin’s work and experience of the Biodiversity process (which has been heavily influenced by NGOs such as the RSPB), clearly show that the emphasis on scientific target setting and a continued belief in the primacy of expertise, is a result of the attitude of many of the key nature conservation agencies in the UK, and is not simply an issue of EN’s organisational culture.

\(^6\) However, one interviewee observed that a facet of the devolved management model of EN, is that staff in the headquarters of the organisation may not always know all the details of the activities of local teams.

\(^7\) Details of the three cases studies are provided in Appendix 2.
The 'culture change' required to become deliberative and inclusionary was poorly understood within the managerial levels of organisation, let alone the local teams where there had been no discussion about why, who, when and how participatory principles could be applied. Initiatives such as the UK Marine SAC Project provided no training or information on techniques for the Project Officers responsible for production of the management scheme to engage stakeholders.

The use of DIPs within EN during the time period up to 1999 was clearly a personalised and not an institutionalised act. Only a few individuals within the organisation at a strategic and local team level were actively involved in pursuing the goals of community involvement, and all the cases of DIPs referred to in this research were driven by individuals with a strong personal commitment to an inclusive and participative approach, in two cases arising from experiences gained overseas. All invested a great deal of personal time into the experience to make it a success, battling against a seemingly unsympathetic organisational culture.

These interviewees discussed difficulties they had experienced of applying DIPs within EN. The issue of timing was one. It was suggested that the short time frame provided by the marine SACs project to produce the management scheme (18 months) did not allow the flexibility to invest the necessary time and resources in the initial stages of the project to develop relationships and run participatory information collation processes. This issue of timing not only affects the preparation for a process, but also the potential for continuity among stakeholder relationships in the longer term. The experience of the Project Officer working on the BAP was similar in that, as a result of the time taken to publish the BAP and then the fact that she had to move onto other work commitments, the enthusiasm and sense of ownership held by participants dissipated, and what was initially designed as Participatory Rural Appraisal became a participatory information collection exercise, because participants were not involved in the process of taking action on the ground:

'I do think that some of the groups lost momentum, some of them just dried up altogether...I think we have to start again because I think the original momentum has probably been lost.' (Local Team)

No staff time was invested into maintaining these stakeholder relationships to ensure an inclusive implementation stage and subsequently the 'original momentum' was lost. In retrospect, she felt that if EN was going to engage with local stakeholders in an intensive way through the use of DIPs, then a commitment must be made on a long-term basis:
'If you put an initial investment in then that’s a commitment that we shouldn’t walk away from. And EN tends to be very short-termist, and individuals will come and go.’ (Local Team)


1999-2002 was a period of great change within English Nature. Grant in Aid rose dramatically, the Chairman and Chief Executive were replaced with individuals openly supportive of a more people-centric nature conservation, and a whole host of new initiatives were operationalised creating opportunities for the use of DIPs. Many of EN’s corporate initiatives designed to maximise the opportunities presented by the sustainable development agenda were initiated during this period – Lifescapes (2001); People & Wildlife (2002), guidance on involvement in community strategies (2002). These initiatives are still at an early stage in delivery, and therefore the extent to which they have the potential to institutionalise a more deliberative and inclusionary nature conservation agenda remains unknown at the time of writing.

However, of particular interest to this research, is the extent to which these initiatives and their positioning within the organisation indicate a change in culture and priorities within EN. The creation of a new People and Policies Programme Board, which incorporated the previous ‘Influencing Strategic Allies’ and ‘Gaining Supporters’ business processes, created the structure within which EN’s work with local communities could be mainstreamed across all aspects of the organisation. The People and Wildlife programme (situated within the People and Policies Programme Board) has been vocally supported from the very top of the organisation, and for the first time a team of staff are able to dedicate their full time focus to developing this area of EN’s work.

These new initiatives were also identified as opportunities to develop experience and transferable skills in stakeholder engagement amongst English Nature staff alongside training programmes for new Conservation Officers and Team Managers which include communication skills. The desire for greater knowledge and skills in facilitation and running participatory workshops has been identified by local team staff for use in many projects.

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8 Staff involved with ‘Gaining Supporters’, felt that prior to the programme boards, initiatives to engage local communities had tended to be marginalised due to a negative organisational culture and poor resourcing (EN, 2001h).
aspect of EN’s work programme. Examples include workshops run within English Nature about best practice in coastal management, and within training workshops for EN’s involvement in community strategies (General Manager pers. comm.). The community strategy process has been identified as a particular mechanism through which English Nature local team staff can develop their capacity and experience of working in participatory ways (EN, General Manager, pers. comm.). In addition, the People and Wildlife programme has as one of its core aims the development of internal capacity by identifying skill gaps and the necessary systems and procedures needed to work in a community involvement way (People & Wildlife Project Manager, pers. comm.).

In the summer of 2002, an informal meeting of Directors was called to discuss a paper on how English Nature should develop and implement an action plan for integrating the processes of stakeholder participation into EN’s work programme. It was recommended that three pilot projects should be undertaken which would focus specifically on learning about DIPs. These were on the development of EN’s maritime strategy, on work with farmers to tackle diffuse pollution from agricultural activities, and on an internal dialogue about how an ecosystems approach should be applied into EN’s work programme (EN, 2002g).

It thus appears that over the last few years there has been a much greater corporate commitment to invest resources into creating institutional spaces within which EN is able to engage with its stakeholders in innovative and deliberative ways, and to develop capacity in stakeholder participation techniques. There also appears to be a greater understanding of the need to translate these initiatives from corporate ideas into the work of local teams. For example, the next challenge of the People and Wildlife initiative is to develop a constituency of support and an understanding of the principles of the community participation agenda within the organisation (Project Manager, pers. comm.).

Nonetheless, at this stage, this remains a purely corporate commitment to change. There still remains a lack of guidance for staff on where, when and how to engage with their stakeholders as discussed by a Lifescapes pilot Project Officers who felt nervous to experiment with innovative DIPs, despite stakeholder engagement being cited as a key objective of the project (Project Officer, pers. comm.).

The position in mid-2002 in relation to the institutionalisation of DIPs was summarised by one interviewee below as:
I'm not sure how far we've gone beyond the thing of we know it's a good thing and we should be doing more of it. I think that's about where we're at.' (Manager).

5.2. Examining Staff Attitudes towards DIPs

This section examines the attitudes of a selected group of eleven staff based in EN's headquarters, interviewed to explore their understandings and attitudes towards the use of DIPs. As discussed in Chapter 3, these individuals were selected according to their role in the delivery of the Habitats Directive, and their involvement in the DIPs debate within English Nature. A complex array of different agendas, objectives for engagement, views on who should be engaged where, and knowledge of available processes was uncovered. However, there was agreement over the need for EN to understand more about how to engage with stakeholders and the public. Indeed, several interviewees argued that EN had no choice but to accept the participation agenda as a core part of their approach to delivering nature conservation:

Kate – 'What do you generally think about this whole drive that EN needs to be more participatory – i.e. it needs to involve people actively in decision-making processes and policy processes?'

Specialist – 'I think it's good and necessary. I think society has changed and is changing, and I think ... I think it's good anyhow, but even if I thought it wasn't good, I think there would be no option. I think the days of saying we're the conservation body, we know best, this is our bit, and we've got absolute control over this – has long gone. I don't think there's any option and I think the more we can do it, the better.' (Specialist)

'Doing nothing is not an option. We have to learn how to do it and do it smartly and effectively.' (Manager)

5.2.1. Objectives for using DIPs

Arguments expressed by interviewees as to why EN should use DIPs were voiced from the perspective of organisational effectiveness - seeing DIPs as a means to improve EN’s leverage over other policy decisions, and to maximise the support and commitment of
stakeholders to delivering EN’s programmes. Interestingly, there was no reference to the
democratic and ethical-normative arguments in favour of DIPs found in the literature.
Three key themes dominated the replies - more effective communication leading to
productive relationships with others, more effective decision-making, and effective policy
implementation.

(i) More effective communication and productive stakeholder relationships

Through the two-way dialogue characteristic of DIPs, interviewees recognized how their
use could improve the effectiveness of stakeholder relationships and help to develop new
‘ways of engaging with a wider range of people than we currently do’ (Manager). It was
hoped that through deliberative discussions EN would be able to communicate its core
messages in an open and transparent way, reducing mistrust and misunderstanding over
aspects of conservation management. This links to the role of DIPs as educative processes,
where through deliberation people can gain a better understanding of conservation issues,
and explore their own understandings and priorities for nature. The former is a particular
motivation for EN because of the limited public understanding of certain conservation
issues (notably in the marine environment), and management activities (such as tree-felling
in heathland):

‘I’ve had a couple of sites where the community has been quite vociferous on the
edges of the site and been quite concerned about what we’ve been doing...Quite
often a lot of concern out of communities comes from not knowing what’s
happening, not understanding what’s happening. So if you can provide the
information, the reassurance and the constant communication then a lot of those
difficult situations don’t arise, or it’s much smoother. So I’ve always tried to keep
people informed as to what’s happening. And keep a dialogue going, and make
people feel that they can come and talk to you about things. Sometimes
successfully and sometimes not.’ (Local Team Staff)

With regard to the role of DIPs as providing opportunities for people to explore their own
values, this is increasingly seen as an important way for EN to gain a better understanding
of the needs and interests of its stakeholders, so as to better inform its policies and
improve its ability to enhance peoples’ experience and appreciation of nature:

‘If we are claiming to protect wildlife at least in part so people can appreciate it
and have this aesthetic experience and whatever, we need to find out from them
what they want in case we’ve got completely the wrong end of the stick.’
(Specialist)
Interviewees envisaged a range of outcomes from improved dialogue. Transformative benefits from participation are well documented in the literature (e.g. Innes & Booher, 1999; Warburton, 1997, Healey et al., 1999), and the development of intellectual, social and institutional capital, were implicitly referred to by interviewees as desirable outcomes for English Nature. It was hoped that the use of DIPs would lead to better informed participants (including EN), improved trust in EN’s advice, better positioning for EN in local social networks, and improved ability to work productively with its stakeholders.

(ii) Effective decision-making

The second group of objectives focused on the effectiveness of decision-making itself, under the (contested) assumption that DIPs would lead to better decisions for nature conservation. Interviewees felt that participatory processes could help collate the knowledge and information of others, in order to make substantively better decisions, especially in relation to large-scale, complex sites where knowledge and responsibility is distributed across a wide stakeholder group. In addition, DIPs were seen as an tool that could help EN capture the social and cultural values of nature which EN tends not to represent itself, and then incorporate them in a rigorous way into policy decisions. DIPs are well understood as being a suitable mechanism to capture non-monetary, ‘common good’ values of nature such as local distinctiveness and place-based values (Harrison et al., 1999). It was argued that this would not only raise the awareness of the multiple ways in which nature is valued, but also lead to more accurate assessments of the environmental costs and benefits of potential policies:

“We’ve seen, in our view, bad decisions made in cost-benefit analysis which have adversely affected nature conservation because they haven’t taken the value of biodiversity into account... So it is purely a technical issue of whether participatory processes could lead to a better cost-benefit decision. And by better we mean one that in our view would protect nature better than previous systems’” (Specialist)

(iii) Effective policy delivery

The effective delivery of nature conservation policy requires the support and commitment of EN’s stakeholders to implement decisions. This was identified as the key motivation for one interviewee for his proposal that local EN teams should set up advisory groups to advise on the management of designated sites and on the distribution of grant schemes:
Kate – ‘And what’s your overall motivation for doing this?’

Local Team staff – ‘Well better delivery I think ... You know the more you involve people in setting the vision and values for an organisation, the more likely that they are to be signed up to them. If they feel they have helped to design a wildlife enhancement scheme the more likely they are to take to money and to deliver it because they’ve told you how they can do it. So, that’s clearly a useful thing to do.’ (Local team)

Interviewees who had been involved in participatory processes either as participants or organisers, noted how as a result of being involved in proactive deliberation, biodiversity goals were more likely to be to be integrated at an earlier stage into the decision-making processes of others. It was also hoped that potential conflicts between conservationists and local communities or developers could be minimised:

‘But it’s a matter for me I think of making sure that some of the trickier areas of our work – some of the more challenging issues that we have to grapple with, are explored with others before they become a problem for other people.’ (Manager)

Motivations for the use of DIPs to build local capacity amongst stakeholders (i.e. knowledge, networks and motivation for collective action) were also linked to EN’s ultimate goal for better delivery of its policies. For example, the objective to use DIPs to build capacity among participants to develop a sense of ownership and stewardship towards the sustainable management of the environment voiced by one interviewee, was driven in part by a desire to increase stakeholder commitment to delivering EN policies and reducing the need for EN to use its statutory powers. In this context DIPs were seen as a mechanism to ultimately lead to more self-regulating environmental governance systems.

5.2.2. Attitudes to Inclusion

Despite a general agreement amongst those interviewed that EN needs to become more deliberative in its engagement with stakeholders, attitudes towards inclusion revealed a much more complex picture. Whilst there was agreement that EN should expand it’s ‘customer’ group to build public support and organisational legitimacy, the idea of allowing a wider range of interests to shape the agenda, or influence the final decision was more controversial. This debate was most clearly articulated around the issue of the extent to
which EN should engage those living near and/or users of sites in decisions made about them. Some interviewees felt that EN should involve local communities in biodiversity planning through a process described by one manager as:

“What we might look to do, is some visioning with a local community, because we have knowledge of the underlying geology, the habitat, the species resource in that locality that we can share with people. These are the assets in your locality, here are some of the threats… How do you want it to be?’ (Manager)

However, the following quote clearly illustrates the extent to which other staff felt that the public should have very little influence:

Specialist – ‘Our role is to encourage appreciation of the wildlife that’s it!’

Kate – ‘But EN’s definition of what wildlife is important is going to be very different to other people’s definition of what’s important. Because EN has certain criteria…’

Specialist– ‘Well it’s up to us to inform people so they will understand what’s important about wildlife.’ (Specialist)

This individual’s attitude to public participation indicates a belief in the ‘information deficit’ model, whereby the public need to be informed by EN of the appropriate values of nature through education and controlled involvement. This corresponds to a ‘passive participation’ approach, where participants are awarded no influence over decision-making, but are involved through information provision or volunteering activities. Experiences from initiatives to develop sustainable practices amongst the public, have challenged the effectiveness of this deficit model to change behaviour (Blake, 1999; Macnaghten & Jacobs, 1997), and it follows that it is unlikely that such an approach will effectively tackle the cultural marginalisation of nature. References to the deficit model within the attitudes of some EN staff is also suggestive of a desire to protect and maintain EN’s privileged position as an ‘expert’. From the perspective of power, participation exercises can range from the contribution of participants’ knowledge and resources to a project, through to empowerment whereby participants take control of decisions that affect them (see Oakley et al., 1991). Where EN should position its use of DIPs on this continuum is a complex issue with no necessarily right answer, and in part is reliant on the extent to which EN identifies its role as conserving nature for the enjoyment and quality of life of the public, or solely to protect biodiversity for its own intrinsic sake, underpinned by values of
naturalness and rarity. There is evidence that the debate initiated within EN on this issue in 1991 has yet to be fully resolved. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 10.

As well as being a personal issue, the disparity of views towards inclusion appears to be related to the individual’s own experience and knowledge of DIPs. A noticeable difference in attitudes was observed between staff members who had had some training in DIPs or had participated in DIPs, and those that had not. For example, some interviewees interpreted DIPs as meaning that EN must hand over total control of decision-making to participants, reducing EN’s ability to ensure the outcome was sympathetic to nature conservation. For these staff, using DIPs meant potentially compromising nature conservation goals, and was therefore seen as a high risk activity, and encouraged a cautious attitude towards their use:

‘We do some of this periodically in terms of our own NNRs and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t. Because participatory rural appraisal if you like is fine providing what the community wants fits in with the nature conservation drivers...And I suppose it’s a bit of risk analysis – where we think the community might want the same thing, then we might, you know, let them come up with it’. (Manager)

Those with knowledge of DIPs were much more understanding of the extent to which such processes encourage dialogue and exchange of knowledge and ideas, without necessarily having to undermine EN’s specialist knowledge and agenda. These individuals were much more supportive of the use of DIPs. The limited understanding of how DIPs could be applied within the organisation amongst some interviewees, is indicative of a lack of wide discussion across the organisation about DIPs. Despite EN’s strategic interest in community involvement and partnership working throughout the 1990s, until 2002 few resources had been invested in developing staff skills in this area.

However, other research evidence suggests that the lack of use of DIPs in EN is a bigger problem than just one of staff attitudes. For example, of the staff interviewed within the centre of the organisation, unknown to me, three had been on training courses in stakeholder participation, but had not applied these ideas in practice:

‘I’m keenly interested in this stuff but I haven’t made it part of the way in which I run my work.’ (Manager)

Some of the causal factors of this organisational ‘inertia’ regarding DIPs, appeared to be confusion over agreeing a unambiguous definition for DIPs, providing a clear definition of
how they should be interpreted across the organisation’s work programmes and the lack of a clear locus within the work programme for institutionalising these processes. This was in part due to the lack of an in-house ‘expert’ to direct the process of institutionalisation, but also as a result of the multiple and potentially contradictory ways in which the term ‘participation’ can be interpreted. However, there is also evidence of barriers to change within EN’s culture.

5.3. Structures, Priorities and Institutionalised Procedures.

Organisational culture and the use of DIPs in EN.

'PRA has been most effectively adopted in organisations that have structures and cultures that are flexible and adaptive, have lateral communication, and are democratic and participatory.' Chambers (1994:1447)

The previous sections have examined the strategic realisation in EN over the past twelve years, that it needs to improve its engagement with stakeholders, and to facilitate partnership and community involvement processes. These corporate objectives have been operationalised through a series of initiatives, designed to create the new institutional spaces within which EN can engage with its stakeholders in innovative ways. Lessons from development and natural resources management emphasise the multiple levels of change required within an organisation if it is to effectively institutionalise participation. These changes go beyond providing training for staff, and change may be required to normalised procedures, systems and structures (IDS Workshop, 1998). This section reflects on EN’s culture, and focuses on key themes which are felt to be limiting EN’s institutionalisation of DIPs.

5.3.1. The Low Priority of DIPs in an Outcome-oriented, Target-driven Culture

Chapter 4 explained how English Nature’s work programme is target-driven, with these targets mainly imposed on the organisation from its wider institutional context of European Commission Directives on nature conservation, the UK Government’s Public
Service Agreements and modernising agenda, and the UK BAP. In terms of securing continued government funding, ensuring these targets are met is an issue of ‘corporate survival’ for EN (see Chapter 4). The consequence is that despite the encouragement by government to use participatory approaches, if they do not contribute directly towards meeting these targets, which are typically framed in terms of wildlife gain, they are likely to be awarded a low priority. Within this target-oriented culture there is a risk that the more long-term diffuse benefits that may come from DIPs and community-led exercises that may not have any immediate benefit in terms of biodiversity targets, will always be in competition for resources with the shorter term use of DIPs to deliver pre-defined conservation targets. The net effect is that within a local team, priority tends to be given to work on designated sites and areas in the wider countryside where wildlife gain is likely to be greatest, and there remains inadequate incentive for local staff to invest time and resources in participatory experimentation:

'I'd have to say that 95% [of SSSIs to be in favourable condition] by 2010, is basically the main driver for us, and our Chief Executive has made it clear that this is a target he does not want us to miss. So you know there's a pressure there. But at the same time he's saying get involved in the wider countryside. Clearly people will focus on the area where they feel they can do the most, which is the land that is in our control via the legislation.' (Local Team Staff).

'There are these various things that we have to achieve - how many site management statements have we done? How many site visits have we done? How many units are in favourable condition? These are things which are counted and as always the things you count will drive the programme, so whether or not they are going to deliver the best for wildlife, it comes second really.' (Local Team staff)

Both the strength and weakness of using a DIPs approach for an organisation like EN is that outcomes tend to be more unpredictable and the full range of benefits are notoriously difficult to capture (see Ch. 2). Participation is therefore seen as a risky exercise which could divert resources away from the achievement of EN’s corporate targets, and EN, despite its corporate rhetoric, was not seen as a risk-taking organisation:

'The organisation talks about being a risk-taking organisation... a risk by definition means you can potentially fail, so I don’t think we are very risk-taking. I think we are very, very unhappy with risk-taking.' (Local Team staff)

As a result, risk-taking tends to be employed only on sites not regarded as being of high conservation value (i.e. ‘trivial’):
'On these [designated] sites, there’s an enormous amount at stake, so if we let the multiple stakeholders decide what happens, we feel that we’re giving away our legislative imperative, our legislative basis for doing things ... And basically we don’t trust them to do the right thing....But the trivial sites, simply because they are trivial we are willing to engage in a multi-stakeholder approach, and usually the solutions are fairly straightforward. So we’re willing to give people the money to kick off a stakeholder approach, bring in a facilitator, and become involved in it ourselves. And it feels quite safe. We just don’t have the guts to do it on these [complex multi-stakeholder, designated] sites because we can hide behind the legislation.' (Local Team staff)

By adopting this approach, the organisation is able to incorporate the objectives of participants without compromising its own biodiversity-focused goals, thus reducing the likelihood of criticism from raising stakeholder expectations through dialogue whilst retaining control over outcomes to ensure they meet predefined targets (see Goodwin, 1998).

English Nature’s People and Policies Programme Board has made significant progress in setting corporate targets which have a strong process-oriented element, with the aim of integrating them across the whole of EN’s work programme. The 2002-5 Corporate Plan sets out these targets - to build support, increase understanding and encourage more people to experience and act for nature; to influence policies to protect priority habitats and species within and outside designated sites; and to achieve a wide recognition of biodiversity as a key test of sustainable development (EN, 2002b). It is hoped that these targets will create the necessary targets to change staff behaviour:

'Until that it [DIPS] becomes a thing that you must do people will ignore it, and I think that in the organisation that is a clear change. We are getting in our corporate plan and in our planning guidance the targets and drivers to make people become more participative in their approach.' (local Team Staff)

In addition, the creation of Community Liaison posts and the Lifescapes initiative, which has purposefully avoided imposing wildlife targets (Lifescapes Project Officer, pers. comm.), suggest that EN is trying to increase the flexibility of local staff in their engagement with stakeholders. However, the risk remains that the objectives of the People and Policies Programme will not be mainstreamed into the actions of local staff because the primary emphasis across all work programmes still lies with meeting PSA targets on designated sites:

9 In fact, in 2001, the People & Policies budget was significantly under spent by local teams.
'But in terms of growing the [People & Policies] programme also, there's an awareness raising of its relevance internally as well... conservation officers are so focused on delivery of the PSA targets, their heads are kind of inside a screen on designated sites. And their awareness of the People and Policies programme, and the need to deliver it sharper, smarter, better, and their role in it, is low.' (Manager)

5.3.2. A 'Time-Poor' Organisation

Part of the problem appears to be that as English Nature's role has diversified, the organisation increasingly sees itself as being 'time-poor' (Manager, pers. comm.):

'While the organisation can only afford the staff to actually respond rather than to be proactive, it's not going to make much progress, and that's the problem I think. Most conservation staff in particular find it difficult to keep up with the workloads they've got that is coming in reactively.' (Local Team staff)

Whilst this situation continues, it will only be staff working on special projects and in community liaison posts that will be able to invest time and resources into stakeholder engagement, and it will not become a daily part of EN's work programme.

Time was also identified as a limiting factor within the headquarters of the organisation, in response to questions on why little strategic progress had been made on the institutionalisation of DIPs. One manager, explained how he felt staff were so focused on the day to day operation of the organisation, that not enough time was set aside to reflecting and developing the organisation, what he referred to as 'blue skies thinking':

'You could sit two or three senior people around together for three weeks and say we want to have some coherent proposals about how we take forward the Government's participatory agenda for consultative decision-making. I would be quite attracted to that, having the flexibility to take people away from the email and the telephone and their in-tray and all the other things that get in the way, and give them space, time to reflect on these things. Because in general I would say that the organisation, certainly at my level - I'm too engaged and soaked up with the messy business of operational delivery, that, you know, one isn't giving the attention to what the organisation needs to look like in 2005 and how it needs to change to get there.' (Manager)
5.3.3. A Lack of Emphasis on Process within the Organisation

Comments about the lack of time available to making strategic progress on DIPs also reflects an organisational culture that did not award priority to the issue. It was only in November 2002 that someone was awarded the responsibility of taking forward the agenda of stakeholder participation within the organisation. Prior to this, the issue of DIPs remained secondary to peoples’ core work priorities, despite any personal interest they may hold in the issue:

"If I didn’t have a job to do, I could devote sufficient time to thinking how we might do more of this. And I’m not alone in that. But until the organisation moves to the point of thinking we ought to be mainstreaming this and making it part of how we do what we do, rather than parking it there on the shelf..." (Manager)

It is apparent that the organisation’s ability to learn about how to engage with stakeholders and local communities in the 1990s was severely hampered because those responsible at a local level were in the vast majority untrained. As a result there was little use of DIPs other than by those who had gained skills from outside the organisation. Evidence for this comes from the marine SAC project (1996-2001), where a staff member involved in the project noted the lack of priority placed on skills in stakeholder engagement in the recruitment of staff to the project, and the limited guidance for project officers charged with developing the management scheme:

"Every time they did another recruitment, it was always people who could do GIS, and survey and monitoring, and advise on the science. But the SAC officers didn’t need that, in fact we needed that less than anything else. What we needed was [guidance on] how do we engage 70, 80, 100 stakeholders in making decisions about this site? How do you communicate? And I sort of said we need training on how to give presentations, how to convey science information in plain English, in a way people can understand and find interesting. We need how do you write in plain English, how do you use language in a written form. How do you get people together and have discussions and debates and come up with decisions? Those are the kind of things we need to be equipped with, we don’t just need more and more and more scientists and more and more how do you survey, and more how do you monitor. But all the money has been thrown in that direction...." (Local Team Staff)

"They were all marine ecologists or marine botanists, and they were pursuing the things that interested them, which was monitoring and surveying and quantifying. You know, that was their interest, and their expertise, so inevitably those interests influenced." (Local Team Staff)
The lack of interest in process at a strategic level is also explained by a culture where the process through which conservation targets are achieved (beyond statutory procedures) is seen as the remit of local team staff, not central office. The benefit of this approach is that it allows local creativity and innovation, but if innovation is desired it needs to be accompanied by appropriate incentives and an investment in training from the centre:

'We place great faith in creativity in EN... Conservation Officers are trusted within a certain framework to just use their own intelligence, they can do things however they want... but how many people have got the knowledge or confidence to do it any different to how it has always been done? ... if you want people to do things in different ways you've got to help them by providing either training or at least familiarisation as well as support.' (Specialist)

Indeed, training provided to local staff still places greater emphasis on statutory procedures and legislation:

'And I noticed with CROW [the Countryside & Rights of Way Act], what's the first bit of training everybody got with CROW? The Government guidance is stuffed with all this stuff about we've got to make sure we don't get into adversarial conflict. We mustn't avoid issues, but we certainly mustn't so quickly get into adversarial legislative processes. We must look to negotiate; we must look to resolve things in alternative ways. And what's the first bit of training we all get? It's briefing us about legalities around CROW and what we can do and what we can't do. And there's nothing about social skills, there's nothing about any of the people skills or what's now referred to as emotional intelligence needed to negotiate with people.' (Local Team Staff)

5.3.4. An Instrumental, Not a People-first Approach

Conservation problems are still approached from a predominantly instrumental perspective, i.e. what action is needed to meet species and habitats targets. EN's approach remains dominated by scientific rather than social and political constructions of conservation problems. One interviewee observed that most local teams did not use the intelligence staff held about their stakeholders in a constructive way to make decisions on how best to engage them in dialogue:

'We don't use our intelligence. The whole idea of dealing with people as customers of what you are doing, which you would do if you sold baked beans, you do not do in the case of nature conservation... the whole idea of actually knowing enough about the people to be able to have a dialogue which is going to produce something similar to what you want but not exactly the same is one of the operational issues that EN hasn't really got going.' (Manager)
Statutory procedures institutionalised within European and UK nature conservation policy encourage a particular approach to decision-making, which frames stakeholder engagement around legal requirements rather than initiating dialogue to identify shared aims and objectives:

‘Culturally, people when they address a problem on an estuary, which is a multi-stakeholder situation, their first port of call is the legislation... they approach it from the point of view of the way they have always approached it, which is to hit people with heavy legislation: “if you don’t do this, you will be fined. You’re not allowed to do this anyway; you’ll take the Government to the European Court. Are you willing to risk that?”’ (Local Team Staff)

Under the legislation, the conservation value of a site is determined according to externally imposed criteria, and deciding what constitutes favourable condition is typically determined by experts. It is towards these targets that dialogue with stakeholders is focused. This affects both the language used to engage stakeholders and the focus of the discussions. While, at this stage of policy delivery EN staff may incorporate local knowledges and understandings to identify how to best resolve problems, this occurs within narrowly defined boundaries of the debate. This target-first approach led Goodwin (1998) to conclude that EN discounted locally held values and interests, leaving participants feeling frustrated and disenfranchised from the decision-making process. His interviewees accused nature conservation agencies of treating them as ‘hired hands’, to deliver predetermined targets (ibid). Indeed, by framing the debate with a species/habitats focus, potential stakeholders may not realise they have an interest in the debate at all (see Holmes & Scoones, 2000). The argument that certain key stakeholder groups would not find the debate relevant to their interests, was used by some interviewees in this study as a reason to exclude them from decision-making processes on designated sites:

Because we are very site-focused, and very focused on those species and habitats, the practical side is that most people are going to find that a totally rarefied debate and aren’t going to want to engage in it.’ (Manager)

5.3.5. Reflective Practitioners?

Recent critiques of the application of DIPs raise concerns that they are simply seen by organisations as part of an array of management tools to influence stakeholder behaviour, without the need to change their existing procedures (Cooke & Kathari, 2001). As discussed
in Chapter 2, DIPs are associated with a democratising agenda that aims to 'demythologise' expert knowledge, and recast the hierarchical relationship between the expert and the 'lay person', towards a system that emphasises dialogue and constructing joint solutions. This requires a change in the role of the expert, who must become a 'reflective practitioner', and give up the initial claim to unquestioned authority (Schön, 1991).

Several respondents suggested however, that for many of EN's staff, the 'reflective practitioner' approach would be an unnatural way of working. EN traditionally has a reputation for employing people who are good natural historians, and although communication is now seen as an important skill for staff to EN have, it was suggested that the strength of the values and beliefs held by staff of the imperative to protect nature, limits their ability to communicate with those holding differing priorities:

'Nature conservation attracts people who have very strong feelings for, and commitment to conservation issues... And I think perhaps therefore people might find it [a people-oriented approach] a slightly less comfortable way of working... you know, they feel it is so self-evident that there is only one way of doing this because it has got to be the right way for nature conservation... and therefore what's the point of having any discussions about alternative ways because it is the only way, isn't it? ...because we really believe this, and we are going to go out and convert them, so they will believe it too!' (General Manager).

The existence of attitudes within EN that act as a barrier to the opening up of expert knowledge is illustrated by the experience of using DIPs in developing a management scheme for NE Kent mSAC. According to the Project Officer, the team managing the project from EN's Head Office, were unhappy for her to use a deliberative process to explore how activities were likely to affect the designated conservation features, and therefore what should constitute EN's statutory advice (Regulation 33 under the Habitats Regulations). The Project Officer felt that EN was nervous of opening up this process to local knowledges, although she felt she did not have the level of knowledge or understanding of the system on which to make the necessary judgements. In addition, the EN marine 'experts' based in Peterborough did not participate as stakeholders in the local workshops:

'I was conveying continuously, you've got to participate, now's your time to comment. I do not want a 12 page letter detailing all your concerns, and in the end that's exactly what I got 4 or 5 weeks after the end of the consultation... Well to me they [the marine specialist team] should have been participating via me and I thought I was mandated to go into there and make decisions and influence things. And that's where the influence should be...But clearly their perception was we'll do the formal comments at formal consultation in our process that
we've generated around commenting on management schemes at the end. Now if EN keeps up with that and doesn't understand that you participate (..) you get in there and say your bit with other people, and negotiate with them around the table - that's what participation is. (Local Team staff)

In this case it appears that EN were unwilling to lose the precedence of science over other forms of knowledge and staff's privileged role as 'experts', by keeping the input of scientific knowledge separate from local stakeholder deliberations. This closed attitude towards EN's 'expertise', is unsurprising given that EN is embedded in an institutional culture which gives particular credence to experts. EN is legally responsible for the scientific basis on which decisions are made, and the importance that EN 'gets it right scientifically', has been strengthened by the CROW Act which provides the right to appeal to owner-occupiers, if they are aggrieved about a decision made by EN over consent for an operation:

'Because as soon as you are challenged about what happens in the countryside by developers or planning authorities and so on, everybody demands you fall back on hard facts, hard scientific evidence. And the whole legislative framework within which we operate demands more of that'. (Manager)

'We've got to be seen to be the experts, we've got to be seen to know it all, and if we really don't, we've got to package it in a way that looks somehow objective and scientific... one of the blocks [of institutionalising DIPs], is that EN would have to admit it doesn't know sometimes, and EN doesn't like to admit it doesn't know'. (Local Team Staff)

5.3.6. A Reflective Organisation?

The literature on institutionalising participation highlights the importance of organisational learning (IDS Workshop, 1998: IIED & IDS, 2000). It is clear from the interviews held with staff who had applied DIPs that the experience led to a change in their beliefs over how EN should undertake its operations. All these individuals went on to apply the principles of deliberation and inclusion through their future work, although not necessarily through the use of formal participatory exercises. There was, however, an obvious lack of mechanisms in place through which EN as a body could learn from these experiences. No formal internal system of evaluation was in place to capture the success or difficulties of such experiences, and there has been little dissemination of learning from their experiences
across local or national teams\textsuperscript{10}. Many of the situations in which DIPs are likely to be used within EN are initiatives which employ a Project Officer for a limited period of time only. Without any formal mechanisms to capture their experiences in a way that adds to the knowledge resources and development of the organisation, this knowledge is lost. One of the staff expressed frustration that the benefits she had learnt were not being disseminated:

'So I don't know within EN how it is viewed, or even how many people know about it … Part of the question for me if [they] think it really was an example of best practice why haven’t they promoted it to the new River SACs. — “Out of everything we did this was the best way of going about it. We strongly recommend you do it this way - go for it!” And why with some of the new European sites haven’t they said we strongly recommend this?' (Local Team Staff)

The limited sharing of experiences was also noted by a senior manager:

'There's a lot of reinventing the wheel and learning on the job. So there's insufficient horizontal sharing of good practice. It's a well-recognised gap. Like any institution, the learning tends to go on in vertical streams' (Manager)

The learning that does occur within English Nature tends to be based on informal feedback and conversation. Managers may then raise these issues at managerial meetings, and ultimately there is the potential to change organisational structures and procedures as a result. But this system relies on two factors. First, that managers perceive the knowledge as relevant and important in the first place, and secondly, that sufficient time and emphasis is placed on reflecting and adapting the organisation to its changing context.

The importance of adopting a bottom-up approach to institutionalising change is particularly important to the issue of DIPs. Lessons learnt from the top-down-imposed Community Involvement Key Initiative in the early '90s are relevant to this debate. The failure of the initiative to institutionalise participation highlights that until local team staff are provided with the capacity to incorporate these processes into their work programmes, and unless they see the value in adopting DIPs, they will remain purely corporate initiatives:

'The organisation toyed with true community involvement when we were producing Natural Area profiles … we did say then that we should consult with a

\textsuperscript{10} EN's Social and Economic Advisory Group held a seminar in 1998 reviewing EN's experience with participation to date (EN, 1998d). However this was attended by a limited group of people who tended to be sympathetic to the participation agenda. Although reports were produced at the time of the Community Involvement Key Initiative and from an external evaluation of the marine SACs project, there was little addition dissemination beyond library shelves and discussion at the very top of the organisation.
much wider community about the agendas that we were trying to set. The trouble with Natural Areas, the trouble with the process, was that it was a top-down process, approach. It was someone in headquarters had the idea, a good idea, I think it was right. But they didn’t sell it to the organisation well. It came down to a dictat—you will produce these in this time. The real thinking behind it wasn’t explained well. It certainly wasn’t taken on board and the staff weren’t given the time to do properly. But they were told you should involve the local conservation community and the broader community if you can—non-specified (...) in drawing up targets and agendas and what have you. Most teams didn’t take on board that idea of involvement, or if they did, they did it at the minimalist level—they got somebody to write the profiles either in the team or they contracted the wildlife trust or occasionally an outside specialist to do it. The community involvement element was done through perhaps one-day meeting, with conservation organisations who were already pretty well on board anyway’ (Local Team Staff)

It is argued that organisational change is more likely to be successful if staff are involved in managing that change (IDS Workshop, 1998). However, within EN local staff have a limited ability to take part in the strategic development of the organisation. But while there has been recent discussion amongst strategic staff about where and when in the organisation DIPs could be trialled and used, debates have not been extended to local team staff, despite their experience of engaging with stakeholders on a day to day basis. This is partly an issue of the geographical distance of local teams from the centre of the organisation, but also a cultural distinction between staff based in managerial positions—the ‘thinkers’—and those at a local level—the ‘doers’11. Several of the local team staff interviewed about their experiences of using DIPs have at various times actively attempted to pursue and raise the profile of this issue within the organisation, but ended up frustrated and disillusioned when little progress was made:

‘I gave up on the organisation in terms of trying to influence it towards this approach, but I didn’t give up on the approach per se… I sort of detached myself a little bit from it in the mid-nineties when I was heavily involved and I could see the benefits, and I was working in areas where the benefits were being delivered. I found it extremely frustrating to come back here [Peterborough] and sort of be banging my head against a brick wall. I talked to directors about it and others, and in the end you know you just run out of energy and you think well … I’m not going to bother.’ (Local Team Staff)

11 This became apparent as I reflected on my own position within EN, where I was pigeonholed as a 'thinker'. I became concerned that my own voice was given greater authority by strategic staff than the voices of their own staff with on the ground experience of running DIPs. As a result, I felt a certain responsibility to communicate the ideas of these local staff, who frequently had a greater experience of DIPs than myself, into the top tiers of the organisation.
Conclusions.

Over past ten years a range of projects have been initiated by EN which have encouraged the use of DIPs. Reflections by EN staff suggest that until recently processes of engaging with stakeholders were not seen as a priority for the organisation and no resources were placed to develop the capacity and skills of staff in this area. As a result, use of DIPs was very limited. Research within the organisation during the period 1999-2002, indicates that priority is finally being placed on this issue at the highest levels of the organisation, and efforts are being made to develop the capacity within EN to use DIPs. However, there still remains a lack of debate beyond a select group of individuals at the centre of the organisation about the potential use of DIPs, illustrated by the limited understanding of their purpose, and nervousness towards opening up decision-making to wider publics. In part, this lack of progress is linked to the complex ways that DIPs can be interpreted and applied, and uncertainty within EN as to where would be an appropriate and low-risk area within which to trial their use.

So what can be concluded about EN’s interpretation of Fitness for Purpose from this analysis at the strategic level of EN? First, it is apparent that there are multifarious pressures for EN to become more deliberative and inclusionary in its working practices, not least the desire for EN to make itself relevant to the Government’s current interest in DIPs. This desire is accompanied by an acknowledgement throughout the organisation that EN needs to find the right methods to engage more effectively with a wider range of stakeholders through better communication and decision-making. This is driven by an aspiration to gain broad public support for nature conservation, to be effective in its efforts to integrate conservation activities into the sustainable development agenda, and to deliver targets in complex, multi-stakeholder situations.

While it can be concluded that the use of DIPs is seen as useful and possible for EN, there is evidence of significant barriers within EN’s organisational culture towards achieving best practice in their use. These barriers include the dominance of instrumental approaches to delivering policy and a desire to maintain the privilege of scientific knowledge, the driving force of top-down targets leaving EN time-constrained and nervous of compromising wildlife gain, compounded by a limited ability to share ideas and learn from local team experiences. However, recently more flexible initiatives have been created, encouraging
staff to engage in a creative way with stakeholders, and appear to offer a significant potential to initiate the mainstreaming of DIPs.

The next four chapters describe a case study where the use of DIPs in the delivery of the Habitats Directive is explored. This will provide more depth and insight into many of these issues about the effect of organisational culture on EN’s use of DIPs.
Chapter 6.

