

science summary



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SCHO1005BJTH-E-P

The impacts of flooding on urban and rural communities

Science Summary SC040033/SR1

A new review of the impacts of flooding on urban and rural communities argues that urban and rural policy should be considering flood risk management as part of an approach to design and landscape, to ensure that development schemes exploit opportunities to alleviate flood risk. Policy makers and planners need to be aware of differences in the way that flooding affects these communities.

The report is based on desk research and interviews carried out in the first half of 2005. The main findings of the review are that:

- the shift in policy towards living with floods makes it essential that flood risk management should become embedded in urban and rural agendas;
- both agendas would benefit from developing dialogues around planning for communities, thus putting FRM into a wider planning context;
- the Environment Agency is already moving in this direction, with flood alleviation schemes in some places being used to create environments that provide urban green space and wildlife habitats.

The report points out that the terms “urban” and “rural” are used in different contexts with more or less precision. Policy makers and planners need to get a better understanding of how flooding impacts on communities with particular characteristics, going beyond some familiar stereotypes about the nature of urban and rural areas and looking at social trends such as migration out of cities and within urban areas. However, some of the people interviewed for the research felt that a focus on urban and rural communities was not useful, and that there were more important issues that cut across the urban–rural continuum (e.g. the nature of the flooding).

The report is intended to facilitate dialogue between the Environment Agency and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (for urban policy) and Defra (for rural policy) on the embedding of flood risk management in urban and rural policy. It should also contribute to better understanding between the Environment

Agency’s own teams, such as Social Policy, Environmental Impact Assessment and Flood Risk Management.

This summary relates to information from Science Project SC040033/SR1, reported in detail in the following output:

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