

# Wear Catchment Partnership

## WEAR CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN, September 2021





## 1 Introduction to the Wear Catchment Management Plan

Our River Wear and its catchment is unique and special. More than 620,000 people rely on clean, clear and good tasting drinking water, require protection from flood events, and desire a healthy and diverse green-blue environment for mental and physical well-being. Important wildlife habitats and species also make the catchment distinct, and whilst some of these are internationally protected, many are part of our wider countryside, unobtrusively providing ecosystem services to people and landscapes.

The health of our river and its tributaries is so closely linked to land management, urban development and climate resilience that real change at a meaningful scale can only be achieved by undertaking an **Integrated Catchment Management** approach.

This plan builds on the collective will, influence and activities of the people who live and work in the catchment, and its communities and organisations, and aims to establish a strong framework for collaborative working to achieve our shared vision for the Wear.

The Wear Catchment Management Plan is written for 2020-25 and sets out our ambition to improve the water environment and the activities we will undertake to work towards this. Our plans will develop further as the catchment partnership grows and becomes sustainable.

The plan is structured in three sections:

- **Business planning** – describes how the partnership is managed and how it will be sustainable into the future;
- **Catchment overview** – presents the Wear Catchment and introduces its sub-catchments, and our approach to using data and evidence;
- **Action plan** – sets out the delivery activities we will undertake to achieve our objectives. The action plan is the basis of, and underpins, the overall management plan. Each action plan project group will deliver its own communication and engagement and data gathering and monitoring activity as required by that project.

## 2 Business Planning

### 2.1 Purpose of the Wear Catchment Partnership

The Wear Catchment Partnership (WCP) was established in 2011 through the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA) ([www.catchmentbasedapproach.org](http://www.catchmentbasedapproach.org)). We are a group of organisations committed to the understanding and improvement of the water environment within the catchment. We work together to share and collate knowledge, information and evidence to inform catchment plans and priorities, align funding and project delivery to maximise impact and benefits, and provide support to project specific sub groups, established through the action plan which may include local stakeholder organisations and/or individuals.

#### Our Vision



A robust, healthy and biodiverse catchment and coastal waters that are valued, enjoyed, contributing to the economic and social well-being of local communities, supported by sustainable land management’.

## **Strategic themes and objectives**

### ***Water awareness and wellbeing***

- To reconnect communities to their local water environment and enable them to access and enjoy their local rivers and coasts and the health and wellbeing benefits this brings
- To share information about the River Wear and its catchment and understand what people value and want to see improved about their local rivers
- To improve communication between local, regional and national organisations using the Wear catchment and work in partnership to improve the water environment
- To support, recognise, and increase opportunities for volunteering and engagement across the catchment

### ***Managing water together***

- To work with statutory organisations, local authorities, water companies, land managers, businesses and communities to improve the management of rivers and coastal areas in the Wear catchment
- To promote the enhancement of natural capital within the catchment and the benefits this brings
- To promote and deliver natural solutions to support climate resilience and adaptation within the Wear catchment

### ***Water quality***

- To make better use of local knowledge to understand the causes of poor water quality in the Wear catchment and take action to resolve them
- To raise awareness and educate local communities and businesses about the impact of their actions on water quality

### ***Wildlife and natural environment***

- To provide improved, bigger and better connected wildlife habitats in the Wear catchment to deliver a catchment-based response to the ecological emergency
- To promote an increased abundance and diversity of species in the River Wear and its tributaries and coastal areas

## **2.2 Partnership Context**

The partnership operates with the context of the wider strategic North East region and National policy and partnership environment. The partnership’s activities and plans reflect these interactions.



At national level these policies include the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, environment and agriculture legislation, the River Basin Management Planning process and Water Environment Regulations.

At regional level, local plans may impact on the activities of the partnership. The partnership will use its influence to promote improved water management.

The Wear Catchment Partnership is one of four Catchment Partnerships within the Northumbria River Basin, and five within the North East area. There are three Local Nature Partnerships which cover the North East area and beyond. Where appropriate, the Wear Catchment Partnership works with these groups and other relevant local and regional partnerships.

### 2.3 Governance and Working Principles

The WCP works primarily within the Wear catchment, but is also outward-looking. WCP participates in cross-catchment, regional, national and transnational partnerships and activity, seeking to share and benefit from best practice, and enhance its visibility to attract investment and support to deliver its objectives.

The WCP is committed to:

- Breaking-down barriers and silos to allow integrated catchment management;
- Making organisational priorities and plans visible to promote a joined-up approach;
- Sharing data appropriately between organisations to inform-decision making;
- Recognising catchment connectivity (upstream/downstream, land/water);
- Empowering community-led activity;
- Aligning funding and income streams to support partnership objectives.

#### **Wear Catchment Partnership Group**

The WCP has an established Wear Catchment Partnership Group (WCPG) which meets three times a year. The purpose of the WCPG is to: share information and provide visibility of partner organisations' strategic priorities and activities; identify new opportunities to support integrated catchment management; monitor delivery of agreed actions from previous meetings.

The WCPG is an open space or forum facilitating joint working between independent partners. It is not there to act in a monitoring capacity or to achieve and collate detailed oversight of project milestones. All project management, communication and monitoring functions remain with the project-specific groups established under the action plan, described in section 4 below.

Project lead partners report progress to the WCPG meetings to enable the wider partnership group to maintain an overview of catchment activity and identify supplementary opportunities.

The WCPG has adopted a Memorandum of Understanding which sets out the group's ways of working and expectations. Updates are controlled by version number. The current MoU is available here [Link](#)

## 2.4 Resources

### Available resources

The WCPG is supported through in-kind contributions of staff time, meeting rooms, project resources etc. from the host and other partners.

