

Flood risk partnerships – a workshop on benefits and delivery

LANDFORM event: E12501

**Report of a workshop organised by LANDFORM at the Environment
Agency Offices, Sapphire East,
550 Streetsbrook Road, Solihull on 26th March 2012**

Speakers	Bryan Curtis	Adur and Worthing Borough Councils
	Mark Young	North Yorkshire County Council
	Nick Humfrey	Essex County Council
	Gareth Buff	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
	Andrew Cameron	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
	Kevin Macknay	West Sussex County Council
Chairman	Paul Shaffer	LANDFORM/CIRIA

INTRODUCTION AND ISSUES

This report summarises presentations, discussion, and group activities at a workshop organised by the Local Authority Network on Drainage and Flood Risk Management (LANDFORM). LANDFORM is a platform for those working in and with local authorities to share information and experience about flood risk management. LANDFORM facilitates communication between key stakeholders in flood risk management, ensures local authorities are updated on developments, provides support for members, and assists in delivery of roles and responsibilities. Members' breadth of interests and extensive applied experience add considerable value to existing knowledge and practice for managing flood risk.

The workshop focused on the benefits and delivery of partnerships to manage flood risk. Chairman Paul Shaffer of LANDFORM opened the workshop and outlined issues to be discussed. These included delegates' experiences and aspirations for partnerships, and exploring the main requirements for effective partnerships. Partnerships vary in structure, scope, operation, and efficacy. Because 'one size is unlikely to fit all', it is imperative to consider group composition, purpose, benefits, and challenges when forming and implementing a partnership.

Working in groups and partnerships has long been a key feature of coastal flood risk management. Closer cooperation and formation of partnerships between inland local authorities has been reinforced by the Flood and Water Management Act, National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy, and more recently the Localism Act. There is a greater focus on partnerships within funding contexts, and with increasing financial, time, and resource constraints it is likely that effective collaboration between local authorities will be vital in managing flood risk. Many local authorities are now using a variety of models and agreements to support coordination and collaborative working. These models facilitate the exchange of information, data, and services necessary to underpin flood risk management activities and delivery of required outcomes.

The workshop reviewed innovative approaches being used to address common challenges of partnerships cost effectively. This included exploring the drivers, development, pitfalls, benefits, and critical success factors of partnerships. The aims of the workshop were to provide (a) an overview of different approaches to working collaboratively for flood risk management, (b) insights into techniques to exploit opportunities and overcome challenges in establishing effective partnerships, and (c) an opportunity to share experiences with other professionals facing similar challenges and influence development of local partnerships.

LEARNING POINTS

1. Partnerships should not constrain a partner's development and innovation.
2. Although partnerships should be established within an overall framework, each partner or group should retain the ability to address their local needs.
3. It is important that partnerships identify options for joint delivery of required outcomes in order to ensure best value for stakeholders.
4. Partnerships will differ in structure, objectives, and operation. Because one size will not fit all, it is important to know the kind of partnership you seek to build.
5. Partnerships should ideally generate communities of shared information and facilitate wide dissemination of guidelines for best practice.
6. It is important to understand who holds power in partnerships, the types of power held, and how they can promote the partnership's aims or limit problems.
7. Partners must understand the nature of the partnership and their responsibilities.
8. Effective partnerships are inclusive, with the right people and a team orientation.
9. Communication and appropriate behaviours are critical for partnerships. Funding and transparency are essential to move partnerships forward. All of these will be necessary to achieve successful partnerships over the long term

BRYAN CURTIS, ADUR AND WORTHING BOROUGH COUNCILS

Partnership working within the Coastal Groups

- *Bryan is Principal Engineer for Adur and Worthing Borough Councils as well as Chair of the Coastal Groups for the south-east UK.*

Bryan provided an overview of the Coastal Groups, discussing drivers and benefits of the groups' approach as well as identifying key experiences and information learned. The Coastal Groups are partnerships of like-minded organisations with a central role in coastal management. The first Coastal Groups were formed during the mid-1980s to share knowledge and address joint problems associated with the coast. Research by MAFF (now Defra) in the early 1990s suggested the coastline could be partitioned into a series of natural sediment cells. Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) for the coastline were beginning to be prepared and coalesced during the 1990s; the plans used the sediment cells (Figure 1) as the basis for high-level strategic management.

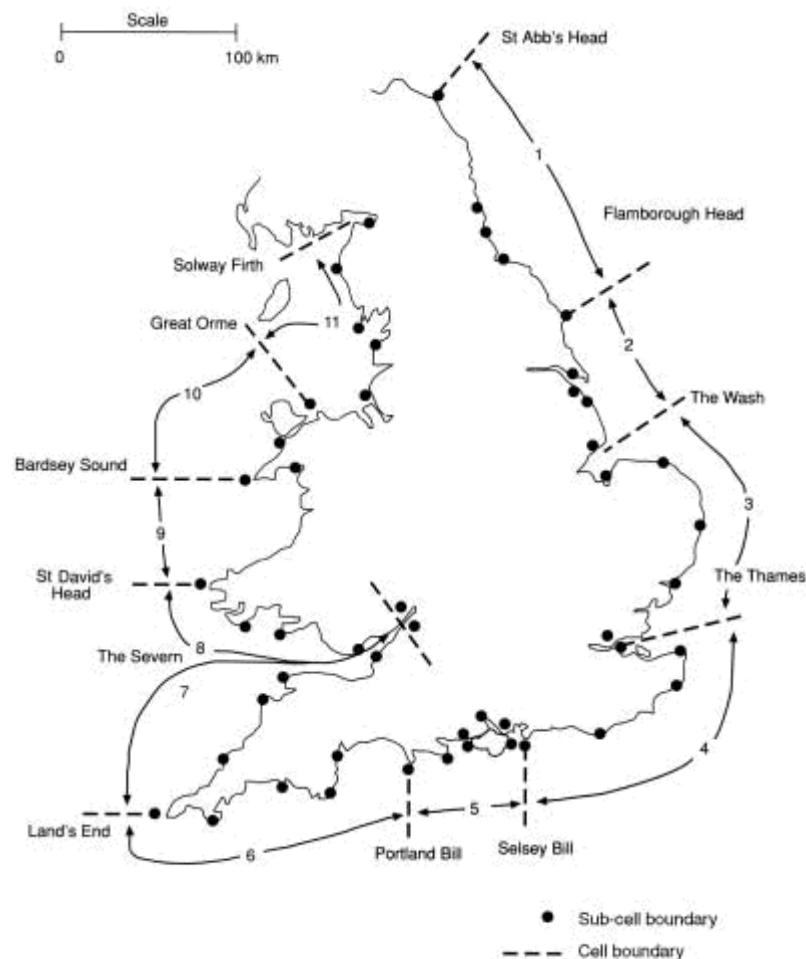


Figure 1 Cells for UK Coastal Groups. © Bryan Curtis

The first generation of SMPs from the late 1990s and early 2000s then began to look ahead to the second generation of SMPs. Outputs included Making Space for Water 2005, Environment Agency Strategic Overview 2008, and Regional Strategic Coastal Groups, October 2008.

There are currently seven Coastal Groups for England (Figure 2); each group covers hundreds of miles of coast and is as distinctive as the coastline it manages. Because care was taken to not constrain innovation within the partnership, the groups develop as part of an overall framework but retain the ability to address their local needs. This has resulted in a coordinated, strategic approach to efficient and sustainable coastal management, which has been successful.

