A guide to collaborative working on the coast – *'two heads are better than one!'*

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The coastlines of northwest Europe are facing a growing range of threats due to both human activities and natural environmental change. The management of these threats is complex both due to the range of interests and the fragmented nature of the administrative arrangements. The COREPOINT project through which this report was produced seeks to address some of these issues. Further information about the project can be found at the end of this report.

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1.0 **Introduction**

"Rhetoric about the benefits of partnership working is endemic but so are complaints about the difficulty of partnership working in practice." (Vangen and Huxham 2003:61):

We are all guilty at times of focussing only on our own experiences and failing to learn from others whether this is at a personal level, institutional or sectorial. Within coastal management there is much talk of the need to integrate efforts and approaches, collaborative working arrangements have been established and written about but often without reference to lessons learnt outside of the coastal sector; this guide aims to help bridge that gap between the coastal sector and lessons learnt within other sectors.

Collaborative working is not unique to the coastal sector and in other disciplines there has been a much more thorough investigation into its implementation and operation. What this document seeks to do is to place some of the more useful and accessible elements of literature from other disciplines within the context of collaborative working in the coastal zone so as to introduce the subject and some of the resources to practitioners in this sector. By practitioners it is not intended just for those who are establishing a partnership or network but anyone who might be thinking about doing so, considering participating in one or already participating in one but wishing it to work more effectively. The intention would be that the clearer all participants are about the benefits and dis-benefits, issues and processes, roles and responsibilities the better the chance that the collaboration will be successful.

I have experience in a number of partnerships and have undertaken academic studies on partnerships so I write not only from practical but academic experience. The guide has also benefited from a 'reality' check on the contents by Niall Benson and Jeremy Hills both of whom have many years experience in coastal management. A further reality check has been facilitated through the partnership working group who have practical experience and form part of the target audience.

2.0 <u>What is collaborative working?</u>

In order to answer this question we need to consider some definitions of collaborative working but also to explore why this form of working is required and what it hopes to achieve. When we have considered this we should be able to state the key features of collaborative working both in terms of its purpose and its form.

Thompson et al (1991) state that all collaborative arrangements derive from one of three forms of governance: contracts, partnerships and networks. Of these we are interested in partnerships and networks, but briefly considering contracts first. Contracts are an arrangement between two or more parties that set out services or products to be delivered by one party for a consideration, usually financial, by another. This is of mutual benefit to all parties but does not normally involve joint decision making or a mutually shared objective. Contracts can exhibit some of the characteristics of partnership working where a deliberate attempt is made to operate in a more collaborative manner but these are extensively considered in other literature and as such will not be considered here.

Networks differ greatly from contracts in that they are normally informal and their operation relies on trust between participants and reciprocity. Individual relationships are important and these often cross organisational boundaries (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). A useful definition for partnerships is the one used by the Audit Commission (1998:6) who describe a partnership as otherwise independent bodies who have agreed to co-operate to achieve a common goal and create a separate structure and plan to achieve the goal or goals.

When considering why this form of working is required it is useful to consider the problem that it is perceived to address, that of divisions or fragmentation of Government departments, local authority departments or any of the service providers or professionals providing a service. Potential benefits arising from this include access to more resources, more co-ordinated delivery of services and new approaches to delivery (Balloch and Taylor 2001). When comparing this to the rationales suggested for partnership working by the Audit Commission (1998):

-to deliver co-ordinated services;
-to tackle wicked issues or interconnected problems;
-to reduce the impact of organisational fragmentation and minimise the impact of any perverse incentives that result from it;
-to bid for, or gain access to, new resources, and/or;
-to meet a statutory requirement

The first three of these relate to overcoming problems arising from organisational fragmentation either in terms of improved efficiencies or improved service delivery. The fourth can also relate to better use of resources already held by the partners or to access resources only available to organisations prepared to work in partnership; this implies that drivers from funding bodies might be encouraging this form of working. Similarly there might be statutory requirements that require partnership working, again indicating that there are external drivers to working in partnership because this is seen as an important part of the process for achieving the desired outcomes.

Considering the audit commission definition in more detail:

Otherwise independent bodies –
Why is this important? If they were not independent then it follows that they are dependent either in terms of being within the same hierarchical organisation or through having some form of contractual relationship. This implies a different relationship compared to independent bodies, when dependent there is someone who is 'in charge' but when independent whilst not always equal in practice in theory everyone comes to the table as equals. In practice there will also be bodies from within the same organisation who can come to the table as 'equals' although there is always the ultimate control of them answering to the same boss somewhere up the management chain.

Agreement to co-operate to achieve a common goal-
A common goal means that there has been recognition from all Partners that they need to undertake some action to achieve this goal. In its own right this does not mean that they need to work in partnership; for there to be a need to work in partnership there

has to be some level of interdependence between the Partners necessary to achieve the goal and there is a need for this to be recognised. Equally there is a need to recognise that Partners will have their core business that does not rely on a contribution from other Partners and that this lies within their direction not that of the Partnership (Hudson and Hardy 2002).

A separate structure and plan to achieve goals-
Considering the previous two points in relation to otherwise independent organisations who have agreed to come together to achieve specific goals; without some form of plan as to how to work together confusion will reign except in the simplest of cases. More than this though it is important to acknowledge that the structure will reflect the equality with which all Partners come to the table; a structure that seeks agreement and consensus as opposed to the traditional hierarchical structure that we are use to working in.

But where do networks fit in this model?
It is perhaps easiest to consider forms of collaboration as lying on a continuum, at one end collaboration can be largely informal and ad-hoc but moving through various levels of formality on the continuum where independent organisations choose to work together and ultimately ending with a decision that a new organisation needs to be formed (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). At one end of this continuum are the informal contacts you have who you have helped in the past and you trust them to reciprocate that help in the future; this moves through networks such as research networks where a group forms around a common research interest and may hold regular meetings; onwards through partnerships in a variety of guises and ultimately to the point where the imperative to work together is so strong that a new organisation is formed.

Who are the Partners?
There are two issues here, the first is who the partner organisations are and the second is the representative of that organisation. It may seem quite simple to say that the partner organisations are whoever you need to achieve the goals you have set out but this would include organisations that may not share your goals; given this why should they become partners? For this reason it is necessary not only to understand what you

wish to get out of any partnership but also to understand what others wish to gain from it; this should be a mutually beneficial relationship. Having identified the organisations there is then the issue of the representative; it has been shown that partnerships are more effective when the representatives are committed to the venture (Hudson and Hardy 2002).

The importance of language and definitions –

Reading through the literature there is much 'navel gazing' in relation to definitions of what constitutes collaborative working and the terms to be used to describe different types. A favourite relates the nature of the collaborative relationship to its duration describing different scenarios as 'one night stands' which are short term one offs; 'affairs' which are medium term and tactical; and 'marriages' which are long term and have a high degree of commitment (Dev and Klein, 1993 referenced in (Fyall and Garrod 2005)). There is a serious point here though in that if you label your collaboration as a 'Partnership', 'Network', 'Alliance' or whichever other term you care to use there needs to be a shared understanding of what this means.

