

Cooperative Research Partnership
for Freshwater Ecology
Consultation

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Background to the Consultation

- 'Review of Freshwater ecology'.
- Significant decline in freshwater ecology research publications.
- Significant decline in the numbers of freshwater ecologists working in academia and research Institutes.
- Reduced support for freshwater ecology from NERC.
- Reduced influence on science spending.

Cooperative Research Partnership (CRP) proposal

- Recommended by the review.
- Discussed at the FBA symposium in October 2006.
- Proposed CRP received support at the meeting.

The consultation process

- June to September 2008.
- Background document – 'A UK CRP in Freshwater Ecology – turning concept into reality'.
- Available on the FBA website along with other background documents.

The consultation process

- Request for responses to key questions by interview or in writing are being made.
- Responses and comments made through the FBA will accepted.
- All responses made are kept in confidence.
- A summary of responses will be compiled.
- A report will be produced by mid September.

Consultation questions

- Does the CRP have wide support?
- What are the key science questions?
- What would the scope be?
- How would it be resourced?
- What are the main obstacles?
- How would these be overcome?
- Would you join?

Some key points so far

- Does the CRP have wide support?
 - Yes from >90% of the consultees
- What are the key science questions?
 - WFD, climate change, floods directive
 - better technical solutions and more focused outputs which help answer policy questions
 - Needs structured research programme
 - Key science questions are all inter or multi-disciplinary
- What would the scope be?
 - The focus must be on freshwater ecology
 - Not be too prescriptive at this stage
 - The boundaries need scoping
 - Very broad and include the marine environment
 - Must work with other disciplines/systems approach
 - Why not CRP for Freshwater Science?

Some key points so far

- How would it be resourced & structured?
 - Finance and resources provided by the partners are key
 - New money may not be essential
 - There must be a pay off for the sponsors
 - Cooperation must mean real cooperation
 - Need centre of gravity / Central Core to partnership ..& smaller scale "satellite" partnerships
 - CRP could be strategic body overseeing and coordinating all key water science and management questions
- What are the main obstacles?
 - Barriers include IPR and data sharing
 - Early agreement on the objectives may prove to be an obstacle
 - Agreement on scope or detail
 - Problems with moving from "competitive" working to CRP
 - Must not become a "club"

Some key points so far

- How would these be overcome?
 - Speak the truth to power.
 - Focus on outcomes and share vocabulary.
 - Must be better links between science and customers.
 - Greater focus on prediction and less on description.
 - Need for this to deliver quickly
 - Needs strong coordination
 - Need to engage and work with each other and be as inclusive as possible
- Would you join?
 - Most say yes but -
 - There is a need for clear definition of the objectives.
 - A flexible approach on what it can deliver in the short and long term
 - The right people need to be round the table
 - Must be high level support

Next steps

- The report will describe the results of the consultation and make recommendations about the future CRP
- This will form the basis for:
 - setting up the CRP.
 - future negotiations on what it looks like.
 - how it will improve support for freshwater ecology.
 - how it will help deliver effective freshwater ecology science outputs.