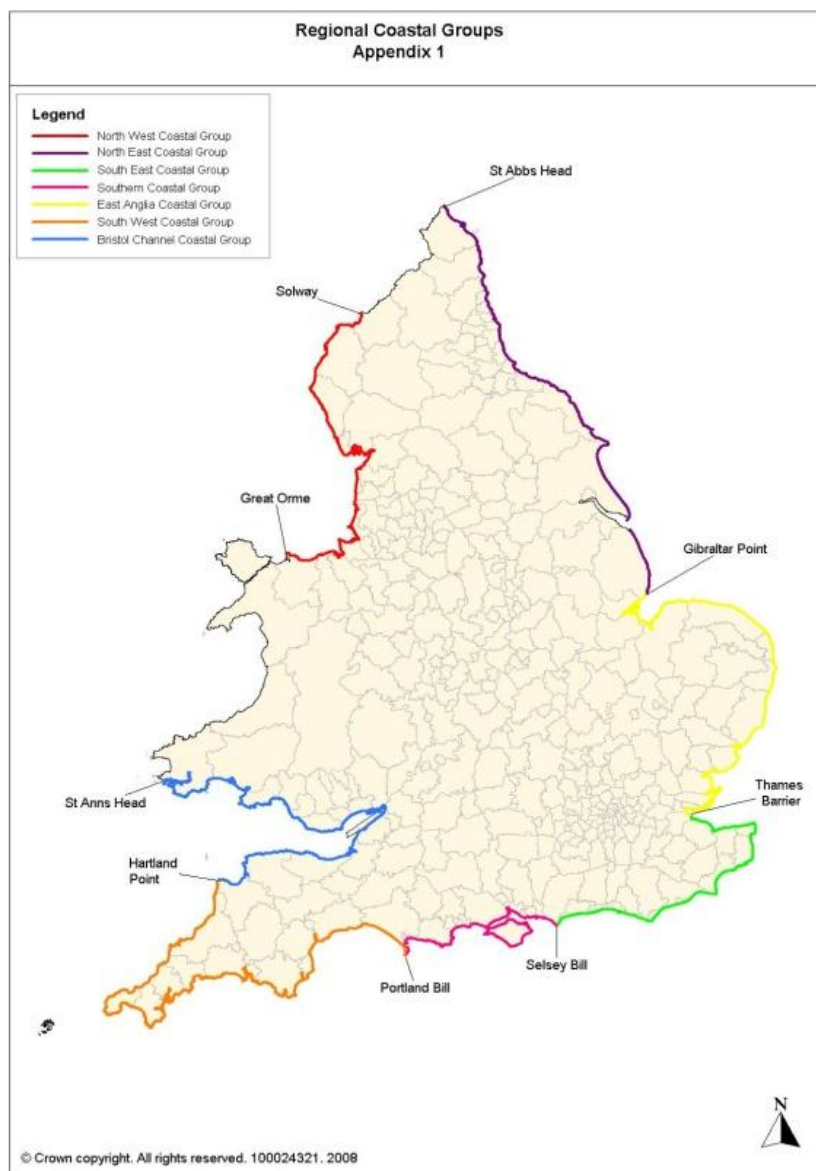


Figure 2 Distribution of seven Coastal Groups in England. © Bryan Curtis

The scope and activities of the groups are broad: “A Coastal Group provides advice on coastal issues and is a strong influencer in optimising strategic and sustainable policies, plans and programmes to best manage the risk from sea flooding and coastal erosion (including sea cliff instability). It is a natural and chosen forum for coastal practitioners to discuss issues, problems, solutions and to share best practice. They are efficient in operation and provide best value for the public purse”. Coastal Groups achieve this through four primary pillars:

- Shoreline Management Plans as well as Flood and Erosion Risk Strategies.
- Coastal Monitoring.
- Effective investment Planning.
- Partnership Working, Research and Development, Engagement, and Training and Information-Sharing.

Funding for the Coastal Groups varies considerably across councils, and some charge an annual cost while others do not. Chairmen of Coastal Groups share responsibilities as well as participation in national strategic forums, and are paid for their time so their expertise is provided but their sponsoring organisation does not incur a financial loss.

Some benefits and successes of the Coastal Groups are:

SMP's as well as Flood and Erosion Risk Management Strategies

As an example of collaborative partnership success, 20 SMPs were delivered to meet Defra's Outcome Measure 9 for completion by December 2010, subject to outstanding Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest which should be resolved very soon. Also, recommended strategies are being undertaken and commenced as necessary.

Coastal Monitoring

In May 2010 the Environment Agency approved a £34m national network for delivery of regional monitoring programmes, which is being led by the Coastal Groups and is currently in the early stages of delivery. One European advertisement was published late in 2010; expressions of interest have been received and a select tender list for all participants has been prepared, from which tenders have been invited. Programme delivery is underway, comprising a single strategy for the English coastline delivered by six regional leads that interlink. Data are freely available and stored at the National Oceanography Centre, Southampton.

Investment Planning

Continued development of the regional MTP and longer term funding requirements is central to the groups' work; it is essential to continue improving collaborative working to ensure success in the future. Identifying more joint delivery options is important to ensure best value for UK public companies. Coastal Groups are working with a cross framework contractor and EA group to investigate better ways of working.

Partnership working, knowledge sharing, and public engagement

Information-sharing is imperative, and successes include development of websites, a Coastal Group Community of Practice (Flownet / Knowledge Hub), close working with the EA at RFCC, Region, and Area levels, shared scheme development, and more democratic awareness through member forums.

Outputs of the Coastal Groups in response to consultations include (a) the Floods and Water Management Bill, (b) the Marine Bill and supplements, (c) CLG RSG Funding, (d) Defra draft Funding Review 2010-2011, (e) Defra Funding FCRM, (f) Marine Policy Statement, (g) the FWM National Strategy and supplements, (h) CLG National Policy Framework, and (i) Environment Agency RFCCs.

The Coastal Groups also encourage close working with institutions and government organisations such as the ICE Maritime Panel, the Technical Advisors Group, the CIWEM Rivers & Coastal Group, LGA Special Interest Group for coastal issues, and the LGA Inland Flood Risk Management Group. Coastal Group Chairs or representatives also make presentations to local institution meetings.

Examples of the Coastal Groups' past activities and policy delivery include the FCERM Conference 2009, 2010, and 2011, Defra's Coastal Change Policy, various research and development projects on SGs and PBs, FCRM strategy, LTIS, outcome measures for partnership funding, CLG's PPS25 Planning Supplement Coastal Change Policy, and CLG's National Planning Policy Framework Review.

Some current activities are Research & Development Advisory Group involvement in steering groups and project boards, AIMs, the National Coastal Erosion Risk Maps Project Board, the FCRM 2012 Conference, and Coastal Pathfinders. Participation in conferences includes FCERM 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, CIWEM Rivers & Coastal Group Conferences (chair sessions and presentations), meetings of local institutions, NCE Flood Management London 2010, the ICE International Coastal Management Conference Belfast 2011, ICE Breakwaters Conference 2013, and LANDFORM. The groups' most recent project is an article for the Parliamentary Handbook; this will go directly to Ministers and raise the profile of the Coastal Groups.

Within the Coastal Groups there is a focus on:

- Providing strategic, planning, practical, and operational training.
- Assistance with advice to practitioners.
- Conducting member forums.
- Promoting coastal partnerships.
- Establishing research and development programmes.
- Conducting field visits.
- Providing best practice guidance, such as *The coastal handbook* with the EA.
- Joint working and sharing knowledge.

Partnerships can be very effective and produce tangible benefits for stakeholders and partners. However, it is important to work hard to maintain partnerships and certainly 'one size does not fit all'.

MARK YOUNG, NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Partnership Working in Flood Risk Management

- *Mark leads the Flood Risk Management team for North Yorkshire County Council.*

Based on his extensive experience as a member of partnerships, including currently the Yorkshire & Humber Learning and Action Alliance, Mark discussed the different approaches adopted by partnerships in and around Yorkshire to manage flood risk. The presentation considered what 'partnership' means, where power can lie within a partnership, and lessons learned from active involvement in partnerships. Definitions of partnership are listed in Figure 3, indicating two perspectives: a legal relationship and a relationship based on cooperation and mutual responsibility.

+ What do we mean by 'partnership' ?

First, a formal definition...

part·ner·ship (pärt n r-sh p) *n.*

1. The state of being a partner.
2. **a.** A legal contract entered into by two or more persons in which each agrees to furnish a part of the capital and labour for a business enterprise, and by which each shares a fixed proportion of profits and losses.
b. The persons bound by such a contract.
3. A relationship between individuals or groups that is characterized by mutual cooperation and responsibility, as for the achievement of a specified goal

Figure 3 Definitions of partnership. © Mark Young

To understand a partnership and increase the probability of it being successful, it is often informative to consider where power lies within the partnership. Key types and sources of power are:

- Positional or legitimate power – derived from rank or office.
- Referent power – derived from identification, such as hero worship or nationalism.
- Expert power – derived from experience, knowledge, or professional qualifications.
- Reward power – derived from an ability to confer advantage, status, or gifts.
- Coercive power – derived from an ability to withhold or withdraw access.
- Informational power – derived from sharing or retaining information.

