

Power to the People - leaderships, partnerships and participation in local flood risk management

LANDFORM event: E9510

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**Report of a workshop organised by the LANDFORM held at
Local Government House, Smith Square London on 30 July 2009**

LANDFORM is a new network primarily for local authorities to share experiences and discuss policy and research outputs regarding drainage and flood risk management. LANDFORM is funded by the Environment Agency, Mouchel and Peter Brett Associates

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THE ISSUES

Leadership, partnership and participation are thought by many to be vital in flood and coastal erosion risk management. This has been reinforced by responses to the Pitt Review following 2007 floods and central government.

There are numerous stakeholders involved in managing flood risk and leadership is required from central government, local government and the Environment Agency to mention a few. The role of partnerships and participation is not new to most of the stakeholders. Many of the lessons learnt from existing approaches to partnerships and engagement in the community can be usefully applied to the challenges of flood risk management.

It is important to raise the awareness of flood and coastal erosion risk among the communities and ensure their engagement in the decisions that directly affect them. The draft Flood and Water Management Bill also envisages leadership from local governments and other stakeholders partnership and participations.

LEARNING POINTS

1. Local Authorities need to be ready to take a lead in local flood risk management and must bring their own asset management systems and maintenance regimes in order.
2. Effective partnerships require time to evolve, are based on shared visions, trust and visible benefits, utilise shared knowledge, expertise and strengths of partners, focus on deliverable outcomes, and crucially commitment from top.
3. No one approach for community participation in flood risk issues exist that will work for every area. Each area, site and community is different with their unique issues and local solutions. However, there are a number of good practical examples and guidance available.
4. Events organised at local level, with fun element, easy information, clear language and using local networks bring positive community participation in flood risk issues.
5. Lack of funding, no easily accessible data, shortage of land drainage staff, two tier local authority set ups and apparent lack of clarity in long term government strategy represent some of current issues in local flood risk leadership and partnership.

6. Small tangible outcomes help in building community trust and alleviate perceived fear of change.
7. There is apparent need for a central flood risk information related database and possibly a national standard to resolve current barriers to data sharing in partnerships.
8. Participation from business sectors in particular major local developers and private landowner etc is also important in resolving immediate flood risk factors.

STEVE COOK, ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Local Flood risk partnerships: The Environment Agency approach

- *Steve is Environment Agency's national Policy Manager for inland elements of the Strategic Overview for flood and coastal risk management. He leads the organisation's policy development and advocacy work on surface water flooding, spatial planning and flood risk and liaison with Local Authorities on the flood risk issues. Prior to joining the Environment Agency in 1999, Steve worked for over 10 years as an ecologist and environmental consultant in the public and private sectors both in the UK and abroad.*

Environment Agency (EA) and local authorities (LAs) share the common vision of achieving sustainable communities. EA currently has two main priorities in relation to managing and reducing flood risk, engaging with local authorities (LAs) and improving its internal approach to partnerships. Flooding affects socio-economic frameworks of local communities. 2007 floods resulted in death of 13 people and damaged hundreds of thousands properties. There has been flooding virtually every month, mainly from surface water, since 2007. The events underline future impact of climate change. Projections of intense rainfall events in coming decades increase risk of flooding from surface water, rivers and sea level rises. Response to the changing circumstances is needed with ability to adopt both quickly and effectively. Partnerships play a key role in achieving this.

The Pitt review recommends EA to work with local partners. The review recommends LAs to lead the investigation and management of local flood risk. Defra directions require LAs to build local partnerships, develop Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA) and Surface Water Management Plans (SWMP). Examples of EA and LAs working together and with local partners already exist in many flood defence schemes and development of planning process to minimise the risks from new developments. Some current EA partnerships include Flood Forecasting Centre (with Met Office), Local Resilience Forums, Multi-Agency Flood Plans and Fires and Rescue Services partnership. EA is also tasked with to carry out a strategic overview to ensure adequate assessment and management of the flood risk from all sources using a risk-based approach to achieve tangible reduction in flood risk. The overview includes strategic flood risk (from rivers, sea and reservoirs), local flood risk (from surface water run off, groundwater and ordinary watercourses) and coastal erosion.

