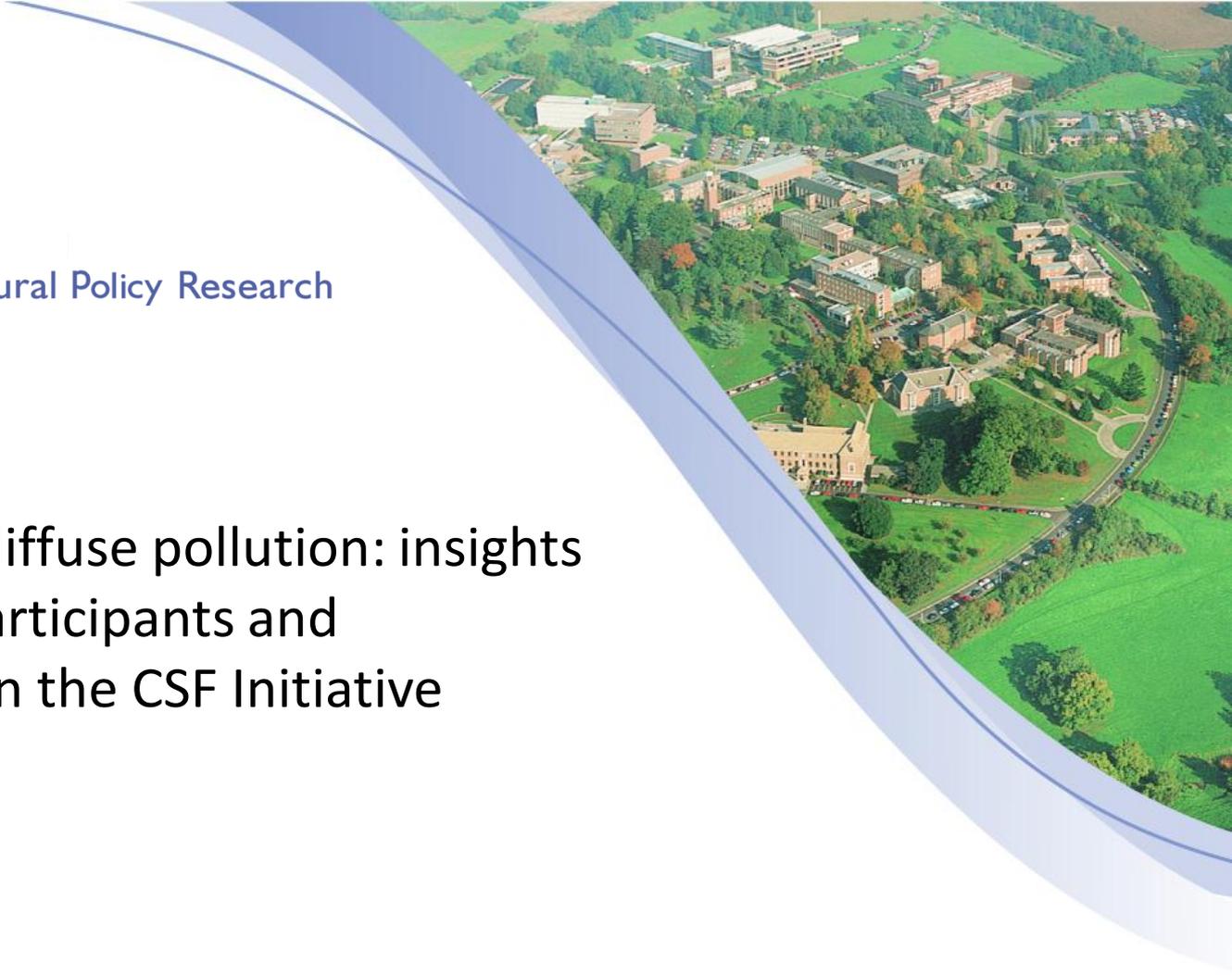


Making sense of diffuse pollution: insights  
from a study of participants and  
non-participants in the CSF Initiative

