Joint Defra / Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management R&D Programme

Improving institutional and social responses to flooding:

Supporting documents

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Contents

This document contains This report contains 3 supporting documents to science project SC060019: *Improving institutional and social responses to flooding*.

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WORKING WITH PARTNERS AND COMMUNITIES: APPLYING GOOD PRACTICE POST-FLOODING

PLANNING AND RUNNING SUCCESSFUL DROP-INS AND SURGERIES

INDEX

INTRODUCTION TO DROP-INS AND SURGERIES

What are drop-ins and surgeries?

Drop-ins and surgeries provide a structured space and period of time for people to come along and find out about something, contribute their views, meet and form relationship with others around a particular issue. They differ from exhibitions (although an exhibition may be part of the drop-in) because they place emphasis on interactions between the visitors and the organisers, rather than simple provision of information from one to the other. They are different to public meetings because the people attending choose a time to suit them, to focus on things most relevant to them, in a way that most suits them.

Is there a difference between a drop-in and a surgery?

In this guide we use drop-ins and surgeries as interchangeable terms, although:

- a drop-in is the best term for situations where people will be attending to find out general information and where the Environment Agency is likely NOT to be able to solve all their problems/answers.
- a surgery is the most appropriate term for an event structured around people coming in and being given individual attention to solve a particular question or problem (for example, how a particular change in the law or a new flood defence will affect them).

What types of drop-ins and surgeries are there, and what can they achieve?

Drop-ins and surgeries can be used proactively or reactively: proactively to consider options for responding to flood risk in the future or gather ideas on a particular issue, for example; reactively after a major incident with consequences that affect individuals and organisations such as flooding, a pollution incident, a change in a law.
Proactive drop-ins may place more emphasis on consulting others and forming future relationships for further work, whereas reactive drop-ins may place more emphasis on practically dealing with problems, exchanging information, signposting.

Are drop-ins or surgeries enough on their own?

Drop-ins and surgeries are NOT usually sufficient on their own; they only work well in conjunction with other activities, as part of a planned approach to engaging others. Further guidance on how to design such approaches, and details of how to use different techniques can be found in the *Building Trust with Others* Guide.

This guide is based on real-life experience gained from designing and running proactive drop-ins (South West and North East regions) and reactive drop-ins (post-summer 2007 floods in North East and Midlands). See credit list at the end of the guide. It should be particularly useful to area staff following large flood events, and can be considered as part of the post-incident response guidance alongside data collection and correspondence.

DROP-IN GOOD PRACTICE OVERVIEW

Foundations	Putting the foundations for successful drop-ins in place well in advance of any actual drop-ins being held. This section includes setting aims, establishing relationships with potential partners, putting in place suitable internal procedures and appropriately skilled/enabled teams.
Preparation	Preparing for an individual event including resources, briefing staff, choosing a venue, deciding what to present and what to find out, format of the event, logistics, publicising the event.
During the drop-in	How to layout a drop-in and how to ensure an excellent drop-in experience, key skills required
Follow up	What to do after a drop-in with those who attended, to make use of the information gathered and build constructive relationships and activities for the future
Checklists and proformas	

FOUNDATIONS

The foundations of successful drop-ins and surgeries lie in work done well before any event takes place. Whether using drop-ins/surgeries reactively or proactively, success requires establishing (in principle at least) the following broad processes and decisions in each area/region. This will ensure the preparation (see the following section) for individual or series of drop-ins can be done quickly and efficiently.

TOP TIP: Adopting the Working with Others - Building Trust with Communities method of planning your approach will help – contact the mentor for your area/region.

Reasons for holding drop-ins/surgeries

Clarify in your team/area/region why drop-ins/surgeries might be chosen as a way of interacting with others (rather than or in combination with other methods such as public meetings, one-to-one meetings, visits).

- **Drop-ins can be a useful way of:**
  - Informing people (collectively and individually).
  - Gathering information, views and ideas (collectively and individually).
  - Building future relationships.

- **Drop-ins may be particularly useful if:**
  - A large number of people from a clearly defined and relatively local area (usually under 15 minutes bus ride, walk or drive) are likely to be interested in being involved.
  - Many people will be affected by an issue, and it is useful to allow them to find out tailored information/advice from a number of partners (rather than just receive general information), and/or to give personal views.
  - It is useful to find out the full range of views on a subject.
  - Building constructive future relationships is important.
  - There is not one particular time when all who might want/need to take part can make it.
  - There is a suitable venue to accommodate the event.
  - There are sufficient staff to manage the drop-in.

- **Drop-ins are likely NOT to be appropriate (on their own) if:**
  - The issue is of specialist interest only, in which case meetings of those with an interest may be more suitable.
  - It is difficult to make sense of the issue without being ‘on the ground’, in which case a tour of the site/area might also be needed or might be more appropriate (for example, to understand a local drainage issue or problem with smells from a landfill site or with a particular property).
  - A decision has to be made, so the drop-in may have to be followed up by a public meeting or by a smaller liaison group who can make sense of the results of the drop-in to inform their decision or recommendation (for example, whether to adopt a particular flood defence scheme).

  - There have been concerns about 'divide and rule' in the past, in which case there will need to be some kind of public meeting at some point.
  - Partner organisations can't or won't attend (in which case work with them to decide what would be appropriate first). Allegations of 'divide and rule' may arise unless a united front can be established in some way.
  - There is a strong lobby/antagonistic group or individual (in which case work may need to be done to engage them before any drop-in takes place – this may provide vital intelligence).

Deciding on numbers/ locations for drop-ins/surgeries

Establishing some principles about how these aspects will be decided on can be extremely useful. For example:

- The number of events, their location and timing can have major resource implications. Often the number, location and timing of events can mean balancing internal needs (such as being well-briefed/prepared) with timeliness from the potential attendees point of view. For example, it was found after the summer 2007 floods that the most successful drop-ins were held:
  - soon after the floods;
  - in collaboration with partners, at the request of local council/other bodies;
  - in venues chosen by and accessible to the community;
  - in areas where the Environment Agency could do something.

- Experience of the summer 2007 post-flood drop-ins shows that area-based decisions (supported by the regional director) are the most appropriate. Some drop-ins held at national level were poorly attended.

Establishing a joined-up approach with partners and other organisations

It has been shown that:

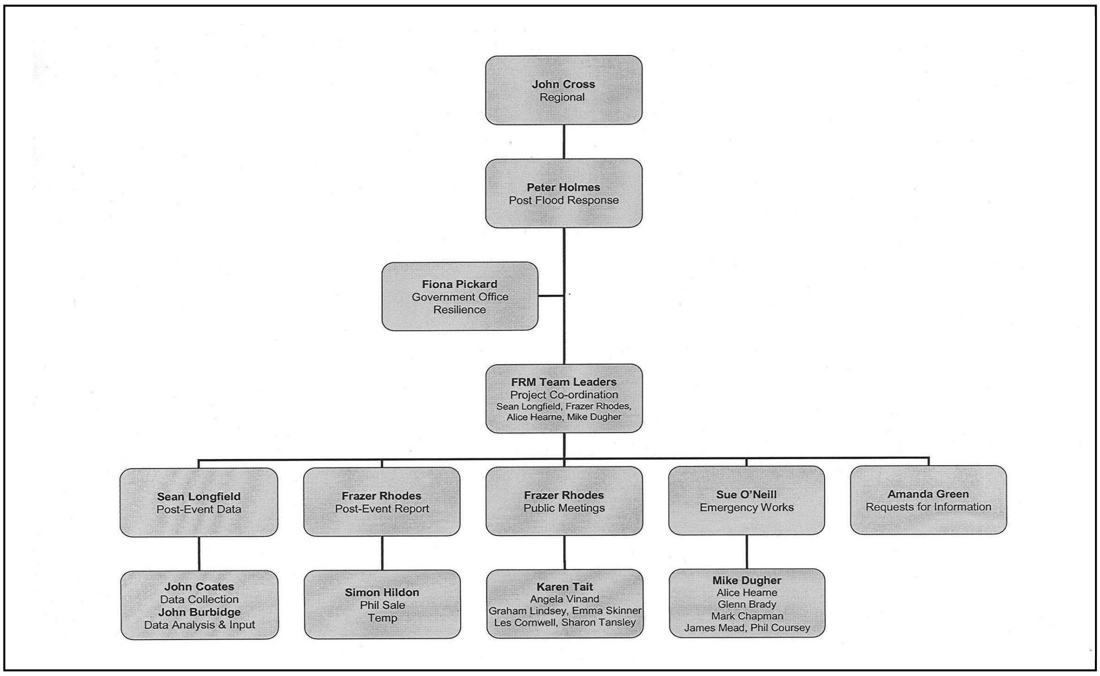
- Drop-ins were most successful after the summer 2007 floods when a multi-agency approach was adopted to host the events, involving the Environment Agency and others such as local authorities (highways, drainage, community services), police, fire and rescue service, water company, Association of British Insurers, Primary Care Trust, Citizens Advice Bureau, British Waterways, housing associations and local organisations . Work in the Midlands showed that a joined-up approach was always welcomed by staff and participants; conversely, there was criticism/a negative reaction where only the Environment Agency attended.
- Joined-up approaches are best done in advance**.** For example, a good approach would be the Local Resilience Forum agreeing a strategy for how to handle drop-ins/public meetings, how to adopt a joined-up approach with the media (at the strategic if not day-to-day level), producing joint advice/information packs, sharing flood ambassador roles, use of websites and so on.
- Taking part in events run by other organisations (such as by Barnsley Council during the summer 2007 floods) can be resource-efficient *and* effective. Establish a clear decision-making process for deciding whether or not to attend drop-ins or meetings organised by others. Otherwise decisions will be ad hoc and inconsistent, and can cause confusion (at best). The emphasis should always be on responding positively and having an influence on how the meeting/drop-in is run, to ensure the interaction is as positive as possible.

- Joined-up approaches will often work best if good relationships have already been established between the organisations. This may be at a technical or external relations level.
- Establish (and keep up to date) a stakeholder database for the local area, with individual contact names. Ask for help to develop it so it is user-friendly (searchable) – this database could be simple or a COBRA-style database.
- As part of your publicity strategy (which should have input from your regional corporate affairs or media team early on), consider establishing relationships with media such as the local BBC station (for example, BBC Radio Gloucestershire), which can be a useful way of getting information out in a crisis (such as widespread flooding). The media can give community updates as well as feeding information back to the Environment Agency.

Establishing an internal team/project structure to manage the events

- Create a project team/structure and treat the drop-in(s) as a project.
- Co-location of staff can help the team to work well.
- Have clear profiles for each of the roles envisaged: level of the staff member, their day job and what they're going to do when the drop-ins are initiated.

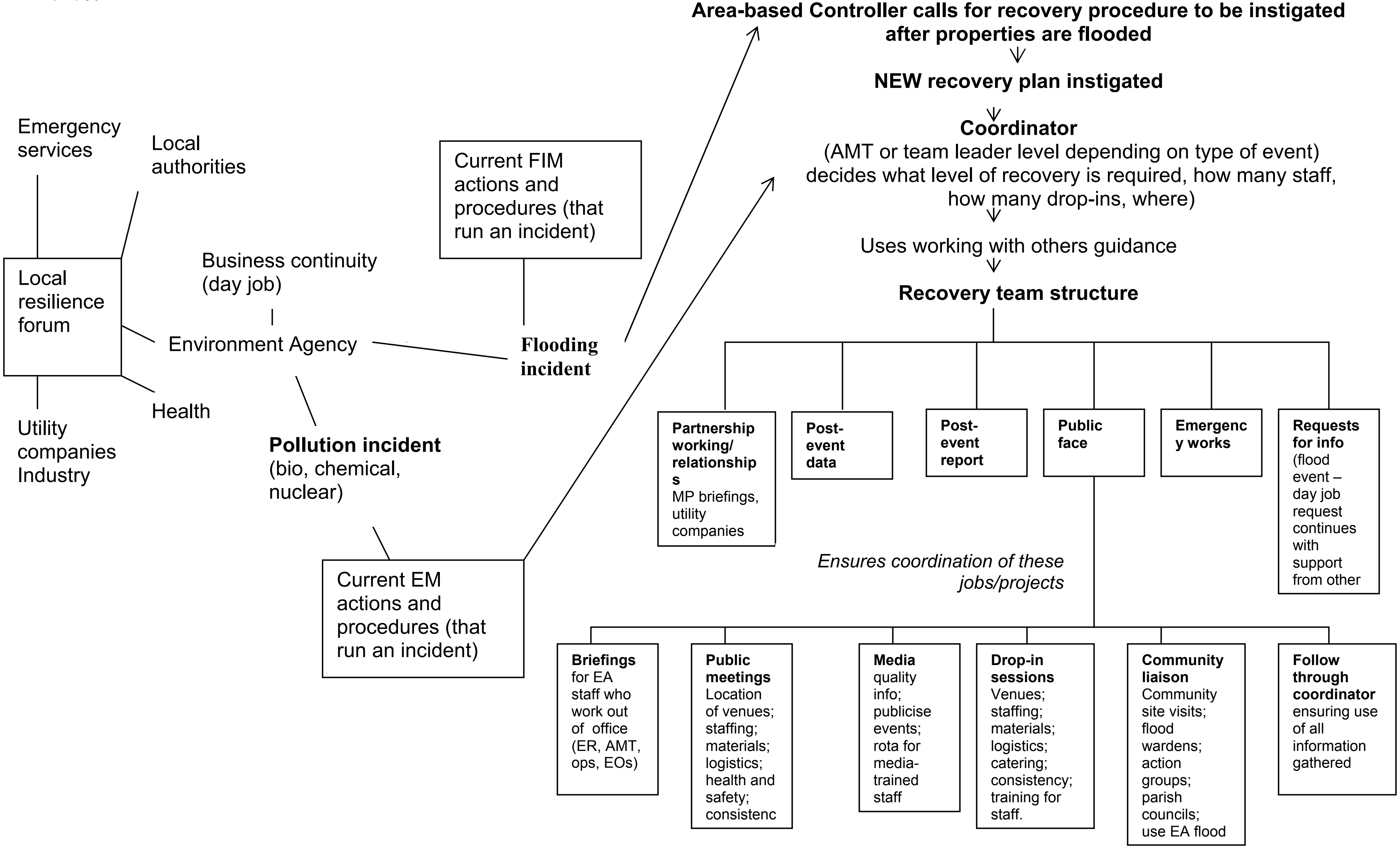
For example, after the 2007 summer flood drop-ins in the North East, the following structure was established to deal with running 33 drop-ins:



In addition to the internal team, it is vital to establish how this fits with external bodies. An example of such a system is given overleaf (thanks to Karen Tait and Emma Skinner for developing this):

Illustrative initiation procedure for reactive drop-ins (post-flooding)

Suggested new procedure (in blue – work needs to be done to link to Cabinet Office Guidance and the emerging Recovery Policy)



Secure staff with skills, knowledge and confidence in technical matters and in dealing with people

- Have a list of staff willing to participate in drop-ins [this can quickly be made into a rota in preparation for specific drop-ins]. This must take into consideration skills and knowledge required (such as local and technical knowledge). Where possible give staff a particular 'patch' (such as their local area) to keep up to date with, to build their confidence that they know enough even if they aren't specialists.

- Consider staff skills required. In the Thames Region, Western Area, staff with experience of dealing with distressed people (such as ex-police officers) were chosen to visit recently flooded areas; in the Midlands, staff with local knowledge were very valued by those attending drop-ins.

- At a typical drop-in between five and 10 staff may need to be on hand (present or on call). Typically the following **minimum** will be needed:
    - One member of staff on registration.
    - One member of staff able to give a general overview (and ideally a good spread of technical staff across functions to answer queries, including: development control, planning, assets, flood mapping and data).
    - One member of staff able to give technical staff briefings and to answer detailed technical questions about each key aspect of the drop-in.
    - One member of staff able to deal with interactive elements such as maps, laptops, flip charts.
    - One logistics member of staff to give logistical briefings and run logistics (including refreshments) throughout the drop-in.

- Ensure someone is able to set up technical equipment and software.

- Ensure someone (likely the technical member of staff) is media-trained.

- Ensure someone is locally knowledgeable.

- Ensure management allocate adequate resources, including terms the staff are working to (for example, staff find it helpful to know they can use casual mileage and take time in lieu, and which bits of the day job to drop).

- Clearly establish how staff can ask for more help when running major series of drop-ins (for example, in Midlands the drop-ins and related activities required the equivalent of 15 full-time staff between August and December 2007).

- Training and briefings are essential for staff to feel confident/equipped for the job. It is essential to consider who will produce them/where the resources will come from to do so. Suggested briefings include:
    - General drop-in training (such as planning how to run drop-ins, preparing answers to difficult questions, improving one-to-one skills).
    - Training for specific roles (such as flood ambassadors, dealing with media).
    - Building trust with others (how to design or facilitate working with others).
    - Briefings (written briefings, verbal briefings prior to the drop-in).
    - Information packs (such as fact sheets on the area or issue).

PREPARATION

This section assumes that foundations have been established (see previous section), and preparation is a matter of planning the details of particular events.

