

National Flood Forum

Bulletin

News and updates

July 2017

What's in this issue

Welcome to the July 2017 National Flood Forum bulletin.

In this issue there are two specific requests, one for you to help influence national policy, the other to help shape the future of the National Flood Forum. Included are articles from two new trustees, Phiala Mehring and Cheryl Scott, news about staff changes and an article from one of our project officers, Sarah Parkington, just to show the range of activities that people get up to. There are short pieces on a visit by John Curtin, Executive Director of Flooding and Coastal Risk for the Environment Agency to two flood action groups, a policy round up and information about how the National Flood Forum is funded, alongside how people can help support us.

We are always keen to publish articles from flood action groups and individuals on the issues that concern you, so do please get in touch if you would like to have your say.

With best wishes, The National Flood Forum team

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Coming soon

There is not enough space in this issue for everything. Next time we hope to bring you news and updates on:

- Our new website
- Blue Pages
- The future of property protection
- A project on flood disadvantaged communities we are running for Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- A European funded project we are starting called FRAMES



Shifnal Flood Partnership Group and Shipston Area Flood Action Group hosted a day with John Curtin, Executive Director of Flood and Coastal Risk Management at the Environment Agency on 2nd June, where they shared their successes, issues and concerns, as well as the benefits of the flood action group approach. More in the next issue.



Shifnal Flood Partnership Group

Shipston Area Flood Action Group

National Flood Risk Management Strategy – we need your help

We need your help. Now is a great time to use your voice to shape our future flood risk. We need you to write to your MP and Dr Thérèse Coffey MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment and Rural Life Opportunities, to ask that the work underway to refresh the National Flood Risk Management Strategy covers all the things that affect flood risk.

Flood Re, the household insurance mechanism introduced under the Water Act 2014 comes to an end in 2039, so by then everyone will need to be able to access affordable property insurance on the open market. That means reducing future flood risk significantly, and to do that will require action on planning and development, critical infrastructure (transport, electricity, gas, water, telecommunications, etc.), business and economic development, housing, highway maintenance, riparian management and many more areas, as well as on flood risk management. This work will also need to be coordinated nationally and locally much more effectively than it is now.

The current National Flood Risk Management Strategy doesn't do any of this, so we need to persuade Government to take a more holistic approach.

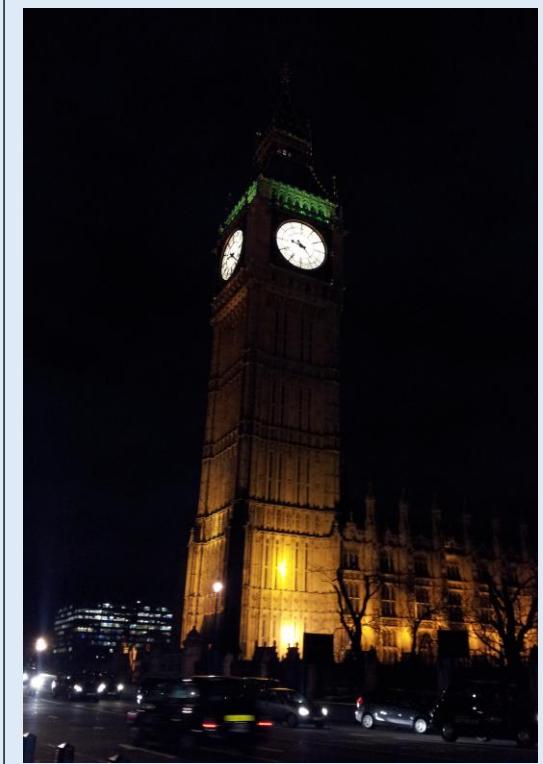
[Contact details for your local MP](#). Emails to Dr Thérèse Coffey MP should be sent to defra.helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk

The Queen's speech – what about flooded communities?

Brexit dominated the Queen's speech. So, we will have to work hard to ensure that the myriad of flooding issues that people are concerned about are listened to, and acted on.

However, the speech did include measures on replacing the Common Agricultural Policy. This is a real opportunity to shape our future land management to reduce flood risk and support farming. The trick will be to get the balance right between what we expect farmers to do as part of everyday management and what incentives are needed to reduce future risks. We could also change the way that we regulate land management and introduce different types of incentive, learning from what works elsewhere in the world.

