

National Flood Forum Bulletin



#action4floods

October 2015

Editor's Note: Hello all, Hope you have not been too scared with all the Halloween activities and fireworks! We would like to introduce ourselves as the new editors. Hannah is still busy working with the National Flood Forum though but we are trying out our editing skills for now.

Don't forget if you need help or support you can call our helpline on 01299 403055. This issue includes an article on a group's visit to see natural flood management in practice, a flood awareness day, various updates and an introduction to a new member of the NFF team.

Would you like to try out your literary skills by writing a piece for the bulletin? To find out more please email: bulletin@floodforum.org.uk



Sarah and Emily (Photo: NFF)

With best wishes, Emily and Sarah

Introducing Tabitha – Latest Recruit to the NFF!

Hello everyone! I have recently joined the National Flood Forum as a Trainee Community Flood Resilience Project Officer, following a Masters at the University of Exeter in Sustainable Development (Climate Change and Risk Management). I am currently shadowing project officers across the length and breadth of the country, learning the ropes and meeting lots of different flood action groups.

I completed my BSc (Hons) Geography degree at Plymouth University, which allowed me to focus on flood risk, human adaptation and the future consequences of climate change. My dissertation for my Masters focused on the role of Flood Wardens in building community resiliency to flood risk.

Throughout my education and personal experiences, I have learnt a great deal about flood risk and the effects it has on local communities. I hope that, through working for the National Flood Forum, I can help local communities build a greater understanding of, and resilience to, flooding issues.



Tabitha Whitcombe (Photo: NFF)

In my spare time I love being in the outdoors. I enjoy walking and running, but my ultimate passion is open water swimming! I swim mainly for my own enjoyment but I have also entered a few charity swims, raising over £400 for the Chestnut Appeal and swimming 2.5 miles continuously!

I'm enjoying my training so far and look forward to working with those communities that are at risk of flooding, alongside my new colleagues at the National Flood Forum.

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

Don't forget! Flood Resilient Communities – a Conference Evaluating the DEFRA Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder

Dates for your diary: Flood Resilient Communities – a conference on **Tuesday 2nd December** which the National Flood Forum are organising in conjunction with CIWEM, Defra and Collingwood Environmental Planning. This will be at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS University, in London.

With Keynote Speaker: Rory Stewart MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs.

Join us in December to...

- Understand how communities can improve their own flood resilience
- Hear about good practice and the very wide range of Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder projects.
- Discuss the key lessons learned from the projects.
- Learn how Risk Management Authorities can engage effectively with communities as part of managing risk
- Meet with the communities and discuss the details of their projects in the marketplace sessions

Who should attend?

- Risk Management Authority staff
- Local authorities – incl. LLFAs, resilience teams, CC adaptations teams and planners
- Engineers and contractors
- Regulators; academics
- NGOs & community groups
- Water companies
- Consultants, incl. those preparing capital works programmes.

NB. This event has received the approval of The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management and will contribute to your CPD. If you have any questions please contact events@ciwem.org and find out more at ciwem.org/events. For members of community groups affiliated with the National Flood Forum, a reduced delegate rate is available.

We hope to see you there in December!

Defra Pathfinders Film Awards - Your Vote Counts!

We are pleased to announce the launch of the Pathfinders Project Film Competition! The videos produced by some of the 13 Defra Community Pathfinders Projects capture the key events and innovative approaches to community flood risk management taken by the projects.

Please cast taking into account how well the films raise awareness of flooding, the involvement of the community in both the Pathfinder Project and film production, and of course the entertainment value!

The winning video will be announced at the Pathfinder Conference on 2nd December by Mary Dhonau. This conference will be the first opportunity for Risk Management Authorities to hear the key lessons learned from the Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder projects on working with communities to improve flood resilience.

Which video will get your vote? Watch them at <http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk/video-competition/>

#pathfinder #floodingfilms #votenow

A Visit to the Stroud Rural Flood Alleviation Scheme.