The table below illustrates the collaborative continuum and has been adapted from Himmelman (Fyall and Garrod 2005), why did it need adapting? Because I didn't agree with it either in terms of the terminology used or the definitions applied. This represents my view and serves to illustrate that as long as we can clearly explain our perspectives we do not need to get mired in definitions as long as we can communicate effectively. The key things that this illustrates from my perspective are that not only does collaboration operate at different levels on a continuum but that the activities of networks and partnerships as we know them will deliver a range of these activities at different times in their lifecycle. This is illustrated in the case study below.

Collaboration	Definition	Explanation
Acting Independently	Do not need to collaborate with any other organisation in order to deliver defined actions.	Work we can deliver without collaboration with other agencies (often referred to as the 'day job')
Networks	Communication – exchange information for mutual benefit	At its most basic this is the personal network of contacts that you can call for advice and who can call you. But it can also be more formally organised networks such as local research networks.
Continuum – these may go by a range of names from networks, forums, partnerships workshops, consortiums, programmes, etc	Co-ordination - exchange information for mutual benefit and co-ordinate actions (change planned activities) for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose	There is an assumption that if you are co-ordinating you are communicating. A change in activity might be a one off such as sharing of ship time for research or the co-ordination of cross boundary works or longer term such as co-ordination of data collection or guided walks.
Partnerships	Co-operation - exchange information for mutual benefit and co-ordinate actions and share resources (and enhancing capacity of one another) for mutual benefit and to achieve a common purpose	Co-operation need not be much more than co-ordination but does involve resources (staff time or money) being supplied by one or more Partners to support the common purpose. This could be support of the secretariat, a project officer, web-site or publication through to on the ground activities that are jointly funded or resourced. It is at this level that many of the coastal partnerships found in the UK are likely to be found at.
New Organisations	Consolidation – bring together resources into a new organisation for mutual benefit and enhanced capacity to achieve a common purpose	If there is a particularly strong driver for organisations to work together there is a possibility that they might need to form a new organisation. This could be a formal agency that fits within the Governmental framework or a constituted body that still answers to a steering group of key Partners but otherwise operates as a hierarchical organisation.

Adapted from Himmelman 1996 as adapted in (Fyall and Garrod 2005)

Sefton Coast Partnership

This was originally set up in 1978 as the Sefton Coast Management Scheme with key issues being the restoration of the sand dune system for its nature conservation and recreational value and coastal defence issues. It is made up of a range of partners including land owners, interest groups and statutory agencies.

The Partners all have their own functions to carry out that do not require working with other Partners. They meet regularly to discuss what they are doing and any issues arising whether these be potential conflicts that need resolving or opportunities to co-ordinate work in a beneficial way. Potential conflicts might include balancing coastal defence needs with those of nature conservation. Opportunities might be tailoring reports on future coastal change to address the needs of Partners. Co-operation might occur where resources are pooled to develop a Nature Conservation Strategy, to jointly commission contractors to achieve economies of scale or undertaking research projects that make use of joint resources.

Have we reached the level of creating a new organisation, I would say not. We have a Partnership and we have some sub-sets of this that come together for particular projects ranging from research projects to potential Landscape Partnerships (required for Heritage Lottery Funding) but none of them extend to setting up a completely new hierarchical organisation.

So where do we sit on this continuum; we certainly do our day job, we communicate with each other although not always as well as we should. We do co-ordinate activities and we do co-operate but as we move through these levels there is a reduction in the scale of the activity. This is probably because the more we move towards co-operation the more effort is required and therefore the greater the driver or reward needed. It is probably also fair to say that whilst the baseline of doing the day job and communicating continues the co-ordination and co-operation flags and peaks through time with some of the most apparent successes (in terms of obvious outputs) occurring early in the life of the Partnership.

Summary of key points

- **Collaborative working should allow you to do things that you couldn't otherwise do.**
- **It happens between otherwise independent bodies.**
- **You should share common goals.**
- **You will have agreed a structure for working together.**
- **There is no one model for this form of working but a range lying on a continuum.**
- **A failure to be clear on purpose and language will lead to confusion.**

3.0 **Why might we need collaborative working in the coastal zone?**

Both the communication from the Commission for European Communities (2000) and the subsequent recommendation from the European Parliament (2002) illustrate the need for and role of collaborative working in the delivery of ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) in the UK. The Communication was designed to communicate the results of a Demonstration Programme and set out a way forward based upon this. It was recognised within this document that this represented a contribution to the ongoing international work on ICZM being undertaken by bodies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and United Nations (UN). One of the stated aims of the demonstration programme was to

'*show the practical conditions that must be met if sustainable development is to be achieved in the European coastal zones in all their diversity*' (Commission of the European Communities 2000, p7).

The communication illustrates the problems experienced at the coast with a number of examples but goes on to summarise the strategic importance of the coast for its

'*economic, transport, residential and recreational functions, all of which depend on its physical characteristics, appealing landscape, cultural heritage, natural resources, and rich marine and terrestrial biodiversity*' (ibid, p7)

Although the specific problems that were identified by the demonstration programme varied depending upon the location there were some common underlying problems identified:

'*– Management of the coast has lacked vision and is based on a very limited understanding of coastal processes and dynamics; scientific research and data collection have been isolated from end-users*

– There has been inadequate involvement of the stakeholders in formulating and implementing solutions to coastal problems

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– Inappropriate and uncoordinated sectoral legislation and policy have often worked against the long-term interests of sustainable management of coastal zones.

– Rigid bureaucratic systems and the lack of coordination between relevant administrative bodies have limited local creativity and adaptability

– Local initiatives in sustainable coastal management have lacked adequate resources and political support from higher administrative levels.'

(ibid, p8)

There are some important elements to draw out from these underlying problems; there is a problem with the integration of scientific research and data with end-users, the policy makers. There is an identification that the lack of stakeholder involvement has led to problems. Both at the legislative and administrative levels there has been a lack of integration as well as a lack of support from higher administrative levels to lower, a failure of vertical integration. These problems are often exaggerated by the 'task and finish' approach when it is not set within an overall strategic context.

Examples of the key problems

Problems with integration of scientific research with end-users:
Whilst Defra have recognised that there are problems with communicating the research they commission with end-users and are trying to address the issue there remains an inherent problem with academic research in that research institutes seek creditability through the publishing of results in academic journals. This forms an important part of their future applications for funding but is not particularly accessible to end-users either in terms of language or access to the journals themselves.

Problems with the lack of involvement of stakeholders:
An example from the Sefton Coast relates to the removal of trees for the restoration of sand dunes. Whilst the initial consultation was perceived to be adequate there has been an ongoing dialogue (often in the press) relating to the continuation of this work with a substantial proportion of the problems now relating to lack of understanding and erroneous information being in circulation. As a result the scheme is substantially delayed.