EA will support lead LAs in managing local flood risk, building partnerships and producing and implementing SWMP. EA will also provide technical guidance, shares data, knowledge and expertise and implement relevant SWMP actions. As an example of benefits, Defra has asked EA to develop in collaboration with a number of LAs, an asset location tool for LAs to map and record their surface water related assets.

SWMPs help in reducing flood risk. A Government announcement is expected for the locations and funding available to LAs to undertake SWMPs, enabling LAs to set up partnerships. Six pilots are underway in Hull, Gloucestershire, Leeds, Warrington, Richmond upon Thames and West Berkshire. The feedback from pilots will feed into the guidance which is already available on Defra website and will be revised further.

A successful local flood risk partnership requires involvement of stakeholders including LAs (County Council, Unitary Authorities) and District, Water Companies, EA and potentially Internal Draining Board (IDB), Fire and Rescue Services, Highway Agency (HA) and other partners (Fig 1). EA is set up in catchments instead of local boundaries and it has to adopt to be involved in different partnerships, set up in different ways, with different priorities and different players.



Figure 1-Stakeholders in Local Flood Risk Partnership

For coastal areas, EA partnership approach includes, strengthening existing partnerships in new coastal groups, collaborative projects e.g. second generation shoreline management plans (SMP2s), coastal monitoring, erosion mapping and sea defences and coastal consultations.

EA launched 'Building Trust with Communities' (BTwC) initiative 18 months ago replacing traditional 'Decide-Announce-Defend' with 'Engage-Deliberate-Decide' approach.

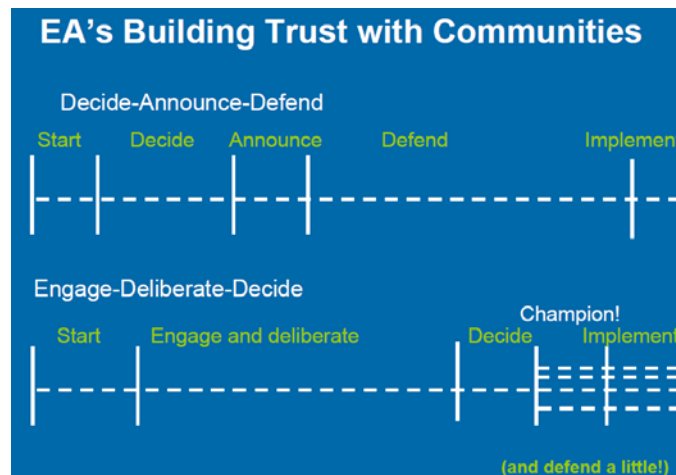


Figure 2- Building Trust with Communities (BTwC) Approach

Inevitably, new approach will require long consultation periods but fewer issues to be resolved at the end with cost and time savings. It gives EA a chance to understand stakeholders' requirements, present options and let stakeholders weigh options achieving local community involvement and potential champions. BTwC has been rolled out across the EA. It is still in early stages but the initial feedback so far has been encouraging.

From a national perspective, EA believes in the essential role of partnerships in reducing flood risk, maximising the efficiencies and achieving tangible outcomes from a delivery focussed approach. Stakeholders in a partnership should be able to see the benefits, share learning, be receptive to good practices and allow time to evolve. Partnerships need to be flexible to meet local issues and needs, but above all must be supported from the top. Shortage of skills and resources in surface water and tight finances require smart working. EA will continue supporting existing and new coastal and main river flood risk partnerships.

DISCUSSION

Q? How involvement of water authorities and companies can be achieved?

