

To:

David Cooper

Head of Water Quality, DEFRA



David Baxter

Head of Catchment Management, Environment Agency

Geoff Sansome

Director of Land Management, Natural England



Richard Greenhous

Director of Forest Services, Forestry Commission

We, the members of the Tamar Catchment Planning Group, would like to extend our gratitude to you for giving us the opportunity to be involved in shaping the future of the Tamar Catchment landscape and contributing to the enhancement of the aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems upon which we all so greatly depend.

It is now more widely acknowledged that far greater environmental improvements can be achieved if all of the groups actively involved in regulation, land management, scientific research or conservation in a catchment area are drawn together with landowners and other interest groups to form a catchment partnership (Rural Economy and Land Use Programme, 2012).

We share your conviction (set out in your recent Natural Environment and Water White Papers, 2011) that only through taking an integrate, stakeholder-driven assessment of our catchment will we be able to develop a shared understanding of the challenges we face and, following on from this, go on to develop a strategic, targeted, balanced and therefore cost-effective catchment management intervention plan. We share your belief that an empowered catchment area partnership comprised of diverse stakeholders, technical specialists and government bodies from in and around a catchment, can be responsible for coordinating the planning, funding and delivery of good ecological health for their river and its catchment.

Over the last 12 months in the Tamar Catchment we have embraced the core principals of DEFRA's 'catchment-based approach', which was first announced by Environment Minister Richard Benyon MP on 22 March 2011 and which is enshrined in the ideals of the Localism Act 2011 and Article 14 of the Water Framework Directive, which require the active involvement of all interested parties in its implementation.

In line with these ideas, and at your invitation, we have worked hard to assemble a diverse and highly motivated partnership of stakeholders comprising around 100 individuals from across the wider Tamar Catchment. Together, we represent over 30 different interest groups, including representatives from each of the environmental government bodies, local authorities, the water company, voluntary sector organisations, environmental NGOs, Universities, private companies, the farming community and local residents.

Since our Group was formed in March 2012 we have worked collaboratively, through over 70 hours of discussion and consultation, to collate and assess all of the evidence relating to ecosystem service

provision in the Tamar Catchment and to develop a shared understanding of the environmental challenges, priorities and opportunities that we currently face in this catchment and that we may face in the future.

Having developed this shared understanding, we have gone on to agree a shared vision for which measures may need to be undertaken in the catchment and where they may need to be delivered in order to achieve the greatest possible enhancement in both the ecological health of our natural environments and their ability to provide the ecosystem services that we all need.

In the first phase of this initiative, we have specifically worked to (1) characterise the current level of ecosystem service provision and/or degradation in the catchment, (2) define a toolbox of catchment management measures that could be used to enhance ecosystem services provision, (3) identify critical multifunctional areas of the catchment where, if delivered in a targeted way, these interventions could realise the greatest and most cost-effective enhancement of multiple ecosystem services, and (4) set out a framework for the delivery of an integrated, balanced and funded intervention plan to realise our shared vision for a Tamar Catchment of the future.

By taking this approach, we are well on the way to producing a strategic plan for the Tamar Catchment with the very people that own, manage, live around and rely upon it and we have created it such that no additional funding will be required from treasury and to reflect our desire to see the agricultural productivity of the landscape maintained.

At a recent combined meeting of our Tamar Catchment Planning Group (at Roadford Lake in November 2012), the stakeholder Group gave its full backing to the work we have undertaken so far and expressed their keen desire to see the initiative move forward into the development of a comprehensive, integrated and strategic delivery plan for the Tamar Catchment in 2013 and beyond.

Furthermore, the members of the stakeholder group also agreed that, no matter what decision is made regarding future direction and funding of the 'catchment approach' nationally, we would be extremely disappointed if the momentum and good-will generated during our catchment planning activities should be allowed to dissipate now that the first 'pilot' year of the initiative has concluded. We feel that we have come too far and achieved too much for this opportunity to be wasted and are determined to continue our collaborative work towards improvement of our catchment landscape for everyone who benefits from it.

We are therefore writing to inform you of our collective resolution to continue our work towards the creation of a co-ordinated and sustainable plan for the Tamar that balances all of the environmental, economic and social demands placed on it at a catchment-scale and which also moves us closer to having a catchment that meets all of the statutory environmental targets we are required to meet over the coming years. All we now require from you is that you give our plan, and the governance arrangements it sets out, the official recognition that it will require to become a powerful and legitimate tool for the integrated and coordinated delivery of catchment management in the future.

Yours sincerely,

The Tamar Catchment Planning Group