Exploring Fitness for Purpose at a Local Level:
Introducing the Case Study

Introduction

The following four chapters present the findings from the River Avon case study. This explores the decisions, assumptions and trade-offs involved in defining Fitness for Purpose in the design of a DIP used to develop a conservation strategy\(^1\). The case study is particularly interesting because it focuses on how the principles of deliberation and inclusion can be integrated into the delivery of international legislation where conservation objectives have been defined in terms of traditional scientific/objective values of nature. The study explores how decisions are made about who, when and how local stakeholders are involved in the development of a river conservation strategy, and how these decisions are framed by the institutional top-down context and the local situation in which the process is to take place.

Chapter 6 introduces the context in which the River Avon conservation strategy is situated. The Habitats Directive and the LIFE in UK Rivers Project provide the legislative and managerial context for the strategy. In addition, background information on the River Avon, its conservation interests, existing governance patterns and main stakeholder groups is provided. The methods used to explore the dimensions of Fitness for Purpose are outlined in Section 6.2, which also provides details of my role in the subsequent design and operation of a DIP.

\(^1\)NB The structure and objectives for the Avon project were defined prior to the latest developments within EN towards institutionalising the use of DIPs.
6.1. Introduction to the case study site

6.1.1. The Habitats Directive

Adopted in 1992 by the European Commission, the Habitats Directive is seen as one of the means through which European countries can contribute to meeting the objectives of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Pinton, 2001). Proposed measures include the creation of a European network of ‘Sites of Community Importance’, known as Natura 2000, comprising Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive (79/409/EEC). The aim of these Sites of Community Importance is to contribute to the maintenance or restoration of certain habitats and species (known as features) to ‘favourable conservation status’, by maintaining the site in ‘favourable condition’.

Sites are designated as SACs, based on the presence of habitat types listed in Annex I of the Directive, or habitats of the species listed in Annex II. This list of habitats and species is identified as containing features requiring the creation of special conservation areas to ensure their conservation. However, the designation of sites is only seen as part of the solution to achieving the favourable conservation status of species and habitats. The Directive acknowledges the importance of action beyond designated sites, particularly the management of landscape features, which may act as ecological corridors or stepping-stones for the migration, dispersal, and genetic exchange of wild species (Article 10).

The Directive does not only aim to protect those species and habitats listed in the Annexes. As stated above, the rationale for the Directive is to contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity, a term encompassing all living organisms. However, Pinton (2001) argues that by presenting a list of features for which special attention must be paid, the definition of biological diversity can easily be reduced to that predefined list of species and habitats. Criticisms of this approach are strengthened by claims that the contents of the Annexes

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2 Favourable conservation status of a habitat is achieved when its natural range and areas are stable or increasing, specific structures and functions necessary for long-term maintenance are stable, and the species making up the habitat type are in favourable condition. Species are in favourable conservation status when they display stable population dynamics, stable range and their habitat area is maintained (Article 1(c)). Favourable condition is judged through the monitoring of the status of the feature itself, and other ecological parameters which are identified as suitable indicators.
only reflect the varying levels of taxonomic knowledge available, and are the result of political negotiation as much as scientifically derived priorities (Pinton, 2001).

Key dates for member states delivering the Habitats Directive are as follows: to put forward a list of sites meeting the criteria of SAC status to Brussels by 1995, and to have completed the designation process and the establishment of management measures necessary for the protection of the site by 2004 (EC, 2000). Each country must report back to the Commission every 6 years detailing the conservation measures taken, with an evaluation of the impact of these measures and the status of the site.

The Habitats Directive is seen as establishing two particularly distinctive features within European conservation legislation. It is the first European Directive to protect biodiversity on an ecosystem-based approach. In other words, a SAC is not considered in isolation but is valued in terms of its contribution to the construction of the Natura 2000 network across the European territory, as divided into five bio-geographical regions (Alphandéry & Fortier, 2001). In this way it differs considerably from the SSSI system, which focuses on the designation of sites based on the presence of natural features, but only in areas where those features are ‘most highly concentrated or of highest quality’ (NCC, 1989).

Secondly, the Directive claims that it ‘makes a contribution to the general objective of sustainable development’ and acknowledges that the maintenance of [such] biodiversity may in certain cases require the maintenance, or indeed the encouragement of human activities’ (para. 3). Alphandéry & Fortier (2001) observe how this differs from the preservationist model of protected area management, which has traditionally dominated the management of special areas globally3. However, despite the Directive’s acknowledgement of the role of human activities in preserving biodiversity in Europe’s predominantly semi-natural landscapes and its commitment to take into account ‘economic, social, cultural and regional requirements’, in reality these aspects come second to the environmental requirements of a site. Following the judgement of the European Court of Justice relating to the Lappel Bank SPA (Case C-44/95 Rv. Secretary of State for the Environment ex parte RSPB [1996] ECR I-3805), and the more recent SAC ruling on the inclusion of the Severn Estuary as a potential SAC (Case C-371/98, The Queen v. Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions ex parte First Corporate Shipping Ltd [2000])

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3 The approach to SSSI management that dominates the UK system is seen as an irregular in this respect, because of its focus on negotiating the co-existence of the conservation interests with other land uses.
Chapter 6

ECR-I 9235), sites can be selected and boundaries determined based only on the scientific criteria listed in Annex III of the Habitats Directive (DETR, 1998). It is only once a site has been designated and management measures are being defined that such economic, social, cultural and regional interests can be taken into account. Even then, new and existing activities are only acceptable if they do not affect the integrity of the site, or there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest^\textsuperscript{4}. McGiUivray (2002) in his analysis of the Severn Estuary case, points out the ambiguity that exists within the Habitats Directive surrounding the issue of sustainable development, in terms of where and when within the delivery of the Directive there can be expected to be a balancing of environmental and economic issues.

Some commentators see the Habitats Directive as a genuine means of delivering sustainable development at a European-wide scale, based on the belief that development which does not allow this defined nature conservation baseline to be maintained cannot be considered sustainable (WWF-Austria, 1999). However, although a need for the adequate protection of the most susceptible features is not refuted, it is argued that by adopting a no-net loss approach and removing areas from an arena where dialogue and negotiation between economy, society and environment occurs, necessary debates between developers and conservationists about how sustainable development can be achieved across the whole country are side-stepped (Owens & Cowell, 2002).

Commitment to a Directive is binding in terms of the need to secure favourable conservation status of species and habitats, but Member States have flexibility in how that result is achieved (EC, 2000). This application of the principle of subsidiarity encourages the translation of the Directive into law in the most suitable way for the socio-political circumstances of the particular state. However, this has resulted in great differences in the sizes of sites designated across Europe, which partially reflects governmental attitudes about whether sites should be designated according to a belief in an integrated management approach or a more strict conservation-focused approach. The Directive has been criticised as being too vague in its guidance on mechanisms to deliver favourable condition. For

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^\textsuperscript{4} The following principles are seen as relevant when determining whether there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest – where there is a need to address a serious risk to human health and public safety, in the interests of national security and defence, the provision of a clear and demonstrable environmental benefit on a national or international scale, a vital contribution to strategic economic development or regeneration, where failure to proceed would have unacceptable social and/or economic consequences (DETR, 1998).
example, Pinton (2001) argues the Directive is weakened by the presence of phrases such as ‘to the extent possible’ and ‘in an appropriate manner’.

These mechanisms are laid out, and the Habitats and Birds Directives transposed into UK law, through the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994, and the Policy and Planning Guidance notes for Nature Conservation (PPG9). The Regulations build on the protection offered to SSSIs and Marine Nature Reserves through the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and set out very prescriptive procedures for the management of SACs (EN Specialist, pers. comm.)\(^5\). Protection for the SAC is therefore partially delivered through processes of regulation and negotiation with owner-occupiers operationalised through the SSSI system. Table 6.1 summarises the key institutional processes designed to deliver the Habitats Directive, and outlines the potential role of deliberation in achieving these objectives:

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\(^5\) The Regulations are expected to be updated in the near future to bring them into line with the 2000 Countryside and Rights of Way Act – EN Specialist, pers. comm.).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Who Involved</th>
<th>Extent of Deliberation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notification</strong></td>
<td>Notify stakeholders of the designation of the site</td>
<td>Owner-Ocupiers</td>
<td>None. Notification based on meeting European scientific criteria.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting Conservation Objectives and Favourable Condition</strong></td>
<td>Defining the objectives upon which the site should be managed</td>
<td>EN and other 'experts'.</td>
<td>Dialogue amongst 'experts' but no consultation with stakeholders holding local knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Determining Appropriate Management</strong></td>
<td>Management Agreements</td>
<td>Negotiation with individuals over the management objectives for the site.</td>
<td>Negotiation possible, to ensure best result for conservation and owner-occupiers' objectives. Payments may be offered for positive management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLDs list</td>
<td>Owner-occupiers must consult EN (or EA) before carrying out an operation listed as potentially damaging to the cSAC.</td>
<td>Owner-occupiers (inc. land adjacent to site)</td>
<td>Room for some negotiation, but must not have adverse effect on site integrity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of Consents</td>
<td>Competent authorities must review existing consents to ensure they do not have an adverse effect on the cSAC alone or in combination with other operations</td>
<td>Competent authorities and project managers</td>
<td>Very little. Based on precautionary principle – it must be shown that the project will not cause an adverse effect unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate Assessment Article 6 (3)</td>
<td>Competent authorities must assess any proposed projects to ensure they do not have an adverse effect on the site alone or in combination with other projects</td>
<td>Competent authorities and project proposers</td>
<td>Very little. As above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Management Statements</td>
<td>Setting out conservation and other objectives for the site.</td>
<td>Owner-occupiers and EN</td>
<td>Principally seen as information sharing exercise. Basis of future communication and negotiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Objective</td>
<td>Who Involved</td>
<td>Extent of Deliberation</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential role of Strategy</td>
<td>Management Plan Article 6(1)</td>
<td>Anyone influential or important for the management of the site</td>
<td>As much as possible, but within the parameters of the conservation objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article 6(1) of the Directive calls for member states to ‘establish the necessary conservation measures involving, if need be, appropriate management plans specifically designed for the sites or integrated into other development plans, and appropriate statutory, administrative or contractual measures’ to ensure the SAC is maintained or restored to favourable condition⁴</td>
<td>Anyone influential or important for the management of the site</td>
<td>Deliberation essential to explore the overlaps between conservation and the interests, needs and objectives of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education / awareness raising</td>
<td>Anyone influential or important over the behaviour of others</td>
<td>Deliberation essential to explore the overlaps between conservation and the interests, needs and objectives of others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁴ It is important to note that the Directive does not demand a statutory, regulatory approach to be taken to ensure favourable conservation status of the listed species and habitats.
Despite being based on the SSSI system, a key effect of the Habitats Regulations has been to alter where responsibilities lie for decision-making about activities that may affect the integrity of a designated site. Although designated sites have greater legal protection under the Habitats Regulations than the SSSI system, most of the power lies at the level of the UK Government which is statutorily responsible for ensuring the requirements of the Directive are met, rather than the nature conservation agencies (i.e. English Nature within England). This difference is summarised by the EN Head of International Casework who provides guidance and advice for EN staff and competent authorities on the interpretation of the Regulations:

‘Our role in the Regulations is very different to SSSIs. For SSSIs, we are the body that is notifying and confirming the SSSI, and placing the prescriptions on the site, and negotiating the management. With European sites, we advise Government on the site, [and] we advise Government on the prescriptions. Government makes the decisions. We are slightly at arm’s length. And the action that we take subsequently, is very much as their agents... It’s all about Government’s obligations under the Directive, not about EN’s obligations under the Directive’ (EN, Specialist).

There are also important differences in terms of who holds responsibility for determining whether a project or plan has an adverse effect on site integrity. On SSSIs, potential plans are negotiated between the nature conservation agency and the developer through consultation according to the list of Operations Likely to Damage. Under the Habitats Directive, however, competent authorities must make judgements on whether these activities will damage the integrity of the site by carrying out Appropriate Assessments of forthcoming projects, and Review of Consents processes on existing and outstanding projects themselves. The nature conservation agency adopts a purely advisory role in this process. This shift of responsibilities to the competent authorities is exacerbated by the Regulation’s adherence to the precautionary principle, whereby the authorities must prove activities will not have an impact on the site’s integrity, in contrast to the previous situation where the onus of proof lay with the nature conservation agency to prove damage would be caused.

These procedural changes under the Habitats Directive, alongside the principle of zero loss of conservation interest, are changing the dynamics of nature conservation management and the relationships between the nature conservation agency and competent authorities. However, these changes are only just starting to be noticed as the Review of Consents and Appropriate Assessment processes take place. As noted by EN’s Head of International
Case work, the Habitats Regulations require ‘a change in perceptions and culture’ among competent authorities and potential developers.

The implications of these changing relationships for the use of DIPs are multiple and contradictory. From one perspective, as already noted, the strict definition of sustainable development implicit within the Directive, makes negotiation and trade-off with potential developers less possible, and increases the likelihood of adversarial relationships between conservation and development:

'It's put us in a very difficult position, particularly on the estuaries, where we can see that some of the small development that people want to do is not overall damaging to the SAC. We could actually negotiate under the previous SSSI legislation, we would have negotiated with them to get quid pro quo what they were doing, somewhere else. You can't do that under European legislation. As agents of Europe our hands are tied, which actually puts us more obviously against the developers.' (Local Team officer)

On the other hand however, as EN's role is as an advisor rather than a decision-maker, and competent authorities hold the responsibility for proving there is no impact on favourable condition, the Habitats Directive could actually encourage more proactive and early dialogue between EN and those proposing development, to work together to find a proposal that is compatible with the site’s conservation importance. This is desirable for EN’s long-term legitimacy and the perception of nature conservation in the UK:

'We tend at the moment to fall back on legislation and say 'sorry, we are the organisation that likes to say no'. And I know that our Council and Directors quite rightly, are very exercised about the need to turn that round, and be seen to be the organisation that comes up with these integrated plans. Because the downside of just playing the legislative card is that sooner or later people get hacked off with being frustrated so often by somebody whinging in the corner, and vetoing their proposals, that you end up with the legislation being changed. And certainly there is a perception around at the moment – we've touched several times on ports and estuaries as an example, but the perception is that the UK is implementing the Habitats Directive in a much more stringent way than other European countries. And therefore the whole of UK Inc. business is being placed at a competitive disadvantage with its European neighbours. And therefore please ministers will you go to Europe and get the Habitats Directive relaxed a bit so we can get on with our developments without being hamstrung in quite this inconvenient way by the environmental lobby. (Manager)

However, primarily due to the tight timetable the nature conservation agencies have been working under to get sites designated, a proactive initiation of dialogue about future

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7 Changes in the relationship between owner-occupiers and English Nature are less affected by the Regulations, as they must apply to a competent authority (which may be English Nature within the SSSI) to implement a plan or project
integrative strategic planning between EN and many competent authorities has been absent due to a lack of time:

'The nature of a designation is such that the moderation process which basically reviews how many European sites there are, sort of says "you haven't got enough estuaries, and you, UK, need six more estuaries". And Government says "We want six more recommendations from you, EN, by a year next February" or whatever, and then the whole scientific thing swings into place to select the six estuaries that best meet the criteria... And so then you breathe a sigh of relief, and off the recommendations go to Government, and in due course they push it off to Brussels... But it [EN] doesn't at that point say, "Well OK, we had to do this necessary designation in quite a hurry, but can we now reflect with all the users of the site on what that all means for them, and how we are going to get some sort of integrated plan going, where we can all define what we all want, and we can all programme it into an overall master plan". Instead what tends to happen is you sort of slap the designation on and then you rush off -- the attention and resources switch then to the next problem. And you wait until the container terminal proposal comes up, and immediately you are in this position... you haven't anticipated the container port, or [been involved] at an early enough stage' (EN Manager)

This need for proactive engagement with competent authorities, and EN's support for the voluntary approach, are some of the drivers for EN staff to adopt deliberative and inclusionary approaches for the delivery of the Habitats Directive at the earliest possible stage. This is compounded by the fact that SACs and SPAs tend to be large sites with multiple and complex ownership and patterns of usage, requiring effective methods for negotiating multi-stakeholder solutions to management issues. However, the top-down nature of the designation process encourages a technocratic approach to engaging with stakeholders, as the Directive has already effectively defined their values and interests as secondary to the management of the site, so even within deliberative and inclusionary fora, the balance of power will always lie with the conservation agencies.

6.1.2. The LIFE Project

LIFE-Nature is one third of the European Union’s LIFE® fund. Projects co-financed through LIFE-Nature, must contribute to the implementation of European Community nature protection legislation, notably the ‘Birds’ Directive (79/409/EEC) and the ‘Habitats’ Directive (92/43/EEC). Project outcomes are expected to have a demonstration value,

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8 The acronym LIFE translates as ‘Financial Instrument for the Environment’. The fund was set up in 1992 and is now in its third phase.
enabling guidance to be disseminated to other areas of international conservation importance within the EU.

The 4-year LIFE in UK Rivers Project; ‘Safeguarding Natura 2000 Rivers in the UK’ (LIFE99 NAT/UK/006088) is managed by a partnership of English Nature, Environment Agency, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Countryside Council for Wales and the Scotland & Northern Ireland Forum for Environmental Research. The project has a budget of 2.241.038,88 euros and is co-financed by the project partners and the LIFE-Nature fund. The primary objective is to develop river conservation strategies for 7 rivers in the United Kingdom that have been submitted by the UK as candidate Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC) under the Habitats Directive. These strategies will contribute to delivering Article 6 (1) of the Habitats Directive by establishing a framework for achieving sustainable management of the river SAC, by identifying key issues affecting the SAC features and preparing action plans. The project proposal states that the strategies:

'will trial different mechanisms for the involvement of other bodies, both public and private, in the sustainable management of river SACs. They will also involve the local community, with a view to generating support for river SACs and the actions needed to maintain and improve them.' (EN et al, 1999: LIFE-Nature 99-11).

In addition, the project has the following aims. To:

- Identify conservation measures that meet the ecological requirements of the designated habitat and species;
- Put together cost-effective assessment techniques;
- Develop techniques for addressing key issues;
- Disseminate best practice.

Seven catchments in the UK were selected for the projects, covering a cross section of river types, land uses, socio-economic issues and conservation threats. Five Project Officers were employed for an initial period of 18 months (later extended to 2 years

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9 The initial bid submitted to European LIFE-Nature Fund was ultimately cut in size by approximately 50%. The effect of this was the removal of practical river restoration works from the project.
because of delays caused by the 2001 outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease), to develop and write the strategies¹⁰.

Project Officers were provided very little guidance as to how the stakeholder participation aspect of their role should be interpreted, with the Project Board keen to highlight the experimental nature of LIFE demonstration project. However, this also suggests a lack of institutional understanding amongst the project partners of ‘participation’:

Kate — ‘Were the Project Officers given any sort of guidance at all about partnership processes and community involvement?’

Project Manager — No...we’ve left it very open. Probably too open, I think that was symptomatic of the fact that we didn’t quite know what we meant by stakeholder engagement, and therefore it wasn’t possible to be prescriptive about it. It was just something that we were going to do and the message got out — do what you think is necessary and we will evaluate it afterwards.’ (LIFE Project Manager)

So what were the motivations for writing participation into the project bid? They appeared to be a mix of producing a bid attractive to funders, the realisation that effective delivery of the Habitats Directive on complex sites requires multi-stakeholder processes, and a desire within the conservation agencies and the European Union to gain an understanding of how participation could be applied to the delivery of EU legislation. This question was put to the principal author of the project bid:

Kate - Why did you want to see partnership and community consultation? Why was that put in the project bid? I suppose it is touching on a lot of things we have already talked about.

Bid Author — It is but there is a more immediate reason, because the Habitats Directive requires it to a certain extent

Kate — Was it a requirement to get funding?

Bid Author — Not particularly I don’t think, but it is a general thing for all – yes, they would encourage that for all LIFE projects – public involvement. And for instance it is even more explicitly written into the Water Framework Directive. So now the European Commission are looking for best practice as to how to involve the public in the Water Framework Directive which is going to go much wider than just SAC rivers. So it is a growing thing, and I don’t think that anyone has particularly solved it. It goes back to your question really of do you see a value in involving the local community in the SAC scene rivers. And I think that has yet to

¹⁰ The Rivers Moidart, Kerry and Borgie in Scotland were covered by a single Project Officer because they all contained the same SAC interest feature, were areas of similar land use, and are only short rivers compared to others in the project (ranging from 3.4 – 14km)
be shown. Hopefully your work will show us and the LIFE project will show us possibly whether we’ve gone about it the right way or not.’ (EN Specialist)

Despite the free reign given to the Project Officers, there were critical factors affecting the parameters within which DIPs could be applied to the production of the strategies.

First, under the UK’s institutionalised approaches to deliver the Habitats Directive, many of the decisions to be made relating to activities that affect the Avon’s conservation features, are undertaken through closed processes detached from the conservation strategy process. A decision was made by EN that favourable condition for the cSAC rivers would be defined at a national level, with some limited consultation with local ‘experts’ (i.e. EA). Once defined, favourable condition sets the ecological parameters within which all decisions made about cSAC management must lie. Therefore, even prior to decisions made about the framing of the strategy, the ability for local stakeholders to influence decisions made about cSAC management had already been highly constrained.

Secondly, there were limited funds available for running participatory processes of £5,000. Thus Project Officers had limited funds to run workshops or employ facilitators.

Thirdly, the Project Officers neither had expertise in stakeholder engagement nor were offered training in designing or running participatory processes. Good communication skills were seen as sufficient to run a stakeholder participation strategy:

Kate — were people selected [as Project Officers] who had knowledge or experience of working in that sort of way [stakeholder engagement]?

Project Manager — it was certainly one of the selection criteria – maturity and experience of working with other organisations, not specifically stakeholder engagement.’ (Project Manager)

The fourth factor was the timeframe within which the strategy had to be developed. The Project Officers had 18 months to produce a final strategy document that had been through a more traditional process of public consultation, as well as fulfil the other requirements of their posts (i.e. the development of a monitoring protocol for the cSAC). From the perspective of participatory processes, this represents an extremely limited time

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11 As a point of comparison, the NE Kent mSAC Stakeholder Dialogue process carried out in 1999 cost around £30,000.

12 One Project Officer attended a training course during his contract, arranged independently.
for the Project Officers to build trust, enrol stakeholders and to run a deliberative and inclusionary process.

6.1.3. Introduction to the Study Site - the River Avon

At 205 km, the River Avon includes the largest length of chalk river habitat of any river in Europe. In its headwaters, clay streams are fed by springs from chalk aquifers which then run through Salisbury Plain. The Avon then is joined by the Nadder, Wylye, Bourne and Ebble. The river's southern tributaries run off the acid sands of the New Forest. The Avon and its catchment is an archetypal semi-natural environment, showing clearly the legacy of past management (mills, water meadows, structures and management actions relating to trout fisheries, the effects of channel dredging). The result is an artificial river structure, geomorphology, ecological and genetic diversity, creating an environment that requires continual management to maintain the balance of uses and values that have evolved throughout its history. Of these uses and values, conservation and biodiversity are a fairly recent addition.

The river runs through three counties - Wiltshire, Dorset and Hampshire, and flows through several sizeable urban areas, most notably Salisbury, Ringwood and Christchurch. Beyond the settlements, the dominant land use in the catchment is agriculture. Figure 6.1. shows the boundaries of the cSAC. From a nature conservation perspective the river is highly valued as one of England’s best lowland rivers for wildlife with over 180 species of aquatic plants and a hugely diverse fish fauna. In recognition of this, nearly all the river system was designated as SSSI in 1996. At the same time consultation was carried out for the designation of the Rivers Avon, Bourne, Nadder, Wylye and Dockens Water as the River Avon candidate SAC. The river is designated under the Habitats Directive as a habitat for the following species listed in Annex II: populations of Atlantic Salmon (Salmo salar), Bullhead (Cottus Gobio), Brook lamprey (Lampetra planeri), Sea lamprey (Petromyzon marinus) and in conjunction with adjoining land as habitat for populations of Desmoulin’s whorl snail (Vertigo mouliniana). Under Annex 1 the river is protected for its characteristic ‘submerged or floating formations of Ranunculus and associated Callitricho-Batrachion vegetation’.  

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13 The SAC moderation exercise led to the River Till being included as part of the cSAC. Further extension of the area covered under the designation may occur as knowledge of the ecology of the system improves.
Figure 6.1. Boundaries of The River Avon cSAC
The English Nature team in Wiltshire take the strategic lead over the cSAC and conservation strategy development. The principal threats to the SAC interests include diffuse and point source pollution from agricultural and road run off, aquaculture, and public and domestic sewerage; water abstraction; and river channel modification for water level and recreational fisheries management. Rivers are dynamic systems, both ecologically and geomorphologically, with the nature of habitats and the physical structure continuously changing, and species moving throughout the system. So, despite the linear shape of the area included in the cSAC, impacts at a particular point can have a significant effect throughout the site. An obvious example of this is pollution incidents - both diffuse pollution running off land into the river and direct point-source pollution from aquaculture and sewage works, which can affect the passage of species up and down the river. However, the ecology and management issues although inter-related, do vary along the river as the nature of the river geomorphology changes, and there are issues that can be dealt with independently.

The River Avon cSAC itself is underpinned by five component SSSIs — the River Avon system, the River Till, Jones Mill, Porton Meadow and Lower Woodford Watermeadow SSSIs. Other internationally and nationally designated sites with their own management requirements and interests border the site. Within the catchment, Salisbury Plain is designated as a cSAC and SPA under the Habitats and Birds Directives, the lower Avon Valley (between Bickton & Christchurch) as a Special Protection Area, and the New Forest as an SAC, SPA and scheduled National Park. In addition, there are several small SSSIs within the catchment. (Appendix 3 gives more detail of the cSAC and SSSI features).

The Avon's administration, regulation and management are complex as the river falls within a variety of organisational jurisdictions and a scattered pattern of public, private and institutional ownership. Most farmable land is tenanted out on long or short-term licenses, and fishing rights (including control of the bank) are sold or leased to fishing clubs. Members of the fishing clubs then pay to fish within that particular area of river, thus giving them a claim to have rights as a stakeholder. Management on each estate varies dramatically depending on the personal interests of the landowners and leasees, with varying degrees of emphasis on nature conservation, agriculture, landscape, recreation and fisheries.

As a social and economic resource, water flowing through the Avon contributes to the supply of drinking water in the region, acts as an irrigation system for agriculture and a
drainage system for the waste products from society and agriculture. An effectively managed river and floodplain also provide capacity for flood containment. In addition, the river provides an environment for business ventures such as watercress and fish farming, and for recreational activities such as canoeing. However, the river is probably best known for the salmon and coarse fisheries which it supports, which dominate the management of the Upper Avon particularly. The river forms a focal point for many villages and towns in the catchment, and contributes to the sense of place and attractiveness of the area for residents and visitors.

The management of the cSAC is the concern of organisations with statutory responsibility for ensuring good environmental quality of the river – the Environment Agency (EA), three English Nature teams, three county councils, five district councils, two unitary authorities, three water companies, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD) based on Salisbury Plain. EA and EN have been given a mandate by Government to look after specific aspects of the river – with EA leading on water quality, flows, flood defence, sustainable fisheries, and EN leading on biodiversity conservation and designated sites. As competent authorities, the other organisations must ensure their actions do not have an adverse impact on the site.

There are also professional organisations involved in management of the river and its catchment. These include Wiltshire, Hampshire and Dorset Wildlife Trusts, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), the Farming and Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA, now the Rural Development Service – RDS), and the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). These professional bodies tend to play an enabling and facilitatory role, providing important support, advice and funding to landowners and managers.

Finally, there are those stakeholders who hold no statutory, financial, or professional rights to the river, but hold an interest in it and value it – these are the members of the public – either living in the area, or visitors visiting the area for recreational purposes.

A summary of the different stakeholder interests on the Avon is provided in Table 6.2 below. The contents of this table are based on preliminary discussions with the stakeholder group.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Interests in River</th>
<th>Geographical Area of Interest</th>
<th>Roles / responsibilities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English Nature (EN)</td>
<td>Biodiversity conservation&lt;br&gt;Ensuring SAC (and other designations) reach favourable condition</td>
<td>Offices in Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset</td>
<td>Regulating, advising, enthusing &amp; enabling nature conservation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency (EA)</td>
<td>Keeping river in good ecological quality whilst maintaining its functions as a social and economic resource</td>
<td>Avon catchment. 1 office covering the whole catchment</td>
<td>Competent authority for Habitats Directive. Licensing abstractions, managing water levels and flood defence mechanisms, regulating water quality, managing and promoting sustainable fisheries, promoting water based recreation and navigation. Some responsibilities for nature conservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Companies - Wessex Water (WW), Bournemouth &amp; West Hants Water (BWHW), Thames Water (TW)</td>
<td>Ensuring an efficient and sustainable supply of drinking water and sewerage</td>
<td>Whole catchment (WW &amp; BWHW have the main impact)</td>
<td>Competent authority. Abstraction and discharge of water into system. Funding of environmental projects.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Councils (WCC, HCC, DCC)</td>
<td>Negotiating between social, environmental, economic goals for county, delivering government policy</td>
<td>Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset</td>
<td>Competent authority. Writing Structure Plans that set out future planning developments, responsible for minerals extraction, waste disposal. Also have remits for public rights of way, recreation, landscape, archaeology, biodiversity, community strategies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiltshire Wildlife Trust (WWT)</td>
<td>Promoting and achieving nature conservation</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>The Wildlife Trusts tend to be involved particularly in protected species, BAP, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. They tend to work closely with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>Activities Description</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire Wildlife Trust (HWT)</td>
<td>Promoting and achieving nature conservation — particularly Avon valley</td>
<td>Hampshire — particularly Avon Valley</td>
<td>The Avon Valley &amp; West Hampshire Project provides habitat management advice to farmland owners and rural communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset Wildlife Trust (DWT)</td>
<td>Promoting and achieving nature conservation</td>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>Particularly involved in the protection of wetland habitats and species in Dorset.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)</td>
<td>Promoting and achieving nature conservation (particularly avian). Main interest lies in the Avon valley SPA</td>
<td>SE &amp; SW England regional offices,</td>
<td>RSPB do not have a direct involvement in river management, but are involved in many committees and conservation networks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiltshire Fishery Association (WFA)</td>
<td>Ensuring Upper Avon fisheries interests are represented in debates about river</td>
<td>Upper Avon (upstream of Salisbury)</td>
<td>Co-ordinating fisheries owners, lessees, anglers on Upper Avon. Members play a big part in the day-to-day management of the Upper Avon through weedcutting, fish stocking, removal of predator/competitor species &amp; bank management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon &amp; Stour Rivers Association (ASRA)</td>
<td>Specific concerns include the decline in salmon stocks and the management of problem species such as mink and cormorants</td>
<td>Lower Avon (downstream of Salisbury)</td>
<td>Represent riparian owner interests on the Lower Avon. Owners of river and land in Valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wessex Salmon &amp; Rivers Trust (WSRT)</td>
<td>Conserving and restoring salmon populations</td>
<td>Lower Avon</td>
<td>Act as self-named pressure group to restore salmon populations to the river. Some members manage areas of the river. Troublesome relationship with EA and EN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch Netsmen</td>
<td>Angling — catching salmon for an income</td>
<td>Christchurch Harbour</td>
<td>Set up nets at the mouth of the river for salmon fishing. Now operate a catch and release policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish farms</td>
<td>There are 2 fish farms on river — these are run as a business venture</td>
<td>Lower Avon</td>
<td>Control of small sections of river for fish farming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>maintaining a livelihood and business</td>
<td>Across the catchment</td>
<td>Farming is accused of contributing to diffuse pollution and siltation of the Avon. May participate in agri-environmental schemes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Farmers Union (NFU)</td>
<td>Social and economic welfare of the farming community</td>
<td>Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset</td>
<td>Representing interests of farmers at national and local debates, Providing technical advice to farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming &amp; Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG)</td>
<td>Integrating nature conservation into commercial farming and identifying funding opportunities</td>
<td>Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset</td>
<td>Advising farmers on how to farm more environmentally sensitively – administer the Countryside Stewardship Scheme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farming &amp; Rural Conservation Agency (FRCA) (now Rural Development Service)</td>
<td>Administering Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA) scheme along Avon Valley</td>
<td>Avon valley ESA</td>
<td>Working with farmers to integrate environmentally sensitive management into their farming through the ESA scheme. Involved in many fora about the management of the Avon valley.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Communities</td>
<td>Variable. From discussions I had with people on the Avon, it was clear that local residents value the river as a cultural, historical &amp; aesthetic resource. At the time primary concerns were related to flooding and local developments.</td>
<td>Across the catchment</td>
<td>Variable. Some local community groups exist with an interest in increasing public access to the river or undertaking small-scale restoration works. Many individuals are involved with EN through their responsibility as riparian owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational Interests</td>
<td>Canoeing, walking</td>
<td>Various – canoeing around Christchurch harbour. Long distance Avon path</td>
<td>Tend to have a limited role in the river’s management because canoeing is limited to a very short section at the mouth of the Avon. The path rarely passes very close to the river.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a result of the complexity of ownership and regulation, there are many ongoing initiatives and projects to tackle various environmental issues involving the river directly or indirectly. Some of the key initiatives and their objectives are outlined in Table 6.3 below:

**Table 6.3. Key Governance Initiatives affecting River Avon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initiative</th>
<th>Key Partners</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asset Management Plans</td>
<td>OFWAT, Water Companies, EA, EN</td>
<td>To reduce effects on the river from Water company discharges and abstraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon ESA scheme</td>
<td>FRCA / MAFF (now RDA)</td>
<td>Grants for environmentally sensitive land management of areas of countryside of landscape, wildlife &amp; historic importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP). Drawn up at a county level and for the Avon Valley</td>
<td>EN, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, County Councils, EA</td>
<td>Actions to conserve nationally and locally important habitats and species</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch &amp; Release Scheme</td>
<td>EA, WSRT, ASRA, Mudford netsmen, Tesco</td>
<td>Sponsored catch and release scheme for salmon fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Countryside Stewardship Scheme</td>
<td>MAFF, administered by FWAG</td>
<td>Grants for areas outside ESA to encourage environmentally sensitive land management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Landcare Partnership</td>
<td>EA-led partnership including farming representatives, councils, water companies, fisheries groups, conservation interests</td>
<td>Initiatives to reduce non-point source pollution from agricultural management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Environment Agency Plan (LEAP)</td>
<td>EA</td>
<td>Identifying actions to resolve environmental issues relating to EA’s functions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2. Case Study Methodology

Chapter 3 introduced the case study as a piece of action research, where I played an active role in the design of the conservation strategy process, and subsequently observed the process as it evolved. The remainder of Chapter 6 will provide details of the specific methodology used to analyse the context in which the strategy was prepared and to observe the strategy as it progressed.

Allen (2000), in his review of action research approaches, refers to different phases in an action research project: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The action cycle presented in Figure 6.2 outlines when these different stages took place and shows my involvement in the development of the River Avon cSAC conservation strategy and how my relationship with the strategy process and the project officer evolved.

As part of the strategy planning, my involvement was to carry out stakeholder interviews to gain an understanding of the local context in which the strategy was to be prepared. The ‘acting’ phase represents the stage when the strategy process was negotiated between the local EN team and myself, to translate the findings of my stakeholder interviews into a deliberative process. This process was implemented and evolved under the control of the Project Officer (who held responsibility for the development of the strategy), and following a hand-over period, my role became one of observer of the process. Throughout the strategy there was ongoing reflection and discussion of the process as it progressed. There followed a period of dissemination in which the strategy process and its progress to date was presented to a variety of audiences within English Nature, by myself, the Project Officer and her line manager.
Figure 6.2. Action Research Timeline for the Avon Case Study

TIMELINE

- **March 2000**
- **July 2000 – February 2001**
- **June 2001**
- **July 2001**
- **August 2001 – October 2002**
- **November 2001 – February 2002**
- **June, August 2002**
- **September – October 2002**
- **December 2002**
- **April 2003**

**Stages in the Action Research Project Cycle**

1. **Planning**
   - Stakeholder & Situation Analysis Reports
   - Negotiating research objectives and my role
   - Pre-strategy stakeholder interviews
   - Negotiating strategy process
   - Observation, Reflection / Learning
2. **Acting**
   - Interviews, EN headquarters
   - Interviews with PO & line manager
   - Sharing Lessons with EN
3. **Observing**
4. **Reflecting / learning**
5. **Disseminating**

**Outputs**

**Role of the Researcher**

**Role of Project Officer / EN**

**Strategy released**

**Life Rivers Project Report to EU**
6.2.1. The Interviews – Conducting a Stakeholder Analysis

The aim of this stage in the case study was to gain an understanding of the existing structures, networks, processes and interests involved in the governance of the Avon prior to the strategy being prepared. This understanding was gathered through an analysis of the Avon system from the perspective of stakeholders with an interest and involvement in its management. This is referred to as a Stakeholder Analysis.

Stakeholder Analysis is defined by Grimble and Wellard as ‘an approach for understanding a system, and changes in it, by identifying key actors or stakeholders and assessing their respective interests in that system’ (Grimble & Wellard, 1997: 173). It has evolved independently in different fields including management, economics, development and natural resource management. The approach is used to identify and capture the different interests of groups who may influence or be affected by a decision or project, to understand complex social systems, and ensure an equitable distribution of costs and benefits. (See Grimble & Wellard, 1997 for more on the origins of stakeholder analysis). The popularity of this approach has risen as businesses and organisations have broadened their definition of who their stakeholders are, and as policies and projects have either failed to meet their objectives due to the non-co-operation or opposition among stakeholders, or success has been achieved at the expense of certain stakeholder groups (Grimble & Wellard, 1997:185). Stakeholder Analysis is also used as a process design tool whereby a participatory approach is presupposed and the analysis used to decide where and how to engage stakeholders in the process. Such a model has been developed by the Overseas Development Agency (now DFID) in conjunction with the Centre for Development Studies, (ODA, 1995), and was applied as a process design tool in this study. This method and its results are presented in Chapter 8.

The methods used during this initial ‘planning’ stage, included informal discussions and semi-structured interviews. The empirical research occurred during the six-month period before the Project Officer was in place. An initial list of potential interviewees was selected through a process of ‘snowballing’, using contacts identified by English Nature staff as a starting point. Between July and September 2000 a total of three weeks was spent travelling around the catchment carrying out preliminary, informal discussions with identified ‘key players’ and reviewing relevant background documents. In this way I was able to familiarise myself with the main issues affecting the river, and the initiatives and outreach structures
that have been set up to tackle them. This preparatory process also allowed me to develop
a list for semi-structured interviews. The main data collection phase occurred between
November 2000 and February 2001, when taped interviews were carried out with
representatives of competent authorities, organisations, associations and individuals who
have an involvement and interest in the River Avon. Interviews were semi-structured
covering a relatively open-ended set of thematic topics. This flexibility was important
because of the range of knowledges, experiences, and involvement in the river's
governance held by the stakeholders. The interviews focused on the following topics:

- What is important about the river to them
- What needs doing to improve the river
- Interests and involvement in the river's management – both directly and indirectly
- Extent of influence over the river in terms of management and the decisions made
  about it
- Experiences of working with other stakeholders
- Relationships with other organisations (EA and EN particularly)
- Attitudes to SAC and regulation
- Thoughts about the forthcoming river conservation strategy (this was discussed in
  particular detail with the English Nature staff member who held the strategic
  responsibility for the Avon as her ideas for the strategy were likely to be particularly
  influential due to her role as line manager for the Project Officer).

A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix 4

Responses from stakeholders approached for interview were mixed and their willingness to
participate in the research appeared to depend on their current relationship with EN,
interest in river conservation issues, and personal agendas. The response of stakeholders
and implications for the subsequent analysis and process design are discussed below:

Competent authorities (EA, Water Companies, County and District Councils, MoD).

Interviewee recruitment was frequently difficult with these groups, and when individuals
did agree to meet, were often unable to spare much time. The individuals who showed
most interest in my work tended to be those who were sympathetic to my role as a
researcher, or for one reason or other had political motivations to improve their
relationship with EN and involvement in river conservation issues. Identifying the most appropriate individual to approach for interview was a particular problem within councils and I frequently failed to identify anyone who felt they could help me. This explains why the majority of discussions with council staff remained informal unrecorded interviews. This was partially because dealing with English Nature and other interest groups about river conservation was only a small part of any individual’s professional responsibilities within local councils, and there was rarely one individual with an overarching understanding or remit for riverine issues.