Four examples of partnerships were outlined: two were long term relationships (North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership, Yorkshire & Humber Learning and Action Alliance) whereas the other two were formed for specific tasks then finalised (Bishop Monkton Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) Partnership and the anonymous 'Little-place-on-the-moors' FAS Partnership).

North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership

This partnership (see Figure 4) is one of four sub-regional partnerships established to feed into the RFCC. Membership includes local authority elected members and senior officers, and representatives of the water company, IDBs, and environment agency. The partnership provides strategic direction and assists members with carrying out their flood risk management duties. The partnership's key characteristics are:

1. Formal terms of reference.
2. Powerful and influential membership.
3. Formal meetings.
4. Limited flexibility.
5. High level of accountability.

Appendix 2

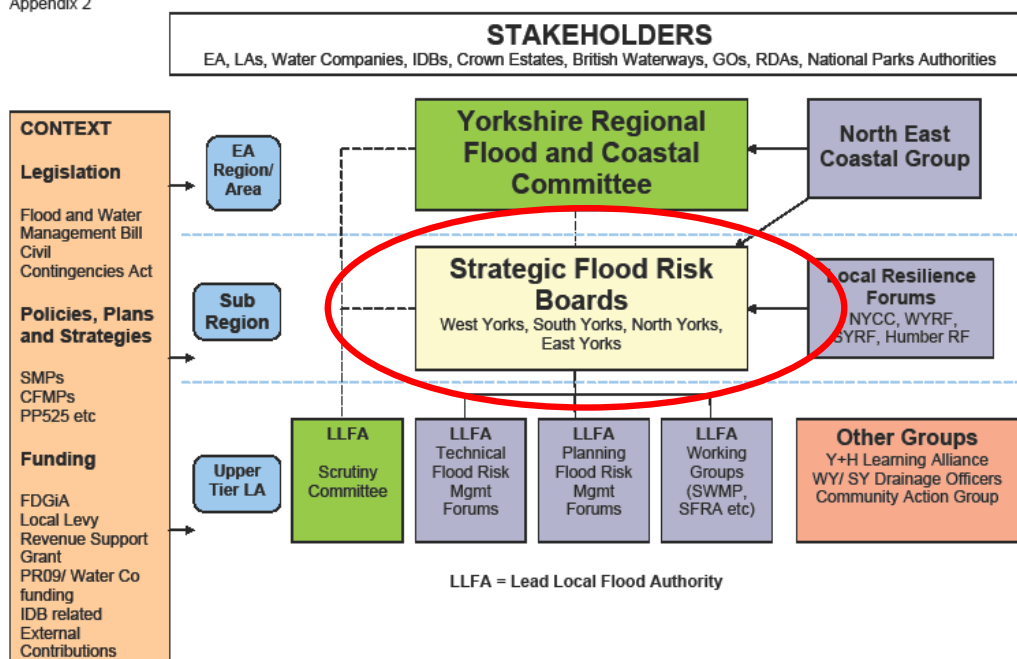


Figure 4 North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership. © Mark Young

Yorkshire & Humber Learning and Action Alliance

This partnership is a regional group created through a European-funded programme to encourage sharing of learning. Membership is diverse, comprising local authority officers from drainage, planning, building control, and flood risk, and representatives of the water company, environment agency, and academia. The partnership provides a community of shared practice, develops guidelines for best practice, and interacts directly with Defra and EA officials. The partnership's key characteristics are:

1. Loosely defined purpose
2. High levels of expertise & experience
3. 'Democratic'
4. No formal power
5. High degree of influence

Bishop Monkton FAS

This partnership was formed to conduct a £250k flood alleviation project. Membership comprised the LLFA, EA, and Parish Council, delivering a flood alleviation programme that provides 1:75 year flood protection. The partnership's key characteristics were:

1. Shared vision.
2. Good local leadership.
3. Regular and open communications.
4. Limited flexibility.
5. Trust.

'Little-place-on-the-moors' FAS

The name of this partnership is being withheld because it has been far less effective than it might otherwise have been to date. The group is a community with a surface water flooding issue; membership includes LLFA, EA, three tiers of local government, the water company, local residents, and local landowners. The partnership is seeking to improve maintenance of drainage, water company investment, interventions by landowners, and groundwater investigation. The partnership's key characteristics are:

1. Lack of shared vision.
2. Local political difficulties.
3. Reactive communications.
4. Loss of momentum.
5. Lack of trust.

In summary, to achieve an effective and successful partnership it is essential to know what kind of partnership you are trying to build and maintain. This includes clarifying structure, objectives, and how the partnership will operate. It will also be important to understand who holds power, the types of power held, and how these could be best used to promote the aims of the partnership and/or restrict corrosive influences. It is vital that all of your partners understand the nature of the partnership as well as their responsibilities. People create partnerships and determine partnership effectiveness; drive, enthusiasm, mutual trust, and a team orientation are critical for success.

Question to Mark: While we are familiar with partnerships supporting or driving policy, are these the same as partnerships carrying delivery of schemes on the ground?

Response by Mark: To some extent the term “partnership” has been hijacked by the new partnership funding requirements. To form a scheme we now need to go to Defra for partnership funding, which may imply there is a partnership to deliver that scheme. However, although an entity has been formed at a strategic level, this does not always or necessarily mean the partnership will deliver effectively on the ground. Partners might have very different agendas and priorities, and can have different views about what the scheme is intended to achieve. As a result, the individuals representing the partners that come together to secure funding could be different to the partners who carry out the delivery, and we need to be mindful of the issues this might generate.

NICK HUMFREY, ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Better together: Thoughts on building partnerships and relationships in Essex

- *Nick is Flood Risk Partnerships Manager at Essex County Council.*

Nick outlined different types and levels of partnerships working in and around Essex to manage flood risk. Essex comprises 12 districts and boroughs, which include a large coastline (longer than the Netherlands) and an extensive river network. There are two water and sewerage companies, three additional water-supply companies, and three Regional Flood and Coastal Committees. The rural north is considerably less densely populated than the south. Essex has many local management authorities (Figure 5).



Figure 5 Risk management authorities in Essex. © Nick Humfrey

Essex has not experienced large-scale flooding to the extent of the 2007 floods that occurred elsewhere; however, many smaller areas have been heavily affected while the 1953 floods have generated an understanding of the risk of flooding. There is an Indicative Flood Risk Area in the south of the county and modelling suggests that the potential risk is higher than recent experience would indicate (Figure 6).

