Insights from international experiences of integration: briefing on current state of understanding and a future research approach

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Executive summary

There have been decades of calls for more integration in water and catchment management, and this is now reflected in the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Floods Directive (FD), now transposed into Scottish law. However, there is little firm knowledge about how to go about improving integration. This briefing summarises what we already know about integration and provides a plan for learning from international experiences in order to synthesise ideas and identify insights for Scotland.

Integration is expected to help avoid unexpected consequences or side-effects, and to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation, and even the equity of these outcomes. However, the meaning and expectations of integration are rarely made explicit, and there are very few studies that have explored integration in practice.

We propose a content analysis of European plans for River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) in late 2016-early 2017, a survey on practical experiences of WFD-FD integration sent to European member states (early – late 2017) and interviews with selected European partners (mid –end 2017). The final outputs of this work will be a full report on what we can learn from international case studies (D1.2), and a briefing highlighting existing progress in integration and insights for further encouraging this (D1.3).

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Insights from international experiences of integration: briefing on current state of understanding and a future research approach

Background to this briefing note

This briefing is the first output in a 2-year project to learn from international experience of integrating goals for water quality and flooding. In particular, we focus on other Member States' experiences of intergrating the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive (from here on referred to as WFD and FD). It summarises what is already known about integration and details the next steps in the research.

The project responds to a policy interest in learning more about about when and how we can integrate different objectives for flood risk management and water quality. We aim to learn from other countries' experiences (good and bad), to identify insights applicable to Scotland. Many academic and policy documents state that improving integration should aid us in achieving efficient water management that achives multiple objectives. However, identifying exactly when and how to do this is challenging.

Why think about integration?

The idea of integration being a goal for water management is nothing new, and is reflected in common terms like 'Integrated Catchment Management'[1] and 'Integrated Water Resources Management'[2]. All sectors unanimously accept integration as a good thing for water management[3]. It is expected to help avoid unexpected consequences or side-effects[4], to develop the effectiveness and efficiency of policy implementation[5], and even improve the equity of these outcomes[6].

However, when we look closely at what integration actually means, the meaning often seems imprecise or elusive. To put it bluntly, many have called for integration, but without saying much about what that means or how it can be achieved or how to overcome the conflicts that may arise[7]. Ultimately, it is important to be precise about what we expect integration to deliver, and how we define it. Otherwise, we risk it becoming something like the so-called "integrative imaginary"[8] – a vague concept that does nothing to help us achieve new ways of working.

Based on our ongoing review of policy, academic and grey literature, it seems many see integration as very similar to collaboration and/or coordination[9]. Some see it the same as being holistic[10]. Several refer to integration of different knowledges, potentially related to participation[11]. Others use it to refer to trying to balance the provision of societal benefits as well as environmental benefits[12], or in terms of integrating a new issue or goal into an existing main process or way of working[13]. In particular, several sources call for Climate Change mitigation to be integrated into planning for water management[13]. Many of

Goals for water management in Scotland

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) was introduced in 2000 to establish a process for achieving 'Good Ecological Status' of rivers, lochs, estuaries and coastal waters. This was transposed into Scots Law as the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 (WEWS Act).

More recently, the Scottish Government transposed the 2007 Floods Directive (FD) into law as the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009. This aims to achieve a more sustainable and modern approach to flood risk management.

The main focus of this research is on integrating the objectives of these two policies. Annex I provides more information on the original directives. The insights may also be relevant to integrating other connected or subsidiary policies such as for drinking water, shellfish, bathing waters etc.

Regardless of future changes in policy resulting from the UK leaving the EU, we presume that these laws will continue to apply and Scotland will continue to strive for similar goals.

these ideas are interrelated, or could reinforce each other, yet are certainly not identical.

For the purposes of this project we have a clear view that integration is about coordinating delivery of the goals of the FD and WFD (whose goals are summarised Annex I). There are lots of related studies and ideas to learn from; however, there are not many studies that can directly guide us or show us how to go about doing it.

What relevant sources of knowledge can help us think about integration?