Rob Fish

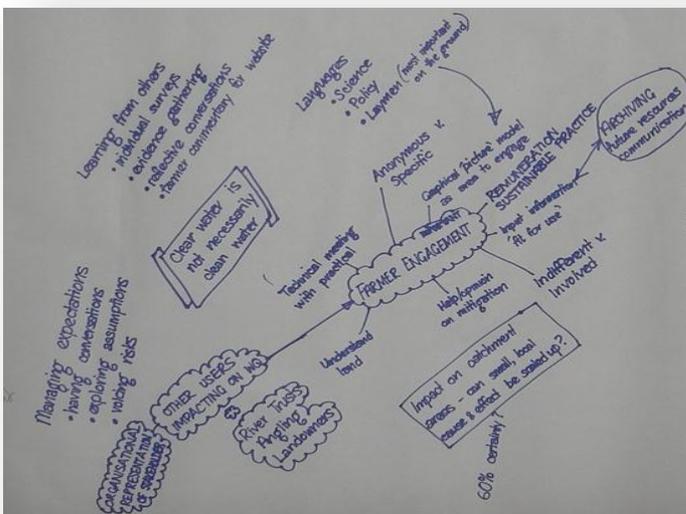
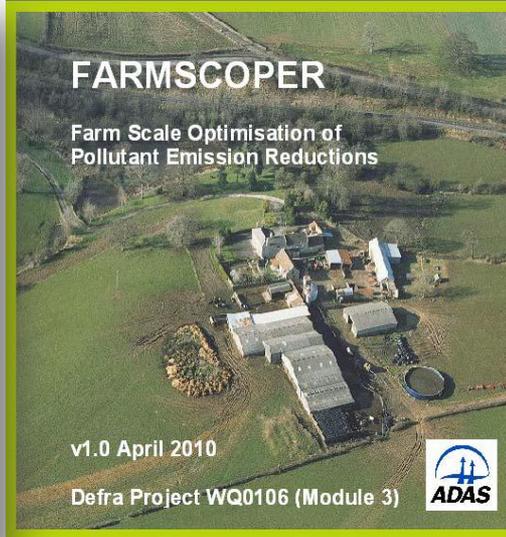


# CRPR Context to Diffuse Pollution

- A Research council (RELU) funded interdisciplinary project on water quality undertaken in the Taw Catchment.
- Knowledge exchange and transfer activities being conducted under the auspices of Defra's (National) *Demonstration Test Catchment initiative*
- Sustainable Rural Futures Research programme' (SRFRP) *Taw Torridge and North Devon Streams*

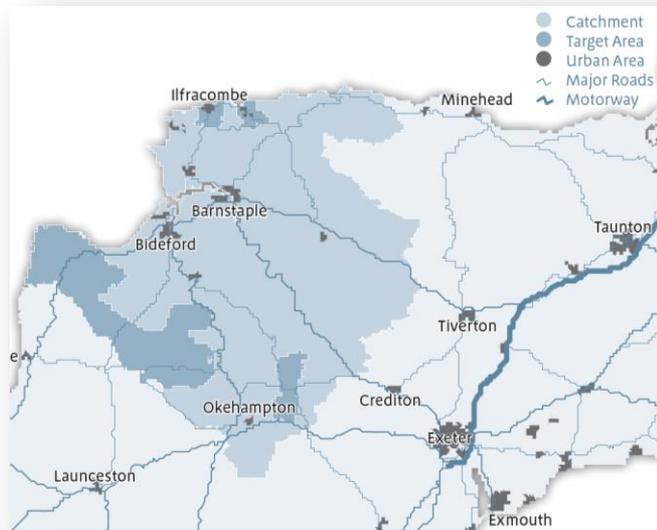


# CRPR context to Diffuse Pollution



# Aims

1. Examine perceptions of diffuse pollution issues among farmers who work in north Devon
2. Views on real and potential involvement in the CSF initiative: *Taw Torridge and North Devon Streams Strategic Partnership*



*Not* concerned with evaluating the work of the strategic partnership *per se*.

*Rather:* to use the setting of this partnership to explore how farmers in the area think about catchment sensitive farming and opportunities to benefit from advice/assistance

# Context to CSF: policy evidence

- Developing scientific evidence base funded by government trying to understand the linkages between land use and water quality and in determining the technical/management solutions to problems
- Interpretive social science research into attitudes and values of farmers towards CSF comparatively undeveloped.
  - Evaluations of CSF initiative naturally tend to focus on generic quantitative measures to report against CSF goals: scales of DP awareness and procedural successes, such as numbers of farmers passing through initiative.
  - Nationally, qualitative understanding of engagement is underdeveloped [eight in-depth interviews in Winter 2007]
  - Insight into non-priority catchments generally undeveloped nationally: absent from evaluations until last round of reporting.