Aims

Experience shows that many staff are not aware of the aims of a drop-in/surgery. Ensure the whole team understands and, if possible, develops together the aims of the drop-ins:

These aims will typically cover three timeframes:

What has happened?	Helping all to make sense of the situation – facts, response, perceptions
What now?	Helping all to understand what is going on now, what is available, what can be done, what problems/questions remain
What next?	Laying the foundations for the future, and working together

There should also be aims on giving information to others, receiving information from them and working together/establishing relationships.

The aims of the drop-ins should be complimentary to other activities; for example, do they relate to any public meeting or activities with media and VIPs such as MPs?

Deciding on numbers/locations

The location and number of drop-ins/surgeries should be decided based on those who will attend as participants and on staffing capabilities (see Foundations section).

In choosing a venue, consider:

- **Location**: Environment Agency-led drop-ins must only be held where there is Environment Agency responsibility, otherwise the drop-in MUST be done with/by partners (such as the local authority) – we are not normally the lead on recovery.
- **Type of venue:** The best places are normally well known to the local community; for example, church or community halls are normally closest to the communities affected and have appropriate facilities, are the easiest to promote and advertise. Venues further away are less appropriate. Use of hotels can work well, depending on their facilities, cost, location and how busy they'll be.
- **Capacity/accessibility:** When is it available? Is there disabled access? Can X people fit in? Is there space for the layout you require eg height of room for display boards?
- **Facilities**: Do they have tea/coffee-making facilities? Toilets? A private area?
- A risk assessment is needed for venues (often the same for each venue).

Note: Having a list of suitable venues for the future, using advice of partners/community contacts, can be useful: see Foundations section for further information.

Note: Use of external consultants to organise venues did not work in the North East post-summer 2007 floods: the consultants did not know the area or the venues and the venue-finding work had to be done in-house at the last minute.

Note: Be careful of being over-influenced by community leaders hijacking or dictating venues or arrangements for drop-ins.

Joining up with partners/others

Experience shows that joining up with others works best if relationships and/or procedures have already been established before the drop-in (see Foundations). If this has not been done, a letter requesting another organisation's presence at a drop-in will **not** usually be sufficient - just as it is not usually sufficient for the Environment Agency to want to attend a drop-in or public meeting run by another organisation that has simply sent a 'summons'. You will at minimum need to find someone relevant to talk to, and give them some opportunity to find out about and potentially influence how the drop-in is run.

- Where possible, plan your drop-ins/surgeries WITH other organisations. This is especially important if we do not have the lead role, for example where flooding was a result of surface water flooding. Collaboration with the local authority is particularly important if it is leading on recovery.
- Ask partner organisations to suggest who/which organisations should attend drop-ins: they may know key people (such as loss adjusters) and services (such as a crèche) vital to the success of the drop-in.
- Attend events instigated by others (and influence them to be as constructive as possible). Responding to requests from the community/parish councils can be particularly constructive: these tended to be the best attended/most constructive post-summer 2007 drop-ins in the North East. If flood ambassadors are used to visit people during the flooding, they can provide useful local intelligence about whether a drop-in might be useful for people.
- If there are many events taking place (such as post-crisis drop-ins) establish a shared a calendar of events with other organisations. This should include national campaigns.
- From flood drop-in experience in the North East, the following are recommended:
    - Liaise with key people in the community such as flood wardens, neighbourhood managers and parish councillors to decide if a drop-in is needed and/or if it can be combined with other nearby events. *Note, this doesn't mean holding an event in every parish!*
    - List organisations/civil contingency partners (CCPs) who should be involved in a multi-agency drop-in (including insurers/loss adjustors).
    - keep a list of key personnel (LRF recovery sub-group or post-event manual).
    - Working with voluntary sector organisations can be useful; this could include groups such as the National Flood Forum. The groups which will be helpful will vary in each locality. These groups may be able to encourage other organisations or individuals such as loss adjustors to attend.

Establish and prepare your team

See the Foundations section for details of the types of teams/initiation procedures that work well - this should have already been established in your area/region before the drop-in is planned. If a major series of drop-ins is planned (10 or more), the office-based team should not go to the drop-in sessions – it is difficult (Midlands suggest impossible) to organise the sessions, attend them and service the resulting correspondence.

Having staff present at a drop-in is critical to building trust, enabling people to establish relationships with the Environment Agency and to find out what they need to know. Draw up a rota of who will be staffing the drop-in, and what questions or explanations they are able to deal with.

- For each drop-in, the staff required will be different (see Foundations section).

  For example, typical post-2007 flood drop-ins worked best when the team included [staff provided by Environment Agency/partner organisations]:
    - Two staff on reception
    - One lead on logistics (included dealing with refreshments)
    - One lead on technical matters
    - Flood incident management (FIM) (if flood warning service in the area)
    - Development control
    - Planning (if contentious issues)
    - Operations delivery
    - Assets (defences)
    - At least one media-trained member of staff

- It is useful to have at least one team leader or manager and at least one person with local knowledge amongst the team.
- A 'lead' member of staff for logistics/technical sides can be helpful.
- It can also be useful to have extra staff on call or on the end of the phone.
- Ensure someone is in charge of reducing staff numbers if attendance is low, which can save huge amounts of time.
- You will need to plan time out for staff/a daily rota (lead logistical). Also provide a staff room for them to take breaks in.
- Each member of staff will need to be allocated roles during a drop-in (lead logistical). Experience shows that every aspect (even what seem to be small roles) can be time-consuming.
- Ensure your staff feel comfortable with their roles, and that they have had appropriate briefing (see below and the During the drop-in section), and where needed training (such as media training).
- Encourage staff attending drop-ins to keep an eye on each other, particularly those who are perhaps less experienced in dealing with the public.

Below are excerpts from actual staff rotas

Shaldon, Devon (proactive flood risk drop-in)

STAFF		External relations	FIM	Technical specialist	Technical specialist	Other	Press officer
DATE/time							
0840	Set up						
1000	Briefing						
	Registration						
	Refreshments						
	Enquiries 1 (overview)						
	Enquiries 2 (technical)						
	Flipcharts and map						
1100 - 1300	Registration						
	Refreshments						
	Enquiries 1 (overview)						
	Enquiries 2 (technical)						
	Flipcharts and map						

Shifnal, Shropshire (post-flood drop-in) staffing rota

Shifnal - Tuesday 20 November 2007	Venue: The Park House Hotel, Park Street, Shifnal, Shropshire, TF11 9BA		
Role	**Name**	**Department/ organisation**	**Contact details on the day**
Lead Tech	Name	Flood Risk Mapping and Data Team Leader (West)	
Lead Logistics	Name (refreshments to be ordered at hotel on the day)	Senior External Relations Officer (West)	
Logistics	Name	External Relations Officer (West)	
Additional Tech	Name 2.00pm start (tech set up)	Flood Incident Management (West)	
Additional Tech	Name 2.00pm start	Asset Systems Management (West)	
Additional Tech	Name	Development Control Officer (West)	
Additional Tech	Name 2.00pm	Operations Delivery (West)	
Environmental Management Tech	Competent Officer (8.30 am - 5.00 pm)	Standby Officer (5.00 pm - 8.00 pm)	
Other Authorities	Name	Land Drainage Engineer, Bridgnorth District Council	
	Name	Flooding Manager, West - Severn Trent	
	Name	Flooding Team, Severn Trent	
	Name	Shropshire Highways	
Press			
MP	Name (tbc)		
RFDC Member	(tbc)		
Environment Agency 24-Hour Press Line	Duty officer		
Courier	Name	Stand & Deliver Couriers	
Contact at Venue	Name	Conference & Events Admin Manager, Park House Hotel	

What information and materials to provide?

Experience shows it is important that people know there is information available, but not to swamp people with information. Leaflets, booklets and fact sheets should be given out when requested or needed and tailored to individual needs. Start with a limited number of publications on display and adapt it once those most in demand are known.

Experience shows it is useful to provide information in the following ways:

- **Displays** on walls/exhibition/nomadic boards – these can include pictures, maps, words, facts and figures. Ensure they tell a story/are not in technical jargon and are locally framed and relevant.
- **Leaflets/booklets**. Be careful not to have too many on show: put out key ones and have others available on request. Change those displayed if demand shows they are required! It is usually the most practical ones that are most in demand (such as flood products booklets; what to do with your garden/how to fix your house post-flooding), and the more technical (such as about different types of flooding, diagrams/visuals to explain technical points, why we don't dredge) that should be brought out if and when needed.
- **Fact sheets**. Leaflet versions of the exhibition can be useful for people to take away. These can avoid misunderstandings through word of mouth.
- **Laptops**. These can be used for presentations or can be hooked up to the internet/intranet for searching (for example, to see whether people are signed up to Flood Warnings Direct (FWD)), or to provide interactive maps.
- Via **Environment Agency staff.** People can be the most effective way of providing information (see Staffing below).
- Via others such as **partner organisations**, members of a liaison group, those with local knowledge.

Information to provide at a post-flood drop-in

The following were provided in the North East and Midlands post-flood drop-ins:

Photographs	Site-specific for each drop-in. Up to 30 printed (A4) to be displayed on the boards. Also available on a looped presentation saved onto **laptop 1**.
Maps	Site-specific maps printed and displayed on the table in the middle of the room and/or around the side if space is limited. 25/50 K (A0) map of the whole area covered by the drop-in session. Lower scale 10K maps of the towns and villages on various paper sizes.
Hydrographs	Flood event hydrograph curves from the July flood event. Also comparisons with historic events. All printed onto A3. To be displayed with the A3 showing when the flood warnings were given.
Gauge Board	A3 sheets showing the gauge boards with historic flood levels.
Hyrad	A printout on A2 showing the maximum rainfall for the July event. The Hyrad images also available **laptop 2** if there is a trained member of staff there on the day [note: plasma screen is a good tool and very professional-looking].
Rainfall Data	Rainfall comparison phrase for each sessions. For example: "On July 2007 98 mm of rainfall fell at Hindlip near Upton upon Severn. This is equivalent to over twice the normal average for July."
Gauging Station	Two photos (A3) showing the outside of the nearest gauging station to the drop-in session and the inside of a gauging station.
Level Peaks	A chart showing recent and historic peaks in the Severn catchment.
Flood Warning	A map showing the coverage of the flood warning system for that area, if it has one.
Flood Zones	The flood zone maps are available on **laptop 2** (only to be shown if actually asked for by a member of the public).
LiDAR maps	LiDAR maps which show height of ground and aerial photography – on table/nomadic. These help people visualise low spots, extent of flooding and so on. Good to split these up.
FWD information	A list of properties signed up/not signed up to the nearest warning areas together with recruitment forms for FWD. The public could quickly look down the list to see whether they were registered for the service, and often took extra forms for their neighbours.

Publications and briefings

How to exchange information and views

Drop-ins and surgeries work best when they are interactive. Drop-ins should not just be about the Environment Agency giving information, but about allowing and encouraging others to offer their information and views. People can only make sense of information if they are 'allowed' to interact with it – the old model of the 'empty vessel' waiting to be filled with expert information has long been discredited.

Information and views provided by others can be extremely valuable to the Environment Agency. For example, these can help to provide feedback on a service, identify people or partners to work with in the future, understand what happened during an incident, or test theoretical models.

Giving thought to what information/views might be most useful and how best to gather and capture these will save enormous amounts of time after the drop-ins:

- Record people's contact details at the registration desk: this is invaluable for contacting them in the future.
- Ensure it is possible for staff and visitors to clearly distinguish between enquiries (people asking a question) and comments/views/information (people wanting to tell or show the Environment Agency/others something). Ensure people can do both, and do everything possible to:
    - answer as many enquiries as possible at the drop-in;
    - capture the information/view, explaining how it will be used/responded to;
    - enable people to act there and then (for example, sign up to FWD);
    - ensure all are clear on how/when they can expect an answer to any queries/requests that are made, for example, a webpage set up on frequently asked questions (FAQs) or a letter within 20 days.
- **Gathering comments/views/information**
    - Encouraging people to bring in their own photographs/other documentation relating to the subject of the drop-in can generate huge quantities of data. Consider using laptops with scanners so people can scan their pictures in (after filling in the Corporate Affairs permission form!), and can print them out/paste them on the display themselves. This also ensures information is not lost and minimises time to return pictures.
    - It may be useful to have a questionnaire for visitors to complete with their comments/views/information. Provide freepost envelopes if they are unable to complete the questionnaire at the drop-in. Having a café or similar area at the exhibition provides a place and incentive for people to sit and take their time to fill in the questionnaire alone or with staff or other visitors.
    - With proactive drop-ins, have some flip charts where people can write public comments – others will often add their own comments and answer queries. This has worked well in Shaldon and other drop-ins (such as Boscastle), demonstrating openness and allowing people to answer each other's queries and concerns, although some staff view this as 'risky'.

- Have a large map of the area, where people can add comments on post-its or using map pins.
- Consider having a form for sending comments/questions to other bodies.

- **Dealing with enquiries/requests**
  - Ensure your enquiry form only gathers questions/requests (not comments – see above) and that it is ONLY handed in if the enquiry/request has not been answered at the drop-in (saving time after the drop-in).
  - Consider how to deal with enquiries to other bodies – ideally have them at the drop-in! If not possible, consider having a form to send them.
  - Consider whether having a laptop with a database/link to the internet might help answer queries/requests at the drop-in (for example, whether someone is in a particular area, or whether they are or can be signed up to FWD or to receive particular leaflets; some councils – such as Hull - have interactive websites where enquiries and comments can be logged directly onto a map).

- **Staff report forms**. As well as having the above, it is useful for staff to be equipped to note their own comments/views and enquiries. These can be quickly collated into a report to evaluate the effectiveness of the drop-ins (as in Midlands post-summer 2007 floods).

Note: Example query forms and questionnaires are provided in the appendix to this report. Forms may need different wording, depending on what will be done with the information gathered. Legal departments may need to be consulted over issues like wording to cover data protection issues.

Publicity

Decide on a publicity strategy for your drop-ins/other related activities including:

- Posters (in shops, bus shelters) and flyers (at emergency centres, libraries, doctor surgeries, other meetings, to hand out by flood ambassadors and so on).
- Press/media work (including paying to place adverts rather than just relying on press releases, using partner's publications such as the local authority free newsletter, proactive use of radio interviews/features).
- Individual invites (the Midlands post-flood drop-in found that people whose homes had flooded had mail redirected, so this was the best way to reach them).
- Other systems (such as use of FWD – especially as community areas will be established by 2010). Ensure drop-ins are easily found on the Environment Agency website and 'join up' with other organisations' websites (web links).
- Spread the word (at meetings, when out and about in the community, via key individuals such as flood wardens or partners in contact with the community).

Layout

See During the drop-in section.

Briefings

Two types of briefings will be available to staff (from Environment Agency and other organisations):

- **Paper briefings:** questions and answers, difficult situations (see below), staff behaviour, rotas/roles, local information (sent to staff before the drop-in).
- **Verbal/interactive briefing**: may be day before, but most likely to be run just before the drop-in starts, including considering how to answer difficult questions/situations expected, how to listen well, layout of the drop-in, who is there to answer what, learning from previous drop-ins, issues arising and so on.

Example of a quick brain storm of difficult questions to prepare for, prior to a post-flooding drop-in (Midlands, July 2007)

- Upton on Severn and Worcester. Why didn't barriers go up?
- Overtopping/failure of flood defences. Maintenance questions. Why aren't certain things maintained (such as channel/dredging)?
- What are you going to do about flooding in my village/town X?
- You said you learnt from floods in 1998, 2000. What did you learn, what did you do?
- We will be not having return period data – will not be able to tell them whether defences are fit for purpose.
- Why was my house built in the flood plain?
- Why was flood warning late, why didn't I get one?
- Why doesn't the Environment Agency dredge rivers any more?
- Why did you open or shut sluice gates which do or don't exist..?
- Farmers/rural areas – why are they less protected? Why is rural land sacrificial compared to urban? Costs of summer floods to farmers is huge. Compensation.
- Why are some places defended and others not?
- What's all this talk of surface water? Why have I flooded now and not in the past? (pluvial versus fluvial).
- Why did the Environment Agency spend millions on a scheme which made flooding worse?
- Why are utilities built in floodplains? Lots of people not flooded but still affected?
- If the Environment Agency won't protect me, can I build my own flood defence?
- Why couldn't I get hold of anybody when I phoned? (Tewkesbury building was evacuated/NCCC – people stuck in loops? Also floodline. National phone line not as easy to get through).

Getting the logistics right

Even for a one-off drop-in, organising logistics is an important task. For those organising a series of drop-ins (for example the summer 2007 flood drop-ins where regions were running between 20 and 40 drop-ins over several months), it is important to deal with logistics in the most resource-efficient way.