The Queen's speech also introduced measures to reform claims management. This is primarily aimed at vehicle claims, but there may be opportunities to improve people's experience of flood risk.



As a Community Flood Resilience Officer for the National Flood Forum, I am used to working with Flood Action Groups, to facilitate partnership engagement with the local Council, Environment Agency and others collectively, to address the concerns residents have about flooding and drainage issues in Rochdale and Greater Manchester. My role started in 2013, supporting the Council to bring an awareness and how to prepare for flooding in local communities where their flood risk was high but where they hadn't actually flooded for some time, but also to pick up on concerns that the community may have over flood risk. On Boxing Day 2015, Storm Eva hit those communities hard with widespread flood damage to homes and businesses. The National Flood Forum has been working closely to support those communities and others across the Country to recover.

My role has changed again recently.....

Most people might picture Rochdale as a large industrial settlement but it is situated in the foothills of the South Pennines with fast flowing streams and rivers fed by high rainfall and the Pennine Watershed. The changing climate may result in higher rainfall and more intense storms in future years.

Littleborough and further downstream the town of Rochdale itself, suffered from severe flooding on Boxing Day 2015. Some of the pictures and videos from the day show the huge amount of surface water travelling down the upper reaches before it reached the River Roch. Rochdale Borough Council and the Environment Agency are keen to see what measures might be possible to help 'slow the flow' of water into the rivers and streams of the River Roch catchment. My job is to speak to land owners and farmers to explain what natural flood management is and to gauge the level of interest in the upper Roch Valley for possible schemes on their land that can help reduce flood risk, improve land management and create habitats all that will contribute to reducing flood risk for the towns of Littleborough and Rochdale.

The Environment Agency, and local Council are working up proposals for flood storage and improved flood defences in the main river Roch catchment to benefit more than 1000 homes and businesses. Natural flood management can add further benefit to this project by reducing the amount of flow into the River Roch and helping storage and defences to manage water better in periods of high rainfall.



A canal drain that could be utilised

There are many possible measures which can help to slow the flow of water off the catchment such as 'leaky' walls and dams, ponds and wetlands to tree planting, not only do these help towards reducing the flood risk but benefits the

Natural Flood Risk Management – one approach

I will be working closely with many interested organisations including the Council's Planning and Countryside Services, the Environment Agency, United Utilities, Moors for the Future, the Woodland Trust and the South Pennines Grassland Project to provide advice and support to land managers who want to work on possible projects. I'll also be looking at the options for funding to support schemes wherever possible.

Working with Rochdale Council's Countryside Service at the Hollingworth Lake Country Park Visitor Centre near Littleborough, where we are soon to install new display boards about natural flood management as part of the visitor attraction. The Visitor Centre is situated in the Ealees Valleys Centre and Ealees Brook flows close by and down to the River Roch in Littleborough. Proposals for a Natural Flood Management demonstration area based on and around Ealees Brook are being worked on to highlight and provide access to a suite of natural flood management techniques to help inform and inspire others as well as helping manage flood risk in its own right.



Ealees Valley with Hollingworth Lake in the distance

Natural Flood Management measures will not solve flooding in this area on its own, but it will help as part of a collection of other options being investigated. It is something that the whole community can play a part in if they wish, and can help to plan and prepare for the future flood risks that climate change may bring. If we can slow the flow of water and reduce the volume of water entering the river system in times of a flood, we can hopefully provide more time for towns and businesses downstream to cope with a flood event, reducing damage and disruption.

Sarah Parkington, Project Officer for Rochdale

Staff updates

Two members of staff have recently left us. Emily Hutchinson, who was working with communities in the middle Trent area has moved to a new job in Cambridgeshire, whilst Lucy Scarborough, our Communications Manager, has also moved on. We wish them well and are also grateful for all the work that they have done to support communities and the National Flood Forum

So, for now, the bulletin is being produced collectively by the Team. If you would like to comment or contribute, please contact Amanda Davies at 01299 403055 or Amanda.davies@floodforum.org.uk

Phiala Mehring

In late 2002 it rained in Wokingham, I mean, really really rained, for what felt like months. By early 2003 the river was fast approaching my and my neighbour's houses. We gathered outside in the street nervously watching the rising water. Just when we thought we were going under, it abated. Phew.

