

What's in this issue...

The National Flood Forum works in communities and with partners to support people at risk from flooding, and should flooding occur, to help them recover. Communities lie at the centre of this and throughout this bulletin there are examples of people working to take control of the flooding in their lives, as well as some of the projects we are involved in. Also in this bulletin is a small selection of news items from the flood risk management world; things that we think are particularly important.

With best wishes, The National Flood Forum team

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Community Flood Plan



On Thursday 16th November Bewdley held its first exercise to test the deployment of the temporary flood barriers involving community volunteers and other agencies. A section of the Stourport Road at the junction with Kidderminster Road was closed off for 5 hours while the Environment Agency, Highways Department and the newly trained Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service erected the barriers.

Members of the Town Council, Wribbenhall Residents' Flood Committee and Flood Group volunteers could observe and note areas of improvement for the safe and quick deployment of the barriers in the event of future flooding. More volunteers are needed as many are Wribbenhall residents and in the event of a flood will be needed to safeguard their own family members and property.

If you can help please contact the Town Clerk, Nick Farress on 01299 400157,

email: townclerk@bewdleytowncouncil.org



‘Why choose flood-resilient repair?’

Anyone who has been flooded will understand just how difficult recovery can be. It is possible to make changes to speed up the recovery process in any future flood - one way of doing this is by making your home ‘flood repairable’. People who have already done this find they can get back to normal much more quickly after a flood - typically in days, rather than months. Some of the ideas don’t cost much, especially if you are redecorating or buying things for your home, whether after a flood or at any other time.

As part of the Defra project ‘*Supporting the uptake of low cost resilience*’ our research team held in-depth conversations with 13 householders and small business owners who had already made flood repairable adaptations to their properties. Their experiences, together with information from 18 professionals with extensive knowledge and experience in this area, revealed an ever-expanding list of low cost resilience measures for limiting flood damage. For example, floor coverings such as tiles, some vinyls and resins can survive most floods and just need a good clean before you can move back in. You could make this kind of change next time you are thinking of replacing your carpet or floor covering, or updating your kitchen.

The best choice of measures for any property, of course, depends very much on the type and condition of the building, as well as the type of floods likely to affect it. To achieve the highest levels of resilience, however, we found that specialist advice is usually needed – there are currently no accepted standards indicating that some widely available construction materials are in fact ‘flood resilient’ when used appropriately – for example, water resistant wall boards, which are marketed primarily for use in bathrooms. Incorrectly specified measures can not only be a waste of money but could even lead to increased damage.

In the properties with resilient features that our team studied the majority of the changes had been made as part of post-flood repairs. However, some of the householders we talked to reported they had needed to ‘take control’ of the insurance claim/loss adjusting process in order to bring about these changes – for example, by insisting on a cash settlement. Trying to research alternative repair options in the immediate aftermath of a flood could add to the stress already been experienced, however, so some sensible forward planning can be highly advantageous. To help with this, the project has produced ten illustrated case studies, showing the kind of results that can be achieved, as well as explaining the benefits felt by owners who have suffered subsequent flood events. For example, a homeowner in Cockermouth told us:

“(It’s) now easy to sweep and mop out ... got drying under way in a couple of days.”

Another household in Buckinghamshire experiences combined watercourse and groundwater flooding. The owners chose flood-resilient repair, as resistant remedies (such as door barriers) are not designed for this particular problem:

“You can’t keep the water out, but you can manage the water when it comes in ... so it doesn’t cause damage.”

These videos are available at: <https://floodrepairable.wordpress.com/case-studies/> The same website includes many other sources of advice and guidance on flood repairable approaches.

Jessica Lamond, University of the West of England



We are delighted to hear that we have received Big Lottery Awards for All funding to develop a small network of flood action groups. More in the next bulletin.



‘Our Water’ – Suffolk Community Flood mitigation project

Suffolk County Council (SCC) are trialling a community led project to gather local knowledge on flooding and drainage. The project aims to collect data about local ordinary watercourses and other significant water related features, through simply drawing the location on a map and recording issues associated with flooding which affect the community. The information gathered can then be transferred to Suffolk County Council where the data will be recorded, and then the maintenance roles and responsibilities for the watercourses can be ascertained.

‘Our Water’ is a tool which enables community groups to improve their understanding of local flood risk and possibly help maintain the local watercourses. The project is achieved by walking around a targeted area and noting the location, condition, and other attributes of a watercourse and its features. Volunteers would be provided with basic training of such features and will be supported by SCC throughout the duration of the project.

We would like to involve the community so that they fully understand their local flood risk and so they can support in the mitigation process where needed. The volunteers will be given a pack of equipment for the fieldwork which includes a map of the parish, a handbook, a photo guidebook of watercourse structures and conditions, a record sheet, clipboards and other stationery.