- A Lead LAs will be tasked with bringing all the parties to the table. Water companies will join in that way. From pilots, a good dialogue with water companies has been observed. There is an appetite and optimism in water companies for working together and recognition that they have a strong role to play. This will become more apparent when Government announces plans for SWMPs.
- Q? In the BTwC initiative, how Engage-Deliberate stage will run?
- A Local communities will be targeted through newsletters, workshops, road shows and exhibitions etc. Challenge for EA will be to present understandable options in the start and help stakeholders to weigh different options to achieve informed decisions.
- Q? Will the current draft Flood and Water Management Bill be acted in this parliament?
- A The Bill was included in the Queens speech and time has been allocated for the Bill in this parliament. In principle, all parties are behind the Bill. Instead of waiting for the Bill we should be working together anyway.
- Q? Are the proposals mentioned happening or they show the future intentions?
- A They are certainly Government's intentions which EA supports. Progress has been made in the areas affected by floods. Way forward is to bring all others on board.

KATHY DERRICK, BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL

Engagement, Participation and Partnerships

- *Kathy's current position is divided between Programme Co-ordinator for the Water Environment and as Environment Manager. Kathy led a partnership project called Bristol Living Rivers from 2003-2008. She is currently supporting two partnership projects, South Bristol Riverscapes and Avon Invasive Weeds Forum. Kathy is also liaison Panel member for the Severn River Basin Management Plan.*

Bristol City Council launched Bristol Living Rivers (BLR) Project following a Quality of Life Survey (carried out in 2003) which included a question asking how satisfied the public were with the local rivers in terms of for instance access, water quality etc and indicated that there was room for improvement. The project was funded by the Council and EA and supported by a range of organisations and groups.

A stakeholder workshop called 'Plotting the Course' was organised following the survey. Facilitated by a highly trained and independent consultant, the workshop was attended by relevant sectors, NGOs, local community groups and other organisations. The workshop started with a very simple questionnaire which was designed to be open ended, contained basic questions and immediately gave ownership of the event to the participants. It became obvious that a standalone project was required in its own right to address the issues not a bolt-on initiative to something else and hence Bristol Living Rivers Project was initiated.

The project targeted three low scoring dissatisfaction elements in the survey as areas of improvement i.e. flytipping and litter control, community involvement and available information about rivers in Bristol in addition to other issues raised in the stakeholders workshop. A Project Officer was appointed and steering group and topic groups were set up. Stakeholders were identified and their commitment secured. During the project period, sustainability became a key issue so that the issues tackled during the project continued after the project ended. This was partly secured by the local community themselves obtaining Lottery funding for a successor project. The BLR project was aimed at making rivers visually attractive, protecting and restoring habitats, increasing public participation, civic pride and respect for rivers, safeguarding public health, ensuring effective drainage and ensuring planning development benefits river landscapes and biodiversity.

One key area of partnership work was the problem of abandoned supermarket shopping trolleys. A joint trolley survey was undertaken by stakeholders – the EA, Council and local groups. A public consultation took place so that the Council could acquire powers to recharge supermarkets for the collection of abandoned trolleys. Targeted actions were taken setting up

planning conditions for supermarket development requiring Trolleys Management Plans from supermarkets, the setting up of a trolley collection service (charged to supermarkets) and carrying out annual monitoring surveys.

During the project, a number of other initiatives and actions were taken to engage local communities. Providing information and raising awareness is important but the available traditional methods were improved. Creative and hands-on small events were initiated. For example making use of local networks and libraries, using props, understanding what people like about rivers, making it interesting and encouraging people to celebrate their local area and to make a difference. To engage in the earlier age, school trips to local rivers were organised. Information and awareness about local rivers and waterways and flora and fauna was arranged through treasure hunts, slide shows and interpretation boards, weekend events and other fun activities. In one instance, the local community were consulted to choose the colours for a river footbridge crossing. A musical walk was arranged. These initiatives helped in better community engagement and participation.