Top tips from the teams in the North East and Midlands:

- Have a lead logistics person for each event – they provide the briefing and materials needed (and refreshments).
- Use a courier or other trusted contractor to deliver/set up displays.
- Use a distribution company to distribute leaflets/fliers to save time and money.
- Have a cool box/crates (provision of refreshments to staff and public is beneficial), trolley and nomadic displays. If refreshments are only available to staff, do not eat/drink in front of visitors!
- Folder at each drop-in session with essential information about what should happen at each event, contact details and so on.
- Timing. If a one-day event runs from 2pm to 8pm, allow time to set up and then for staff to split shifts. Where longer term drop-ins are planned, it is good to offer at least one full day, and one day at a weekend where possible.
- Scaling down. Lead person should be responsible for deciding if attendance by staff can be reduced if numbers at drop-in lower than anticipated.
- Scaling up. Have other staff on call/on the end of the phone.
- Clarify how to pay people such as community venues who do not want to be invoiced, and the procurement process; allocate people who can use their credit cards if necessary.
- Ensure staff know if they can take time in lieu, overtime, if they can claim mileage and what they can drop from their other duties.
- Direct enquires/make it easy for people to contact you. Have a way for people to give information without attending (such as dedicated email in Gloucestershire).
- Do not open the doors or put up wobble boards/signage directing to venue until all displays are up and all staff have been briefed.
- Compile rolling logistical briefing including lessons learnt from previous sessions and list of any persistent complainants.

DURING THE DROP-IN/SURGERY

Drop-in room layout

Drop-ins/surgeries work best when they are designed from the point of view of the visitor, so that once they are welcomed (at the registration desk) there is a natural flow to the room, as well as a range of ways for them to:

- get the information they need;
- give the views/information they want to share (and that may be needed by the Environment Agency/others);
- take time out/reflect (alone/with others).

Typically, your drop-in exhibition will be structured or will touch on the following:

- what has happened in the past;
- what is happening now;
- what is happening next.

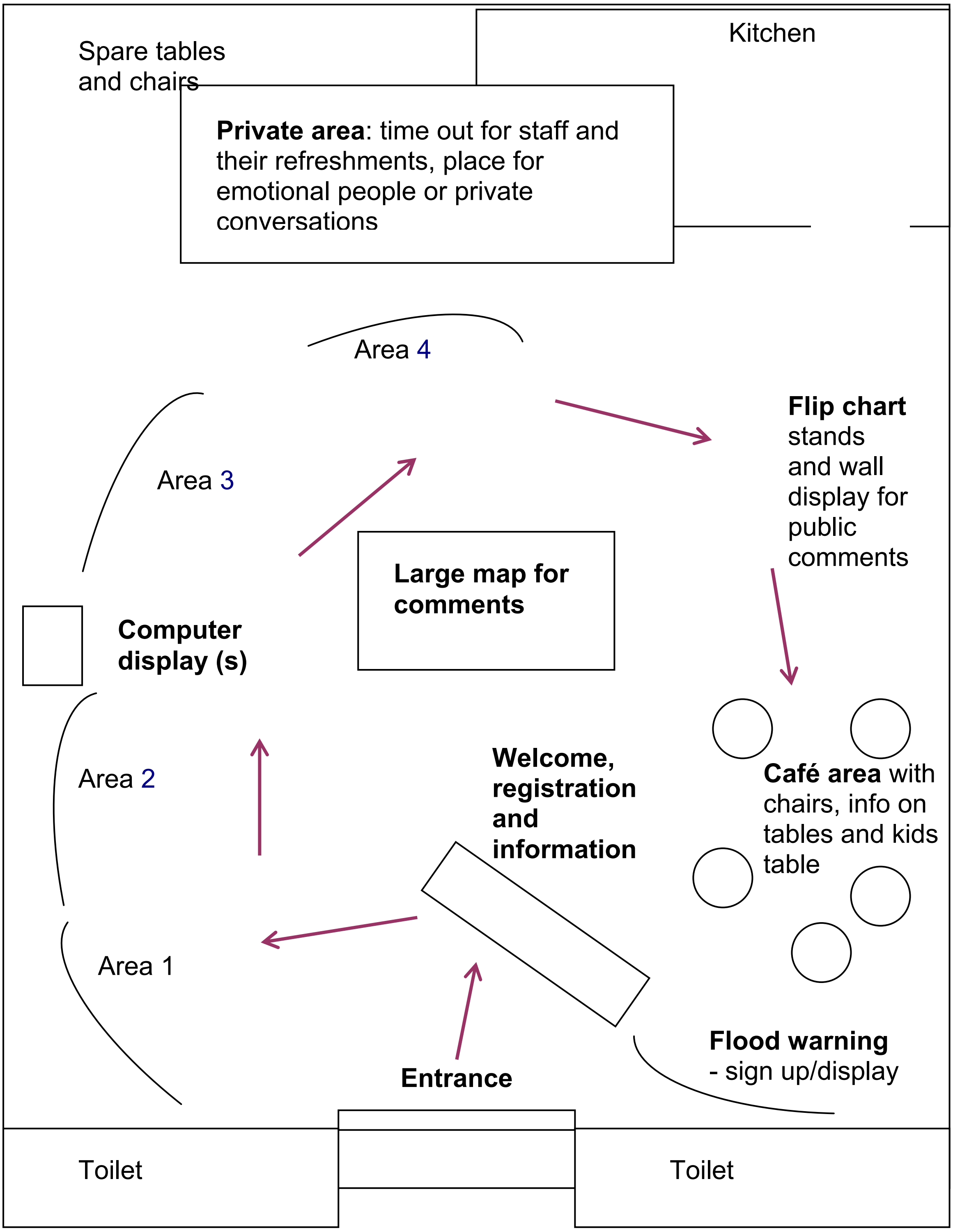
For further guidance on creating effective exhibitions/exhibition boards, see the *Building Trust with Communities* Exhibition Guide.

It is useful to have a standard/template for the drop-in layout illustrating what to include and where. Experience shows this helps with setting up/taking down times, especially if you have a number of drop-ins to run. The first time a team sets up a drop-in, leave at least one hour to do it, preferably 90 minutes.

The diagram overleaf shows a typical layout.

Experience shows it is useful to include:

- Registration area with signing in sheets and someone with people skills continually on registration to counsel/direct people. Post-summer 2007 flood drop-ins showed this helped to diffuse the situation.
- Exhibition boards, laptops, leaflets (see what information to provide below). Consider how to spread this out as much as possible – have more than one exhibition board.
- Café area and/or private area for informal conversations, interviews, staff/visitors to have time to selves, briefing and so on.
- Ways for people to bring/log information/queries/comments and for the Environment Agency to capture it (including feedback forms, enquiry forms, laptop/scanner for pictures, flip chart area, interactive maps).
- Kids table/area/crèche (this often provides useful place to take time out!), although you may need to check health and safety and insurance.
- Seating area for giving talks/questions and answers sessions, in addition to the other areas (for private conversations and so on).
- Starting/gathering place for any tours of the local area.


Spare tables and chairs
Kitchen
Private area: time out for staff and their refreshments, place for emotional people or private conversations
Area 4
Area 3
Flip chart stands and wall display for public comments
Large map for comments
Computer display (s)
Area 2
Welcome, registration and information
Café area with chairs, info on tables and kids table
Area 1
Flood warning - sign up/display
Entrance
Toilet
Toilet

Building an excellent drop-in experience

The following have been shown to add huge value to drop-ins, for both visitors and staff. By building an excellent drop-in experience, the stress and anxiety for all can be reduced at the same time as improving the outcomes for all parties:

- **Registration, meet and greet:** ensure everyone who arrives is welcomed, listened to and signposted to the best way to start – where to go, who to talk to and so on. This can help in diffusing confrontational situations (people feel heard from the moment they arrive), making people feel less anxious and helping to ensure the right staff meet the right people (saving time of visitors and of staff). There needs to be at least one (preferably two) people dedicated to the registration desk, skilled in dealing with people. When people leave, ensure they are **thanked**/have done all they need (such as leaving questionnaires in box, having signed up to X).

- **Sign people in:** ensure contact (and other relevant) details of visitors are captured on the way out, or on the way in to the drop-in.

- Design the drop-in with people in mind. Have a **private area** if the subject is at all controversial/emotional – this has proven valuable for both visitors and for staff, and for individual time out/discussions. Have a **café/sociable area** where people can fill out questionnaires, have small meetings and chats with others (this can extend the length of time people stay by up to 45 minutes). Consider a **crèche/children's** area.

- Where possible provide **refreshments** (water, tea, coffee, juice, biscuits) to visitors and staff, and lunch/supper to staff on long shifts.

- **Theme** areas for different interests, such as space for people to talk to FIM, Operations Delivery, the local authority, water company and so on.

- Consider how to make sure **everyone** visiting the drop-in gets a chance to talk to an expert if they want to by considering the room/staff positions and where needed having timed slots, moving people on, having a table where one individual member of staff talks to a group rather than individually.

- **Work closely with partners**: give them a clearly defined area to be in/a display space so it is easy to direct people to them to discuss relevant issues; ensure they are included in any prebriefing emails/face-to-face sessions.

- **Help people take action/get their answers there and then**: enable them to sign up to FWD (in flood warning areas), enable them to upload pictures to computers, direct them to people who can answer their queries.

- Be **prepared to change your plans** if it isn't working out! For example, if one area of the exhibition is overcrowded, spread it out. If one leaflet is particularly popular, get more copies. If 300 people turn up at once expecting a presentation, don't keep them queuing outside because you expected 30! Try to be accommodating – ask them in, explain the difficulty. If you feel able to, or have use of a professional facilitator, consider an impromptu presentation. Or explain the situation, take details, arrange for them to come back later, or at another time.

- Have **generic signs** made up, for example to reception, local authority and so on to ensure venue is easily navigable.

Being prepared

One way of reducing the stress for staff and maximising the usefulness for visitors is to ensure all staff are well prepared. This includes both individual and collective preparation.

Individually. Before you attend a drop-in, you will find it useful to:

- Be clear about the aims of the drop-in, your role, the role of others, how to deal with people/questions/situations that you may find challenging.
- Identify any training/development needs you have and find out if you are able to address them.
- Have any Environment Agency messages/info/plans clear in your mind (and which questions you can answer/which to refer on).
- Consider how you will capture/use/signpost/provide information as usefully as possible.

Collectively. Before the drop-in, the team should:

- Be clear what the drop-in aims to achieve.
- Run through how the drop-in will work.
- Identify and address how to deal with any anticipated tricky questions, situations, issues or people.
- Clarify everyone's roles.
- Receive relevant briefings on the local area, the issue and so on.
- Clarify who can make what decisions (such as logistics, technical).

Key skills to develop for any interaction with the public are dealing with difficult behaviour, one-to-one interactions and listening/questioning (see overleaf for guidance). These skills can be developed on a pre-drop-in training course or as part of a drop-in briefing (focused on the difficult issues/questions anticipated).

Learning from the experience

It is always possible to improve on how a drop-in is run. Consider how you will gather feedback and ideas for improving the session next time including:

- Encouraging visitors to give feedback (for example, on a feedback form).
- Encouraging staff and partners to give feedback (for example, on an insights form).
- Have a quick debrief after the drop-in session with staff and partners involved to review how the session went (note things that worked well and issues to improve).
- Over a series of drop-ins, ensuring lessons learned are fed into the next drop-in (via rolling brief) so mistakes are not repeated over and over.
- Identifying someone to oversee/chase this work and have a deadline for completion.

Key skills: Dealing with difficult behaviour

So called 'difficult behaviour' may take many forms, and different forms will be more or less difficult to handle by different people. Typically, difficult behaviour falls into four categories, each associated with a set of negative characteristics. However, these mask their positive potential (which can often come to the fore once people feel listened to, understood and that they have a role/responsibility to do something).

	Negative characteristics	Positive potential
Bully	Abusive, aggressive, won't listen	Leadership role: will convince others
Critic	Detailed analysis, finger pointing, questioning, blame	Provider/analyser of useful information
Victim	Helplessness, tears, passive/aggressive, poor me	Will do what is required/join in
Show off	Exaggerated reports, knows it all, won't listen	Energy, enthusiasm, role model

The secret in dealing with all these behaviours lies in individual preparation, listening well, the layout of the drop-in and follow through. This section looks at the first two of these.

Key skills: Dealing with one-to-one interactions

1. Be clear about the aims of the drop-in, your role, the role of others.
2. Consider before you start how you will deal with people/questions/situations that you may find challenging.
3. Try to feel confident before you start about the experience – and if you are finding it difficult, take time out to recover during the event.
4. Start from where they are – LISTEN well (see listening sequence below) first, to make them feel heard/understood before you respond.
5. Do everything you can to capture and use the information they bring to you, where you can, to answer their questions honestly and where you can't, to signpost them to relevant people/information.

Key skills: Using the listening sequence

You can use the following sequence to ensure people are genuinely understood, to improve chances of constructive exchange, and to find out who the person needs to talk to by adopting the following model of active listening. Practice using it on anticipated difficult situations/questions/accusations.

Listen actively and supportively
(look at them directly, nod etc)

Reflect
('So you are concerned about…')

Clarify
('What specifically… when… who… where, examples')

If very clear – that is, if no clarification is needed

Respond	**Capture**
('What you could do…	On questionnaires
Here is the number of X…	Verbally
We can help by Y…	On flip charts
Unfortunately this is why….')	On the maps

This listening sequence can be practiced at your pre drop-in briefing session!

AFTER THE DROP-IN

Drop-ins should be considered as only one part of continued collaboration and cooperation with communities, partner organisations and others. The results of the drop-ins should be fed into further technical and involvement (communication) plans.

By definition, even the most uncontentious drop-in will need some follow up; it is simply not possible to hold a drop-in that doesn't result in some longer term action because drop-ins are a part of a continual process. After a major series of drop-in sessions (such as after an emergency situation), the follow-up can be substantial. For example, in the Midlands Region, post-summer 2007 floods drop-ins saw a 550 per cent increase in questions, letters, emails and phone enquires. Dealing with these within the terms of the customer charter took the work of six full-time staff equivalents.

Dealing with people face-to-face at the drop-ins is only part of the job. The data, views, ideas, suggestions and contact information gathered from the drop-in also needs to be taken on board and used. If it is not, many will (rightly) view the drop-in as a cynical stunt, without real value. Experience shows that even six months after post-emergency drop-ins have been run, it is not clear exactly how information has been used as most of the focus of activity is on responding to enquiries. Someone needs to have the responsibility for overseeing this vital set of tasks.

Careful planning for the post drop-in work can not only ensure the information gathered is used and the follow-up more useful, it can save huge amounts of time. For example, differentiating at the drop-in between comments and enquiries that have been answered at the drop-in (or that don't require an answer) and those that do, will ensure that only those that do require answering add to the post drop-in workload.

Dealing with the information/views/interest generated

- How/who to use/capture/direct respond to any suggestions/offers/comments (such as produce a report, follow up with a public meeting, set up a liaison group)?
- How/who to use/capture/return the information provided by attendees such as pictures, data, videos of floods (and use of these to inform work such as flood maps, updating gauge information)?
- How/who to pass relevant information onto other organisations?
- How/who to follow up people who have signed up for taking action/being more involved? Will forms be sent out for sign up to FWD? Have they offered to sit on a liaison group? Become a flood warden? Will they get a newsletter?
- How/who to follow up the contact details secured (not just to put them on a database, but to demonstrate that you are now in touch with them)? It is not effective to send a thank you letter for attending unless additional information is included such as a short update, note on next steps, report or newsletter.

Dealing with requests/enquiries requiring follow up

- How/when to respond to the questions/enquiries posed by attendees (on enquiry forms)? Will the response be done individually or as a whole (by posting FAQs on website, in information folders, producing a newsletter, writing an article for the local parish magazine)?

- Answering questions collectively/writing a report on the results of the drop-in and next steps can help galvanise a sense of collective interest and action.
- How/who to deal with media enquiries/requests? Often post drop-in features will provide excellent opportunity for joint work with partners to raise awareness, encourage action and so on.
- How/who to deal with enquiries/requests from MPs/councillors or other VIPs?

Learning/reporting

Learning or reporting may relate to either the process of the drop-in (how it went) and/or the content of the drop-in (what was learned about the issue, people or situation).

It may involve:

- Analysing the results of feedback and evaluations from the drop-ins (participants and/or staff and partners) and pulling together a lessons learned report (on paper or at a debriefing meeting for staff and/or partner organisations).
- Feeding lessons learned to relevant parts of the Environment Agency (through internal round-up/lessons learned or *Building Trust with Communities*) and/or external reports and to other partners to ensure others benefit.
- Feeding back to the public (such as through a newsletter).

Longer term planning/prevention/preparedness

Drop-ins should be considered a starting point for continued collaboration and cooperation with communities, partner organisations and others. Some proactive drop-ins will have been set up in order to establish that ongoing cooperation, but even reactive post-crisis drop-ins need to be used as a platform from which to improve cooperation and planning to build resilience to similar events in the future. For flooding, for example, this will involve considering how/who is going to do what at each stage of the flood cycle, and how (and in what role) the Environment Agency will work with civil contingency partners and the community/voluntary groups and with individuals to deliver what is needed. The table below shows some of the things that will need to be considered.

Considering longer term cooperation requires decisions on what the Environment Agency can offer/how to work with communities in the future and ideally, presenting or testing these at the actual drop-in. For example:

- providing advice on community flood action plans or emergency plan templates;
- assisting with establishing flood wardens/flood groups;
- progressing/planning flood defence schemes;
- providing flood ambassadors.

In addition, cross-organisational work needs to be done with partner organisations to follow through the drop-ins by, where possible, joint promotion and planning for similar future situations. For example, ask the Local Resilience Forum to set out a post-emergency engagement strategy that covers how to manage drop-ins across organisational boundaries. See Foundations section for details.