Problem of lack of integration:
This covers a multitude of 'sins' ranging from different organisations not communicating to having conflicting objectives and conflicting legislative boundaries. An example of the conflicting (or just confusing) boundaries would be those used for estuaries where there is the boundary defined for the Water Framework Directive, the Schedule IV boundary, those chosen for Catchment Flood Management Plans and Shoreline Management Plans, ownership boundaries, political boundaries and those boundaries defined by natural processes; there are more but this makes the point. The issue of vertical integration relates to the lack of legislative support from Government for ICZM at both National and Regional levels meaning that it tends to occur at local levels on an ad-hoc basis with minimal funding.

It is worth considering the proposals for solving these problems in some detail:

'The Demonstration Programme illustrates that in complex areas with multiple users, such as coastal zones, uncoordinated sectoral policies tend to conflict and may even work at cross-purposes, resulting in policy gridlock. <u>The best means to avoid such gridlock and to ensure the effective implementation of many individual EU sectoral goals is through an integrated territorial approach.'</u> (ibid p9)

Considering the above and focusing on the term '*integrated territorial approach'* it can be seen that they are referring to a process of integration that applies at a chosen geographical scale. They go further than this indicating that the integrated solutions arrived at through this process can only be found and implemented at the local and regional scale with the higher levels of governance being required to provide the legal and institutional context to support this. In relation to the process of ICZM they

highlight that it is about collaboration in both identification and implementation of mutually beneficial solutions.

The objective of this approach is described as:

'Such an approach seeks to maximise the overall, long-term economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of the coastal zone and its users, by concurrently addressing the many different problems facing the coastal zone. This approach thus promotes the three dimensions of sustainable development.'

(ibid, p9)

Contemplating what is considered as good coastal management that the ICZM approach aims to deliver, it is suggested above that the objective is to maximise the economic, environmental and social well-being of the coast and its users. It is accepted that these three elements of a sustainable approach may be in conflict but that there will be a compromise solution that achieves a maximum output. It is implied that through a partnership mechanism we will be able to agree common aims and reach a consensus solution that whilst not maximising any one parties benefits does, in theory, deliver an optimum solution. There is an assumption here that all stakeholders will agree to this approach. There is also a recognition that this will require new styles of governance.

There is a clear view as to the respective roles of the local, regional, national and European levels of governance; local and regional are seen as the 'doers' whilst national and European are seen as 'enablers'. The emphasis being on the local level for the development and delivery of detailed actions, the regional level where it exists delivering a more strategic view and strategic actions.

The complexity of the problem to be addressed and the need for flexible solutions is described and it is recognised that because the coast is so variable solutions need to be specific to a particular location. It is for this reason that they have considered it inappropriate to be prescriptive as to the way the problem is to be addressed

preferring to set out some good principles for ICZM that can be applied in the development of a solution at any location. These have been set out by the European Community as it has progressed its commitment to progressing ICZM through the issuing of a Recommendation in 2002 on the subject (European Parliament 2002), this suggested a number of principles that should be adopted when undertaking ICZM (shown below) and requested that member states undertake a stocktake of their current position with regard to ICZM and then develop a National Strategy to implement ICZM.

'- coastal zone management should be based on:

(a) a broad overall perspective (thematic and geographic) which will take into account the interdependence and disparity of natural systems and human activities with an impact on coastal areas;

(b) a long-term perspective which will take into account the precautionary principle and the needs of present and future generations;

(c) adaptive management during a gradual process which will facilitate adjustment as problems and knowledge develop. This implies the need for a sound scientific basis concerning the evolution of the coastal zone;

(d) local specificity and the great diversity of European coastal zones, which will make it possible to respond to their practical needs with specific solutions and flexible measures;

(e) working with natural processes and respecting the carrying capacity of ecosystems, which will make human activities more environmentally friendly, socially responsible and economically sound in the long run;

(f) involving all the parties concerned(economic and social partners, the organisations representing coastal zone residents, non-governmental organisations

and the business sector) in the management process, for example by means of agreements and based on shared responsibility;

(g) support and involvement of relevant administrative bodies at national, regional and local level between which appropriate links should be established or maintained with the aim of improved coordination of the various existing policies. Partnership with and between regional and local authorities should apply when appropriate;

(h) use of a combination of instruments designed to facilitate coherence between sectoral policy objectives and coherence between planning and management.'

Principles for ICZM – European Parliament Recommendation (2002)

From this it can be seen that any arrangements for a particular area need to be tailored to the particular geographic, political and societal circumstances but that two aspects that will remain common throughout will be the need for science to inform policy making (evidence based policy making) and the need to collaborate, partnership working being one mechanism through which to achieve this.

The potential value of integrated management approaches is referred to in the Rupprecht report (2007) which reviewed the implementation of ICZM across Europe; *'Integrated approaches to manage the interests in the coastal zone have been scarcely implemented and were not strategically employed, except on a case study basis. Nevertheless the few examples of implemented ICZM projects analysed in the report on the Assessment of Socio-Economic Costs & Benefits of ICZM have shown, that "more coherent spatial planning", "improved decision making" and "better partner understanding" are major advantages in areas within ICZM and thus improve the acceptance and sustainable success of management measures taken at the coast.'*

It can be seen that at a European level there is recognition of the need and value of an integrated approach to the management of the coastal zone. This may be achieved through the reorganisation of institutional arrangements or through collaborative

working. Either option is difficult and has its own sets of problems but the advantage of collaborative working is its flexibility, particularly in terms of responding to changing circumstances, its ability to be initiated as a bottom up approach and to be designed to be a proportionate response to local circumstances.

Summary of Key Points
The coast is an important and valuable resource
There are some common underlying problems:
- **Lack of vision and understanding**
- **Inadequate involvement of stakeholders**
- **Lack of integration, coordination and support**

It is not possible to provide prescriptive solutions due to the unique nature of each coastal area.
The principles provide some guidance for managers when developing approaches for the sustainable management of a coastal area.

4.0 When should you undertake collaborative working?

Where ever possible you should avoid it! (Huxham and Vangen 2005).

We've already briefly considered the nature of collaborative working and some of the issues that it seeks to address so here we will consider in more detail how you decide when you should undertake collaborative working making use of examples where possible and referring back to the reasons for collaborative working (Audit Commission 1998):

-to deliver co-ordinated services;
-to tackle wicked issues or interconnected problems;
-to reduce the impact of organisational fragmentation and minimise the impact of any perverse incentives that result from it;
-to bid for, or gain access to, new resources, and/or;
-to meet a statutory requirement

Considering Coastal Groups as an example first:
– These are groups with the remit of assisting in the delivery of Government policy in relation to tidal flooding and coastal defence. They tend to be mainly single discipline, engineers from local authorities and the Environment Agency, with other relevant bodies who have an interest or responsibility in relation to this area. Their geographical scope tends to be based around coastal process boundaries as opposed to administrative boundaries.

