

# Loddon Valley Residents Association

Case study showcasing approaches recommended in the National FCERM Strategy

**The aim of the Environment Agency's *National flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England* is to ensure that the risk of flooding and coastal erosion is properly managed and co-ordinated to minimise its impact.**

It sets out a statutory framework, recommending a number of approaches, that will help communities, the public sector and other organisations to work together to manage flood and coastal erosion risk.

The **Loddon Valley Residents Association (LVRA)** is a great example of how proactive **community-led engagement** with the **responsible organisations** is already producing good outcomes for managing flood risk. **Phiala Mehring** of the LVRA tells us about the group.

## Background

"LVRA started out as a group of residents determined to protect their properties. We are fortunate that there are not many properties in the area which flood. However, year on year we saw the waters encroaching on our homes. Those that had flooded felt that nothing was being done to mitigate future events. The flood partnership was set up to effectively project manage flood mitigation in the borough."

## Our approach



A LVRA River Walk

"LVRA was set up in April 2009 by residents in Woodley, Winnersh, Earley and Lower Earley. Luckily only a handful of properties in Earley, Winnersh and Woodley have suffered internal

flooding. A lot of the work that the flood partnership does is pro-active - for example, preventing additional homes from being flooded."

"In April 2009, we hosted our first meeting. Over 120 people came. In April that year we managed the first flood partnership meeting at our local council offices. We invited Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), Earley Town Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water and the National Flood Forum."

"We now hold these partnership meetings every eight to ten weeks with a very clear objective - to project manage flood mitigation. What started as a local affair has quickly developed to include much of the borough."

**'The real benefits from the partnership come from getting all the interested parties in flood management and mitigation sitting down regularly around a table.'**

"Within the partnership, LVRA has two key roles:

- 1) Managing, chairing and developing the partnership.
- 2) Sharing the vast wealth of local knowledge that residents have regarding flooding."

"We also host annual [flood surgeries](#) which enable residents to ask questions directly to the Environment Agency, Thames Water, the National Flood Forum, Earley Town Council and Wokingham Borough Council."

## Outcomes

"We are now involved in many areas of the council's work - from forming policy through to building relationships with developers to ensure that new developments do not increase flood risk (particularly in regard to pluvial flooding)."

"During the last two years the partnership has achieved a lot. We've made sure sections of the river were cleared, and key ditches were cleaned and restored to normal function; household level

protection has been provided in two separate locations; we've arranged river walks to seek opportunities to reduce flood risk; and held annual Flood Surgeries to ensure residents are informed and know what is being done to reduce their flood risk."

"But the real benefits from the partnership come from getting all the interested parties in flood management and mitigation sitting down regularly around a table. What could take months to solve via email or phone can be resolved fairly quickly just by having the right people talking to each other (although it is fair to say that it has taken some time to get to this point). And the transfer of information not only fast tracks solutions, but ensures that all interested parties have all relevant information at their finger tips."

"Our relationship with Wokingham Borough Council is on a very good footing. We are in the early days of helping them establish their water management strategy, and were asked to participate in their Flooding and Sustainable Planning group."

### **What's next**

"We are involved with so much. Our diverse activities include working with the Environment Agency to ensure that the river flows unimpeded, through to ensuring that flood assets are working optimally. We intervene when there is a dispute about who actually owns, and should therefore maintain, critical flood assets. The process is not as fast as we would wish, but we are making progress. We are also working with our local authority to ensure that drainage strategies are developed and deployed in all new development. "

### **More information**

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Please visit the LVRA [website](#), Twitter @PhialaM or email [Phiala Mehring](#).