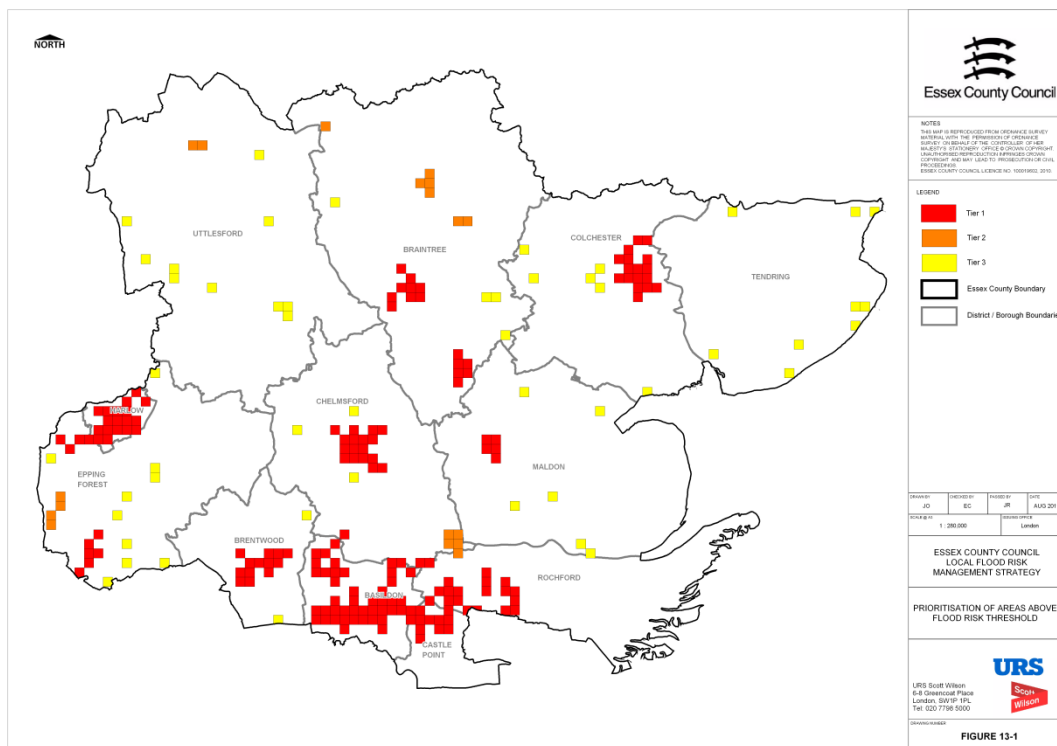


Figure 6 Flood risk areas in Essex County. © Nick Humfrey

The Essex Partnership for Flood Management is chaired by the Cabinet Member for Flood Risk (currently Cllr. Tracey Chapman) and is clerked by the Flood Partnership Manager. The partnership has an open-ended term and convenes every quarter in a private meeting; it can provide recommendations but does not have authority to make binding decisions. The partnership approves policies for management of flood risk as well as the local strategy and annual action plans.

Membership of the partnership includes Essex County Council, the District Councils (represented by their cabinet member or chair of the relevant committee), Area Flood Risk Managers from both Environment Agency regions, representatives from Anglian Water and Thames Water, the Chief Fire Officer, a representative of the Country and Landowners' Association (CLA), as well as Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea councils. Other groups working within the county include the Officer Group (which meets prior to EPFM meetings), the Essex Coastal Forum, Regional Flood Coastal Committees, the Land Drainage Working Partnership, and Regional Lead Local Flood Authorities Group.

The partnerships are member-led; partners take responsibility and have a high level of involvement. They are particularly focused on elements such as communication and insurance which stops officers simply concentrating on operational affairs. The numerous forums, groups, and committees working across the county ensure considerable expertise and knowledge is dispersed widely to fill any gaps. Experience in Essex suggests that the key to effective partnerships is ensuring the right people are involved; individuals who work positively and productively in partnership are essential. It is also critical to build an inclusive partnership that is not only a forum for the Council to speak. Partnership meetings should incorporate workshops, invited speakers, and decision-making to maximise their value in terms of expectations, resources, and time invested.

**GARETH BRUFF AND ANDREW CAMERON,
ASSOCIATION OF GREATER MANCHESTER AUTHORITIES**

Flood and Water Management: Partnership Arrangements in Greater Manchester

- *Gareth is Policy Manager for the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).*
- *Andrew is Interim Flood & Water Management Programme Manager for the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA).*

Gareth and Andrew provided an overview of the approach to managing local flood risk through partnerships in Manchester, including governance, the economic context, the strategic and operational approach to managing flood risk, achievements and benefits to date, and goals for the future. A main challenge is to integrate the Flood and Water Management partnership, and issues it addresses, into existing institutional structures. A further challenge is to promote Flood and Water Management up the policy agenda to overlay strategic leadership onto existing technical and professional collaboration.

Greater Manchester comprises ten local authorities. The population has increased by 4.5% to 2.6 million people over the last decade, and a further 4.4 million people reside within a one-hour drive. It is a coherent economic area (Figure 7) which produced £48 billion GCA in 2008, amounting to 5% of the national economy and 20% of the output from northern England. Over the decade preceding the recession it was the only area in the UK to experience growth comparable to London and the South East.

Major companies (including the Bank of New York Mellon, Google, Credit Suisse, and Nike) have been attracted from within the UK and overseas. Greater Manchester has particular strengths in advanced manufacturing, financial services, business services, life sciences, and creative and digital media, as well as an exceptional offer in higher education (more than 100,000 students, Europe's largest student population, across five universities). An agglomeration effect arising from the density and complexity of built areas and economic functions allows Greater Manchester to operate as a single functional economic area with an increasing array of investment incentives.

Greater Manchester: 10 local authorities, one coherent economic area

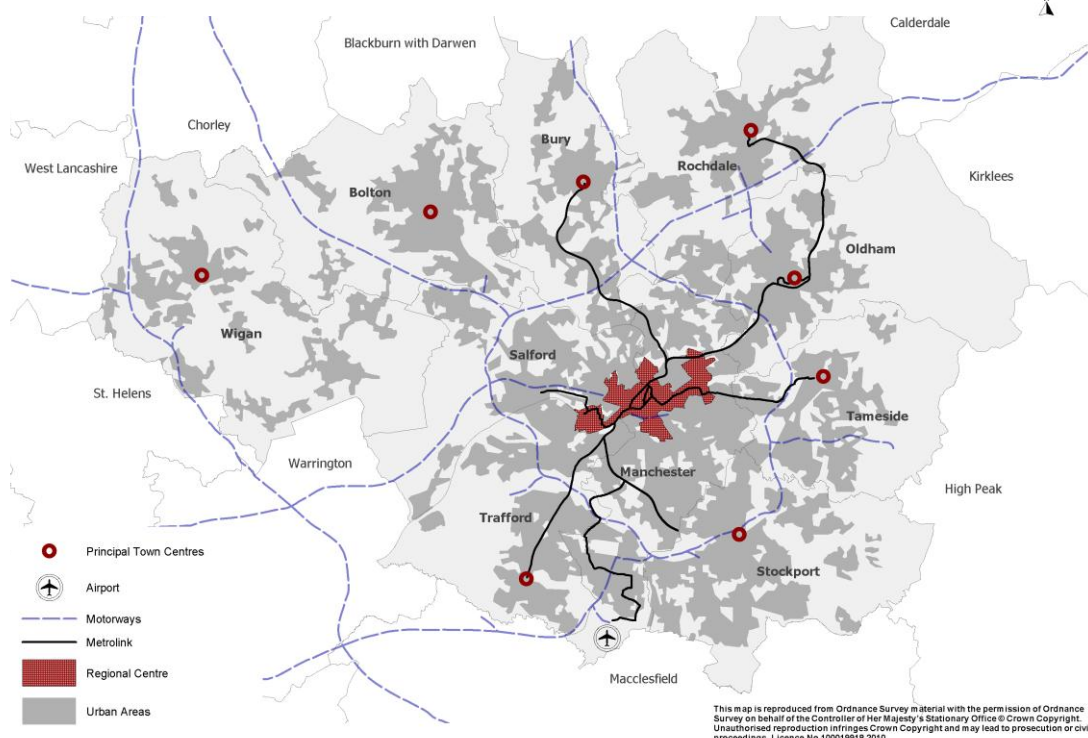


Figure 7 The extent of Greater Manchester. © Gareth Bruff and Andrew Cameron

Greater Manchester has a long history of collaborative working and this has recently been strengthened through the Executive of the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA), various joint bodies, and a series of local enterprise partnerships. The AGMA Executive is a joint board that provides a focus for voluntary coordination. Joint bodies include the Greater Manchester Police, Fire Authority, Waste Authority, and Transport for Greater Manchester. These are supported by AGMA Commissions and advised by the Greater Manchester Business Leadership Council. The GMCA was established on 1 April 2011, while the Greater Manchester LEP is a platform to enhance private sector engagement. These governance structures provide a stable basis for collaboration, founded on consensus decision-making as well as more than 20 years of practical experience. The structures draw on private sector expertise and insights, are well-regarded both locally and nationally, and have Greater Manchester Strategy Priorities at their core.

The Greater Manchester Strategy incorporates 11 strategic priority areas for economic growth; although flood risk and water management are not mentioned explicitly, these are built into other components:

- Focus on early years to maximise the impact of interventions.
- Better life chances in the most deprived areas.
- Increase the proportion of highly skilled people.
- Attract, retain, and nurture the best talent.
- Significantly improve transport.