If any parishes in Suffolk are interested in engaging their community in the project please contact me with the following details:

Ben Carter 01473 260456 Ben.Carter@suffolk.gov.uk

NEW PROJECTS – UK FRAMES Day Participants

In November participants from across Denmark, Germany, The Netherlands Belgium and the UK gathered on the banks of the River Trent as part of the Interreg FRAMES project to share their experiences of different approaches to managing flood risk. FRAMES (Flood Resilient Areas by Multi-layEr Safety Approach) aims to reduce the impact of floods from sea, river and extreme rainfall through 13 interlinked projects.

The National Flood Forum is working in Kent and Southwell alongside the Rivers Trust and shortly in Great Yarmouth to deliver community led approaches with a range of partners.

November also saw the start of a new project in Wales, Sustainable Community Engagement Pilots, where the National Flood Forum is working with Collingwood Environmental Planning to test and provide an evidence base for future work with flood risk communities.



The Queen Awards Local Flood Group – Again!

Her Majesty The Queen has honoured a local Flood Protection Group for the second time in two years.



On 23 July the Lord Lieutenant, Lady Darnley, presented the Secretary, Babs Mitcheson, with the British Empire Medal in recognition of her work and that of the Bodenham Flood Protection Group. The Group was formed in 2008 after the 2007 floods which affected many Herefordshire towns and villages. In Bodenham Moor some 40 houses were flooded, with many more garages, conservatories and outhouses damaged. The cost was over £500k in damage to residences alone. Since then, the Group has actively protected the village from flooding by clearing local ditches, drains and culverts and cutting back vegetation to allow the water to flow freely down to the River Lugg.

Babs Mitcheson thanked Lady Darnley for the Award and said that the Flood Protection Group was very much a team effort and, in addition to the work which members do on a regular basis clearing the watercourses, they were to be commended on actively looking out for, helping and supporting one another.

She recalled that the Group had previously been given the Pride of Herefordshire Award in 2011, followed by HM The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2015. For a small self-help group in a rural community, to be given three such awards in just 9 years was, she said, truly amazing.

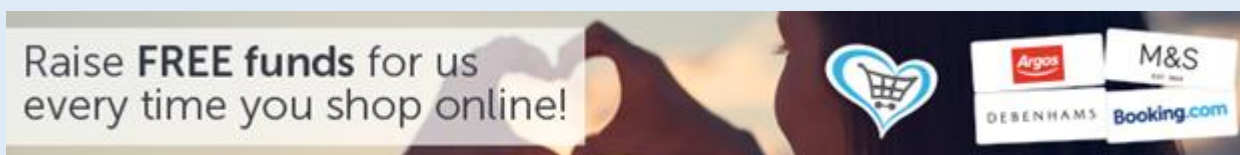
The Award Ceremony was followed by a Garden Party and Barbecue. Also present at the Ceremony were Councillor Bruce Baker, the Councillor, for Hampton Court Ward, and Councillor Brian Willcox, the Chairman of Herefordshire Council, who have both been very supportive of the Group.

SUPPORTING THE NFF BY RAISING FUNDS

Thank you to everyone who signed up to **Giveasyoulive** recently. This is already beginning to generate some much-needed funds to allow us to continue with our work.

Whilst we recognise that not everyone is comfortable giving money to charity, the Just Giving facility allows you to donate to the National Flood Forum every time you shop online, at no cost to you. What is more, we can use the funds to match against some of the other projects described above and double up the value. If enough people sign up, it will make a real difference to the work that we are able to do.

Just go to www.giveasyoulive.com/join/nationalfloodforum or click on the image below to sign up.



National Policy

National Policy

There are currently two big initiatives that could really change people's lives and a new publication on Natural Flood Risk Management.

The National Flood Forum has been pressing Government to undertake a review of the **National Flood Risk Management Strategy**. We have written to the Secretary of State, Michael Gove MP twice and met with the Minister for Flooding Dr Thérèse Coffey MP to press the need for a much more ambitious approach to flood risk management that puts people at the centre. We recently met with Environment Agency and with various partners to argue for a clear, cross Government approach with a vision to match. We started to scope out issues such as "Where do we want to be in 25, 50 and 100 years' time and what are the most important things to do in the next 5 years?" As well as the work of Environment Agency, local authorities and other Risk Management Authorities, the approach needs to consider the contributions from planning and development, housing, critical infrastructure, transport, riparian management, contingency planning, etc., taking account of development and climate change. We will keep you updated.

25-year Environment Plan – The Government's 25-year Environment Plan is finally due to be published very soon. We understand that this will provide a framework for detailed policies. How will agriculture develop beyond Brexit, for example? There is an opportunity to help make a long-term difference to our flood risk.