Why were they created?
Some were created from a perceived need at a local level such as Liverpool Bay Coastal Group where a number of authorities came together having recognised that there would be benefit in sharing experiences and knowledge. There was also a top down driver when the concept of Shoreline Management Plans was promoted by Government as a rational way to plan for coastal defence. As these plans crossed administrative boundaries there was a need for those areas where coastal groups did not already exist to form them in order to develop the plans and deliver the actions arising from the plans.

Where the need was perceived at a local level the key benefits were the creation of a network that could exchange information; this helped to deliver co-ordinated services, tackle interconnected problems and reduce the impact of organisational fragmentation. The top down approach was driven by the need to overcome organisational fragmentation to deliver Government Policy; this could be considered to deliver more than the bottom-up approach in this instance and verged on being statutory as without the completion of SMPs we would struggle to gain resources for coastal defences. In both cases the benefits could not be achieved without collaboration.

In the above example the need for the network is identified and discussed at a local level, having discussed it there was agreement to proceed to form the network but it should be borne in mind that the investment by Partners was low (attendance at two meetings a year) compared to the benefits (exchange of information and experiences). Where the Groups arose as a result of the SMPs then the need was 'forced' upon the Local Authorities (akin to a statutory requirement), the decision was effectively taken at a Government level that this was what they wanted. In the first instance the individual organisations had a choice in relation to collaborative working in the second they did not.

The table below is extract from the Audit Commission (1998) and suggests some of the questions that you might want to consider before entering into partnership working. A key aspect to draw from this is how many of the questions relate to clarity of purpose and willingness to participate in return for the perceived benefits.

Questions to ask before setting up a partnership

• Is the problem that the prospective partners want to solve one that needs a
  partnership approach?
• Do the prospective partners have a clear and shared vision of the benefits that the
  partnership is intended to achieve?
• Is this vision realistic in the light of:
– the resources and opportunities likely to be open to the proposed partnership?
– the issues that partnership working is particularly suited to address?
• Will the anticipated benefits outweigh the likely costs (direct and indirect) of a
  partnership?

• How will the costs and benefits be measured?
• Could the benefits be achieved in a simpler or more cost-effective way?
• Are the partners all willing to devote the necessary time and effort to
  make the partnership succeed?
• Do the partners all know what role they will play, what resources they will
  contribute and how they will account for the success of the project?
• Are the partners willing to consider changing their other activities to fit in with the
  partnership's objectives, where this is appropriate?

Factors indicating that a partnership is not the best approach

• The answer to one or more of the questions above is 'no';
• The topic proposed is primarily the responsibility of one agency,
  with others having only a marginal interest or role;
• Agencies have no shared objective in relation to this topic;
• Agencies' main aim is to achieve cost savings;
• Agencies have a history of poor relationships and have not made a
  commitment to change this; and
• Agencies want to shunt costs or blame for problems on to one another – that is, there
  is a hidden negative agenda.

Table B from (Audit Commission 1998)

North West Coastal Forum – a Regional Approach to ICZM

The North West Coastal Forum (NWCF) was formed in 2000 following the North West's first ever Coastal Conference. The Secretariat for the Forum was initially provided by Government Office North West but in autumn 2002 this function was transferred to the North West Regional Assembly. This move coincided with the election of the first independent chair for the Forum, Laurence Rose, Regional Director of the RSPB, and subsequently the merger of the Coastal Forum with the North West Bathing Water Forum to further integrate work on coastal issues.

The Secretariat, in the form of a full-time project officer with administrative support, is provided by the North West Regional Assembly.The Management Board consists of over 30 organisations and has a biennially elected, independent Chair. The Board meets three times a year to steer the Forum's Programme of Work. Projects in the Programme of Work are each assigned a Management Board 'Champion' and Management Board decisions are reached, where possible, by consensus. The Forum also has several sub-groups, with many other organisations being represented on these groups. Sub groups are either standing (e.g. PISCES) or task and finish (e.g. North West Coastal Trail Group). Chairs of the sub-groups sit on the Management Board to facilitate 2-way information flow between the groups and the Board.

A wider coastal audience is involved through networking and communication events, such as the biennial regional coastal conference and other theme-based workshops and seminars. The Forum has developed a 5-year Business Plan which includes an annually updated Programme of Work.

All of which sounds very good but when considering the Audit Commissions questions above in relation to the NWCF there are a number of the questions for which it is not possible to answer a definite yes. There have been issues relating to all Partners being clear about our purpose which was one of the reasons for a business plan being developed; is our vision realistic in the light of resources, probably not as there is always more we would like to do but we try to manage down to the level of our resources. Because we operate at a strategic level many of the benefits are difficult to measure or could be considered intangible, for this reason it is sometimes nice to be involved with projects with tangible outputs such as the North West Coastal Trial. None of this means that it was wrong to establish the Partnership just that we needed to be aware of the potential problems and develop approaches to manage them.

Irish Sea Forum – an example of a research network

The Irish Sea Forum was established following a conference in 1990 and its stated purpose at that time was to follow up on the work of the Irish Sea Study group who had undertaken an Environmental Review of the Irish Sea. It sought to do his by stimulating discussion of topics relating to the environmental health of the Sea through a series of seminars. It raised the profile of these issues, provided professional development through the seminars and brought practitioners and researchers together across a wide geographical area and across a range of subjects.

As a network it was considered by many to be successful but the test of how much people valued it was perhaps reflected in the contributions to its running both monetary and time; partly because of this it ceased operation in 2005. The aspect of this that requires further consideration is that a new research network is being established covering a similar area, it has a new champion and a slightly different remit. Why did the previous network fail other than resources? This question has not been answered but the lessons from a quick review would certainly be useful.

What is the new network doing? It is perhaps more focussed on the academic community but certainly seeks to promote communication through exchange of experiences; to identify opportunities for cooperation such as sharing of ship time and data. Ultimately as trust is established it may lead to formal collaboration with joint bids for resources and subsequent project working. Could these benefits be delivered without the network, probably not.

The above is a good illustration of a collaboration that had a clear remit and was successful for a significant amount of time. The initial benefits were around communication and the opportunity to discuss issues with the seminar proceedings well documented and as such a valuable resource in their own right. Given this it was clearly appropriate to collaborate initially but it is possible that this need evolved and the network did not evolve with it. This illustrates the need to keep the reasons for collaboration under review.

A problem solving model used in industry has some potential benefits here, referred to as the GROW model (set out in the table on the next page) it sets out to clearly identify the problem and possible solutions but also has a reality check which checks to see that participants would be willing to participate in the chosen solution and if not why not (what are the barriers). This used in conjunction with some of the other material on collaborative working can guide the initial process where you decide if you really need to undertake collaborative working and perhaps more importantly if everyone is willing to do so.

Summary of Key Points

Don't undertake collaborative working unless you have to.

Reasons for collaborative working include:

-to deliver co-ordinated services;

-to tackle wicked issues or interconnected problems;

-to reduce the impact of organisational fragmentation and minimise the impact of any perverse incentives that result from it;

-to bid for, or gain access to, new resources, and/or;

-to meet a statutory requirement

Checklists are useful but if Partners are willing there are ways to manage or overcome some of the potential problems.