- Expand and diversify the economic base.
- Increase the international connectivity of local firms.
- Securing the transition to a low carbon economy.
- Creating quality places to meet the needs of a competitive city region.
- Delivering more effective governance.
- Building a sense of place.

Greater Manchester's priorities providing context for flood and water management are:

1. *Overall vision.* A new model of sustainable economic growth to ensure residents and businesses benefit from and contribute to growth.
2. *Economic growth.* Developing and sustaining the capacity necessary to secure investment and grow Greater Manchester's economic base sustainably.
3. *Public service reform.* Deliver transformation in delivery of public services to reduce dependency and increase active participation in the economy.

Despite Greater Manchester's considerable assets, along with the rest of the UK it is challenged by how to continue economic growth with severely constrained access to market finance and limited public funding. In response, a new approach to stimulate private sector growth and job creation has been developed to reflect local needs and opportunities. This investment-led approach will enable public funding to be re-cycled to support other local projects that meet priorities in the Greater Manchester Strategy. Public funds and private sector resources will be deployed in a very targeted manner to support strategic objectives; a key emphasis is housing and infrastructure.

However, strategy and management should reflect patterns set by physical geography as well as the political and economic contexts. Hydraulic links in Greater Manchester are illustrated in Figure 8.

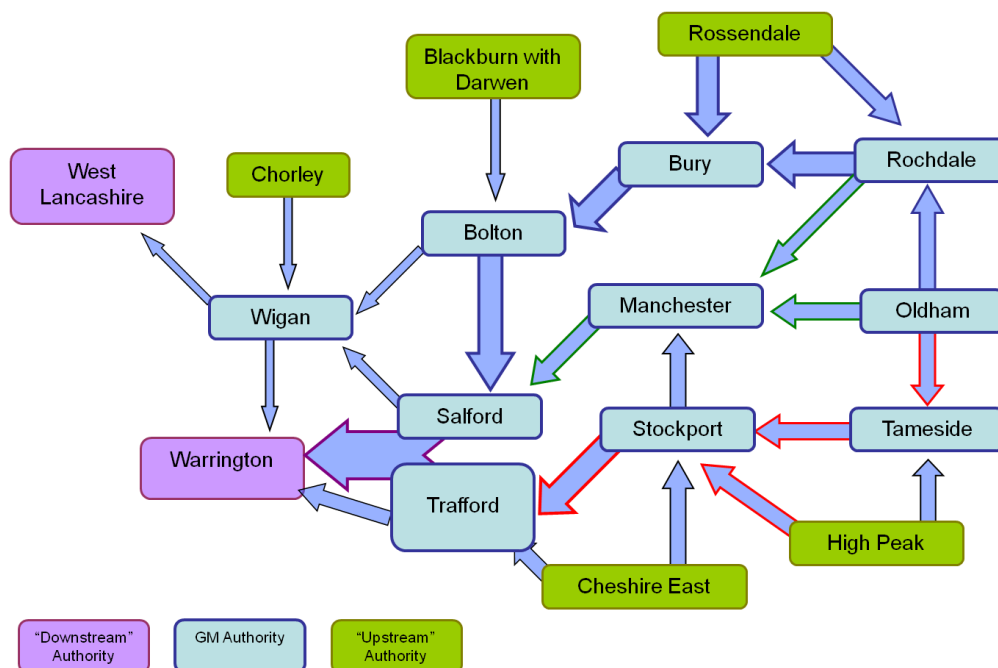


Figure 8 Hydraulic links in Greater Manchester. © Gareth Bruff and Andrew Cameron

Greater Manchester is effectively a single river basin with flows entering from adjacent areas. There will therefore be knock-on effects from work undertaken in some sectors of Greater Manchester to other areas of the city and beyond, and hence benefits from coordinating work within Greater Manchester. Most of the rivers flow via the centre of the urban conurbation to Salford / Trafford (divided by Manchester Ship Canal) and on to Warrington. Some relatively large rivers flow through constrained channels in busy city centres. In Figure 8, green-edge arrows are the Irk & Medlock, blue-edged arrows are the Irwell and main tributaries, red-edged arrows represent the Mersey and main tributaries, and the large purple-edge arrow is the Manchester Ship Canal. All of the Greater Manchester districts interconnect; only Oldham at the head of the catchment does not receive flows from elsewhere. Because each district sends flow downstream it is critical to consider impact.

A combined approach has been developed to address this, incorporating four levels. In descending order these are the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC), Strategic Flood and Water Management Board (SB), the Flood Risk Officers Group (FROG), and the District. The RFCC has recently shifted from two groups based on Environment Agency operational areas to five based on LLFA groups: Merseyside, Cheshire / Mid-Mersey, Lancashire, Cumbria, and Greater Manchester. SB functions as a sub-group of the RFCC and provides strategic leadership to ensure collaboration works. FROG is a forum for building technical capacity and sharing ideas. The district level is where work is carried out. The focus for workshop purposes is SB and FROG. Figure 9 illustrates how these groups interlink.

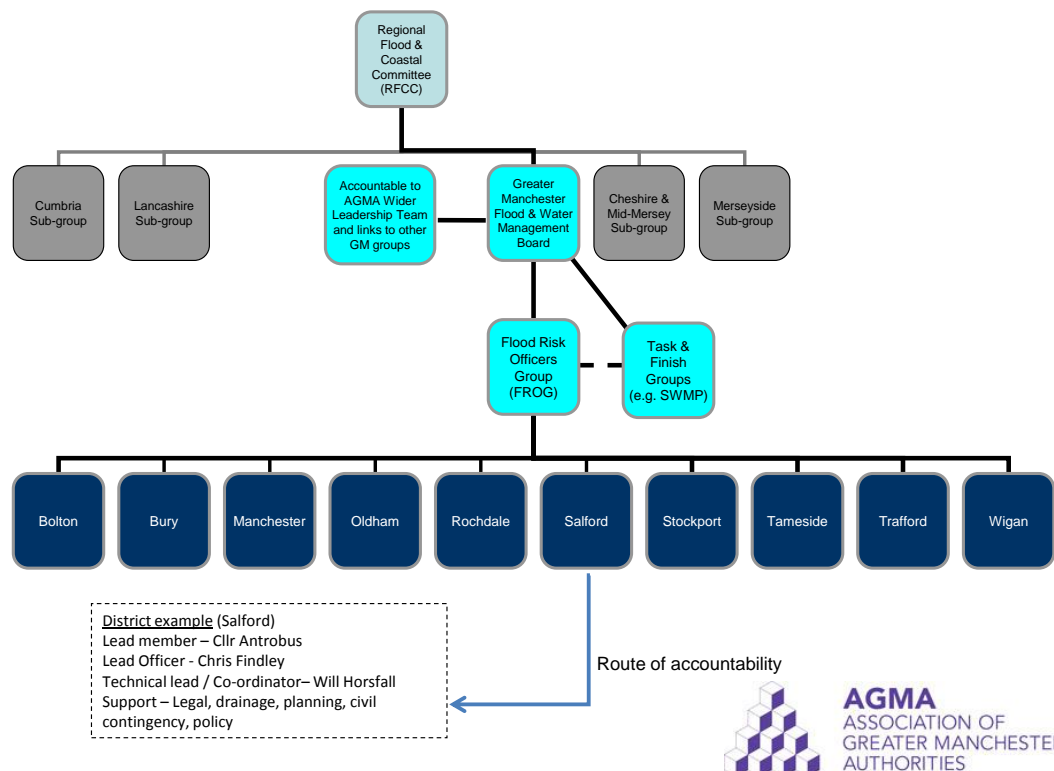


Figure 9 Group structure for flood risk and water management in Greater Manchester.
© Gareth Bruff and Andrew Cameron

Achievements of the partnership include capacity building, the Greater Manchester SWMP, PFRA, investigations policy, and Strategic Board Work Programme. FROG meetings have been used to deliver training to ten authorities cost-efficiently. There has been a high emphasis on opportunities to 'do it once' when possible, minimising workloads and providing consistency across all ten authorities. FROG was formed prior to the SB, which led to some difficulty securing 'buy-in' for strategic-level work and placing the best people within each role. The SB was required to hit the ground running and hence has an outline programme of priority work for the coming year.