Local stakeholders with a major involvement and interest in river conservation issues (e.g. Fishery Associations)

Individuals of certain stakeholder groups were keen to participate as they saw me and my research as a independent / anonymous channel through which they could provide feedback to EN about river issues and how they conduct their relationships. I frequently found myself inundated with names and numbers of people who I was told ‘I must interview’ particularly from the fishery associations.

Local stakeholders with a minor interest and involvement in river conservation issues (e.g. agricultural, recreational (other than angling), and community interests).

Within this group, individuals had very little involvement in the river’s management or decision-making process, or with English Nature. Although interested and friendly, these individuals often felt they lacked sufficient knowledge and experience to contribute through an interview, although their positions as stakeholders were noted for the stakeholder analysis process.

Implications of interviewee recruitment for subsequent analysis and strategy design.

Stakeholders such as the farming community, local communities, walkers and visitors to the area are relatively ‘unorganised’. Due to the time constraints of the research it was not possible to interview a broad enough spectrum of such stakeholders to gain anything like a ‘representative’ view of their interests. Instead an indication of issues relating to farming, local communities, walkers was gained indirectly through interviews with organisations.
representing farming (NFU, FWAG, FRCA), organisations working with or representing local community interests (Wiltshire Wildlife Trust's Salisbury Project Officer, Town Council, a local community representative on the Salisbury Biodiversity Agenda 21 group). The Rights of Way officer in Salisbury and canoeing interests were contacted informally.

The table below shows who contributed to the research, indicates when meetings occurred and whether discussions were recorded:

**Table 6.4. Discussions and Interviews with River Avon Stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation / Interest</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Geographic Area of Interest</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Taped</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competent Authorities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Nature</td>
<td>Deputy Team Manager</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>25/07/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27/02/01</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Nature</td>
<td>Conservation Officer</td>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>25/07/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28/11/01</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Nature</td>
<td>PT Conservation Officer</td>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>12/09/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>29/11/01</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>LEAP officer, Landcare Project Officer, Conservation</td>
<td>Avon catchment</td>
<td>27/07/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leader - Fisheries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Avon catchment</td>
<td>27/02/01</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>Team Leader - Flood defence operations and enforcement</td>
<td>Avon catchment</td>
<td>04/12/00</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wessex Water</td>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>05/12/00</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bournemouth and West Hants Water</td>
<td>Technical Director</td>
<td>Bournemouth &amp; Hampshire</td>
<td>19/12/00</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>County Councils</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>Head of Strategic Planning, County Forester, Minerals and waste, planner;</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>06/09/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>Water In Hampshire Project officer.</td>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>19/02/01</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ecologist, Rights of Way officer, Archaeologist</td>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>Phone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>Discussions with Head of Countryside Policy, County Ecologist</td>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>11/09/00</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Councils</td>
<td>Conservation Interests</td>
<td>Fishing Interests</td>
<td>Landowning Interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kennet</td>
<td>Landscape &amp; Countryside Officer</td>
<td>Kennet</td>
<td>05/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Wilts</td>
<td>Planning</td>
<td>West Wilts</td>
<td>02/03/01 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salisbury</td>
<td>Planning and community officers</td>
<td>Salisbury</td>
<td>13/09/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>(Env. Planning)</td>
<td>Christchurch</td>
<td>14/09/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilts Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>Head of Conservation, Otters &amp; Rivers Project Officer</td>
<td>Wiltshire</td>
<td>28/07/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salisbury Wildlife Project Officer</td>
<td>Salisbury</td>
<td>06/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hants Wildlife Trusts</td>
<td>Avon Valley &amp; West Hampshire Project Officer,</td>
<td>Hampshire</td>
<td>20/02/01 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset WT -</td>
<td>Rivers and Wetlands Project Officer</td>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>11/09/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hampshire Ornithologists Club</td>
<td>Conservation Officer</td>
<td>South East England</td>
<td>07/03/01 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSPB -</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiltshire Fisheries Association</td>
<td>Chairman &amp; Secretary</td>
<td>Upper Avon</td>
<td>10/11/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Piscatorial Society representative (now Chair of the WFA)</td>
<td>2.5 mile of River Avon &amp; 5.5 miles of Wylye</td>
<td>12/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilton Fly Fishing Club representative</td>
<td>6 miles of Wylye</td>
<td>13/02/01 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salisbury &amp; District Anglers representative</td>
<td>Leasees of fishing rights around Salisbury</td>
<td>07/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hon. Secretary, principal contact with EN</td>
<td></td>
<td>20/02/01 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Salmon &amp; Trout Association / Services Dry Fly Fishing Association / Wiltshire Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>Upper Avon</td>
<td>04/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>WSRT Chairman</td>
<td>Lower Avon</td>
<td>06/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Independent Chair EA Regional Fisheries, Ecology, Recreation Advisory Group (RFERAC)</td>
<td>Avon catchment</td>
<td>12/09/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ASRA Chairman</td>
<td>Lower Avon</td>
<td>28/07/00 NO</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>01/12/00 YES</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to these interviews, I observed several meetings held during the research period in order to enhance my understanding of progress on particular initiatives relating to the Avon’s management and enhance my understanding of Avon issues. These are presented in Table 6.5:
Table 6.5 Meetings observed during fieldwork period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Purpose of Meeting</th>
<th>Who Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26 July 2000</td>
<td>River Avon Introduction Day to introduce new EA and EN staff to the Avon and its issues</td>
<td>EN and EA staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 September 2000</td>
<td>WLMP meeting</td>
<td>EA, EN, FRCA, Hydrology consultants, RSPB,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 September 2000</td>
<td>Outreach meeting between EN and local residents around proposed development site</td>
<td>EN, local residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 October 2000</td>
<td>WLMP meeting</td>
<td>EA, EN, FRCA, Hydrology consultants, RSPB,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 December 2000</td>
<td>AVLG meeting</td>
<td>EN, EA, WWT, HWT, DWT, RSPB, FRCA, WFA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 February 2000</td>
<td>Salisbury Agenda 21 Biodiversity Group</td>
<td>SDC, local community reps., RSPB, WWT, EA,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.2. Analysing the Interviews for a Situation Analysis

All taped interviews were transcribed and analysed between March and June 2000. This analysis focused on building up a picture of the situation in which the strategy was to take place. Previous research on DIPs has indicated the major influence the situation in which the process is to be embedded can have on its effectiveness (Barr et al., 1996; Borriini-Feyerband, 1999; Clark et al., 2001; Coenen et al., 1998). A situation analysis was seen as a way of presenting information learnt through the interviews about the river’s current and previous governance that would be relevant to designing a process to develop a strategy. From a review of guidance literature on designing participation processes, a series of codes were devised and used to focus the interview analysis. These codes are presented in Table 6.6 below.
Table 6.6. Codes used for Situation Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Previous events and experiences of stakeholders with each other and English Nature which may affect relationships and willingness to participate (experiences with other organisations at a national and local level noted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>How stakeholders organise themselves to define and defend their interests, outreach mechanisms by agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Formal and informal networks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategies by stakeholders to further their interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic</td>
<td>The extent to which the actions and perceptions of stakeholders were perceived to be limited by wider economic constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical /</td>
<td>Aspects of the Avon and its conservation interests that affect the relevance of different participatory processes – e.g. scale of site and scale of issues, ecology of the conservation features and the river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>The relationship between the cause and effect of a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>Past management of the river - what is seen as 'natural' or 'traditional' management; who has had control and influence over the river</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Land use patterns, administration, distribution of rights and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Barr et al., (1996); Borrini-Feyeraband et al., (1999)

6.2.3. Analysing the Strategy’s Institutional and Project Context

Seven of the eleven interviews conducted as part of the analysis of EN’s organisational culture (see Section 3.3.2) were held with English Nature staff directly involved with the LIFE Project, river conservation and implementation of the Habitats Directive. These interviews provided an analysis of the Avon case study from an institutional and project management perspective. Through these interviews I was able to gain an understanding of the extent to which objectives and parameters for the strategy were imposed through the LIFE project and how the strategy process fitted into existing institutional procedures for the delivery of the Habitats Directive. In addition, these interviews provided an insight into the attitudes of those involved in the management of the LIFE Project and their expectations of the strategy processes.

The details of who was interviewed and their position within the organisation were provided in Table 3.3. These interviews included the LIFE Project Manager, and the Senior
Freshwater Officer within EN. Both of these individuals were involved in recruiting the Project Officers, and acted as a source of advice to them through the strategy process. The Senior Freshwater Officer was responsible for writing the LIFE-bid.

6.3. Process design, observation and reflection

6.3.1. Devising a process for the strategy

A critical time in the strategy and research process was that of disseminating my findings back to English Nature and the newly appointed Project Officer. Three reports were produced for English Nature in June 2000:

• A descriptive account of the interests and influences of those stakeholders interviewed in relation to the river SAC and the potential strategy
• A descriptive account of the governance and other contextual factors relevant to the strategy, including attitudes towards English Nature
• A summary report linking the stakeholder analysis to a proposed approach for developing the strategy, drawing attention to principles of best practice and areas of possible contention, as well as a suggested DIP.

These reports formed the basis of discussions held between the Project Officer, her Wiltshire EN line manager and myself on developing an approach for the strategy held on 15 June 2001\(^4\). This meeting was the moment from which my role began to change from action researcher / process advisor to process observer.

6.3.2. Stepping back – observing the process.

Distancing myself from the strategy by becoming less involved in the detailed issues of implementation was a gradual process that took place over a number of months. I continued to maintain my involvement as an occasional point of contact and advice for the Project Officer on specific aspects of participation. It was agreed that I would attend and

\(^4\) This was not the only time when process design issues were discussed - there was continual reflection and evolution of the process throughout its lifecycle, which I was able to observe and discuss with the Project Officer.
observe a selection of working group and topic group meetings about the Avon. Maintaining links with the strategy enabled me to observe how issues relating to stakeholder involvement were tackled as they arose, and how the process evolved under the steer of the Project Officer. Because the majority of people present at these meetings knew me, my presence was not felt to be an issue. I also adopted a co-ordinating role for contracts where two postgraduate students from UCL took on the role as facilitators for two working group meetings.

In this stage of the research my role was largely reflective, considering how the strategy process had evolved and how different factors had influenced the process in expected and unexpected ways. This period included a great deal of critical self-reflection, about my understanding of DIPs, and the influence I had had over the strategy process. One consequence for the thesis is that as a result of my close links to the project, it would be wrong to construct my reflections on the strategy process as anything other than observations, as I lacked the critical independence needed for evaluation (Mosse, 1998).

Observations made during these meetings were noted and typed up after the meeting. Tape recordings were also made, but it was agreed with participants that these were for reference only and comments made by individuals would not appear in the thesis. This quite deliberately limited form of data collection prevented me from carrying out anything like a discourse-based analysis of the process.

6.3.3. Reflecting on the Process with the Project Officer and Line Manager

As the process evolved I was able to hold some open and enlightening discussions with the Project Officer and her line manager, helping them to reflect on the process at its various stages. These were critical discussions, partly helping me to understand the process through their eyes, and also as a means of learning about process developments occurring outside of the formal meetings. As with other observational data, these discussions were written

15 Jason Chilvers and Sam Gardner are PhD students in the Geography Department at UCL with experience of facilitating stakeholder workshops. They facilitated two stages of the Stakeholder Decision Analysis (SDA) process — developing criteria, and ranking issues against criteria. My role in this was simply to organise the contracts, and act as a point of contact between UCL and EN.

16 Through the additional work carried out by the Project Officer co-ordinating meetings and collating existing information about issues tackled through the strategy it became apparent that the
up after the event and my learning from them contributed to the interpretation of the strategy process presented in Chapter 9. However, I had to retain an awareness of the subjectivity of their attitudes towards the strategy.

This period of reflection culminated in taped, semi-structured interviews being held with the Project Officer and the EN conservation officer individually, to capture their feelings and thoughts more formally, and reflect on their experiences of the strategy process as it drew to a close. These interviews were held in June and August 2002. The ongoing reflection and learning taking place through discussions between the three of us, led to a period of joint dissemination of lessons learnt from the Avon case study, with joint presentations to English Nature’s Socio-Economic Advisory Group meeting in September 2002, and the LIFE Rivers Project Board meeting in October 2002.

6.3.4. Contextualising the Findings of the Avon.

The Avon was one of seven sites where conservation strategies were developed under the LIFE Project. Discussions with other Project Officers on the telephone and at the three LIFE Rivers Project Meetings that I attended (see Table 6.7) provided an understanding of the range of approaches that were used to develop strategies in very different environmental and political environments. The understanding gained through these discussions helped to develop my ideas about the factors which influence the design of a process of stakeholder engagement.

Table 6.7. Attendance at LIFE Project Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Meeting</th>
<th>Relevance to Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2001</td>
<td>Meeting in Peterborough with LIFE Project Manager and Project Officers</td>
<td>Opportunity to discuss stakeholder issues arising in each of the strategy locations and ideas about process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4 September 2001</td>
<td>LIFE in UK Rivers Workshop, Penrith.</td>
<td>Informal discussions with Project Officers about their progress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 October 2002</td>
<td>LIFE Rivers Project Board Meeting, Doncaster</td>
<td>Presentations from each Project Officer about the process used to develop their strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strategy process was progressing through informal discussions and meetings as well as the formal meetings I attended.
6.3.5. Reflections on the Case Study Methodology.

As this research adopted an action research approach, I was aware of potential influences that my close working relationship with English Nature may have had on the results obtained. For example, many interviewees saw my research as a potentially useful communication mechanism with English Nature to declare their interests and thoughts on the approach EN has been taking on the river and the forthcoming river conservation strategy. In addition, staff from the EN Wiltshire team saw my research as an opportunity to show others they were willing to listen and learn from them about the approach they were taking to working with their stakeholders.

The process design stage was a particularly complex one for me as a researcher because of the limited ability I had to influence the structure and parameters within which the process would sit, and because of my limited previous experience of process design. Although based on an analysis of interviews and working within the parameters laid down by English Nature, my personal beliefs were obviously influential over the structure and processes that I recommended. However, it was also important that the Project Officer felt she was able to influence the process design according to her own interests and the expectations she had of her job for the next two years. The direct link between my research and the strategy process also had implications for my position as a researcher in the field. My own beliefs, the fact that I was seen as a source of advice for the local English Nature team about possible participation techniques, must be acknowledged as an influence over the research findings.

Introducing Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

The following three chapters will discuss the Avon case in more detail. Chapter 7 presents a situational analysis of the Avon, based on analysis of the stakeholder interviews. The structures and processes of governance of the Avon are discussed, and ideas about how the strategy should progress based on this analysis are presented. Chapter 8 outlines how a process to engage stakeholders in the strategy was developed, drawing on my understanding of the local and institutional contexts in which the strategy was embedded, and my understanding of the principles of deliberation and inclusion. Chapter 9 goes on to reflect on the strategy as it evolved under the management of the Project Officer.
Chapter 7

Governance of the Avon: A Local Perspective

Introduction

The underlying rationale for any analysis of Fitness for Purpose is the belief that a DIP should be designed in a way that takes into consideration the local social, political and cultural dynamics underlying stakeholder relationships and the current governance system. The assumption is that the process through which decisions are made becomes as significant as the decisions themselves in tackling governance problems.

Chapter 7 presents an analysis of the governance dynamics of the Avon catchment as understood through local stakeholder interviews. The Avon is a classic example of a multi-stakeholder, multi-issue governance situation, with its complex distribution of ownership and management responsibilities. In addition, the river and its catchment are the focus of multiple societal uses and values, including environmental, economic, social and cultural capital.

The analysis focuses on how the process of governing the Avon is divided between stakeholders, how decisions are made, whose values and knowledges are involved in these decisions, and an understanding of stakeholder perceptions and aspirations for the governance of the system. With this thick, descriptive knowledge, a picture is presented of how the cSAC strategy fits into existing governance initiatives, and how a DIP could help transform the governance of the Avon in ways suitable to local aspirations.
7.1. A Governance System based on Multiple Values and Knowledges

7.1.1. Integrating Values

Rivers play an important role in the functioning of a sustainable environment, economy and society. As outlined in Chapter 6, the Avon is a highly valued river system in terms of its contribution to the local economy and society, as a setting for recreational activities, as well as its intrinsic value as a focal part of the cultural landscape and contribution to biodiversity protection. Many of these values are brought together and traded off in day-to-day decisions, for example by estate managers, who must ensure that the estate is economically viable through the income gained from angling, agriculture and recreation, as well as being managed in compliance with environmental regulations.

The environmental quality of the river plays an important role in sustaining the complex medley of values and interests held by stakeholders. As managers of the river for centuries, riparian owners, anglers and keepers of the fisheries have developed a strong sense of ownership and pride in the river and its ecology. Many (but not all) of the interests involved in the river, have a vested economic interest in maintaining the river in reasonable environmental condition. Both water companies and managers of fisheries acknowledge that a healthy aquatic environment reduces their need to invest resources into river management or water treatment to acquire the products they need. For example, the poorer the quality of the aquatic environment, the lower survival rates of fish, and the greater the level of resource-intensive activities, such as fish stocking or gravel cleaning is required. This position is underpinned by a perception amongst these stakeholders that nature conservation is, on the whole, compatible with the interests of fishery and agricultural management in the floodplain. As a result, many anglers, fishery owners and landowners are sympathetic to the conservation cause, and are willing to be involved in governance initiatives that they believe will improve the overall environmental quality of the river:

'The landowners, even way back in the early '80s, there was never any real hostility [to the objectives of conservation organisations]. They all knew that they had something really special and they were proud of it... And whilst there was deep scepticism, particularly among some of the more commercially minded estates, there was never any real hostility or fundamental disagreement in what we were trying to achieve. Because it is more or less along the same lines as they want
to achieve in their farming business, it is the only way you can really work the Avon' (Conservation NGO).

'Most fishermen would regard themselves as conservationists, and we've always argued that if we get the river to a high standard in terms of habitat and food supply and everything else for the trout, it'll be right for everything else.' (Fishery Association member)

As a semi-natural environment, the river requires continual management to maintain its conservation interest. The current in-channel management regime largely relies on actions of the owners and occupiers, particularly the financial inputs generated through fishing rights to fund management activities:

'The environment is being looked after by fishermen, you know with their money. It costs hundreds of pounds for me and all the other fishermen ... to be able to go and fish, and all that money is put into a pot to look after the environment.' (Fishery Association member)

However, disagreements do occur, predominantly it seems in cases where there is no immediate overlap between the interests of stakeholders and favourable condition of the river, or when there is dispute over where the balance should be drawn between short-term economic benefit and longer-term environmental improvement. Farmers working high in the catchment are examples of stakeholders whose actions may have a negative impact on the river's environmental quality through diffuse pollution, but the river is only of marginal interest or importance to them, so there is limited incentive to change their behaviour. Another example of stakeholders who have only a limited interest in protecting the river's environmental quality are the fish and watercress farmers who farm small sections of the river and predominantly use the river as a structure for their activities, rather than as a habitat. The management approaches of these stakeholders are influenced through regulation by the conservation agencies. There is little incentive for them to operate in a way that takes into consideration the interests of other stakeholders.

Atlantic salmon is one example of a riverine feature that overlaps directly with the interests of multiple stakeholders and is valued in a multitude of different ways. Stakeholders share the common goal of wanting to see salmon stocks improved in the Avon for a range of

---

1 The Landcare scheme was set up by EA to provide advice and to demonstrate best practice for farmers predominantly in the catchment around the Upper Avon, identifying how they can reduce loss of topsoil and nutrients from their land, thus improving the quality of their land, whilst reducing diffuse riverine pollution.
economic, recreational, conservation and statutory motives. However, conflict exists
between fishery stakeholders and the conservation agencies over what constitutes relevant
action. Conservationists believe little can be done within the river system to restore the
stocks in a sustainable way:

‘Whatever enhancements we do in the river environment, is probably
insignificant in terms of the whole lifecycle. What we’ve got to try and do is get
the river in the best condition possible’ (EA Specialist)

Many stakeholders owning or managing areas of the lower Avon feel frustrated by the
perceived lack of action on the part of the statutory agencies, motivated by the loss of
income from the very profitable salmon fisheries:

‘At its peak the salmon fishery was worth a hell of a lot of money, and if the
fishery was performing as it did in the early to mid ‘80s it would still be earning
those people a hell of a lot of money. And it isn’t. And some of them resent that
and will do anything to reverse the decline. So economics, finance is a big factor
in the salmon fishery.’ (EA Specialist)

The fishing groups desire a more immediate solution to the problem involving artificial
rearing of salmon fry, although this solution is unsupported and, following trials, refused
consent by the EA. This has led to conflict between the salmon associations and the EA.

Tensions are also evident in relation to opinions on what are the ideal management
practices for this semi-natural environment. Recent conservation designations have raised
speculation amongst fisheries interests, that the conservation agencies will try to reduce
management levels to a more ‘natural’ system, and this is seen as a threat to the continued
existence of fisheries on the river:

‘So it’s all got to make economic sense and the fisheries are the people who put a
lot of money and effort into it all the time, they are there every day, year after
year. This is where I think EN need to be cautious, if they go down a route which
precludes fisheries from operating in a sensible economic fashion, then there will
be no-one to have any inputs in a routine way.’ (Fishery Association Member)

---

2 Some trout fisheries practise fairly intensive riverbed, bank and channel management, including
fish stocking and the removal of natural competitor and predator species, creating a fairly artificial
system managed to maximise trout density. ‘Wild trout fishing’ creates more natural environmental
conditions, and although fewer trout are present, anglers tend to pay higher rates to fish.
Ultimately, however, despite these underlying conflicts and suspicions, there is a general feeling amongst all stakeholders that the only way to manage the river is through a system that sustains the social, economic and environmental values of the river and its floodplain:

‘People live and work on the river valleys, they make their living from the land and the rivers and the eel fishing etc., renting out fishing, tourism is an important part of it. The whole ethos of these river valleys have developed over many years.’ (Fishery Association Member)

‘And we have to accept that as far as the fish population is concerned, artificial management of fisheries, particularly in the trout streams, has been going on for decades if not centuries, and the river was notified with that in place. But I think in the very long-term what we’d like to do is promote and gradually encourage a more wild fishing type mentality.’ (EN Conservation Officer)

7.1.2. Knowledge Resources

Unsurprisingly, considering the complex division of responsibilities for the management of the Avon, knowledge and understanding of the ecological functioning of the river is widely distributed. The Environment Agency holds much of the expert knowledge about the river’s management, with its multiple functions and years of experience as the NRA in regulating, managing and studying the Avon on a day-to-day basis. The local English Nature teams had minimal involvement in the Avon system until the river was designated in 1996. EN is seen as a relative newcomer to the system, particularly in terms of local knowledge of the ecological functioning of the Avon:

‘I don’t think at the moment any riparian owner or fishery manager would look to English Nature as being an authoritative voice on management.’ (Fishery Association member)

Indeed, EN acknowledges that they need the knowledge and expertise of these stakeholders for the effective management of the Avon:

‘We have to remind ourselves very sharply I think that the river is - was notified 5 years ago, but it’s been managed for 50, 100, 150 years, well 500 years as a highly artificial system, and we’re a tiny, tiny faction in its timespan, and we need to be careful about respecting that there are lots of people out there who know an awful lot more than us about the river, and there are people who’ve been managing for what they think is for the best for a long, long time.’ (EN Conservation Officer)
However, it is inaccurate to say that EN as an organisation lacks knowledge and understanding of the Avon system. Specialists in chalk river management are based in the Peterborough office, and were instrumental in providing advice to local teams, particularly in setting the conservation objectives and favourable condition tables to guide competent authorities over what ecological conditions are required for favourable condition.

Other conservation organisations collect ecological knowledge about the river through surveys, particularly the Wildlife Trusts and RSPB. However, the local fishery managers, who are out on the rivers nearly every day, hold much of the local understanding of the day-to-day dynamics of the Avon. This experiential and often quasi-scientific knowledge is particularly important to the conservation agencies, and much time has been invested by EN and EA in incorporating this knowledge into management decisions.

Those involved in the governance of the Avon acknowledge that equally important to resolving environmental management problems is drawing on social, political and economic knowledges and understandings of the system. This knowledge is held among the farmers, landowners and fishery managers, and those who work with these stakeholders on a day to day basis (including the FRCA, FWAG, NFU, and local wildlife trusts).

7.2. Structures and Processes of Governance on the Avon.

7.2.1. Mechanisms of Stakeholder Influence and Involvement

Stakeholders can influence the state of the river directly through management and use of the river in a way that affects the conservation interest, and/or indirectly by influencing the actions taken by others, through formal, informal, overt and covert mechanisms. Table 7.1. summarises these roles, and whilst acknowledging that many stakeholders are influential through both routes, indicates into which main group stakeholders fall:

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3 In fact, the Wildlife Trusts run a local wildlife Watch system where volunteers monitor areas of the river particularly for otters and water voles.
Table 7.1. Direct and Indirect Influences over the River Avon

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Management Influence</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Water Companies, anglers, river keepers, riparian owners, estate managers, fish farms, farmers, canoeists, local community groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>EN, EA, Wildlife Trusts, RSPB, WFA, ASRA, WSRT, NFU, FWAG, FRCA, UK Government Departments (DEFRA, DTLR), EU Government, General Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These stakeholders tend to interact with each other through four mechanisms – statutory processes, shared decision-making processes, discussion fora, and informal liaison. Table 7.2. outlines these mechanisms, with examples of their use on the Avon:
### Table 7.2. Mechanisms of Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mechanism of Involvement</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Examples of Mechanism on the Avon linking EN and other stakeholders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statutory Processes</td>
<td>Statutory procedures such as Environmental Impact Assessments &amp; formal procedures under the Habitats Directive and SSSI legislation. Includes compulsory written consultation exercises.</td>
<td>These processes are a minimum involvement for those whose activities may have an impact on the river’s conservation features such as bank management, fish stocking and planning decisions. Relationships between EN, County and District Councils and Water Companies tend to be dominated by these processes, as well as some owner-occupiers e.g. fish farmers and riparian owners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion Fora</td>
<td>Permanent networks set up to share information between different stakeholder groups. Some of these groups also hold decision-making powers.</td>
<td>Avon Valley Liaison Group (predominantly conservation interests) Fisheries Forum (fisheries interests) Salmon Liaison Group (salmon interests) Farmer discussion groups (EA, EN, tenant farmers, riparian owners, FRCA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Liaison</td>
<td>phone calls, site visits, one-off initiatives. These help to share information and build an understanding between stakeholder groups.</td>
<td>It is not possible to measure these transient and diffuse networks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most stakeholders engage with each other through more than one of these mechanisms. However, decisions about much of the Avon’s governance are dominated by the need to take account of statutory procedures for environmental protection, such as assessment processes under the SSSI and SAC designations, and drinking water and effluent standards. Any changes to the management or proposed activities which may affect the Avon require assessment processes and consent from statutory agencies, and makes the process fairly long and bureaucratic. These standards affect many of the management activities carried out by owners, managers and users of the river, and frame much of the dialogue within partnerships, fora and informal liaison.
Figure 7.1: Map showing key fora relating to management of the River Avon

**AGRICULTURAL INTERESTS**
- Tenant Farmers in Upper Avon
- Tenant Farmers in Valley
- NFU
- BIAC
- Game Conservancy Trust
- MAFF (FRCA)
- FWAG
- Hampshire Ornithologists Club

**LANDOWNING / COMMUNITY INTERESTS**
- CLA
- MOD - Defence Estates
- Wessex Water
- Town / Parish Councils
- Local community groups
- Other estate owners

**WATER RESOURCES**
- Landcare PO
- Flood Defence
- Water Quality
- Water Resources

**CONSERVATION INTERESTS**
- EA
- Statutory Agencies
- Landcare Partnership
- Avon Valley Liaison Group
- Salmon Liaison Group
- Water Level Management Plan

**FISHERIES INTERESTS**
- Fisheries Forum
- Farmer Discussion Groups
- Fish farmers
- Christchurch Anglers
- Christchurch Netsmen
- Christchurch BC
- New Forest DC
- Kennet DC
- West Wilts DC
- Other estate owners
7.2.2. Stakeholder Networks

Figure 7.1. is a schematic map illustrating the dominant linkages between stakeholders on the Avon. It presents linkages between stakeholders based on involvement in decision-making arenas and discussion fora. It focuses only on the networks linked to the management of the river and does not include wider environmental governance networks.

In terms of the fora and arenas, four types of connection between stakeholders are identified. The first type represents connections between individuals with similar interests. The best example of this is the Wiltshire Fishery Association. WFA represents practically all fishing interests above Salisbury, enabling the association to co-ordinate local knowledge and understanding of fisheries management, to provide a coherent voice in consultations, and to provide a single channel of communication to and from the statutory and conservation agencies to the majority of the riparian owners, river keepers and anglers in the area. Members tend to specialise on certain aspects of river management enabling them to act on behalf of WFA in policy debates, such as discussions with DEFRA over piscivorous birds, liaison with EN over nature conservation, and keeping up to date with debates on water abstraction.

The second type of connection is between individuals and/or groups with different interests based in a single locality. These connections are poorly developed on the Avon. Little has been done to co-ordinate the activities of owners and managers of the river along any one stretch of river. Interviewees acknowledged this as an inadequacy in the current governance system, because individuals are often unaware of the potential or actual effects of their activities on others up and downstream. Farmer discussion groups have recently been set up to start a dialogue between the different actors.

The third type of connections occurs between local interests and the statutory agencies. These connections dominate the fora on the Avon, and are used by the EA, and utilised by EN, to raise understanding of the objectives and responsibilities of the statutory agencies. Some fora also appear to be part of a strategy of stakeholder ‘containment’, where the EA invites potentially adversarial stakeholders and individuals to sit on Agency committees with the aim of ensuring that dialogue is maintained with these key groups. The Fisheries

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4 This is particularly relevant in relation to activities like the operation of hatches for water level management in the Valley, where one individual’s actions can flood areas up-stream.
Forum and Salmon Liaison Group are examples of fora set up to appease stakeholder groups following conflict – particularly the Avon and Stour Rivers Association (ASRA) and the Wessex Salmon and Rivers Trust (WSRT):

'It was apparent to me that part of the reason that groups formed in the first place was because there was not a good relationship between the NRA and the salmon fishing interests on the Avon. There wasn't enough exchange of information, exchange of ideas, communication in general, and that's why that group came into being. Since then we've put more effort into communicating with those interests and that's why we have this liaison group [Salmon Liaison group] that is single species and single river focused to keep them informed as to the state of the stock, inform them what the Agency's doing and why.' (EA)

The fourth and final type of connection is found between statutory and professional organisations with a variety of responsibilities and functions. Groups like the Avon Valley Liaison Group (AVLG) have been successful in bringing together the knowledge and ideas of a broad range of organisations with an interest in the conservation of the river and valley. As one stakeholder stated:

'Well it's hard to say exactly what the AVLG is, but it sort of discusses at a strategic level what is happening on the river if you like, to ensure that statutory, NGO's and other organisations are all singing from the same hymn book.' (Conservation NGO)

7.2.3. Key Players in River Governance.

From its position at the centre of the stakeholder maps, it is clear that the EA operates as the hub of governance networks. This is primarily because of EA's multiple roles as regulator, advisor, funder and manager of the river, with responsibility for water quality, fisheries, flood defence and water level management, abstraction and recreation. As a result, stakeholders need to deal with EA to get statutory consent for many of the activities affecting the river. Many of the fora based around river management, were initiated by EA as a means of sharing knowledge with key stakeholders that it has to work with on an everyday basis. This dominant role is likely to continue into the future as the Water Framework Directive comes into effect.

English Nature also plays a central role in networks, participating particularly to develop their knowledge and understanding of the river's ecology and socio-political issues, and to raise awareness of the effects of the cSAC designation. EN works particularly closely with
EA through informal liaison, predominantly because EA staff hold much of the expert knowledge about issues affecting the cSAC. EA and EN have particularly strong links with the fisheries stakeholders, particularly the WFA, as illustrated through the density of fora, informal and formal statutory connections shown in Figures 7.1. The effort made by the statutory agencies to maintain positive relationships with these stakeholders, is in part due to their leverage over the activities of their angling club members, their wealth of experiential and 'expert' knowledge of the river, and the potential role of river keepers and anglers as custodians and observers of the river on a day-to-day basis. However, the incentive to maintain good relations is also swayed by the political influence the fisheries are able to invoke at a national as well as a local level, as illustrated by recent high profile clashes between the angling fraternity and conservationists over the management of a neighbouring chalk river.

Some competent authorities are engaged in the governance networks only through one-to-one connections, predominantly statutory processes of consultation and consent. The water companies in particular fall into this category, and the reason given by one water company was limited time, despite the fact the interviewee acknowledged these relationships would be useful:

'I haven't had enough dealings with EN, apart from at operational level. And one of my New Year's Resolutions that I'd already made actually before you came, was to set about getting closer to the local EN offices at least, and possibly even at national level. Even if, initially at national level it was more limited to just getting to know people and hearing perhaps some of their higher level strategy and objectives and so on. But at a local level we can get together ... we can understand their sort of outlook on the county, on their patch, and that would be useful. And I think, I'm not trying to make excuses, but the reason is that over the last couple of years that we've been so bogged down with detail of strategy and 5-year plans and so on, and I'm personally guilty of not sort of getting my head above the parapet and looking at the bigger picture occasionally.' (Water Company)

5 The extension of the AVLG and WLMP process to involve WFA was a recent development, occurring during the research period, to bring the group closer into governance matters. This appears to be related to the sympathetic nature of one particular member towards nature conservation issues, and the good relationships he had with EN. This illustrates the importance of personality in inter-organisational relationships.

6 An angling club's lease to manage and fish the Abbots Barton Nature Reserve on the River Itchen (also a cSAC) was revoked in June 2000 after Hampshire Wildlife Trust (the site owners), felt the site should be managed in a more 'naturalistic' way. The conflict reached national levels and elicited much national (and international) media coverage showing the political influence of the fisheries and their ability to mobilise national and international media networks.
For other competent authorities like the district and county councils, limited participation in networks appears partly to be because the river is perceived as marginal to their core responsibilities, and environmental protection is just seen as one among a number of considerations that must be traded off when making planning decisions. Nature conservation has tended to be a poorly resourced interest within local authorities and there is limited time and staff available to participate in governance networks above and beyond statutory procedures. This is particularly the case in Wiltshire County Council when at the time of the interviews no individual had the responsibility for representing the Council in ecological issues:

'I think the big one that we've failed to engage with is the local authorities - but I don't think that's entirely our fault. That's a function of there being no county ecologist for example, and a function of there being no countryside department, and it's a function of there being no rights of way along the rivers, so by and large people [in the council] think they've no public responsibility apart from some land drainage responsibility and landscape amenity and planning responsibility, but there's no real commitment to the river.' (EN Conservation Officer)

'To be frank we're a very cash strapped authority, and unless it's a political issue that needs addressing it's unlikely there would be an initiative from this authority to promote anything [relating to the conservation of the river] really.' (Local Authority representative).

Being only involved in river governance through statutory procedures, which tend to involve remote forms of written consultation, it is apparent that these stakeholder groups have limited understanding of management issues on the Avon beyond their particular interests, and a less developed sense of the objectives and interests of other stakeholder groups. The benefits from participating were clearly articulated by stakeholders during the interviews. Through participating in discursive processes stakeholders felt they gained a better understanding of other initiatives going on and the concerns of other stakeholders; they were able to raise the profile and level of understanding of their own concerns among other stakeholders; they improved relationships with organisations and individuals; and they had an increased influence over policy by uniting with others. In other words, stakeholders expressed the development of intellectual, social and political capital through participation (Innes & Booher, 1999).

7 During the strategy process, a Countryside Officer was employed, and this individual went on to sit on the Working Group.
However, many stakeholders are poorly represented on these fora and arenas, and their interests are effectively excluded. As noted above, EA and EN are clearly influential over the agenda and who participates in these networks, and they tend to focus on the stakeholders with whom they need to improve relations in order to deliver their own agendas either because of the knowledge they hold or their control of resources. In other words, the structure and function of many of the fora and arena are instrumentally-motivated. This may explain the poor representation of local community interests in discussions and decision-making structures, who hold little direct influence or knowledge about the river, and therefore are not seen as a priority group by the agencies. Farming interests were also seen as peripheral to debates about the management of the river for conservation and fisheries, despite the influence of their activities on the quality of the river. In the case of the farming community, the FRCA Project Officer and the Landcare Project Officer were seen as providing the link to the agricultural community when discussing nature conservation or water level management on the Avon, rather than the NFU or CLA. However, these individuals, although able to provide an insight into the state of the farming community, and are responsible for programmes to change farmer behaviour, are not representative of farming interests.

Other stakeholders had a lesser involvement in governance structures and processes than might be expected. As a result of conflicts over EA policy on salmon stocking, and more recent conflict with EN over the management of a fishing site in the Lower Avon, the level of influence ASRA and WSRT are able to exert over river management policy has effectively been 'controlled' by the agencies, by involving them only in fisheries-related issues, but involving them in a way that actually provides them very little influence. The role of the Salmon Liaison Group for example, was summarised by an EA representative as

'It's an informing process really, we inform them because we've got the information, we've got the expertise. Their role is really more one of helping us to do things, getting things actually done on the ground'. (EA)

Although these fora have been successful in building up personal contacts between the Agency and the stakeholder group, the lack of influence over policy, has caused frustration amongst the participating stakeholders. Indeed ASRA withdrew their attendance at the EA-led Salmon Liaison Group and Fisheries Forum on this basis:

'We sense that quite honestly, if our position now with the EA is that they're going to do their own thing in their own time, they might as well send me a [note]
Chapter 7

every quarter about what they’ve been getting up to and I’ll send it through to the riparian owners. Our input as an association is obviously of no value at all.’ (Fishery Association Member).

The complex procedures required to get consent to influence the river in any way, has led to owners and managers of the river feeling increasingly constrained by regulation, and led to frustration amongst some stakeholder groups:

They [the riparian owners] have the right to talk about improving the river, but they have to go cap in hand to certain organisations before they are allowed to do so.’ (Riparian owners association)

‘But the fishing interests, I think see the conservation designations as being a new thing that has sort of snowballed, and is gathering momentum, gathering power if you like, and a lot of them think they’re being hit from all directions with different regulations, designations that they don’t fully understand. And I think they view these things as being out of control potentially.’ (EA)

The exclusion of local community groups is partially caused by the dominance of private landownership rights. Much of the river channel, banks and surrounding floodplain are privately owned. The existing culture is one where the owners are fiercely protective of their rights to make the final decision on how they manage their property:

‘The problem there at the end of the day, if you believe in people owning things you’ve got to accept the fact that the owner should really be of paramount importance, providing he doesn’t do something which is obviously totally unreasonable’ (Fishery Association Member)

There are very few areas of riverbank or bed which are publicly owned, or where there is public access. Even when the river flows through urban areas access to the bank and river is leased to private fishing clubs. This lack of legal rights of the public and local communities to access the river alongside the complexity of regulation, makes it particularly difficult for local community groups to take a more active role in the management of sections of the river as it passes through their local environment:

Kate: ‘Do you think all interests are considered or represented in decisions that are made on the river?’

Conservation NGO Employee: ‘I don’t think it is possible in a lot of cases. Again if it’s on a private landowner’s piece of land, then obviously it’s down to him and the statutory bodies what happened on that bit of river, which is right. But really I think it’s very difficult for local people, local communities to get any sort of involvement in decisions that are made on the river; there’s no mechanism for it as far as I can see...because the river is so well protected, and it’s quite technical
what’s done there, it can be quite difficult for local community groups to get involved in the technical design of things.’ (Conservation NGO)

Analysis highlights the dominant influence of statutory authorities over governance decisions, although some stakeholders also felt that certain stakeholder groups – notably the private landowning and fishery interests - were having an unfair influence over the policies being set by these agencies:

‘I think personally fisheries gets an undue weighting... I think they’re given this undue weighting because of a lot of shouting by landowners and angling clubs and things.’ (Water Company).