Bristol City Council also developed a SWMP, in association with Hyder Consulting and Association of British Insurers (ABI). The process included stakeholder workshops, multi-criteria analysis to rank hot-spots, cost benefit analysis and 2D modelling. The SWMP came up with 10 recommendations. The process also highlighted recommendations for producing the SWMP in terms of partnership working.

Bristol Living Rivers Project proved that successful community engagement has to be planned well, based on trust and relationships, shared vision, a flexible approach, open two way communication, making it real at local level and effective involvement of local networks.

A good website, accessible informative plans, maps and assessments, easy to locate and contact information and use of easy language also help. Successful outcome requires good project management, listening skills, and having real achievable and measurable deliverables. Bristol Living Rivers Project showed that organisations involved in partnership must also have clear objectives, roles and responsibilities, accountability, high level support, be open and share information. Timely, collaborative initiatives supported by personal commitment and flexibility finding local solutions can achieve successful stakeholder engagement.

There are obstacles to partnerships. Apparent overlap in the role of existing organisations and public bodies hinders integrated plans. There is a lack of accessible data for better decision making. Data is managed by different organisation with no central database and issue with data sensitivity. Organisations are not necessarily always receptive to sharing their information. Digital Terrain Modelling and Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) licence agreements can become a problem.

DISCUSSION

Q? How do you deal with local people with particular issues which can potentially sway the project in one way?

A Good project management and leadership are essential. One has to be firm and not to loose focus. Talk with those people afterwards; usually there are other issues behind their grievances.

PETER FREW, NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

Coastal Risk Management- A Local Authority Approach

- *Peter is Head of Coastal Strategy at North Norfolk District Council. He is a Chartered Civil Engineer involved in the management of North Norfolk coast for the last 17 years. Peter is Chairman of the East Anglia Coastal Group and Local Government representative on the Defra Adaptation (Coastal Change) Project Board.*

North Norfolk's coast is split between erodable and floodable areas. Experience of dealing with the coastal erosions in the area is extendable to the flood risk. Coastal erosion, up to two metres per year in some areas, contains both deep-seated rotational failures and transitional slumps and slides. Effects of erosion are more highlighted in small villages located on the coast like Trimmingham (population 200 people). Sea defences built in the last century, have deteriorated due to lack of investment particularly in small villages, resulting in deteriorating groynes and lowering of beach levels exposing the toe of sea wall. Small villages mostly do not meet the current funding criteria. To address the coastal erosion issues, North Norfolk District Council is developing a Community Vision and working on three aspects; Buying Time, establishing Local Development Framework guidance and lobbying for Government support for communities and individuals.

The Council has invested heavily in temporary sea defences and heavy maintenance programmes, increasing the life of defences to additional 10 years or so. Budgets have been increased to fund this until Government finalises a long term strategy.

Planning and Local Development Frameworks are also vital in addressing both erosion and flood risk. A local development guide has been produced in consultation with local communities and Department of Communities and Local Government. Some ideas from the guide have been included in PPS/20 (Coastal Planning).

The Council has also been trying to develop a Community Vision for the coast. The process started with workshops in villages. In a day event, invited audience of community representatives were encouraged to discuss their fears and hopes for their village and things that they are proud of. Workshops aimed to identify local linkages to understand how the community worked to help them in a better way for future changes. Figure 3 shows an example of Mind Map encompassing local values, impact and issues developed at Overstrand. These individual village workshops were followed by a single coastal wide workshop assisted by a trained facilitator.