By Phil Wragg - Chairman, Shipston Area
Flood Action Group



Example of the Forest based defences.
(Photo: Grace Martin - NFF)

Members of the Environment Agency (from various catchments), Shipston Area Flood Group and the National Flood Forum attended an event hosted by Stroud District Council to learn more about Natural Defence Approaches.

The day started with an overview of the project which covers all main tributaries of the River Frome around Stroud, characterised by very deep forested valleys above, named the Cotswold Ridge, with fields sloping down into the valleys. There is substantial run off from these which adds to the problem of flash flooding of the watercourses through the valleys and into the River Frome through Stroud. The entire scheme/s uses Natural Flood Defence systems (NFDs) in a catchment area of 230 sq km.

The main 2 systems used were leaky woody dams to slow the flow in the forested valleys and field work compromised of low rise bunds along contour lines at field bottoms to create dry ponds. The type of NFD's used is dependent on soil type and geology but decision making also benefits from referring to flood risk and geology maps along with simply talking with landowners to focus on where flooding happens!

This project was funded by Stroud District Council and matched capital funding from Gloucester County Council and RFCC (Regional Flood and Coastal Committee). Stroud District Council are very enlightened with active councillors and have strong community support with a dedicated project officer, Chris Uttley. They also have support from the Environment Agency with Brian Smith an EA Project Officer whose involvement has aided the process.

Already the schemes installed have substantially exceeded the initial objectives at a fraction of the original budget. They shunned feasibility studies and evidence based justification (as "there can be no evidence without a scheme!"). So Stroud decided what to do and then just got on with it!

We looked at 2 schemes in the Slad Valley near Painswick which has high levels of flash flooding - "like a Cotswolds version of Boscastle"! There are also other schemes in other tributaries but we didn't see these.

1) FOREST BASED.

The landowner here is the National Trust. Large and small leaky dams have been installed plus partially buried log diversions to feed streams into available 'bowls' for water storage.

10 separate schemes have been done with maybe 100 interventions' in total. These cover the entire watercourse where they can and the total cost was only £15k though the wood was free and the National Trust also provided the equipment needed.

The theory is that an aggregation of small improvements can achieve a successful approach, or in simpler terms, 'every little helps'. Wood came largely from coppicing existing trees and was placed across the water course in what appeared a haphazard rather than carefully engineered manner, although the trees were staked, albeit often at angles rather than square across the stream. The trunk/branch length needs to be a minimum of 2.5 times the channel width too.

This is quite different from more structurally engineered approaches and has the advantage of being easier and quicker, thus cheaper to install as most interventions did not need heavy equipment.

Fencing the water course using scheme monies is recommended as it keeps animals out of the watercourse where they can cause a lot of damage and generally improves the basic farm infrastructure. If fencing takes land out of use though, there could be a loss of grant income for the landowner, which would need to be recovered perhaps from additional grant/s for flood alleviation.

A Visit to the Stroud Rural Flood Alleviation Scheme.

2) FIELD BASED

These were on clay soil pasture fields atop the Cotswold Ridge above the Slad Valley. Here they have put in 7 pairs of swales/bunds along contour lines to create dry ponds for run-off water storage, both on down slopes and across the bottom of fields. These were about 1/2m high with a gentle rise and fall so that farm machinery is not hindered. The tops were compacted clay and then re-seeded. The pasture then recovers and comes back into full use. It took one man with a digger just 4 days to do these at £250/day plus £100 for seed!!! In times of heavy rain these ponds will hold back '000's of gallons of water which will then slowly drain away. An additional suggestion was to look at field access gates. They are often at the lowest part of a field and simply act as a water/sediment funnel onto the roads. Moving a field gate and putting a swale above it could make a huge difference to run off and result in less mud on the road. Another good example of thinking outside the box!



Visit at Stroud Rural Flood Alleviation Scheme. (Photo: Grace Martin - NFF)

There are many other things to consider when trying to implement Natural Flood Defence schemes, including what grants/schemes a landowner/farmer may already have in place.