To learn more about integration, there are four sources of information that can help us:

1. Building on the discussions by **member states and the European Commission.** Integration is not always consistently or frequently referred to in reports and plans made under the WFD and FD. However, Working Group F has explicitly discussed experiences and ideas for integrating delivery of the directives. These were summarised and documented in 2014[14].
2. Learning from existing academic **studies of integrating the WFD and FD** in other countries. Only a handful of studies have considered this question, and have either been focused on different settings, such as Germany [15], or focused on specific issues, such as participation[16]. Therefore they do not provide a clear blueprint for studying the subject, nor a complete set of ideas of how to enable integration.
3. Collating ideas from **academic theories and concepts** related to integration, studies of the integration of other environmental policies[17] and related or supporting concepts such as coordination, participation and/or institutional interplay for water management [16; 18; 19] and environmental governance[20; 21]. This literature will include all relevant ideas and will not be limited to the European Union. As with (2) above, their focus is often on *why* to integrate but not *how* to integrate.
4. Learning from **practical examples** of Integrated Water Resources Management or Integrated Catchment Management at the catchment scale in academic literature from across the world, at least where flooding and water quality are part of the issues that are 'integrated'. These planning processes operate at a smaller-scale, so may offer limited insights for how to integrate policy delivery at the national level.

All ideas collected need to be linked to differing interpretations and aspects of integration – for examples, the body of work on Environmental Policy Integration is primarily concerned with how to integrate environmental issues into non-environmental policy. Connecting these different sources will help us find criteria, methods, and cases to focus on in our work.

What has already been discussed by 'Working Group F'?

European policy discussions have not always shared a strong or specific focus on integration as defined above. For example, in early WFD Implementation Reports a dominant focus was on integrating the WFD into other policies such as the Common Agricultural Policy. In the second Implementation Report[22], flooding was not even mentioned once. However, since the adoption of the Floods Directive, integration between the FD and the WFD has become an strong focus. Implementation reports now jointly report on progress for both directives.

The clearest view of the rationale for integrating FD and WFD, and how this can be achieved comes from a 2014 report of the European Commission's 'Working Group F' – see box on next page. Note that this document closely links the terms coordination and integration.

European Commission (2014). *Links between the Floods Directive (FD 2007/60/EC) and Water Framework Directive (WFD 2000/60/EC):Technical Report* European Union, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities. Available from https://circabc.europa.eu/sd/a/2e917bbb-abff-41ac-b6fc-0fc91bf0347d/inks%20between%20the%20Floods%20Directive%20and%20Water%20Framework%20Directive%20-%20Resource%20Document.pdf

"The coordination between the WFD and the FD offers the opportunity to adopt a new approach to optimize the mutual synergies and minimise conflicts between them."

"There are a number of reasons why better coordination is required. These include:

- The overlap of legal and planning instruments in many Member States
- Planning and management under both Directives generally use the same geographical unit i.e. the river basin which acts as natural "reference area" for both water quality and flood risk management
- Aiding the efficiency of the implementation of measures and increasing the efficient use of resources. Measures taken under one Directive may have an influence the objectives under the other. Coordination provides an opportunity to maximise synergies by identifying cost-effective measures which serve multiple purposes and can result in "win-win" measures being implemented
- An expectation from many stakeholders that an integrated approach will be taken."

"The main benefits of coordinating the FD with the WFD are…

Improving efficiency via:

- Presenting information to the public in one place
- Cross referencing of objectives to ensure mutual benefits realised
- Coordinating consultations on FRMPs and RBMPs increases the opportunities for synergies to be recognised

Information exchange via:

- Collecting data once and using it many times
- Integration of data, which allows for easier identification of pressures on the water environment
- Sharing data assists better understanding of the issues and potential solutions to identify reductions in flood risk and improving the environment

Achieving common synergies and benefits having regard to the environmental objectives laid down in Article 4 of the WFD including:

- Improved integrated river basin management
- Identify areas where measures can meet both FD and WFD aims e.g. river and floodplain restoration, use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), changes in land management and creation of multifunctional wetlands."

How can integration be achieved? The document discusses a variety of approaches that are expected to help coordinate/integrate planning and delivery of the two directives: sharing spatial management units, sharing competent authorities, linking reporting timetables, coordinating assessment, mapping, planning, selection of measures and monitoring.

What countries or places can we learn from?

We plan to start with a broad comparison of many countries, and then focus down into more indepth studies on fewer countries in the later stages of research (see next section for full methodological details).