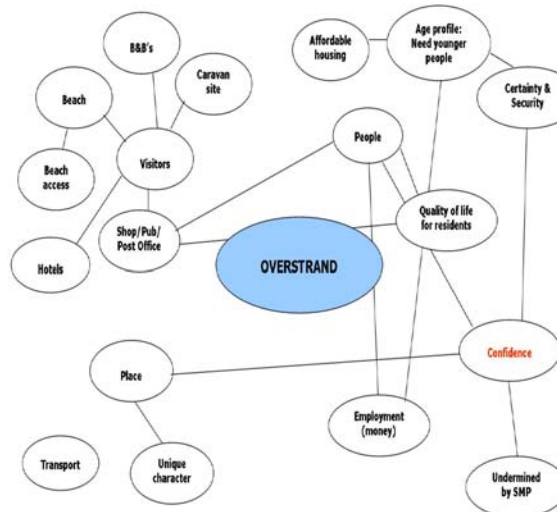


Figure 3- Overstrand-Mind Map of Values, Impacts and Issues

Resistance to some government policies and actions for coastal erosion in local communities is well known. People fear change; however, the resistance can be reduced by understanding the factors behind the local dissatisfaction combined with clear vision and taking first steps involving the local community. When first steps are greater than resistance then progress can be made. Fear of change is greater than fear of staying the same and it has to be reversed.

Village of Happisburgh has attracted headlines, where the sea defences have almost failed and local community is at risk. There is no active intervention policy for Epoch 1 (2025), Epoch 2 (2055) and Epoch 3 (2105). The risks at Happisburgh include loss of beach access, toilets (already demolished), car park, houses, local pub, church, caravan site, life boat and cost guard stations and the blight. The actions by the Council in consultation with the local community are aimed at gradually moving facilities and properties behind 100 year erosion line. The Council has built temporary defences spending about £0.5m, piling the rocks to break the waves. Local community also raised £50,000. Further actions with engagement of local community include construction of new beach access steps, identifying risk free development sites, remove dereliction and developing action plan. Lobbying for more help and support from the central government will also continue.

The current policy for Mundesley Village is to hold the line for Epoch 1 and Epoch 2 and a managed realignment for Epoch 3. The problem in Mundesley is not today but in the future. The risks at Mundesley include loss of accesses, coast road, car park and toilets, hotels, pubs and clubs, church, graveyard, village hall, library, sewage pumping station, houses, cafés and life boat station. The entire infrastructure is close to the cliff top and the blight is already visible. The coast road and other significant assets are in front of 100 year erosion line. Regretfully, before the publication of 100 year line, new development in front of the line was approved. However, the developer has suggested underwriting the current value. The publication of 100 year line has helped in encouraging local community to consider different options. The current strategy is to relocate assets behind the 100 year line, enforcing planning and development restrictions, considering future risk free development sites and identifying by exception where affected people can move. The Council actions also include investment in local defences, arranging local workshops and developing action plan. Development exclusions are in place and the Council fights the appeals against planning restrictions and exclusions. Importantly, exceptions have been introduced in Local Development Framework to facilitate under risk properties to relocate to a risk free site. These actions can also apply to flood risk management.

The experience in North Norfolk District coastal areas shows that there are no quick fixes. Solutions have to be achieved over a period of time. Involving the local community generate ideas, however, focus should be on achieving deliverable outcomes (no matter how small) to build early confidence. Local planning process has to support these initiatives. There are no proven solutions; each site is unique requiring different approaches over varying timescales. Each affected LA appears to adopt a different approach suggesting a need for a National Framework to address the flood and coastal erosion risks.

DISCUSSION

- Q? How are you dealing with the issue of land ownership? Has the option of Council purchasing the affected land been considered?
- A This issue has not been addressed yet. Defra consultation is continuing for Adaptation and Coastal Change Fund. Huge increase in the fund to enable Councils to acquire properties (including business properties) at risk is being lobbied. Obviously, there will be rules associated with the acquirement. Studies show economic viability of the initiative; however, this will require early intervention and forward planning say 20 to 50 years ahead.
- Q? Useful for more information describing the relation between fear and resistance?
- A People naturally fear change. The inertia can be overcome by showing the benefits from the change and other actions to help communities to accept the change.
- Q? How have you dealt with particularly angry people?
- A They should be engaged and pointed in the right direction to shed their frustrations. Character of individuals can be used in a beneficial way, but we cannot ignore them.
- Q? Has the idea of Council buying properties in affected area and renting it back to the previous owners been considered?