Your objectives need to match the available resources.

You need to review your objectives to ensure they are still valid.

GROW model

GOAL	What is the aim of discussion? What do you want to achieve long term? What does success look like? How much personal control or influence do you have over your goal? What would be a milestone on the way? What is a short term goal on the way? When do you want to achieve it by? Is that possible, challenging, attainable? How will you measure it?
REALITY	What is happening now? (WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHO, HOW MUCH, HOW OFTEN) Who is involved (directly and indirectly)? When things are going badly on this issue, what happens to you? What happens to the others directly involved? What is the effect on others? What have you done about this so far? What results did that produce? What's missing in the situation? What do you have that you're not using? What's holding you back? What is really going on? (intuition)
OPTIONS	What is happening now? What else could you do? What if…? (time, power, money, etc.) Would you like another suggestion? What are the benefits and costs of each?
WILL	Which option or options do you choose? To what extent does this meet all your objectives? What are your criteria and measurements for success? When precisely are you going to start and finish each step? What could arise to hinder you in taking these steps? What personal resistance do you have, if any, to taking these steps? What would you do to eliminate these external and internal factors? Who needs to know what your plans are? What support do you need and from whom? What will you do to obtain that support and when? What could I do to support you? What commitment on a 1-10 scale do you have to taking these agreed actions? What prevents this from being a 10? What could you do or alter to raise your commitment closer to 10? Is there anything else you want to talk about now or are we finished?

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5.0 How do you start to collaborate?

There is much written on this but Gray (1989) perhaps sets it out most clearly in a stepwise format; the steps are split into three broad phases which are problem-setting, direction-setting and implementation, the detail of which is reproduced below. It should be borne in mind that the problem setting phase overlaps with the decision to enter in to a collaborative working arrangement and during this phase you should still challenge the need for this form of arrangement.

Goal: Stakeholders agree to talk about issues

Issue	Question	Description
Common definition of the problem	'What is the problem?'	Need agreement that a community issue causes problems important enough to collaborate. The problem must be common to several stakeholders
Commitment to collaborate	'What's in it for me?'	Stakeholders feel that collaborating will solve their own problems. Need to be dissatisfied with current conditions. Shared values are key
Identification of stakeholders	'Who should participate?'	An inclusive process that includes multiple stakeholders so the problem can be understood
Legitimacy of stakeholders	'Who has the right and capability to participate?'	Not only expertise but also power relationships are important
Leaders characteristics	'Do I trust and respect the leader – the organization and person?'	Collaborative leadership is key to success. Stakeholders need to perceive the leader as unbiased
Identification of resources	'How can we fund planning processes?'	Funds from government or foundation may be needed for less well-off organizations

Goal: Negotiating (Gray 1996)

Issue	Question	Description
Establishing ground rules	'What is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour?'	Gives stakeholders a sense of fair process and equity of power
Agenda- setting	'What are the substantive issues we need to examine and decide?'	Stakeholders different motivations for joining mean that establishing a common agenda may be difficult
Organizing subgroups	'Do we need to break into smaller groups to carry out our work?'	Large plenary committees need to be broken into smaller working groups
Joint information search	'Do we really understand the other side of this negotiation?'	Parties have different sets of information and/or not enough information to make a judgement. Joint search can help find common basis for agreement
Exploring options	'What are all the possible options to solving our problems?'	Multiple interests mean that multiple options need to be considered before closure. Stakeholders own interests are important
Reaching agreement and closing the deal	'Are we committed to going ahead on one option or a package of options?'	Stakeholders can agree on recommendations for a formal organization or a joint voluntary course of action

Goal: systematic management of inter-organizational relations (Gray 1996)

Issue	Question	Description
Dealing with constituencies	'How doe we persuade our constituencies that this was the best deal we could negotiate?'	Stakeholders need time to make sure that their constituents understand the trade- offs and support the agreement
Building external support	'How do we ensure that organizations that will implement are onside?'	A concern that senior officials in government or business have not been briefed fully
Structuring	'Do we need a formal organization to fulfil our agreement?'	Voluntary efforts can work. A formal organization may be needed to co-ordinate long term collaboration
Monitoring the agreement and ensuring compliance	'How do we figure out assets, legal obligations and compliance with contracts?'	Time for lawyers and possible more legal/financial negotiations

As ever with these types of approaches it should not be assumed that you will progress through the steps in order or not repeat some of the steps. It is also useful to consider that the issues can easily be used as a checklist at a later date if there are problems with the operation of the partnership or you just wish to do a health check.

Key outcomes from this stage should be:

- **Confirmation of the need to collaborate**
- **Identification of the problem/issues to be addressed**
- **Identification and engagement of Partners**
- **Identification of a working structure and rules**
- **An action plan detailing some short term achievable targets**

It is worth remembering the following question if you seek to learn from other initiatives at this stage:

"*why does a particular programme work, for whom does it work and in what circumstances?*" (Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:193)

6.0 Some operational issues

This section briefly runs through some of the issues that various authors have identified and is substantially extract from previous work I have done (Lymbery 2004). It does not necessarily give all the answers but hopefully where issues sound familiar it highlights that it is not just a problem you are experiencing (if you are already involved in collaborative working) but one that is common to this form of working. Having a clear recognition of the issue is a good starting point for resolving it.

Having established the objectives for a partnership it is necessary to maintain the involvement and commitment of the partners (Audit Commission 1998). Hudson and Hardy (2002) describe an essential part of this process as relating to leadership, ownership and commitment from the organisations involved. Further, they emphasise the need for a culture of trust to be developed. They identify potential problems in commitment and involvement relating to the sharing and potentially ceding of power and the potential for operational staff to "*make or break shared arrangements*" (*ibid*:56). It is also observed by Eden and Huxham (2001) that

"*negotiation within the group is 'private' and does not directly involve their organizations*" (Eden and Huxham 2001:388).

Thus it is how the operational staff, the representative, chooses to interpret their organisation's objectives that will inform their action within the group. They go on to suggest that this may go as far as representatives being aware of their organisations lack of interest and attempting to 'lever' in their own organisation through their actions within the group. An alternative approach to engaging the partner organisations is to ensure that the partnership objectives are more widely understood and accepted within that organisation (Local Government Association 2002b).

Vangen and Huxham (2002) describe leadership in the context of Partnerships as

"*the act of shaping and implementing collaborative agendas.*"
(Vangen and Huxham 2002:67)

This authority to lead may derive from visible signals such as language use and educational attainment, professional status or organisational status or less visible personal attributes such as the ability to inspire, nurture, support and communicate (Diamond 2001; Balloch and Taylor 2001; Vangen & Huxham 2002; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002). Because of the consensual nature of some partnerships the authority within the partnership could be considered to be informal and based on the relationship between partners and their externally held status. This is emphasised by the way in which some partnerships are established. Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) observe that the act of establishing a partnership comes about as a result of leadership, in some instances this leadership is based upon an individual seeing an opportunity or need and developing the partnership to address it.