Working with partners and communities to improve flood resilience

The table below highlights the need for joined-up working with individuals, communities and organisations involved with flooding in terms of:

- data – sharing data and information;
- design – planning to improve flood resilience;
- delivery – practical activities.

Activities need to cover all stages of the flood cycle – from planning and prevention through to preparedness, response and aftercare/recovery.

Type of activity	Stage of flood cycle			
	Planning and prevention	**Risk assessment**, **warning** (preparedness)	**Response** during flooding (readiness onwards)	**Aftercare**, **recovery** and adaptation
Data: share/discuss information	*What data or information sharing can help with planning and prevention?*	*What data or information sharing can help with risk assessment, warning and preparedness?*	*What data or information sharing is needed during a flood?*	*What data or information sharing is needed after a flood?*
Design: designing/ planning	*What designing and planning can be done to prevent flooding risks?*	*What designing and planning can be done to help effective risk assessment, warning and preparedness?*	*What designing and planning is needed during a flood?*	*What designing and planning is needed as part of aftercare, recovery and adaptation?*
Deliver: practical activities	*What can be done on the ground to prevent flood risk?*	*What can be done on the ground to deliver effective flood risk, warning and preparedness?*	*What can be done on the ground during a flood?*	*What can be done on the ground to assist with aftercare, recovery and adaptation?*

For more information see detailed guidance:

- ***Building Trust with Communities* toolkit**
- **How much engagement do we need?**
- **Types of collaboration**
- **Who should do what?**

CHECKLISTS

Checklist 1: Foundations for effective drop-ins and surgeries

Checklist 2: Things to do before each drop-in/surgery

Checklist 3: Things to do during each drop-in/surgery

Checklist 4: Things to do after each drop-in/surgery

Checklist 1: Foundations for effective drop-ins and surgeries

This checklist can be used as a tick-off procedure, and/or to allocate specific people to tasks

Actions	By who			
	Area ER	FIM team	Other EA	Other organisation(s)
Establish aims for drop-ins/surgeries				
Guidance on when they might be appropriate and when not				
Guidance on when other activities will be needed as well as the drop-ins				
Deciding the number/location of drop-ins				
Guidance on the number/location/timing				
Clear decision-making process (who decides?)				
Establish a joined-up approach with partners and others				
Guidance on the need for joint approach with others				
Agree (eg via LRF/equivalent) a strategy for joined-up handling of post emergency engagement including drop-ins, media, information packs				
Establish database and keep it up to date				
Build on good relationships with other partners and establish new contacts (through ER or technical teams)				
Establish publicity strategy including working with local media				
Establish internal team/project structures				
Put in place mechanisms for specific project teams/structures to be formed to manage drop-ins (including co-location where possible)				
Consider the initiation procedure for emergency drop-ins (eg post flooding) and how these link to cross-partner work (eg LRF) and use of websites				
Decide how to secure staff with appropriate skills, knowledge and confidence				
Establish a staff list of those willing to participate in drop-ins (location-specific ideally)				
Establish a person specification for various jobs (eg flood ambassadors require X skills)				
Establish the minimum staffing level required for drop-ins (including local, people and technical knowledge)				
Establish how staff can ask for more help when running major series of events, the terms staff are working to (eg time off in lieu)				
Develop the skills of the staff who will be involved in drop-ins (on drop-ins/dealing with others generally, and for specific roles)				

Checklist 2: Things to do before each drop-in session

This checklist can be used as a tick-off procedure, and/or to allocate specific people to tasks

Actions	**By who**			
	Area ER	**FIM team**	**Other EA**	**Other organisation(s)**
Aims				
Involve the whole team in understanding/ developing specific aims for the drop-in(s), including how the drop-ins relate to other activities that will be going on				
Decide on the number of drop-ins, locations and timings				
Consider the needs of participants and staffing capabilities when choosing how many drop-ins, where they should be run, facilities required and the timings [have a list of appropriate venues/consult partners see below]				
Liaise with others to help decide location/number (eg flood wardens, parish council, local authority)				
Join up with partners/others				
Where possible, plan with partners (rather than just inviting them), including asking them who should attend, locations etc. Invitations to attend must be personal – not a summons!				
Prepare for sessions where partners cannot attend, eg can they send us information and contact details to give out?				
Where possible, respond positively to requests for events from others (eg from the community)				
Establish a shared calendar of events with other organisations (including national campaigns)				
Establish and prepare your team				
Between 5 and 10 staff for each drop-in (each with a specific role/skill), plus others on call. Where possible, establish leads for technical/people/logistics roles. Include other organisations' staff where possible.				
Plan a daily rota of all staff/their roles, and be clear who decides whether a team can stand down on the day (if insufficient numbers), breaks etc				
Email session rota to staff and partner staff				
Ensure all have sufficient training/skills/ confidence to fulfill their role, and appropriate conditions to their job (eg can they claim casual mileage, what about the day job)				
Ensure all are briefed (see briefing below)				
Decide what information and materials to provide (and how/who to produce/provide it)				
Displays (boards and maps)				
Leaflets/booklets/handouts				
Fact sheets				
Laptops				
Staff				
Partner organisations				
Prepare to collect information from the public				

Carefully consider how to maximize answering queries, capturing information and where possible signing people up to FWD on the day, rather than making it work to do after the event				
Contacts form to collect attendees details on arrival				
Prepare a set of feedback/questionnaire/enquiry forms that distinguish carefully between things that require a response after the drop-in and those that have been answered				
Ensure you are clear how/when enquiries will be answered *[eg FAQs on the web or a letter within 20 days etc],* and have staff allocated to do this. Consider how you will forward information to other organisations				
Consider using laptops/scanners (with consent forms) for people to upload/print their own information such as post-flooding pictures, or to sign up to FWD				
Consider using a map for detailed comments and a café area to encourage people to take time filling in their feedback/suggestions				
Prepare board or flip chats to collect public comments				
Use staff/partner feedback forms to gather their views about the drop-ins				
Publicity				
Decide on a publicity strategy for the drop-ins and other related activities. How will you let people know? Posters, media, individual invites, use of other systems (eg FWD), spreading the word.				
Pre-briefings on paper and face to face				
General briefings on the issue (paper/emailed)				
Preparing site-specific briefing notes for staff (context and FAQs) (paper/emailed)				
Pre drop-in interactive briefing for the team - ideally well in advance to identify and decide on answers to difficult questions AND on the day				
Logistics				
Identify lead logistics person				
Use couriers/others to help deliver leaflets, deliver and set up displays (if multiple drop-ins)				
Have standard set of displays/tool box and crates (if multiple drop-ins)				
Have folder/guidance with essential information				
Book venues using local knowledge where possible				
Arrange refreshments (tea, coffee etc)				
Have easy way for people to contact you about the drop-in eg dedicated email, phone number				
Have a way of keeping check on what is being spent (budgetary constraints)				

Checklist 3: Things to do during each drop-in session

This checklist can be used as a tick-off procedure, and/or to allocate specific people to tasks

Actions	By who			
	Area ER	FIM team	Other EA	Other organisation(s)
Drop-in room layout				
Set up the drop-in so that it presents a logical order/flow for the visitor. Allow at least an hour to set up the first drop-in – ideally up to 1.5 hours				
Set up registration area with signing-in sheets				
Set up ways of giving information: exhibition boards, laptops, leaflets, maps				
Set up café and/or private area				
Set up ways of collecting views and information from visitors: questionnaire, enquiries, comments				
Set up kids area/crèche (if appropriate)				
Seating area for any talks, gathering place eg for any walking tours				
Building an excellent drop-in experience				
Meet, greet and signpost ALL arrivals				
Sign-in sheets to capture attendee details				
Have a private area, a café area and a kids area				
Provide refreshments where possible				
Theme areas for different interests eg space for people to talk to FIM, Operations Delivery, the local authority, water company etc				
Help people to take action (eg sign up to FWD), or get the information or answers they want there and then where possible				
Think about how you can make sure everyone has a chance to talk to an expert if they want to eg timed slots, or moving people on, or having a table where one member of staff talks to a group rather than individually				
Be prepared to change your plans!				
Be prepared				
Ensure everyone is individually prepared (and has the chance to develop the skills/gain the information they need)				
Ensure the team is collectively prepared				
Learning from experience				
Encourage staff and visitors to leave feedback (eg feedback form)				
Have a quick debrief after the drop-in session with staff and partners involved to review how the session went (note what worked well/to improve)				
Quick debrief at the end of the event				
Ensure lessons learned are fed immediately to next event if doing a series of meetings (include in rolling brief)				

Checklist 4: Things to do after each drop-in session

This checklist can be used as a tick-off procedure, and/or to allocate specific people to tasks

Actions	**By who**			
	Area ER	**FIM team**	**Other EA**	**Other organisation(s)**
Plan both how to respond to enquiries and comments AND how to use the views/interest information gathered				
Dealing with information/views/interest				
How/who to use/capture/direct/respond to suggestions offers and comments				
How/who to use/capture/return information provided (eg pictures) and use them to inform models etc				
How/who to pass relevant information to other organisations/others				
How/who to follow up people who have signed up for taking some kind of action				
How/who to follow up on the contact details provided – database, update letter etc?				
Dealing with public requests/enquiries				
How/when to respond to questions/enquiries? eg posting a report on a website? Writing a newsletter? Dealing with them individually?				
How/who (eg the media team) to deal with media enquiries/requests, including where possible working with partners to make the most of any follow up reporting and features				
How/who to deal with MP enquiries/requests				
Learning/reporting				
Analyse results of feedback and evaluations – ideally with partners and members of the community -> lessons learned report (on content and on process)				
Feed lessons learned to relevant reviews, departments, partners				
Feedback to the public				
Longer term planning/prevention/preparedness				
Follow up to build relationships with local community in appropriate ways eg helping them establish an emergency plan				
Work with civil contingency partners and others (eg via the LRF)				
Consider any internal changes that are needed to enable effective follow through				

PROFORMAS

Proforma 1: Comment and enquiry form

Proforma 2: Understanding what happened during the flood

Proforma 3: Drop-in feedback form

Proforma 4: Signing-in sheet

Proforma 5: Form to capture insights from staff/partners

Proforma 1: Comments and enquiry

Please use this form if you feel we have not yet answered your query, or if there is something you want us to take on board.

1. COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS

Please use the space below to make any comments/suggestions that you'd like the Environment Agency or other organisations to act on in the future

2. QUESTIONS/ENQUIRIES

If you have something you **need to have an answer to**, please note it below and we will answer it individually or as part of the report we produce of the event:

3. CONTACT DETAILS

If you want an answer to your enquiry, or to be kept informed in the future, please provide your contact details below and confirm that you are happy for us to hold this information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name(s):
Address: Post code:
Day time tel/fax:
Email

❒ I am happy for my details to be kept on the database by the Environment Agency in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and understand that these will not be passed on to any other organisation

Proforma 2: Understanding what happened during the flood

UNDERSTANDING WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE FLOOD

Completing this form with the information/experience you have had of the recent floods will help the Environment Agency and other organisations to better understand what happened, so that warning and response to flooding in the future can be improved. If you experienced more than one flood, please complete a separate form for each.

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM BY [insert date]: ___________________________
To: [insert address/place to return it to]

1 Details of the flooding you experienced

Where was the flood you experienced (which roads/streets were affected)?		
When did the flood start? **Date:** **Time:**	(Approximately) how many **hours** did it last?	
How deep did the water get? **At what time?**	(Roughly) how many houses/other properties got flooded?	
Please describe the flood as specifically as you can (continue on a separate piece of paper if you need to): **Where** did the flood come from and why do you think it happened? - Was it rain and drainage (any particular blockages?) - A river overtopping its banks (which river/stream?) - Rising groundwater (where?)		Any record of this? (eg photos, measurements, press cutting, reports, journal)

2 What made the flood – or the effect of the flood – better or worse?

What helped you and others deal with the floods (if anything)? Anything you received (eg flood warning)? Anything you did? Anything neighbours or others in the community did? Anything organisations such as the Environment Agency did? Anything else?	Any record of this? (eg photos, measurements, press cutting, reports, journal)
What made the flooding worse, and what got in the way of dealing with the flood? Include any details of things you, organisations or local people did, or any physical things like water coming over the top of defences, blockages or breaches	

3 Previous flooding in the area

What, if any flooding has happened in this area in the past? Please tick below, and where possible give a date.

River overtopping its banks		Flooding from overflowing sewer	
Flooding from rain not draining fast enough		Flooding from groundwater coming up	
Blockage of debris/other structures during a flood		Buildings/houses flooded	
Roads closed by flooding		Campsites flooded	
Other (please describe)			

If you have any records of this past flooding, please note below what you have (eg photos, videos, measurements, reports)

If you could attach and return any available photographs of flooding incident records along with the completed questionnaire this would be much appreciated. Any such forwarded material will be returned if requested.

Please tick this box if the material is enclosed	
Please tick this box if the material is to be returned	

4 **Your details**

If you want your materials to be returned, or to be kept informed in the future, please provide your contact details below and confirm that you are happy for us to hold this information in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

Name(s):
Address: Post code:
Day time tel/mobile/fax:
Email:

❒ I am happy for my details to be kept on the database by the Environment Agency in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and understand that these will not be passed on to any other organisation

Proforma 3: Drop-in feedback form

FEEDBACK ON THE DROP-IN

We would like your views on the drop-in, so that we can improve on them in the future. Your views will be kept confidential.

1. How did you hear about today's drop-in?

❒ I received an invitation/leaflet ❒ Someone told me about it ❒ I saw a poster
❒ I was just walking past ❒ Information on the website ❒ Environment Agency staff

❒ Through radio/TV (please name) ____

❒ Through a newspaper/magazine (please name) ______________________________

❒ Another way (please describe) ____

2. How useful have you found the drop-in?

Not useful *Extremely useful*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please note below any comments/suggestions

3. To what extent were your questions and needs answered (eg by staff, information boards/pictures, leaflets)?

Answered none *Answered all*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please note below any comments/suggestions

4. How easy did you find it to give your views (eg making suggestions, providing information about the flood)?

Unable to give any *Able to give some views* *Able to give all my views*
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Please note below any comments/suggestions

Proforma 4: Signing in sheet

Attendance list: [DATE] [LOCATION]

Please give your name and if you would like us to keep in touch with you, please add contact details*
***** Details to be kept on the database by the Environment Agency in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998, and I understand that these will not be passed on to any other organisation

Name (s)	[Question – as appropriate]*	Email	Address

And so on….

Examples of questions that have been asked in the past:
- Do you live/work in the at-risk flood area?
- Did you attend the previous drop-in (last summer)?
- Are you on FWD?
- Do you want a copy of the report?

Proforma 5: Proforma to capture insights from staff/partners

[adapted from the form used by external relations team, West Midlands post-2007 summer floods]

Date	Venue	Media rep?	Details of staff/others spoken to by press	VIPs or key groups or individuals attending	Partners and other bodies who attended	Comments/feedback/learning on the drop-in, from staff/partners

FURTHER HELP AND INFORMATION

Materials available from North East

- Lessons learned
- Directors report (key statistics)
- Rolling debrief from staff/partners at individual drop-ins
- Staff rota
- Venue list and dates
- Examples of technical briefings prepared for staff attending
- List of information to take to drop-ins
- Generic room layout plan/display material

Materials available from Midlands

- Drop-in lessons learned notes from meeting on 7 January 2008
- Example questionnaires used (three versions)
- Example technical briefing

Guides from *Building Trust with Communities*

- Step-by-step guide to involving others
- Creating good exhibition boards
- Using exhibitions (and drop-ins) for consultation
- Explaining Environment Agency processes
- Explaining your involvement plans
- Working with liaison groups
- Designing good questionnaires
- Staff guidelines for involving others
- Introduction to using websites

CREDITS

Many thanks to the following who have been involved in advising on and producing this guide:

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Running collaborative meetings

How to plan and run meetings to get results

Improving Institutional and Social Responses to Flooding

Guidance from science project: SC060019

March 2008

Table of Contents

This manual is written by Lindsey Colbourne Associates with thanks to Lynn Wetenhall Associates and InterAct Networks for many of the ideas and tools, and to Environment Agency staff in particular Phil Foxley (Midlands FIM) for testing them.

1 Roles when running meetings

Many different roles can be played in planning the ‘what, why and how’ of any meeting, and in delivering that meeting. For some meetings only one role is used, for others, all of them, with different people playing different roles.

Meeting commissioner

- Decides when or if the meeting will happen.
- Decides on the meeting purpose and aims.
- May decide, alone or with others, on the agenda and format (such as whether it will be chaired or facilitated).
- Can be outside or part of the set of participants involved in the meeting.
- Pays for meeting costs.

Meeting chair

- Is usually part of the group of participants involved in the meeting.
- May decide agenda alone, or with others.
- Chairs the meeting – what this entails will vary in any given meeting.

Facilitator (anything from independent professional to internal staff may play this role)

- Is, or acts as far as possible as though, independent of the participants involved in the meeting.
- Plans meeting with other stakeholders.
- Runs some or all of the meeting.

Delegated officer

- Usually asked to plan and/or run a meeting on behalf of someone else.
- This could comprise a mix of any of the above roles.

How you approach the planning and running of any meeting should be based on an understanding of what role you and others are playing.