A Buy and lease-back principle can work, but as mentioned, early intervention is required. There is an economic case for it.

Q? How did you convince the planners to extend the affected village envelopes?

A It is an exceptions policy. Village envelopes do not exist now in our local plans. The coastal erosion policy allows for a property at risk to be relocated in an area where the development may normally be restricted e.g. on a green field sites.

DAVID SELLERS, LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

Inland Flood Risk Management- Local Authority approach

- *David is Principal Engineer (Land Drainage) at Leeds City Council, he is a Chartered Civil Engineer and currently responsible for Leeds City Council's Land Drainage Team and has worked on the appraisal, design and construction of drainage schemes for more than thirty years. David was the project manager of the West Garforth IUD pilot project, the Dunhills Flood Protection and Resilience Pilot Project and (currently) the Wyke Beck First Edition SWMP Pilot. He is also the author of a history of sewerage in Leeds (hidden beneath our feet, 1997)*

Serious and widespread floods hit Leeds in August 2004 and May 2005. Various inquiries and investigations followed into the causes of floods. Sewers, watercourses, highway drains, gullies and surface water run off were identified as the main sources of floods. Many of the flood sources were owned and fell under the responsibility of Leeds City Council. It appeared that assets were owned by different Council departments, with different priorities and in most cases no budgets for maintenance. The areas most affected in the city have undergone huge development in last seven decades, a problem the Council can influence, which also contributed to floods.

In response, the Council set up a Water Asset Management Working Group renamed Flood Risk Management Group (FRMG). The report by the Group, 'A New Departure', presented a 33 point action plan with a cost tag of £1.2m per year and contained three main elements Leadership, Partnership and Participation. Funding was approved by the Council.

The Leadership element targeted Council to improve its own house. Centralised maintenance responsibility for all Council owned watercourses (underground and over ground) was assigned to Land Drainage Section (LDS) with £0.5m annual budget. Other actions included 50% budget increase for gully cleansing machines, highway gullies and culvert survey, rapid sandbag filling machines purchase, increased size of LDS to inspect watercourses and provide advice on new planning applications, visual and CCTV inspection regime set up, programme to control run-off from Council parkland and SFRA set up.

The Partnerships were established with EA and Yorkshire Water (YW) to; investigate flooding, collaborate on development control and flood risk and engage with third parties (communities) to reduce flytipping (e.g. supermarket trolleys). Engagement with community was through consultation, providing information and consideration about flood risk and mitigation and supporting communities to help themselves.

The follow up actions resulted in Council's planned preventive routine maintenance programme including fortnightly clearing of over 70 identified grids and blockage hot-spots and critical watercourse inspections. Up-to-date inspections information is available on Council's website. Maintenance examples include removal of a matured tree allowed to grow unrestricted in the path of a watercourse, removal of 130 tonnes of debris and 50 supermarket shopping trolleys from a flood risk location.

A better reactive maintenance process of potential blockage and debris also followed. A process is in place to turn up within 24 hours following a report to remove the debris or blockages. There are 130,000 gullies estimated to be in Leeds. To enable a pro-active risk based frequent maintenance of riskier gullies; GPS positions of all highway gullies were recorded. Council's gully sucker fleet has expanded by 50%. CCTV surveys were initiated for covert watercourses. The GIS record of existing covered culverts and highway drains is also being maintained. Investigations found that different agencies and contractors run pipes through the culverts unchecked over the years, hindering the flow of flood water. In absence

of a statutory duty on Councils to keep records of culverts and highway drains; they became damaged and increased flood risk.

