

Editor's note: This edition is largely dedicated to reflections on the conference we hosted last month where we addressed the challenge of planning, development and flooding. *Are we planning to flood?* certainly exercised our 200+ delegates and our speakers got under the skin of the issue. Here we present the post-conference feedback and discuss what has happened since.

With conferences in mind, we're also participating at Flood & Coast 2017, the flagship event convened by the Environment Agency. We've helped coordinate part of the event to ensure community voices are given a platform. The exhibition and seminar programme are free to attend and we would encourage you to join us if you can.

We're also pleased to give space to submissions from local community activities and would welcome more in future editions. If you have any ideas or feedback, please send them to bulletin@floodforum.org.uk

ARE WE PLANNING TO FLOOD?

Reflections on the conference, By Lucy Scarborough, National Flood Forum

As we take stock of our conference, and the subsequent busy period in Westminster and around the country, it's timely to think about what we learnt from *Are we planning to flood?* and consider the big question: What next?

As a charity supporting those at the grassroots, we were delighted to see so many Flood Action Groups and community representatives at the conference. It's the best attendance we've seen from communities which just goes to show the theme of the event clearly hit the right note with the people we seek to support.

Such a topical and, frankly sometimes emotive, issue really got people going. Indeed, it was refreshing to read in another blog about our event that one delegate broke his usual rule of always asking a question at a conference because he wanted to hear the concerns of the various Flood Action Groups present.

"It was refreshing to spend a conference speaking to the flooded rather than fellow flood risk professionals. To re-invigorate occasionally jaded professional interests by putting faces to the real world situations we are trying to manage."

Precisely the point. People on the ground have the knowledge and the expertise, but too often feel unheard and powerless. We hope *Are we planning to flood?* gave people the chance to have their voices heard and to challenge, raise questions and use the networking opportunities to discuss their views.

The day was crammed with back-to-back presentations but we hope that by keeping them short, we maintained a momentum throughout the day. Some of the key themes seemed to be:

- An urgency to act now to address the challenge of climate change and avoid people being 'locked in' to future flood misery.

Continued...

Are we planning to flood? Reflections on our conference

- The hollowing out of the planning system at the cost of people's right to feel safe in their homes.
- The frustration of residents who feel more action could be taken to maintain and manage water in their neighbourhoods.
- The presumption to build takes precedence.
- A willingness and recognition that collaboration is key but a question mark remains over how this actually works in practice.
- A need for a national strategy to tackle flood risk.
- An understanding of the ambition required to meet the challenges we face, particularly in light of the Flood Re deadline in 2039.

Big issues, with some chinks of opportunity and positivity in the mix too:

1. SuDs can work. We recognize there are areas where they don't, but also, they only focus on the footprint. However, schemes are happening and we all have a part to play.
2. Developers are beginning to listen in some areas, such as Shifnal. There are still challenges ahead but at least this local Flood Partnership Group has a place at the table.
3. Flood Action Groups can collectively have a voice and share common concerns, as in the case of West Sussex.
4. There is a growing recognition that these issues affect people all over the country. You are not alone.
5. There are lots of organisations who are potential partners who will work with us.

What has happened since the conference and what next?

- The NFF supported a group of flood action groups from Cumbria to present to the Efra select committee. They made a really powerful and passionate case for action, promoting the need for communities to be listened to and actively involved in shaping their futures, using their knowledge and skills in combination with the technical expertise of professional organisations. Amongst the topics discussed was the need for a long term, adaptive approach to flood risk management, supported by the planning system, as well as action now to deliver quick wins.
- The NFF has already met with Defra officials to press the case for action and meetings are planned with many of the organisations that presented at the conference
- The NFF submitted a consultation response to the National Infrastructure Commission pointing out that flood risk management is part of our national infrastructure and that we need a long term national strategy to invest and maintain it. It also submitted case studies for meetings with ministers on SuDS. A submission is being developed for the Efra Select Committee Post Legislative Scrutiny.
- A great deal of evidence was presented at the conference, but we need to consider what is really going to make a difference and to set about collecting it with your help. We will be developing this over the next few weeks and discussing with partners how we might turn this in to reality.

