



The Economic Value of Participation for Water Resource Management

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Public Participation is a central feature of nearly all environmental policy making and implementation, and is a key 'plank' of the EU Water Framework Directive. At present, however, public participation is a confusing concept which is often misunderstood and can be treated with scepticism by both decision making agencies and members of the public alike. This paper provides a brief introduction to what Public Participation actual means and the historical context within which it has developed. An outline of why Public Participation is so relevant to river basin management will be provided, together a comprehensive specification of the economic benefits and costs of Public Participation processes. A partial budgeting approach is used to illustrate the potential economic returns to use of participatory processes in water management applications. Consideration is also given to the role of civil society and the 'third sector' in delivering the Public Participation requirements set out in the Water Framework Directive and achieving the benefits expected from this.