Benefits of partnership are (a) the SuDS / SAB Working Group can consider how to deliver the SAB role most efficiently, (b) consistency between LLFAs, particularly in terms of common policies, minimum data standards, and combined technology, (c) improved engagement with partners through better relationships and consistency in policy and decisions, and (d) cost savings through economies of scale.

Continuing work for the partnership includes building working relationships as well as developing new relationships, which can be almost as important as delivering results on the ground. This will ensure flood risk is considered comprehensively and not only in isolated areas; it will also facilitate cost-efficient delivery of roles. Further linking to adjacent LLFAs such as Derbyshire, Warrington, and Cheshire East will help to share ideas and best practice and extend communication about risk. Additional funding and investment opportunities can facilitate building new infrastructure to manage flood risk while simultaneously building the infrastructure in a manner that reduces flood risk.

KEVIN MACKNAY, WEST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Working together in the South East: An introduction to the South East 7

- *Kevin is Drainage Strategy Team Leader at West Sussex County Council.*

Kevin provided an outline of the work of the South East 7 Group, their approach to working in partnership, and how this can be applied to local flood risk management. This included discussion of the group's origins, drivers, achievements, challenges, and future directions.

The South East Seven (SE7) partnership comprises seven Councils committed to working together to improve the quality of services and achieve savings:

- Brighton & Hove City Council
- Medway Council
- East Sussex County Council
- Hampshire County Council
- Kent County Council
- Surrey County Council
- West Sussex County Council

The partnership operates as a coalition of willing Councils; each Council reflects on its own priorities and policies when deciding the extent to which it will participate in each partnership activity. The seven Councils signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding' in March 2010, which formally specified their intention to (a) increasingly work together to benefit the population within their combined boundaries, (b) increase operational efficiency, and (c) improve value for money in project returns.

Current work streams for the South East Seven include information technology, waste, and highways; the Flood Management and Drainage Group falls within the ambit of highways. Savings have been generated for partners through achievements regarding knowledge development (notably sharing services and resources), enhanced analysis (comparing performance and costs), capacity building (increasing client capabilities), and joint procurement.

The Flood Management and Drainage Group formed relatively recently. The major opportunities discussed during the group's inaugural meeting in October 2010 were (i) sharing knowledge, intelligence, and resources, (ii) building client capabilities, (iii) providing support to RFCC, (iv) ensuring a consistent approach to SuDS approvals, (v) improving enforcement by working together to have greater potential impact, (vi) IDBs, and (vii) increasing consistency when disseminating public information.

Since their first meeting the group has provided input into legislation, carried out key legislative requirements, and promoted consistent approaches across members. The group's outputs have included:

- Draft Flood and Water Management Bill
- Flood and Water Management Act
 - Investigating flooding incidents.
 - Establishing a register of structures and features.
 - SuDS and SAB.
 - OWC.
- Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA)
 - Recommendations regarding good practice and significant flooding.
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS)

Challenges for the South East Seven are securing ongoing funding (given current dependence on government funding), SuDS and SAB, and continued momentum, recognising that with one serious flooding event the work is essentially completed. Moving forward, the partnership still has much to do. Plans are to develop an SE7 Developers Guidance document for SuDS, joint software, and asset capture.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Q? What are the best ways to develop trust in partnerships?

A Clarify what each partner wants from the partnership or is aiming to achieve. It is important to identify any differences between partners in terms of their goals and objectives. Openness and honesty are essential from the outset otherwise trust will be eroded. It is very important to be honest about expertise and what can (or cannot) be done, and also to respect the priorities and perspectives of other partners. Plugging into existing partnerships can increase accountability. Often it is more important to build trust at the operational level rather than the decision-making level.

Q? Is it essential to form partnerships?

A Not every circumstance, task, or issue requires a partnership; it is often a case of horses for courses. Partnerships can also be formal or informal, and depend on needs and objectives. Partnerships are clearly not a panacea, and you may slow things down in some cases by setting up formal partnerships. An example could be guidance for developers, where partnerships might repeat things over and over again in each area even though natural or defined standards already exist.

Q? How can duplication be avoided and inclusion promoted in partnerships?

A By establishing procedures to check whether stakeholders are being left out of processes and/or decisions. This involves determining how comprehensive the scheme is in terms of capturing information and input, which could in turn raise issues of capacity building and sharing. If this does not occur the wheel will be re-invented many times and duplication will undermine the benefits of forming partnerships. Duplication could also lead to inconsistency, which will disillusion stakeholders and introduce uncertainty into relationships.

Q? After more than 18 months of formal partnerships, are they sufficiently capable of addressing wider water management issues?

A Yes, although up until now there has been considerable pressure to focus on core, central, or more-immediate issues rather than broader but still relevant concerns such as drought or climate change. Partnerships should be equally useful for addressing these questions, particularly because these issues are complex and multi-dimensional. Also, the broader environmental agenda will become increasingly merged with local agendas; they are connected and we should increasingly interlink with wider management issues.

Q? Is it possible for partnerships to represent communities completely?

A That is a significant challenge. Although it is essential to build trust in communities it can often be difficult to get all community representatives involved. Overall, it may not be possible to represent all communities or their groups meaningfully; however, it is important to have procedures in place that promote the process and ensure the widest possible engagement takes place.

PAUL SHAFFER, CIRIA

Workshop: Exploring what makes local flood risk partnerships work

The afternoon session comprised a workshop where delegates worked in groups to share their experiences and aspirations for partnerships, and to explore requirements for effective partnerships. Recognising that partnerships vary and 'one size is unlikely to fit all', delegates considered the composition, benefits, challenges, and purpose of partnerships. Delegates worked in six groups, each comprising five to ten people and a mix of partnership and environment agency representatives. Groups considered the elements of partnerships that should be preserved, eliminated, avoided, or achieved: What elements should continue? What current elements should we change or stop? What should new partnerships avoid? What should new partnerships achieve?

Groups' responses were assigned to each of the four categories using a structured goals grid: Figure 10. Answering the following four specific questions, responses were written onto post-it notes, allocated to the four boxes on the grid, and then shared as feedback with other groups.

Achieve	What do you want that you don't have?
Preserve	What do you want that you already have?
Avoid	What don't you have that you don't want?
Eliminate	What do you have now that you don't want?

Goals grid



Do we have it?	No	Achieve	Avoid
	Yes	Preserve	Eliminate
		Yes	No
		Do we want it?	

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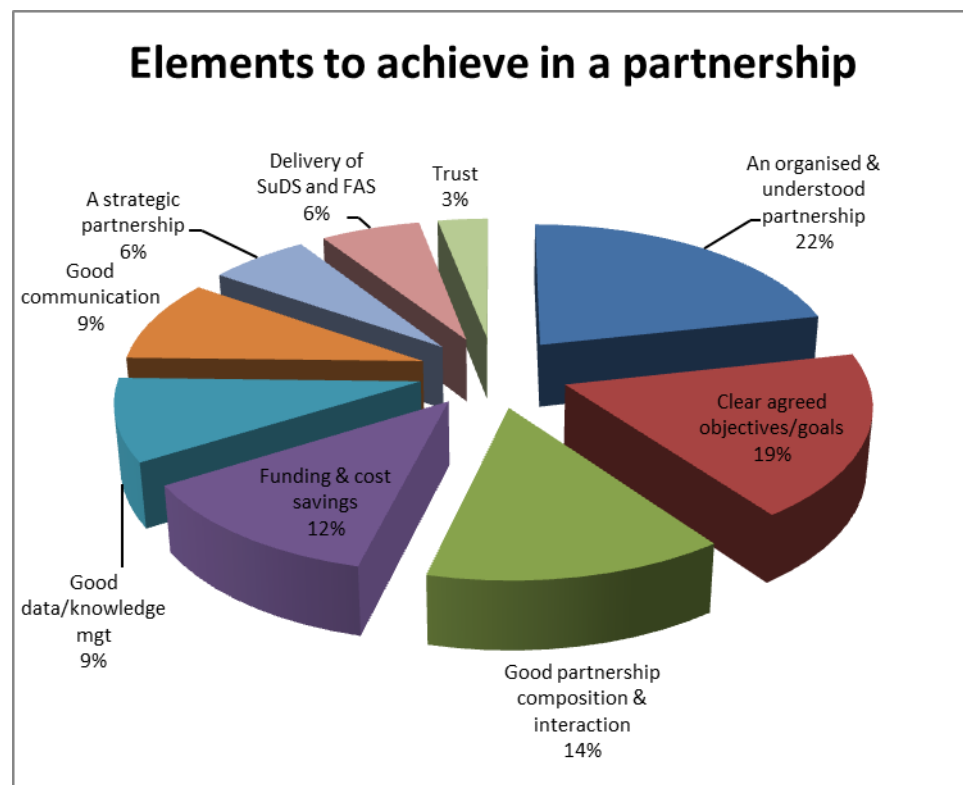


Figure 10 Goals grid to categorise responses by workshop groups © Paul Shaffer

FEEDBACK FROM THE GROUPS

An extract of some of the elements that the delegates wanted to achieve, preserve, avoid and eliminate are recorded at the end of this report. The next section summarises the outputs and discussion from the groups.