The WCPG aims to work collectively to identify resources to allow delivery of the Action Plan and achieve the strategic aims and objectives of the partnership.

### Funding

The WCP is currently funded by Grant in Aid received from Defra through the Environment Agency in an annual allocation to support the Catchment Based Approach. £15K is allocated each year to the host organisation (in 2020 the Wear Rivers Trust) to support the partnership in the Wear Catchment.

Project funding is available from a variety of sources which can support the activities identified in the Action Plan. This includes cash and in kind contributions from partners.

### Further Funding

Funding options which could bring in additional income to support the partnership are being explored and include:

- Partners funding the WCP through direct contributions;
- Securing external funding through applying to local, regional, national or international environmental or partnership funders;
- Including revenue support for the WCP in Wear Catchment project proposals.

Project support could include accessing contributions from developers through Local Authority Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy funds, flood risk contributions through FCERM projects, Local Levy or RFCC funding streams through projects with appropriate benefits; and securing funding from business and industry Corporate Social Responsibility budgets by demonstrating the value of the partnership's activities.

## 2.5 Monitoring and Review of our Catchment Management Plan

This plan will be updated if any partner suggests an amendment to the WCPG priorities or ways of working in response to new opportunities or changed circumstances.

The WCPG will assess the extent to which forecast action plan activities have been achieved and summarise results on an annual basis through the standard CaBA format.

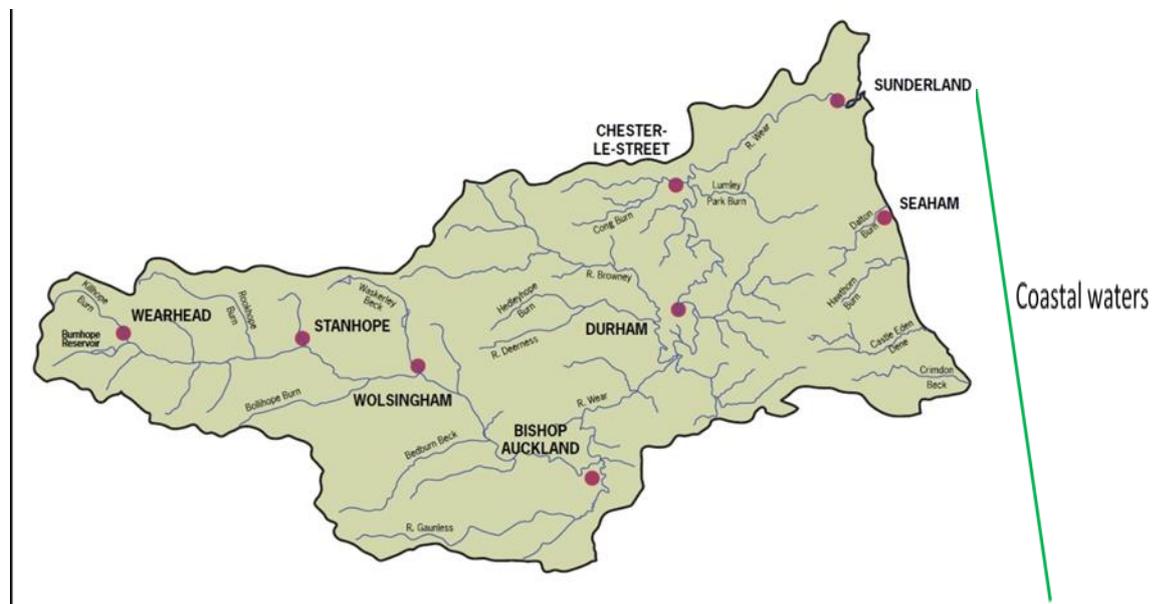
We will also look to improve our plan through engagement with the wider CaBA community, and sharing of best practice with other partnerships.

### 3. Context

#### 3.1 Catchment Area

Rising in the North Pennines several small streams drain from the hills between Killhope Law and Burnhope Seat to form the headwaters of the River Wear. The Wear begins where the Burnhope and Killhope burns merge at Wearhead. The high energy, rocky upland river flows eastwards through Weardale, gradually widening and deepening as it is joined by tributary rivers and streams, meandering its way through the more fertile flatter lowlands in the East of the county. The river is tidal from Chester le Street to, Wearmouth, Sunderland, where it discharges to North Sea coastal waters. The Wear catchment has an area of 1080 square kilometres or 417 square miles. The main river is 97km or 60 miles long from Wearhead to Wearmouth. A series of deep wooded valleys or coastal denes arise independently from the Wear and discharge to the sea.

The Wear catchment is bounded by the catchments of the Tyne to the North, Eden in the West, Tees to the South, with the North Sea forming the Eastern boundary.





## 4. Action Plan

### 4.1 Managing the Action Plan

The action plan drives forward the practical delivery of the principles contained within this management plan. Partners can nominate projects for inclusion in the action plan where overlapping opportunities have been identified, aligning the interests of and providing benefits to multiple partners.

The WCPG will decide if a nominated project is accepted on to the action plan.

The nominating partner will usually be established as project lead, taking responsibility for the establishment and management of a project-specific subgroup, as required, comprising WCPG members and additional local actors as appropriate.

There may be a need for a project-specific Memorandum of Understanding, depending upon the type and complexity of the project and the numbers and expectations of participating partners.

The project lead will co-ordinate funding availability, including any match, the distribution of funds to participating partners and agreed delegation of tasks.

The project lead will be responsible for the co-ordination of communication and engagement activities and for data collection and monitoring as required by funders but will delegate individual tasks to participating partners as appropriate.

The project lead partner will be responsible for reporting progress against the registered action plan to the WCPG.

The action plan is updated, controlled by version number, as projects are completed and registered. The current action plan is available here. [Link](#)