

3. At a Watershed: Land Use Planning in Scottish River Basins

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Some of the latest trends within ideas of sustainable water management promote greater integration in decision-making. The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), seen by many as a 'Sustainability Directive', places particular emphasis on building linkages between water management and land use planning. This integrative vision fits comfortably with broader concepts of sustainability, but in reality it involves bridging widely separate policies, institutions and cultures of practice. There is little understanding of what this means in practical terms for those at the 'front line' of decision making (particularly land use planners).

This research project examines how these questions are being tackled in the real world. Its focus is on the WFD's river basin management planning (RBMP) framework and its emerging relationship with the land use planning system in Scotland. The project's theoretical stance is based on the premise that policy objectives can be interpreted differently by different stakeholders in the decision making process (e.g. planners, politicians). These interpretations may even contradict each other, which can stand in the way of implementation. Furthermore, they are affected by wider social factors, such as political agendas, institutional structures, and professional cultures. Through analyses of key policy documents, as well as in-depth interviews with local authorities and public agencies, this project is exploring various interpretations of the RBMP/planning relationship – including who is involved, and what the key roles and responsibilities are. The analysis also looks at what effects these interpretations will have on how the relationship unfolds.