Vangen and Huxham (2003) discuss the role of the project officer or partnership manager in building and maintaining a partnership and discuss some of the potential conflicts associated with this role. As an employee of the partnership they often have no authority to act as a leader and shape the agenda but in practice they are well positioned to do this. There are occasions when they can choose where to apply their time, whether this is pushing a particular agenda item or supporting a potentially more useful partner at the expense of another. They suggest that project officers can face the dilemma of choosing between ideology and pragmatism having to

"make a trade-off between promoting genuinely collaborative, but time consuming and difficult activities such as workshops, and 'getting on with it'."
(Vangen and Huxham 2003:71)

This situation is often emphasised by limited resources. It is useful to consider this against the traits that Sullivan and Skelcher (2002:104) suggest are required to lead or 'champion' a partnership, trusted by most if not all partners and with the ability to act as an 'honest-broker'. Trevillion (2001) considers that brokers of this kind are important to the success of a partnership but need to know how to avoid dominating the partnership. Harrison *et al* (2003) make the observation when discussing leadership that

"everyone in a partnership is in some way a leader, representing their agency, its values and clients." (Harrison *et al* 2003:26)

If citizens are to be considered as key stakeholders then the balance of power is important, otherwise, as Sullivan and Skelcher (2002) reveal the decision-making experience can be frustrating for those community members who believe they have made the transition from 'subject' to 'player'. They identify this imbalance of power to derive from the resources and authority that statutory partners hold although they suggest that community representatives may have some informal legitimacy based upon their experiences and local knowledge. Methods suggested for addressing this situation include the allocation of a number of places for community representatives, protocols to allow everyone to be heard, decisions to be taken by consensus and ensuring that statutory bodies are open to the decisions arrived at.

Considering the power relationships between the partners, Mayo and Taylor (2001) observe that

"the most powerful partners are in a position to determine time frames and set the agendas"

and that partnerships can

"become increasingly unequal as time goes by and partners settle back into role."
(Mayo and Taylor 2001:39)

Further, they suggest that power can be considered on three dimensions; the first is the most obvious relating to decision-making. The second is the power to limit what is considered, setting the agenda or 'burying' items. The third is the ability to define the terms of the debate and includes the assumptions that are 'taken as read', this often relates to government policy that informs the boundaries within which it is perceived that the partnership should operate. Craig and Taylor (2002) discuss power in terms of resources available to partners from large organisations and contrast this with less well resourced organisations, such as those from the voluntary sector where

participation with the partnership can be a significant drain on their resources (discussed more extensively by Clark 2002). There are occasions where a partner from the voluntary sector may be dependent on one of the other partner organisations for funding, under these circumstances it is possible for the voluntary agency to perceive a conflict of interest and not feel that they can negotiate as an equal partner (Pearson 2001). This funding relationship risks making the partnership very unequal and making any claims of equality rhetoric only (Butt 2001), it can also distract the voluntary organisation from its task as it devotes efforts to securing funding (Clarke & Sarre 2001).

Alcock and Scott (2002) observe that in order to rebalance power between partners some gain and some lose power, this requires not only one partner to relinquish power but for another to be willing to take on the responsibility associated with that power and to have the capability. Powell and Exworthy (2002) claim that the majority of observers see power asymmetries within partnerships and they question how much inequality of power is possible before the structure shifts to a hierarchal form. Although, Rummery (2002) suggests that public sector partners may be less likely to lose power to each other when they are under the same pressure to work in partnership.

When considering issues of public representation it is necessary to explore the role of Councillors in partnerships as they are the democratically elected representatives of the community. Skelcher (2003) expresses concerns in relation to this area, stating that

"The governance of communities is developing fast, but it is difficult to capture because much now takes place in the covert world of partnerships." Skelcher (2003:21)

Wilkinson and Craig (2002:40) identify a number of actions that local councils should consider in this context. They should ensure that mechanisms are in place for members and officers to raise issues from partnerships and also to be held accountable for decisions taken on behalf of the authority within partnerships, they should

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consider the role of backbenchers in the scrutiny of partnerships, provide appropriate training and support and develop guidance for the consistent selection of representation for partnerships. Non-executive Councillors undertaking a scrutiny role is also suggested by the Local Government Association (2002a), they also highlight the need for training to undertake this role successfully. When discussing this issue Daly and Davis (2002) suggest that a balance needs to be achieved whereby the community can participate as partners and also be represented. They accept that this can be difficult and can place Councillors in a difficult position but suggest that one way to address this is to make the role of the Councillor clear, whether it be advisory or decision-making. Ambrose (2001) considers the role of locally elected representatives to be significant where the partnership has budgetary or decision-making powers although he observes a trend for a move away from locally accountable representatives within these organisations.

Seddon *et al* (2004) describe how

"*the rhetoric of 'partnership' sometimes masks complexities and tensions within localized decision-making processes.*" (Seddon *et al* 2004:129)

Such tensions have the capacity to influence and shape the working of the partnership, some of the areas that can lead to tension are: fragmentation and non-coterminosity of boundaries; differences in funding mechanisms and bases; differences in aims, organizational culture, and procedures; lack of appropriate accommodation and resources; differences in ideologies and values; conflicting views about user interests and roles; concern for threats to autonomy and control and having to share credit; communication difficulties; lack of organizational flexibilities; differences in perceived power; and inability to deal with conflict (Tett *et al* 2003: in Seddon *et al* 2004:129; Northmore 2001; Williamson 2001). Of these the legislative framework, powers, accountability, funding regimes, geographic location, culture and management framework can be considered to be 'agency characteristics' of the individual organisations (Ambrose 2001:18). Having identified similar barriers Northmore (2001) suggests three key approaches for addressing some of these problems; communication, training and assessment. These approaches concentrate

primarily on improving mutual understanding and joint approaches to problem solving.

One of the problems of partnership working that Sink (1996) identifies is

"*dealing with individual representatives' idiosyncrasies, egos, personal agendas and interpersonal quirkiness.*" Sink (1996:102)

Sink points out that this problem cannot be avoided but can at least be better managed if partners are aware of this as a potential problem. A further aspect related to the individual is the skills they possess, whether innate or taught, to work within this environment. Charnley (2001) when discussing the importance of skills quotes Thompson:

"*…working in partnership is a skilled activity. It involves communication, assertiveness and negotiation skills so that the possibilities for effective collaboration can be maximised*". (Thompson: in Charnley 2001:161)

Grimshaw (2001) stresses the need for these skills to be developed at all levels of the partnership.

In summary the key aspects that this discussion brings out for me are that different skills are required when undertaking collaborative working as it is based on working with individuals and it is necessary to maintain trust and build consensus. Equally because it involves working with individuals it is possible for them to wield a disproportionate amount of power through their failure to cooperate. Leadership is required but the authority to lead is often granted by participants based on respect for the individual and their ability. Within the collaborative framework the individual should represent their organisation but does have the power to adapt this within limits to suit their own perspective of what is needed and it is often the individual who controls the level of commitment to the initiative.