As observed from the stakeholder maps, these groups have much closer liaison with EA and EN than the water companies, councils, farmers and local community interests, motivated in part by the agencies’ wish to maintain positive relations with these powerful and potentially disruptive groups. One interviewee even accused EN and EA of being willing to trade-off conservation best practice for political co-operation:

‘English Nature will change anything administratively to keep the fishermen onside... these are rich, powerful, articulate people, which they are, the fishing lobby - and we will accommodate them. And then we are pushing the Avon down the same disastrous route which the Itchen and Test [two other highly managed chalk rivers] have gone down and that would be deeply regrettable’ (Conservation NGO)

Despite the high density of networks relating to governance of the Avon, networks tend to be focused around particular functions, i.e. nature conservation, flood defence or fisheries. Integration between these networks relies on key organisations like EA and EN who participate across these networks. This requires effective internal communication and knowledge-sharing within these organisations. Of all the organisations involved in the Avon’s governance, it is only EA that has a single office covering the catchment, and therefore it plays an important integrating role. However, the EA acknowledged that its ability to adopt this integrated overview of the Avon was limited by poor communication between its function-based departments. One EA employee suggested that different departments were so focused on achieving their particular objectives, that mutually beneficial solutions went unnoticed.
7.2.4. A Governance System in Transition.

The river and its floodplain (the Avon Valley) still tend to be treated as two separate systems in terms of their ecological and economic functions, and the individuals who are involved in their governance. In terms of the local economy, the river is seen as a fishing resource, and the valley seen as a resource for food production, managed by fishery associations and farmers respectively, and in isolation. Indeed, this perceived separation between river and valley has been potentially exacerbated by the notification of the river cSAC within the boundaries of the river channel only, rather than including the river and its floodplain. The effect of this is that one EN team focuses on the management of the river for aquatic species and another team focuses on the management of the floodplain for bird species.

Stakeholders interviewed identified a need for a much more integrated approach to be taken to the catchment’s management. Strategic organisations like EA, EN and the Wildlife Trusts identified a need for greater co-ordination between stakeholders. Indeed, the Water Level Management Plan consultation process (which had not started at the time of the interviews) aims to bring farmers, fishermen, conservationists and owners operating in the same hydrological unit together to reach agreement on how water levels could best be managed. It was hoped this would improve communication and encourage co-ordinated planning.

Local owners, managers and users of the river identified a need for integration at a more strategic level, specifically in terms of a streamlining or reduction in the number of policies, action plans and strategies being pursued or developed. It was hoped that an improvement in knowledge-sharing at a strategic level would co-ordinate the advice given to land and river managers, reduce confusion over the implementation of different plans and initiatives, and improve the agencies’ understanding of cause and effect relationships:

'I think there's a lot of potential synergy that's being overlooked, because there are a lot of strategies out there that have identified problems and constraints and causative factors that are common. A synergistic approach would pick up that commonality and you would be able to focus in on it much easier, and I think that's not being done.' (EA staff member)

In terms of the delivery of the Habitats Directive, the stakeholder maps illustrate that there are no structures through which all the competent authorities for the cSAC get together
and share their experiences, let alone including other fishery, agricultural, conservation and local community interests. Interviewees noted the need for such a forum as a potential mechanism to improve communication and integrated decision-making about the Avon cSAC.

7.3. The LIFE Strategy in the Context of Local Governance

7.3.1. Attitudes to English Nature, the cSAC and the forthcoming strategy

In order to understand how stakeholders would receive the concept of a strategy being developed by EN for the cSAC, and to ascertain local willingness to participate in this strategy, interviewees were asked about their experiences of working with EN and their attitudes to the cSAC designation and the forthcoming strategy. Interestingly, despite EN's increasing profile in governance issues on the river, the organisation was perceived as having a relatively unimportant role. From the perspective of local stakeholders, the EA remained the key statutory authority on the river:

'We don't really regard EN as having a fundamental role. We obviously regard them as being the custodians of the SAC, but we suspect this is largely a matter of getting the organisation of the rivers right, of which most of the expertise lies with the NRA [EA]' (Fishery Association member).

Indeed, many stakeholders expressed some uncertainty about the necessity for EN to be involved in governance at all:

'When you've got a responsible government body for the river environment [EA], why do you want another one?' (Fishery Association Member).

To some extent, the low profile of EN was unsurprising. In the period between notification and this research EN had made a conscious effort to focus on gaining an understanding of how the system works and building relationships, rather than demanding immediate changes to the management of the river:

'At the moment we are not exactly putting the writing on the wall, but we're putting down markers that things are wrong and need to change... But it's a sort of stick and carrot situation, in that we're trying to do it through a process of education and encouragement rather than implementing legislative sticks at the
moment...trying to get people to accept that there are problems, and that we and
Government will be expecting changes.' (EN Conservation Officer)

Most of its activities had been focused on notification exercises and other administrative
procedures such as clarifying the conservation objectives and how favourable condition
should be defined and monitored. These latter two processes were closed, expert-led
exercises, involving engagement with the EA only. Stakeholder liaison focused on building
relationships and raising awareness of the Habitats Directive and its implications. In the
Upper Avon particularly, the effort put in by EN to build relationships and learn from local
stakeholders, was appreciated by interviewees:

'Quite rightly, EN have trodden very sensitively, certainly in Wessex, because this
team is very, very good and they take enormous trouble to get to know people
and understand the fishery problem.' (Fishery Association Member)

Staff operating from EN's Hampshire and Dorset offices had, at the time of the interviews,
invested much less time and resources into building stakeholder relationships, due to
commitments to the management of other designated areas and recent staff turnover. At
the same time they were involved in litigious exercises with local stakeholders, and the
effect of this on stakeholder attitudes towards EN was very apparent. Stakeholders with an
interest in the Lower Avon expressed much less trust in EN, tending to perceive EN as a
remote organisation, uninterested in tackling their concerns.

The fact that the Wiltshire team took the lead for strategic issues relating to the Avon's
management, also led to the perception that Lower Avon issues were less well understood
and incorporated into EN's strategic priorities:

'I think the Avon having a strategic lead based in the Upper Avon, where they're
not in direct contact with the people working on the ground and the issues of the
lower Avon on a day to day basis... raises some concerns and problems and
perhaps this is why we're finding it difficult to actually get into the loop as it
were...I see Wiltshire running a Wiltshire agenda and saying it's a strategic
overview' (Conservation NGO)

One individual from the Wildlife Trust felt that at present the different EN offices were
acting as separate entities:

'There are at least 3 different English Natures working in the Valley. And liaison
between them is the first thing to ensure is operating successfully... actually
there's a fourth - there's Peterborough, which is a completely wild card, no idea
what they're going to come up with next.' (Conservation NGO)
Alongside these mixed attitudes towards EN, attitudes towards the cSAC designation also varied. Because of the desire of many of the stakeholders for a well-managed environment, there was general (but slightly nervous) support for the cSAC, seeing it as a mechanism to help them protect their interests. The following quote is from an angler and member of WFA:

'I hope it's going to be beneficial. I think the SSSI — I've always supported the SSSI and I support up to now the candidate SAC because I think it's going to give that greater protection. It's something that fishery managers will see as a help to their environment, to improve the fisheries or keep them from deteriorating anyway.' (Fishery Association Member)

However, there was a sense of nervousness and uncertainty about the extent to which English Nature would demand changes to management practices that had been in place for hundreds of years:

'I mean most fishing clubs think that they're the experts on the river environment, not the EA or EN ... They [the fishing clubs] have got the know-how and they've been doing it for a long time, and all they really want, they don't want to be interfered with too much. There's nothing worse than someone coming along and saying, you shouldn't be doing this, when you've had 30 or 40 years of experience and you know it's right, because you've got to have it right. If you get it wrong there's no fish.' (Fishery Association Member)

The development of the LIFE project bid involved relevant staff from English Nature and the Environment Agency, but not all local stakeholders were aware of the initiative, or even viewed the production of a strategy as necessary. On the Avon, certainly, some stakeholders saw this as yet another bureaucratic process imposed by the agencies, using money that could have been used for more immediate gains on the ground. The fact that action-oriented parts of the project proposal were cut from the project (see Chapter 6 footnote 9) furthered these feelings of frustration. As one interviewee put it:

'If English Nature want a strategy that's up to them, anybody can have a strategy.'
(Water Company).

Some felt that the creation of another strategy would add to the increasing levels of bureaucracy faced by stakeholders on the river, and create a range of actions focusing only on the needs of particular species rather than the needs and interests of all parts of the system:
Chapter 7

'Now the danger of this all is that a huge great bureaucracy is going to start delving into little details and imagining that they’re frightfully important, and the whole aspect has got to be changed in order to look after the lamprey or the water rat or whatever it may be. One is, if not careful, in danger of losing sight of the main rationale of what it’s all about. I’m just concerned at the moment that EN are getting, if it’s the right word, too involved in it all.’ (Fishery Association Member).

'We struggle to get individual catchment management as a holistic management tool, and EN are really interpreting on SAC European rules…I’m sure Desmoulin’s snail is very important, but I don’t know how many jobs it produces. I do know how many jobs salmon fishing and fishing in general produces. I do know the comparative socio-economic values of the various activities and I think that ought to be taken into consideration in consultation. (Fishery Association Member)

In fact, some stakeholders argued that if the strategy only focused on English Nature’s own objectives and the cSAC interests, it could prove to be a step back among efforts for more integrated management of the catchment:

'I suppose if there is an SAC strategy coming forward, it must look at the whole system, and not just what’s within the 2 black lines that form the SAC boundary … You could, within the SAC rules, you could achieve favourable conservation status of that SAC whilst having an ecological disaster on your hands in the Avon Valley. And I suppose that’s at the core of my fear that one starts to manage the SAC towards the targets that are set for SACs, rather than managing the whole system, the whole process.’ (Conservation NGO)

Stakeholders urged EN to ensure the strategy considers all existing initiatives and interests relating to the river:

'But all I would ask I think, is that they recognise the numerous interests in the river, as being genuine interests. I mean some of the things have been going on in the river for decades and centuries, and that they listen to those peoples’ views and inputs, and that they try to involve key - if they can identify which are the key stakeholders - into some sort of steering arrangements. So that it isn’t then perhaps seen as a narrow English Nature strategy…’ (Water Company)

7.3.2. Integrating the Strategy into Local Stakeholder Objectives

Any new legislation or initiative has the potential to destabilise the existing governance culture. The Habitats Directive has such potential, because of the differing responsibilities placed on competent authorities, the dominance of the precautionary principle, and the
more general fact that it demands greater consideration to be given to the environmental impacts of existing and future management practices on the river. From the perspective of conservationists then, the implementation of this legislation would transform the river’s governance. However, the process of developing a strategy also had the potential to act as a ‘political opportunity structure’ (Healey et al., 1999: 131), to facilitate a culture change towards more integrated management of the river and deliver local governance objectives. Many of the stakeholders interviewed recognised the potential for the strategy process to provide opportunities for greater integration.

From the analysis, it became apparent that the strategy design needed to take into consideration several factors particular to the local governance situation. First, is the observation that the strategy was to be introduced into a context of considerable political sensitivity and underlying suspicion of greater public-good management of private resources. Tension over the unequal influence of riparian owners, fishery managers, conservation and local communities were part of a broader debate over the appropriate balance between public and private interests and the extent to which statutory agencies have the right to intervene in the private rights of land owners. With English Nature only having access to the river for the first time in the mid-1990s to carry out ecological surveys and consequently designate it as an SSSI, its activities have been accompanied by rapid change in terms of greater regulation through the SSSI and SAC designation and the recent CROW Act.

Some stakeholders were suspicious that conservationists had ‘hidden agendas’, suspicions aggravated by recent flooding events within the Avon valley (seen as an agency tactic to wetten up the area for birds, whilst lowering agricultural yields), and the conflict over the management of Abbots Barton National Nature Reserve (See Footnote 7). Further exacerbating the nervousness amongst fishery managers and owners were concerns over greater public access to the countryside and the rise in political profile of anti-fieldsports campaigns:

‘This country is going through a major social revolution, and has been doing so for five or eight years now, and the Countryside and Rights of Way Bill is one manifestation of what’s going on, and there’s no doubt that landowners have got their - do feel to some extent that they’ve got their backs to the wall against egalitarian and libertarian influences’ (Fishery Association Member)
Chapter 7

A second issue is stakeholder fatigue. This feeling of consultation and policy overload manifested itself in several ways and is strongly linked to previous statements made about poor integration and co-operation between agencies. As a result of all the plans and projects, many stakeholders felt that the river was already overrun by the bureaucratic procedures of the statutory agencies, which, as far as they are concerned, resulted in no obvious improvement to the condition of the river.

‘One does wonder what the EA and EN are up to concerning their goals, in that it seems that there is no element of speed in this at all, you know it’s just a scientist with a continual examination of the same problems, there’s never an outcome saying let’s get on and do this... They spend hours on all these reports; they spend more time getting these reports out than getting in the river and actually doing something. But I think, says me unkindly, that’s a bureaucrat.’ (Riparian Owner Association).

As noted by another interviewee, stakeholders should be engaged in river governance in ways that are meaningful to their interests, rather than in ways framed by bureaucratic structures:

‘As soon as you start talking in acronyms - the SSSI, the SAC, the SPA, the Ramsar, I think they [local managers and owners of the river] turn off. If you talk to them about the valley, you know the door is open. After all, all they are is administrative structures for the likes of you and I, you know, why on earth should these poor souls have to understand the Habitats Regulations and what not?’ (Conservation NGO)

The final issue relates to the scale at which management problems could be effectively tackled. As understood by EN (see Chapter 4), many current conservation problems are caused by an unsuitable agricultural policy, decisions made by the state regulators for the water industry (OfWat), and uncertainties in the causal factors of the problem in the first place\(^8\). It is clear that not all issues can be effectively resolved at a local governance level, through regulation or dialogue with local stakeholders. The strategy needed to be clear about what can and cannot be tackled at this level, and what other efforts are being made to progress issues outside of local networks.

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\(^8\) For example, the decline of salmon in the river is unclear, but thought to occur in international waters rather than within the rivers themselves
Conclusions - Implications for the Design of a DIP.

This chapter has illustrated that a river conservation strategy would be prepared in a situation with an existing and complex governance system. The river has many stakeholders, and knowledge of it is widely distributed. A host of initiatives, relationships and procedures already exist. As a result of the multitude of plans and projects, the strategy risked occurring in a context of stakeholder fatigue. At the time of the strategy, other initiatives (notably the Water Level Management Planning process) would also be operating and running consultation exercises to engage local stakeholders and to co-ordinate local management activities. However, it was felt that the strategy could do much to improve dialogue within and between strategic organisations, to co-ordinate provision of advice to river managers and owners, streamline consultation and decision-making processes, and as a result reduce the effect of a bureaucratic system.

Secondly, it is important to note that any process would be occurring within the context of mistrust and suspicion of a 'hidden conservation agenda' amongst fishery and landowning interests, exacerbated by recent conflicts over the management of chalk rivers for fishing. Any changes to strategic policies would therefore be viewed with great suspicion, and it was essential that the strategy be developed in an open and transparent way. Stakeholders should be involved in ways that allowed them real influence over the decisions.

Thirdly, the strategy is seen as an opportunity to contribute towards more integrated environmental governance of the system, taking into consideration the needs and aspirations of local stakeholders, and the social, economic and environmental values of the river. Some stakeholders felt that the current governance system was unfair, dominated by certain interests, but a move to a more democratic and participative governance system also requires a change in attitude on the part of stakeholders. The current situation was one where the dominant fishery and riparian owners already felt threatened by a loss of control over 'their' river, and their private rights to make decisions should be protected. This situation would make it very difficult to directly engage the values and objectives of local communities. However, the extent to which the cSAC strategy would be transformative in terms of the long-term governance of the Avon, depended very much on the attitudes of EN and how they interpreted the role of the strategy themselves. This is explored in the next chapter.
Chapter 8.

Designing a DIP:
Integrating Institutional and Stakeholder Objectives

Introduction

Chapter 7 examined the local situational context in which the forthcoming Avon strategy would be prepared. However, as conveyed in Chapter 6, the strategy had to operate within fairly narrowly defined parameters of time, funds and resources. My role as an action researcher was to help devise a process to develop the strategy, working within the broad process parameters as defined by EN. The first stage of this was a scoping exercise to bring together key factors from the contextual analysis and identify the main objectives for the process. The following questions were used to structure the analysis:

- Why is a deliberative and inclusionary approach necessary or relevant?
- What issues should be on the agenda for discussion?
- Who should be involved in the process of developing the strategy?
- What deliberative and inclusionary techniques could be applied?

Chapter 8 gives an account of the reasoning behind the decisions made about who, when and how stakeholders were to be involved in the development of the cSAC strategy and the trade-offs that were made between the normative principles of DIPs and institutional and local process objectives.
8.1. Scoping the Process

8.1.1. Integrating Local and Institutional Contextual Factors.

In terms of process design, the strategy could not be seen as an isolated procedure. The decisions made and the processes through which they were made would be influenced by the institutional and local governance cultures in which the strategy was situated. The objectives and parameters of the strategy were firmly embedded in EN culture at an institutional and local level because the LIFE Project was written principally by EN’s Senior Freshwater Advisor and was to be delivered by a Project Officer under the management of a local EN Conservation Officer. In addition, the process is framed and embedded within institutionalised approaches to delivering the Habitats Directive and organisational assumptions about what decisions should and should not be open to stakeholder involvement. By explicitly considering the derived objectives from both these contexts it was hoped that the strategy would be designed in a way that met local and institutional objectives.

Figure 8.1. provides a diagrammatic overview of how the ‘top-down’ and the ‘bottom-up’ contexts were influential over particular aspects of process design.
Figure 8.1. Effect of top-down and bottom-up context on process design.

INSTITUTIONAL, LEGAL, POLITICAL, CULTURAL CONTEXT

Interviews with Strategic Staff at EN

UK REQUIREMENTS UNDER HABITATS DIRECTIVE

EUROPEAN UNION

LIFE-NATURE FUNDS

ENGLISH NATURE (P'boro) OBJECTIVES & PROCESSES

UK RIVERS LIFE PROJECT

GENERIC OBJECTIVES

UK REQUIREMENTS UNDER HABITATS DIRECTIVE

AVON RIVER cSAC STRATEGY PROCESS

PROCESS OBJECTIVES

SELECTED PARTICIPANTS

RESOURCES

ENGLISH NATURE (local) OBJECTIVES & PROCESSES

IDENTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNANCE NEEDS

LOCAL OBJECTIVES

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder Interviews

LOCAL SOCIAL, POLITICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, ECONOMIC CONTEXT
The diagram highlights how the process objectives were defined through the integration of local governance objectives (defined through the stakeholder-based context analysis) with the generic objectives for the strategy defined by the LIFE Project, and the local EN team’s particular objectives and culture. Similarly, the resources for the project, defined in terms of time, money and skills, were broadly defined by the LIFE Project, including who was employed as Project Officer. A major consideration for the strategy had to be what could be achieved within the 18-month time period, with a limited budget for facilitation and stakeholder engagement, under the co-ordination of a Project Officer with no previous experience of participation herself. Resources for any deliberative and inclusionary process are also influenced by the extent to which local stakeholders and particularly the local EN team are willing to invest their knowledge, time and skills into the strategy process.

The following sections go into more detail on how these contextual factors were brought together, and in some cases had to be traded off against each other, in making decisions about the extent of deliberation and inclusion that could occur, who should be involved and in what type of decisions.

8.1.2. Setting the Objectives and Parameters for the Process. Comparing Local and Institutional Perspectives

Significant differences were noted between the Avon as perceived through the lens of local stakeholders and through the lens of the Habitats Directive. These differences had effects on the identified objectives and role of the strategy. The picture of the Avon built up through the analysis of stakeholder experiences and attitudes reported in Chapter 7, constructs the strategy as embedded in the complexities of local governance patterns and social, economic and environmental objectives. In contrast, under the Habitats Directive, the river effectively loses its identity as a ‘river’, and ‘place’, and becomes a ‘Special Area of Conservation’, where its values are defined according to the presence of certain species and habitats identified at an international level and effectively imposed on the local environment from above. Under the Habitats Directive, locally significant species and habitats, and the role of the river in the local economy and society, all become secondary to maintaining the conservation features in favourable condition. From the perspective of the Habitats Directive then, the development of the strategy under the LIFE Project is interpreted as an instrumental process to tackle management problems that are seen as hindering the achievement of favourable condition (see Table 6.1). In the management of
the cSAC, stakeholders become defined as those people whose involvement is necessary to achieve favourable condition of the cSAC, rather than those with more socio-cultural interests in the river. The LIFE Project Manager, referring to another cSAC river in Scotland, illustrates this point:

'Because I think there's definitely a role for people in ownership of their local river, or their local bit of catchment, but that's slightly different from ownership of the SAC, because you could encourage ownership of the River Kerry SAC, and when you talk about the River Kerry SAC most people are going to think, 'Oh, little river running down the road, running through various farms, there's a fish farm at the bottom and a reservoir at the top". That's what they are going to think about, but that isn't the SAC. The SAC is the pearl mussel full stop. So you know, are we really serious about engaging people in pearl mussels on mass? I don't think it's going to work. So it's a problem of the Directive really. We have defined the SAC as a pearl mussel and therefore the scope for public engagement is by definition very low.' (LIFE Project Manager)

The EN teams working in the area did not think about the Avon in such polarised terms. They understood the river to be both a place where people lived, worked and recreated, and a designated site. They perceived their role as being to try to bring these two constructions of the river together. In other words they saw themselves as operating at the interface between the two social worlds of conservation legislation and local stakeholders (Long & Long, 1992). This is reflected in the approach that the Wiltshire team had tried to adopt so far in its efforts to deliver conservation legislation, which emphasised partnership working and negotiation within the parameters set by the legislation:

'And I have such a strong belief in getting the statute understood, but then giving people as much room within that as possible, to build partnerships rather than to be knocked into shape sort of thing...that's how we have done it in Wiltshire, and it has worked very well' (EN Conservation Officer)

The Conservation Officer based in EN’s Wiltshire office, who was to line manage the Project Officer, was very committed to the production of the strategy. An effective strategy in terms of process and outcomes was important to the local English Nature team because the strategy would be their first high profile attempt to influence the strategic management of the river. The strategy was also an opportunity for the SAC to be seen as a positive impetus for action to improve the quality of the river. A strategy leading to positive action for the riverine environment would help reverse negative attitudes towards the cSAC as a negative and bureaucratic exercise. It was important for EN that the strategy paved the

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1 Because of the nature of the procedures set up for SSSIs and SACs, there is a risk that designation is seen in terms of what could not be done on the river (the term ‘Operations Likely to Damage’ having particular connotations).
way for EN’s future involvement in the river, by showing them to be an open, listening
organisation, willing to work with others to resolve management problems:

EN Conservation Officer – ‘And I think one of the biggest problems we’ve got is
that because there are several regulatory authorities and statutory bodies, it is
difficult for people to understand what we can add apart from bureaucracy. And
the strategy is a big opportunity for us to add something by pulling all the
different things together, or equally it’s an opportunity for us to confirm people’s
worst suspicions by just producing another document that just sits on the shelf
and doesn’t do anything’

Kate – ‘So it’s quite important to you - the strategy?’

EN Conservation Officer – ‘Yes, I think we could make quite an important leap
forward in terms of particularly landowner and fishing club perceptions of us, if
we come back with something and they say “oh yeah, this is really useful, I can
see how this is going to change things for the better”.’ (EN Conservation Officer)

EN’s commitment was particularly focused on the strategy as a means of delivering the
cSAC, although, as explained in Chapter 7, local stakeholders expressed a desire that the
strategy should not simply focus on the requirements of the cSAC but incorporate the
needs of the wider catchment. EN acknowledged this concern and agreed the strategy
should consider the objectives of all relevant stakeholders but only within the context of
making decisions to improve management of the cSAC, in other words within the
parameters of their agenda. With the Head Office of EN focused on ensuring the
Government meets European deadlines on achieving favourable condition on cSACs, it is
perhaps unsurprising that the local team (Wiltshire) were keen to maximise the possible
benefits for the cSAC from the strategy. The short timescale that the Project Officer was to
be employed to develop the strategy was also a factor in this decision. The Wiltshire
Conservation Officer explained how she did not wish the strategy to be ‘sidetracked’ into
considering issues which, from her position of responsibility for achieving favourable
condition, had few benefits:

‘EN Conservation Officer – ‘But I do think we need to be selective a bit, and we
need to say not let the branches go on and on and on expanding. Because she [the
Project Officer] could just end up doing a strategy about the River Avon and the
Avon Valley SPA [Special Protection Area]. And it’s not about the Avon Valley
SPA, so I think that you have to come up against the buffer that says it
interrelates to the Avon Valley SPA …these are the issues they will need
addressing but it’s not the job of this strategy to do that. And probably - you
know my prejudiced guess is that we would say the same about community
involvement in Salisbury and Warminster and places like that.’

Kate - ‘Because?’
EN Conservation Officer: 'Because you could end up - you know if she went down to Salisbury now she could spend 18 months in Salisbury writing a strategy for 5 miles of the River Avon as it flows through Salisbury, and actually not make very much difference at all... to the management of the river and the conservation of the SAC interests.' (EN Conservation Officer)

This decision was to be hugely influential over all subsequent decisions made about process design, particularly stakeholder selection.

8.1.3. Scoping the Extent of Deliberation and Inclusion

As noted in Chapter 7, several aspects of the delivery of the Habitats Directive on the Avon had already been identified by EN as being beyond the strategy. At a strategic level, there was an identified need to ensure there was coherent knowledge of all the issues that were affecting the cSAC, to build understanding of how different management practices affect the cSAC interests both alone and in combination, and to improve communication and co-ordination of key organisations operating on the Avon. At a more specific level, there were issues that required more focused deliberation to resolve identified management problems. In other words, it became apparent that there were two types of deliberative processes needed. First, a knowledge-sharing, relationship-building process was required to provide a strategic overview of the cSAC and how it related to the river's existing governance; and secondly, a process was needed that would resolve specific management problems, focused on a particular aspect of river management or a specific geographical area. In line with these two process objectives, stakeholders tended to fall into one or both of the following categories, those with a strategic knowledge and interest in the governance of the whole river, and those with a specific interest in a particular geographic area or aspect of river ecology.

Another consideration in determining the extent of inclusion possible within the strategy is the extent of private ownership rights. It was felt by organisations with experience of working with landowners and local communities, that the direct involvement of local communities in decision-making about river management would be likely to cause local conflict amongst owners and fishery associations towards English Nature:

'The best way to alienate the landowners you go down that [public involvement] route...However, if there were large areas of publicly owned, publicly managed land there, almost certainly there should be some form of accountability for the
A third issue for consideration, was that several initiatives were already tackling some of the key management issues affecting the cSAC and other locally valued interests. For example, diffuse pollution was being tackled through the EA-led Landcare initiative, and the management of the river to control water levels and flooding through the EA-led Water Level Management Plans. Through their participation in these initiatives and through the forthcoming Review of Consents process, EN was already able to ensure that any activities that would potentially affect the river would be compatible with cSAC interests and they did not feel that there was any benefit to be had in reviewing this through the strategy. Therefore, as well as the extent of inclusion being constrained as a result of institutionalised procedures under the Habitats Directive, it was also felt by EN that it would be unnecessary and undesirable for the strategy to engage stakeholders in a deliberative process focusing on all aspects of river management. As noted in Chapter 7, there were already numerous networks sharing knowledge and resources, and many stakeholders felt it unnecessary to engage in further deliberation because their concerns were already being progressed through other initiatives:

‘[Our interests are] very much live issues at present, and are the subject of debate in the appropriate forum (Area Environment Group, LEAP etc.). We would therefore be very reluctant to engage in a full debate on them except through the consultative machinery which already exists’ (Fishery Association Member, pers. comm.)

Nonetheless, some local stakeholders still felt that the major issues of over-abstraction, pollution from aquaculture and diffuse pollution were not being tackled by the competent authorities. This perception was in part due to a limited awareness among these stakeholders about efforts being made to tackle these problems (e.g. the Asset Management Plan negotiations), but was also a consequence of many of the problems affecting the Avon being seen as unlikely to be resolved in the short-term:

‘Everyone says no one’s doing anything. But when you look at it there are loads of things going on but it’s because they are not instant cures that people don’t appreciate there’s any action being taken. And part of the way to get over that is to communicate what is actually happening better.’ (Project Officer)

English Nature felt it important for the strategy not to place too much focus on issues that already had procedures and consultative structures in place; the strategy could be seen as yet another bureaucratic ‘talking shop’:
'And you know the people we are involving are blooming busy people. So they don’t want to spend time sitting around examining their navel, they want to get on with things.’ (EN Conservation Officer)

Instead the strategy should focus on raising awareness of existing initiatives, and making progress on issues that were currently being overlooked, or being tackled in an unsatisfactory way. Faced with this situation EN emphasised the need for action-oriented and outcome-focused discussions, rather than exploratory and ‘educative’ debates.

8.1.4. Summary of Considerations of Fitness for Purpose.

Table 8.1 summarises the key issues which were considered in process design, drawn from normative principles and the local and institutional context. It illustrates the extent to which trade-offs had to be made between the normative principles of deliberation and inclusion, local contextual factors and institutional objectives in order to construct a process that was perceived by EN as being fit for its purpose:
Table 8.1. Summary of Objectives from Three Perspectives of Fitness for Purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why a Participatory Approach?</th>
<th>Normative Principles of DIPs</th>
<th>Issues Raised from Local Situation Analysis</th>
<th>Institutional Context: LIFE Project / EN objectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Effective, efficient, equitable process &amp; outcomes (see Chapter 2)</td>
<td>Help to achieve integrated management and decision-making through better cooperation &amp; communication between stakeholders; deliver Habitats Directive in a way that is meaningful and supported at a local level.</td>
<td>Some participation is a project requirement; help EN develop good working relationships with stakeholders; reach agreement on complex cSAC management problems involving multiple stakeholders; effective incorporation of widely distributed knowledge about river management; some SAC interests (salmon and Ranunculus)² are highly valued locally; ecological needs of cSAC species, overlapping with and in some cases directly conflicting with stakeholder interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What issues should be discussed?</td>
<td>Allow participants to determine the agenda.</td>
<td>River governance issues which are not being tackled effectively through other initiatives.</td>
<td>Issues relating to cSAC management that can be resolved at a local level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who should be involved?</td>
<td>Anyone who will affect or be affected by the issue or has an interest in it.</td>
<td>Stakeholders are defined in terms of their interest in the river; respect for private rights.</td>
<td>Stakeholders are defined in terms of their influence over achieving favourable condition of the cSAC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When in decision-making process should people be involved?</td>
<td>Involve stakeholders as early in the decision-making process as possible.</td>
<td>As early as possible but don’t involve people in unnecessary debates or reiterate debates occurring through existing fora to avoid stakeholder fatigue.</td>
<td>The values and objectives of cSAC management are pre-defined; stakeholder discussions should focus on how to achieve favourable condition rather than redefining objectives for river management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to involve people?</td>
<td>Selection of appropriate participation methods; facilitators.</td>
<td>No local experience of using participatory working methods; pressure for action-oriented approaches.</td>
<td>The LIFE Project encourages participatory and innovative approaches to involve stakeholders; limited funds, Project Officer skills and time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Ranunculus plays an important role in the river’s ecology by affecting water temperature, flow and levels. It is an important structure in the river, providing habitat for game fishery species, its management aiding the control of water levels as well as having an ‘intrinsic’ biodiversity value. Salmon is valued highly by conservationists, fishermen and landowners, both for its economic and intrinsic worth. Its critical condition on the river is a source of great concern, even if different interests hold different positions as to the most appropriate means of tackling the issue, leading to conflict between fisheries interests and conservationists. The multiple values, uses and roles of the species must be accommodated during decision-making about its management.
8.1.5. Agreeing a Broad Structure

The effect of these observations led to the premise that a process should be devised based on a flexible two-tier structure involving people when it was pragmatic and relevant to do so, as opposed to setting up a single structure inclusive of all interests.

In the proposed structure, a working group would be set up which involved representatives from all the key stakeholders on the river (see section 8.3). Through deliberation, this group would take an overview of the key issues and interests in the Avon, review existing knowledge and progress on tackling management issues and how they affect the cSAC, and decide which issues required in-depth deliberation. Since the participants in the working group would not necessarily hold in-depth knowledge, responsibility, or interest in specific management issues on the river, it was decided that these selected issues would be taken forward by a group of stakeholders (which may include working group participants) within ‘topic groups’, selected with a specific knowledge and interest in that issue. The topic groups would analyse specific problems relating and determine actions.

This two-tier structure has similarities with that proposed for the Estuaries Initiative and marine SAC project (DETR, 1998), which had been accused of being hierarchical and not enabling local interests to influence the final decision-making process (see Chapter 5). However, it was proposed that these topic groups should have the responsibility to make any decisions they felt were relevant, and that it was important that any relevant authority was present to ensure all statutory and legal implications were taken into consideration. This approach is in contrast to the DETR process which recommends that information and ideas from topic groups are fed into the working group to make the final decision. However, despite the emphasis on the authority of topic groups to make decisions within the Avon process, it is acknowledged that dialogue within these groups would be bounded by the parameters determined by the working group, and that the compatibility of the actions would need to be ensured by the Project Officer, the Working Group, and through a wider consultation process.

3 Another key factor in this decision was the pragmatic acknowledgement that the Avon process had limited resources to run workshops involving a wide range of stakeholders in effective deliberation. This would require multiple trained facilitators to work with groups of stakeholders, which would be expensive and outside the budget of the project.
8.2. Selecting Participants

8.2.1. The ODA Stakeholder Analysis process

A stakeholder analysis was used to analyse the potential role that stakeholders could play in the development of the river conservation strategy. This used the methodology developed for the ODA by the Centre for Development Studies (ODA, 1995). The aim of the ODA analysis is to:

- Draw out the interests of stakeholders in relation to the problems the project is seeking to address
- Identify conflicts of interest between stakeholders
- Identify relations between stakeholders which can be developed
- Assess the appropriate type of participation for different stakeholders in the project

(From ODA, 1995).

The key codes used in the analysis drew out interests, influences, importance and position of the stakeholder in relation to the strategy process, as defined in Table 8.2 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interests</td>
<td>Extent of interest in river conservation, expectations of a strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences</td>
<td>The power stakeholders have over a particular decision, the implementation of the strategy, or the actions of others. Influence includes legislative power; social, economic &amp; political status; authority over others (covert or overt); control of resources; possession of relevant knowledge; links with other stakeholders and degree of organisation; negotiating position (power over, or dependence on others).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>The importance of this group to the success of the strategy. This includes the extent to which the needs of the stakeholder group are an aim of the strategy, and the extent to which their interests converge with the objectives of the strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position</td>
<td>An indication of the level of support or opposition to the strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The qualitative analysis of Influence and Importance can then be reproduced visually onto a matrix map, allowing stakeholders to be grouped according to whether they are judged to be of high or low influence and importance for the strategy:
Groups \textbf{A, B, C}, are referred to as key stakeholders.

\textbf{A} - require special initiatives to protect their interests in the strategy because of their low influence.

\textbf{B} – it is important that there are constructive working relationships with this group, to ‘ensure an effective coalition of support for the project’.

\textbf{C} – a source of significant risk to the project because of their high influence but little overlap of interests with the project.

\textbf{D} - low priority because of low influence and low importance - unlikely to be significant stakeholders in the project’s activities.

Figure 8.2. maps the position of stakeholders in relation to the strategy according to the criteria of Influence and Importance to the Strategy. A summary of how the different stakeholders ranked against these criteria is presented in Appendix 5.
Group A. The farming community, and any riparian owners who are not members of WFA and ASRA, are poorly networked. Their interests appear to be under-represented in existing strategic governance discussions about the river. These groups have a direct influence on the river SAC features, and therefore identifying mechanisms to reduce their impact on the SAC whilst protecting their interests is seen as desirable. In practice, this is predominantly carried out through one to one negotiations with the statutory agencies.

Group B. Stakeholders falling into category B are those who are influential over the issues the strategy is to tackle, either through their ability to facilitate strategy delivery or because of the knowledge and control of resources they hold. This group are also important to the strategy because of the extent to which their interests are the focus of the strategy. In practice, the councils and water companies in particular, may not be able or willing to commit time and resources to the process. From the perspective of these organisations, river conservation issues are likely to be one priority among many, and one that they feel is being effectively tackled through statutory mechanisms, such as consent and assessment.
procedures and Asset Management Plans. The question of how to enrol councils into the strategy is also problematic in terms of representation. The River Avon does not fall under a single department’s jurisdiction, so no individual has the appropriate knowledge and understanding of the inter-relationship between council functions and the cSAC.

WFA and ASRA expressed a certain reticence about the need for another strategy. They were concerned that there are too many strategies and plans for the river already and not enough action. From the perspective of these stakeholders unless the strategy produced short-term actions they might withdraw their support and co-operation for the strategy.

**Group C.** As a result of EN’s decision to focus the strategy on the objectives of the cSAC, organisations whose primary interest lay in the management of the Avon valley were seen to be less important to the strategy, despite the fact they were highly influential stakeholders in the wider governance of the catchment. Also falling into this group is the Wessex Salmon and Rivers Trust. Despite their interest in salmon in the river, it was felt that, as little could be done in terms of river channel management to restore salmon populations, their main point of involvement in Avon governance fora should remain through the EA’s Salmon Liaison Group. There were also concerns about the increasingly bad relations between members of this group and EA and EN over specific management of the river as well as the extent of regulation. EN staff were concerned that their involvement could become deleterious to the success of the process.

**Group D.** Two types of stakeholder fall into this group, illustrating the influence of the parameters determined by EN at an institutional and local level for the strategy. As a result of the cSAC focus, and the private ownership of much of the river, the interests of local communities were not seen as important to the strategy’s objectives. Similarly, the impacts of other recreational pursuits on the river is so limited, their involvement was also a low priority. Fish farmers and the Christchurch netsmen have interests limited to very specific area, and whose activities on the river are negotiated independently with the statutory agencies.

As a result of this stakeholder mapping exercise a group of key stakeholders identified as having a strategic interest in and importance to the success of the strategy were selected to sit on the working group. This group consisted of those stakeholders in Group B of the stakeholder map: EN, EA, Water Companies, County and District Councils, WWT, HWT,
WFA, ASRA. The selection of participants for the focused topic groups would be determined according to an assessment of their importance or influence over the particular topic being discussed and came largely from Groups A, B, and C on the stakeholder map.

8.2.2. A Retrospective Critique of the Use of Stakeholder Analysis in DIP Design.

The advantages of undertaking a stakeholder mapping process are that the process encourages a structured consideration of the role that different stakeholders played in river governance and the role they could or should play in the strategy. However, the method is relative and imprecise because of the complexity of information that has to be considered when judging influence, importance and position of stakeholders. A stakeholder can be influential in multiple and potentially conflicting ways, as well as over a range of scales. For example, a stakeholder could have a high socio-economic status, but little knowledge or understanding of the river's ecology, or they could have a large and direct influence over a particular geographic area, but limited impact on a catchment wide scale. Similarly the judgement of importance is subjective, depending on whether importance is judged from the stakeholder’s perspective (i.e. are the objectives of the strategy of interest to me?) or from that of the project organiser (i.e. how important for the success of the strategy is it that this individual is involved in this process?). For example, the water companies and councils did not see the strategy objectives as being particularly important to them, whereas EN identified the strategy as being a potential opportunity to increase the involvement and understanding of cSAC issues within these competent authorities. The mapping process therefore incorporates a whole series of subjective judgements and at best are relational and should only guide process design. The stakeholder mapping process makes the assumption that the parameters and objectives of any DIP are fixed and non-negotiable, whereas in reality objectives are likely to, and should, evolve.

The results of the stakeholder analysis were influenced by the parameters of the process determined by EN. If applied in too meticulous a way, there is the danger that process design becomes a tautology, with EN’s objectives defining the participants who in their turn support the objectives. This is against best practice in inclusion, which states that stakeholders should be able to influence the agenda of the deliberations.

In conclusion, carrying out a stakeholder analysis can be said to be useful to EN in terms of reflecting on the strategy from the perspective of the main actors in the system in relation to their own objectives – something that strategic staff within EN admitted the
organisation does not tend to do. Thus, stakeholder analysis can build up social intelligence within EN about its 'stakeholders', and this may prove as useful as the final outcomes achieved. It is also clear that the process should be applied with care to avoid selecting participants that meet the interests of the leading organisation, and as a result reinforce existing power differentials.