In summary...*Are we planning to flood?* was a fabulous first step, but only a first step and we all have much more work to do. Let's keep the issue alive and continue the discussion. Your views are always welcome. Please email bulletin@floodforum.org.uk



By Paul Cobbing, CEO, National Flood Forum



What a wonderful conference! Thanks to all the speakers and the delegates who really participated with enthusiasm, *Are we Planning to Flood?* was our best conference yet. Our sponsors got in to the spirit of the day as well and really helped make the event a success.

The day confirmed that people at risk of flooding consider that planning and development is a really serious issue. People worry about increased risks of being flooded and the impact on their lives, together with the trauma that it brings. People are concerned that their knowledge about their local area is often ignored, despite their herculean efforts, and that their skills, which sometimes outstrip those of the agencies involved, are simply not taken in to account. People struggle to be heard.

As I said at the conference, this was the first step in what may be a long haul. So, what next?

We certainly need to give communities more opportunities to express how they feel, perhaps through conferences and workshops, but also through our bulletin, on social media and by you sharing your thoughts with us. We will need to continue to reflect the things that people are most concerned about.

We also need to build an evidence base about some of the issues, but in doing so we will need to be specific. We need to work out exactly where we can have the greatest effect and following the conference have been talking to other organisations about their views and what they are working on. We may ask communities to participate in specific pieces of work to help build the evidence, to contribute to case studies or research that we can place before policy makers.

We will need to work in partnership with other organisations to tackle the challenges ahead. We already have good relationships with many of them, but it will require collaboration and coordination, if we are to succeed.

We are always interested in hearing from people about what they think is important, so do get in contact.

Are we planning to flood? What you told us about the conference

By Jack Southon, JBA Consulting

It sounds like it should be the start of a bad joke – what do you get if you put a Flood Modeller, an Emergency Planner, and the Lead for Flood Resilience in a room together? (answers on a post card please). But these three roles represent the three JBA staff members who attended this year's [National Flood Forum \(NFF\) conference](#) on Wednesday 1 February 2017.

Despite their different backgrounds and professional interests, all were equally impressed with the range of speakers contributing to this year's NFF conference. The diversity of our staff however was nothing when compared to the range of backgrounds of the other attendees.

Diverse range of attendees: This was the first NFF conference I have attended and I found the mix of attendees, particularly those from Local Flood Action Groups, really added to the level of the debate. There was occasionally something of the pantomime about the audience's response to the speakers, with cheers of 'hear-hear' ringing out frequently in response to the popular and provocative in equal measure. But where else would the Chairs and members of various Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCC), Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) officers, flood wardens and local action groups get to engage so readily.

Listening is key: I have a rule that if you attend a conference you should always ask a question – but on Wednesday I gladly broke that rule to hear the concerns of the various Flood Action Groups present. It was refreshing to spend a conference speaking to the flooded rather than fellow flood risk professionals. To re-invigorate occasionally jaded professional interests by putting faces and stories to the real world situations we are trying to manage. I think I only spoke to one other consultant during the course of the whole day as I was too busy listening to and learning from residents of flooded neighbourhoods, Local Authority Offices and Flood Wardens who were freely sharing their experiences.

Highlight of the day: Amongst all the fine speakers a particular highlight for me was Dr Hugh Ellis' presentation, looking at how English Local Plans are responding to the challenge of Climate Change drawing on the Town and Country Planning Association's (TCPA) report '[Planning for Climate Change](#)'. Not only was the presentation an excellent and thought provoking insight into the recent study, but Hugh was on particularly fine form in his appraisal of some of the critical issues we face as an industry and a society going forward. I would recommend the TCPA report, or at the very least the Executive summary documents, as essential reading for anyone and if you see Hugh listed to speak at any further events then he is well worth the price of admittance.

The value of a different perspective: In conclusion, a very worthwhile conference that I have gained a lot from. Not an occasion to meet-up with the same old industry faces and congratulate ourselves on how well we are doing. Rather an opportunity to meet new friends who will hold our feet to the fire to make sure we are doing our utmost to ensure we are not re not 'Planning to Flood'.



Are we planning to flood? What you told us about the conference

By Phiala Mehring, Loddon Valley Residents Association

Often the best thing about conferences is the networking. And the networking opportunities at this conference were fantastic but it was the presentations and the thinking it made me do that made it a 'must attend' event.