Overall though too much of our current policies are often driven by outdated assumptions and ways of doing things. Attitudes to Natural Flood Defences need to change as they are cheap, flexible, easy to install and help with flooding issues without heavy engineering, which is ideal, especially in rural areas for accessibility reasons and for the aesthetics of the countryside.

This is the closest scheme we have seen to our own catchment and it provides much for our flood group to consider (swales below the head of the river as well as above could be a real possibility), as well as making several useful contacts who have offered ongoing help and advice. In short it was a very worthwhile day!

A short was film commissioned to publicise and demonstrate the work to implement Natural Flood Management with the community & landowners in the Stroud Valleys, Gloucestershire.

You can watch the full film (20mins) at: <http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/environment/rsuds/video.asp>

Or a link to a shorter 3min taster version: <https://vimeo.com/13932142>

Reducing adverse health impacts from flooding and flood risk: A review of the literature and development of questions for further research

A report has been produced by Liverpool John Moores University and Champs Public Health Collaborative Service "Reducing adverse health impacts from flooding and flood risk". This has been produced with support from colleagues of Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council Environmental Health Department.

The report focuses on not just the damage that flooding does to properties but the health impacts on people during and after experiencing flooding. It also suggests actions that could help reduce the impacts and questions to further understanding of local priorities. You can find a copy of this under the "Library and Reports" section of the National Flood Forum's website, titled "flooding-and-health-final-13072015".

Environment Agency – Flood Awareness Campaign

www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy



The first two weeks in November sees the return of the Environment Agency's annual Flood Awareness Campaign.

The Environment agency urges everyone to check their flood risk, to check if you are in an area which received free flood warnings, and to think about and plan what it is that you need to do when flooding happens.

1. Check your flood risk by:

i. visiting the webpage: www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding

ii. emailing the Environment Agency:

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

iii. calling Floodline 0345 988 1188

You'll need to provide the house name or number and postcode for the property of interest, and you'll then find out whether it is at very low, low, medium or high risk.

2. Check if you're eligible for free flood warnings: If you're in an area at risk of flooding you may be able to sign up for the Environment Agency's free Floodline Warnings Service, to receive messages to your home, business, mobile phone or email. You can sign up online at: www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings, or email the Environment Agency or call Floodline.

3. Think about what you need to do when flooding happens.

Many things you can help you to prepare:

- Make a flood plan
- Locate your water stopcock
- Know how to isolate your gas and electricity
- Identify a safe place for you to go should flooding happen
- Don't drive through floodwater
- Check for flood warnings before you travel

Keep an eye out for press releases from the Environment Agency over the next few weeks! (National Flood Forum staff may be making an appearance too!):

Facebook www.facebook.com/environmentagency/

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/envagency>

Environment Agency blog:

<https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/>

DO YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO?



Worldwide Flooding

The past few weeks have seen several countries experience terrible flooding, be that the flash flooding across the southern French coast and elsewhere in Europe, floods associated with Typhoon Koppu affecting South East Asia, and Hurricane Patricia affecting Mexico, the Southern United States and other countries in Central America.

Our most heartfelt condolences go out to all those friends and family members who have lost loved ones. Our thoughts are also with all those now coming to terms with returning to their homes and beginning the difficult process of repairing, rebuilding, and coping with the loss which flooding brings.

As we move into the winter season, I am sure there is no need to remind all of our readers to be mindful of the potential unpredictability of our weather and flood water, and to take appropriate precautions to keep you and each other safe. The Environment Agency Flood Awareness campaign provides some useful resources and advice, do take a look at www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy

Flood Awareness Day with Shifnal Flood Partnership Group

By Bob Haddon (Chairman, Shifnal Flood Partnership Group).

Organising a flood awareness day takes a lot of work, but after holding our first event, I'd definitely recommend it. First we fixed our venue – the local Village Hall, the event was sandwiched between line dancing sessions and a wedding!

Supported by the National Flood Forum in the guise of Thomasin our new support co-ordinator (already proving to be a star in the making) leaflets were printed.