This will ensure that you are realistic about the level of influence, ‘mandate’ from participants or others and power that you have. This in turn should influence your planning and decisions about the meeting.

2 Chairing and facilitation – what's the difference?

Many Environment Agency meetings assume a formal chaired meeting, but this is not the only model – sometimes it might be useful to use a facilitator, or a facilitative style. There are no right or wrong ways of running a meeting: it is a case of using the form of meeting which is most likely to lead to the desired result. This section outlines some of the differences between chairing and facilitation to provoke thought on how different aspects of a meeting can be influenced by how it is run. It is not any one of these aspects that makes the difference – it is the combination of several which makes a cumulative difference. This list is indicative only; for example, a good chair may borrow several things from the 'facilitator' side:

A chair…	**A facilitator…**
Tasks	
Sets agenda	Sets agenda in consultation with participants
Channels discussion along predetermined lines/topics	Structures process to enable participants to meet their needs
Steers/shapes content	Continually reviews agenda and process for relevance
Takes part in content (agrees, disagrees)	Keeps out of content - does not express own views
May represent an interest (Env. Agency's)	Independent of any interests
Format and style of meetings	
Formal	Informal
Agenda sets broad topic areas	Structured process within each agenda item
Tight topic focus	Flexible focus
Participants focus on each other or chair across a table.	Participants have changing focus through pairs/ small group work, to neutral point (flipchart)
One person speaks at once ⇒ limits discussion time	Parallel discussions ⇒ expands discussion time
No structure for conversation other than chair's directions and interventions	Tightly structured conversations, using focus questions and participative techniques
Emphasis on sharing information, planning/ reviewing work done elsewhere, and making decisions ⇒ can take less time	Emphasis on doing work in session and developing ideas ⇒ can take more time
Record / Output	
Minutes produced later by secretariat	Record of meeting created in session on flip-charts (eg decision/action/who/when flip-chart)
Minute taker interprets and summarises discussion in writing after event	After meeting, flip-charts either photographed or transcribed
Opportunity to have full explanation in minutes of meeting	Flip-chart notes (care needs to be taken to make these meaningful)
Minutes corrected at next meeting	Opportunity for instant correction

3 Supporting better conversations

Why the interest in conversation?

Increasingly academics and practitioners from disciplines such as organisational development, management, psychology, coaching and personal therapy, are paying attention to the quality of conversation. Conversations are seen as *the* building blocks on which all human interactions are built.

Every constructive, productive idea, action, result, collaboration, can be traced back to one or more 'successful conversations'. There is increasing acceptance that successful conversations are the key to achieving better outcomes, particularly where people are operating in a context of uncertainty, lack of mutual understanding and a fast-changing environment – that is, all the time!

By contrast, many Environment Agency-run meetings tend to be about simple one-way information provision or information exchange. Consider how to increase the amount and quality of conversations at your meetings:

What is a 'successful' conversation?

a) those involved in the conversation **share a broad idea of the purpose of their conversation** and/or what its outcomes might be (eg for each agenda item);

b) the conversation achieves **the broad purpose that all parties had first thought of** or agreed as the purpose for the conversation;

c) each person **speaks without being interrupted;**

d) **facts are communicated** accurately: the listener has heard and understood the fact that the speaker was conveying;

e) **ideas are communicated** accurately: the listener has heard and understood the idea that the speaker was conveying;

f) the **difference between facts and opinions/ideas** is noted by all parties to the conversation;

g) those involved in the conversation have **understood each other better**. Note that this *does not* mean 'agreeing' – it just means having a better understanding of why that person thinks and acts as they do on a given issue;

h) **A new 'frame' for a situation or a solution has emerged** from the shared thinking and talking – a solution or action that neither party had previously had in mind (this aspect of conversation, in the jargon of complexity thinking, is known as actively seeking to create 'possibility space' – the space into which unknown and unimagined ideas can emerge through conversation);

i) **An iterative sequence of constructive dialogue has occurred.** For example: A speaks → B checks for meaning, then considers what he thinks about what A has said → B replies, connecting in some way to what A has said. This continues, so that A and B together build a shared understanding of what they each think and maybe of any possibility spaces to consider. In the field of facilitation, this sustained, deeper conversation is referred to as 'dialogue'.

4 Commandments for a good meeting

The following have been shown to increase the value of meetings appreciably. If you have influence over a meeting, or are running a meeting, you should:

Before the meeting:

- Do comprehensive advance preparation, including producing an informative agenda.

- Arrive earlier than other participants so you check the room is set up appropriately and so that you can welcome other participants.

At the beginning of the meeting:

- Start on time, with a round of introductions.

- Aim to create a relaxed and open atmosphere that puts people at ease and helps them to contribute creatively and flexibly.

- Review and agree aims of the meeting and the agenda: summarise the issues to be discussed and ask for any additional issues which should be on the agenda (rather than asking for AOB at the end).

- Review and agree any ground rules, especially regarding participation in and reporting of the meeting.

- Say at what time the meeting will end and the timing of any breaks; if you have to over-run, ask permission from participants.

- Check that all participants have the same definition of key concepts or issues.

During the meeting:

- Keep people focused on the main points and the meeting's desired outcome: ensure everyone is clear whether an agenda item is for information only, for discussion and/or for decision.

- Ensure any meeting has at least one item for genuine discussion, and give real time to this item.

- After every few contributions, summarise what has been said and ask for confirmation from those who have spoken.

- Give equal attention to each person regardless of status or quality of ideas: focus the group's attention on understanding what is said not on who is saying it, helping to clarify anything that is not clear.

- Record each decision and action point so that the whole group can see a record of the discussion as it proceeds - a visual recording, for example by using flip-charts or on powerpoint, encourages the group and shows them what is being minuted.

- **Intervene concisely**, discourage long speeches from others and attempts to dominate the discussion: wherever possible, **ask questions** rather than make statements.

- **Check** that people are satisfied with the way the meeting is progressing.

- Use **humour** to reduce tension, but ensure that it is not patronising or distracting people from the task in hand.

- **Encourage** participants who seem to be contributing less than others, for example by (gently) asking them direct questions or seeking their comments on particular issues.

- Create somewhere to **'store'** questions or issues which need to be addressed later or at subsequent meetings.

- Adopt behaviour/attitude which is positive:

Can be perceived as *negative*	**Generally perceived as *positive***
▪ Assume win/lose and act for own advantage	▪ Seek win/win by adding value for everyone
▪ Defend own inflexible positions	▪ Explore shared and competing interests
	▪ Look for ways to dovetail differences
▪ Focus on past	▪ Seek to learn from the past, focus on present, open to the future
▪ Focus only on outcomes which suit you	▪ Focus on outcomes and on process to build joint ownership/commitment
▪ Interested in facts only	▪ Grounded in facts, attentive also to feelings, values, perceptions
▪ Make negative remarks which hinder communication	▪ Make positive remarks encouraging open communication
▪ Display attitudes which discourage future contact	▪ Demonstrate attitudes which encourage future contact

At the end of the meeting:

1. Run through the **decisions/actions agreed**.

2. If there are to be further meetings of the group, **confirm times, dates and places** as far ahead as possible while everyone is still in the room.

3. **Say when** minutes or notes of the meeting will be circulated and ensure they are, with action points clearly marked.

4. **Thank** everybody for attending.

5. Get some kind of feedback on how the meeting went**: either in the meeting or hang around** afterwards to pick up reactions and comments.

Plan in time to do your follow-through tasks as soon as possible after the meeting.

5 Useful interventions for chairs and facilitators

Language is the most basic and yet critical tool for anyone charged with running a meeting. It can be used to achieve a wide range of desired outcomes.

Say what's going on (how you think people are feeling, anything 'bubbling under').

Get strong reactions, or whatever isn't working or is causing problems, out into the open.

Maintain/regain focus

Make sure all are working on the same content, with the same process at the same time.

Return questions or statements (boomerang)

Send the question/issue back to the person who asked it or to the whole group so that you are not responsible for every question/issue raised.

Avoid 'battles' over inappropriate detail

Where there is a need to start doing something, intervene to prevent lengthy arguments over minute detail on the 'right' way to do something.

Enforce process agreements

Where an individual or the group as a whole are not keeping to previous agreements about how to work and this is causing a problem (e.g. someone keeps interrupting other speakers).

Support contribution by those who have said least

There may come a point when you have to ask for contributions directly from those who haven't spoken, or refuse further contributions from those who have until others have had their say.

Accept/legitimise/deal with or defer

This intervention is related to the need to deal with anything which threatens to throw the meeting off course – for example, if people are difficult or a new idea has been aired. Intervene to agree whether to address the new idea, then make it legitimate by 'writing' into group memory, then decide with the group whether to deal with it there and then or defer it.

Protect individuals from personal attack

Interrupt/intervene to stop someone from verbally attacking another.

Ensure everyone understands

This often means dealing with jargon coming up during a discussion, but could simply be that people haven't grasped what someone has said. If you feel that something has been said that not everyone understands, intervene to establish what is meant to everyone's satisfaction.

Mark the end/beginning of a discussion and of decisions

A regular intervention is to establish whether the meeting or discussion is finished and whether it is now time to move onto the next topic.

Mark decisions and actions

Ensure everyone is clear on whether or not a decision has been reached, and if so, what exactly that decision or action is.

Other language hints

- Set an example by using plain language and where more than one language is commonly used, using bi-lingual arrangements where possible.
- Don't be defensive. If you argue back you will generate resistance, so accept any negative comments and 'boomerang' back to the group if necessary.

Clarifying jargon before you start

If jargon is inevitable given the context of the discussion, it is invaluable to ensure that everyone is clear what things mean before the discussion gets underway. This might mean circulating something before the meeting or simply start with some definitions, written up separately or verbal explanations/illustrative exercise if appropriate.

Some useful phrases

Note use of **questions** rather than **statements**…….

- *To encourage those who haven't contributed and 'control' those who have overcontributed:* Does anyone who hasn't spoken yet wish to say anything?
- *To help people make one clear point when they are rambling:* I [or the minute taker] need to write up the point you are making so could you try and say it in one sentence?
- *Checking understanding, for you and participants:* Can I repeat back what I think you just said to make sure I've got it right?
- *To check accuracy:* When scribing: I have recorded your point here – is that right? Is there anything you want to add to it?
- *To keep discussion on one track, around one key point made rather than jumping around the subject :*
  - What do other people think about that idea/comment (that John has just made)?
  - Does anyone else share that point of view or want to add anything before we move onto the next point?
- *Tactful way of asking people to take less airtime, or to set a tone for a meeting:* We don't have a lot of time so could people keep their contributions as short as possible?
- *Flagging where the discussion is and moving through the agenda:* Have we finished discussing topic X now? Are we ready to move on to think about Y?
- *'Reframing' and empathising with a comment that could be seen as 'difficult' or obstructive to help the participant come back with a more constructive contribution :* I understand the difficulties that must cause you - could we look at what could be done instead/how it could be different/how you'd like to see things in the future.

6 Putting your meeting in its context

Meetings can and should be planned. This can be done by asking the following questions, all of which need to be asked as early as possible in the planning process.

First questions:

- What are the **aims** of this event?
- **Who** is this event for?

Once you have a roughly satisfactory answer to these two questions, you can move onto the **secondary questions:**

- Is this event **part of a wider process**? If so, where does this event sit in relation to the overall project/process/desired goals? What therefore are the implications for this event?
- What is **happening both before and after this event** that is relevant, that may impact upon it in some way? (This is about *external* events that are of relevance to your event, such as a government announcement or a deadline imposed on your sector).
- What do **I and others need to do in advance** of the event? (This is about *internal* actions, from sending out a programme to briefing your speakers – a 'to do' list).

What's happened so far & what needs doing?

- What's already happened that is relevant?
- Anything new that must be communicated?
- What material will be available – in advance and/or on the day?
- Any 'props' for the day?
- Are people up to speed?
- What briefing do speakers need?
- What deadlines affect this event?

The event

Realistic aims
+
The right stakeholders

What will happen afterwards?

- Where will the outputs from the event go?
- Who will make what decisions as a result of the event?
- What feedback might be needed?
- What follow-up is essential/desirable?
- What deadlines after the event are significant?

7 Meeting and aims

- Every meeting should have a set of aims that express **what is specifically to be achieved within that meetin**g – what you will have (or where you will be) at the end of the meeting that you didn't have at the start.

- Meeting aims are the way you clearly express for yourself, and in order to communicate to others, **why people might want to come to the meeting**, what's in it for them and for others, what will be covered and so on.

- The aims of the event will inevitably be linked closely to, and may even help to suggest, **whom the event is for** – one impacts directly on the other.

- Meeting aims need to be expressed as **clear, full sentences** if they are to be unambiguous and understood by everyone attending the meeting.

Examples of meeting aims for a new working group meeting

By the end of the meeting, the new working group members will:

- know each other better;
- have a better understanding of each other's respective roles in this project;
- have discussed and agreed the scope of the project (based on the proposals paper circulated in advance of the meeting);
- have discussed and agreed administrative and protocol issues for the group, including:
    - frequency of meetings;
    - chairing of meetings – whether it is required and what approach to take for choosing a chair;
    - how administrative requirements will be met.

8 Meeting agendas

The proforma below will help you bring together the key points from this manual into an agenda which supports a productive meeting

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Meeting name:</td><td>Date:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Location:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Arrival time:
Start time:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Finish time;</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Meeting purpose/aim:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Participants (invitees):</td><td>Chair/facilitator:

Minute taker:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Any background/context:</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">AGENDA</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><td>Arrivals</td><td>15 mins</td><td colspan="2">Refreshments provided</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Welcome, agenda and progress</td><td rowspan="3">20 mins</td><td>This item is mostly for:
Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:
o Check agenda and list any AOB/allocate within items below
o Run through actions/updates since last meeting
o Check minutes (if required)

Preparation before meeting:
Complete actions from last meeting; send in any AOB</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">1. [Session Title]</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for:
Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">2. [Session Title</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for:
Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
</table>

Meeting agenda proforma (continued)

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="3">3. [Session Title</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for: Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Break</td><td>15 mins</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">4. [Session Title</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for: Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">6. [Session Title</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for: Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">7. [Session Title</td><td rowspan="3">X mins</td><td>This item is mostly for: Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:

Preparation before meeting:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Next steps</td><td rowspan="3">15 mins</td><td>This item is mostly for: Information?</td><td rowspan="3">Detail to be covered:
Agree decisions made, and any actions to be taken by whom, by when</td></tr>
<tr><td>Discussion?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Decision? YES</td></tr>
<tr><td>Close</td><td colspan="3">[insert time]</td></tr>
</table>

9 Meeting minutes proforma

The proforma below will help ensure your minutes, and any flip-charts/powerpoint used to record minutes in the meeting, bring clarity to what happens after the meeting.

<INSERT MEETING NAME>
<INSERT MEETING DATE, LOCATION
Participants: <LIST NAMES/ROLES IF REQUIRED>
Apologies: <LIST NAMES/ROLES IF REQUIRED>

Decision	**Action**	**By whom**	**By when**
Date next meeting: <INSERT HERE>	Send in any items for agenda	All	Two weeks before meeting
	Circulate draft agenda	Secretary/Chair	One week before meeting
	Attend	All	<date of meeting>

Additional notes, and key points raised or discussed

10 Stages of development

Any collaboration/series of meetings will need to go through four stages of development – the forming, storming, norming and performing stages. This cycle is natural and essential in forming a fully functioning team. The role of the chair is to assist progression through these stages so that each is addressed, but the group does not get stuck at any of them:

Stage in group devt	Characteristics of the stage	Role of the chair	Beware
Forming	The group comes together for the first few times. Everyone a bit unsure of their role and the role of the group as a whole therefore: • general defensiveness • 'showing off' • territorial behaviour • sycophantic behaviour (agreeing with others, trying to find allies).	• Helping members to see their role and why they are each needed. • Establishing parameters for the group including how the group will work, what is expected of each other. • Demonstrating the desired behaviour (e.g. strategic thinking, honesty, openness, thinking beyond organisational boundaries). • Finding practical quick wins to focus on. • Looking for common ground, mapping any areas of uncommon ground (disagreement).	• Formation of cliques. • Setting up precedents that may be appropriate at this stage, but that are not in the future. • Getting stuck at this stage: . avoidance of difficult issues, overriding reliance on 'pleasantries' and so on.
Storming	Members have got used to each other, and have started to see each other's weaknesses and strengths, and also where the key areas of disagreement or conflict lie. They may try to openly (often in a confrontational way): • blame others or express concerns about the initiative and about other members • undermine others' opinions, interests • stop listening to others • raise what seem to be irrelevant concerns	• Being clear about what is going on – useful that people are being so honest/focused/practical • Assisting and focusing negotiations. • Encouraging ownership of difficult issues. • Encouraging responsibility for finding a collective way forward. • Ensuring 'fair play' and that power games do not dominate.	Being blown out of the water at this stage – only seeing the meeting as negative rather than an important development.