8.3.1. Agreeing Process Design

An outline for the process was discussed with the local EN Conservation Officer and Project Officer during the early stages of the latter's contract period in June 2001. They agreed with the proposed recommendations for setting up a working group to act as a steer for the strategy and to encourage integrated thinking about the river's governance, and for topic groups to focus on particular issues in depth. The use of a DIP was recommended, and this is explored below. At the same time, a particular effort was made to leave the process as flexible as possible to allow the Project Officer to adjust it as the process evolved. The following paragraphs outline the recommendations on process design provided to EN.

Stage 1 – Initial stakeholder consultation

The first stage of the strategy was to involve the collation of existing knowledge through the distribution and completion of two matrices by stakeholders. This was an exercise already initiated by the Project Officer to improve her understanding of the impacts and initiatives going on within the catchment, and to build relationships with key stakeholders on the river. It was also identified as a mechanism that could be used to enrol potential participants into the strategy process. One matrix focused on collecting information on the activities within the catchment that were felt to be impacting river ecology, and the other assessed attitudes about which current initiatives were addressing the impact of these activities both indirectly and directly. A range of key stakeholders completed these matrices.
Stage 2 — Developing a partnership

Key stakeholders with a strategic overview of issues affecting the Avon, were to be enrolled into the working group. The recommended objectives of the first meeting of this working group were to agree what the conservation strategy could deliver within the constraints and parameters detailed by English Nature, and what issues should be tackled through the strategy. From initial discussion about the key issues and how they were being tackled, the focus of five or six topic groups were to be agreed, and a list of stakeholders produced to be approached to participate in each. Although no specific DIPs were to be used in this first working group meeting, through the use of brainstorming techniques the process would focus on deliberation rather than being dominated by key interests.

Stage 3 — The Topic Groups

The objective of the topic groups was to bring together all relevant stakeholders covering local interests, experts, and regulatory authorities. It was suggested that, if possible, existing fora should be used to discuss issues, such as the EA’s Salmon Liaison Group or the Avon Valley Liaison Group. The aims of these discussions would be to identify the causal factors for problems on the river (including socio-economics, culture, ecological management etc.), and potential solutions or next steps. As a means of achieving these ends it was suggested that there should be an analysis of existing initiatives according to their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, to assess the extent to which they were delivering positive change for the river, and analyse what should be done within the strategy to try to improve such initiatives. From this analysis a broad picture could be developed of what seemed to work and what did not, leading to ideas on how the strategy process should progress. From this governance-based approach it was hoped that the topic groups would be able to identify some innovative approaches through which management issues could be resolved. More than one meeting would probably be needed in each case.

Stage 4 — Stakeholder Decision Analysis

It was acknowledged that if the strategy was to develop simply through these discrete topic groups which encouraged stakeholders to take decisions focused on their own particular interests, there was a danger that the governance of the river would become more fragmented and the opportunities for stakeholders to gain an understanding of other perspectives of river management would be lost. The working group was seen as an
opportunity to improve relationships between strategic organisations operating on the Avon, and to encourage them to consider the river in a more integrated way. It was therefore suggested to the Project Officer that the working group enrolled in a process to explore and capture the values that they felt should be considered in making governance decisions about the river. Through the use of a DIP called ‘Stakeholder Decision Analysis’, these values could be transferred into criteria and used to prioritise the issues that stakeholders had identified through the topic group discussions and at the first working group meeting. Each topic groups would be represented by at least one individual on the working group and involved in this prioritisation process.

Stakeholder Decision Analysis (SDA) is a deliberative form of multi-criteria analysis, allowing participants to develop social, political and environmental criteria to assess and prioritise a list of defined issues. The method was first trialled for the New Forest Local Environment Agency Plan in 1998 (Clark et al., 1998) and has been used since in several environmental decision-making contexts such as the Severn Estuary Management plan, and the Jersey sustainable development strategy. SDA seemed particularly suitable for the Avon strategy because it enables working group participants to stand back from the details of the issues affecting the river and think about the needs of the river as an integrated system by developing a series of criteria, which are, in effect, principles of good governance for the river. These criteria would provide a transparent and objective way of determining which issues were of high priority. The benefit of carrying out a prioritisation exercise through a deliberative process is that it opens up the judgement of what is important to the management of the Avon to a wider group of stakeholders than EA and EN, and ensures priorities are set not just in terms of achieving favourable condition, but also by considering socio-political and economic values as well. This provides transparency about why certain issues are tackled before others, and to some extent allows stakeholders to hold EN and EN accountable to adhering to the agreed priorities.

The SDA process has six stages:

1. Understanding the issues
2. Defining criteria relevant to the focus of the strategy
3. Ranking criteria
4. Scoring issues (High, Medium or Low) against the top 10 criteria
5. Calculating the priority level of issues, by multiplying the scores of the issues against the rank given to the criteria
6. Reviewing and grouping the priority list.

Once the use of SDA was agreed with EN, a meeting was held with the creator of the SDA process to gain her input on how this process could be adapted to suit the Avon situation. With her advice it was agreed that the SDA process could be held within two facilitated workshops rather than the four used in the New Forest process (Clark et al., 1998). One reason for reducing the number of workshops was because EN was worried about having too many meetings of the working group and the topic groups (many of which met twice). Given the number of other ongoing initiatives and fora on the Avon, and that many working group participants would be involved in the topic groups directly, it was felt the participants would already be familiar with the issues and the context of the strategy. The first meeting as used in the New Forest process, therefore was seen as unnecessary. It was also suggested that it would be possible to do the ranking of criteria remotely through email. The drawback was that working group participants would have less opportunity to build relationships and explore each other’s values, placing greater emphasis on the need for high quality deliberation within each workshop.

Figure 8.3. summarises the strategy process as it was planned.
Figure 8.3. The Strategy Process

**The Matrix Exercise**
Two matrices were circulated to a broad range of stakeholders for feedback on:
1. Activities within the catchment impacting on aspects of river ecology.
2. Initiatives addressing the impact of these activities both indirectly and directly.

**Time Line**

- **July 2001**
  - Agree objectives and parameters of the strategy.
  - Review the results of the matrix, and from this identify topic groups.
  - Agree the use of SDA process.

- **Aug 2001**
  - Familiarise with SDA process and prepare draft criteria
  - Agree list of criteria for prioritising issues for the River Avon cSAC

- **Oct. 2001**
  - Review draft strategy including issues and solutions coming from topic groups

- **Nov. 2001 - June 2002**
  - Project Officer groups issues into a manageable no.
  - Assign weighting to criteria
  - Calculate scores
  - Evaluate issues against criteria
  - Produce & review prioritised list

- **Sept. 2002**
  - Discuss on implementation and further consultation

- **Dec. 2002**
  - Strategy sent out for Written Consultation Exercise

---

**The SDA Process**

- **Pre-WG 2**
  - Familiarise with SDA process and prepare draft criteria

- **WG 2**
  - Agree list of criteria for prioritising issues for the River Avon cSAC

- **WG 3**
  - Review draft strategy including issues and solutions coming from topic groups

- **Pre-WG 4**
  - Project Officer groups issues into a manageable no.
  - Assign weighting to criteria

- **WG 4**
  - Calculate scores
  - Evaluate issues against criteria
  - Produce & review prioritised list

- **WG 5**
  - Discuss on implementation and further consultation

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235
Agreeing this structure marked the end of my formal involvement in the strategy process. The next chapter will report on what happened when this process was put into effect by the Project Officer. It reflects on how the process used stands up to best practice principles of deliberation and inclusion, and concludes with a discussion of the factors affecting decisions made about the Avon strategy process.
Chapter 9.

The Avon River cSAC Conservation Strategy:
Reflections on Deliberation and Inclusion.

Introduction

Evaluation is a vital stage of any project, enabling the project managers and institution to reflect and learn from experience (Clark et al., 2001). In part because of my involvement in its preparation, the arguments presented here cannot be treated as a rigorous evaluation and are written to be understood only as personal reflections on the strategy and my role in it. For reasons of timing and resources it was impossible for this research to extend to carrying out a full evaluation of the Avon strategy process. My role was to analyse the effect of context on process design, so as a result the main part of my involvement in the strategy process was prior to strategy development.

A comprehensive evaluation would require interviews with participants during and/or after the strategy, and/or an intensive discourse-based analysis of the dialogue within the strategy discussions. Both of these activities were deemed to lie beyond the resources and timescale of this research. Moreover, at the time of writing, the strategy remains to be implemented, meaning judgements on the outcomes of the process would be premature – i.e. whether it has resulted in successful changes in management or stakeholder behaviour.

Using the normative criteria of fairness and competence as framing principles, Chapter 9 presents a structured analysis of how the context, framing and management of the process influenced the extent to which the process constituted best practice in deliberation and inclusion. The analysis purposefully includes ‘thick’ descriptions of events, to provide the reader sufficient detail of events and to provide supporting evidence to back up the statements made (Schofield, 1993). Further details of the process and its outputs can be found in Appendix 6. The chapter ends with some conclusions about the influence of context on the use of DIPs, particularly within a narrowly bounded framework.
9.1. The Conservation Strategy

This section provides an overview of the different stages of the strategy process. Details of incidents seen as particularly important will be provided in the subsequent discussion.

9.1.1. Process Overview

The Working Group consisted of EN, EA, Wilts CC, Hants CC, Salisbury DC, Christchurch BC, New Forest DC, Kennet DC, West Wilts DC, Wessex Water, Bournemouth & West Hants Water, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, Hampshire Wildlife Trust, DEFRA (RDS), ASRA, WFA. This encompasses competent authorities and important local organisations and associations with good links to riparian owners, farmers, river managers and local communities. The first meeting sought to agree the objectives and parameters for the strategy, to combine their knowledge and understandings of issues affecting the Avon and of existing initiatives, and to decide what issues the strategy should focus on through in-depth topic group discussions. The objectives and parameters of the strategy as agreed at the first meeting of participants are set out below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Develop the strategy in partnership with others, raising awareness of the cSAC, sharing knowledge and strengthening the links between existing initiatives and bodies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Identify where the cSAC is not in favourable condition, and why not.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Identify initiatives already in place to achieve favourable condition, and assess their effectiveness and additional resource needs (information, money, policy, communications), or where further action is needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4. Identify implementation options, and include a system for reviewing the strategy document and progress with its implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5. Specify the monitoring required for assessment and reporting of the status of the cSAC, and to inform decisions or further actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.6. Disseminate the strategy to relevant parties and ensure the document is widely available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Thames Water and Dorset Wildlife Trust were 'sleeping partners' on the working group.
### Framework:

- The strategy will focus on the designated area and species. However, offsite activities that may impact on the cSAC can be considered.

- Strategy recommendations must be compatible with existing statutory, regulatory and policy frameworks and processes (e.g. local plans, Environment Agency consents etc.). NB these aspects are subject to future change at a national level.

- The strategy must be based on the Conservation Objectives for the River Avon cSAC (Conservation Objectives specify targets that must be reached in order to attain favourable condition according to best current knowledge). Favourable condition has been defined nationally by the conservation agencies, and may not be altered by the strategy.

- A monitoring protocol will be produced for the cSAC, outlining the monitoring method, frequency, and location of data collection. Monitoring will assist in assessing the status of the cSAC and informing management decisions.

> From Minutes of First Working Group Meeting, Avon cSAC strategy process.

As a result of discussion by the Working Group, six topics were selected for in-depth discussion. These were agricultural diffuse pollution, abstraction, fisheries management, ‘problem species’, Christchurch Harbour and restoration and rehabilitation\(^2\). It was also agreed that communication issues and the effect of adjacent designated sites would be considered through all discussions. For those issues lying outside the topic group discussions, it was agreed the Project Officer would review available information and discuss any potential actions with the working group.

The Project Officer led topic group discussions with a nominated chair. Discussions took place over one or two meetings of two hours, depending on the extent of knowledge about the issue. I attended and observed five of these meetings between November 2001 and July 2002. I had access to written minutes for all meetings except the more informal fisheries management and abstraction groups where no minutes were produced.

These discussions shared a common structure focused on:

\(^2\) Abstraction was added at a later date as a result of a request from WFA
1. Agreeing the aims and parameters of the group
2. Sharing information about impacts of activities on the river and the initiatives in place already
3. Defining existing issues to be resolved, and
4. Agreeing actions.

The SDA process occurred over two facilitated workshops and written participation exercises involving the working group. Previous experiences of running the SDA process suggested that a higher quality of deliberation is achieved with a lower number of participants (SDA designer, pers. comm.). For this reason it was suggested that a subsection of the working group were involved in the process of developing criteria. Eight participants volunteered to represent all interests from the Working Group. There was one representative each from EN, county councils, district councils, Wildlife Trusts, each of the fishery and riparian owner associations, water companies, and EA. Participants initially worked in facilitated pairs to brainstorm a list of value judgements that they felt should be considered in the prioritisation of issues coming from the strategy. The final set of criteria were agreed through a facilitated group discussion. The criteria covered a broad range of values, from the nature of the issue itself (i.e. its achievability, severity and the evidence behind it), to the effect of tackling the issue on stakeholder relationships, and effect on the local economy, recreation and biodiversity. Despite the range of interests represented in the process, there was a good deal of coherence between the criteria identified by the different interests. Table 9.1. lists these criteria in ranked order:

Table 9.1. The Final list of Criteria (highest rank first).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank given</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>To what extent will resolving the issue contribute to favourable condition of the cSAC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>To what extent can the issue be resolved in a sustainable way (social, environment, economic)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>To what extent does the resolution of this issue benefit wider biodiversity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Is the issue being addressed by other organisations in the catchment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>To what extent will the action taken improve the level of cooperation from the main users of the river?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>To what extent will the resolution of this issue generate stakeholder commitment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>To what extent is the issue backed up by reliable evidence?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>To what extent can the issue be resolved by the existing statutory, regulatory, policy and legal framework?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>To what extent is the issue a driver for real change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>To what extent will the action taken to resolve the issue enhance the general publics’ perception of the SAC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>To what extent will the resolution of this issue improve the economic potential [income generation or capital value] of the cSAC?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 9

The fourth meeting of the working group, was a facilitated process to use the above criteria to rank the issues coming from the topic groups. Prior to the workshop all the issues and actions coming from the topic groups and other discussions, were grouped by the Project Officer into 24 broad issues. These, alongside the necessary supporting information were distributed to the working group prior to the workshop. Based on this information, participants scored each issue against each criterion, through the process explained in more detail in the Appendix 6, to arrive at an overall score for each issue. Two issues obtained scores much higher than the others. These were strategic rehabilitation and diffuse pollution. The complete list of ranked issues is listed in the Appendix 6.

A draft of the strategy was sent out to a range of stakeholders for consultation. At the third meeting of the Working Group, it was decided that this consultation should not extend to a public consultation, rather that the strategy should be circulated to all those who participated in the process at any stage. In the main, comments were predominantly minor issues of detail, with no criticisms of the process, prioritised issues or proposed actions. However, one group felt they should not have been excluded from the working group discussions, and a few individuals provided additional information for sections which either had not been subject to stakeholder deliberation (e.g. dealing with the effects of climate change), or where the individual did not participate in the topic group discussion. This latter point indicates that despite its efforts at inclusion, the process may not have fully utilised the existing knowledge capacity amongst stakeholders.

9.1.2. Participation in the Strategy.

Table 9.2. presents a summary of the stakeholders who contributed to each stage of the strategy process. Nineteen different organisations and associations were represented on the Working Group, and 24 in the topic group discussions. A total of 31 different organisations were represented in the whole process. However, more than one individual participated from each organisation (55 individuals in total), and within the working group particularly, staff turnover meant that there was not always continuity in those who attended meetings and took part in the two SDA workshops. In addition, stakeholder interests were not always represented by the same individual in working group and topic group discussions. This has implications for the extent to which relationships and trust is developed between participants through the strategy process.
Table 9.2. Participants in the Strategy Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Strategy</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working Group</td>
<td>EN (Wilts, Hants, Dorset), EA, Wessex Water, Bournemouth &amp; West Hants Water; Wilts CC; Hants CC, Kennet CC, New Forest DC; Salisbury DC; West Wilts DC; DEFRA-RDS; Wiltshire Wildlife Trust; Hants Wildlife Trust, WFA; ASRA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Restoration &amp;</td>
<td>EN (Wilts), EN (Hants), EA (Flood defence, restoration), Hants CC, WWT, HWT, WFA, ASRA / Landowner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rehabilitation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Problem Species</td>
<td>EN (Wilts), EA (Environment, Fisheries, Recreation), DEFRA (licensing), WWT, Game Conservancy, ASRA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Agriculture</td>
<td>FWAG, NFU, ASRA/Landowner, RSPB, HWT, DEFRA (RDS &amp; CSS), EA (Landcare), EN (Wilts &amp; Hants)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Christchurch Harbour</td>
<td>EN Dorset, EA (Fisheries, Water Quality), Dorset CC, Christchurch BC, ASRA, WSRT, Christchurch Netsmen, Hengistbury Head Centre, Hengistbury Head Advisory Group, Local Environmental Concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Fisheries</td>
<td>EN (Wilts), EA (Environment, Fisheries, Recreation), WFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Abstraction.</td>
<td>EN (Wilts), WFA, Wessex Water, EA (water resources).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written consultation over draft</td>
<td>All participants in working group and topic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strategy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The strategy process was successful in bringing a broad range of interests together to discuss river matters, particularly those stakeholders who had not tended to discuss riverine issues around the same table. The working group and the restoration and rehabilitation topic group in particular were successful in bringing together representatives from agricultural, landowning, conservation and fisheries interests. As a result, it could be suggested that the strategy process played a small role in facilitating the evolution to more integrated governance through creating new connections between stakeholders. However, as will be discussed in Sections 9.3.1 and 9.3.2, the extent of integration was limited by the framing of the process and the fragmentation effect of the topic group structure.

The strategy was particularly effective at bringing the two major fisheries and landowner associations (WFA and ASRA), more closely into river governance decisions. These two groups were the only non-professional stakeholders to sit on the working group and they were represented on the majority of topic groups. However, the strategy was less successful at bringing other stakeholders more closely into governance networks, particularly other competent authorities. For example, despite sitting on the Working Group, the interests of
chapter 9

county and district councils were not well represented in topic group discussions as a result of their limited interest or knowledge in the issues selected for topic groups.

The participation of stakeholders from different interest areas was often limited to one or two individuals, so although representatives from across a wide range of interests took part in the discussions, the complexity of perspectives and concerns from within a broadly defined interest area were not necessarily well-represented. For example, in the discussion about restoration and rehabilitation the only representatives from the landowning and agricultural interests came from the Game Conservancy Trust and a single landowner, farming in the Avon Valley. Issues of representation will be discussed in more detail in Section 9.3.2.

9.2. Presenting Themes and Criteria for Reflection on the Strategy

9.2.1. Introducing the Criteria of Fairness and Competence

Probably the most robust process-focused evaluation criteria are Webler’s (1995) metacriteria of fairness and competence, based on Habermas’ vision of what constitutes an ideal speech act. The criteria are underpinned by the same principles of inclusion and deliberation that form the basis of this research, and therefore form a useful benchmark against which to examine the extent to which best practice in deliberation and inclusion was met through the process. The subsequent evaluation will reflect on the contextual factors which affected the use of DIPs in the Avon strategy. These process criteria are based on the assumption that by making a decision through the most fair and competent procedure, the result is also likely to be fair and competent (ibid.). Webler believes that a good process is one which provides the opportunity for fair and competent consideration of four types of validity claims – explicative discourses (how language is used to communicate ideas), theoretical discourses (the use of objective statements or factual claims to truth), practical discourses (ethical statements of what an individual feels is appropriate behaviour), and therapeutic discourses (subjective statements through which others can judge the sincerity of the speaker). Fairness is judged according to the extent to which the validity claims held by different stakeholders have the opportunity to influence the decision. A judgement of competence is based on analysis of how the decision-making
process draws on and validates claims made by participants. These criteria are summarised in the text box below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairness:</strong> ‘the distribution among participants of opportunities to act meaningfully’ (Webler, 1995:62).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every actor must be free to act in the following ways during the setting of the agenda, moderation and rule enforcement and in the discussion itself:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend (participate),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate discourse (make validity claims),</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debate (challenge and defend claims), and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decide (influence the decision through a procedure).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competence:</strong> ‘the construction of the best possible understandings and agreements given what is reasonably knowable to the participants’ (Webler, 1995: 65).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The participants must be provided with access to knowledge and its meaning, plus the use of the best available procedural tools to select and validate knowledge claims, so as to make the most competent decision in the situation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9.3. Reflections on the Strategy Process

This section uses the metacriteria of fairness and competence to structure an evaluative discussion about the Avon strategy process. The table below provides an overview of how the process stands up to these criteria:
Table 9.3 Review of the Avon Process Against Criteria of Fairness & Competence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Performance of Process against Criteria</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fairness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Setting the Agenda and Rules</td>
<td>Very limited. Parameters predefined by EN. However, the working group had the opportunity to discuss and agree the overall strategy agenda.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in Selecting Moderator and Method of Facilitation</td>
<td>Limited. Project Officer, who took on the role of moderator, was selected by LIFE Project. Chair of Working Group decided by EN as an impartial and respected local individual. Limited facilitation used, but because of no local expertise in facilitation outsiders brought in.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Participation in the Discussion and Decision-making | Process was separated into two stages – the working group had responsibility for prioritisation and the topic groups had responsibility for making decisions about particular management issues. As a result not all participants had the opportunity for equal participation.  

Recruitment into the topic groups was based on recommendations from members of the working group, and occurred through a snowballing process, utilising local connections and networks.  

Many decisions were seen as lying beyond the scope of the strategy, because they were already taking place through statutory procedures under the Habitats Directive, or other initiatives running concurrently in the area. |

| **Competence**                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Access to Knowledge                   | Topic groups encouraged the sharing of all existing knowledge and meanings amongst participants. Discussions dominated by expert and experiential knowledge of cause and effect, rather than discussion of normative values of the river system. As a result, some individuals contributed to discussions more than others.  

The SDA process focused more on exploring value judgements. |
| Use of best procedures to resolve disputes about knowledge and interpretation | Local and national experts and those with statutory responsibilities were invited to topic group discussions to ensure decisions fell within legal parameters, and to input ‘expert’ knowledge(e.g. EA, DEFRA, University river restoration expert).  

Discussions were seen as only the start of the process to make decisions about river management and with the limited time scale focused on building awareness and mutual understandings. In many cases final ‘decisions’ to change management were not made, rather identified needs for further discussion and knowledge collation to ensure the competence of any decision.  

Statutory authorities tended to demand ‘scientific’ proof to assess the validity of stakeholder claims. |

To examine these observations in more detail, the following section will focus on how different aspects of process design, management and context affected the extent to which the process met best practice in fairness and competence.
9.3.1. The Effect of the Boundaries of Debate on Fairness & Competence.

Chapter 8 explained how the decision to focus the strategy discussions on cSAC issues influenced the selection of key stakeholders and EN’s perceptions of what issues should be included within the boundaries of the strategy process. This framing of the process limited the extent to which other participants were able to influence the agenda of the discussions and therefore the ability of the process to score highly on fairness. The effect of this framing was apparent throughout the different stages of the process, particularly during the agreement over the objectives and framework for the strategy by the Working Group, which in line with EN’s predetermined agenda, would be based on meeting the conservation objectives of the cSAC features. This cSAC focus was then effected through the agendas of the topic groups, where the discussion focused only on those issues affecting the cSAC and actions necessary to achieve favourable condition.

With this limited opportunity to influence the agenda of debates directly, certain participants were observed constructing issues affecting their particular interests as factors impacting the cSAC as a way of ensuring their concerns were on the agenda. In this way they would increase the legitimacy of their personal agendas within the strategy’s limits, and maximise the leverage their interests could gain from the strategy. This is an example of rational strategic behaviour within communicative procedures described in Chapter 2 (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998). By constructing an issue as something affecting the cSAC, it would more likely be tackled during the course of the strategy, and the resolution of the problem would be more likely to be backed politically and in terms of resources by EN and EA. As noted by the Project Officer:

‘Hopefully because of the European designation, it gives extra leverage to the things that need to happen if you like … some of the things I put in [the strategy] reinforce actions in other places, but because they are needed for the SAC as well it gives them extra weight, if you like’. (Project Officer)

An example of these tactics was observed in the Problem Species topic group where WFA representatives raised the problem of localised mute swan grazing on *Ranunculus* (which affects the quality of fish habitat and angling) and their concerns that it was having a significant impact on the favourable condition of *Ranunculus*. In another example, in the Christchurch Harbour topic group, local environmentalists concerned about powerboating in the harbour claimed this activity affected bank erosion and encouraged sedimentation of the harbour. In both these cases, representatives of EN and EA who held the responsibility
for consenting the desired changes, felt there was limited evidence to back up the claims of these stakeholders, and were not willing to make any decisions without further research.

In the first topic group on restoration and rehabilitation of the river channel and floodplain, the effect of the narrowly framed discussion appeared to be a limitation on the quality of the dialogue. Participants attempted to constrain the discussion to focus on the parameters of the strategy's boundaries, whereas in reality the issues were far wider reaching. For example, early in the first meeting, participants realised that to discuss the effect of rehabilitation projects in the floodplain and channel required consideration of the objectives to achieve favourable condition of the neighbouring valley SPA as well as the river cSAC, and the participation of those influential over agricultural management in the valley (particularly ditch clearance). Given those present in the meeting and the knowledge they had access to (which was predominantly river focused), it was apparent to those present that it would not be possible for them to make competent decisions. As will be discussed later, this led to a reinforcement of demands for more integrated discussions, considering the river and valley as a single unit, and highlighted the unsuitability of the strategy's boundaries to the nature of this particular issue. The way in which the strategy was framed therefore influenced the extent to which outcomes could be reached within confines of the cSAC process. As a result, participants reframed the agenda for the issue of restoration and rehabilitation for a future process within a more integrated framework.

The bias towards the interests of EN within the process was visibly reflected in the outcomes of the SDA process. The highest overall ranked criterion was 'To what extent will resolving the issue contribute to favourable condition of the cSAC?'. In Working Group 4 some consternation amongst participants was noted about the low priority awarded to those issues which were still seen as a major problem for the catchment but not for the cSAC as a result of this ranking exercise. For example, issues such as water level management were not a priority in terms of the strategy's narrowly defined objectives, despite being a major issue affecting the functionality of the Avon valley from a conservation and agricultural perspective. In response to this concern, EN representatives present at the meeting with the responsibility for conservation interests in the Avon Valley, assured participants that although the issue of water level management was not a high priority for the cSAC, it was still a high local priority for the effective management of

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3 In fact from a nature conservation perspective, the Avon Valley SPA is generally considered to be in worse ecological condition than the river cSAC. (EN, Conservation Officer, pers. comm.)
the Avon Valley and they would continue in their efforts to tackle it. This questions the relevance of the prioritisation process to organisations with responsibilities to deliver on issues other than the cSAC, and highlights a major difference between the use of SDA in the prioritisation of actions for a single organisation and for multiple organisations. The SDA process was initially developed as a prioritisation tool for EA’s forthcoming activities under the Local Environment Agency Plan (Clark et al., 1998). In contrast, SDA in the Avon River Conservation Strategy was used to prioritise issues requiring the commitment of multiple organisations, but was focused on delivering favourable condition on one designated site only. As a result, the prioritised outcomes will undoubtedly be a useful tool for EN and EA to focus their activities on achieving favourable condition, but the extent to which other agencies will use these priorities is uncertain.

Several conclusions can be drawn from these observations about the effect of framing on fairness and competence. First, the focus on cSAC features limited the extent to which participating stakeholders were able to influence the agenda. The agendas of stakeholders were only seen as relevant as and when they overlapped with the interests of the cSAC. As a result, the strategy only focused on a subset of all the issues and interests present amongst local stakeholders and was constructed as a process to help EN (and to a lesser extent other competent authorities) fulfil their responsibilities under the Habitats Directive. This led to evidence of strategic behaviour by certain stakeholders to try and maximise the benefits they could accrue from the process and led to the efficacy of such boundaries to tackle certain issues affecting the cSAC being challenged by participants.

9.3.2. The Influence of Process Design on Fairness and Competence

The rationale for the use of a two-stage process to structure stakeholder participation is discussed in Chapter 8. Through a two-tier process the stakeholder engagement process was able to focus on different types of deliberation in line with the particular objectives of each tier. As a result, the process, when evaluated through the normative principles of fairness and competence had particular strengths and weaknesses. Most notably, the segregation of roles between the Working Group and topic groups, led to participants

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4 It should be noted that these boundary of the discussions was made explicit at the start of the strategy, to ensure that participants did not have misguided expectations of what the strategy could deliver.
having differential opportunities to influence the final outcomes of the strategy, and may have compromised the desire for wider integration of stakeholder co-operation (see Munton, 2003 for a similar criticism of a segregated process proposed by Renn et al., 1993).

The two-stage process also clearly segregated value-based dialogue (in the SDA) and the more rational, issue-focused discussions within the topic groups\(^5\). Through the structured SDA process undertaken by the Working Group, participants engaged in deliberation based on value judgements about what they felt should be important considerations when assessing the priority of issues. Rather than discussing the details of the issues themselves, the SDA process ensures dialogue is focused on explicative, practical and therapeutic discourses, with the aim of building mutual expectations between stakeholders about the principles of good governance as they understand them. The topic groups on the other hand were in-depth discussions focused largely on theoretical discourses, i.e. sharing information and knowledge about cause and effect of impacts on the CSAC, and experiences of existing initiatives. These discussions were responding to the need for technically informed solutions to management problems affecting the river, and the identified need for the strategy to collate existing knowledge and identify actions (see Chapter 8).

The structured approach and the use of facilitators within SDA towards the comparison and prioritisation of issues ensured that all participants were given equal opportunity to influence the final priorities. In terms of opportunities for participants to initiate, debate and decide, the SDA process has the potential to score highly for fairness. But, because of the complexity of calculations required to compute priorities, the criteria setting process was made open only to eight people (acting as representatives for the whole working group), while only 13 people were involved in the prioritisation process. Within this structure then, fairness was traded off against competence and pragmatism, leaving the results of the SDA process potentially vulnerable to criticism if topic group participants and other stakeholders outside this part of the process did not agree with the priorities agreed. In this way competence was clearly traded off against fairness.

\(^5\) This segregation has a similarity with the model for analytic-deliberative decision-making suggested by Ortwin Renn, whereby processes of value elicitation and policy design are undertaken through separate deliberative processes (Renn et al., 1993; Renn, 1999). Their rationale was to maintain a highly competent process by allowing stakeholders, experts and citizens to contribute according to their particular expertise and experiences.
The extent of deliberation and inclusion within the topic groups was heavily influenced by pre-existing governance networks and knowledge. However, it must be acknowledged that basing deliberations around this knowledge results in an increased likelihood of reinforcing the existing framing of river governance debates, and that the opportunity for creative thinking may have been compromised (see Pellizzoni, 2001). The focus on existing frameworks and knowledge, also meant there was less emphasis within discussions on the exploration of underlying stakeholder values. Rather, discussion was driven by the desire to identify common ground (i.e. the overlap of interests rather than a true consensus) on which to base agreement over a way forward.

The emphasis within the topic group discussions was on achieving the most competent decision in light of available information, and when knowledge was felt to be inadequate, proposing new research or further consideration of the issue within other fora and arena on the Avon. This emphasis on competence within topic groups, meant that participants were selected according to a judgement on their access to knowledge as well as their ability to represent certain interests likely to be affected by a decision. In other words, inclusion was judged in terms of 'cognitive' abilities as well as their normative right to participate (see Pellizzoni, 2003). Topic groups were formed of a mix of ‘experts’ and stakeholders. Because the discussions were dominated by the sharing of information and there was no facilitation, dialogue tended to be dominated by those participants who had greatest access to scientific and technical knowledge, which was usually English Nature or the Environment Agency. It was clear from debate that ‘experience-based expertise’ was also considered legitimate, albeit framed within the limits of scientific rationality (see Collins & Evans, 2002). However, in some cases ‘scientific proof’ was deemed necessary by EA, EN and DEFRA to prove the legitimacy of stakeholder statements.

The consideration of who participates raises issues about representation. As noted above, some individuals were constructed as representing a certain area of knowledge, rather than a particular stakeholder group. For example, an employee of Hampshire County Council participated within the rehabilitation and restoration topic group. However, this individual was effectively participating in the guise of an ‘expert’ in archaeology and water meadow restoration, rather than as a representative of the council and all its functions. This raises

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6 This was particularly noted in the Agriculture topic group, which was attended by many individuals who were either new to their post, or had not been previously involved in discussions about the effect of diffuse pollution on the Avon. The discussion here was almost completely dominated by the participant from EN and the EA Landcare Project Officer.
another notable difference between the SDA and topic group discussions. Within the SDA processes participants were acting as representatives of the range of interests in the Avon river system. Their role as 'experts' was not seen as relevant to the nature of the value-based dialogue. However, within the topic group decision-making process, participants were acting as representatives of a particular knowledge-base, and/or stakeholder group.

The issue of representation is a complex and contested issue within the design of DIPs. There must be clarity as to whether participants are representing certain interests, or are representatives of a particular group (Petts, 2001). If they are representing interests, to what extent is their behaviour accountable and legitimate in the eyes of their constituents (O’Neill, 2001)? That participants were really representing those they claim to be was a major assumption within the strategy process. However, as noted within the Avon process, participants were often involved through a variety of guises as expert, an individual within society, and as a representative of a group of people.

To some extent, the extent to which individuals are able to represent others is dependent on the extent to which the stakeholder interests are organised. WFA, for example, are very well-organised, with an elected committee and a clear division of roles between members relating to particular aspects of river management. However, the relationship between the representing participants and the represented is not so clear cut. The WFA admit their inability to directly influence the decisions made by their members relating to the management of what is a private resource (WFA committee member, pers. comm.). Therefore, while the extent of inclusion may have helped to improve the perceived legitimacy and relevance of the strategy outcomes, with inclusion limited to primarily strategic interests, the process is not able to guarantee local compliance with any subsequent initiatives. Landowners, farmers, river managers and anglers have individual complexity of interests and needs, and different motivations to participate in an initiative to protect cSAC interests, which is likely to be affected not only by a rational consideration of the costs and benefits of participation, but their previous experiences, particularly with the agency responsible for the initiative and their personal beliefs (Myers & Macnaghten, 1998).

Other local stakeholders interests are less well organised. A single landowner participated in the agriculture and restoration topic groups, but had no authority to represent all farmers and land owners in the Avon valley, even if he was able to input the views of a farmer into the process. NFU, FWAG, the Landcare Project Officer and the agri-environment scheme officers were all also able to provide an insight into the situation of farmers into the topic
group on diffuse pollution, and the Landcare Project Officer and the ESA Project Officer were able to input an agricultural viewpoint into the working group. These stakeholders were therefore representing a particular area of knowledge, rather than the interests of particular stakeholders.

As will be discussed in more depth later, the strength of the topic group discussions seemed to be in the sharing of knowledge, and the coming together of key stakeholders who tended to have a strategic knowledge or influence over river management, to identify ways to integrate the Habitats Directive into existing governance mechanisms and instigate any new mechanisms for delivery. As noted by the Project Officer, in fact very few actual decisions were made that would directly affect management on the ground. To further develop some of the ideas raised in the strategy process, best practice recommends that DIPs are held to identify how the outcomes can best be translated into decisions relevant to the local interests and needs of individual stakeholders (through the use of existing outreach connections such as the farmer discussion groups for example).

It is clear therefore that the strategy was only the starting point for a further series of necessary deliberation within and between stakeholders. It is too early to tell whether the presence of individuals from the range of interest groups involved in river governance issues means that the framing of these subsequent deliberations is seen as legitimate and relevant.

For some issues and stakeholders, the limited time and resources of the strategy process led to a decision by EN that issues should be tackled through a separate forum altogether. For example, EN felt that an ongoing forum where a range of representatives from the councils and EN met on a regular basis over a period of a year would be a more suitable approach to building the relationships with the councils relating to the Habitats Directive, despite this falling within the remit of the strategy (EN, Conservation Officer, pers. comm.). As a result it is unlikely that the strategy process has done anything more than raising the awareness of a few individuals from these councils.

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7 This planning forum is now running.
9.3.3. The Effect of Process Management

(i) The role of the Project Officer.

As the strategy progressed it became increasingly clear that the personality, skills and objectives of the individuals running the process were highly influential over the process and outcomes of the deliberation. Particularly influential is the role of the Project Officer both within and outside the formal stakeholder participation process. This section explores how the role of the Avon Project Officer evolved to become a critical and influential juncture between both the stakeholder networks developed to produce a strategy, but also within the wider governance networks of the Avon.

A considerable proportion of the Project Officer's time was spent on administrative roles such as organising and liaising with participants over the stakeholder meetings, collating the necessary information for meetings, and writing up and distributing the minutes. Beyond all this, the Project Officer had an important role enrolling potential participants into the process and maintaining relationships with stakeholders during the process. A Project Officer with good communication skills appears to be an important factor in a successful process. She was also the only individual who was present at all topic group and working group meetings. Consequently she became increasingly knowledgeable about the Avon system, and particularly the inter-relationships between different management issues, which because of the fragmented nature of the process, other participants were unable to gain to the same extent. She was able to feed this knowledge into the strategy, by explaining to the topic groups how their discussions overlapped with other issues relevant to the strategy, and sharing relevant knowledge between topic groups. As she became more knowledgeable about the issues, she increasingly adopted a moderating role in topic groups discussions, where she drove discussions forward and, in some cases where the groups were making little progress suggested potential ways forward.

The most extreme example of this lay in the restoration and rehabilitation topic group. In this case, partly because of the complexity of the issue and the fact that it overlapped with her own personal expertise in river restoration and hydraulic engineering, the Project Officer played an important role in bringing her own knowledge to the topic group and indeed entered into negotiation with an outside expert on river restoration to bring knowledge to the meeting to help drive the issue forward. As a result, much of the preparation for one of the key outcomes of the strategy - a strategic framework for in-
Chapter 9

channel and floodplain rehabilitation to help prioritise sites for rehabilitation — occurred outside the topic group, with input from participants through email, and was finally discussed and agreed by participants within the second topic group meeting.

This was not the only example where the strategy was progressed through discussions occurring outside of the structured fora of the working and topic groups. For example, some aspects of the process occurred through remote, electronic consultation, such as the distribution and completion of the information-gathering matrices and the criteria ranking exercise. This was seen as a necessary part of efficiency within the process by reducing the number of meetings that stakeholders had to attend, and an opportunity was always provided for the results of these exercises to be discussed at the following meeting. In addition, the working group decided that some issues did not require in-depth deliberation within the context of the strategy process, even though they were constructed as a 'problem' for the cSAC. They included development and planning control, communication and external influences. The issue of communication was implicitly discussed in all topic groups, but no overall strategic discussion was held, whereas development and planning control and external influences were not discussed, and any comments made within the strategy document, came from the Project Officer.

As the strategy progressed, the Project Officer also began to play a more prominent role in local governance networks as other organisations attempted to capitalise on her knowledge of issues across the whole of the Avon within their own networks. For example, she participated in strategic discussions about the future direction of the Landcare Project, and sat on the Avon Valley Liaison Group. As a result she developed an important role as a communication channel between stakeholders, both within and outside of the strategy process. Having such an individual affiliated to English Nature was hugely beneficial to the organisation, bearing in mind the fact that responsibility for the Avon cSAC was distributed across three local teams. In particular, she was able to contribute to the understanding of social and political aspects of river management. In contrast, the focus of EN's activities tended to be the particularities of SSSI and Habitats Directive case work. The wider benefits to EN from her position are explained below:

'I wonder, well I know, that they underestimate the amount of work that a river is going to bring — SSSI or SAC. Because on top of all the extra planning case work

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8 Interestingly, in the communications section of the strategy, my own comments about communication were included based on the findings of the stakeholder interviews.
with SACs that you get, ... if there are problems out there that you can't solve by legislation you're going to have to get out there and get people motivated and get a body of momentum behind things to get things to shift. And you're not going to be able to do that on your own. So me being in the [EN] office just means that there's an extra person who's only looking at the river, and not worrying about case work, not worrying about any of the day to day stuff, purely out there to find out how to work with other people to do something, and what needs to be done. And I am there giving EN a consistent presence down the whole river as well. So in that way, I've done a lot of filtering of information between the EA and EN and kind of oiling the wheels... I'm the one person that goes to meetings of all the different things that go on, on the Avon. Not the day to day stuff but the kind of liaison stuff. I seem to go to more meetings across the whole river system. And because I'm looking at all different aspects, I've got more idea of the overall picture than most of them have. So I can kind of bring that into the office and say, "Oh this is going on, did you know about this in Hampshire?"' (Project Officer)

As the primary author of the strategy, the access of the Project Officer to knowledge networks was hugely beneficial to the production of a competent strategy document. However, it could be argued that this role developed out of necessity from a process which did not place enough emphasis on effective integration across the different issue networks. The Project Officer has an important role as the key locus of intersection between the new and existing stakeholder networks. This raises a concern that this integration of knowledge will be lost once the Project Officer's contract is terminated, and this important node for connection between stakeholders disappears.