A SFRA for Leeds City was also carried out in October 2007; however, it does not detail the strategic capacity and mitigation of current sewerage system or the rest of the underground infrastructure or overland run off. Despite the maintenance regimes and other actions there will be floods requiring emergency response. The Council response actions include mitigating effects of flooding where possible and providing emergency assistance to vulnerable groups. Some specific measures include availability of rapid sandbag filling machines, an emergency incident coordination vehicle and access to real time rain fall radar displaying the data from Met Office to LDS. The availability of real time rain fall intensity information in any particular area will help the Council to respond effectively.

Flooding is caused by a multitude of factors which fall under the responsibility of different parties e.g. EA, LAs, Water Companies etc and also the private owners of drainage systems. It is difficult to investigate flood causes and manage future risks without a partnership. LAs have to take a lead role in this as viewed by Pitt Review and draft Flood and Water Management Bill. Leeds City Council set up the Flooding Technical Forum (FTF) of engineering representatives from EA, YW, LDS and Highways Services. The forum meets every quarter and can jointly investigate situations with an overlap of responsibilities. The forum has been successful in agreeing the causes of floods and enabling solutions to progress within the relevant bodies. The success of FTF was followed by the setting up of a Planning and Flood Risk Forum (PFRF). The planners from EA, YW, The Council (incl. LDS) and HA are represented in the forum. The forum looks at the strategic planning and development issues where co-ordinated response is required. The outstanding items from forums can be referred to the Strategic Flood Risk Management Board (SFRMB) represented by the same organisations at Regional Director level. The above arrangements have resulted in ad-hoc collaborations on two Integrated Urban Drainage (IUD) Pilot schemes for West Garforth and River Aire Studies and 1st Edition SWMP for Wyke Beck.

Equipped with the new powers, collaboration with EA and threat of fines up to £20,000 a number of actions were taken to tackle the issue of abandoned supermarket trolleys. Some supermarkets introduced automated wheel locking system to stop trolleys crossing defined boundaries. A Trolley Collection Service (TCS) set up by supermarkets has been a success. In 12 months from June 2008 to May 2009, TCS collected 10,730 abandoned trolleys in Leeds. Other communities participation actions include, provision of free temporary flood protection guards for doors and brick breeze covers to individual houses in selected risk areas under a pilot programme, arranging Days of Action, cleaning banks of River Aire participated by the Council, EA, YW and landowners, introduction of schemes where rubbish from watercourses is cleared by local residents and collected by the Council and two successful bids for Defra grant for flood protection assisted by residents action groups.

DISCUSSION

Q? Current partnership efforts are focussed on local residents, missing out developers, commercial businesses and industrial sectors. How this should be addressed?

A Many privately owned lands are at risk from poorly maintained watercourses or culverts located next to them. Landowners see the benefits from maintenance and actions taken by the Council upstream to reduce flood risk. They also accept their responsibility to keep their length of watercourses clear. Landowners resent having to clear debris that was thrown in upstream, but are more likely to respond if the Council keeps upstream land in its ownership free of debris.

Q? Many councils are short of Land Drainage staff. How do you get existing Land Drainage Engineers in LAs up to speed with current level of expertise available?

A Staff shortage is a barrier. We had only seven staff in our LDS, this has risen to 14. However, some surrounding LAs have only 1 or 2 staff in their LDS. We try to help and support them by means of a Regional Land Drainage Liaison Group, in swapping ideas and assisting each other. I believe EA should step in and arrange seminars and workshops to bring Land Drainage Engineers working in isolated LAs together. It is understood that Regional EA is considering similar initiative. LAs also need to increase Land Drainage resources particularly in recent flooding areas.

GROUP DISCUSSION

Q? There appears to be two tiers of LAs. County Council and Unitary Authorities as tier one and the rest of LAs who are also facing staff shortage. How can slow moving LAs be brought into main stream?

A There needs to be willingness and engagement. Different issues require different approaches. It will take time to get things in place before actions happen. We have to look for good practice and practical examples and solutions. Funding issue needs to be resolved.

Funding is a real issue. It is difficult for LAs to take further actions until it becomes mandatory and funding is available. Implementation of the current recommendations and the new responsibilities outlined in the draft Bill will cost a lot of money.

