

*Editors' Note:* Well, it's rolled around quickly, again: Christmas is nearly upon us! For many this is a time to look forward to, to celebrate and to enjoy the company of friends and family. However, for some families, this Christmas will *mark one year after last year's dreadful winter floods*. For those who are only recently home, or who are still waiting to return, at the National Flood Forum our thoughts are especially with you. If you are worried, concerned or frightened, please call our helpline on 01299 403055. We hope that this year you can have the Christmas you've dreamed about.



land we develop on and an update on the National Flood Forum's survey.

As we reflect on 2014 we can begin to ponder about 2015, which looks like it will be extremely busy in the flood risk management world: we have the upcoming *general election*, which we hope will bring optimism for flood victims; we look forward to hearing more about how SUDs will be implemented; and, of course, our fingers are crossed that *Flood RE* will finally be in put in place. Now that'd be a Christmas present I wouldn't mind waiting for!

Wishing you a peaceful Christmas and best wishes for a Happy New Year.

*With warm regards this Yuletide,  
Hannah and all at the NFF xxx*

This last edition of the bulletin for 2014 includes an article from the Littlehampton Flood Action Group, more information about the flood risk management plans consultations, a message about respecting the

## National Flood Forum Survey Results

In August, September and October 2014, a public online survey was undertaken. The purpose was to gather a sense of the key issues affecting people who have flooded and those at risk. In particular, this was an opportunity for people to tell us what they thought the solutions to flood risk are. In addition, respondents were asked what specific, practical things different organisations could do differently or better.

A number of key messages emerge from the analysis:

- Listen to and work with local communities properly;
- Coordinate flood risk management activity much better;
- Quicker action is needed; it often takes far too long to bring projects to life

There are also a huge number of suggestions as to what the Government, its agencies, local government and society at large might do to improve flood risk management.

We'd like to thank all those who took part in the survey. If you'd like to see the results in more detail, please follow [this link to our website](#).



Thank you for participating! You're helping us to shape the priorities of flood risk management for the future.

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in the bulletin are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the National Flood Forum.*

Supporting and representing flood risk communities

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## Littlehampton Flood Action Group's Story so Far: An Inspiration for Others

It all started when Heather gave one of her talks to the Littlehampton Civic Society, some of whose members had been flooded out in 2012. We have really only been active for a little more than a year; still just a handful of people set on tackling our ageing drainage system and the mysteries of groundwater arising in an expanding urban area.

Over several meetings held with residents of Littlehampton we got some potential helpers and a whole slew of "concerns" to set before our initial multi-agency meeting, from which we discovered who's who, who does what and who does not. Heather and Ruth Webb urged us on by showing that most groups have a small membership but can get things done by working in partnership with the agencies and authorities that manage flood risk.

Our Operation Watershed moneys from the County Council enabled us to attend local events handing out information and advice, learning of more flood concerns, getting the odd offer of help in an emergency and raising flood awareness. We made up a home-produced A6 list of the local emergency phone numbers with our name and logo on it, popular enough for us to seek funding for a professional print run.

The same source has provided something towards the setting up of a website: [littlehampton-floodaction.org.uk](http://littlehampton-floodaction.org.uk), which is more or less operational, save for a voluntary geek to man it.

Another grant from County has just funded the sinking of 3 boreholes to monitor groundwater levels close to properties with flood affected cellars, we ourselves will be doing the reading and recording.

In partnership with the Littlehampton Civic Society

(a registered charity) we obtained a grant from Santander which has provided flood sacks for residents of the west bank of the Arun, who have been subjected to tidal surging when spring tides coincide with stormy weather.

Another cause we espoused is 'Rain Gardens'. To our delight the local councils and the academy are also very enthusiastic. We will soon have the first one, helping a stretch of roadside gully cope with these increasingly heavy downpours.

Our ongoing scheme is the formation of a network of Flood Watchers whose purpose is to monitor the drainage system in Littlehampton and report information back to the Flood Action Group; reporting issues on their quality status and/or whether there are any changes that need to be reported back to the appropriate agencies and authorities.

We are now at the point where we are in the beginning stages of developing a 'Littlehampton Resilience Plan', with the support of the National Flood Forum. The purpose is that the Flood Action Group and associated volunteers can use our local knowledge to begin responding to flooding events before it reaches an emergency situation.