Daniel Johns (CCC) gave a very stark presentation about the threats of climate change. One that I think all planners, LPA's, developers and councillors should see. The big take out for me is that if the country doesn't change planning so it takes flooding more seriously then **we are locking in future generations** into the misery of flooding. We are setting them up for a fall, well a flood. And that doesn't just have hugely adverse impacts on the people flooding, it also devastates communities as a whole and puts pressure on other areas of society like the NHS, schools, roads, etc. We are locking the country into a hugely costly problem, costly in terms of finances and human misery. We, as a society, need to take a long hard look at planning and understand what our priorities are.

Dr Hugh Ellis (Town & Country Planning Association) also gave a remarkable presentation expressing concerns (and that is the understatement of this piece) about the state of planning policy and the 'hollowing' out of the planning process. This echoed much of Daniels presentation in terms of locking people into future misery. Having spent much time working on trying to ensure that local developments don't increase local flood risk I can understand the concerns that inappropriate build brings with it and also the concerns that flooding isn't really taken seriously in planning. For goodness sake, why does the drainage strategy for a development or the flood compensation appear in the conditions of a reserve matters? These are fundamental elements of any development and should be in the main body of an outline application if not agreed in pre-application discussions. Quite frankly are we planning to flood?

By Linda Tippelt, Leatherhead & Fetcham Flood Action Group

As the title of the Conference suggests, the focus of the presentations was on planning issues in relation to flooding. Early in the day we heard from the Committee on Climate Change who said that we are unlikely to see a global rise in temperature of 4-6 degrees by 2100, due to the Paris Agreement in 2015 (agreed by 190+ countries), which aims to keep the level rising no more than 2 degrees. However, the Committee on Climate Change said it is most likely to rise by 2.5 degrees.

The Town & Country Planning Association is a charity that "campaigns for the reform of the UK's planning system to make it more responsive to people's needs and aspirations and to promote sustainable development". Their representative, Dr Hugh Ellis, stated that in the government's National Planning Policy Framework, "...*climate change has been hollowed out of local planning*" in preference to fulfil the five-year land supply for homes. He went on to say that in relation to planning for flood resilience: "*We are not short of technical solutions – we're short of political will*".

The Thames Water speaker gave a presentation on Flood Risk Management which had one aspect that sticks in my mind; he said that they cannot resolve all flooding problems as they can't afford to because they are answerable to shareholders!

Continued....

This is what people said about *Are we planning to flood?*

"Incredible line up of varied speakers with great insight and thought-provoking discussions."

"Informative range of different viewpoints."

Great chance to make "...contacts – fantastic! And good exhibitions too."

"Planning – such an important area of flood risk – a long overdue look at the issue. Well done in bringing it up!"

"It gave me additional knowledge, I was in a room full of people that could drive policy change. I felt empowered, more in control, less of a victim."

"Good opportunity for networking & picking up lots of information on a wealth of topics."

"Straight talking presentations."

"Good diversity of attendees."

Are we planning to flood? What you told us about the conference

Continued... By Linda Tippelt, Leatherhead & Fetcham Flood Action Group

Paul Sayers works with the Joseph Rowntree Foundation that works to inspire social change and he spoke about social justice and flood disadvantage. He said that the legacy of recent building developments was that climate change acts to increase risk where new developments are made in the most vulnerable areas. At the coast, it is an exponentially disproportionate increase in risk.

The Property Flood Resilience Action Plan was released in September 2016 by DEFRA as a private sector initiative, supported by government, aimed at encouraging and enabling wider uptake of property level flood resilience within the UK. Their speaker, Graham Brogden, said that this would also include better contractor knowledge and better control over strip out after a house has been flooded.

The Chairman of Flood Re spoke of how Flood Re is an interim measure to help householders who have a problem with getting insurance. Flood Re only covers homes built before 2009 and runs until 2039. He stated that the reason homes built after 2009 are not covered is because we should not be writing a blank cheque to developers who build in the wrong place!

The messages I took away from the Conference were:

- Climate Change means it is inevitable that we face an increase of flooding.
- Planning legislation i.e. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is inadequate, it is focused on building houses and does not encourage local councils to act in the best interests of their communities to protect them from flooding.
- Householders must take personal responsibility for providing flood resilience to their homes.

By Amanda McDermott, [Slow the Flow Calderdale](#)

The conference was a very useful day, with a variety of delegates, including The Environment Agency, the water authorities, community flood groups, academics, politicians, councils, Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA), insurers, construction industry professionals, and reporters.