Achieve



An organised and understood partnership

It was suggested that the partnership needs to be recognised by all those involved in managing local flood risk management and there should be an appreciation of the drivers and the goals of the partnership. It was also stressed that there needs to be an understanding of individual members' roles and responsibilities, their challenges and what they can potentially deliver to the partnership. If possible there should be benefit for all members (particularly district councils).

Clear agreed objectives/goals

This includes the development of a clear terms of reference for partnerships and consensus on a shared vision including specific goals and key messages. The importance of an agreed prioritised programme for delivery was also stressed.

Good composition of partnerships

Balanced representation was thought to be useful and should include the best people from an organisation. It was thought that where there is delegation of responsibilities (for meetings etc) they should still have the power to make decisions and there should be the potential for local/community input through the inclusion of elected members. There was some tension between allowing flexibility and having continuity in terms of individual representation. It was also suggested that drainage engineers will have an important role.

It was considered useful to have broad representation in the partnership, but care would be needed to ensure it did not become cumbersome. It would also be important for all members to have clarity on roles and responsibilities (here as well). There is also a need for trust and the management of expectations and the ability to develop effective compromises.

Strategic partnership

This collection of requirements focussed around the need for considering strategic partnership between organisations, whether spatially (eg catchment, LA boundary) or in terms of broad planning and delivery with high level strategies being agreed and developed.

Funds and cost saving

It was suggested that a common procurement strategy should facilitate cost and resource savings, helping deliver cost effective flood risk management. It was mentioned that there was some uncertainty around the provision of adequate funding and it would be useful for future funding on Flood Risk Management to be ring fenced.

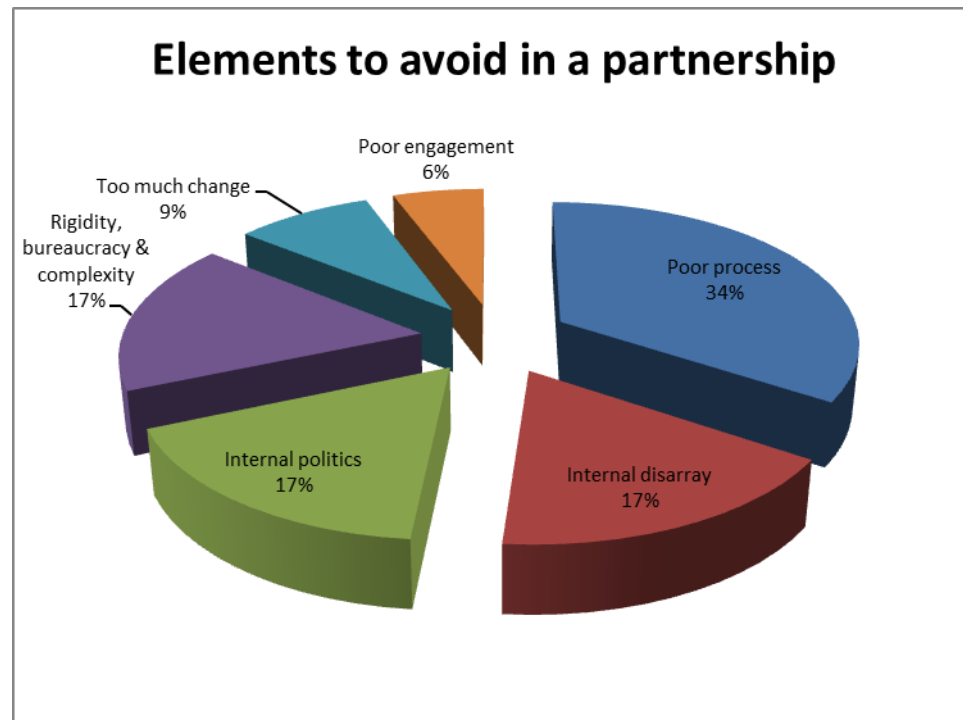
Good data/knowledge management

This requires the capturing and recording of local knowledge (preferably on shared GIS platforms). It was also thought useful to share good practice and good processes amongst those in the partnerships.

Good communication

The importance of good communication within and externally to the partnership was raised. There needed to be an agreed communication plan.

Avoid



Poor processes

This aspect covered items related to the actual management of the partnership. It was hoped that an efficient use of time and resources would be made with any potential risk of duplication minimised. The partnership needed to be well managed to ensure it did not descend into a talking shop, and that terms of reference remained relevant providing clarity of purpose. It was also suggested that the number of meetings needed to be balanced.

Internal disarray

It was suggested that partnerships should avoid misunderstandings, misinterpretation and misrepresentation. It was also thought useful to avoid infighting, 'destructive' criticism and a blame culture.

Internal politics

It was suggested that an artificial hierarchy or formal mentoring might be unhelpful to the development of partnerships. The partnerships need to be balanced with different organisations (ie district and county council involvement), functions and disciplines. Imbalances need to be managed to reduce the chance of fragmentation and power struggles.

Rigidity, bureaucracy and complexity

It was suggested that complex partnerships using jargon, acronyms could potentially alienate members of the partnership. Bureaucracy and associated rigidity of processes could also damage a partnership and any goodwill developed.

Too much change

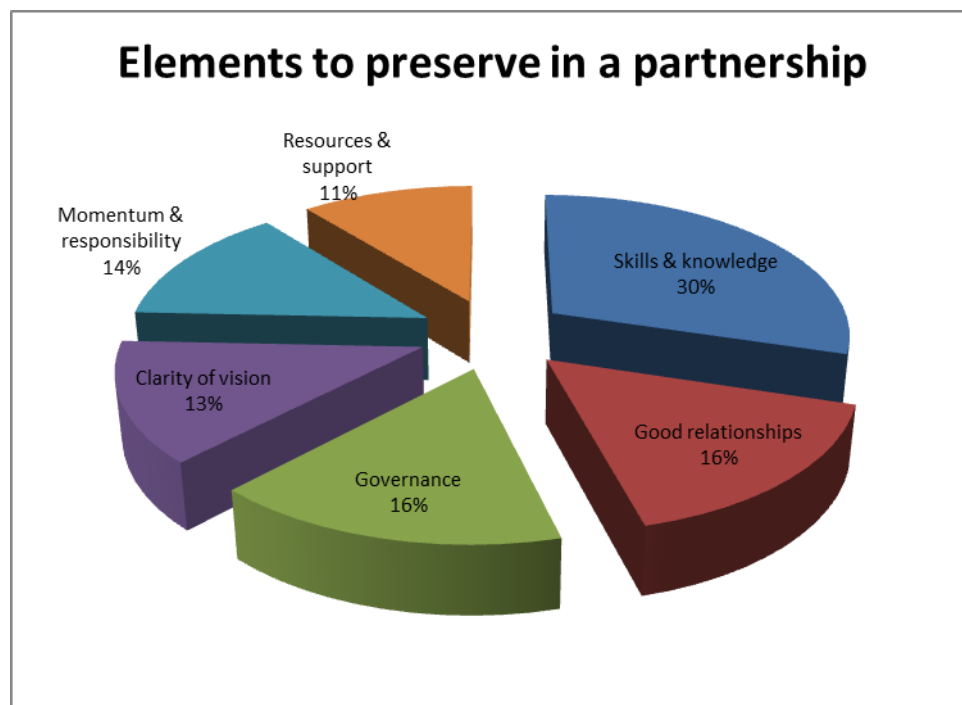
It was suggested that reorganisation of partnerships and constant changes in the representation would reduce effectiveness. Some concern about commitment levels

for some partnerships would need to be monitored and managed to reduce the risk of relevant stakeholders leaving.