Evidence pack for Natural Flood Risk Management – A huge new resource has just been published at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-natural-processes-to-reduce-flood-risk> for Flood Action Groups undertaking natural flood risk management work, or just thinking about it. It consists of the evidence base needed for grant applications and licenses, a literature review, a mapping tool showing where different interventions might be most useful and lots of case studies.

Rivers Trust

The National Flood Forum has just signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Rivers Trust aimed at developing collaboration so that we use the combined (and different) skills of both organisations to best effect.

National Flood Forum supporting Flood & Coast 2018

The third edition of the Flood & Coast Conference & Exhibition will be taking place 20-22 March 2018 at the Telford International Centre.

National Flood Forum are again supporting this important event with Chief Executive, Paul Cobbing sitting on the Conference Advisory Committee, which plays a vital role in ensuring the event meets the needs of the whole flood & coastal risk management community.

Paul tells us...

"Flood & Coast is a forum in which people can influence the big issues in flooding, such as the Government's 25-year environment plan and the Environment Agency's flood and coastal risk management strategy. It is also a chance to put across community perspectives on what flooding feels like and the things that really matter to people."

Please visit www.floodandcoast.com for more information.

FIRST MAM FOR WOLVERLEY FLOOD FORUM

Wolverley Flood Forum hosted their first MAM in November with representatives from Worcestershire County Council Flood Risk Management Team, Severn Trent Water, Environment Agency, and North Worcestershire Water Management. The group wanted to create partnership working with these agencies to help mitigate their flood risk and work towards making Wolverley more resilient. They were extremely grateful to all those attended the evening meeting that they went the extra mile to make flood related cupcakes to enjoy before and during the meeting.



Christmas is getting nearer, please support us through



Graham Bocking's petition:

Reduce the risk of flooding by halting major developments on our floodplains

We ask the government to act responsibly regarding safety to new and existing communities and show more environmental foresight. We ask for legislation to be passed that forbids strategic development allocations from being situated within all flood zones or areas that impact upon them.

With the ever-increasing impact of climate change, it is becoming more important than ever to avoid man-made disasters. Once the floodplain is developed, there is no turning back." The 2007 Pitt report said, "wherever possible, new development should not take place in flood risk areas and that there should be a strong presumption against building on the floodplain." This is currently not always adhered to where non-flood plain options could be made available hence the requirement for legislation

Sign this petition by going to the Gov. website <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/204649>

Stanstead Flood Working Group – Clearance of Ugley Brook



THE TEAM : Steve Betts Queens Head Pub, Cllr. John Hudson, Iain Pottinger, Cllr. Peter Jones, Peter Beattie, Cllr. John O'Brien and Mary Lamprell

Ruth Clifford, Parish Clerk, got in touch to tell us about this important project of keeping Ugley Brook clear of debris.

When Ugley Brook is full of water and flowing very fast debris is washed down the Brook and collects in the grille at the mouth of the culvert, if it remains there it prevents flood water flowing through the culvert; the banks of the Brook are then breached and Gall End Lane and Lower Street flood. The village flooded badly in the lower section and since then they have been working with the Environment Agency to hopefully come up with a long-term solution to this problem.

The Group have been undertaking self-help to keep the Ugley Brook clear of debris. In one of the photos, you will see the "trash screen" which can get clogged up with debris and, if that happens, the risk of flooding is very high, and in the second photo how clear the trash screen is after the Volunteers hard work...



Letter to the Chancellor...

Faith Cole sent this email to the Chancellor Philip Hammond regarding Budget Representation...

Dear Philip Hammond MP

I am connected with Cumbria Rivers Authority Governance Group which represents flooded Communities across Cumbria and incorporates the Farming Community as well. Some of our group Chair Flood Action Groups, represent flooded Communities on Catchment Management Groups, Cumbria Strategic Flood Partnership, and the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee too.

With the Government set to publish its next Budget on 22/11/17 we feel that it is imperative that you consider carefully the fact that record breaking rainfall caused by climate change alongside the lack of maintenance of assets over the years means that 1 in 6 properties across England are now at risk of flooding.

With main links to Scotland threatened during Storm Desmond and therefore connection through Cumbria to Stranraer with main connection to Northern Island and EU border, planning for the future is crucial. Some repairs to critical infrastructure are still being carried out across our region almost two years on since Storm Desmond. The whole of Cumbria's drainage structure needs to be restored to functioning capacity. However, with no adequate flood protection still in place, most Communities remain in exactly the same vulnerable position as before.

We are deeply concerned by the lack of investment in flood defences and would urge the Government, not only to reinstate the monies promised to Cumbria following Storm Desmond, but also to increase the overall Budget considerably to create a Country that protects all Britons from flooding with complete fairness and equality and without penalising poorer and more rural Communities.