Throughout the sessions, there was a helpful dialogue around flooding in relation to the planning system from all of these different perspectives. As ever, it was reassuring to hear from other community flood groups dealing with some of the same issues that we face.

Key Themes and Learnings

I will stick largely to reporting on *Slow The Flow: Calderdale's* key areas of interest (i.e. Inland natural flood management (NFM) and how community groups can work effectively with other organisations). There were also several other points of interest, such as [FloodRe](#) insurance, mental health following flooding, tidal surges, climate change evidence, vulnerable communities, and household resilience measures.

Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in urban areas

Bob Haddon from [Shifnal Flood Partnership Group](#) (SFPG) discussed the need for developers to be 'more than just builders'. Shifnal has a great deal of planned new build development, and the community has been forced to consider the issue of what significant amounts of rainwater run-off from new hard surfaces would do to flooding. SFPG are strong advocates of urban Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and are working hard to ensure that "*when developers are granted permission for building, they are responsible for the provision of adequate attenuation systems, which also provide betterment to the existing flash flood potential*".

Phiala Mehring from the [Loddon Valley Residents Association](#) (LVRA) echoed this, with her description of the '[Hatch Farm](#)' case study – an intended building site on a flood plain, in an area that already floods. LVRA are working hard to get consideration of SuDS written in to outline planning conditions (rather than as reserved matters, which is where they currently tend to sit, if anywhere).

Continued...

Are we planning to flood? What you told us

Other pearls of wisdom for other community flood groups, from Shifnal, Loddon Valley, and others, included:

- Studying historical maps is important.
- Knowing your catchment area (particularly walking it in the rain!) is enormously helpful.
- Think long term (longer than that... 30 yrs is not long term, try 150+).
- What the local fishermen don't know about their river is not worth knowing – talk to them.
- Endeavour to become consultees on planning applications – it is much easier to have an influence before applications are approved.
- 75% of Local Plans have no mention of managing carbon. Neighbourhood Plans can make a huge difference.
- '1 in 100' flood statistics are not helpful. Plan for the worst case scenario.

The importance of retrofitting SuDS

Sue Illman (Landscape Architect, and [CIC Champion](#) for Flood Mitigation and Resilience) was also eloquent on the problems caused by development without a SuDS strategy. She emphasised the need to retrofit SuDS to existing developments where possible.

There will be, of course, ongoing development, partly driven by the need to build significant numbers of houses... so yes, we need to integrate SuDS into all new development, to stop things getting worse. However, the situation is already worsening due to climate change.

[Recent revisions from the EA](#) now estimate that peak flood levels are likely to be around 25% higher, and could be up to 105% higher, in 100 years' time.

Therefore, we must retrofit solutions to existing developments, as well as implementing SuDS on all new developments, even in order to maintain existing flooding levels – and certainly if we wish to improve the situation.

As Phillip Harker from the [Homes and Communities Agency](#) (HCA) put it:

“We must recognise the consequence of getting this wrong, in order to understand the importance of getting it right”

By Tony Johnson, Loddon Valley Residents Association

It's always a blow if one of one's leading speaker, the keynote speaker especially, can't attend. Despite the late breaking change, having a senior member of permanent staff of David Cooper's calibre is never going to be quite the same “draw” as one of the small handful of more senior elected representatives speak, no matter how personable or skilled the civil servant is.

What I understood Mr Cooper to say was, in summary, that the NPPF is working well in relation to development of new houses, but that there are still residual risks.

I doubt that ANY member of the public would agree with the assertion that the NPPF is working well, so I have posed a question for him to brief the minister on: *What plans does the Minister have to make objective evidence available that will convince members of the public that the NPPF is effective?*

Then again, as happened at your conference, the vast majority of speakers who committed to speak did and almost all had a clear point or message to convey.

This was especially true for the evening session where it was good to listen to the shadow minister for flooding, Sue Hayman, and the executive director of the EA with responsibility for floods, John Curtin.

Continued...

Continued...By Tony Johnson, Loddon Valley Residents Association

Where Next

All this led me to ponder - quo vadis?

Personally, it's my belief that until the problem is starkly evident inside the debating chamber at the House of Commons, there won't be any appreciable action at national level.

Evidence: It took the great stink of 1856 to commission the Metropolitan Board of Works to solve the sewage & consequent cholera problems.