Stage in group devt	Characteristics of the stage	Role of the chair	Beware
Norming	The group recovers from and accommodates results of storming stage to establish normal operational procedure	• Enabling everyone to hear, integrate and act on the learning from the storming stage. • Focusing the emerging consensus on real tasks, and often on difficult decisions that have to be made. • Dividing the group into operational sub-groups in order to get jobs done.	• No one person or organisation becomes the scapegoat for previous stage. • Ensure that people don't get too comfortable with this stage – so happy with emerging consensus and 'team spirit' that they are resistant to further action.
Performing	The group is focused on a clear task (externally) but also on how it needs to work together to achieve that task (internally)	▪ Strategic and operational thinking. ▪ Drawing in resources. ▪ Monitoring and review. ▪ Shared glory. ▪ Highlighting and dealing with difficult issues as they arise.	• Need for forward planning as well as delivery. • Lack of accountability.

Strategic planning

In addition to the above stages in team building, chairs of meetings, collaborations and initiatives should bear in mind the project stages that need to be addressed, and ensure their group works together to address them.

These stages may roughly follow the stages of group development, but not necessarily:

Initiation	Deciding something needs to be done
Planning	Identifying the problem, the desired end point, the range of ways of getting there (solutions), and the priorities
Implementation	Putting agreed priority solutions into action
Consolidation	Monitoring, reviewing, linking to next action phase

11 Collaboration/partnership analysis and 'health check'

This health check provides a framework for *starting* to consider (alone or with other partners):

- what needs to be done in the setting up stages or early years of a partnership, regular meetings or collaborative initiative;
- whether existing arrangements or ideas need to be reworked or amended;
- how a partnership, meeting or collaborative initiative might successfully develop.

Not all questions will be relevant to you or your partnership, meetings or collaboration. Equally, there may be others that you need to add. Below are a useful set of questions to start off with.

Sections in the health check:

- Making the most of what already exists
- Agreeing the boundaries
- Commitment
- Issues of relative power
- Roles and remits
- Structure and membership
- Ways of working
- Good communication at all levels
- Appropriate activities for an appropriate timescale
- Evaluation and monitoring

How to use the health check:

1. For each question, first consider whether the answer is broadly **yes** or **no**.
2. Use the right-hand column to record reasons and justifications for why you have given this answer.
3. Then use your answers as the basis for deciding what issues most need to be tackled.

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Making the most of what already exists			
1	Has the convenor or initiator of the partnership/meetings/ initiative paid attention to both the process of setting up and operating the initiative AND its content (what the initiative actually sets out to do)?		
2	Has the *unique role* of the initiator or convenor of the partnership/meetings/initiative been made explicit and carefully managed? Have any issues of ownership or control been discussed with (potential) partners?		
3	Has the *initiative collaboratively reviewed existing or past collaborations/initiatives*, including factual mapping of what exists and who sits on what, an evaluation of the effectiveness and lessons learned … and used the results to inform your partnership/meetings/initiative? Are you making the most of existing mechanisms, rather than duplicating them?		
4	Has there been *shared collection and analysis* of data to give an accurate baseline picture of the partnership/ meetings/initiative focus area or topic? Does this include qualitative and quantitative information? Have gaps been identified and filled?		
5	Has there been an *audit of existing strategies/plans*, highlighting common ground, conflicts and gaps..,and using the results to inform how your collaboration can add value to existing work?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Agreeing the boundaries of the partnership/meetings/initiative			
6	Have the *shared vision, aim, objectives and priorities* been openly discussed with all partners (based on shared analysis of current baseline data), and agreement reached on them?		
7	Have *areas of common ground and of conflict* been openly mapped out and the implications of any differences addressed?		
8	Has there been agreement about *the unique role of the* partnership/meetings/initiative in terms of how it compliments other initiatives? Did this include setting out clearly what it should NOT focus on?		
9	Has there been open discussion of what each of the partners has to *gain (or lose)* by being in this partnership/ meetings/initiative and whether this is indeed the most appropriate vehicle to deliver the agreed objectives?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Commitment to the partnership/meetings/initiative			
10	Are all the constituent members genuinely committed to the partnership/meetings/initiative's agreed objectives, actions? Are they committed to sharing responsibility for success AND failure?		
11	Has there been a period *of compromise and negotiating priorities*, in the interests of achieving a more important overall, agreed goal?		
12	Have you planned what you are going to do? Are all partners committed to *taking a planned approach*, recognising that partnership working is a demanding and evolving agenda which requires flexibility based on a learning approach?		
13	Have all partners done an appropriate level of *internal preparations?* For large organisations, setting up strong internal teams to: drive the work within the organisation or community, bring senior level people on board as well as those on the frontline, agree how the community strategy fits with internal decision making and roles (eg of elected members), ensure there is adequate internal communication and training where needed. For small organisations, considering how to cover this new area of work, including linking up and sharing the work with other partners in your field.		
14	Are any new members of the partnership/meetings/ initiative carefully inducted to ensure they understand and 'buy in' to it?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Issues of relative power			
15	Does everyone recognise and acknowledge where various *power lies* in the partnership/meetings/initiative? For example, has every partner had the opportunity to acknowledge what they and what others bring to the table – what resources, skills, influence, connections or legitimacy? Is the value of all contributions recognised?		
16	If there is no equality, or equality is not a necessary condition, has the *nature of the power relationships* between members been negotiated and explicitly agreed? For example, if one partner is responsible for all decisions, and other partners are simply advising, the partnership may agree that it is simply a sounding board or advisory group. If some partners bring no financial resources, but do bring grass roots understanding of community needs, do they share equal decision-making power over allocation of budgets?		
17	Has the partnership/meetings/initiative agreed early on what it would do if one or more partners began to abuse their power within the partnership/meetings/initiative? Has this been set out in some form of agreement?		
18	Has the partnership explored and agreed the ways in which it will accountable to the stated communities/ beneficiaries it seeks to serve, including considering the role of any elected members/similar?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Roles and remits			
19	Is every individual clear about his or her *role within* the partnership/meetings/initiative, AND their role within sub or working groups, AND their role in terms of linking back to their community or organisation?		
20	Does each named element within the partnership/ meetings/initiative (eg the board or the various working groups) have a stated role and remit, including how it makes decisions and how it relates to the other parts of the partnership/meetings/initiative?		
21	Have members of the partnership/meetings/initiative agreed realistic respective time, skills, money, and resource *commitments*?		
22	Is everyone clear on what they are expected to bring to the partnership/meetings/initiative – that is, why they are valuable? Are *different* roles recognised and respected as playing their part? Is the contribution of voluntary and community groups recognised and respected?		
23	Are new members carefully inducted so they can explain what they can offer, and so they know what is expected of them?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Structure and membership			
24	Has an appropriate *timescale for the evolution* of the partnership/meetings/initiative been set, recognising that it will take a while to get the whole structure right, but setting out early on the principles that will underpin its operations and longer term goals in terms of the desired structure/membership?		
25	Is the structure of the partnership/meetings/initiative 'fit for purpose' in terms of: • legal status • component parts *(eg board, secretariat, theme or geographically based groupings, consultative forums)*		
26	Has the partnership/meetings/initiative produced a clear illustration of the different ways in which people and organisations will relate to it, who those people are, and how they will be engaged? For example, the formal members, those who are regularly involved (eg in working groups) but are not formal partners, others who may simply wish to be updated or give their views.		
27	Has attention has been paid to ensuring that *the right people and organisations* are in the partnership/meetings/ initiative, paying attention to: • appropriate seniority and influence • knowledge of 'on the ground' priorities and practicalities • balance of interests and sectors • representation from other partnerships/initiatives.		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Ways of working			
28	Has the partnership/meetings/initiative openly discussed and found a *way of operating* which suits the various functions, organisations and individuals involved? • Does this way of operating favour *consensus*-based decisions, rather than majority rule? • Are meetings held at mutually convenient times, using techniques and methods appropriate for the types and numbers of people involved? • Is there a culture of commitment to turn up to meetings? • Are appropriate numbers/types of subgroups being used?		
29	Has the partnership/meetings/initiative set out an *agreement* covering all aspirational and operational aspects of the partnership/meetings/initiative, including discussing how to deal with possible future events or scenarios that could cause problems?		
30	Does the partnership/meetings/initiative find time to *attend to its own needs* (e.g. team building, revisiting vision and aims, evaluation and monitoring) as well as delivering its principal objectives?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Good communication at all levels			
31	Is there effective, open, two-way communication between *members*?		
32	Have partners developed a close working relationship? *Do they encourage and nurture each other, building an environment of trust, and contributing to an effective team? Do they bring problems to the table, to work out together, rather than keep them to themselves?*		
33	Is there effective, open, two-way communication between partners and *their parent body, constituency or members*?		
34	Is there effective, open communication between the *core* body of the partnership/meetings/initiative, the *secretariat* servicing it and the *constituent* groupings (such as working groups)?		
35	Is there effective, two-way communication between the partnership/meetings/initiative and those that are *consulted* by it, giving *feedback* as well as asking for views?		
36	Is there effective two-way communication between the partnership/meetings/initiative and the *wider community*, including an agreed protocol and strategy for dealing with and generating media and other interest?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Appropriate activities for an appropriate timescale			
37	Has a realistic *project plan*, setting out the various strands of connected activities, been agreed by all partners?		
38	Has there been open discussion of the type of *collaboration* expected between partners, and how this may evolve over time? *(eg joint branding, coordinating existing initiatives, setting up new programmes with joint budgets and staff, changing own corporate plans and spending in line with partnership priorities)*		
39	Have *'quick wins'* been identified and achieved to demonstrate the value of collaborative working whilst getting on with the longer-term tasks of the partnership/meetings/initiative?		
40	Have *capacity building* needs been discussed (not imposed), and a programme agreed to enable partners and wider interests to take part in the partnership/meetings/initiative?		
41	Has there been a review of existing and planned consultation activities by all partners, and mechanisms put in place to ensure *joined-up consultation* in the future?		

	ISSUE	Achieved Yes / No	COMMENTS ON PROBLEMS NOTED
Evaluation and monitoring			
42	Does the partnership *recognise* the importance and positive contribution that evaluation can make to programme and project management?		
43	Have *procedures* and *systems* been put in place to monitor and evaluate the: • effectiveness of partnership/meetings/initiative's projects and programmes on the ground; • internal operations and ways of working; • effectiveness of links between the partnership/ meetings/initiative and their constituent organisations.		
44	Do all members of the partnership/meetings/initiative, AND the beneficiaries, stakeholders or community who the partnership/meetings/initiative serves *have any input* into evaluating the achievements of the partnership/meetings/initiative?		

Supporting communities to improve flood risk management

Examples of the Environment Agency's work

Improving Institutional and Social Responses to Flooding

April 2008

Science project: SC060019

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Collaborating with communities – the range of activities and what they can achieve

This brochure pulls together some examples of practice across England and Wales through which the Environment Agency collaborates with communities. In focusing on collaboration – building a two-way ongoing relationship which enables the community and Environment Agency (and often others) to act together - this brochure does not cover activities such as day-to-day telephone conversations, answering queries, writing letters or general communication or awareness programmes unless they are part of an ongoing relationship building exercise.

In pulling together some examples from practice, we hope to illustrate the range of ways in which the Environment Agency is currently working with communities and others to improve flood risk management. We have found that approaches and practices vary considerably, not only between regions but also within regions. There is much to be learned from different initiatives and what makes them work…and not work. We hope the brochure will stimulate further action and learning in the future.

Why collaborate with communities?

After the summer 2007 floods, two major reviews (led by Sir Michael Pitt and the internal Environment Agency) recognised the importance of community involvement:

> *The review considers the actions of the public to be just as important [as those of public and private bodies] – and in some aspects more so – to effectively coping with emergencies like those of summer 2007.*[1]

Similarly, our interviews have shown that area-level staff recognise the value of working with communities as being the only way to deliver services and improve community resilience to flooding. For example, in the South West Area, one member of staff told us:

> *"… in many rural areas having community-based incident plans is the only way to get communities prepared. We have 40/50 locations across Devon which need to have IPs (incident plans) because they are likely to be on their own if a flood comes. On paper it doesn't make sense in terms of the number of properties at risk, but in rural areas it is the only way we can do our job."*[2]

A similar message from staff in the North West:

> *"I think we've changed our approach a lot since the flooding. I think we've realised locally the impact the floods have had, and we've used our own initiative in a way, you know like the work with the community groups. Before we would … sit in the incident room and we would get a river level trigger and we'd think we*

[1] *The Pitt Review: Learning lessons from the 2007 floods. An independent review*. Published December 2007, Cabinet Office. Crown Copyright. http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/flooding_review/flood_report_lowres.pdf

[2] Interview with Flood Incident Manager. February 2007

need to issue a warning for that area, press the button to issue the warning and then just think well they'll cope, they'll deal with it, they'll get back on their feet and everything'll be fine. But after the flooding, I think it really hit home to a lot of people how devastating it had actually been for a lot of people. And since then that's why we've moved more to this community engagement work we've been doing, because we really want to find out what the key issues are and how we can help as an agency.

I think the whole community involvement work is very important. It just makes sense that people talk to the community. It's like the whole warning area thing. We create new flood warning areas so we can offer people a flood warning as early as we can during a flood event. But unless we've done the ground work and got the communities involved in that process, the people are registering and they don't actually really know what they're registering for or they don't understand what a flood warning area is, they don't really understand what the flood risk is, they don't understand what to do when they get a flood warning, they don't understand the flood warning codes."[3]

Collaboration with communities can:

- Increase effectiveness and delivery, enabling us to make better decisions and build the potential for collaboration and co-delivery, for example, in helping to design and operate a flood defence scheme.
- Enhance legitimacy and democracy of decisions, helping people to understand the trade-offs needed to make acceptable decisions, and building more equitable decision-making processes which take into account the full range of views, for example, in deciding how best to reduce flood risk for a community.
- Empower people to act, enabling people to develop skills, influence, networks and to change or implement what really matters to them, for example preparing their houses or helping vulnerable members in the community.

Foundations for success: careful planning

It is clear that working with communities can help improve flood risk management, but supporting communities requires careful planning. Guidance on how to design your approach to collaboration with communities, and details of different techniques, can be found in the Environment Agency's *Building Trust with Communities* guide.

The dangers of not collaborating are illustrated in an article in the Western Gazette in February 2008.

[3] Interview with Flood Incident Management Officer. September 2007

The dangers of not collaborating

The article below illustrates the dangers of not harnessing the potential of collaboration: people may not understand what you are trying to do or why; you may not come up with the best solution because you do not have sufficient local knowledge; people will not play a role in making the solution work, in fact they will organise themselves against you!

Oliver's weekly column in the Western Gazette Saturday, 9 February 2008
DEMOCRACY PRODUCES A FLOOD PLAN NO-ONE LIKES

When is progress not progress? Answer: when it makes things worse rather than better.

This riddle came into my mind as I stood staring, last Friday, at a large map in the kitchen of a house in Charminster. The map showed in glorious technicolour the scheme proposed by the Environment Agency for relieving flooding in Charminster. For those who are not familiar with Charminster, it is a village that has, at its centre, a beautiful old church, a confluence of various streams, and a number of lovely old houses coming down a rather steep hill.

For many years, I have been trying, at the behest of people living in the village, to persuade the Environment Agency to devise a scheme to make it less likely the village will be flooded by the streams. You might have assumed the early morning inspection of the map was something in the nature of a celebration. Here, at last, was an Environment Agency scheme for doing exactly what we had all been seeking.

Alas, there is a hitch.

The parish council chairman reports the scheme has succeeded in achieving unanimity in the village, something that is rare in any place. Unfortunately, the unanimity resides in the fact there is no-one who approves of the scheme.

There seems, in fact, to be various kinds of objection. Villagers believe the scheme will probably make flooding more likely rather than less, at least in some places; not an auspicious start for a flood alleviation project. This is not the end of the matter. Villagers are also alarmed at the aesthetic damage the scheme will cause, creating a rather intrusive and unsightly bund in a location of exceptional charm.

As I listened to the various objections to the Environment Agency proposal, I reflected on how extraordinary an achievement it is for a public agency to devise something that is clearly intended to fulfil aspirations but has managed to unite residents in feeling it would be worse than useless. I do not suppose the cost of producing the drawings and doing the other work associated with the proposal will have been enormous, but a consultancy was nevertheless employed and we will all have contributed a small amount through our taxes in paying for this objet d'art.

It is a little irking that we will now have to spend a certain amount of energy persuading the Environment Agency to abandon the very thing we had expended so much energy persuading them to undertake.

The strange thing is when one inspects the proposal, it transpires that enormous numbers of worthy bodies were duly consulted. The so-called Scoping Consultation Document has been issued to Natural England, English Heritage, West Dorset District Council, Dorset County Council and the Dorset Wildlife Trust. These worthy bodies will, no doubt, now have to expend some time and effort considering their responses to the proposal.

The thought flitted through my mind, as I left the kitchen meeting, that it might have made sense for the Environment Agency to ask their consultants to have a quick word with the locals at an early stage, to see what might be acceptable, before they did all the work.

I quickly banished this ludicrous fantasy from my mind. A quick word with the locals is not, after all, part of a proper bureaucratic process.