Many countries and catchments around the world have aims to improve water quality and manage flooding. However, the most closely comparable countries are those which share the same policy goals i.e. all those European member states that also need to implement the WFD and FD. These share not only the same goals but also have been following the same broad procedures for collecting information and assessing what is needed to achieve the goals. In particular, both directives place a strong focus on the creation of plans, RBMPs and FRMPs, often for the same spatial unit (i.e. River Basin Districts). Plans are only one influence amongst many on whether or not actions actually support integration. However, the content of plans is a useful first indicator as to whether and how integration is being considered. Furthermore, the 2014 reports of Working Group F (see above) provide examples from different member states that it might be useful to focus on.

Despite sharing common goals, each European country can have very different water-management issues, legacies of past arrangments and institutional context. For example, countries vary in the extent to which they have (de-)centralised governance systems, the extent to which water quantity versus quality are seen as problematic, and if and how flooding has previously been managed. This means learning has take into account contextual differences, to interpret their experiences and searching for insights applicable to Scotland. A recent review paper contrasts approaches to water governance across Europe[23], and has identified key 'types' of country according to how they have adopted and implemented the WFD. Scotland is classed within a group of countries called "water resource governance adaptors"– so, we might want to select from countries that also fall within this class (Czech Republic, Denmark, Ireland, Germany and Austria). We might also consider countries without a history of flood risk management shaping implementation of the Floods Directive.

The above points give us some ideas about countries that it could relevant to learn from, in order to bring ideas about integration back to Scotland.

- Netherlands – well studied and sees itself as innovator;
- Ireland – similar cultural and institutional context to Scotland (but currently only have 1st cycle plans available to study);
- Rest of UK – similar cultural and institutional context;
- Flanders and/or Austria – through law has formally integrated WFD and FD planning (but no 2nd round RBMP exists for Austria as yet);
- Germany – a similar water governance 'type', has been well-studied and promotes a 'LAWA' approach for enabling integration[24];
- Transboundary River Basins –familiar with challenges of institutional coordination;
- Czech Republic (or another eastern state where a plan exists);
- Scandinavian country – similar flooding challenges.

We need to understand more about progress across Europe, before finalising this list of countries (for summer 2017).

What are the planned next steps for this research?

We focus on integration in terms of jointly considering and delivering the goals of flood risk management and good ecological status. To understand this, we need to identify exactly where and how objectives for water quality and flood management are negotiated and

connected in practice, and the consequent implications for water management outcomes. We aim to identify both principles and practical examples.

We plan a content analysis of European plans, a cross-Europe online survey targetted at individuals in charge of implementing WFD and FD in each state, followed by indepth interviews with those involved in implementing the directives from selected cases. All these strands of empirical data collection run in parallel with ongoing work to synthesise relevant academic literatures on water management and environmental goverance. This will allow us to keep abreast of any new developments and feed these into the data collection and analysis.

Throughout the project we will take care with communication, since integration can mean different things to different audiences.