It took the 1953 near flood of the Thames to put the barrier in place but the MP's went off half cocked & only solved the tidal problem not the fluvial one

It took one TV image of a single house with its moat plus two visiting ministers arguing in the media for the Somerset Levels to be dredged. Despite far more people being affected, Hull got nothing.

I foresee a number of different approaches being possible:

1. Rebuttal to "Are we Planning to Flood"

The Developers need an opportunity to rebut the challenges laid down.

The planning inspectorate as well - as they may have a viewpoint as to where the NPPF has worked well.

However, some counterpoints would help people learn from the less successful matters, e.g. Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme (MWEFAS)

Flooding from the Dearham Park housing development in Cumbria

Using the Thames Barrier as a way of managing fluvial flooding

The flood protection system that was left open in York

2. What DOES "good" look like?

In the past thirty years, have you seen agreement as to what the solution or solutions are to the problems of flooding?

The amount of debate is enough to confuse anybody - good progress though it might be, the Pitt Report is hardly a model of uniform clarity.

The cost (as well as the consequences) will be so high that it's likely to provoke people to give up - before we've even started on solving things. Therefore, the next thought comes to mind...

3. What can we afford to solve?

If we just took the economic consequences of the floods we've had since 1893 - when the Thames was in a rather poor way...

- What would the economic consequences be today if each flood were to happen again?
- What would they cost to have been prevented - wholly or partially?
- What's the realistic probability of re-occurrence?
- Which ones are worth doing something about?
- What do we do about the rest?

A public thank you from the Ash Green Flood Action Group who have seen their flood defence scheme finally completed, contributed by Val O'Dea, Co-ordinator

“Many people in Ash Green were flooded previously to my move here in 2005 - so have endured multiple events. Many are elderly and infirm – seven have now passed away. In 2006, myself and 13 other homes were flooded - a very distressing and traumatic experience. We accumulated nearly a million pounds worth of insurance claims and commenced a campaign for the people, money and resources required to provide a community solution.

“The Bund is s a huge engineering project and complex computer software has been involved with the design, thus our risk will be substantially reduced. Sadly, planning permission has recently been granted for a development of 50+ houses which have a drainage system which will share the same watercourse as the Bund and have its sewer pump located nearby, so we hope in the event of future flood that the Bund protection won't be compromised.

“We are delighted the Bund construction is in its final stage and although there have been setbacks over the years e.g. foot and mouth disease, resource constraints, funding/legal considerations and landowner negotiations all contributed, we are still unsure the reason it took nearly 10 years.

“With sincere appreciation from us all at the Ash Green Flood Action Group.”



Stroud Natural Flood Management Case studies, Introduced here by Chris Uttley, Rural SuDS Project Officer, Stroud District Council

We have published a series of six case studies that illustrate the natural flood management work we are undertaking in the catchment of the Stroud River Frome in Gloucestershire. We have now worked with a wide range of farmers, private land owners, woodland owners and partners to install over 280 different structures on 18km of headwater stream. Approximately 21% of the catchment area now discharges through natural flood management features located primarily in the headwaters.

The case studies are a selection of our work sites in the Stroud Frome catchment, chosen to be representative of private & NGO ownership, a mixture of woodland & farmland and different techniques and construction processes. They describe the way Natural Flood Management works, the reasons for them, how they were carried out and by whom, the consents required and the indicative costs.

You can download the case studies by clicking on the links below:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241295/snows-farm-nature-reserve.pdf>

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241298/buckholt-and-cranham-woods.pdf>

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241297/workmans-wood.pdf>

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241296/wick-street-farm.pdf>

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241299/overtown-farm.pdf>

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/241294/miserden-estate.pdf>

Flood & Coast 2017: Last Call for Community Flood Action Groups

The Environment Agency is inviting all Community Flood Groups to join them for the largest debate on Flood and Coastal Erosion in the UK.

Flood and Coast Exhibition and Conference is convened by the Environment Agency and supported by the National Flood Forum. The event will take place at the Telford International Centre, 28-30 March 2017 and will host 1500 fellow professionals and groups to exchange a broad range of perspectives on innovation and best practices in Flood and Coastal Risk Management.

Clare Dinnis, Deputy Director, Flood and Coastal Risk Management at the Environment Agency and Chair of the Advisory Committee, said: "Community flood groups and local authorities see the whole picture of what affects an area from planning policy through to emergency response and community support. They provide the link between individuals in the community and are often the first point of contact."