# Context to CSF: research evidence

Research literature is *uneven*:

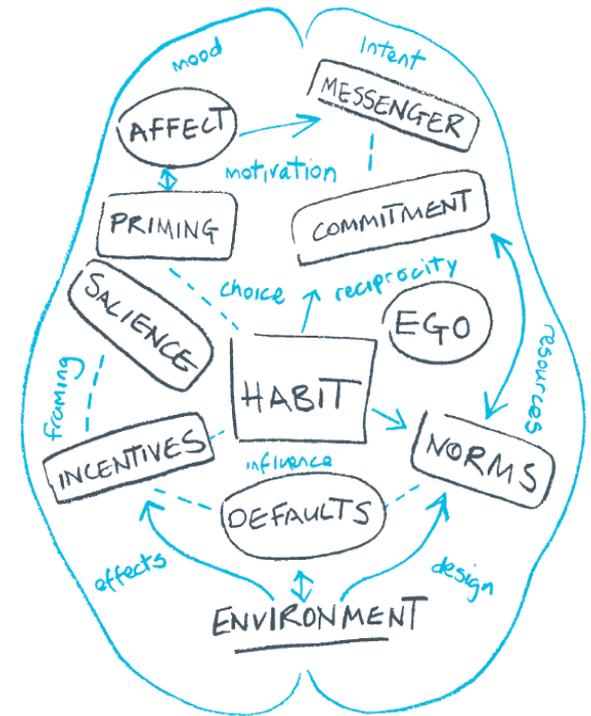
- Insight into farmers attitudes and values research in the social sciences overwhelmingly developed in the context of involvement in environmental conservation.
  - e.g. various typologies and styles of participation/non participation meted out with reference to agri-environmentalism.
- Research into environmental protection issues such as DP has tended to approach farmers at one step removed:
  - The starting point has been less about attitudes and values but exploring (and advocating for) a particular approach to engagement: participation, sharing, co-production of visions.

# Approach

- On-going programme of qualitative research
- Today reporting on 30 In-depth semi-structured interviews with farmers
  - Farmers who have passed through activities of the Partnership (events; advice/site visits; small capital awards).
  - Farmers afforded opportunities for participation, but not taken (non-engagers)

# Making sense of diffuse pollution

- Building *a priori* picture of values and attitudes
  - Agri-environmental and extension research
  - Also drew insight from UK ‘behavioural change’ agenda: academic behavioural research - particularly from within economics, psychology and sociology



# Approach to understanding engagement in CSF

Consideration of values and attitudes around two key areas of CSF activity:

1. **CSF ends:** the way diffuse pollution is thought about and rationalised as an issue by farming and farmers;
2. **CSF means:** facets of CSF delivery that structure farmers into particular forms of conduct/engagement to act on diffuse pollution: e.g. training, advice, funding.

# Attributes of engagement/non engagement

## CSF Ends

- *Awareness*
- *Significance*
- *Relevance*
- *Precedence*
- *Valuation*
- *Responsibility*
- *Effectiveness*

## CSF Means

- *Awareness*
- *Understanding*
- *Entry points*
- *Supersession*
- *Identification*
- *Sharing*
- *Regulation*
- *Messenger*
- *Replication*
- *Specificity*
- *Valuation*
- *Achievability*
- *Resources*

Attribute	Sentiments potentially driving non-engagement	Sentiments potentially driving engagement
<b>Awareness</b>	There is general ignorance of the problem	The problem is known
<b>Significance</b>	The evidence that this is an issue for farming is weak or exaggerated	The evidence that this is an issue for farming is strong/well founded
<b>Relevance</b>	The farm is/will not be susceptible to this problem	The farm is/may be susceptible to this problem
<b>Precedence</b>	Dealing with this issue is less important than other priorities	Responding to this issue is integral to priorities
<b>Valuation</b>	Action in this area is likely to incur costs for the enterprise	Action in this area has benefits for enterprise 'bottom lines'.
<b>Responsibility</b>	It is not the farmer's responsibility to address this problem	Farmers should pay their part in addressing this problem
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Action on the part of farmers will not solve this problem	Action on the part of farmers can make a big difference to this problem