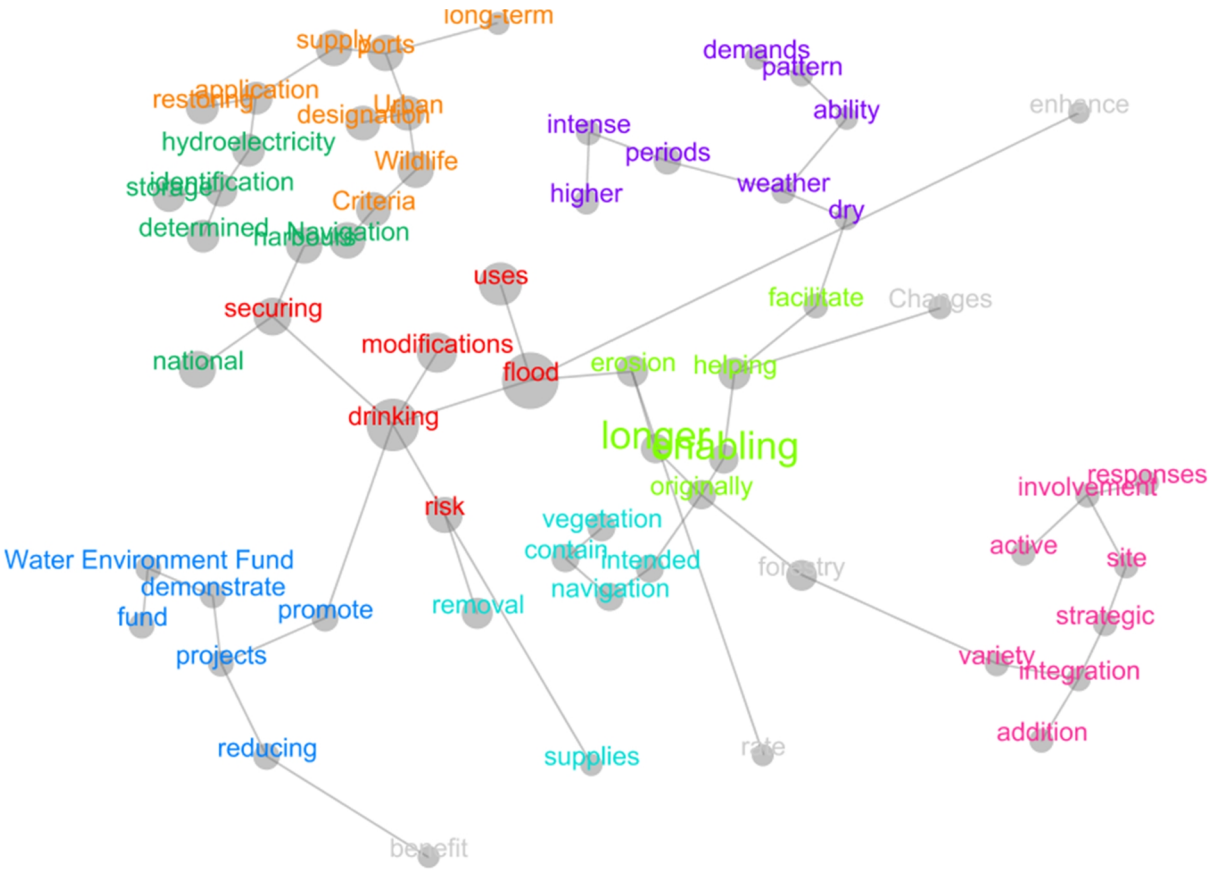
i. October – February 2016. Content analysis of selected River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs). We will use Leximancer and Nvivo to identify evidence of integration and associated concepts. See example on next page. Annex II summarises the plans available to study. This will be carried out in the plans' native language, with main concepts translated, aggregated and reported in English.
ii. December – April 2017. Design, pilot and launch cross-European survey on integration. We will survey multiple individuals within each member state, to build a full picture of experiences in each country. The survey will focus on (i) understandings of integration (ii) expectations of what integration can deliver (iii) experiences of practical factors in planning process that affect integration (positive and negative), (iv) ideas of what approaches and actions can enable integration. We will discuss this with European Commission 'Working Group F' and hope to attend their March/April 2017 meeting to refine and launch the survey. Depending on the advice of this group, if required the survey will be translated into selected other EU languages to maximise response rate.
iii. May – August 2017. Compile survey responses, translate if necessary, and analyse. A large sample may be amenable to multi-factorial statistical analysis, but the main analysis approach is qualitative to focus on collecting ideas and experiences of integration. Thematic analysis will be informed by analytic criteria and results of content analysis.
iv. August 2017 – December 2017. Carry out interviews with English-speaking key informants, to elaborate on results of (i-iii) and to probe aspects of planning processes that are hard to articulate in surveys or not available from studying plans themselves.
v. January 2018 – March 2018. Analysis and synthesis of above strands of work to produce full report on results (D1.2). Consult with policy and agency stakeholders (in workshop and/or remotely) to produce briefing highlighting insights for Scotland (D1.3). Potential for follow up workshop with Working Group F, to feedback results and discuss ideas for integration.

The final outputs of this work will be a full report on what we can learn from international case studies (D1.2), and a briefing highlighting existing progress in integration and insights for further encouraging this (D1.3). After April 2018 the research team shift to examine when and how catchment-scale working should be promoted as a means for organising and achieving effective water management.

Example of content analysis using Leximancer

The first phase of work is a content analysis using Leximancer[25]. Leximancer automatically analyses text documents to identify and visualise key high-level concepts. It can perform unguided analysis, or be set to find the concepts associated with particular terms. It is possible to use it with documents in different languages.

Explanation of the figure. The figure below shows the result of an experimental trial run of Leximancer to 'profile' the concepts associated with floods and flooding in the Scottish River Basin Management Plans (1st & 2nd cycles). This is called a 'concept map'. There are also text lists and numeric outputs describing this output, not shown here.