7.0 The Life and Death of Partnerships

A collaborative venture may end for a number of reasons: there may be problems in how it was set up, the commitment from Partners ,whether it was really needed; but it may also end because it has achieved what it set out to do and is no longer required. Equally a collaborative venture may continue and appear to be healthy but actually no longer be needed; this should be considered a failure because it is wasteful of resources. It is for these reasons that reviewing should be focussed on two elements; the first being the purpose of the collaboration and the extent to which it is being achieved, the second is similar to a health check on the collaboration to identify problems that might otherwise compromise its effectiveness. It is worth considering that there may be a number of elements leading up to the achievement of the objective of the collaboration and some of these elements may well be considered as objectives in their own right; an example of some of the generic outcomes that might be considered is shown in the table below.

		Expected Outcome	
		Exchange of information	Joint agreements
Motivating Factors	Advancing a shared vision	**Appreciative Planning** • Exchange of information about visions and understanding • Understanding of others' visions and expectations • Fuller comprehension of problem by stakeholders • Agreement on problem definition	**Collective Strategies** • Agreement reached • Agreement implemented • Survival of alliance • Partners' goals achieved • Problem alleviated
	Resolving conflict	**Dialogues** • Development of trust • Recognition of legitimacy of others' interests • Generation of integrative ideas • Ongoing interaction • Recommendations for action	**Negotiated Settlements** • Integrative agreement reached • Agreement implemented • Reduction in negative reactions from constituents • Extent of compliance with the agreement

Criteria for success (Huxham 1996)

When looking at review of Partnership working Skelcher *et al* (2004) point out that many partnerships are dealing with public funds and as such should be able to demonstrate that they are operating in an effective manner. Hudson and Hardy (2002) have developed six principles upon which to base assessment, these are: acknowledgement of the need for partnership; clarity and realism of purpose;

commitment and ownership; development and maintenance of trust; establishment of clear and robust partnership arrangements; and monitoring, review and organisational learning. They have gone on to develop these principles into an assessment tool (Hardy *et al* 2003) based upon questionnaires; when the responses are collated they provide a graphical output designed to indicate the 'health' of the partnership. This assessment tool conforms to what Fournier (in Sullivan and Skelcher 2002:186) describes as the 'logic of evaluation', this comprises five steps as follows: establishing criteria; constructing standards; evaluating collaboration; measure performance; and analysis. The Audit Commission (1998) consider the cost of running the partnership and the cost of not operating the partnership, which, if it can be measured, provides a useful baseline against which to compare the partnership work.

Dowling *et al* (2004) have expressed concern over the use of assessment tools such as the one described above, firstly because different stakeholders may attach different levels of importance to the criteria and secondly because it focuses upon the process rather than the outputs. Whilst these problems exist it does not mean that the process is not useful just that it requires careful management and recognition that the process itself has value if undertaken as a group effort in identification of and resolution of issues. Having tried some of the assessments my advice would be to avoid any of the guidance that tries to apply a numerical score, focus on the qualitative approach adapting existing guidance to your own needs or developing your own criteria. There are plenty of resources on-line that provide review procedures that you can adapt but it is worth considering how to apply it, like any relationship there is much that won't be said in public for fear of giving offence, looking foolish or not wanting to 'rock the boat'.

The box below contains some extracts from a review of a Coastal Partnership where it was undertaken on a one to one basis with the interviewee identity kept confidential, so no quotes could be used that might compromise this. Whilst informative about some of the issues it does require careful handling to use it in a constructive manner without damaging trust. A key aspect that comes from this type of frank exchange is an understanding of different perspectives and objectives although these generally represent the individual perspective rather than the organisation they represent.

"*I make it up as I see fit ... no-one from my organisation has said you must attend this partnership and do xyz and no-one from the partnership has said we need your organisation to join because of xyz*"

"*This partnership is about getting on with people, it's down to the individuals to make it a success.*"

On the positive side individuals with enthusiasm and commitment could make the Partnership work well and achieve it's objectives. On the negative side individuals could obstruct the work of the Partnership, the form that this took ranged from individuals wanting to avoid conflict resulting in issues not being resolved; individuals being apathetic with regard to a particular topic; to individuals non-attendance at meetings delaying progress. One Partner suggested the following as a contributory factor to this

"*probably to do with over commitment, heavy workloads, consequent lack of communication*".

And further suggested that when individuals miss meetings they can lose track of actions agreed and can potentially be 'overtaken' by events.

A number of Partners commented on the need for

"*a fuller and more open debate about things that matter*"

and that we should not avoid issues that it was perceived might lead to conflict. In this context one Partner suggested that

"*they might start to argue a bit more*".

Seeing this as a positive development leading to a full debate of the 'difficult issues'.
When considering the accountability of the Partnership there were a variety of views. Some Partners felt that accountability fell to the individual organisations.

"*I'm not sure that we account for very much as a partnership when there are tough decisions to be made it rapidly becomes the sum total of the individual organisations involved rather than a partnership view ... accountability reverts back to the organisations... ultimately the accountability is with our organisations*".

When considering the value of having a partnership one Partner made the following comment

"*it now becomes increasingly a requirement of funding arrangements that you have some sort of active partnership in place in relation to what you are doing ... it is now a kind of received wisdom that one ought to work in partnership... but they don't always work out why it is a good thing*"

Extracts from a review of a coastal partnership.

There are problems with the measurement of outcomes also, they may take a long time to become apparent and also may be difficult to attribute to the work of the partnership. It can be difficult to say what would have happened in the absence of the partnership or what would have happened under an alternative organisational structure (Dowling et al 2004). This view is echoed by Davies (2002) when discussing urban regeneration partnerships where he suggests that it might be necessary to wait several years until we can measure positive results that can be directly attributed to partnership activities.

When reviewing collaborative working it is important to consider it within the context of the life of the initiative and consider whether it might be time for it to 'die' or evolve. The life cycle model below helps when considering this and also illustrates

the different phases and levels of activity that might be experienced, this is useful as it can be easy to hark back to early successes and become disappointed with current activity.

Phase 1: Pre-partnership	Phase 2: Take-off	Phase 3: Growth	Phase 4: Prime	Phase 5: Deceleration	Phase 6: Continuation or 'after-life' option
Issues identified	Launch	Early projects implemented	Stability and credibility	Stagnation of activities	Continue same
Ideas explored	Seeking wider support	Establish identity	Held up as good practice	Loss of interest	Absorbed into bigger partnership
Formulation of objectives	Staff appointed	Expand activities	Additional funds secured	Questioning commitment	Split between Partners
Developing a common purpose	Inventory of resources	Refine internal organisation	Monitoring progress	Uncertainty	Taken on by one organisation
Securing commitment and funding	Needs assessment	High commitment	Activities consolidated	Loss of momentum	Continue in different form
	Objectives refined	Innovation	Delegating/tendering some activities	Objectives re-evaluated	Community takes it on
	Work programme set	Leadership	Increased administration	Reviewing commitment	Spawns other projects
	Trust develops				Finishes completely

Composite life-cycle model
Source: Cffyn, 2000 in (Fyall and Garrod 2005)

In summary there are three areas to review; is collaborative working still needed; are you doing it well and are you achieving the objectives you set out to achieve. However, as you review these it should not be forgotten that there can be benefit from the process if done with either all or just key collaborators as it helps them to reflect on what has been achieved and if necessary to recommit to the initiative.