Every area has its own priorities but we hope this report is an encouragement to those just starting out.

Fancy sharing your group's story?

Email:

[hannah.tankard@floodforum.org.uk](mailto:hannah.tankard@floodforum.org.uk)

Your Thoughts...Your Opinions...Your Letters...Your Thoughts...Your Opinions...Your Letters...

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## Failing to Plan...

By Phiala Mehring (Loddon Valley Residents Association)

Tis' the season for constant rain. Well, that is what it feels like. Very quickly we are back to high water table levels and nowhere for the most recent rain to go other than quickly into local rivers (hopefully not through someone's lounge). With so many impermeable surfaces the 'roof to river' time for rain is very short. This is a self-inflicted problem which increases flood risk.

So planning is key: if we are to avoid increasing flood risk, then it must be considered a vital and key component of planning. We must learn from our mistakes.

Ideally flood risk should be assessed at the pre-application stage of the planning process and most definitely embedded into any outline application. ***If we fail to plan to mitigate flood risk then we are planning to flood.***

If you talk to any member of the flooding community they will probably have a plethora of things they wish would change in planning, starting with:

(1) *The Flood Risk Assessment*: This MUST be done at the catchment level. Developments are not independent features, they have water entering and leaving the site in various ways. Without a catchment view how is the water output from a sewage farm factored in? How is the effect of a local river in flood on discharge rates from a development understood and how does this impact both the site and properties downstream? Basically, developments are not island, just like traffic they have large ramifications downstream and water upstream has large ramifications on the flood risk of the site itself.

(2) *Drainage is King*: Without a robust and easily maintained drainage system properties are going



...means planning to flood!

to flood. Full stop. So the prevarication over SUDs at Government level is deeply concerning. But good drainage doesn't just affect the development itself, it affects areas around it. If discharge rates are high (the site produces a lot of surface water) then surrounding areas could flood (yes we are back to catchment...). Drainage should be planned in to determine where the properties should go to optimise drainage. Let's make sure we are planning on having the horse in front of the cart.

(3) *Inappropriate development*: After the winter we have just had why or why are we still developing flood plains? Haven't we learnt that one of the tricks to reducing flood risk is to 'hold the water back'? If we remove flood plains there is nowhere to 'hold the water back'. We seem to be back to catchment....

Considering flood risk at the catchment level is critical and this extends beyond planning new developments. We need to plan river maintenance. We must plan to reintroduce features into rivers which hold back the water (i.e. return rivers to a more natural state). We need to invest more into understanding the impact that farming has on flooding so we can plan how to manage the interaction between the two. We need to plan on managing flood risk in a much more holistic manner.

So I would like to change the adage from my third paragraph: ***if we fail to plan flood risk management from the catchment level down, then we are planning to flood.*** Doesn't trip of the tongue easily but is a good mantra to live by if we are planning on not flooding.

## Community CCTV to Prevent Blockages

A community at risk of flooding in Bedworth have been successful in securing funding to install a CCTV camera on a trash screen prone to blockages. They were selected as part of the Defra Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder Project to work with the National Flood Forum and other authorities within Warwickshire. The community previously used torches to inspect the trash screen for blockages during heavy periods of rain to ensure it was free flowing. Since the installation of the CCTV residents can view live images which are posted every 4 hours on twitter or via a website. They are able to do this from the comfort of their own homes day or night.

The group, mainly residents within Delamere Road, are very happy with the outcome. They were badly flooded during December 2008 and have since worked to limit their risk of flooding. Tom Gay, chair of the Flood Action Group stated "The camera is working and our group view it regularly, even though we haven't had very much rain and the river level has been steady for a couple of weeks."

The camera has been installed working in partnership with The Environment Agency. The agency uses these cameras around the West Midlands to monitor trash screens for blockages, allowing resources to be more effectively managed. During an emergency the Environment Agency can request photos from the camera as frequently as needed. The project has highlighted successful

partnership working within the area and has included the National Flood Forum (NFF), the Environment Agency (EA), Warwickshire County Council (WCC), Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Severn Trent Water, County Highways and Coventry Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience (CSW). Capital funding for the camera was through a grant from Warwickshire County Council; however, ongoing maintenance costs and data charges are being continued by the Environment Agency.



