

Abstract to accompany slides by Blackstock:

### **How to improve River Basin Management using integration of various policies?**

This presentation places the scientific and management innovations generated by the MARS project looking at “Managing multiple stress for multiple benefits in aquatic ecosystems” into the wider policy and governance context. The presentation starts with asking why improvement in river basin management is required – it is required to deliver the ambition of the Water Framework Directive as a true ‘sustainability’ directive that takes an Ecosystem Approach. However, the ambition of the WFD is mis-matched with the means within the WFD to achieve these goals; hence the interest in how to utilise other policies to help deliver River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) and their objectives. This also aligns with the European Commission agenda for ‘better regulation’ that is more effective whilst more efficient in its use of resources. However, aligning or integrating multiple policies to act on a water body is a spatial planning problem. Spatial planning, despite its long history, is still difficult to implement. The presentation briefly defines and discusses policy literature insights on the definition of policy; types of integration and the main policies that might integrate with RBMP. The need for ‘vertical policy integration’ when aligning, for example, Common Agricultural Policy with the WFD, is highlighted. Using empirical work in progress, the presentation illustrates how conceptual integration is developing; and some operational integration is already in place. However, implementation integration – putting measures into practice – is lagging behind. Furthermore, it is important that a monitoring and evaluation feedback loop is implemented, so that the efficacy and efficiency of integrated policies can be analysed. Overall, there are many opportunities available so we do not need ‘new’ policy, but policy integration will face the same challenges already identified for WFD delivery – it is not a magic bullet. The solutions, echoing what is already known from the spatial planning, ‘nexus’ and integrated water resource management literature, often require a combination of political will, public and stakeholder support, resources for implementation, and learning through doing. *The research presented here is funded by the Scottish Government Strategic Research Programme (WP1.2 Waters and WP1.4 Integrated management of natural assets); Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme grant agreement No.689669 (‘Magic-Nexus’); and AlterNet High Impact Activity Award 2017.*