The exhibition and a series of seminars aimed at Community Flood Groups and local authorities are free to attend for all. There is also an in-depth technical conference running alongside the event.

Free seminars include:

- Community Flood Groups in their own words
- Working with us to manage local flood risk
- Innovations in Data, Products and Technology
- Community Flood Risk Planning – What Can We Offer?
- People at risk and how can they get involved?
- Working with communities at risk: The ResearchHealth and Flooding
- Business and Flooding
- Supply Chain Briefing: Government Sector

Grant Collier, spokesman for the event said: "We would encourage all community groups to join the event, listen to the free seminars on what can be done and share ideas with the Environment Agency".

To register for the event. For further information see www.floodandcoast.com



FLOOD²⁰¹⁷
& COAST

Convened by

28 to 30 March



Environment
Agency

HAVE YOUR SAY - Warwickshire Flood Summit, 1 April

As many villages in Warwickshire were seriously flooded during 1998 & 2007 and now many have flood action groups, Warwickshire County Council are inviting local people to the Warwickshire Flood Summit, taking place on Saturday 1 April in Stratford-upon-Avon. The event will start at 10am and will finish around 4:30pm. Building on the successes of the 2014 and 2015 Flood Summits, the organisers are looking to engage with even more members of the public with the 2017 event, by making it an open public event.

The main objectives are three-fold:

1. To raise awareness of flood risk and promote realistic expectations of the role of Flood Risk Management Authorities, leading to action on the part of residents and businesses, therefore leading to greater resilience.
2. To let people know that they are not alone, through displaying the positive community resilience work that has been achieved throughout the county.
3. To gathering views from the public, especially with respect to the implementation of the Warwickshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy one year after its adoption by Cabinet in April 2016

The event will be held in two locations within Stratford. Firstly, in the Stratford Arts House (Rother Street, Stratford, CV37 6LU), where there will be stalls from various partners, split into various themes (planning and development, maintenance, community resilience etc). People will have the chance to speak to staff from the various agencies (EA, Severn Trent etc) and learn more about what they do to manage the flood risk in Warwickshire.

The second venue will be along Waterside, next to the RSC. Here we will have an outside public display area. On display will be a new temporary flood defense barrier from the Environment Agency along with one of their emergency response vehicles, a Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service boat and equipment, the National Flood Forum information trailer, and some WROC instant response vehicles. As with the indoor exhibition, staff from the relevant agencies will be there to answer any questions the public may have.

At 3pm there will be a brief presentation on the theme of the Flood Summit – ‘is the Warwickshire Flood Strategy working?’ – followed by a Question & Answer session with a panel of experts from major flooding agency

This should be an extremely productive event, with a great turnout by our partners expected, and hopefully a very strong public attendance. We hope to see you there on the day.



Click this link to watch our Community Support and Flood Recovery Specialist, Heather Shepherd, speaking about the National Flood Forum's involvement in the Summit:

<http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/floodsummit>

Bradford on Avon Launch New Vehicle, By Paul Robertson

The Community Emergency Volunteers in Bradford on Avon, Wiltshire were formed after the terrible storms of 2013-14 caused considerable flooding in the community. Working through the Town Council with the aim of combining a variety of roles that involve Category 1 and 2 Responder Agency community schemes we currently provide Flood, Snow, Utility, & Public Health Warden roles as well as crowd marshalling for local events. So far, we have cooperated with over 15 local agencies and voluntary groups and hold training sessions once a month at the local fire station.

Recently the CEVs successfully applied for a grant from the SSE Community Resilience Fund for over £18000 for purchasing a range of equipment including push along gritters, lifejackets, and a 4x4 vehicle. The vehicle will make a huge difference to the volunteers as previously our effective area of operations was limited to the walking distance from our equipment container in the fire station yard in the centre of town. The mobile capability we now have allows us to extend our reach not only in Bradford on Avon but to outlying villages and parishes that may also be affected by severe weather events.

If you wish to seek funding for your local group, contact your regional electricity network to see if they run a community resilience fund in your area. If you are interested in setting up a multi-role group in your community, please visit our blog at www.boacevs.blogspot.com for tips based on our experience and for more information.