An image of the CCTV footage that the Bedworth group are using to monitor blockages at the trash screen.

There are a number of these cameras around the West Midlands and these are accessible to view via the website: <http://www.vision-link.co.uk/community-home.php>. These can also be followed on twitter, using the postcode of the site.

### Policy World in Brief

Three new policy reports have been issued in the last few days:

- The [National Flood Emergency Framework for England](#);
- Consultation responses on [Sustainable Drainage Systems: changes to the planning system](#)
- [Flood Re](#), the proposed household insurance scheme on flood risk.

All are directly relevant to people at risk of flooding.

### We're still looking for your opinions...

Don't forget that the National Flood Forum is calling for your input into our manifesto for the 2015 election. We are still looking for what you think should be the focus for flood risk communities. We are keen to hear more of your views as soon as possible. Opinions received to date are helping us to help influence flood risk policy to benefit the communities at risk of flooding.

To take part in this survey, please use the link below: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/NFFManifesto](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/NFFManifesto) or email [paul.cobbing@floodforum.org.uk](mailto:paul.cobbing@floodforum.org.uk).

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## Is your group affiliated to the National Flood Forum?

You might be wondering why you would consider affiliating. Here are six top reasons, in no particular order:

1. **It's free!** Not much nowadays is free but we believe communities should not be charged for our services.
2. National Flood Forum will be there to support the group throughout its **lifecycle**.
3. Groups are able to swap **knowledge** and **information** with other groups around the country.
4. Your group will be informed of any consultations / surveys / **funding** that becomes available.
5. You will receive the **bulletin** and other email updates throughout the year.
6. You are part of a **wider collective**, which gives the National Flood Forum more say at policy level about what flood risk communities really want to better enable us to **campaign** on your behalf.

So, if you're not affiliated but interested in joining the National Flood Forum, please contact us on: 01299 403055.

## Open Data Update

A message from the EA about their recent changes in public access (incl. for commercial use) to open data so that individuals and groups can better protect themselves against flooding:

We are releasing three datasets under the [Open Government Licence](#):

**1. Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea:** A map showing the likelihood of flooding from rivers and the sea in England, considering the location, height and condition of 175,000 defences. Results show the annual chance of flooding - Very Low, Low, Medium and High. Click [here](#) to find out more.

**2. Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea – Properties in Areas at Risk:** A database that uses the Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea product with Ordnance Survey data to assign one of the flood likelihood categories to properties simply based on the likelihood of flooding to the area the property is within. Click [here](#) to find out more.

**3. Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea – Postcodes in Areas at Risk:** A database that uses the Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Sea product with Ordnance Survey data and Royal Mail data to show the number of properties in each postcode area that are in each of the four flood risk categories. Click [here](#) to find out more.

## Live in Wales or England? A Gentle Reminder...

Natural Resources Wales (NRW), like the Environment Agency (EA), are consulting on flood risk management plans (FRMP), jointly with the EA for the Severn and the Dee River Basin Districts but independently for the Western Wales. The consultation is running until the **31st January 2015**; to comment on the NRW's consultation please follow this link: [naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/splash?orig=/about-us/Consultations/our-own-consultations/](http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/splash?orig=/about-us/Consultations/our-own-consultations/)

Through this consultation NRW are seeking your views on our proposed actions to address flood risk from main rivers, reservoirs and the sea across Wales. The plans set out the conclusions of what is at risk of flooding, along with the objectives and measures for addressing the risk.

So, that means for both the EA and NRW consultations on FRMP there are less than **SEVEN WEEKS LEFT** to get in your responses. You can find the EA FRMP consultation at: [gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-flood-risk-management-plans](http://gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-flood-risk-management-plans). Go on; act now before it's too late...

Don't forget, you can also comment on the river basin management plans before 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015:

- EA: [gov.uk/government/consultations/update-to-the-draft-river-basin-management-plans](http://gov.uk/government/consultations/update-to-the-draft-river-basin-management-plans).
- NRW: [naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/about-us/Consultations/our-own-consultations/consultation-on-the-proposed-update-to-wales-river-basin-management-plans/?lang=en](http://naturalresourceswales.gov.uk/about-us/Consultations/our-own-consultations/consultation-on-the-proposed-update-to-wales-river-basin-management-plans/?lang=en)

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