(ii) The influence of EN on the strategy

It was noticed that the management of the process and the decisions made by the Project Officer were strongly influenced by the local EN team, and her line manager in particular. The influence of this individual over process design was discussed in Chapter 8, but EN attitudes and objectives were also very influential over the process as it evolved, both behind the scenes and within the stakeholder discussions. As well as supporting and guiding the Project Officer, her line manager played a key role in drafting the objectives and framework to the strategy (which clearly constructed it with a cSAC focus), and participated in the working group and four of the six topic groups. She used her position to ensure the strategy progressed in a way that was relevant to local EN objectives and the local team's way of working with stakeholders on the river. As the Project Officer's line manager noted herself:

'Because that's the approach I've taken, and because I've been heavily involved in it [the strategy], then I've ensured that's how the strategy approach is. And because [the Project Officer is] based in the office with me, and I tend to be an
influence, quite a strong influence, so therefore it's a bit difficult to say whether
the strategy, if it had been based in Hampshire or Dorset – it would probably
have been slightly different.' (EN Conservation Officer & Line Manager to the
Project Officer)

The line manager saw the strategy as an extension and advancement of the work that she
and other local EN staff had been undertaking over the past five years, building
relationships with key stakeholder groups and developing knowledge about what changes
would be needed to existing management practices to meet favourable condition targets for
the cSAC.

Evidence of this influence was particularly explicit in the decision made within the Working
Group to set up a topic group to discuss fisheries management – an idea proposed by the
Wiltshire EN team. The strategy was seen as a particular opportunity for EN to open up
debates about controversial management issues even if they would not be resolved within
the lifetime of the strategy. For example, at the time of notification, the stocking of fish
into the river was perceived by English Nature as being too politically controversial and not
well enough understood to be mentioned in the list of Operations Likely to Damage, yet
staff understood that at some point it would be desirable to encourage a change in fisheries
management to be more sympathetic to the cSAC interests:

'The strategy gave us the opportunity. I think you came to the first working group
meeting didn't you, and that was the first time I'd ever said I think we ought to sit
down and just have a quiet chat about fishing. And it [the strategy] gave us the
framework for that to happen in and it enabled us to say there are issues with
fisheries management, or there are potentially issues with fisheries management.
So if you like, the context that the strategy is happening, gave us the remit to raise
the issue, because it's in the context of all the issues being addressed. It wasn't
that we were picking on fishing'. (EN Conservation Officer & Line Manager)

(iii) The influence of perspective on process management

Whilst my observations of the strategy were particularly focused on the extent to which
the strategy process met best practice principles of deliberation and inclusion, it was clear
that the Project Officer and EN were likely to place different levels of emphasis on aspects
of the process. This leads to differing and potentially competing perspectives by which the
effectiveness of a decision or process is judged, and therefore how the process evolves
under the management of these individuals. The concept of competing values (Quinn &
Rohrbaugh, 1983), has been used to explore competing evaluative criteria in participation
processes (e.g. Mumpower, 1995; Vari, 1995; and Cowie & O'Toole, 1998). In this context
the idea is applied to gain an understanding of how the perspective and objectives of those running a participatory process may influence decisions made during process management. The Competing Values Approach sets out three perspectives from which attitudes towards decision-making processes may vary, presented in Figure 9.1:

- The structure of the process, with variability in the extent to which there is emphasis on control or flexibility (i.e. the extent to which the process is open and exploratory, or closely bounded).
- The focus of the process, whether the process emphasises meeting the needs of those directly involved (an internal focus), or the perspectives of the wider public (an external focus).
- The emphasis on process or outcome (whether priority is given to how the decision is made or the substance of the decision itself).

**Figure 9.1 Perspectives on Effectiveness - The Competing Values Approach (taken from Cowie & O'Toole, 1998)**

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<th><strong>EXTERNAL</strong></th>
<th><strong>INTERNAL</strong></th>
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<td><strong>CONTROL</strong></td>
<td>RATIONAL</td>
<td>EMPRICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goal-centred process</td>
<td>Efficient decision</td>
<td>Data-based process</td>
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<td>Efficient decision</td>
<td>Accountable decision</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FLEXIBILITY</strong></td>
<td>POLITICAL</td>
<td>CONSENSUAL</td>
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<td>Adaptable process</td>
<td>Participatory process</td>
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<td>Legitimate decision</td>
<td>Supportable decision</td>
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Using these dimensions some interesting observations can be made about how the strategy evolved under the management of the Project Officer and the influence of her line manager. In terms of the structure of the process, the Project Officer and EN adopted a fairly 'controlled' perspective, because of their wish that the process put in place mechanisms to deliver favourable condition. This is illustrated in the refusal to tackle issues of local community involvement and access to the river, or the management needs of the Avon Valley SPA. This control of the deliberation within topic groups also meant that
greater emphasis was placed on getting all the existing knowledge collated than to facilitate the dialogue towards a shared value-base for river governance.

In terms of the focus of the process, the emphasis of the topic group discussions was to ensure that any outcomes were supported, and seen as acceptable, by those participating rather than the wider population. This was because the nature of the strategic level discussions meant that those participating would hold responsibility for taking issues forward and implementing them.

Finally, and arguably most influential, under the management of the Project Officer, the strategy process was very concerned with ensuring that the strategy was action-oriented, and the effect of this was apparent throughout the strategy process. It was an issue raised in terms of strategy design (see Chapter 8). The importance of outcomes to EN is illustrated by the fact that even before the workshop to prioritise the issues took place, meetings were being held between groups of stakeholders about taking issues forward to an implementation phase. Over particular issues where there was uncertainty or underlying conflict, such as the example of the fisheries management topic group, less emphasis was placed on reaching an agreed action and more on exploratory discussion. EN were keen that the fisheries management discussion built relationships between participants rather than trying to resolve some of the long-term underlying conflicts between conservation and fisheries management in a single meeting:

‘And we puzzled, and puzzled, and puzzled about the fisheries stuff, and [the Project Officer] was getting worried that we needed to get the fisheries stuff sorted for the strategy, and I’ve always said “No we don’t. It’s an issue, but it’s not going to be resolved in five months”’ (EN Conservation Officer & Line Manager)

A further supposition is that the emphasis on achieving implementable outcomes explains why political and strategic issues like ineffective communication between stakeholders was not the focus of a topic group, despite being identified as a massive problem affecting the river. It was ranked fourth in the results of the prioritisation exercise. Issues such as communication are diffuse and benefits in terms of the cSAC difficult to capture.

(iv) Experience and expertise in running DIPs

The final observation to make about the management of the strategy process is linked to the fact that the Project Officer had no previous experience of running a DIP or facilitating
stakeholder discussions. Moreover, DIPs were a different way of working for the local EN team and local stakeholders, despite the emphasis the Wiltshire EN team had previously placed on building and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders. EN's inexperience of using these processes, I believe, led to some nervousness of opening up the strategy process to the agendas of other stakeholders, particularly noticeable in the first working group meeting where EN were seemingly unwilling to encourage a wide debate on what the objectives of the strategy should be. EN were far more comfortable adopting a controlled approach to engaging stakeholders, through setting out EN's objectives and asking for feedback. This observation overlaps with the findings presented in Chapter 5, of the nervousness of EN staff towards the use of DIPs.

(v) The importance of facilitation

One key aspect of process management which can have a big effect on fairness and competence is the issue of facilitation (Sidaway, 1998). There are key differences between the roles of a chair and a facilitator, notably that facilitators prevent certain interests dominating the discussion. Despite advice that the use of facilitators constitutes best practice in DIPs, the Project Officer in collaboration with her line manager, decided that stakeholders would feel more comfortable with a familiar and respected figure acting as a chair for discussions instead of an independent and unknown facilitator, with the exception of facilitators for the two SDA workshops. As the selected chairs were local, it became apparent that in topic group discussions, the individuals chosen as chair had their own vested interest or opinion on the issue being discussed. In several topic group meetings the Chair was observed dominating rather than managing the discussion. To reduce this effect, the Project Officer started to take a more prominent role in managing these discussions herself, and the role of the chair effectively became defunct. However, the lack of an independent facilitator raises the question of how the issues raised within the discussions are used. The Project Officer's management and recording of the discussion could easily be biased towards meeting the instrumental requirements of producing a strategy, rather than creating a record that fairly reflects all concerns of stakeholders (see Renn et al., 1995 for comments on the role of facilitators).

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9 The role of a chair is to introduce the discussion, maintain order and keep the discussion to the agenda. The role of a facilitator is to guide the discussion and ensure all participants are given equal opportunity to participate and influence any decisions, in part by employing techniques to encourage deliberation (Sidaway, 1998).
9.4. Deliberation and Inclusion in the Context of Wider Governance Culture

The effect of existing knowledge governance initiatives on the strategy process has already been noted. In addition, decisions had to take into consideration statutory responsibilities and the legal rights of participants. This section will consider the effects of these boundaries imposed by the strategy’s context in more depth.

9.4.1. Deliberation and Inclusion in a Highly Regulated Environment

The strategy process was embedded a highly regulated system where EA and EN hold the statutory responsibility for many aspects of river management. Unsurprisingly then, participants from both these organisations had a disproportionate influence over the strategy process in an explicit and implicit way. In particular, the extent to which the topic groups discussions could ever be truly fair and competent across all discourses was limited because of the role of statutory agencies as having the ‘final say’ over certain aspects of river management. Where possible, EA and EN ensured that the appropriate people to take these decisions were present in strategy meetings, such as the Head of Environment, Fisheries and Recreation who attended the Problem Species and Fisheries topic group, and the Area Manager who attended the final working group meeting.

In decisions where one stakeholder has legal responsibility for the outcome, it is not possible for a ‘level playing field’ in decision-making, and the extent to which management of the river is regulated meant that the judgement of competence of many decisions was subject to legal procedures such as an appropriate assessment. These responsibilities meant that decisions made within the topic groups which required legal consent required a high level of technical competency and scientific evidence for EA and EN to agree to consent to them\(^1\).

\(^1\) An example of this lies in proposals raised in the ‘problem species’ topic group for DEFRA and EN to consent to the control of the mute swan population on the river. According to EN, a decision to control swan populations on the Avon would require scientific and legally defensible ‘proof’ that swan grazing was affecting the favourable condition of the cSAC, an agreement that there were no alternative solutions and a high confidence that any measures would be successful (Minutes of Problem Species Topic Group).
Chapter 9

The extent of regulation of issues raised in the strategy, did not only lead to an emphasis on certain types of evidence and discourses within topic group discussions, but also affected which issues were constructed as being negotiable within the strategy. Some issues, such as discharge of pollutants into the river from agriculture, sewage treatment works and fishfarms, were not discussed in detail, because decisions about their occurrence fall under the statutory Review of Consents process, which is the responsibility of the EA. Similarly, the issue of abstraction of water falls under the Asset Management Plan process negotiated between EA and the Water Companies. Interestingly, in the case of abstraction a topic group was held at the request of WFA, despite the fact they were not directly able to influence decisions. This highlights the role of deliberation as a means of encouraging transparency about efforts being made to tackle issues affecting stakeholder interests.

These observations illustrate the extent to which in a heavily regulated system, many decision-making processes cannot meet the normative principles of fairness and competence because they are embedded in a system of instrumental rationality - far from Habermas' ideas of an ideal speech situation which claims that 'no force except that of the better argument is exercised' (Habermas, 1975:108). This is particularly the case when the whole process itself is embedded in a system of instrumental rationality, such as the Habitats Directive.

The way in which the Habitats Directive has been brought into practice has exacerbated the prevalence of instrumental rationality in UK conservation, because the mechanisms do not encourage the identification of shared agendas and cooperative working. The process of carrying out an appropriate assessment of a proposed development for example, requires the development simply to comply with the standards of favourable condition set by the nature conservation agencies:

'If people want to put in a development on that site [a cSAC], there is no democratic means for them to argue that particular case - democracy has been removed from the process. In fact it is not sustainable development, it is outside the process of sustainable development – there is no balance there. There's no social inclusion, there is simply a compliance requirement.' (EN, Local staff)

The definition of what was negotiable within the Avon process was hugely influenced by decisions taken under the guise of the Habitats Directive at an international, national and a local level. A series of negotiations and decisions made at the level of the European Commission, the UK Parliament and within English Nature itself, have predetermined the focus of the debate, the key mechanisms and principles that will be used to ensure the
protection of these 'important' species and habitats, and how it can be ascertained whether
that species and habitat is in 'favourable condition'\textsuperscript{11}. As a result most of the parameters
influencing river management had already been laid down or were in the process of being
resolved through separate 'closed' procedures. At a local level the strategy was seen as a
particularly useful fora to tackle either those issues which were not included in the list of
SSSI Operations Likely to Damage, for reasons of a lack of scientific evidence or the
sensitivity of the subject (such as fisheries management on the Avon), or were too diffuse,
making regulation through the normal consents process difficult (e.g. diffuse pollution).

The statutory agencies therefore had a disproportionate influence over the broad framing
of the agenda, what was constructed as legitimate knowledge and the authority to make
decisions. However, participants were also aware of the risk that if 'consensus' was not
reached through a collaborative and communicative approach, the statutory agencies had
the power to resort to a regulatory approach. In addition, EA and EN had an important
role as a potential source of funding for local stakeholders and the outcomes of the
strategy. Therefore, it is not unlikely that the outcomes would be biased to those issues
which participants believed would most likely be supported and /or delivered through the
agencies (see Mosse, 2001, for a similar observation on the use of PRA). The external
power of the agencies over the process, both external to and within the process of
dialogue, influences the agreed outcomes (Pellizzoni, 2001).

9.4.2. Looking Forward to Outcomes – Utilising and Enhancing Existing Initiatives

At the time of writing it is too early to discuss what outcomes have and have not come
from the strategy, either as a result of the process used (process outcomes), or the decisions
made (decision outcomes). However, several observations can be made about potential
outcomes. EN feel that the main strength of the strategy process has been that it created
agreement on the key issues to be tackled relating to river management, and raised local
support and a momentum to address them:

'What it's done is it's brought forward a small number of issues that fall outside
the statutory process, which are the ones where further actions are needed. And
everybody think that all of those are important one way or another. And action is

\textsuperscript{11} It should be noted, that the decision not to open up the interpretation of 'favourable condition'
to local stakeholders is in fact a organisational culture issue, not a feature of the Habitats Directive.
As a result of the participation of well-connected stakeholders, EN hopes to take advantage of existing networks in the implementation phase of the strategy and future decision-making about issues affecting the Avon cSAC. The role of the strategy appeared to evolve from a process focused solely on decision-making, to one where building networks between stakeholders and enhancing the capacity of existing initiatives was equally important. Therefore, it is hoped that one of the key transformative outcomes of the strategy will have been its contribution to the development of social and political capital, and the capacity for future collaboration to tackle problems (Beierle & Konisky, 2001). The local EN Conservation Officer observed how she felt the strategy had played an important part in reinvigorating some of the existing initiatives in the area and developing relationships, which could then go on to play an important role in delivering favourable condition for the Avon:

For diffuse pollution, the LIFE project I think has done some good, because bringing together the LIFE project has helped focus the Landcare partnership… There’s also Water Level Management Plan process is finally getting going, they’ve finally got their Project Officer, and that will feed in, in terms of the restoration stuff. There’s the agri-environment review … So you’ve got a combination of good local stuff from EN with a very, very clear sense of direction. We might not know what the end point is but we know broadly what we are working towards and we are determined to get there. And then you’ve got this good partnership stuff, and the strategy has helped with that.’ (EN Conservation Officer)

In some cases however, it was apparent that existing initiatives were inadequately covering key issues affecting the river, and in these cases decisions were made by participants to continue to meet. Of the six topic groups set up, the Problem Species group decided to continue to meet, and the Christchurch Harbour group expressed an interest in modifying to become a forum to discuss all harbour issues. The Agricultural Diffuse Pollution and Fisheries Management topic groups have been involved in setting up new partnership-based activities to take forward identified actions. The issue of restoration and rehabilitation is to be developed on a much bigger scale involving the working group and topic group representatives in a partnership to develop a bid for funding of a large-scale
integrated project. This aims to develop a strategic approach to valley and river restoration issues, engaging fisheries, farmers, landowners, local communities and conservationists in a process to determine the most appropriate sites for restoration and habitat enhancement projects that consider all values and needs of the land. This project will incorporate the two highest ranking issues as well as many of the other issues identified through the strategy. The planned project is described below by the English Nature Conservation Officer with a strategic lead for the Avon:

‘If we have anything, what we want is a big major strategic project that is looking at bringing in things like large scale habitat restoration where that’s needed, reconnecting the river and its floodplain where it’s possible. It’s going to be much easier in some places, not others, and we’ve got to recognise that. Working, trying to integrate that with sustainable land drainage and flood relief type systems and bringing in more of the cultural and archaeological heritage, including landscape and recreation and making it more accessible. And that is actually a Lifescapes project.’

As such, the strategy is only the beginning of a much wider process of stakeholder engagement about the Avon’s management, which will in time involve more stakeholders in direct decision-making about the river. As very few actual ‘management’ decisions were taken in the course of the strategy process, the majority of identified actions were based either on the need for more research or for other organisations and projects to take certain issues into consideration within their operations. In particular, the extent to which implementation can tap into existing links with stakeholders on the ground, such as the farmer discussion groups, and Water Level Management Plan groups will be a critical factor in the strategy’s success. A one-off initiative such as the development of the strategy will have no long-term impact unless the social connections developed are maintained and there is effective integration of the knowledge, ideas and concerns raised in the strategy process into the behaviour of stakeholders and the objectives of new and existing projects. This requires effective social and institutional learning (see Knoepfel & Kissling-Naf, 1999).

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12 At the time of writing two Project Officers had been employed by EN to develop funding bids to LIFE and the Heritage Lottery Fund for the River Avon and Avon Valley Initiative. These bids are being managed by a partnership based around the Avon strategy Working Group, plus WSRT and DEFRA.
9.5. Conclusions: Reflecting on Fitness for Purpose

Taking part in the design and observing the development of the Avon cSAC river conservation strategy process has enabled me to make observations about the effect of institutional and local contexts on process design and evolution. At this early stage, English Nature are confident that the strategy will play an important and successful role in securing favourable condition of the river cSAC. So from their perspective, so far, the strategy has been a success, even if the strategy process itself has not always met the best practice criteria of fairness and competence.

9.5.1. Trade-offs in Process Design

The Avon study has illustrated that in the design and management of a process to engage stakeholders trade-offs are frequently inevitable. One noticeable trade-off was between the fairness of the process and the competence of the outcomes. Reviewing the analysis of eight citizen participation processes against the criteria of fairness and competence, Renn et al. (1995), acknowledge that 'depending on the kind of problem and the social context in which the decision is to take place, certain attributes of fairness and competence will matter more than others' (Renn et al., 1995: 358; original emphasis). The Avon process emphasises the achievement of competent and supported decisions over an equitable and inclusive process. As noted by Bloomfield et al. (2001), deliberation is less likely to be effective the larger the number of participants, or the size of groups involved. This is because the more people involved, the less opportunity individuals have to enter into the discussion. In the Avon, the need for this trade-off was exacerbated by the limited funds for multiple facilitators.

Also affecting this trade-off was the motivation to adopt an action-oriented approach to tackle the issues affecting the Avon (raised both prior to and during the strategy process by participating stakeholders). This outlook encouraged a process focused on outcomes and the identification of implementable decisions where the participants involved were able to commit to delivery. Again, this focus on competent decisions was achieved at the expense of a more inclusive process (as requested by some stakeholders in the pre-strategy interviews) which could have sought to engage the non-landowning and non-fishing 'publics' in deliberation about river management. Such a process might not have improved
the technical competence of the outcomes, but it would have contributed to a broader governance transformation away from a function-based position approach.

The strategy process also indicated that inclusion and fairness were traded off against issues of efficiency and productivity. It is naive to engage in an exploratory and inclusive process whereby participants are able to set the agenda if the agencies involved are unable to commit to their implementation because of their statutory responsibilities or the specific boundaries placed on the process by the initiating or funding agencies. As noted by Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas (1998) and Goodwin (1998), an exploratory process can raise stakeholder expectations which, if then undelivered, can further alienate local communities from the policy process. Within a process explicitly set up to tackle cSAC issues, it would be potentially deleterious to long-term stakeholder relationships to open up the debate to stakeholders beyond those interested in the cSAC features. In a context where stakeholders are involved in multiple ways in governance issues, considerations of whether an engagement process is an efficient and productive use of their time are important (Clark et al., 2001).

9.5.2. The Effect of Context on Stakeholder Participation — Lessons from the Avon

The extent to which local stakeholders were involved in the design of the Avon cSAC strategy can be summarised as being influenced by three main factors: the relationship between the strategy process and the policy process; the embeddedness of the process within existing social networks; and the effect of organisational culture and attitudes of EN staff managing the process.

The Avon process was very closely focused on the delivery of the Habitats Directive. This meant that inclusion was limited, but resulted in a set of outcomes for which there was organisational commitment to implement. Part of the difficulty with adopting such a narrow focus arose from the fact that the strategy process was the first time EN had engaged in multi-stakeholder deliberations about the cSAC, a fairly late stage in the process of translating the Habitats Directive into policy delivery. Many decisions had already been made in framing the subsequent dialogue. It follows that the stage in the policy process at which DIPs are used affects their objectives and purpose. For example, if a stakeholder engagement strategy had been proposed at an early stage following the designation of a
cSAC, it might have been more desirable to run a more inclusionary, process-oriented approach, with an emphasis on fairness in setting the agenda, exploring the ideas and values of stakeholders (i.e. practical and therapeutic discourses), with outcomes focused on learning and building trust between stakeholders. Then, as knowledge and understanding of issues built up, it would be possible for the process to develop into something more focused on identifying competent decisions.

The research revealed that the governance of the Avon was characterised by considerable knowledge and understanding of the management issues affecting the Avon cSAC, and a wide range of existing relationships between stakeholders forged through a dense array of fora. Process design and management took this context into consideration to ensure the process did not place an unnecessary emphasis on issues being tackled through other fora, while seeking to maximise the extent to which the strategy could tap into these existing networks and understandings. This conclusion is in agreement with the findings of Jones et al. (2001) where it is suggested that different approaches to stakeholder engagement will depend on existing levels of social and knowledge capital. Areas of low social capital require more time in building relationship and exploring stakeholder aspirations, whereas areas of high social capital (such as the Avon) may be able to engage more directly in decision-making.

In fact, the EN Conservation Officer involved felt that the previous five years in which EN had been involved in River Avon issues effectively constituted this relationship-building stage. She felt that the process as it evolved on the Avon would not have worked five years ago:

‘And so the strategy has come along at about the right time. Had it been five years ago, it would have been too early. Whereas now...we really know it quite well, we've got good relationships with people, and just everybody is a lot more aware of the issues’ (EN Conservation Officer).

However, it could be argued that the fact that the stakeholder participation did occur at this stage, further supports the claim made in Chapter 5 that the culture of EN as an organisation leads it to engage in deliberation with stakeholders only once it has its own agenda clearly defined. This in turn indicates the extent to which EN still feels that stakeholder engagement should be a controlled rather than an exploratory or flexible process.
The dominance of the statutory agencies over deliberations within the strategy process has been ascribed in part to the statutory context in which the strategy was embedded, and in part due to decisions made by EN both before and during the process. However, there are indications that the experience of adopting a more deliberative and inclusionary approach to making decisions about river management has had a transformative effect on future initiatives. The local staff involved expressed how the experience had given them greater confidence to work through DIPs, and there is evidence that stakeholders who had not previously been widely included in river governance fora have been invited to take a steering role in future partnership-based processes (e.g. WFA, ASRA, WSRT). In addition, the proposed River Avon and Avon Valley Initiative hopes to make the first strategic attempts to engage the interests of local communities in River Avon issues. This suggests that the process has accelerated a transition (that was already in evidence prior to the strategy) towards more inclusive and integrated governance. It follows that any shift in power relations through the use of DIPs is likely to occur incrementally over a period of time beyond the application of a one-off use of DIPs, and this requires a long-term commitment by EN to this approach.

The principle of Fitness for Purpose highlights the importance that any DIP is developed with consideration of the position of the process in time and space. DIPs should not be seen as isolated procedures. The Avon strategy was visualised by EN as part of a longer term process to engage stakeholders in the delivery of an effectively managed river and floodplain for conservation, and one which was being taken forward through a range of initiatives and policy networks. Even within a policy area, the principles of deliberation and inclusion can be applied to all aspects of stakeholder engagement, including one-to-one negotiation, and unfacilitated group discussions. It therefore follows that these contextual factors should be considered in any judgement about the fairness and competence of the process and the effectiveness of the outcomes. In a situation such as the Avon (which is not atypical in terms of the extent of regulation and initiatives occurring on it), it may be more insightful to review the use of DIPs in the context of the whole of the governance of the system, thus taking into consideration how stakeholders are engaged in other overlapping fora and arena, and whether, in the long-term, stakeholders are being engaged in an effective, efficient and productive way (see Clark et al., 2001).
9.5.3. Fitness for Purpose and The Effect of Power Relations on the use of DIPs.

'Who participates, and how they are allowed to participate, determines the type of questions raised, the information brought to the discourse, and judgements made and encouraged upon others to make. The participants and process determine the product.' (Norgaard (1994:51)

The case study has shown that the design of the process was heavily influenced by English Nature at institutional and local levels. Pellizzoni (2001) argues that by exerting this power over deliberative processes, the ability to make decisions according to the power of the communicatively best argument becomes impossible. English Nature maintained control over all three of the dimensions identified by Bryson & Crosby (1993) through which an organisation can influence or exert control over a decision-making process (through the language and evidence used within the process; by biasing attention to certain issues on the agenda and in decision-making; and by maintaining control over the framing of the issue – see Chapter 2), but particularly and influentially, over the latter two dimensions. Within a process where the agenda and legitimate knowledges within the discussion are closely defined by the interests of one actor, the extent to which the outcomes fully meet anyone's interests other than those of the organising agency must be questioned. When stakeholders are engaged around the delivery of a tightly defined piece of legislation there is a limited opportunity for the broadening of the agenda to incorporate local values. In such cases, it is important for EN to be open and transparent about the limitations of the process.

This type of participation can be most closely equated with 'co-optive' participation whereby EN retains control of the process and engages local stakeholders around their agenda (see Murphree, 1994). However, at the same time, for many stakeholders, this agenda was an opportunity to achieve positive change in environmental quality of the river (see Chapter 7) which would benefit their interests as well as those of the cSAC. Stakeholders have different motives to participate, but the Avon process illustrates that they can co-operate and agree ways forward, even if not for the same underlying reason (Pellizzoni, 2001). It can be argued that despite the instrumental focus to the Habitats Directive, engagement with stakeholders can occur through a more broadly defined process, which instead of using the needs of cSAC as a starting point for all discussions, started from the interests and desires of stakeholders, and then focused on how the cSAC designation could help to deliver their ambitions as well as how they could help deliver the legislation.
9.5.4. The Effect of Context on Stakeholder Participation - Comparative Lessons from the LIFE Strategies

All the strategies developed under the LIFE Project adopted an instrumental approach to stakeholder involvement. Despite a similarity in the resources and objectives for the strategies there was variation in the methods used, providing further evidence of the influence of contextual factors on process design.

The influence of organisational and local team culture were particularly noticeable. As a result of the Countryside Council for Wales’ (CCW) policy for producing strategies for designated sites, the Project Officer was commissioned to produce an internal management plan focusing on setting out the ecological requirements of the cSAC, to identify mechanisms for delivering these standards, and to engage in formal consultation with CCW and EA staff. This Project Officer fulfilled the stakeholder participation element of the strategy by developing a stakeholder network to promote the links between the environment, economy and social aspects within the catchment, and by developing a Public Outreach Plan. By adopting this approach, the constraints imposed by the requirement of a cSAC focus around which to engage stakeholders were relaxed, enabling stakeholder engagement to focus on exploring the overlapping needs of stakeholders and building relationships. This approach effectively separated the production of the strategy from the participation of stakeholders, and still leaves a question mark over the extent to which local stakeholders will support the implementation of a strategy over whose production they have had no influence.

The Scottish strategies were also developed with more limited stakeholder engagement than the English cases, in part because of the wish of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), to maintain a considerable control over the issues and the outcomes arising but also because of the remote nature of some of the rivers (Project Manager, pers. comm.).

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13 As the strategies were developed for English, Welsh and Scottish rivers, Project Officers were under the management of three different country nature conservation agencies.

14 The strategy for the Endrick was able to draw on the results of a previous stakeholder consultation for the Loch Lomond Catchment Management Plan (the Endrick lies within the catchment), and therefore had indirect input from local riparian owners and interest groups. However the cSAC strategy itself was developed as a technical document, and any issues that were not raised in the Catchment Management Plan were assigned actions by the Project Officer, rather than being developed through collaboration. The strategy was only subject to a consultation with...
English strategy took a more similar approach to the Avon, although it engaged in less deliberation with stakeholders with engagement based around consultation on a draft issue report formulated by the Project Officer, and subsequent problem-solving topic groups.

In the case of the Avon, there was a high degree of local commitment to the strategy from the local EN team. It played an important role in supporting the Project Officer while also ensuring that the strategy lay in line with EN’s long term strategic goals. This local commitment is important if the improved relationships and social capital developed through the strategy are to be maintained in the long-term once the Project Officer has moved on. As with the Avon process, there were indications that other LIFE strategies evolved in line with the culture of the local team.

Comparison of the LIFE strategies also clearly indicated how the extent of overlap between cSAC and stakeholder interests affects the extent to which it is possible to engage stakeholders in dialogue about the management needs of particular species and habitats. Because of the nature of the conservation features of the Avon cSAC, and the extent of existing stakeholder interest in and knowledge of issues affecting the cSAC features, this did not preclude a deliberative and inclusionary process. However, other strategies within the LIFE Project which also maintained a cSAC focused approach found it almost impossible to engage local stakeholders around this agenda because of the very specific nature of the cSAC features. For example, the strategies for the River Moidart and River Kerry focused explicitly on the freshwater pearl mussel, in which there is httle stakeholder interest. In such cases, if the conservation agencies are serious about using cSACs to engage stakeholders, effective participation may require a broadening of the boundaries of debate to encapsulate more genuinely the agendas of stakeholders. Indeed, none of the Project Officers concluded that a strategy to tackle the management of cSAC features was a suitable context in which to engage members of the local community in decision-making.

Strategies for the Rivers Moidart, Borgie and Kerry, were produced by a single Project Officer. Despite the similarities in conservation features and ecological issues affecting the rivers, and the fact that they are all relatively small rivers (13km, 11km & 5km respectively) they are geographically remote. As a result, the Project Officer had to divide her time between the three catchments and spend a lot of time travelling between the areas. This limited her ability to engage stakeholders in the strategy, which was also affected by the unwillingness of the private estate owners to participate. As a result the strategies were subject to a limited consultation.
other than owners and users with a direct involvement in river management\textsuperscript{15}. It can be concluded from this that the value framework imposed through the Habitats Directive which framed the objectives of the stakeholder engagement process, largely excluded the values of nature and interests of local communities.

Experiences of the other Project Officers highlighted the growing problem of overlapping consultation exercises and the potential of stakeholder fatigue. The most obvious example of this was the River Endrick where local stakeholders, had been involved in consultation exercises for the Loch Lomond Catchment Management Plan prior to the strategy, which covered many (but not all) of the issues affecting the Endrick. Therefore, even if there was support for an inclusionary approach within SNH, the question should be raised as to whether or not this would be an efficient use of stakeholder time. A conversation held with the Project Officer for the Eden raised the issue that many local stakeholders felt that the strategy was badly timed in relation to local events and initiatives, many of which were at too early a stage for findings to feed into the strategy process. There were also local concerns that because of the SAC focus, the strategy would not tackle issues of local priority and relevance. This reinforces the observation made during the Avon process of the effects of the imposition of the strategies on the local stakeholders in terms of timing and focus, rather than the need for such a process emerging from locally identified governance needs.

One of the wider objectives of the LIFE Project was to enable a process of organisational learning about the potential role of stakeholder and community participation in the management of river SACs. However, beyond a meeting of the LIFE Project Management Board at the end of the project where Project Officers presented a summary of the processes they had used to develop the strategy, there was no formal comparative evaluation of the strategy processes against pre-defined evaluation criteria. In particular, no resources were made available for stakeholder-based evaluations to explore the experiences of those who had been involved in the process. Thus despite the substantial investment of resources into ecological monitoring processes for SAC management, it is a pertinent observation that while it is well-understood that environmental problems tend to have their basis in social, economic and political factors, there are no means of monitoring stakeholder relationships or the effect of changing context on the achievement of

\textsuperscript{15} Several of the Project Officers carried out awareness raising events for local communities – e.g. the Endrick, Teifi and the Eden.
conservation goals. This lack of a thorough comparative evaluation severely limits the extent to which any conclusions can be drawn for EN about best practice in stakeholder participation beyond the experiences reported in this chapter from the Avon process.
Chapter 10.

Conclusions.

Fitness for Purpose:

Is there a Role for DIPs in Nature Conservation Policy?

Introduction

The concept of DIPs is embedded in political and theoretical discourses of deliberative democracy and the theory of communicative action, which together advocate a transformation in democratic practice to a form of governance based upon public debate and reasoned dialogue. This agenda is transformative and radical, calling for a ‘repoliticization of the public sphere’ (Fischer, 1993), requiring a redistribution of political power towards civil society and away from the current privileging of the knowledge of experts, professionals and other elites in the policy process. There are strong arguments in favour of the use of DIPs in modern society as a means of reinvigorating civic involvement in governance, improving trust in ‘experts’ and institutions of governance, and to improve the effectiveness, efficacy and equality of policy development and delivery. In addition, DIPs are seen as a mechanism to mediate between institutional, political, cultural and administrative boundaries where no one person, group or organisation has the necessary power or authority (Bryson & Crosby, 1993). Reference to the use of participation and consultation processes is increasingly found in organisational and government literature, particularly linked to agendas for modernising government and achieving sustainable development. As a result, the use of participatory practices has become a political necessity for publicly funded organisations like EN.

However, the use of DIPs by public agencies highlights the distinction between rationales based on theoretical-normative arguments of empowerment and equality, and instrumental arguments of effectiveness, efficacy and legitimacy. While it is argued by proponents of communicative action that these two agendas are mutually inclusive, there is increasing
concern that in reality, normative agendas are awarded only rhetorical significance within organisations and government, and DIPs are being used to maintain rather than transform existing power imbalances and to legitimise predetermined policy decisions (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). There is a potential impasse in the institutionalisation of DIPs because their use requires the commitment of those with power to change their approaches and structures to identify spaces whereby other voices, interests and values can influence the policy process. This shift needs to make sense to those in power, and clear arguments need to be made as to why it is worth changing and investing in processes that can be destabilising, time-consuming and expensive.

This thesis has presented a focused case study of an organisation struggling to respond to the participation agenda. The empirical and organisational focus of the study has enabled an examination of the opportunities for, and barriers to, DIPs within existing institutional and organisational policy cultures. By discussing the extent to which it is in the interest of EN and nature conservation to institutionalise these processes, the findings contribute to wider debates about participative practices in policy processes.

The research questions set out in Chapter 1 have been used to structure the study and to analyse the complex relationships between English Nature's culture, its operational context and the potential and actual use of DIPs. The first research question focused on understanding the motivations and objectives of EN staff about the use of DIPs, and how these views are influenced by the organisation's responsibilities, approaches and history of delivering nature conservation policy in England. Through the Avon case study, the second research question then examined how the institutional, organisational and local situational contexts interrelate to influence the application of DIPs. Drawing on the findings of the previous two questions, the third research question asked more generally the extent to which the use of DIPs is desirable and feasible within the delivery of nature conservation policy.

By way of drawing conclusions from the research, this final chapter addresses the overarching third research question about desirability and feasibility and the role of DIPs in EN. The discussion will revisit some of the theoretical arguments presented in Chapter 2, draw conclusions about the feasibility and desirability of DIPs within EN's work programme, and make policy recommendations for their use. Whilst evidence from the research agrees with many of the critics of communicative action, it also gives reasons for optimism, noting that benefits from deliberative working can still be accrued and should
Chapter 10

not be discounted just because the process is not theoretically ideal. Rather, deliberation and inclusion remain important principles under which environmental governance should develop. It will be suggested that utilising and participating in DIPs is a necessity for the future of nature conservation, and that it is in EN's long term interest to build capacity in this area.

10.1. The Desirability and Feasibility of DIPs in Nature Conservation Policy

This section will focus on two key questions in relation to the use of DIPs in delivering nature conservation policy. Is deliberative and inclusionary policy-making feasible and is it desirable? Disagreement exists over the extent to which policy-making based on the principles of communicative action is feasible. Protagonists of participative policy-making claim that through the process of deliberation, distorted power relations will be counteracted (Healey, 1997; Healey, 1999). Critics, however, argue that rather than neutralising power, communicative action simply 'assumes away' the effect of power and politics on processes of deliberation (McGuirk, 2001). There is an increasing wealth of empirical evidence suggesting that, in practice, the achievement of communicatively rational policy decisions is constrained by political and institutional contexts and the prevalence of strategic forms of social action, which tend to maintain and strengthen traditional power inequalities (e.g. Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Flyvbjerg, 1998; McGuirk, 2001; Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones & Thomas, 1998). There are also practical issues about the feasibility of communicative action based on the difficulties of inclusion, representation and the desirability of consensus, as discussed in Chapter 2.

10.1.1. Trade-offs between Process and Outcome in the use of DIPs

The feasibility of true DIPs is questioned by the necessary trade-off that a practitioner must make between best practice in process and the achievement of certain outcomes. This issue also cuts to the heart of debates about the desirability of DIPs in nature conservation policy. Goodin (1992:168) succinctly summarises this dilemma: 'To advocate democracy is to advocate procedures, to advocate environmentalism is to advocate substantive
outcomes'. This leads to a dilemma within the organisation whether to aim for best practice in deliberation and inclusion or to remain focused on the delivery of the organisation’s internal conservation goals.

It has been argued that because of the anthropogenic nature of communication and democracy, democratic processes based solely on communicative action will lead to ecologically damaging outcomes (Eckersley, 1992). She argues that nature and the intrinsic value located within it cannot be directly represented in such debates because they are incapable of actively engaging as subjects in the process of dialogue. However, this position is contested by Dryzek who argues that a communicatively rational approach that is ecologically benign is possible by encouraging a form of ‘ecological communication’ whereby consideration is given to signals emitting from the natural world in policy processes (Dryzek, 1995). This position implies that it is the role of EN to translate these signals from the natural world into policy debates, and that it is in EN’s interests to advocate more deliberative and inclusionary processes in policy if only to provide an opportunity for these values to infiltrate into wider policy agendas. But, it is not specific as to what extent EN should use DIPs within the delivery of its own operations.

This draws in the question of whether EN has a moral obligation, duty and political purpose to enhance community participation (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). This in turn raises further questions about whether EN’s role is to protect nature for nature’s sake (i.e. adopting a predominantly ecocentric position), or for society’s sake (predominantly anthropocentric). This debate remains unresolved within EN (Manager, pers. comm.), and until it is resolved the role of community participation within EN is likely to remain contested. With the increased emphasis on quality of life within EN rhetoric, there appears to be increasing emphasis on anthropogenic aspects of nature conservation within certain areas of EN’s work programme, and for community participation to be invested in as an end in itself, rather than being a purely instrumental mechanism to deliver biodiversity targets (see 10.1.2.). Nevertheless, research findings suggest that in general the use of DIPs has to directly or indirectly facilitate the achievement of EN’s nature conservation goals, some of which are laid down in statute and others in government accountability targets.