Q? It is expected from those LAs who do not have expertise to bring resources from EA. Expertise is available in consultancy sector, why not to draw on this expertises?

A With its own duties, EA cannot spread ourselves thin. Expertise can be shared between the LAs via partnerships. They can engage consultants on specific issues or if one LA has more resources than others, they can bring them together in partnership to achieve critical mass.

LAs have to bring relevant departments currently working in isolation together.

An integrated approach is needed to bring planners and engineers together. Availability of funding on short term basis is a problem. In absence of long term commitment, the expertise and good staff resources are lost. Better consistent funding streams are required.

Q? Many plans have been drawn around predicted 100 year erosion line; however, even properties rated relatively at low risk have disappeared in the sea. Predictions did not prove correct. Is there a Plan B for this?

A This problem will remain with us. The erosion seen now is well beyond what was predicated many years ago. However, predictions are now getting better. Without predictions there will be a huge certainty. Relocation and funding issues should be addressed as a Plan B. The predictions will also be reviewed as we move forward.

Q? There is a doubt that LAs have appropriate funding, equipment and expertise available to react to floods? Apart from sandbags and door guards what are other alternatives for better use of resources?

A Sandbags have a psychological importance, but are not very effective. Alternatives are considered but it is difficult to find suitable temporary flood protection measures that will work for a variety of property types and terrains. More investigation and funding are required to find alternatives.

Q? Why has a holistic long term approach not been considered to tackle the root cause of floods e.g. planning, transport, recycling and use of cars, garden front pavements etc?

A In addition to resolving immediate issues like shopping trolleys etc, there are a number of other long term sustainable initiatives underway including sustainable transport plans etc.

Q? Water companies have become an easy target and the idea of reducing water bills in future holds no ground, what are your views on this?

A Contrary to Pitt review recommendations for integration and partnerships, Ofwat is encouraging Water Companies to adopt private sewers. This will result in fragmentation of drainage in that area. It is not a good long term solution.

Ofwat has been asked to take flood risk seriously, but there is issue of cost. Who bears the cost, whether it is the water company or should local communities buy their own insurance?

- Q? There were consultation questions in the draft Flood and Water Management Bill for delegation of powers between two tiers of LAs. County Councils provide funding and Districts do the planning, shouldn't there be a partnership between those two tiers?
- A Two tiers of LAs have different statutory requirements. Communication between two tiers is vital. Forced legislative requirements may not help; it has to be free open communication.
- Q? One individual can jeopardise the whole area and his/her neighbourhood. How non participating individuals in community involvement initiatives are engaged?
- A It is an issue. Leeds City Council pilot project was free and fully funded. The Council, Defra and the Regional Flood Defence Committee contributions met the full cost of the pilot. Among 70, mainly owner occupied, semi-detached houses, there was only one individual who refused to take up the free offer for unknown reasons. Patient explanation would seem to be the only solution in a case like this. Where the householders have to meet a substantial portion of the cost themselves (the total is typically £2500 - £3500 per house), however, it is understandable that current costs become a formidable barrier. This is a significant cost relative to average household income.
- Q? Are there any stakeholders who have been missed from flood risk issues?
- A: Church Organisations, Business Forums, CBI, Large Property Management Organisations (they have funds available from their insurance companies), Insurance Companies.
- Q? What are the barriers to effective partnership working?
- Data Sharing (Red Tape)
- Sensitivity of Data, Commercial and Legal Concerns, Confidentiality, Costs, No Standard or National Protocol or Format for Data or repository.
- Personal Commitment (attendance at meetings).
- Fear of talking openly in communities about issues and opening the dialogue.
- Q? Is there enough guidance available for stakeholder engagement/partnership building?
- It is all available.
- There is much generic guidance available about partnerships but do we need specific guidance about flood risk partnerships?
- We do not have to wait for the Government to produce guidance; relevant organisations can come together and produce it.