In 2007 it rained in Wokingham. And at the risk of sounding like Network Rail (the wrong kind of snow), this rain was different. Rather than a protracted event we have torrential, Noah style rain. The drains plumed, the pumping station was overwhelmed and our road turned into a river. We all gathered outside our houses, nervously, and watched the water rise. On this occasion to within a few inches of our front doors.

In 2008, it rained, the sound of the rain on the conservatory was enough to send me into a panic attack. We all gathered outside.....

In 2009 it snowed! Heavy, heavy snow, which, of course melted. We all gathered outside our houses and decided enough was enough. It was blatantly apparent that no-one was doing anything to manage the situation. If they were, then our homes wouldn't be under constant risk of flooding.

I went to the local pub and asked could I borrow a room and was given the whole bar! My children and I posted some 500 flyers through local's doors and as white as a sheet hosted our first flood meeting. And Loddon Valley Residents Association was born (LVRA).

Immediately we set up regular meetings (which we called flood partnership meetings) with Wokingham Borough Council, Thames Water, the Environment Agency and our local MP Mr. John Redwood. LVRA's role was to project management flood risk management, ideally, as far as we were concerned, to get the river dredged.

From 2009 to 2017, I personally have been on a journey from starting out demanding dredging to solve my flooding problems through to the opposite end of the spectrum where I now believe that a much more integrated approach to managing flooding is required. One that blends hard engineering solutions with more natural ones. An approach that realises that the greatest impact that flooding has is on people. Not on buildings, or roads or infrastructure. Those can be repaired. Your health, whether physical or psychological is much less replaceable. Your sense of place and purpose can be decimated in a few hours as the flood waters wash through your home.

My journey has led me to set up a catchment flood group, start a part time PhD (designed to understand how institutional constructs of flooding and flood risk management align, or otherwise, with society's perception of flooding and flooding risk management and how this impacts community engagement) and to become a Trustee of the National Flood Forum.



And like most of you all this is done around a day job: Research Director for a food and drink research agency.

I want to take my experience and my hard earned knowledge of flooding and its impact and work with the National Flood Forum to help ensure that flood risk management is high on the national agenda, that planning doesn't compounded flooding problems and that people who live at risk of flooding can live normal happy lives. Lives that aren't predicated on not flooding.

Dr Cheryl Scott

Last year I relocated from a little village in Sussex to the West Country in order to become a Town Clerk. My property in Sussex was one of many across the UK that was suddenly and severely flooded on 20th July 2007 and I am very aware of both the short and long-term financial and emotional impact this can have on householders and business owners alike. Following the flood, I became Chair of the Village Flood Forum, working with the Community, Parish Council and Environment Agency to instigate a property protection scheme for 47 properties at risk and pilot a warning scheme for flash-flood watercourses. I then led the village in a new pilot project with the County Council (as the newly appointed Local Lead Flood Authority) and other stakeholders to develop a co-ordinated surface water management plan in the village; whilst in the process creating a new village Flood Network with Area Champions, Village Stewards and Flood Warden.

Whilst I am excited to have relocated back to the West country where I grew up, I want to be able to continue to contribute my skills, experience and competence to assist those at risk of flooding. NFF has established itself as the National Voice of all those at Risk of Flooding. If my contribution as a Trustee of NFF will help to prevent, alleviate or support just one person from suffering my own past personal experience, then it is time well spent.

Building back better, not like-for-like

The future of the National Flood Forum

The National Flood Forum is refreshing its own strategy – looking to the future to make sure that it focusses on the needs of communities at risk of flooding and it has the greatest impact. We are interested in your views, which will lead to a new business plan in the autumn.

We start with a few questions:

1. What do you like about what the National Flood Forum does?
2. What would you like us to do differently?

Many people helped us with these questions when we did our stakeholder survey last year, but please let us know if you have more to say. There are also questions about what we should focus on in the future.