Attribute	Sentiments potentially driving non-engagement	Sentiments potentially driving engagement
<b>Awareness</b>	There is ignorance of the initiative	There is knowledge of the initiative
<b>Understanding</b>	There is ignorance of what the scheme offers/does	The attributes of the scheme are understood
<b>Entry points</b>	There is ignorance of how and when to engage with the Initiative	The way in which engage can occur with this is initiative is clear
<b>Supersession</b>	Engagement is likely to be displaced by other commitments/priorities	It is easy to juggle engagement with other commitments/ priorities
<b>Identification</b>	The initiative is not for people ‘like me’	Others are engaging in this initiative so it must be important.
<b>Sharing</b>	Participation would invite negative comparisons	It is important to compare understanding with others
<b>Regulation</b>	Participation would invite regulatory scrutiny	Participation displaces scrutiny
<b>Messenger</b>	The source of advice is not credible/trustworthy	The source of advice is credible/ trustworthy
<b>Replication</b>	Understanding/advice on this issue is already provided for	The initiative can reinforce/ add to existing knowledge
<b>Specificity</b>	Any advice received is likely to be too generalised	The initiative provides information directly relevant to circumstances
<b>Economics</b>	Participation is likely to incur costs for the enterprise	Engagement has benefits for enterprise ‘bottom lines’
<b>Achievability</b>	Participation will led to unrealistic expectations/ demands being made	The initiative helps to facilitate personal action
<b>Resources</b>	Participation would bring with it resource burdens	Engagement is a gateway to new resources
<b>Effectiveness</b>	The Initiative is unlikely to change anything	The Initiative is a pretext for positive outcomes

# Key Findings

- Diffuse pollution is generally (but by no means exclusively) rationalised as a real, significant and relevant problem and an issue that necessitates intervention;
- Some evidence to suggest this is a ‘displaced’ problem, even among participants. i.e. the real problem lies elsewhere (other farmers, other sources)
- However only a small number of interviewees exhibited strong pro and anti CSF depositions:
  - Strong anti-depositions tend to be articulated on *end-driven* grounds, centred mainly on issues of *significance* (‘*proof*’) *precedence*;
  - Strong pro-depositions tend to be articulated on *means-driven* grounds, centred on *learning, sharing and advice*.

# Key Findings

- In general, engagers and non engagers in CSF cannot be neatly distinguished by uniformly positive and negative sentiments about the means and ends of CSF. Overall we find considerable diversity across the range of sentiments expressed. Thus:
  - Non-engagers may express many positive sentiments about CSF (e.g. advice and potential funding);
  - Engagers may express many negative sentiments about CSF; (e.g. appeals to proof and hard evidence);
- What partly distinguishes whether a farmer engages in CSF is how:
  - Sentiments serve to reinforce each other: escalating positive and negative sentiments create pretext for engagement/non engagement;
  - Contrary sentiments effectively “trump” each other. i.e. sentiments are weighted differently.

# Key Findings

## Some examples

- *Tactical Engagers:*
  - DP may be regarded as irrelevant, but it may be important “to be seen” to be doing something; for instance, because it is perceived to *displace* scrutiny.
- *Tactical Non-Engagers:*
  - DP may be regarded as significant, but engagement in CSF is perceived to *invite* scrutiny;
  - DP may be regarded as significant, but DP diffuses/scrabbles responsibilities.
- *Practical engagers:*
  - DP may expressed as a low priority but the process is seen to be a credible context for advice and added value (also ‘esteem’ features)
- *Practical non-engagers:*
  - DP has credence as a problem but engagement is displaced by other commitments;
  - DP has credence as a problem but access to funding is perceived to be either i) absent ii) limited iii) difficult to access.

# Concluding remarks

- Need to be careful in artificially distinguishing engagers and non engagers into neat 'pro' and anti 'CSF' positions;
- 'Escalating' and 'trumping' are two key facets determining engagement/non engagement;
- Information and recruitment campaigns might usefully reflect more broadly on wide and diverse range of attributes defines attitudes and values towards engagement.
- Exploring these now through group work.