Thomasin would not be beat, she hand delivered these to local residents in the pouring rain and winds. Sarah, also from the National Flood Forum, battled the M6 to join our merry gang on the day! Multi-Agencies were invited, local press and radio informed, our website updated and most importantly coffee, tea and biscuits purchased, we were ready for action!

Shifnal's worst floods came in 2007 and we fully expected that the residents who were affected would be our core visitors but interestingly this was not the case. We had one couple from another village who were interested in setting up their own Flood Group and passers-by who saw our large blue and white banner and wondered what was going on! We also had several residents from Shifnal's new housing developments that had heard that Shifnal had previously been flooded and wanted to learn more.



Members of various agencies and some of the Shifnal Flood Partnership Group. (Photo: Thomasin Sayers – NFF)

There were also a few visitors who wanted to join our Group, local Councillors and one lady who thought we were organisers for Meals on Wheels and wanted to register!

64 interested parties attended our event and we managed to give each of them the dedicated time to listen to their concerns. We met new people from our community who were previously unknown to us. We had achieved what we had hoped for; to meet the wider community and to "spread the word" about flooding. In doing so we may have given ourselves even more challenges, but we've gained even more "eyes and ears" in our fight against flooding.

Sea and River levels – New Site

The current Environment Agency's sea and river levels will be available from the GOV.UK website from the end of September. You can find these at <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/>

The old site on the Environment Agency website will currently run for several weeks until the Environment Agency are confident the new site is operating and delivering what people need.

The Environment Agency coordinate an extensive network of monitoring stations, and these cover all the major rivers in England as well as many smaller rivers with data for over 1,950 monitoring stations. Natural Resources Wales have launched their new river and sea levels site, which will make it easier for users by showing all the gauging stations in cross-border catchments. Go to: www.naturalresources.wales/flooding/alerts-and-warnings

Let us know how user friendly you think the new site is. The Environment Agency and GOV.UK site are welcoming feedback so they can review this on a weekly basis and then will change and update the service based on this. The river levels service has been developed to work with all modern browsers and unfortunately some older browsers, such as Internet Explorer 8, do not have all of the functionality to display the river levels page correctly.

National Flood Forum at the Flood Expo in October 2015



Thomasin Sayers with visitors to the National Flood Forum's Stand at the Flood Expo in London.

(Photo: Amanda Davies – NFF)

Advertised as “The World’s largest event dedicated to finding solutions to widespread flooding”, this took place over 2 days, 14th and 15th October at the ExCel venue in London. The events allows many exhibitors from the property level protection manufacturers and distributors sector to display their products, as well as holding live debates and workshops with various speakers involved in flood risk management.

And of course the National Flood Forum was there to champion the communities that we support!



Amazing Grace!

From running around supporting flood action groups to running half marathons, the National Flood Forum's Grace Martin has successfully completed the Birmingham Half Marathon recently!

Grace is currently working with flood action groups that suffer from flash flooding from the Rivers and Severn and Wye and their tributaries. Grace has been previously based in Swindon working on 1 of the Defra funded Pathfinder projects as well as supporting a variety of flood action groups in the south of the country.

Warwickshire County Council Local Flood Strategy out for consultation.

Warwickshire County Council is now undertaking Phase 2 of the consultation for the 2015 Warwickshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, and are looking for comments and constructive feedback from local residents. The Council Flood Team were out and about across the county between 12th and 16th of October with the support of the National Flood Forum, to provide advice and support on a range of issues and to discuss the strategy in person.

Comments are warmly welcomed, the closing date for the consultation is 4th December 2015. You can download the strategy and make comment from this website:

<https://askwarks.wordpress.com/2015/01/09/local-flood-risk-management-strategy-consultation/>

If you have any questions please email the Flood Risk team at flooding@warwickshire.gov.uk.



Warwickshire County Council Flood Team and the National Flood Forum in Rugby this month.

(Photo: Warwickshire County Council)

Supporting and representing flood risk communities