Towards consistent practice

As well as highlighting the need to collaborate with communities, our interviews point to a lack of clarity about what the Environment Agency expects of its staff in terms of working with communities. As one Flood Incident Manager [4] said:

> *"Locally it doesn't seem as though there is national support or understanding for what we are trying to do here in working with communities – we need more guidance from Head Office in terms of what we want to do with communities. For example, there are no KPIs or working structures to support the community-based incident plans. This means it is all a bit hand to mouth, and dependent on getting the resources (people/time) to do it. [The Regional Flood Manager] is supporting staff to do this. Most activities are going on through area level 'initiative'."*

The summer flood reviews also point to the need for more consistency, albeit at guidance rather than policy level. For example, Recommendation 32 of the Environment Agency's review of the summer 2007 floods[5] concluded:

> *We need to revise our good practice guidance and share this with our partners, so that we effectively plan to include the work of flood ambassadors and flood surgeries in the response and recovery phase.*

Our review of practice shows that flood ambassadors and flood surgeries are just two of many activities taking place to encourage collaboration with communities. This brochure covers just some of them:

- community-based emergency or incident plans
- community and liaison groups
- flood ambassadors
- flood surgeries/drop-ins
- flood wardens.

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[4] Interview with Flood Incident Manager. February 2007
[5] Environment Agency (2007) *Review of 2007 Summer Floods*. http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO1107BNMI-e-e.pdf?lang=_e

Community and parish emergency/incident plans

What are they?

Community incident plans, or emergency plans, cover smaller areas than major incident plans and place emphasis on community activity as well as – or in some cases instead of – the actions of civil contingency partners (CCPs). They are often but not always parish or community council-based. The role of the Environment Agency in promoting/supporting these varies betweens regions.

Why are they useful?

Cumbria County Council considers it useful to have community emergency plans to cover the situations in which some utility services will have failed and the emergency services are restricted in their ability to immediately respond to the community. The plans cover all forms of emergencies from flooding to environmental contamination.

The aims of community emergency plans are to:

- protect lives and property;
- promote mutual assistance within the community;
- sustain acceptable living conditions.

This will be achieved by:

- identifying vulnerable people and areas within the community;
- identifying hazards and possible mitigatory measures;
- identifying resources and key contacts within the community.

In Devon there are 40 or 50 locations across the county which need to have incident plans because they are likely to be on their own, without the support of civil contingency partners, if a flood comes. They may be on their own because the flood will be so rapid (such as in Boscastle) that it is unlikely civil contingency partners will arrive fast enough. Or in the case of a major flood (such as from the sea), it is likely that so many urban areas will be affected that civil contingency partners will be too stretched to reach the smaller communities.

Other areas are motivated by the need to assist civil contingency partners, using the community to get messages out, or to operate defences (from sand bags to flood gates). For example in Hampshire, the guidance from the Environment Agency and parish councils suggests the plans should include details of how warnings are received in the community and how they are passed on to those at risk, liaison and contact arrangements with organisations involved in flood events, and information on where to obtain sandbags or alternatives.

What do they contain?

See the appendix for emergency plan templates from Cumbria and Hampshire.

Who initiates and writes a community emergency/incident plan?

The Environment Agency's approach varies from region to region, as does the critical role of the local authority – county, district and or parish (or community) council. The consistent factor is collaboration between the Environment Agency and the county or local council. Most variation in approach results from the characteristics of the local communities themselves and how they organise themselves or what they focus on (see also later section on community/action groups).

Some examples are given below.

In Hampshire, Hampshire County Council and the Environment Agency are encouraging each parish, town council or community association to appoint a flood coordinator. Parish or town councils and communities should play an active role in preparing for, and responding to, flooding. Key to the role would be drawing up and putting in place a town or village flood plan. Hampshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit has produced a template for the flood plan in a Word document (not a true WP template), that can be altered in any way required to suit local needs. It contains advice and suggestions to assist parishes in drawing up their own plans (the flood template is included in the appendix here).

In Devon, the County Council and Environment Agency have identified 40 or 50 locations which need incident plans. These communities are very vulnerable to long-term effects of a flood on their viability – that is, if houses/shops/services are shut down. The County Council annually pushes parish councils to consider the need for incident plans, with the emphasis on community self-help – led by parish council with civil contingency partners in support. The initial focus is on communities where there has been some flood defence work, or where the community/parish council has invited the Environment Agency in (such as Shaldon). The incident plans include what the community can do to reduce the impact and risk (community volunteers checking on vulnerable people, operating flood boards or flood gates).

In Low Crosby, the North West region, some community members took the initiative when they realised there was only so much the agencies could do. These members pulled a committee together and drew up an emergency plan, arranged a reception centre and recruited volunteers to act as community wardens. The community is so organised that the Environment Agency has an early warning system whereby the community contacts are warned at the same time as the local authority: It is up to the community to decide when to start issuing an early warning.

In the North West, the Environment Agency has convened a series of multi-agency and community group emergency flood plan workshops which focus on supporting community groups to develop their own emergency plan. These workshops are attended by up to four representatives of each parish, action or community group as well as representatives from a range of different agencies including the local authority and emergency services. The workshop is designed to assist groups who have started developing an emergency plan or to give help, support and ideas to groups who have not yet started the process. These workshops have been well received.

Community flood wardens

What are they?

Flood wardens are volunteers from the community who take on the role – usually with the backing of the parish or community council or for a local group – of providing advice, support and information on flooding to help and prepare those at risk from flooding. They can provide a useful link between residents, local government, emergency services and the Environment Agency. Flood wardens are often seen as key to getting a community to produce an emergency or flood incident plan.

When are they useful?

Currently, the Environment Agency has mixed views about the value of flood wardens. Our interviews have revealed the following views amongst members of staff:

- Flood wardens are invaluable, actively encouraged and supported as core part of flood resilience strategy (South Wessex).
- Flood wardens are informally supported but not formally endorsed by Environment Agency (health and safety concerns) (North West).
- Flood wardens are only useful if they have the wider remit of 'community wardens' (covering all emergencies) and actively supported by the council's emergency planning team (Midlands).
- Flood wardens are considered at best unreliable and at worst a liability (Midlands).

For example, staff in the North West told us:

> *"Years ago, the Environment Agency used to have flood wardens which were almost employed by us to be a community warden but because we had no control over what they were doing out in the field, they could put themselves into a dangerous situation that an Environment Agency employee wouldn't and we wouldn't want, we used to have meetings with them and brief them. We've moved away from that because of the whole health and safety issues.*
>
> *Whilst we've got these community wardens they're not agency wardens, we've not given them instructions. We're there to give them help, advice and support and help them with their emergency plan, and we've told them what we can and can't do and we've left it to them to manage their own response. On their head be it if something happens."*

Further work is required to understand what makes the warden role work, how to deal with health and safety concerns and in particular whether there is mileage in focusing more on community rather than flood wardens. What is clear at this stage is that the warden scheme can work – see the case study of South Wessex below. Wardens seem to work best in smaller communities (small flood risk areas) and in conjunction with other initiatives such as a community emergency plan, liaison with authorities and involvement of the community in proposals for reducing flood risk.

Case Study: South Wessex Community Flood Warden Programme

South Wessex started their flood warden scheme following the winter of 2002/3. Approximately 50 per cent of flooding that winter resulted from groundwater and most occurred on chalk catchments: very hard to predict and almost impossible to issue warnings accurately. Local knowledge to where groundwater will rise is critical. The flood warden scheme was started by asking all communities at risk from groundwater flooding to appoint a flood warden, at the same time as a programme of monitored borehole installations to predict more accurately the location of groundwater flooding. These wardens were to act as a local point of contact and tap into vital local knowledge.

Groundwater rises relatively slowly, allowing initial warnings to be mailed to flood wardens about two weeks before any predicted flooding. This gives wardens enough time to prepare and warn local residents. Mailing warnings also prevents making inappropriate telephone alarm calls, sometimes in the middle of the night. Following the success of the initial groundwater warden scheme, this was widened to include communities with fluvial (rivers and watercourses) and coastal flooding problems.

Communicating with residents through the parish structure seems to work well. It provides a permanent forum to allow regular review of individual schemes. The response from parishes with fluvial catchments has been very positive, and will be followed by a programme for smaller coastal and tidal communities. Larger communities pose information distribution problems that will be addressed by breaking them down into smaller flood risk areas.

Flood wardens are supported by:

- a comprehensive Flood Warden Handbook[6] which includes guidance and templates
- an annual flood warden seminar
- newsletters
- use of a mobile exhibition
- invitations to other relevant events.

The wardens are encouraged to:

Before a flood	**During a flood**	**After a flood**
• Identify vulnerable residents. • Monitor watercourses. • Recruit people to FWD. • Appoint deputy flood wardens. • Prepare a community flood plan. • Secure own home.	• Act in accordance with the flood plan. • Provide initial organisation and guidance. • Pass information from the Environment Agency and emergency services to local residents and vice versa. • Help prioritise resources.	• Stay in a state of readiness until the all clear is given by the emergency services and Environment Agency. • Act in accordance with the flood plan, for example, guide the clearing up. • Fill in the post-event fact sheet.

[6] *The Community Flood Warden Handbook*. Environment Agency, 2006. GEW1206BLBQ-E-P

Flood action/liaison groups

What are these?

These are groups of people from residential or business properties deal with flooding issues within a community. They may be:

- sub-groups of the parish council (eg Stanwix in Cumbria – emergency sub-group of parish council, with local coordinators and three parish contacts);
- resident groupings (eg Carlisle);
- business groupings (eg Carlisle willowholme Industrial estate);
- individuals (eg Cockermouth);
- church/other community group lead (eg Communities Reunited);
- groups of people representing the full range of interests (eg Shaldon);
- community groups involved in a range of activities (eg Milton Street Community Group).

What do they do?

The National Flood Forum says:

> *"Establishing an action group in a local community to work on behalf of residents and businesses has proved very effective in many areas of the UK. It has been a successful way of finding solutions to flooding problems and coping with flood related issues through self-help, mutual support and direct liaison with the various official agencies responsible for flood management. Local action groups act as a voice for their community with the Environment Agency, local councils, water companies and emergency planning agencies. If you live in an area that suffers from flooding or is at risk from future floods starting up a group to represent the views of residents and businesses in a structured way, helps to ensure that the responsible bodies take notice of local views and concerns."*

Groups may be involved in one or more of the following:

- Newsletters
- Websites
- Emergency plans
- Contact sheets (for individual businesses/households)
- Flood wardens/coordinators
- Giving early warnings to those at risk
- Meetings
- Pilot in sandside coastal group on temporary defences in return for signing up to FWD
- Adopting drains
- Campaigns for particular initiatives (such as defences, insurance), for example, Bewdley in Worcestershire
- Investigative reports (sucha s Borrowby Drainage Improvement Group report on flooding events,

possible solutions and funding of those solutions)

- Liaising with authorities (such as water companies) on collective or individual issues (for example, Buxted pressure group on maintenance)

- Securing grants/subsidising individual house works (such as Alney Group, Gloucester)

- Organising flood fairs (such as Alney Group, Gloucester)

- Supports individuals – especially the vulnerable (good neighbour schemes)

- Encouraging preparedness

- Setting up information centres during floods

- Set up information/notice boards

- Survey residents on what they need/can offer during a flood linked to emergency plan (such as Stanwix in Cumbria)

- Media work

- Arts or celebratory activities (such as Milbourne Street Community Group)

How many groups are there?

It is not known how many groups exist, but as an indication, there are more than 80 groups listed on the National Flood Forum website, and in the North West more than 70 people attended a seminar for flood groups in September 2007.

As background, there are 8,300 parish councils and 400 town councils in England; 450 community councils in Wales including town councils.

How are they established?

Very often groups are established after a flood, for example:

- groups established after drop-ins/public meeting (eg Alney Group, Gloucester);
- lobby groups campaigning for a flood defence scheme.

In other cases they are set up before a flood, for example:

- as suggested in a letter from the Environment Agency to groups/parish council;
- groups already established to deal with others issues/residents associations;
- individuals taking initiative.

"There's a member of the traveller community… who runs the group and then we've got people from different businesses who come and go depending on whether they're busy or not. The businesses lost all of their income. They started off being quite angry because the insurance companies didn't want to know. They lost a lot of assets, a lot of vehicles. They've all got back up on their feet and started off again. I think there's only two that haven't. They were quite angry at first and we had a few public meetings. But we all came to realise that unless we started talking we weren't going to get anything sorted and this is where the business group started up.

So now we have a rain gauge down there and we've got an alarm here so if we get a heavy rainfall we'll ring the chair of the group who will then disseminate a

warning. Basically we let [him] know and he rings round. He often goes down and has a quick look just to make sure everything's ok but it is a real early trigger."
North West region

What does the Environment Agency do

The Environment Agency can be important in helping to establish a group and supporting its successful operation. There is sometimes a tendency for the Environment Agency to view lobby or campaign groups defensively, but experience shows that anger turns to cooperation over time (see quote on previous page).

The Environment Agency:

- Sends letters suggesting parish councils and other groups take action on flooding.
- Uses email to prompt/check on groups to help keep them active.
- Provides groups with templates and guidance (such as emergency plan templates).
- Talks to groups (individually/collectively) or at seminars (for example, to help draft a community emergency plan).
- Updates with flood maps, warning areas, leaflets.
- Takes part in/convenes cross-CCP meetings with groups (individually/collectively); for example, Bewdley liaison meetings involve emergency services and the local authority and are chaired by the Environment Agency
- Works with the groups to support their actions.

Some are concerned about liability issues in relation to community groups. If this is of concern, it can easily be handled, as Maria Ullyart, Flood Incident Management Officer, Penrith Office explains:

> *"Whilst we help initiate them getting set up, we've had a lot of discussions with the emergency planning unit in how these groups will work and each agency has said, we're here if you need us and you know how to contact us but we won't give you any instructions, it's entirely up to you, you've got your own risk assessment and you've done your own safety stuff so we'll leave it with you to initiate your response. And they've been quite happy with that."*

Others are concerned about the cost-effectiveness of supporting such groups and attending meetings with them.

Flood ambassadors

What are flood ambassadors?

Flood ambassadors are staff with a direct role in liaising with a particular at-risk or flooded community (or communities). It is a relatively new role, although flood ambassadors have been used successfully in the Thames region for the last two years, basing the scheme on staff with 'people experience' such as ex-police officers.

Although our research found that other regions such as the Midlands (who were asked to follow the flood ambassador scheme rather than developing it themselves) have struggled to make the ambassador scheme work, the Pitt Review (2007) found:

> *People welcomed and supported our flood ambassadors and post-event surgeries. Over 110 staff took on the role of flood ambassadors and went round to homes offering advice and listening to concerns. This is extremely useful as we learn first hand what is concerning people.*

Numbers of ambassadors used post-2007 summer floods

	Midlands	North East	Thames
Media interviews	164	70	195
Info requests	687	346	405
Flood ambassadors	18	38	59
Public surgeries	29	33	10

A need for guidance on activities/job specifications

One of the observations from staff who acted as flood ambassadors during the summer 2007 floods was that there are currently no guidelines for flood ambassadors. This gap should be urgently addressed, along with a careful review of what makes flood ambassador schemes work (and not work). As an example, the following are drawn from Helen Todd from the Midlands Flood Incident Management (FIM) team, who acted as one of the ambassadors post-summer 2007 floods, and from an interview with Thames FIM Manager who oversaw the successful operation in Thames West area.

What are the merits of flood ambassadors? Flood ambassadors could:

- Provide a face to the Environment Agency.
- Diffuse issues at an early stage, and on a one-to-one basis.
- Give information to the public/educate the public.
- Gather valuable information on flood risk management, such as filling in information on gauge board sheets, photos, flood levels and so on.
- Help assess the need for a further drop-in session/public meeting.

When should ambassadors be sent out? Flood ambassadors could be:

- Pre-emptive in the traditional winter flood season.
- Reactive following a major flood (the scale of which can be determined by the need to collect evidence/educate a particular area).
- Timely, possibly within two weeks of an event so that evidence is still fresh, although this runs the risk of people not being in their homes.

Where should ambassadors be sent to?

- To places badly affected by flooding, or where there is a need to determine what happened and gather more information for the Environment Agency.
- In the short-term, there may be a problem in determining places where the greatest numbers of properties have been affected.
- Locations should therefore be chosen from information gleaned from media coverage and from flood risk management teams involved in the Flood Incident Room.

Who makes the decisions about ambassadors?

- Ideally, a temporary offline team should decide when and where ambassadors should be sent, and organise the whole activity from start to finish.
- If not an offline team, a collaborative approach needs to be instigated using a variety of sources.
- A coordinator/lead contact would be a bare minimum

What should an ambassador do?

- Be prepared to consider the situation from the community rather than the Environment Agency's point of view, to troubleshoot and liaise with other authorities.
- Be prepared to act as a counselling service and deal with emotions supportively.
- Be equipped to write down queries, gather information, and know the procedure to follow once back in the office.
- Actively pursue information and intelligence that the Environment Agency should act upon and chase up any promised actions or information needs with the community.

Who should be flood ambassadors?

- Anyone can be a flood ambassador as long as they are trained and comfortable with what they are doing. They must be comfortable with working with distressed people, and have strong interpersonal skills: ex-police officers worked well in the Thames.
- It would be advisable for flood ambassadors to stick with a patch they are familiar with through work or through home-life.

How should flood ambassadors be trained?