Is the Environment Agency repeating the mistakes of the past? By Ewan Larcombe

“I am concerned that the River Thames upstream of Teddington is not being maintained. After continuous dredging since 1947 the EA disposed of the dredgers when they took over from the National Rivers Authority in the mid-1990s. I believe there are serious existing issues with bed-rise and with blocked flood arches that are not being addressed.

“Furthermore, the EA has a legal duty to maintain Thames navigation but no corresponding legal duty to maintain discharge (i.e. conveyance capacity). Apparently, the riparian owners are responsible for the banks and bed of the River Thames but in my opinion this is not a reasonable or practical arrangement. I get the impression that backwater maintenance is tending towards non-existent. We need amended legislation.

“In my view, there is evidence to demonstrate that the £100m Jubilee River flood channel was flawed from concept to operation, resulting in £5m for repairs and a £2.75m out-of-court settlement for sub-standard in design and construction. This channel will never be able to carry its design capacity of 215 cumecs. Control structure operation merely bypasses attenuating flood plain and dumps flood water onto undefended communities downstream. Restricted main river discharge then leads to elevated stage, with flood water arriving earlier, rising more quickly and achieving higher ultimate levels.

“It seems to me that the Environment Agency has failed to learn the lessons and I am concerned that the proposed £478m River Thames Scheme (Datchet to Teddington) is just history repeating itself – with a sub-optimal solution producing a wide variety of unintended consequences.

“Finally, I think the national land drainage infrastructure should be considered as an asset - to be maintained and nurtured - rather than as a liability due to ever-increasing maintenance costs. I believe that after 90 years it is time to submit current evidence to another Royal Commission on Land Drainage.”

Note from the National Flood Forum

The National Flood Forum gets many comments over riparian ownership.

People feel this has suddenly been dumped on them and they know nothing about it. Others say the deeds to their property say that they do not have any ownership. Many people do not have the means or the physical ability to take on the task. Others remember (and some have evidence) that there was a surcharge on their Council tax to pay for the Council who took responsibility, which also ensured that owners did not do inappropriate activities with the water course. So many also remember the Waters Authority, before it became the Environment Agency, taking on this responsibility.

At the end of the day it is important that our rivers and water courses are managed and maintained properly keeping flood risk as low as possible. If we don't it is people that suffer in the end.

What is your view? What experiences have you had? Please let us know at info@floodforum.org.uk

We welcome any feedback, comments or questions about the bulletin. Please email them to bulletin@floodforum.org.uk

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



Jessie Hope, Trainee Community Flood Resilience Project Officer, Cumbria

I am a Registered Mental Health Nurse with 12 years of practice experience in the UK and New Zealand. After working across a number of settings (acute and forensic inpatient, University, Rehabilitation, and a Community Homeless Charity), I have developed a range of interpersonal, therapeutic and risk management skills.

I have an interest in the relationship between people their communities and their environment. When living in NZ I observed some of the destruction earthquakes can have on people's lives and the need for communities to work together to support each other to deal with the initial crisis and subsequent trauma and disruption to day to day life.

After 10 years living in New Zealand I returned to Cumbria where I grew up and am now fortunate to have a role within the National Flood Forum supporting my local community.

I have been practicing Mindfulness since 2008 both personally and professionally and I am a mindfulness teacher. I use mindfulness to reduce the daily stress of juggling parenting and professional life.

I love to travel and experience new cultures. In my spare time I enjoy walking, kayaking and paddle boarding.

Rebecca Boulton, Trainee Community Flood Resilience Project Officer, Warwickshire & Worcestershire

From a young age, I have been interested in the physical aspects of our environment and have always been fascinated by the processes that naturally occur in nature. Additionally, throughout my education I learnt about the struggles faced by lesser developed countries. As a result, I decided to spend three months teaching English in Ethiopian state schools and a month teaching basic English, Science and Maths in a Kenyan orphanage. These experiences led me to want to further my knowledge with the aim of helping more people in the future.

Bath Spa University allowed me to proceed through the higher education system from a Foundation Degree in Development Geography, to a BSc in Global Development and Sustainability and finishing with a Masters in Environmental Management. The courses included a variety of modules such as Development and Disasters, Applied Geomorphology and Climatology. The subjects I found most interesting and important was the social aspects of environmental hazards and the applications of renewable energies.

In my spare time I enjoy cooking, music and being active, either on a hockey pitch or walking to explore new areas. I started working for the National Flood Forum in December 2016 and I hope my experience can be applied to help those in local communities.