1. How should we best support people at risk of flooding? We currently work with communities, facilitating the creation of Flood Action Groups that identify and address peoples' concerns and issues. We support groups to work in partnership with flood risk management organisations, using their expertise to reduce communities' flood risk. People lead, on their agenda. We also have a range of projects working with local authorities and the Environment Agency and emerging projects with networks of groups. We run an advice line giving advice on everything flood related, Blue Pages, the bulletin and our website
2. How can we best support people who have flooded? At present, we go into flooded areas immediately after the flood incident and help people through the initial stages of recovery. We support the process of an insurance claim, give immediate tools & tips to help you cope, listen and reassure. When able to, we also stay on to support you for the long haul of recovery (12/18 months). We also currently offer strategic advice to Local Resilience Forums

3. What do we need to focus on in terms of national policy that will deliver the maximum benefits to people – investment for capital schemes, maintenance, planning and development, riparian management, etc.? From the work that we do and surveys, the topics that people are most concerned about are insurance, planning and development and riparian management, in that order. Linked to this is the question of visibility. Most of our work is done quietly, behind the scenes, trying to influence change. Should we be much more vocal and if so what would be the benefit?

What do you think and what should be the balance between these three?

However, the other part of the story is the “how” question.

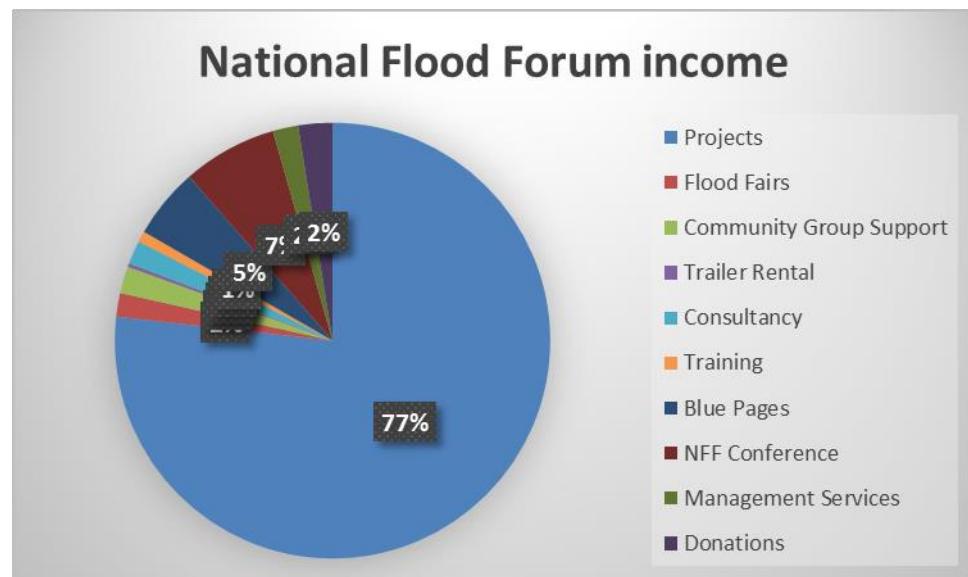
1. How do we resource this activity? Like most charities, the National Flood Forum really struggles with the three T's - Time, Treasure and Talent (How can we do more? How can we resource it? How can we best get skills for projects such as developing Blue Pages?). Ideas are welcome. How can people best support us to support you?
2. How do we organise ourselves to have the greatest effect (how do we involve people from communities much more in running the organisation, for example, and do you want that)?

To send in your ideas or for a more detailed briefing document, please email paul.cobbing@floodforum.org.uk

About the National Flood Forum

People are often surprised when they hear that the National Flood Forum receives no core funding, so we thought that it would be helpful to explain how we are resourced. Over three quarters of our funds come from local authorities, the Environment Agency and other organisations for projects to support specific communities that have either flooded or who are at risk. Of the remaining 23%, receipts from advertising in the Blue Pages directory and our national conference are the most significant.

Like many charities, funding is becoming more difficult to obtain from the public sector, so we are looking to increase what we receive from other areas, particularly through training for organisations (on facilitation, working with communities and property resilience), Blue Pages and donations. We are also seeking support from businesses in a variety of ways, where this doesn't conflict with our charitable aims and where it is of mutual interest.



What do we spend our income on?