Each group of words that share the same colour theme are a family of terms that have some commonality or connectedness (based on algorithms that take into account the prevalence and frequency of co-occurrence of different terms). i.e. looking at the map above, Leximancer is not claiming that 'flood' and 'drinking' are synonyms, but does indicate that these two terms frequently co-occur in the text. Hot colors (red, orange) denote the most prevalent or important themes, whilst cool colors (blue, green), denote those less important. The pathways suggest direct and indirect connections between the themes and terms. For example, 'drinking' [water] is quite closely related both to 'flooding' and to 'risk'.

This kind of information obviously requires interpretation, and gives limited insight by itself, but can provide a useful source of concepts or topics to follow up in futher research.

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Annex I

A precis of the goals of the Floods Directive (FD 2007/60/EC) & Water Framework Directive (WFD 2000/60/EC). Adapted from http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/

The WFD aims to protect and restore clean water across Europe, and ensure its long-term and sustainable use. Action to achieve this is organised around achieving the 'good ecological status' of water bodies within river basins. Member States are required to assess the status of all water bodies, and use this information make plans for each basin. The plans encompass inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater, and also incorporate pre-existing directives on bathing water, drinking water, nitrates pollutration control, wastewater treatment and nitrates.

The main aim of the FD is "to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity". It requires Member States to assess and identify the river basins and associated coastal areas at risk of flooding; produce flood risk maps for these zones and flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness. It applies to inland waters and all coastal waters. Member States should take a long-term prespective, considering climate change, as well as sustainable land use practices.

The FD specifies that it should be implemented with the WFD, principally by coordinating the flood risk management plans and river basin management plans, and also through

coordination of the public participation procedures during preparation of those plans. There is also a requirement to coordinate with other countries where river basins are shared, and not to undertake measures that would increase flood risks in other countries.

Annex II

To date, we have collected all the publicly accessible and ratified River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs), for both 1st and 2nd cycles, across all the European Member States, including the International RBMPs made for large transboundary catchments spanning more than one European country. The results are shown in the table below. We also searched for Flood Risk Management Plans (1st cycle) but at the time they had not yet been collated by the commission. SEPA have kindly offered to help by providing links to these plans: once we have stored them we can focus on the reciprocal links within FRMPs.

FRMPs differ from RBMPs in several ways, including being more specific and targeted, so that we may expect to find more evidence of integration within FRMPs e.g. via the appraisal of environmental consequences of flood management measures. We might also expect evidence of integration in 2nd cycle RBMPs created after the Floods Directive was adopted.

Type of Plan	# Collected[a]	Member State Authorship	Missing Plans
1st cycle RBMPs	70	Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden	France (1, Mayotte); Italy (1, Sicily)
1st cycle IRBMPs by International Commissions	8	Danube, Meuse, Oder, Elbe, Ems, Rhine, Sava, Scheldt	-
Other 1st cycle IRBMPs within or for IRBDs[b]	91	Belgium, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, UK[c]	-
2nd cycle RBMPs	45	Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Malta, Norway, Spain (9), UK	Ireland (all), Belgium (all), Denmark (all), Sweden (all), Cyprus (all); Italy (all), Portugal (all), Spain (7); Greece (all); UK (1, Gibraltar)
2nd cycle IRBMPs by International Commissions	7	Danube, Meuse, Oder, Elbe, Ems, Rhine, Scheldt	Sava
Other 2nd cycle RBMPs within or for IRBDs	50	Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Hungary, Slovakia[d], Spain, UK	Scheldt – Federal (Belgium); Poland (all); Lithuania (all); Sweden (all), Bulgaria (all), Romania, Croatia, Slovenia, Austria, Italy (all); Portugal (all), Greece (all)

[a] Plans collected as of September 2016. This table does not include draft plans not yet formally adopted.
[b] In many cases, multiple RBMPs exist for the same International River Basin District (IRBD)– for example, Meuse IRBD has 6 RBMPs published by member state responsible authorities, plus an overall IRBMP (total 7).
[c] UK have chosen not to produce a plan for Shannon IBRD as only a tiny portion of it is within Northern Ireland.
[d] As with Croatia, Slovenia and Austria, Slovakia has one combined plan for multiple IRBDs that include Slovakian catchments.