Key questions:
- **Are you achieving your objectives?**
- **Are the collaborative working arrangements 'healthy'?**
- **Is the arrangement still required?**

8.0 Additional web based resources

This is just a selection to illustrate what is available; there is lots of useful material out there as long as you don't limit yourself to coastal sites. As ever the links may change but if you go to the home page and search for Partnership or Collaborative Working it is normally possible to relocate the relevant pages.

Scottish Centre for Regeneration

How to guide on partnership working for Scottish housing regeneration. Sets the context of partnership working and what resources are available and some case studies.

http://www.pt.communitiesscotland.gov.uk/stellent/groups/public/documents/webpages/cs_011419.hcsp

Employers Organisation

Making the most of partnership working. Does a questionnaire health check, reviews learning and skills that you or your partners have, case studies of joined up working and contains other links to further online resources. The site has good diagrams is easy to understand. It is not specific to a certain area of partnership working like the NHS etc. **Probably the best website.**
http://www.lgpartnerships.com/

Alberta Government

Download resources about partnership working which seek to support the voluntary sector. Learn the steps involved in self-assessment, establishing compatibility, writing a partnership agreement, evaluating and enhancing the partnership, and conflict management.

Nonprofit/voluntary sector representatives identified a need to create a resource that would assist in the establishment of effective partnerships. The result is a kit that addresses both basic and comprehensive issues associated with partnering.

http://www.wildrosefoundation.ca/partnershipkit/default.aspx

OurPartnership

This project has ceased due to lack of funds (does this sound familiar!). However the site is still there and it does have some useful materials.

The Partnership Lifecycle takes you through the process of setting up, running and ending a partnership. The material has been assembled from a variety of sources and consists of:

• Some questions to use with your partnership to stimulate reflection and learning

• Some short stories about successful partnership working to keep your spirits up

• Some simple models to help you and your colleagues to think about what's different about partnership working

• Some activities to practise with your partnership to improve its performance.

The material is organised around five key stages in the life of a partnership:

Connecting, Contracting, Conflict, Collaborating, Closing

http://www.ourpartnership.org.uk/anncmnt/anitem.cfm?AnnID=7

National Council for Voluntary and Community Organisations

Talks about collaborative working and case studies, has some useful resources.

http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/collaborativeworkingunit/

Audit Commission

Have down some useful report, worth seeking out as a very useful resource is 'A fruitful partnership, more effective partnership working' and also useful to read although not as accessible is 'Governing Partnerships, Bridging the Accountability Gap'.

http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/

Improvement Network

The Improvement Network is a partnership between the Audit Commission, the Improvement and Development Agency, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. It supports improvement in the delivery of local public services through addressing the current needs of local councils. It has a range of resources including some addressing Partnership Working.

http://www.improvementnetwork.gov.uk/

9.0 References

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COREPOINT

The coastlines of northwest Europe are facing a growing range of threats due to both human activities and natural environmental change. The management of these threats is complex both due to the range of interests and the fragmented nature of the administrative arrangements. There have been a number of problems identified in relation to addressing these threats in a sustainable manner and the COREPOINT project seeks to address some of them.

Overall Objective: The principal goal of the project is to establish NW Europe as an internationally recognised region of excellence in coastal management. This will be achieved by successfully meeting the following objectives:

- Build European and local capacity to implement integrated coastal zone management programmes.

- Provide concrete solutions for current problems in the Northwest European region using current best practice approaches and identify models for sustaining ICZM (Integrated Coastal Zone Management) initiatives.

- Promote social and political responsibility for the coastal environment.

- Influence national spatial policy development in response to the EU recommendation on ICZM.

- Develop an integrated coastal information management system for Northwest Europe.

Some of the key issues that this project seeks to address are:

- Lack of integrated planning and management to achieve sustainable development of the NW Europe coastal zone.

- Lack of engagement and open communication with stakeholders, including political representatives and the general public.

- Poor links between researchers and policy makers.

- Lack of sustained capacity and expertise within local authorities.

- Disproportionate levels of progress on ICZM in Northwest Europe.

One element of this project is the consideration of Collaborative Working, this approach to the delivery of some of the aspects of coastal zone management appears to be widely used in the UK but not in other partner states. In the UK it is widely used to address a range of problems such as regeneration or the delivery of health services as it facilities the integration of what have been traditionally sectorial approaches to these problems. Given this it is considered to be beneficial to review the literature available on Collaborative working and produce a brief guide for practitioners to aid the delivery of ICZM.

Ten Tips for collaborating (Huxham and Vangen 2005)
Use these with care!

They are intended to provoke thought.

Only the first and last should be taken as absolute truths.

10. **Don't do it unless you have to! Joint working with others is inherently difficult and resource consuming. Unless you can see THE POTENTIAL for real collaborative advantage (i.e. that you can achieve something really worthwhile that you couldn't otherwise achieve) it's most efficient to do it on your own.**
… but if you decide to go ahead…

11. **Budget a great deal more time for the collaborative activities than you would normally expect to need.**

12. **Remember that the other participants involved are unlikely to want to achieve exactly the same thing as you and make allowances. You need to protect your own agendas but be prepared o compromise.**

13. **Where possible, try to begin by setting yourselves some small, achievable tasks. Build up mutual trust gradually through achieving mutual small wins. If the stakes are high, you may need a more comprehensive trust-building approach.**

14. **Pay attention to communication. Be aware of your own company jargon and professional jargon and try to find clearer ways to express yourself to others who do not share your daily world. If partners speak in ways that do not make sense, don't be afraid to seek clarification.**

15. **Don't expect other organizations to do things the same way that yours does. Things that may be easy to do in your organization may, for example, require major political manoeuvring in another.**

16. **Ensure that those who have to manage the alliance are briefed to be able to act with an appropriate degree of autonomy. Wherever possible, they need to be able to react quickly and contingently without having to check back to the 'parent' organizations.**

17. **Recognize that power plays are often a part of the negotiation process. Both understanding your own source of power and ensuring that partners do not feel vulnerable can be a valuable part of building trust.**

18. **Understanding that making things happen involves acting *both* facilitatively *and* directively towards others.**
… in summary …

10. **Assume that you cannot be wholly in control and that partners and environment will be continually changing. Then, with energy, commitment, skill and continual nurturing, you can achieve *collaborative advantage*.**