Poor engagement

Partnerships need to have effective links into the respective organisations and need to have engagement with the communities. Policies and processes should not be developed in isolation from others.

Preserve



Skills and knowledge

This area was thought to be of greatest importance. The professionalism already demonstrated by those in LAs needed to be preserved, as does any access to best practice, expertise and local knowledge. The strengths within existing teams needs to be utilised and developed.

Good relationships

At the officer level it was thought that there was a trusting and effective relationship where people felt comfortable to challenge (and be challenged) and these aspects should be retained.

Governance

Where there are strong leaders these need to be retained and developed, as does the inclusion of champions and enthusiasts for the partnership. Appropriate sub groups may also have an important role (ie catchment management).

Clarity of vision

Generally it was considered that LLFAs have a clear understanding of what's required and what is needed to be achieved. The LLFA and any established partnerships need to remain focussed and motivated, with clear terms of references and a vision.

Momentum and responsibility

It was thought that the partnerships that have been setup have established a collective responsibility, which in themselves developed momentum and the capacity to appropriately respond to their new duties and challenges.

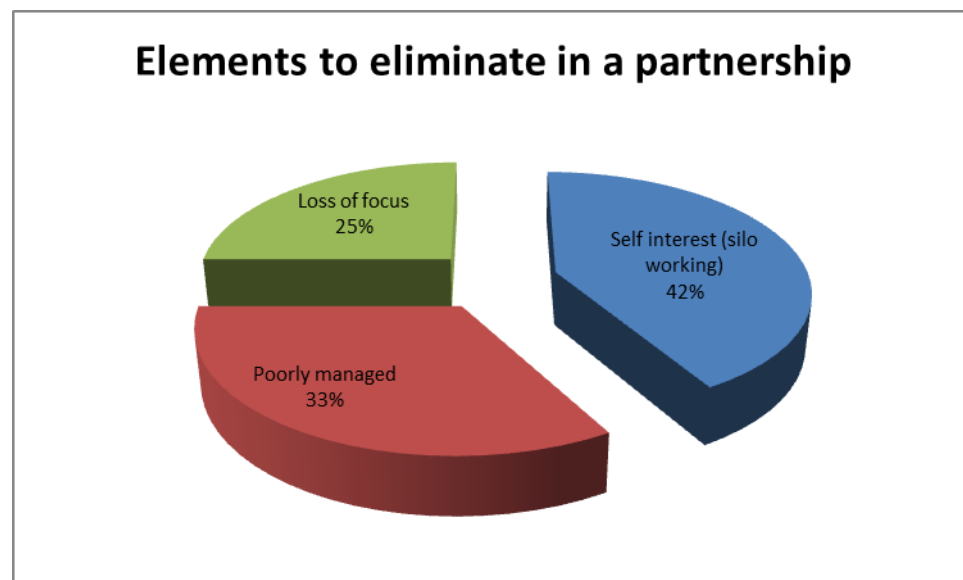
Resources and support

The delegates wanted to retain some certainty around funding and the ability to share income. It was thought important that the ability to identify common strategic issues was maintained that there would still be opportunities to obtain democratic input and political support to help secure future funding.

Serving communities

While not popular enough for representation in the pie chart, there was an overriding commitment to continue to protect communities at risk, and provide consistent customer focus and deliver maintenance and good service provision

Eliminate



Self-interest (silo working)

Issues around political self-interest, politics and the potential for single minded focus were raised as potential elements that should be eliminated. It was also thought useful not to have an artificial hierarchy and any (party) political difference would need to be carefully managed.

Poorly managed partnerships

Making the best use of time and resources again featured within this discussion, items included; reducing time wasting, repetition and reinventing the wheel. If frameworks were thought to be inefficient they should be improved or replaced.

Loss of focus

Concern was expressed about partnerships losing momentum, and that there should be real benefits and delivery on the ground. There should be clarity on the way forward and the partnership needs to have appropriate resources (not just the cheapest).

Inappropriate behaviour

While not presented in the pie chart there was specific discussion around behaviours and language that could impact on partnerships. It was suggested that challenges like jargon, entrenchment of views, and focus on historic issues and grievances would not be helpful.

Other elements to eliminate included an abundance of guidance documents. Concern also expressed about the impact of SuDS Standards, the asset register and long term maintenance responsibility.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although delegate conversations and general discussion differed from group to group during the workshop session, there was considerable similarity in the issues identified as most relevant for an effective partnership. Feedback indicated that communication and appropriate behaviours are of critical importance, while transparency and funding are central in terms of moving a partnership forward. All of these will be necessary for achieving successful partnerships over the long term. Main themes emerging over the day were

1. the need for effective communication, which interlinked to issues of trust, honesty, openness, and transparency,
2. the value of developing skills and resources for partnerships,
3. the importance of promoting representation and working with communities.

Local input is paramount; democratic structures should not only include communities but also listen to them more broadly, without focusing on special-interest groups. It will be valuable to develop long-term skills and training strategies to ensure there will always be highly knowledgeable and expert technical staff for partnerships. Planning for the future and developing team members is integral to the effectiveness of many partnerships over time.

SOME OF THE DETAIL

The delegate groups identified the following as elements of partnerships to achieve, preserve, avoid, or eliminate. There was general consensus regarding many of the elements and often overlapping responses across groups.

1. Elements of partnerships to achieve

- Trust between partners.
- Mutual respect among partners.
- Open communication.
- Ability to challenge each other constructively without being shouted down.
- Clarity of rules and responsibilities.
- Common standards and procedures.
- Sharing of data and information.
- Better use of legislation and available information.
- Pipeline of priorities and feasibility of schemes.
- Desired outcomes and end results.
- Aspire to sustainable drainage practices.
- Adequate funding, joint funding, and evidence that funding is warranted.
- Ring-fenced funding through partnership.
- Economies of scale; remain lean.
- Appropriate size to be effective; neither too large (less than 20) nor too small.
- Empowerment and being enabled to operate efficiently.
- Authorisation to make decisions and commitments.
- Appropriate terms of reference.
- Engagement with communities.
- Meeting community needs.
- Facilities for remote attendance at meetings.
- Greater stakeholder representation.
- Raised profile for flood risk management.

2. Elements of partnerships to preserve

- Ability to identify strategic issues.
- Ability to respond collectively.
- Key resources achieved through partnership, particularly technical resources.
- Extensive shared knowledge and skills.
- Local knowledge and insights.
- Innovation and thinking outside the box.
- Fundamental differences to ensure perspectives are balanced.
- Consistency where it exists and is effective.
- Certainty of income streams.

- Having an organising officer for the partnership.
- Overall partnership message and mission.

3. Elements of partnerships to avoid

- Infrequent meetings.
- Meetings without a clear agenda, practical purpose, or objective.
- Poor communication.
- Working in isolation or silos.
- Repetition and duplication of effort.
- False agreement due to coercion, bullying, or pressure.
- Factions and fragmentation.
- Infighting and power struggles.
- Excessive bureaucracy.
- Lack of commitment.
- Inflexibility.
- Misrepresentation or misunderstanding.
- Inconsistency, particularly procedural inconsistency.
- Ambiguity of process and/or legislation.

4. Elements of partnerships to eliminate

- Inconsistency of agendas between partners.
- Grievances or negativity.
- Self-interest.
- Focusing on historic issues.
- Focusing on cheapest-is-best solutions that are not always appropriate.
- Pitfalls of partnerships that impede implementation and action.
- Inefficient or ineffective maintenance.
- Confusion about purpose, approach, or objectives.
- Politics and point-scoring.
- Hierarchy or alienation of partners.
- Excess of leaders and too few doers.
- Imbalance between remote leadership and insufficient on-the-ground action.