It is frustrating to see the Government continually being forced to respond to flooding disasters reactively and showing no long term ambition or plan. Flooding is a major threat to the economy with Storm Desmond alone costing more than £5 Billion. It is clear that more needs to be done in terms of prevention. Cost cutting on defences is a false economy and those at risk need to see this Government taking flooding more seriously and understanding the negative impact it has on people's lives. The UK is currently the 5th largest economy in the world and yet this Government fails to protect its citizens effectively with many reduced to living in third world conditions following floods.

It is important to note that Cumbria has suffered some of the most severe repeated flooding over the last few years, and not only has there been a loss or damage to personal possessions and property, but there has been higher occurrences of those suffering from mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, depression and PTSD. The number of extreme flood events endured means that one's ability to cope is severely diminished and the personalisation, privacy, and safe haven of one's home is destroyed.

The depths of the flood waters entering people's homes in Cumbria means that the scale of the reinstatement works can be overwhelming. During the lengthy recovery period normality and routine are suspended. Many children's education was severely disrupted, and with access to healthcare already an issue here, it was horrifying that one of our main hospitals for the County had to switch to an emergency generator and all routine operations and appointments were cancelled.

Many People across Cumbria have not returned to experiencing higher levels of wellbeing before another flood is upon them. Some constantly check river levels and feel physically sick every time it rains hard, which can be often here. Sadly, relationships are put under enormous strain and unfortunately many fall apart. There has been an increase in flood victims taking anti-depressants, sleeping tablets, and turning to drink, and substance misuse.

It must also be recognised that Cumbria has a 'super-ageing' population with 1 in 4 people over the age of 65. They are particularly vulnerable when flooded, with reports of exploitation during the reinstatement process, and sadly some have lost their coveted independence. Further to this the stress can exacerbate illnesses and unfortunately hasten their deaths.

Continued

Sadly, we hear of distressed elderly people trying to carry belongings upstairs every time it rains hard, which is an unacceptable state to be in.

A huge stressor is the devastating impact that flooding has on economic wellbeing. With reports of property sales at 60% of their pre-Desmond value resulting in a significant loss of equity, or possible negative equity, and of course with many unable to sell. A significant reduction in property value will impact taxation on sales and the loss of equity has a knock-on effect on beneficiaries paying taxation on any inheritance.

Climate change is not just the fault of those who have been flooded but it seems that flood victims are the ones paying the price. It should also be recognised that some across the U.K. are oblivious to the fact that their property is flood free because fortunately for them investment has been made to effectively protect them.

It also needs to be pointed out that there is a clear North/South divide when it comes to expenditure on flood defences. We would never wish to say that any Community should be without defences. However, it is a fact that 60% of the current flood defence budget is to be spent on London and the South East when they only account for 32% of England's population. The current cost benefit formula is totally unfair and not fit for purpose. The capping at market values on properties which are obviously more expensive in London and the South East desperately requires a counter mechanism which takes into account the vulnerability and number of severe events endured by those in more rural, less wealthy areas as well.

Local Authorities have pushed property level resilience which is important but can often be futile here with flood doors currently manufactured to protect homes and businesses from up to 900mm of water, when floods here can exceed this level significantly. Natural Flood Management (NFM) can be beneficial in some areas and may encourage wildlife and biodiversity, but again in Cumbria these measures do not offer adequate protection. Following a comprehensive review of the scientific evidence commissioned by Oxford Martin School, experts found that NFM works best in minor floods and would therefore not provide defence against the floods experienced here.

As with the residents of Grenfell Tower prior to the devastation that impacted their Community their pleas for help fell on deaf ears. When will the Government of this Country begin to take the safety of all its citizens more seriously whether it be a threat of fire or flood?

There is a lot of anger, misery, and frustration across Cumbria with many demanding to know why this Government continues to ignore the plight of those who have been flooded multiple times to extreme levels. This Government needs to consider that flooding would have been far less severe and costly had a more realistic Budget for flood defences been set many years ago along with a more robust maintenance regime. Finally, the Government's current system for allocating flood defences is seriously flawed and has created an ongoing social injustice crisis that needs to be addressed and put right within this next budget.

Your sincerely

Faith Cole

Cumbria Rivers Authority Governance Group Representative

Derwent River Catchment Coordinator

Vice Chair Workington Flood Action Group

2018

We are looking forward to the National Flood Form Conference that will take place in early 2018, further information to come.

The Flood and Coast Conference will take place on the 22nd and 23rd March 2018 at the Telford International Centre, UK. More information can be found at <http://www.floodandcoast.com/>

Contact the National Flood Forum

01299 403 055

email@ info@floodforum.org.uk