The emphasis in practice on outcomes over process is exacerbated by the current political culture which is preoccupied with performance targets and administrative efficiency (Ferlie & Fitzgerald, 2002; Newman, 2002). For example, the requirement to get 95% of SSSIs
into favourable condition by 2010 is considered the main driver for EN's operations across all its work programmes (EN, 2002). Interview findings suggest that organisational concerns to meet such political targets in a cost-effective way are a key consideration in resource allocation within EN. As EN is unlikely to be awarded additional funds from Government for the use of DIPs, the use of these processes will have to be incorporated into existing internal negotiations over resource allocation and traded-off against other activities which may deliver more immediate biodiversity benefits. As Berry (2003:53), an EN employee suggests:

'One could argue, after all, that the organisation [EN] does not even look after all its own National Nature Reserves properly at the moment, while the target for SSSIs – 95% by area to be in favourable condition by 2010 – looks hard to reach, to put it mildly. How, then, can English Nature possibly even conceive of diverting any of its scarce resources towards things as imprecise and vague as involving more people or broadening the agenda?'

At present, it is likely that EN's use of DIPs will be evaluated against the extent to which designated sites are in favourable condition and biodiversity decline is controlled. This led one interviewee to suggest that the use of DIPs within EN could only be justified in areas of high potential biodiversity gain or in situations where inputs could be low because of existing initiatives and networks with stakeholders already set up:

'I think the criteria that decide the type of approach that you take are around cost in terms of time, individual time and money. And yes, the amount of wildlife gain that you get out as a proportion of that. So we tend to go to existing networks and situations where those networks exist, to try and build on those rather than starting afresh ... we can look at areas like Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, where you've got a group of stakeholders, sometimes have Project Officers and you have nature conservation value. ...Look at where you can get the maximum gain for the minimum input.' (Local Team)

One solution to the problems associated with narrowly defined mobilisations of bias and the need for organisations to focus their attention on resourcing certain policy outcomes, might be an increase in place-based and partnership-led DIPs encapsulated in Local Agenda 21 and, more recently, community strategies. This provides the opportunity for local agendas to be identified and explored through community-based participation processes, and then translated into the policy processes of a range of public agencies (see Healey's 'place-based governance', 1997). Because communities rarely articulate conservation concerns as an isolated set of activities (Murphree, 1994), such approaches
Chapter 10

offer a particular opportunity for EN to discuss biodiversity issues in the context of other environmental, social and economic issues.

These opportunities open to EN staff have been enhanced by the growth in inter-sectoral, governmental PSA targets and the legal requirements for other Government departments to have regard to the purpose of conserving biological diversity (HMSO, 2000). They have increased the political incentive for public agencies to work with English Nature in a proactive way to incorporate nature conservation issues at an earlier stage into their decision-making processes. Equally, EN has incorporated government priorities for rural regeneration, sustainable development and social inclusion into its work programme (EN, 2001; EN, 2001c) demonstrating how non-conservation oriented PSA targets could be delivered through its work. In these ways EN is able to work within the target-orientated political system and use the system to promote a more inclusive and creative conservation agenda. However, the practicality of intersectoral working and co-ordination remains complex (Degeling, 1995), and the extent of collaboration necessary for agencies to be able to pool resources and respond to a community-led agenda across horizontal and vertical tiers of government 'becomes mindboggling' (Tewdwr-Jones & Thomas, 1998: 143).

In addition, there are practical constraints to integrated working that relate to the focus and availability of funds. The feasibility of delivering nature conservation policy through integrated ‘place-based’ processes may be limited by funding streams arising at particular times, from particular places, and with particular outcome requirements. The LIFE funding for the development of River Conservation Strategies was secured by EN Headquarters and the focus of the project was negotiated at this level, rather than evolving from locally defined, place-based objectives. The limited time and funds provided (sufficient for only limited participation) meant that the DIP used to produce the strategy was very tightly controlled and did not fulfil local objectives for a more integrated strategy that tackled valley as well as river management issues.

10.1.2. Considering the Role of DIPs across EN’s Work Programme

The research presented in this thesis suggests that the over-riding concern with outcomes and the practical limits to inclusion vary across EN’s work programme according to the extent of its responsibilities, the particular policy objectives, and the lowest possible
geographical scale at which the policy agenda can be developed. For simplicity in the subsequent discussion, EN’s work programme is divided into three functional areas – the protection of designated sites, the delivery of biodiversity targets in the wider countryside, and the role of nature as a part of local quality of life. Table 10.1 summarises the potential roles of DIPs across these functional areas, highlighting the different attributes of deliberative and inclusionary working that are relevant in each:

Table 10.1. A Typology of DIPs across EN’s Work Programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Objective of Deliberation</th>
<th>Whose Agenda?</th>
<th>What Nature?</th>
<th>Type of Participation</th>
<th>Role of EN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Designated Sites</td>
<td>Policy delivery</td>
<td>International &amp; National - EN’s</td>
<td>Nature as Species &amp; Habitats</td>
<td>Instrumental and Co-optive</td>
<td>Participant, Expert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People &amp; Wildlife / Local Quality of Life</td>
<td>Facilitating connections between people &amp; wildlife</td>
<td>Local &amp; Public</td>
<td>Nature as experience &amp; contribution to human, social and political capital</td>
<td>Exploratory &amp; Empowering</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(i) Designated Sites

Securing the favourable condition of designated sites is a key responsibility of English Nature, and is probably the policy area within which they engage with other organisations and individuals most regularly. The policy objectives are focused on the delivery of a top-down conservation agenda, for which EN has statutory powers to enforce. Lessons from the River Avon case study are relevant here.

Within the Avon strategy process, the extent of stakeholder inclusion was bounded by an imposed value system (from the European Commission), and the power awarded to EN as the statutory advisor to Government on the Habitats Directive, in particular to make judgements relating to the ecological dimensions of the interest feature and its habitat, and to determine what constituted ‘favourable condition’ of the cSAC. These judgements
framed all subsequent decision-making processes about cSAC management, and EN's overall success on the Avon will be judged against the achievement of this interpretation of favourable condition. To some degree this will always be a subjective judgement, and this was acknowledged by EN, nevertheless the making of this judgement was seen as the preserve of the 'expert' EN employees in Peterborough and the local team.

Within the process of stakeholder deliberation on the Avon, decisions were not made according to the 'best argument' as would occur in a communicatively rational world, but according to their conformity with imposed values and instrumental-technical standards. The role of deliberation was constrained by a policy process that was 'deliberately exclusionary' of other values and knowledges, even if agreement was reached between stakeholders about a way forward. In the delivery of designated site policy, true consensus is neither necessary nor desirable because the objective of the designated site is set in an exclusionary manner and at a distance in both time and space to sustain the conservation interest. Thus, whilst it can be argued that there might be a greater role for communicative rationality in setting the initial moral and ethical standards of conservation legislation, and a role for local stakeholders to redefine the conservation agenda within the limits of ecological protection in any particular case, it is against the purpose of designating sites for these limits to be undermined or distorted by local agendas. Local consensus within designated sites management will always be constrained by the boundaries set by the nature conservation agencies and the legislation that sustains them.

This deliberate exclusion does not necessarily undermine the role of DIPs or the benefits that can be accrued. The Avon process showed that there remains a beneficial role for DIPs in translating legislation into integrated practice on the ground. Benefits perceived by EN as coming from the process of stakeholder engagement included the effective integration of existing knowledge about the river to produce a technically competent strategy; improvements in relations with key stakeholder groups; progress on the resolution of potentially highly contentious issues about fisheries management; a local commitment to collaborative-working and the development of collaborative capacity through the strategy process; and an acceleration of the time between plan production and implementation.

The nature of the dialogue to secure the management of designated sites can be summarised as 'co-optive' participation (Murphree, 1994) whereby local stakeholders are engaged in a collaborative process to meet predefined targets. However, the Avon study indicates how local conservation policy goals (i.e. for a river with less pollution or more
controlled water level management) may also be in the interests of other stakeholders. By using DIPs to search for and identify a common goal, a situation of ‘instrumental cooperation’ may be achieved, whereby stakeholders acknowledge that it is in their interests to work together despite their potentially conflicting motives (Pellizzoni, 2001).

The design of DIPs to deliver conservation policy within designated sites should focus on the following characteristics. Firstly, it is necessary to ensure there is the effective integration of dispersed knowledge to make the most competent decisions relating to site management. Secondly, there is a need to develop reflexive processes so as to explore aspects of local management and existing governance patterns that can identify common areas of interest and common agendas, through which a shared willingness to work together can be developed. Whilst acknowledging that this overlap in agendas is likely to be neither complete nor permanent, through such an approach it may be possible to create the local capacity to tackle management problems that require collective action. In these situations it is essential that the networks are sustainable over time to maintain the incentives and structures for joint-working, even if disagreement over particular issues and solutions will inevitably occur (Driessen et al., 2001; Walker et al., 2001). As noted by Meadowcroft (2002:178), ‘consensus is only relative’. As social, cultural political and environmental conditions evolve and knowledge develops, so agreement over appropriate management must evolve.

(ii) Wider countryside

Beyond designated sites, the policy agenda shifts significantly for English Nature. With less restrained and geographically discrete objectives, EN’s approach is more project-based (frequently managed by a partnership of organisations) and focused on mainstreaming and integrating biodiversity interests into local and national policy processes, at the development or delivery end. The ‘deliberately inclusionary’ sustainable development agenda (Healey, 1997:184) creates significant spaces for the delivery of biodiversity targets through other policy processes. Indeed, EN’s willingness to embrace the quality of life agenda is effectively about the mainstreaming of conservation into policy areas such as health, society and culture as well as environment (Doughty & Gay, 2003).

The delivery of biodiversity targets in the wider countryside requires EN to engage with other organisations in a proactive way that encourages creative and exploratory dialogue and identifies opportunities where biodiversity can be incorporated into new and existing
initiatives. DIPs used within this context should encourage the translation of policy agendas from a function-based to a place-based approach, and ensure there is sufficient mobilisation of knowledge resources around an integrated system of social networks, within which EN is situated as a central actor. At the same time, the role of EN in policy debates in the wider countryside raises issues about the scale and extent to which different values and knowledges are given authority and legitimacy. EN acknowledges that to meet its goals, the practice of nature conservation has to be made meaningful to local communities, which implicitly means that local values need to be integrated into the delivery of conservation targets. But, local and national conservation agendas are not necessarily compatible. EN's traditional bias towards species and habitats, the rare and endangered, and the designation of special sites contributed to the cultural marginalisation of nature in the countryside because its institutionalised agenda did not overlap with the values and aspirations of those local stakeholders with whom it wished, in principle, to engage. Indeed, the conflict between locally and nationally-defined conservation agendas described by Goodwin (1999), is more than local frustration as a result of the imposition of a national conservation agenda; it is a conflict over discourses and meanings of nature.

How to achieve the 'right' balance in its activities between local social and cultural meanings of nature and national, top-down biodiversity targets is a dilemma for EN. Indeed, one of the major criticisms of the model of communicative action is that there is no guidance on how policy decisions made at a national or international level can be translated into local action in a way that allows the aspirations and agendas of local stakeholders to influence the outcomes (Murdoch & Abram, 1998; Tewdwr-Jones & Thomas, 1998).

The effective protection of biodiversity requires ecosystems to function effectively across time and space, and too much emphasis on the 'local' risks fragmenting habitats while creating a disjointed nature conservation vision (Shoard, 1996). On the other hand, as illustrated by the Avon case study and by Goodwin (1999), attempts to engage local communities in a top-down, expert-defined nature conservation agenda, means that the boundaries of debate will of necessity be imposed on local stakeholders, and local values and meanings of nature may remain marginalised. This situation is exacerbated in the UK by the institutionalised division between the responsibilities for the cultural landscape and natural heritage; and while broadening the range of values and knowledges included within EN's mobilisation of bias will give greater legitimacy to public agendas and meanings of
nature, the institutional context in the UK still tends to privilege the values and influences of experts and scientific knowledges (Harrison & Bedford, 2002, Holder, 1999).

(iii) People and Wildlife / local Quality of Life

There is evidence of a shift towards a more inclusive conservation agenda within EN, but only in certain areas of the organisation's work programme. Whilst EN's motives for engagement in this debate appear to lie in gaining support and legitimacy for the wider objectives of nature conservation, nature's role in improving peoples' Quality of Life is a strongly social and local agenda. EN's agenda here is to improve peoples' experiences with the natural world through increasing access to spaces where nature can be easily found, and to bring nature into places where people live and work (EN, 2002c). This requires a greater understanding of in what ways nature is important to people, and how nature can be incorporated into the spaces in which people live and work. The dominant construction of nature in these localised debates is likely to be based on personal and social experiences, and culturally-informed understandings and relationships with nature. To understand and facilitate the links between people and wildlife, the use of DIPs must be exploratory and empowering, encouraging individuals to develop, express and explore their meanings of nature, and identify ways in which nature could contribute to their quality of life. Thus by raising awareness within society about the role of nature in their lives, 'ecological values' could become more significantly embedded in social values and priorities (Wilkinson, 1999).

At present, however EN's People and Wildlife agenda remains relatively conservative, focusing on wildlife-friendly gardening, access to urban greenspace and NNRs, grants for local residents to volunteer in the management of LNRs, and the provision of information on EN's website. These initiatives have so far left unchallenged the consideration that EN's objectives and constructions of nature do not necessarily relate to those of local communities, and a clear division between these community-focused projects and EN's other operations has been maintained. To effectively engage with people about how wildlife could contribute to quality of life requires EN to develop its activities in this field through a process of reflexive learning with local communities and other organisations experienced in working with local communities. As 'People and Wildlife' is explicitly about 'people', it seems sensible that those people whom EN is trying to connect with play an active role in developing EN's policies in this area.
Whilst these three functions of EN have been discussed separately, in reality they should overlap. For example, designated sites are also local sites for the communities living round them, and therefore the potential for the role of these sites in contributing to the quality of life of local residents needs to be considered. In addition, biodiversity targets can be incorporated into the management of both designated sites and community-based action.

The key point from the analysis presented in this section is that in these different contexts a different emphasis is placed by EN on issues of inclusion and the focus of deliberation. In addition, the role of EN staff should vary according to these different contexts. Within the management of designated sites and in approaches to deliver biodiversity targets in the wider countryside, EN staff should be active participants in the process of communicative conservation planning, rather than a mediator of it. There is the need for competent communication of ecological needs and interests (Dryzek, 1995) as well as an acknowledgement of the contribution expert knowledge can make to informing policy decisions. Alternately, in programmes which aim to explore the role of nature conservation in local peoples' quality of life, it is desirable that EN staff adopt the role of facilitator to enable people to explore their meanings and values of nature in an undistorted forum.

From this analysis it is suggested that any efforts to use DIPs within EN should apply deliberation and inclusion as principles upon which to develop a suitable stakeholder engagement process, rather than focusing on the achievement of the idealistic principles of communicative action. It follows that the staff involved must have the appropriate skills for their role as an expert or facilitator.

10.1.3. The Effects of Organisational Culture on the Feasibility of DIPs

The organisational analysis of English Nature presented in Chapter 5 described several aspects of EN's existing culture which appeared to be acting as barriers to the institutionalisation of more deliberative and inclusionary approaches. The analysis of the LIFE Rivers Project reinforced many of these observations.

EN's institutionalised bias, plus the fact that success tends to be judged against the achievement of certain ecological outcomes, encourages processes of stakeholder engagement to be structured in an instrumental way. The dominance of instrumental rationality is exacerbated by the privilege given to expert knowledge. Important progress
Chapter 10

has been made over the last ten years, particularly in terms of EN's increasing willingness to accept local knowledges and understandings of natural processes in the management of designated sites. However, as noted within the Avon study, there is still a tendency for conservation agendas to be set according to an expert-led agenda and local knowledges to be seen as legitimate so long as they are congruous with scientific rationality (see Collins & Evans, 2002). With an instrumental approach still dominating EN's activities, there is a danger that the feasibility of local community participation and the legitimacy given to social and cultural values of nature will remain isolated within localised 'community' projects. If EN are to tackle the cultural marginalisation of nature and achieve their goal of 'winning hearts and minds', it is suggested that there is a need for EN to enter into a dialogue with local stakeholders encompassing social, cultural and moral as well as scientific values of nature, and this requires adopting a communicative and inclusive approach to setting the conservation agenda.

In the current political climate of consultation, there is a risk of further alienating people as a result of efforts made to increase the access of people to policy debates without increasing their ability to influence the agenda of the debate. One danger of this instrumental approach is that it acts to reinforce the cultural marginalisation of nature conservation, particularly when the language used in the debate focuses on administrative considerations and such exclusionary terms such as 'cSAC', and 'favourable condition'. Evidence of stakeholder fatigue was found on the River Avon, in part because those stakeholders, who were interested and willing participants, felt increasingly inundated with the bureaucracy of conservation. As observed by one interviewee:

'Semantics and jargon and the bureaucracy of it all [nature conservation] is driving a wedge between the ardent conservationists and the countrymen - the people who do care, but haven't got the patience to get involved.' (Fishery Association member, River Avon)

Another effect of adopting an instrumental approach is apparent in terms of who is invited to participate in DIPs. As noted from the Avon study, from EN's rational and instrumental perspective, it was in EN's interest to invest time and resources to engage those who were

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1 In light of increasing concerns about the 'tyranny' of instrumental participation (see Cooke & Kothari, 2001), and the rising risk of stakeholder fatigue as more and more organisations act to fulfil consultation requirements, it is recommended that further research is carried out on participant attitudes to the deliberative culture to increase organisational understanding about why, when and how they would like to be consulted.
identified as being influential, and therefore with an important role to play in delivering EN's objectives, rather than to expand the constituency to those who had an incompletely revealed interest in the issues. Under the instrumental model that dominated the Avon strategy there was little incentive for EN to engage with the marginalised and the socially excluded, because they had little ability to help EN achieve its aims in the short term.

A characteristic of EN's organisational culture which is salient to the debate about the institutionalisation of DIPs relates to how responsibilities for change are divided between the strategic staff within EN's headquarters and the local team staff. While, in theory, staff within local teams are encouraged to innovate and decide the most appropriate projects on which to focus their time to achieve EN's goals, the majority of local staff are time-restricted and spend most of their time working to achieve organisational targets. In addition they have no direct influence over the strategic direction of the organisation; the instigation of new programmes and policy approaches occurs largely as a result of decisions made by strategic managerial staff and is effectively imposed on local teams. However, in relation to the institutionalisation of DIPs, a top-down imposed policy change is unlikely to be effective, for several reasons.

Evidence from this research has clearly shown that new initiatives developed within EN's Headquarters, labelled as areas where community involvement or stakeholder engagement could or should be used (e.g. in the setting of Natural Area and BAP targets, and LIFE-funded demonstration projects such as the marine and river SACs projects), have not been accompanied by an appropriate investment in skills training or guidance on how local teams should deliver the initiatives on the ground. As a result, experimentation with the use of DIPs has been minimal and conservative, with little innovation or learning on where and how the organisation could take DIPs forward. There was also an obvious lack of learning from previous trials of stakeholder participation, such as from the marine SACs LIFE Project to the river SACs LIFE Project, despite an external evaluation having been completed before the start of the river strategy processes (Jones et al., 2001). Moreover, despite the interest in innovation at a strategic level in the organisation, staff within the local teams placed greater emphasis on ensuring that the strategy achieved the necessary ecological outcomes, rather than treating the process as a trial where potentially risky innovation could take place.

Beyond this thesis, the potential for any lessons learnt within the Rivers LIFE Project has been significantly constrained because of a lack of investment by the project into
comparative participants-based and/or outcome-focused evaluation to capture the costs, benefits and lessons of the different approaches taken to develop the strategies for the nature conservation agencies and the EC. This limits the extent to which links between DIPs and ecological outcomes can be made.

Despite these limitations there are indications that DIPs are feasible within EN. For example, the research findings indicate that a significant cause of conservatism amongst staff towards the use of DIPs, and the limited use of these processes within the organisation to date, were linked to a lack of understanding, training and nervousness of 'losing control'. This suggests that this conservatism is not immoveable, but in part a result of a lack of knowledge, training and accumulated experience. The Avon strategy process reveals a willingness to learn, and that the initial, closely bounded process built confidence amongst EN staff (and participants) to work in a more open, deliberative and inclusive way. Not only can this shift be linked to the identification of previously unrecognised shared agendas through the process of deliberation, but also because powerful agencies such as EN now see it as in their strategic political interests to engage with stakeholders and publics.

McGuirk's (2001:204) critique of communicative planning claims that 'actors cannot be expected to adopt the dialogic practices of listening and giving respect to all voices and value systems, nor to abandon political strategising in favour of formulising generalised interests'... nor 'to enter into a deliberative forum without some notion of preferred outcomes.' Yet, although an instrumental approach to stakeholder engagement still dominates within EN (and is always likely to) there are indications that in certain areas of its work programme EN acknowledges that it is in its interests to give respect to a wider range of voices and value systems, and to relax institutionalised notions of what is regarded as a suitable outcome. This trend is variable across the work programme and by no means constitutes a strategic move to embracing communicative action. Nevertheless, it is an indication that the organisation is in partial transition from a top-down, expert-led approach to a greater emphasis on engaging stakeholders.

Previous studies of communicative planning criticising the feasibility of DIPs because of the effect of power relations on processes of deliberation and the translation of outcomes into policy, have tended to be an evaluation of one-off, initial attempts by organisations 'feeling their way towards' the democratisation of their policy processes (Tewdwr-Jones and Thomas, 1998; McGuirk, 2001). This is unsurprising considering that deliberative and
inclusionary approaches are still in their early days of being applied in practice. However, this research suggests that longer-term analysis of organisations and the particular situations in which they are actively trying to use DIPs should be undertaken to see how individuals and organisations learn, and the extent to which the institutional, organisational and attitudinal barriers to more communicative approaches can be transformed over the long-term. While this research has attempted to explore these issues, it also has been undertaken in the context of an organisation traditionally unused to this type of working.

10.2. Policy Recommendations: 'doing nothing is not an option'.

(i) Provide a Clear Value-basis for Fitness for Purpose

Chapter 1 defined Fitness for Purpose as the process of selecting the most appropriate technique given the objectives and context in which a DIP is to be applied. While the use of DIPs must have a normative basis in principles of deliberation and inclusion, this must be balanced by the acknowledgement that undistorted deliberation and inclusion is not always desirable or feasible, and in the translation of these principles into practice, context needs to be taken into consideration. Evidence from the LIFE Project suggests that unless participation terminology is clearly defined in normative terms prior to the process (i.e., what is meant by 'partnership', or 'community involvement'), interpretations of 'Fitness for Purpose' could easily justify the use of processes that maintain existing power imbalances between agency and participants.

In addition, a clear distinction must be made between processes of consultation and what I have referred to in this thesis as passive participation (i.e. volunteering, access to sites), and the promotion of DIPs that are transformative and based on dialogue rather than the aggregation of individual preferences. It is therefore recommended that EN establishes a clear set of principles about what constitutes best practice in DIPs as guidance for staff, highlighting the importance of inclusion as defined by influence over the agenda, the discussion and decision-making. It is also suggested that, in any given situation, the interpretation of the purpose of a DIP and the criteria against which 'fitness' will be judged, should be opened up to stakeholder consideration rather than being under the control of the organising agency. What constitutes a successful or effective project or process depends on who defines the criteria for success (Estrella & Gaventa, 1998). By
ensuring staff place the principles of deliberation and inclusion at the heart of policy and stakeholder engagement processes, the potential for an instrumental and imposed participation agenda should be reduced.

(ii) A Shift to Communicative Conservation Planning

The majority of environmental problems arise from competing constructions of social, political, economic and environmental issues within society, and EN staff within Peterborough spend much of their time acting as policy advocates to reduce the impacts, as they see them, of damaging policies on biodiversity. However, at a local level, while staff are also aware of, and involved in, tackling the social, political and economic factors underlying conservation problems, there is no structured approach to analysing these issues from anything other than an ecological perspective. It is recommended that EN approaches the resolution of ecological and biodiversity problems (particularly, but not solely, around designated sites) by undertaking a deliberative and inclusionary social, political and economic analysis of the local context at the earliest possible stage after site notification. In this way an agenda for progress will be couched in more meaningful terms of local socio-economics and political dynamics, and will help to increase EN’s awareness of the agendas and problems of local stakeholders which may affect site management. It will also start to build social capital between EN and stakeholders, and initiate a process whereby stakeholders can identify areas of common interest enabling the development of projects to deliver biodiversity gains in a way that also benefit the local society and economy.

EN’s Lifescapes approach encapsulates many of the issues discussed in this thesis, including the need for an integrated approach to environmental governance and a more proactive approach to identifying local conservation agendas. It is recommended that this initiative becomes mainstreamed (it is still in its trial stages) and extended as a strategic planning tool for local EN teams. As part of this planning, EN staff should undertake a stakeholder analysis of the influence and importance of organisations, individuals and projects operating in the local area as they relate to EN’s strategic goals of ensuring favourable condition of designated sites, integrating biodiversity into wider countryside planning, and enhancing the relationship between people and wildlife.

While EN’s desired outcomes will always remain focused on biodiversity targets, wherever possible the social and cultural values of nature should be incorporated into the
development of local conservation policies, using a process similar to the Stakeholder Decision Analysis used in the Avon case study. The overarching aim of the SDA process is for a range of interests to come together and debate the bases for the values of nature which they hold, and through this process reach agreed principles on which the participants believe local environmental actions should be based (Harrison et al., 1999). The strength of the multi-criteria approach is that it allows stakeholders explicitly to explore the multiple values of nature, whilst acknowledging that these values are not always commensurable, and without being constrained by the need to reach any consensus. This conforms to the use of DIPs as ‘value-articulating institutions’ (Jacobs, 1997). Through a SDA process an inclusive list of values of nature held by a representative group of EN’s stakeholders could be captured, and then be used to inform the planning of new initiatives and projects for nature conservation. Their contribution to a broader range of conservation agendas than simply biodiversity targets could then be assessed.

(iii) Rethinking the Role of EN in DIPs

There is a danger that discussions about the use of DIPs place too much emphasis on the issue of what role DIPs should play within EN’s work programme, whilst underplaying the complementary consideration of what role EN staff should play in these processes. If EN is going to shift towards a culture whereby policy decisions are made on the basis of the principles of deliberation and inclusion, rather than the ad hoc and discrete application of particular participatory techniques, then it is argued that EN staff need to be willing participants in the process of deliberation, rather than observers or consumers of the process. There must be a transformation in the organisational attitude of ‘us (EN) and them (stakeholders)’, to a ‘singular construction of ‘us’.

Proponents of communicative planning construct the role of planners as mediators and facilitators of planning debates (e.g. Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999). However taking a more pragmatic stance, I have argued in Section 10.1.2, that the role of EN staff in DIPs should vary according to the particular objectives of the dialogue. This requires EN staff to adopt the role of ‘reflexive practitioners’ (see Chapter 5), using their knowledge and understanding of ecological processes and requirements to inform the decision-making process rather than to frame the policy decision. In situations where local and national conservation objectives are to be integrated, discursive spaces need to be provided for local
communities to explore their meanings and understandings of the issues, before being engaged in an inclusive process with those whose positions are more frequently rehearsed.

(iv) Maintaining a Commitment to Deliberation and Inclusion.

The institutionalisation of DIPs requires more than putting the right structures in place; it also requires the development of an adequate skills basis amongst staff. Research findings sustain the argument that ‘behaviour and attitudes ... matter more than methods and procedures in the spread, scaling up and institutionalisation of participatory approaches’ (IIED/IDS, 2000:21). It is therefore seen as imperative that there is not only adequate investment in training and support services for EN staff to innovate and use DIPs within their work programmes, but also that organisation develops the capacity to learn from the experiences of its local staff and be responsive to new ideas and the outcomes of DIPs (see Arygris & Schón, 1996).

The Avon case study showed that benefits from the use of DIPs may not be immediate and are likely to be incremental. For example, stakeholder involvement in the development of the river conservation strategy did not lead to immediate wildlife gains but to the opportunity for future collaboration and partnership-based initiatives. To fulfil the potential from the Avon process requires the long-term commitment by staff in the local team to maintain the momentum to translate this collaborative capacity into collaborative action. At present the potential for long-term social and political benefits from the use of DIPs is undermined because their use tends to occur within isolated projects managed by Project Officers working to Fixed Term Appointments. While these staff have the benefit of a flexible role in which they are able to innovate, it is important that there is the long-term capacity within EN at large to maintain and benefit from the momentum generated by these projects. EN should institutionalise the principles of deliberation and inclusion as principles of good practice in all its work.

(v) Reasserting the Importance of Monitoring and Evaluation

While the importance of monitoring and evaluation has been stated many times in the literature (e.g. Barnes, 1999; Bloomfield et al., 2001; Clark et al, 2001; Munton, 2003), the research findings illustrate there is still inadequate investment by EN in these practices. Evaluation plays an important role in the institutionalisation of deliberative practices because, as this research suggests, unless this shift is perceived to be in the interests of
those holding power, it is unlikely to become reality. Many of the benefits of DIPs for EN will not be directly linked to wildlife gain, and therefore may not be captured by EN’s existing monitoring protocols, without a specific investment in the evaluation of how EN engages stakeholders in the policy process. Evaluation also facilitates and consolidates learning within the process of institutionalisation (Barnes, 1999), allowing the sharing of lessons and the identification of successful approaches, measured against common criteria. It is essential that EN evaluates the success of its projects against social and political criteria as well as the achievement of ‘wildlife gain’.

10.3. Final Thoughts

The research has demonstrated that it is in EN’s interests for the current socio-political trend towards more communicative-based policy to continue. EN is able to take advantage of ‘deliberately inclusionary’ policy agendas such as sustainable development and quality of life to incorporate concerns about biodiversity into a wide range of decision-making processes. Within these arenas it is in EN’s interests to advocate the use of DIPs. However, within the ‘deliberately exclusionary’ context of designated sites whereby conservation must take precedence over other agendas, a consensus-based approach as advocated by communicative action theory is undesirable. Nevertheless, the research showed that there is clearly a role for DIPs in the translation of legislation into locally agreed management practices and the development of collaborative potential for partnership working.

Exploration of the attitudes and experiences of EN staff plus analysis of the Avon case study suggests that there are significant institutional, organisational and political barriers to the undistorted use of deliberation and inclusion within EN’s work programme. The limited investment in training, the inadequate time available for most local staff to innovate and adopt a proactive approach to stakeholder engagement, the dominance of an instrumental approach to the design of processes of stakeholder engagement, and a lack of investment within the organisation to learn from its experiences were all identified as issues which need to be addressed if EN is to develop capacity for the use of DIPs.
There are indications that opportunities are opening up within EN for the use of DIPs, notably the commitment from the top of the organisation to develop capacity within this area, and the initiation of programmes placing greater emphasis on a proactive and creative conservation agenda. However, the extent to which these developments represent a shift from an instrumental to a communicative approach to stakeholder involvement has yet to be proven.
Appendix 1

Interview Checklists and Cover Letters for EN Staff Interviews
Dear [Name],

I am writing in the hope that you will be able to spare some time to take part in an interview to discuss the role of stakeholders in delivering wildlife gain.

I am a PhD student doing doctoral research jointly supervised by Jonathan Burney (Environmental Impacts Team), and Richard Munton from the Environment and Society Research Unit in the Department of Geography, University College London. Impetus for the research came from English Nature’s Social and Economic Advisory Group, which after a series of seminars and discussions about participation, identified the need to understand more closely why, when, and how English Nature should involve other organisations, interest groups and the public in making decisions about nature conservation.

The aim of the research is to understand the different approaches adopted by English Nature to achieve its goal of wildlife gain, and how the organisation interacts with its stakeholders to achieve this objective. In particular, I am interested in exploring how English Nature’s responsibilities, values, policies and procedures affect the terms on which stakeholders are involved in decision-making and discuss the potential opportunities and barriers of involving stakeholders more closely in decision-making processes.

As you know, my research to date has involved a case study based around the Hampshire Avon where I carried out a series of interviews with different stakeholders about their attitudes towards how decisions are made about nature conservation and how they are currently involved in the river’s governance. Through this case study I have built up close links with English Nature’s Wiltshire team which has aided my understanding of how a local team operates. My involvement in the case has continued through observation of a process involving stakeholders in the development of a river conservation strategy to deliver the conservation objectives for the Avon SAC. The completion of this conservation strategy is a key objective of the UK LIFE in Rivers project. As a way of developing my understanding of how English Nature can use more participatory working practices, I am also undertaking interviews with staff from local teams who have experience and knowledge of running participatory processes.

Work to date has primarily been trying to develop my understanding of how English Nature operates at a local level. I would like to build on and balance these findings through discussions with staff situated within the organisation’s headquarters. I am hoping to carry out in-depth interviews with staff who hold key positions within English Nature; i.e. those who have an interest and influence over how nature conservation is achieved in freshwater ecosystems and/or have strategic responsibility for English Nature’s overall approach. As one of the people who have been identified by Jonathan Burney and Mark Felton I hope you will be able to help me with my research.

The interviews are likely to take between 1 1/2 and 2 hours, and will take place in Northminster House. In the discussion I would like to draw on your knowledge and experiences of the different approaches English Nature has taken to deliver their statutory obligations in freshwater ecosystems. I am particularly interested in how they are delivered in complex multi-stakeholder, multi-issue sites such as the Avon. I would
also like to talk more broadly about your personal thoughts on the processes through which the organisation achieves its objectives both in designated sites and the wider countryside, and explore any opinions you have on the concept of greater stakeholder and public participation. I hope you will find this an interesting discussion and one that is relevant to English Nature today.

I will be spending most of January in Northminster House, so if you are in agreement I would like to try and arrange a meeting at some point during this period. I would also like to tape record the interview. Taping is important for the analysis process, not only enabling me to obtain an accurate and detailed record of your views, but also allowing me to carry out an indepth analysis of the contents of the discussion. The tape will not be listened to by anyone other than myself, although my analysis of findings will be reproduced and discussed in my thesis and presented to English Nature. Care will be taken to ensure that the name and identifying characteristics of interviewees will be kept confidential in any report or presentation. Participation in the interviews is entirely voluntary and you will be offered the opportunity to review the transcript of our discussion and indicate any comments that you would like to remain totally confidential. My aim is to provide a fair and accurate picture of the things I learn, in the context of my own interpretations.

I would greatly appreciate your input into my research and I look forward to speaking to you in the near future. I will follow up this letter with a telephone call during the week starting the 16th December to discuss the interview in more depth, answer any queries you may have and arrange an appropriate time. In the mean time if there is any more information your would like about my research please contact me at the address or phone number at the top of the page or at k.studd@ucl.ac.uk. Alternatively please contact Jonathan Burney on xxxxxx.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Kate Studd
INTERVIEW CHECKLIST – STRATEGIC STAFF –

PETERBOROUGH

As each individual interviewed had different responsibilities, experiences and involvement with the issue of DIPs in EN, questions asked were tailored to suit the particular interview allowing the discussion to focus more or less on different themes. The questions below were only as a guide for the interview, not all questions were asked in every interview.

Introduction

Role in English Nature.
Roles and responsibilities now.
Different areas of the organisation you have had experience of working in
How do you influence EN policy and processes now?
(through this discussion understand about how the organisation is structured)

A changing organisation

How have you seen the organisation change since you’ve been there, particularly in terms of the approach to working with others in delivering wildlife gain?
What were the causes of this change?
Organisations are a product of their history - the legislation passed, the culture in which the organisation was incepted, how has this affected how EN is today?
How influential is the Government on the approach EN takes to delivering wildlife gain?

EN’s approach to delivering wildlife gain

Do you feel the organisation is adopting the most effective approach to safeguarding nature conservation in the UK?

EN uses a range of approaches to work with people on designated sites, and in the wider countryside. Use of regulation, advice, grants, and promotion to engage people. Where is EN most effective?

How central is legislation and regulation to achieving wildlife gain? What role does winning hearts and minds have?

Procedures set out in legislation for engaging with certain stakeholders on designated sites – e.g. competent authorities, owner-occupiers. What about the public and other interest groups who may value and have an interest in the site. Do they have a role to play in designated site management?

What do these procedures say about the way EN prioritises its stakeholders?
To what extent can local staff decide on the approach they will use and how they will work with stakeholders?

How is effectiveness judged within the organisation?

How do these targets affect how and why stakeholders are engaged in EN's work?

**Habitats Directive**

The Habitats Directive talks about sustainable development. To what extent does the legislation allow procedures to integrate social, economic and environmental values into management of these sites?

What is the role of Peterborough-based experts in determining local objectives and solutions for designated sites? What about the role of local knowledge?

How important is local ownership and support for securing favourable management? How effective is EN at achieving this?

How effective is EN at engaging with different values of nature?

About the objectives of the LIFE Project (where relevant)

**DIPs in EN**

The idea of involving organisations and individuals to a greater extent in conservation decision-making is talked about a lot. Why do you think this is?

Have you been involved in debates about this within the organisation?

Have you had experiences of being involved in a participation process?

How much of a priority do you think this is for EN alongside other priorities?

Who do you think EN needs to engage with more? Why?

When is it suitable for EN to involve people in setting conservation priorities?

Do you have a vision of how EN should respond to the participation agenda?

Do you think the way the organisation is currently structured, targeted and the procedures it adopts, facilitate or inhibit the use of participation?
INTERVIEW CHECKLIST. LOCAL STAFF WITH EXPERIENCE OF DIPS.

Their role in English Nature.
Roles and responsibilities now and previous experiences.

A changing organisation

How have you seen the organisation change since you’ve been there, particularly in terms of the approach to working with others in delivering wildlife gain?
What were the causes of this change?

Effects on day to day working practices at local team level – types of projects, how EN engages with other organisations, owner-occupiers.

What priorities drive local teams?

How much flexibility exists at a local team level in terms of how to approach a problem and work with stakeholders?

EN’s approach to delivering wildlife gain

Do you feel the organisation is adopting the most effective approach to safeguarding nature conservation in the UK?

EN uses a range of approaches to work with people on designated sites, and in the wider countryside. Use of regulation, advice, grants, and promotion to engage people. Where is EN most effective?

Experiences of using participatory processes

What triggered your interest in these processes?

What is your experience of using them?

What should be learnt by EN from your experiences?

What effect did your experience have on the way you approach future issues?

Do you think EN should use these processes more? In what way? Where within the organisation’s work programme?

Are there any changes that you think needs to be made to the way the organisation operates if these processes are going to be used more regularly? Were there any constraints that you came up against?
Appendix 2

Details of three cases where DIPs have been used within EN’s Work Programme
The use of focus groups in Natural Area programmes (EN Humber – Pennines Team) (1997).

Focus groups were used to explore peoples’ understanding of Natural Areas and to incorporate the ideas raised into the development of Natural Area Profiles. An initial study sent out questionnaires and then carried out a focus group discussion. The second stage of the process involved questionnaires from 517 residents and four focus groups.

As a result, the EN team felt it had learnt about peoples’ perceptions of nature, its decision-making processes were informed, and as a result it changed its publicity strategy. In addition the team felt it had added leverage over negotiations with local authorities because of information provided by the public.


At a conference held in December 1997 by the Buckinghamshire Nature Conservation Forum, it was agreed that the development of the Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan should occur through a predominantly ‘bottom-up’ process, whereby local people would be involved from the start of the process. As a result, a Working Group was set up (of forum members) to develop the process. Initially existing factual information about the key habitats within Buckinghamshire was collated into habitat statements. Some members of the Working Group then attended a training course with the Oxford Forestry Institute on Participatory Rural Appraisal, and as a result, 15 members of the Forum became trained facilitators. As part of the training exercise, interviews were carried out with members of the public in Aylesbury Town Centre, and two evening workshops were held to develop Habitat Action Plans for three key habitats. Following this training, further workshops were held for each Habitat on which an Action Plan was required. These workshops, open to anyone interested, tended to attract the ‘informed’ publics. The final BAP was sent out for consultation for all participants.