Most of our funds are spent directly on supporting people, followed by the costs for running the office.

About the National Flood Forum cont...

The activities that we really struggle to find any funding for are the most important aspects of our work; running our advice line and providing practical support to individuals and groups that ask for help. Calls can come from anywhere in the country, on a huge range of issues, and can take a great deal of effort to resolve, particularly where we need to meet face to face and/or help people to set up flood action groups. Difficult insurance claims also take up significant time, as do problems with planning and development. In addition, the work that we do to influence national policy and organisations is unfunded.

Our remit is to be an independent organisation free from government, or any other, control, to support the needs of people and communities by helping them to take control of the flooding in their lives, and to work nationally for change that will reduce the impacts of flooding

How you can help the National Flood Forum

As a charity, we would be hugely grateful if you could support our work through sponsorship, partnerships or donations. We are very keen to work with people to develop and deliver projects and to work on secondments and placements.

There are lots of ways to donate:

1. We now have a fundraising pack with lots of ideas on how people can raise funds
2. You can donate every time that you shop online without it costing you a penny by registering at <https://www.giveasyoulive.com/join/nationalfloodforum>,
3. You can text **RAIN07 £5* to 70070** to donate via your mobile directly or through our website at www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk

With best wishes

The National Flood Forum team

***Suggested donation. Your chosen amount** comes from your pre-paid credit or is added to your bill and the National Flood Forum receives 100% of the donation.

Forthcoming events

From the flood to the future – community action across catchments

Hosted by the Radcliffe Flood Action Group/ Dr Paul O'Hare

Location: Business School, Manchester Metropolitan University (close to Oxford Road station)

Date: 19th August, 2017

Recent flooding across Greater Manchester and the North West has raised many critical questions about flood risk management, not least from communities that have been subjected to the consequences of floods.

Increased urbanisation, aging utility infrastructures, the threat of climate change, and the need to facilitate economic growth have all been blamed for driving exposure to flooding. But as many parts of the country embark on ambitious plans to develop land for homes and employment and we brace ourselves for the potentially severe impacts of climate change, our local communities are asking one question above all others: ***What are we doing to deal with flood risk across our catchments?***

The event will draw together community and flood action groups to discuss flood risk management in their areas and how these activities can be co-ordinated across river catchments. Speakers will include flood group members and key policy makers and first responders, with a view to sharing best practice and to discuss community strategies to deal with future flood risk.

This is a free event. Please register your attendance here:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/from-the-flood-to-the-future-tickets-34417391344>

Or, contact: Dr Paul O'Hare, *Manchester Metropolitan University*, Paul.A.OHare@mmu.ac.uk, **0161 247 1512**



The Flood Expo is the world's largest exhibition and conference designed to showcase the latest innovations that further the way flooding is predicted, prevented, and managed. It takes place on the 27th & 28th of September at ExCeL, and tickets are free from the [Flood Expo website](#).

The show features over 200 innovative environmental suppliers, 80 hours of CPD-accredited seminars, interactive debates, live demonstrations on the River Thames, one-to-one advice from industry experts, unparalleled networking opportunities, and much more.

Guests can also filter between areas dedicated to flood prediction, flood prevention, flood management, flood rescue, and more, as well as the Marine & Coastal Civil Engineering Expo (M&CCE Expo) and the Contamination Expo Series next door.

To book your FREE ticket and take advantage of everything the Flood Expo has to offer, [register on the Flood Expo website](#).

If you're interested in exhibiting at this year's event, [contact Jon Greenslade on +44 \(0\)1179 296 099 or email jon.greenslade@prysmgroup.co.uk](#).

The Emergency Services Show takes place at Hall 5, NEC, Birmingham from 20-21 September 2017

The ONLY UK event for all emergency responders where you can

- Visit over 450 stands showing the latest kit and solutions
- Network with like-minded emergency staff
- Take part in free CPD-accredited seminars covering collaboration, ICT, innovation, road safety, health & wellbeing
- Experience live demonstrations from leading response teams
- Get updated on collaboration and multi-agency plans
- Source new kit and save money
- Gain CPD points at the free College of Paramedics CPD Workshops
- Visit The Collaboration Zone and see how charities, voluntary sector and government partners are working with the emergency services.