Unfortunately since the BAP was produced no further engagement with local communities has taken place, due to the workload of the staff involved.
Stakeholder Dialogue in the development of the NE Kent European Management Scheme. Kent Team (1997-1999)

A series of four facilitated consensus-building workshops, led by The Environment Council, were held to development a management scheme for the NE Kent European Marine Site. This area included a SSSI, SPA, Ramsar site, and two cSACs, plus built up coastal resorts of Margate, Ramsgate, Thanet and Broadstairs. The project took advantage of the identified need for a Coastal Action Plan, to handle the conflicts between recreation, tourism and nature conservation. The process initially started in January 1997 when the Relevant Authorities for the European Marine Site came together to form a management group to discuss the development of the management scheme. Following a presentation on consensus building the group agreed to use the approach. After a bid for funding was accepted, a contract was let to the Environment Council to manage the process. Facilitators were trained up from the local authorities to facilitate the process. 4 workshops were run over a period of a year between July 1998 and July 1999. These workshops represented a single-tier, inclusive management structure, within which no organisation or individual had greater influence than another over the final outcomes. Participants represented a range of interests from around the area including local residents, business people as well as local authorities and conservationists. The workshops were used to create a vision for the area, collate information about ‘what happens and where’, and the development of codes of conduct of activities for the management scheme itself. The knowledge gained during this process fed into EN’s statutory Regulation 33 advice for the site.

Following the development of the management scheme, the consensus-building approach has continued under the management of a Project Officer to carry out the more detailed negotiation of codes of conduct for activities affecting the site.
Appendix 3

Details of the designation of the River Avon cSAC/SSSI and the Avon Valley SPA/SSSI
River Avon cSAC citation

Description of site
Area name: River Avon
Administrative area: Bournemouth
Dorset
Hampshire
Wiltshire
Component SSSI: Jones' Mill
Lower Woodford Water Meadows
Porton Meadows
River Avon System
River Till

Reasons for recommendation as a candidate Special Area of Conservation
This area has been recommended as a candidate Special Area of Conservation (SAC) because it contains habitat types and/or species which are rare or threatened within a European context. The SSSI citation describes the special interests for which the site was notified in the British context. [NB: not for marine interests below mean low water mark]. The interests for which the site was selected as SSSI may differ from the interests selected in a European context. The area is considered to have a high diversity of habitats/species of European importance.

Interest(s) submitted to the European Commission
European interest(s):

1. *Cottus gobio* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Bullhead. The bullhead is a small bottom-living fish found in the upper reaches of lowland rivers and lower and middle reaches of upland rivers in England and Wales. It is not found in badly polluted rivers.

2. *Lampetra planeri* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Brook lamprey. The brook lamprey is a primitive, jawless fish resembling an eel and is the smallest of the lampreys found in the UK. It lives entirely in fresh water and occurs over most of the UK in streams and occasionally in lakes.

3. *Petromyzon marinus* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Sea lamprey. This is a primitive, jawless fish resembling an eel. It is the largest of the lampreys found in the UK. It inhabits North Atlantic coastal waters and migrates to spawn in rivers. It has a widespread distribution within the UK, although populations have declined due to pollution and barriers to migration.

4. *Salmo salar* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom.
Atlantic salmon. The Atlantic salmon is the largest of our migratory fish and spawns in the least polluted rivers of north-west Europe. It has declined due to over-fishing at sea, pollution and barriers to migration within its spawning rivers. The UK supports a large proportion of the salmon population in the European Union.
5. *Vortigo mouliniana* for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. Desmoulin's whorl snail. This small snail is found in base-rich wetlands where there are long-established swamps, fens and marshes usually bordering lowland rivers and lakes. It lives on the leaves of reed sweet-grass *Glyceria maxima* and large sedges *Carex* species. It occurs at scattered sites in a broad band stretching across England, from the Norfolk Broads to Dorset, with isolated populations elsewhere. Within the European Union, only England and Ireland are considered to have reasonable populations.

6. Water courses of plain to montane levels with the *Ranunculion fluitantis* and *Callitricho-Batrachion* vegetation for which this is considered to be one of the best areas in the United Kingdom. Rivers with floating vegetation often dominated by water-crowfoot. Rivers that support characteristic communities of water-crowfoot *Ranunculus* species, which often dominate the plant community in the river channel. This vegetation occurs in relatively unpolluted waters, in a diverse range of river types.

**River Avon System SSSI Citation**

**SITE NAME:** River Avon System

**Status:** Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

**Environment Agency Region:** South Wessex

**Water Company:** Wessex Water plc, Bournemouth and West Hampshire Water Company

**Local Planning Authorities:** Hampshire County Council, Dorset County Council, Wiltshire County Council, East Dorset District Council, New Forest District Council, Christchurch Borough Council, Salisbury District Council, Kennet District Council, West Wilts District Council

**National Grid Reference:** SZ163923 (Christchurch Harbour) to: SU073583 (Avon) ST867413 (Wyllye) ST963297 (Nadder), SU170344 (Bourne) SZ241147 (Dockens Water)

**Extent of River SSSI:** Approx 205.11 km, 507.79 ha

**Ordnance Survey Sheet:** (1:50 000) 173 183 184 195

**Date notified (under 1981 Act):** 16th December 1996

**Other Information:** new river SSSI

This site is listed as Grade 1* quality in "A Nature Conservation Review" edited by DA Ratcliffe, C.U.P., 1977 Parts of the site are separately notified as: Lower Woodford Water Meadows SSSI (1987); East Harnham Meadows (1995); Britford Water Meadows (1987); Avon Valley (Bickton-Christchurch) SSSI (1993).

The site is significant for the following habitat and species covered by Council Directive 92/43/EEC on The Conservation Of Natural Habitats and of Wild Flora and Fauna:
Habitat
Floating vegetation of *Ranunculus* of plain and submountainous rivers

Species
- **Sea Lamprey** *Petromyzon marinus* --- Annex IIA
- **Brook lamprey** *Lampetra planeri* --- Annex IIA
- **Atlantic salmon** *Salmo salar* --- Annex IIA, Va
- **Bullhead** *Cottus gobio* --- Annex IIA
- **Desmoulin’s Whorl Snail** *Vertigo mouliniana* --- Annex IIA

Parts of the site lie in the Avon Valley Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) and/or the West Wiltshire Downs and Cranborne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It also passes through the New Forest.

Description and Reasons for Notification

Key Features
The River Avon and its tributaries are of national and international importance for their wildlife communities. The Avon is richer and more varied than in most chalk streams with over 180 species of aquatic plant having been recorded, one of the most diverse fish faunas in Britain and a wide range of aquatic invertebrates. It rises in the Pewsey Vale as a network of clay streams fed by chalk springs. These converge to a chalk river running through Salisbury Plain. At Salisbury this is joined by the main Wiltshire tributaries and develops into a large calcareous river flowing over more acid sands and clay as it passes the New Forest and the Dorset Heaths. The site includes the Dockens Water, a largely unmodified acid stream draining New Forest heathlands. The Wiltshire tributaries, of interest in their own right and with contrasting geologies, are included primarily on account of their importance, with the Avon itself for internationally rare or threatened species (*Ranunculus* vegetation, sea lamprey, brook lamprey, bullhead, Atlantic salmon and Desmoulin’s whorl snail). The Bourne section is a pure chalk stream, the Wylye rises in clay and develops into a chalk stream and the Nadder is influenced by greensand but again primarily calcareous in character.

In the upper reaches of the system the rivers support outstanding chalk stream fisheries. The surrounding land is mainly grazed or arable. From Salisbury to Ringwood the floodplain is much broader and the river becomes braided where old water meadow channels exist. The floodplain is largely given over to grazing.

The upper reaches of the rivers are largely fed from chalk springs and in the Avon itself flows are relatively constant. The water quality of the Avon and northern tributaries are affected by high levels of phosphates and nitrates. These appear to adversely affect the flora, especially downstream of sewage discharges.

Flora
The plant communities in the Avon and the three northern tributaries are characteristic of a calcareous river with a clay influence. The water crowfoot *Ranunculus penicillatus var pseudofluitans* is dominant through most of the river. Other water crowfoot species are present, reflecting different conditions. In the upper reaches *R. pellatus* occurs, in the middle reaches *R. fluitans* and in the lower, more sluggish, river *R. circinatus*. The Dockens Water supports *R. flammula* and *R. omiophyllus* which are characteristic more of bogs than rivers. Two other groups of aquatic plants are characteristic of the different geological influences. The starworts *Callitriche obtusangula* and *C. platycarpa* grow with water crowfoot in clumps on the river beds. *C. stagnalis* is more frequent in the chalk tributaries and *C. hamulata* in the Dockens Water. Pondweeds reflect the more enriched nature of the Avon itself with *Potomacoton pectinatus* and *P. perfoliatus* in the upper reaches, and *P. lucens*, *P. silicifolius* (a hybrid between the last two...
species) and *P. berchtoldii* in the lower section. In the more acid Dockens Water bog pondweed *P. polygonifolius* and broad-leaved pondweed *P. natans* are found. The influence of the more acid sands is also illustrated by the occurrence of common spike-rush *Eleocharis palustris* and hemlock water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*. Other species of the channel flora in the Avon include spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*, arrowhead *Sagittaria sagittifolia*, lesser water-parsnip *Berula erecta* and fool’s water-cress *Apium nodiflorum*. Flowering rush *Butomus umbellatus* occurs in both its submergent and emergent forms, perhaps its fullest expression in a British river. The nationally scarce river water dropwort *Oenanthe fluviatilis* is found in the Avon and the Wylye, and the locally important hemlock water dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* also occurs in the system, although more characteristically at the river edge.

Adjacent and associated habitats comprise swamp, wet woodland and flood pasture habitats that are now rare both locally and nationally, although they would once have dominated the floodplains of the upper Avon. The swamp communities are dominated by sweet grass *Glyceria maxima*, common reed *Phragmites australis* or lesser pond sedge *Carex acutiformis*. These are especially important habitats for invertebrates and birds.

The wet woodlands are dominated by alder *Alnus glutinosa*. Their ground flora is governed by the water levels, with nettles *Urtica dioica* on dryer ground and greater tussock sedge *Carex panicea* in wetter areas. There are small stands of mixed alder-ash *Fraxinus excelsior* woodland, whose ground flora is characterised by creeping jenny *Lysimachia nemorum*. The site includes small fragments of agriculturally unimproved flood pasture. These are dominated by three rare grassland types: meadow foxtail-great burnet *Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis*; crested dog’s-tail black knapweed *Cynosurus cristatus-Centaurea nigra* and crested dog’s-tail marsh marigold *C. cristatus-Caltha palustris*. These flower rich grasslands are relics of traditional grazing systems once common throughout Wiltshire’s river valleys. Their swards are more productive without fertilisers than many other grassland types, however they are inferior by modern agricultural standards and most have been lost to drainage and fertilisation.

**Invertebrates**

The invertebrate fauna of the Avon is extremely rich and contains most of the species associated with a large river running through calcareous areas. In the upper stretches, over clay, there is a reasonable range of mayfly species and a variety of gastropods. The middle reaches have the most diverse fauna, again especially mayflies and mollusca, including the very localised *Batis arebatinus*. Tall fen habitats are notable for the presence of the internationally important Desmoulin’s Whorl Snail. From the lower river two species of aquatic mollusc have been recorded: *Valvata macrostoma* (vulnerable status) and the pea mussel *Pisidium tenuilineatum* (rare status), both inhabitants of slow flowing waters.

**Birds**

The river system and its adjacent vegetation provide a variety of habitats for breeding, wintering and migrating birds. The lower Avon supports a good breeding populations of kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, reed warbler *Acrocephalus scirpaceus* and sedge warbler *Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*. It is also important as a feeding site for passage birds, in particular common sandpiper *Tringa hypoleucos*, green sandpiper *Tringa ochropus* and garganey *Anas querquedula*. Several pairs of the rare Cetti warbler *Cettia cetti* are associated with the riverine habitats.

Around Salisbury and in the upper reaches of the system birds breeding on the river include little grebe *Tachybaptus ruficollis*, kingfisher and mute swan. Fringing vegetation is used by reed bunting *Emberiza schoeniclus*, yellow wagtail *Motacilla flava*, sedge and reed warblers.

**Fish**

The system has an extremely diverse fish fauna with more species recorded in the Avon than in any other British river. The renowned salmonid fisheries, with wild populations of migratory sea trout *Salmo
trutta, brown trout and Atlantic salmon *Salmo salar*. A wide range of coarse fish are present, including bullhead *Cottus gobio*, minnow *Phoxinus phoxinus*, 3-spined stickleback *Gasterosteus aculeatus*, dace *Leuciscus leuciscus*, stone loach *Noemacheilus barbatulus*, pike *Esox lucius*, grayling *Thymallus thymallus*, eel *Anguilla anguilla*, perch *Perca fluviatilis*, roach *Rutilus rutilus*, gudgeon *Gobio gobio*, bleak *Alburnus alburnus*. The system is notable for sea *Petromyzon marinus* and brook lamprey *Lampetra fluviatilis*, the latter having particularly important spawning areas in the upper reaches.

**Mammals**

The system as a whole is well used by water voles *Arvicola terrestris* and water shrews *Neomys fodiens*, with occasional recent evidence of otter *Lutra lutra*. 
Appendix 4

Interview Schedule for Stakeholder Interviews: River Avon case study
Interview Schedule – Avon Stakeholders

Introduction
About yourself, your organisation, your interests and involvement with the River Avon

Influential Groups on the River
Who do you feel are the key players with most influence over your interest in the river?

Involvement in decision-making
Who do you involve in decisions that lie within your remit / responsibilities?
What factors influence the decisions you make?

Are you happy with the level of involvement you have in decisions made about the river’s management at a local and strategic level? Discuss consultation / decision-making.

Are your knowledge / interests fully represented in policy or management decisions?

When do you feel it is most appropriate to involve a wider range of interest groups?
Are there some decisions / situations where you feel that consultation isn’t appropriate?

What do you want from involvement in a consultation / discussion process - benefits, motivation, expectations. (process, outcomes, perspectives)

Relationship between interest groups
Which organisations / groups do you feel you have a good relationship with on the river? What formulates a good relationship? What causes bad relations?

Do you feel there is a sense of common understanding or common purpose about what it is that people are striving for on the river (within your org, between orgs)? Explain

How do groups resolve their different interests and work together? conflict resolution?

EN
What are your experiences of working with English Nature?

SAC
Do you feel adequately informed of the purpose and effect of the SAC designation on activities?

River Conservation Strategy.
The River Conservation Strategy will try to pull together the relevant parts of the wide range of existing plans and fora that relate to or affect the interests of the eSAC.
Are there aspects of river / catchment management that need to be integrated?

If you had the opportunity to design your involvement in the strategy process - what role would you have? What would the RCS try to achieve?

Finally Is there anything which you feel we haven’t covered that you would like to talk about (on/off record)
Appendix 5

Results of the ODA Stakeholder Analysis Process. Assessing Stakeholders against Influence and Importance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Potential Influence over Strategy</th>
<th>Importance to Strategy</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN</td>
<td>access to national and local scientific knowledge aiding decisions</td>
<td>Strategy important mechanism to help get SAC in favourable condition, and for EN to build relationships and influence others through non-statutory processes HIGH</td>
<td>Lead Agency SUPPORTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statutory responsibilities which must be considered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Influence over decisions made at a local and strategic level through regulation, funding and advice.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond the statutory channels related to designation, EN holds much less informal influence over stakeholders than EA.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time and funds dedicated to the river SAC and developing a strategy HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EA</td>
<td>In-house and external access to expert and local knowledge</td>
<td>Strategy may help EA achieve internal policy objectives and as a competent authority, ensure policies compatible with SAC needs. HIGH</td>
<td>A project partner SUPPORTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statutory responsibilities which must be considered</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control of funds and consents for river management works</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very influential over the activities of other stakeholders through formal and informal mechanisms – Key implementation mechanism HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water Companies</td>
<td>Knowledge and understanding of water resource issues and ecological impacts</td>
<td>Identified by EN as a stakeholder group they would like to involve more closely in discussions about the SAC. Competent authority so strategy may help ensure policies compatible with SAC needs. But, SAC impacts predominantly dealt with through AMP3 &amp; other statutory mechanisms. MEDIUM-HIGH</td>
<td>Would like to be more closely involved in river governance. However, may not see much other benefit from being involved. SUPPORTIVE, but maybe UNINTERESTED?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Statutory responsibilities to deliver water must be considered in decisions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential implementation mechanism through funds, policies &amp; awareness raising exercises to improve understanding of water resource issues &amp; tackle consumer demand amongst public and their shareholders MEDIUM-HIGH</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Councils</td>
<td>Influential in strategic land planning areas selected as appropriate for development or other potentially impacting activities.</td>
<td>EN keen to get councils to adopt a more proactive approach to the river.</td>
<td>Possibly uninterested / unable to find time or</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Responsibilities an important consideration in decision-making, particularly relating to abstraction and planning. Hold broad overview of social, economic, environmental issues for county but little specific knowledge of the Avon or nature conservation. Little access to £ or time, so questionable whether they will aid strategy implementation other than through forward planning.

**District Councils / Unitary Authorities**

Influential over development decisions likely to impact the river. Responsibilities an important consideration in decision-making about issues relating to urbanised areas. (but much of catchment privately owned) Hold broad overview of social, economic, environmental issues in the district, but little specific knowledge of Avon or nature conservation. Potential role in raising local awareness and community involvement in river through community strategy process. Little access to £ or time. MEDIUM-HIGH (could increase)

However, the SAC has little interest to them beyond statutory processes, and the strategy does not overlap with their priority interests despite being a competent authority.

**Nature Conservation Interests**

**WWT**

No legislative powers but very influential through position on fora and consultation processes, key enabling role for local community interests and fisheries. Could play a key role in implementation. Understanding of the Avon system both politically and ecologically. MEDIUM-HIGH

Strategy could be a key way to maximise the contribution of the Wildlife Trusts to nature conservation of the river. Protection of other species / habitats also of interest to the strategy. MEDIUM-HIGH

**HWT**

Very influential through position on fora and consultation processes, key enabling and communication role for local communities, farmers and landowners in Avon valley. So could play a key role in implementation of actions relating to the valley. Understanding of Avon system both politically and ecologically. MEDIUM-HIGH

Interests and involvement more in the agricultural management of the Avon Valley. Strategy could be key way to maximise contribution of HWT to priority conservation issues. MEDIUM-HIGH
| **DWT** | Less involved and knowledgeable of Avon issues.  
But well networked and connected to local community and farmers.  
Experiential and scientific knowledge of conservation issues  
MEDIUM | Strategy could be way to maximise contribution of DWT to priority conservation issues on Avon. But less important because of little overlap with the strategy’s geographic focus  
MEDIUM | SUPPORTIVE |
|---|---|---|---|
| **RSPB** | Well networked into conservation-oriented fora (AVLG, WLMP, AEG), so hold understanding of Avon issues.  
Scientific / expert knowledge of floodplain management, nationally / internationally networked, hold resources and avian survey records.  
But little direct influence over on-the-ground decisions relating to river management beyond advisory role and little ability to facilitate implementation.  
MEDIUM – LOW | Interested more in the impacts of the river’s management on the Valley, rather than the river itself.  
MEDIUM-LOW | SUPPORTIVE |
| **Fishery Interests** | | | |
| **WFA** | Represent or have links to most of those who manage the river for fisheries north of Salisbury, and therefore are influential over member’s actions, v. well networked locally and nationally,  
good links with EA and EN  
knowledge and expertise of local fisheries management  
angling licenses and rents fund much river management works  
control of resources make them important for the resolution of issues relating to fisheries management.  
MEDIUM-HIGH | Strategy has potential to improve riverine environment for fishery management.  
HIGH | would support a process to develop actions to improve quality of river, would not want to be excluded, but unwilling to enter into ‘talking shop’.  
POTENTIALLY ANTAGONISTIC |
| **ASRA** | umbrella group for most landowners in Valley so are influential over actions of members  
Control of land and river channel makes them important for the resolution of issues relating to valley and fisheries management.  
Socio-economic & political status,  
well-networked locally and nationally,  
potential access to £ for strategy delivery  
less direct knowledge and understanding of river management than WFA  
MED-HIGH | Strategy has potential to improve riverine management for salmon stocks and other concerns of riparian owners. But ASRA not directly interested in other aspects of SAC.  
MED - HIGH | Frustrated with lack of action to deal with salmon. Potentially antagonistic unless action results from discussions!  
POTENTIALLY ANTAGONISTIC |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WSRT</td>
<td>A pressure group conflicting with others over management</td>
<td>Interests overlap regarding salmon, but because agencies feel there's little actions that can be done, and salmon issues being tackled through EA Salmon Liaison Group, their interests unlikely to be focus of strategy. MED-LOW</td>
<td>poor relations with other key stakeholders, and unless action results for salmon. POTENTIALLY ANTAGONISTIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch Netsmen</td>
<td>Local knowledge of riverine issues at the mouth of the river</td>
<td>Interests overlap with strategy regarding salmon, but this issue being tackled through Salmon Liaison Group MED-LOW</td>
<td>? UNINTERESTED?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish farmers</td>
<td>Hold little influence over the behaviour of others, Unlikely to contribute to strategy implementation because they already practice catch and release of salmon. LOW-MED</td>
<td>Little interest in ecology or conservation of river. Fish farming is an impact on the river controlled through one to one negotiation / regulation. LOW</td>
<td>? UNINTERESTED?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landowning Interests</td>
<td>Little involvement or influence over riverine issues or knowledge of SAC – left to tenant fishing club. Very good informal relationships with EN and they tend to liaise directly over conservation issues Training Area Estate Management have links to local communities living along Avon on MOD land. Potential means of raising awareness and community involvement in the river. MED-LOW</td>
<td>Conservation staff interested in becoming more aware of riverine issues. But they are not seen as a priority for the strategy, despite being a competent authority. MEDIUM -LOW</td>
<td>SUPPORTIVE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoD - Defence Estates</td>
<td>Other riparian</td>
<td>Unknown. They are able to negotiate directly with EN/EA over any</td>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The majority of big landowners are affiliated to ASRA or WFA, if they don’t it is assumed they have little involvement / interest in the river. As owner-occupiers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owners</strong></td>
<td>they will be part of statutory consultations to do with the SAC, and negotiate any impacts with EN/EA directly, so there are mechanisms to protect their interests. LOW</td>
<td>planned activities that may impact on the river. LOW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Agricultural Interest</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Farmers</strong></td>
<td>Not particularly well networked especially in relation to river, however networks currently being developed in relation to Landcare, &amp; Water Level Management Plans. Influenced by organisations like FRCA, NFU, FWAG, MAFF. Unorganised group – act mainly as individuals with little influence over behaviour of others. Tenant farmers in particular can have little influence over the long-term approach to farming their land due to financial constraints and short-term leases, so unlikely to directly be able to facilitate strategy implementation. Understanding of issues in agriculture may be important in resolving issues relating to pollution. LOW-MEDIUM</td>
<td>To reduce impact of agricultural practices on the SAC the needs and interests of farmers must be considered. The strategy is likely to review current initiatives to help farmers reduce their impact on the SAC. MEDIUM</td>
<td>UNKNOWN, but possibly uninterested. Maybe interested in more focused discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NFU</strong></td>
<td>Tend to be reactive to concerns of farmers rather than proactive. Poorly networked in riverine and environmental networks other than Landcare. Provide a means of passing on information to farmers. Hold understanding of issues and problems in agriculture which may be useful in tackling agricultural pollution. MED-LOW</td>
<td>Interests with strategy don’t directly overlap unless actions identified which they have a specific interest in. LOW</td>
<td>SUPPORTIVE but uninterested. Maybe interested in more focused discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FWAG</strong></td>
<td>Technical knowledge and understanding of relationship between farm management and nature conservation. Able to influence farm management but on reactive basis only. If funds available would be a potential implementation mechanism for initiatives to advise and support farmers about impact on river. MED-LOW</td>
<td>Interests not directly overlapping with strategy, unless specifically tackling agricultural issues – predominantly dealt with through Landcare. MED-LOW</td>
<td>SUPPORTIVE, but would want to take a more action-oriented role in relation to specific issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRCA</strong></td>
<td>Influential means of changing farmer behaviour within ESA, but constrained by</td>
<td>Interests mainly in agricultural</td>
<td>SUPPORTIVE but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest Type</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Management of Avon Valley</td>
<td>Engaging in Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Community Interests</strong></td>
<td>Very poorly organised or networked into river governance other than through representative democratic structures — i.e. councils. So hold little influence. Little knowledge of riverine issues, or their impacts on the river in an indirect way — as water company customers and consumers etc. but value the river as part of their local environment.</td>
<td>Little perceived overlap by EN with community interests and the conservation and in-channel focus of the strategy. However, some community groups may be interested in being involved in management of the river in urbanised areas.</td>
<td>UNKNOWN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other recreational interests — walking, canoeing</strong></td>
<td>Interests poorly represented in riverine fora (because they have very little access to the river) and they hold very little influence. An increased influence would be seen as controversial with landowning and fishing interests represented through EA and County Councils.</td>
<td>Strategy not seen as appropriate forum to debate access issues because of controversy with landowners and fishing interests. LEAP is most appropriate forum.</td>
<td>UNKNOWN / UNINTERESTED?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for Assessment:

**Influence:** The power the stakeholder has over the type of decisions that need to be made in the strategy (holding responsibilities, knowledge and/or control of resources affecting the ability to resolve issues), the ability to facilitate the implementation of the strategy (through funding, policies, or networks with other stakeholders), or the ability to negatively affect the success of the strategy (through inability or unwillingness to co-operate).

**Importance:** whether the needs and interests of the stakeholders are to be the focus of the strategy – i.e. the extent to which the interests of the stakeholders overlap with the strategy focus on in-channel conservation and whether it is seen as necessary to address these interests to achieve strategy goals (helping to deliver favourable condition of the SAC, particularly by resolving issues which are not being tackled elsewhere by statutory mechanisms or other initiatives).

**Position:** attitude of the stakeholder to the river conservation strategy – willingness to be involved.
Appendix 6

Additional Details of the Avon Strategy Process
## 9.1. Details of Meetings

The Avon River Conservation Strategy Working Group meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Working Group Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attendees</th>
<th>No. Participants</th>
<th>Objective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting 1</strong></td>
<td>14/08/01</td>
<td>EN (Wilts, Hants, Dorset); EA (Landcare), Wessex Water; Hants CC; Kennet DC; New Forest DC; Salisbury DC; West Wilts DC; Wiltshire Wildlife Trust; Hants Wildlife Trust, WFA; ASRA</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Setting objectives for strategy &amp; agreeing topic groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting 2</strong></td>
<td>06/11/01</td>
<td>EN Wilts; EA (Restoration); Wessex Water; Hants CC; Kennet DC; Hants WT; WFA; ASRA</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>SDA Process – Agreeing criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting 3</strong></td>
<td>23/09/02</td>
<td>EN (Wilts); EA (Restoration); Wessex Water; Bournemouth &amp; West Hants Water; Wilts CC; Hants CC; Kennet DC; Salisbury DC; DEFRA-RDS; Wilts Wildlife Trust; WFA; ASRA</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Discussing draft strategy &amp; consultation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting 4</strong></td>
<td>08/10/02</td>
<td>EN (Wilts, Dorset); EA (Area Manager, Restoration); Wessex Water; Wilts CC; Hants CC; Kennet DC; Salisbury DC; West Wilts DC; Wilts Wildlife Trust; Hants Wildlife Trust; WFA; ASRA.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>SDA Process – Agreeing prioritised list of issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meeting 5</strong></td>
<td>16/12/02</td>
<td>EN (Wilts, Dorset); EA (Restoration); Wessex Water; Wilts CC; Hants CC; Kennet DC; Salisbury DC; DEFRA, West Wilts DC; Wilts Wildlife Trust; Hants Wildlife Trust; WFA; ASRA.</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Discussing strategy dissemination &amp; implementation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Outputs Working Group 1 – Agreed List of Topic Groups plus Comments.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Comments on effectiveness of current initiatives</th>
<th>Topic Group?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Existing mechanisms which should be addressing problems currently ineffective</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td>Existing council mechanisms to control effect of development currently not working as effectively as wished</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discharge of Polluting Substances</td>
<td>Consented processes adequately being addressed, but diffuse pollution issues, and escape of farmed fish need to be addressed</td>
<td>NO, but diffuse pollution, fish escape to be considered in other groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstraction</td>
<td>Tends to be resolved through statutory mechanisms</td>
<td>YES – at the request of WFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flood defence / land drainage</td>
<td>Ongoing Water Level Management Plan should resolve most issues relating to flood defence.</td>
<td>NO. Other key issues to be taken up in fisheries and restoration groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisheries Management</td>
<td>Potential conflicts may exist, possibly a lack of understanding and communication of objectives between conservation and fisheries interests</td>
<td>YES – informal discussion only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreation</td>
<td>Not thought to be important enough to discuss, but access could be an issue in the future</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>Not thought to be impact on river, need information before any actions</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan grazing</td>
<td>Ongoing discussion and research about impacts on Ranunculus hasn’t yet determined whether this is an issue.</td>
<td>Included in Problem Species’ group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predation (Mink / piscivorous birds)</td>
<td>No integrated initiative to determine impact or resolve problems</td>
<td>YES. Problem Species Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eSAC boundary</td>
<td>In future boundary may be reviewed by EN, but this would be a statutory procedure</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consenting protocol between EN and EA</td>
<td>Identified as a problem in pre-strategy interviews, but being developed through a separate process.</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjacent Designated Sites</td>
<td>Identified as a problem in pre-strategy process.</td>
<td>Interactions to be considered in all groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Identified as a problem in pre-strategy process.</td>
<td>NO. Issue to be considered in all groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Forest Streams</td>
<td>Lack of information about the effect of these streams running into the river</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Influences – Climate Change, International fisheries</td>
<td>Thought to be outside scope of strategy – because local stakeholders could not influence issue</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Processes</td>
<td>Beyond scope of strategy</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christchurch Harbour</td>
<td>Little known or understood about harbour and interaction with strategy</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Group Meeting</td>
<td>Date</td>
<td>No. Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Restoration and Rehabilitation.             | 23 November 2001, 3 April 2002 | 9, 11            | Identify issues for the River Avon cSAC associated with current and possible future rehabilitation projects (in-channel and on the floodplain) and means by which they can be addressed.  
Identify principles for strategic rehabilitation priorities on the River Avon cSAC, including the objectives of rehabilitation / restoration in relation to the cSAC features.  
Provide guidance for the delivery of future rehabilitation projects on the ground. |
| Problem Species.                            | 28 November 2001, 23 January 2002 | 6, 8             | Identify issues for the River Avon cSAC associated with problem species, and means by which they can be addressed.  
Identify issues for the River Avon SSSI and wider biodiversity associated with problem species, and means by which they can be addressed. |
| Diffuse Pollution from Agriculture          | 5 December 2001, 5 March 2002  | 9, 7             | Identify issues for the River Avon cSAC associated with agricultural diffuse pollution and means by which they can be addressed.                                                                                               |
| Christchurch Harbour:                       | 7 December 2002              | 16               | Identify issues for the River Avon cSAC associated with Christchurch Harbour and means by which they can be addressed.                                                                                                             |
| Fisheries Management                        | 21 June 2002                 | 6                | Informal exploration of fishery management issues which may affect the cSAC interests.                                                                                                                                             |
| Abstraction:                                | 17 May 2002                  | 5                | Informal discussion over how abstraction issues being tackled.                                                                                                                                                                     |
Details of The SDA Process (adapted from documentation produced by the Project Officer)

The approach used to prioritise the issues identified for the River Avon cSAC was adapted from a method used in development of the New Forest LEAP\(^1\). The method combines discussion and negotiation between stakeholders with a systematic decision analysis approach.

**Rationale**

- provides a systematic method for prioritisation of issues
- is inclusive of people involved in managing the river and catchment
- promotes negotiation and consensus building
- ensures all the issues are appraised on the same terms
- is open and transparent
- creates a decision-making path that can be re-traced if the outcomes are disputed

Through a series of workshops, the working group developed the criteria, assessed issues against the criteria and reviewed and agreed the final list priorities for action. The diagram below shows the approach to carrying out the methodology.

---

Working Group 2, Procedure:

Setting the Criteria.

1. Introduction to the process, and update on the strategy

2. Participants worked in pairs of similar interest, to brainstorm a list of criteria and the associated reasoning

3. In groups of 4 participants clarified, condensed and agreed on criteria, with the help of a facilitator, ensuring that they were relevant to the strategy, and workable as criteria.

4. Working as a single facilitated group, similar criteria were grouped together and any clarification and rewording agreed to reach a list of 10-12 criteria to be taken forward.

Following the workshop an email exercise was carried out whereby each participant scored each criterion out of 100 according to their relative importance. Criteria thought to be
important were assigned a higher weight than criteria that were thought to be less so. The scores submitted by individuals were normalised and averaged. Everyone’s initial criteria were represented in the final list of criteria presented below:

**Ranked Criteria plus Reasoning.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank given</th>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>To what extent will resolving the issue contribute to favourable condition of the cSAC?</td>
<td>Issues having negative impacts on favourable condition across a range of indicators need to be addressed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>To what extent can the issue be resolved in a sustainable way (social, environment, economic)?</td>
<td>Sustainable (socially, economically and environmentally) solutions to issues are needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>To what extent does the resolution of this issue benefit wider biodiversity?</td>
<td>Resolve issues in a way that has a neutral or positive impact on the SPA/Ramsar and wider biodiversity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Is the issue being addressed by other organisations in the catchment?</td>
<td>To avoid organisations duplicating effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>To what extent will the action taken improve the level of cooperation from the main users of the river?</td>
<td>Maintain/ improve levels of support and co-operation of main users of the river.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>To what extent will the resolution of this issue generate stakeholder commitment?</td>
<td>Working in partnership increases the likelihood of addressing issues effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>To what extent is the issue backed up by reliable evidence?</td>
<td>Increased confidence in prioritisation of issues and proposed actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>To what extent can the issue be resolved by the existing statutory, regulatory, policy and legal framework?</td>
<td>Higher priority to address issues that can not be resolved satisfactorily within the existing statutory, regulatory, policy and legal framework framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>To what extent is the issue a driver for real change?</td>
<td>The more powerful the driver(^2), the more chance of improvements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>To what extent will the action taken to resolve the issue enhance the general publics’ perception of the SAC?</td>
<td>Develop and maintain a positive public perception of the cSAC and be aware of public interest as a factor in decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>To what extent will the resolution of this issue improve the economic potential [income generation or capital value] of the cSAC?</td>
<td>Resolve issues in a way that has a neutral or positive impact on economic potential of the cSAC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Prior to Working Group Meeting 4, all the issues and actions coming from the topic groups and other discussions were grouped into 24 broad issues by the Project Officer, and

\(^2\) Issues that have a strong negative impact on the SAC have a stronger driver for change (the Habitats Directive) than those affecting the cSAC less, or affecting mainly SSSI/BAP species.
were distributed to the working group with supporting information, cross-sectioned to the relevant section in the draft strategy document. This provided enough information by which to prioritise the issues.

**Working Group Meeting 4 – Scoring Issues against Criteria**

The workshop had five stages:

- Participants break into 3 groups (two 5's & a 4), scoring all issues against one of the 3 highest weighted criteria.

- In pairs and 3's the same process is carried out for the remaining criteria

- The whole group is able to view, question and discuss the scores given to each issue under the 11 criteria.

- The scores are calculated for each issue and reviewed by the whole group and grouped into high, (scored as 3) medium (scored 2), and low (scored 1), and non-applicable (scored 0).

The process is illustrated using the example below;

**Issue**

1. Planning authorities deal with a multitude of designations and legislation, it is difficult for them to focus on the cSAC.

2. Problem species impacting on the cSAC features.
Criteria | Issue 1: Planning authorities deal with a multitude of designations and legislation, it is difficult for them to focus on the cSAC. | Issue 2: Problem species impacting on the cSAC features.
--- | --- | ---
Is the resolution of this issue a legal requirement? | High (3) —because planners have statutory obligations | Medium (2) —Indirectly, legal requirement if problem species affect favourable condition
Is the problem identified likely to get worse? | Medium (2) —because the situation will probably not change if no action is taken | High (3) —because problem species are likely to spread if no action is taken

Once the issues have been rated, the criteria weight is applied, and the weighted scores summed to obtain a total.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Issue 1 Rating × weight</th>
<th>Issue 2 Rating × weight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 1</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Low (3) × 60 = 180</td>
<td>Med (2) × 60 = 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criteria 2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Med (2) × 40 = 80</td>
<td>High (3) × 40 = 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>260</td>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Applying our example criteria to Issues 1 and 2, the issue of planners struggling to focus on the cSAC has a higher priority than tackling problem species.

The “money screen”

The criteria do not consideration of costs and availability of funding for resolution of the issues identified. If criteria included costs, issues that are expensive to resolve could be are scored as a low priority on purely economic grounds. In keeping with the Habitats Directive, the strategy should prioritise issues according to their impact on the cSAC, not according to how expensive they are to resolve.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>There is need to approach rehabilitation on a catchment scale in order to maximize ecological gain for the cSAC</td>
<td>256.599</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Diffuse pollution is impacting adversely on the River Avon cSAC</td>
<td>241.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Existing abstractions should not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC either alone or in combination with other abstractions</td>
<td>214.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ineffective communication undermines co-operation between stakeholders and statutory bodies</td>
<td>210.062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Current and future developments or road schemes must not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC either alone or in combination with other developments and road schemes</td>
<td>206.087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Recreational fisheries management activities must not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC</td>
<td>205.014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Flood defence and land drainage activities must not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC</td>
<td>204.323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Existing point source discharges must have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC either alone or in combination with other discharges</td>
<td>203.604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Future abstractions must not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC either alone or in combination with other abstractions</td>
<td>198.499</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>There is inadequate survey and monitoring of certain features and attributes of the River Avon cSAC to allow reporting on favourable condition</td>
<td>194.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Future point source discharges must not have a significant effect on the River Avon cSAC either alone or in combination with other discharges</td>
<td>187.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The available data related to the River Avon needs to be collated, stored and managed more effectively.</td>
<td>183.986</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Flood risk management in the Avon catchment should take into account the requirements of the cSAC and deliver net wildlife gain where possible</td>
<td>174.291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Guidance on appropriate rehabilitation techniques is required</td>
<td>174.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>The exploitation of salmon stocks needs to be managed to ensure healthy stock levels are achieved and subsequently maintained</td>
<td>165.167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Improved accessibility (physical/intellectual) to the River Avon cSAC is required to enhance understanding of the ecology of the river</td>
<td>163.187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Water level management to benefit the Avon Valley SPA must take into account any potential conflicts with the ecological requirements of the River Avon cSAC</td>
<td>161.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Salmon smolts may be vulnerable to avian predation at particular times and locations</td>
<td>157.779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Invasive plant species have the potential to significantly effect the River Avon cSAC</td>
<td>155.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>The boundaries of the River Avon cSAC/SSSI were based on available scientific knowledge at the time of notification and in future new information may indicate that the boundary should be revised</td>
<td>152.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Grazing by large flocks of mute swans has been observed to have a marked local effect on Ranunculus beds, reducing structural and biological habitat diversity</td>
<td>147.296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>There is a risk that the operation of eel traps may delay the upstream migration of salmon</td>
<td>133.021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Escapes from fish farms are of concern due to potential impacts on the cSAC features</td>
<td>130.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Signal crayfish populations in the cSAC, may impact on the cSAC features, in particular bullhead and Ranunculus</td>
<td>115.288</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Process Evaluation
At the end of the two facilitated SDA workshops, a sheet with some evaluation questions was completed by participants.

Stakeholder Evaluation from Working Group Meeting 2: Identifying Criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation</th>
<th>★★ ★★ ★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★★</th>
<th>Very bad</th>
<th>Very good</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style of working</td>
<td>★★ ★★ ★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★★</td>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How enjoyable was today?</td>
<td>★★ ★★ ★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★★</td>
<td>Not very</td>
<td>Very</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution made to developing the strategy?</td>
<td>★★ ★★ ★★★ ★★★★ ★★★★★</td>
<td>Very low</td>
<td>Very high</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Stakeholder Evaluation from Working Group Meeting 4 – Scoring Issues:

**Question 1.**
How happy were you with the style of working today?

Not very | | | | | | | | | | very

**Question 2.**
How happy are you with the outcomes from the day?

Not very | | | | | | | | | | very

**Question 3.**
How much has this workshop contributed to the success of the Conservation Strategy?

Not very | | | | | | | | | | very
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A


B


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