- Training at least once a year prior to the traditional winter flood season.
- Refresher training would be advisable following a flood event/before going out as an ambassador.
- Training should include all issues likely to be encountered whilst out and about, for example the status/availability of a flood warning service, local defences/plans, potentially contentious issues, what publications are available and what they contain, and a general brief on what actually happened (rainfall and the way local rivers reacted).

What should an ambassador pack include?

- Comments/observations form.
- Questions/inquiry sheet.
- Local gauge board sheet (if available) with “what time did you flood” option so we can relate the timing of the street/home flooding to an actual level on the gauge (if fluvial). Such information should then be relayed back to the customer so that they can use this information in future events.
- Rules and responsibilities of the Environment Agency.
- Where to get further information from ourselves, local authorities, utilities, National Flood Forum (for flood products) and so on.
- Flood warning service information: where we offer it, how it works, how to sign up, quick-dial codes for Floodline.
- Leaflets on preparing for, during, and after a flood

What happens after flood ambassadors have been out?

- Ambassadors should pass back information to an offline team, or at least to a coordinator who knows which teams should be receiving which information/queries.
- Queries should be logged and responded to, either personally or using a report formulated from all other questions gathered.
- Information such as levels at which certain properties flood should be gathered and added to procedures.
- Use the information and intelligence gathered to inform any further work with the community, such as the need for a further public meeting/drop-in session if it looks like the community would benefit from one

Surgeries and drop-ins

Flood surgeries were especially successful when we linked in with our partners and held events quickly after the floods. The events allow people affected by flooding to share their experiences, ask questions, and allow us and our professional partners to listen, learn and explain.[7]

What are drop-ins and surgeries?

Drop-ins and surgeries provide a structured space over a defined period of time for people to come along and find out about something, contribute their views, and meet and form relationships with others around a particular issue. They differ from exhibitions (although an exhibition may be part of the drop-in) in placing emphasis on interactions between the visitors and the organisers, rather than simply providing information from one to the other. They are different to public meetings in that the people attending choose a time to suit them, to focus on issues most relevant to them, in a way that most suits them.

Is there a difference between a drop-in and a surgery?

- A drop-in is the best term for situations where people will be attending to find out general information and where the Environment Agency is NOT likely to be able to solve all their problems/answer their questions.
- A surgery is the most appropriate term if the event is structured around people coming in and being given individual attention to answer or solve a particular question or problem (such as how a particular change in the law or new flood defence will affect them).

What types of drop-ins and surgeries are there, and what can they achieve?

Drop-ins and surgeries can be used proactively or reactively: proactively to consider options for responding to flood risk in the future or gathering ideas on a particular issue, for example; reactively, after a high profile event with consequences that affect individuals and organisations such as flooding, a pollution incident or a change in a law.

Proactive drop-ins place more emphasis on consulting others and forming relationships for further work, whereas reactive drop-ins place more emphasis on immediate resolution of issues, gathering information and signposting.

Drop-ins can be a useful way of:

- informing people (collectively and individually);
- gathering information, views and ideas (collectively and individually);
- building future relationships.

[7] Environment Agency (2007). *Review of 2007 Summer Floods*

Drop-ins may be particularly useful if:

- A large number of people from a clearly defined local area (usually under 15 minutes bus ride, walk or drive) are likely to be interested in being involved.
- Many people will be affected by an issue, and it is useful to allow them to find out tailored information/advice from a number of people or organisations (rather than just receiving general information), and/or to give personal views.
- It is useful to find out the full range of views on a subject.
- Building constructive future relationships is important.
- There is not one particular time when all those who might want/need to take part can make it.
- There is an appropriate venue to accommodate the drop-in.
- There are sufficient staff to manage the drop-in.

Drop-ins may NOT be appropriate (on their own) if:

- The issue is of specialist interest, in which case it may be better to attend meetings of those with an interest (such as parish council, angling group).
- It is difficult to make sense of the issues without being 'on the ground', in which case a tour of the site/area might also be needed or might be more appropriate (for example, to understand a local drainage issue or problem with smells from a landfill site or with a particular property).
- A decision has to be made, in which case the drop-in may have to be followed up by a public meeting or by a smaller 'liaison' group who can make sense of the results of the drop-in to inform their decision or recommendation (for example, on whether to adopt a particular flood defence scheme).
- There have been concerns about 'divide and rule' in the past, in which case there will need to be some kind of public meeting at some point.
- Key organisations can't or won't attend (in which case, work with them to decide what would be appropriate first).
- There is a strong lobby/antagonistic group or individual (in which case, work may need to be done specifically to engage them before any drop-in takes place – this may provide vital intelligence).

For more information

For more information see the Environment Agency's guide, *Planning and running successful drop-ins and surgeries*. This detailed and practical guide is based on experience gained from designing and running proactive drop-ins (South West and North East regions) and reactive drop-ins (post-summer 2007 floods in the North East and Midlands). It includes check lists, examples of good practice, proformas and covers everything from room layouts to staffing requirements. The guide should be particularly useful to area staff following large floods, and can be considered part of the post-incident response guidance alongside data collection and correspondence.

Flood fairs and property grants

What are these for?

Flood fairs and grants are ways of liaising with the community and individuals to help them protect themselves and their property. These are very much in line with Recommendation 33 from the Environment Agency's lessons learned from summer 2007 floods:

> *People need to be more aware of the risks of flooding and better prepared to protect themselves and their properties. We should promote more people signing up to our flood warning service, protecting their properties more by using door guards and air brick covers and other measures to protect them from the effects of flooding, and increasing the number of homes being built or restored to withstand flooding.*

What is a flood fair?

Flood fairs bring together flood protection products and services, ideas, help and information for the benefit of those who have been affected by or are at risk of flooding.

Flood fairs not only provide a method for suppliers of flood protection products and services to reach their scattered market. They offer a one-stop shop for flooding information and help, bringing together those affected by flooding with those who may be able to offer a solution.

Flood fairs normally include:

- manufacturers and suppliers of flood protection products;
- drying and restoration companies;
- voluntary bodies offering support and advice;
- Environment Agency flood warning and flood defence teams;
- the water companies;
- WaterVoice
- county councils, district councils and emergency planning units.

At the same time, the agencies have a chance to hear first hand about the problems faced by those affected by flooding. They have the opportunity to distribute publications, explain policy and promote the work they are doing to alleviate flooding or its effects.

The first flood fair was held in Bewdley in June 2001, organised by Bewdley Residents' Flood Committee. The fair enabled householders to see for themselves the range of flood protection products available. What had been planned as a local event turned into one of national importance, with potential customers attending from all over the country, and firms coming from as far away as Sweden to exhibit their products.

Since, then flood fairs have been taken up by emergency planning officers, local authorities, the Environment Agency and community action groups, and a whole series of flood fairs have taken place round the country. The National Flood Forum can offer support to the organisers of flood fairs in the form of advice, a calendar of fairs already planned and lists of potential exhibitors. http://www.floodforum.org.uk

Grants

> *"This grant scheme is giving people an opportunity to do something to their homes which means after a flood there's less stress, they can get back in a lot quicker."*[8]

The North West region has a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) pilot scheme operating in two areas – Appleby and Kirby-in-Furness – that won't be setting up flood defence schemes in the next 10 to 15 years. Instead, residents can apply (to the Environment Agency) for a grant to buy flood protection products or to make their home more flood resilient. This includes, for example:

- putting tiles down instead of carpet;
- raising the height of the electrics;
- rendering the walls;
- buying a pump.

Flood fairs were held in September 2007 so that residents could see what's on the market.

Other pilot grant schemes are being operated in the UK by Defra, to identify the most effective method of administering the grants.

FLOOD FAIR CALENDAR

(taken from National Flood Forum Website, February 2008)

ABINGDON FLOOD FAIR
THURSDAY 7TH FEBRUARY 2008
ABBEY HOUSE, ABBEY CLOSE, ABINGDON
2.30PM TO 7.00PM

This fair has been requested by the local community and the Vale of White Horse District Council in association with the Environment Agency and the National Flood Forum. There will be a variety of flood protection products on show plus advice from the National Flood Forum on all aspects of dealing with flooding.

EVESHAM FLOOD FAIR
THURSDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2008
EVESHAM LEISURE CENTRE
2.30PM TO 7.00PM

This fair has been organised by Wychavon District Council and the National Flood Forum. There will be a variety of flood protection products on show plus advice from the National Flood Forum and Wychavon District Council on dealing with flooding.

8 Interview with Flood Incident Management Officer. September 2007

APPENDICES

Example invitation to an emergency plan workshop

Our Ref: MU/MultiAg&CommGp/plans/01

Your Ref:

Date:

[Insert address]

Dear

MULTI AGENCY AND COMMUNITY ACTION GROUP EMERGENCY FLOOD PLAN WORKSHOP

Following the positive response from the community group meeting we held back in February, I would like to invite up to four members of your community group to attend an Emergency Flood Plan Workshop which will be held on 4th October 2007 at the Penrith Rugby Club.

This workshop will focus on community groups developing their own community emergency plan and will be attended by other community groups as well as representatives from a range of different agencies including your local authority and emergency services. This workshop is designed to assist those groups who have started developing an emergency plan or to give help, support and ideas to those groups who have not yet started the process.

We will be providing a buffet lunch first which you are welcome to attend and this will be served at 12.30pm. The workshop will then follow lunch and will aim to finish at 4pm.

It is advisable that if you have started working on your plan already that you please bring this with you.

Please could you complete the attached form with the names of those from your community that would like to attend and send back to me in the pre-paid envelope by Friday 31st August 2007.

If you require any further information or have any queries, please do not hesitate to give me a call on 01768 215788.

Yours sincerely

MARIA ULLYART
Flood Incident Management Officer

Hampshire Best Practice Guide to Managing Flood Risk in Communities

What can the parish or town council do?

Hampshire County Council and the Environment Agency are encouraging each parish, town council or community association to appoint a flood coordinator. Parish or town councils and communities should play an active role in preparing for and responding to flooding.

Key to the role would be drawing up and putting in place a town or village flood plan. Hampshire County Council Emergency Planning Unit has produced a template for the flood plan in a Word document (not a true WP template), that can be altered and changed in any way required to suit local needs. It contains advice and suggestions to assist parishes in drawing up their own plans.

Electronic copies can be obtained from the County Emergency Planning Unit (Email: epoffice@hants.gov.uk).

Local plans should include details of how warnings are received in the community and how they are passed on to those at risk, liaison and contact arrangements with organisations involved during flood events, and information on where to obtain sandbags or alternatives.

TEMPLATE
TOWN/VILLAGE FLOOD PLAN

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This plan is to assist town and village councils in preparing a specific plan for their area. The
plan can therefore be tailored to meet catchment characteristics, local needs and the level of service required.

1.2 Details in the plan concentrate on the operational aspects of flooding, e.g. protecting life and
property and managing the flood.

1.3 The actions of each organisation are listed but they may not necessarily be carried out as the
result of a duty or responsibility.

1.4 Decide exactly what you want this plan to cover and outline the intentions.

1.5 Discuss your plan outline with the relevant agencies – district council, area surveyor, Environment Agency, local landowners, water company and so on.

2.0 FLOOD WARNINGS

2.1 The Environment Agency's Local Flood Warning Plan provides details of the flood warning arrangements for Flood Warning Areas where there is a risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. The Environment Agency also provides information on groundwater levels.

2.2 There are four warning codes (represented by graphical icons). These are:

Flood Watch: Flooding is possible. Be aware! Be prepared! Watch out!

Flood Warning: Flooding of homes, businesses and main roads is expected. Act now!

Severe Flood Warning: Severe flooding is expected. Imminent danger to life and property. Act now!

All Clear: There are no Flood Watches or Flood Warnings currently in force in the area.

2.3 Flood Watch is a general alert concerning flooding from rivers, streams, ditches, watercourses, estuaries and the sea. Flood Warnings and Severe Flood Warnings relate to specific Flood Warning Areas at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea.

2.4 To receive flood warnings you must register with the Environment Agency. List here details of how warnings are received in the village – who receives them and how they are disseminated to whoever needs them.

3.0 FLOODING EVENT

3.1 The main types of flooding event referred to in this plan are:

- Tidal (sea)
- Fluvial (river)
- Flash (roads, ditches, fields)
- Groundwater (high water table)
- Sewage (sewers, rising mains and pumping stations)
- Potable water (mains failure).

3.2 Highlight the type of flooding likely to affect your town/village.

4.0 LEVEL OF RESPONSE

4.1 The level of response from the authorities to a flooding incident will depend on what is flooded or is at risk of being flooded. There are five priority categories:

1 People: Action to protect life
2 Houses: Action to protect life and property
3 Roads: Action to protect life and property
4 Commercial property: Possible action to protect property
5 Gardens/Agricultural land: No action

4.2 There are other factors which may influence the level of a response. Priority is likely to be given to the old or infirm when assisting people and to occupied property when protecting property. The classification of roads may be used in prioritising responses to road flooding and the protection of commercial property may depend on the risk of environmental pollution from stored chemicals etc.

4.3 Some councils may not provide assistance in flood risk areas where there is persistent flooding and property owners and occupiers are fully aware of the situation. In such cases the owners and occupiers must be made aware that they must make their own arrangements to protect their property from flooding and this policy should be clearly stated in the plan.

4.4 List your local priorities for action.

5.0 AUTHORITIES INVOLVED

5.1 The following organisations may be involved in direct specific action during a flooding event. Property owners are listed as it is their responsibility to protect their own property from flooding.

• Environment Agency
• County council
• Unitary authority
• District council
• Town and parish council
• Fire and rescue service
• Water company
• Electricity, gas and telecommunications companies
• Large industrial companies
• Property owners

6.0 ACTION LISTS

6.1 Environment Agency

The principal actions of the Environment Agency are to:

• Issue flood warnings.
• Receive and record details of all flooding incidents.
• Monitor the situation and advise other organisations.
• Deal with emergency repairs and blockages on main rivers and own structures.
• Respond to pollution incidents.
• Advise on waste disposal issues

6.1.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.2 County Council

The principal actions of the County Council are to:

• Coordinate emergency arrangements.
• Maintain safe conditions on the roads.

• Put flood warning signs on the highway.
• Organise road closures and traffic diversions.
• Clear blockages on highway drainage systems.
• May take action to protect property from flooding by water from the highway where there is a failure of the highway drainage system.

6.2.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.3 District Council

The principal actions of District Councils are:

• Coordinating role for own area.
• Flood warning dissemination (by local agreement with Environment Agency).
• Emergency assistance (S138 LGA 1972) - provide sandbags.
• Clear blocked watercourses etc.(Land Drainage Act powers).
• As county council for highways (Highways Agency areas only).
• Environmental health issues - pollution.
• Blocked road channels and gully gratings - street cleaning.
• Emergency planning support groups.

6.3.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.4 Town and Parish Councils

The principal actions of Town and Parish Councils are:

• Flood warning dissemination (by local agreement with Environment Agency).
• Distribute sandbags from district council stockpiles.

6.4.1Add specific local details of importance here.

6.5 Fire and Rescue Service

The principal actions of the Fire and Rescue Service are:

• Rescue.
• Respond to all emergency incidents as required.
• Assist the populace where needed and the use of fire service personnel and equipment is needed.

6.5.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.6 Water companies

The principal actions of water companies are:

• Emergency overpumping or tankering at pumping stations.
• Clearing blockages in public sewers and outfall grills.
• Repairing burst sewage and water pumping mains.
• May take action to protect property from flooding by water from the public water mains or discharges from the public sewerage systems

6.6.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.7 Electricity, gas and telecommunication companies

The principal actions of the electricity and gas companies are to:

• Attend to emergencies relating to their service at properties where life at risk from flooding.
• Attend to flooding emergencies at their own service installations.

6.7.1 Add specific local details of importance here.

6.8 Large industrial companies

The principal actions of large industrial companies are to:

• Protect own premises and installations.
• Source of resources which could be hired.

6.9 Property owners

The principal actions of owners of property at risk of flooding or which is flooded are to:

• Move to a safe area if life is at risk.
• Prevent water from entering property if possible.
• Switch off electricity and gas supplies at mains.
• Move valuable possessions above floor areas liable to be flooded.

6.9.1Add specific local details of importance here.

7.0 CONTACTS AND COMMUNICATION LINKS

7.1 CONTACT TELEPHONE NUMBERS

ORGANISATION TEL. NO. TEL. NO.
FAX. NO. MOBILE NO. (Office hrs) (Out of hrs)

Environment Agency	
District Council	
County Council	
Fire & Rescue Service	
Police	
Water Company	
Electricity Company	Add details here
Telecommunication Companies	
Gas Company	
Adjacent Town/Parish Councils	
Emergency Planning	

List your own town/village contact numbers here

If you have specific direct numbers for some agencies, a note may be required about them for
the general public or they may become overloaded when you most need them.

7.2 EMAIL ADDRESSES OR HANTSNET CONTACT NUMBERS (if applicable)

ORGANISATION	EMAIL ADDRESS OR LOGON ID
County Council	
District Councils	Add details here

8.0 FLOOD RISK AREAS

8.1 List details of properties/areas at risk from flooding (including cause: watertable, run-off or tidal)

9.0 SANDBAG PROVISION

9.1 Statement on who, in the immediate area, holds sandbag stocks and where:

- Parish
- District
- Commercial stockists

10.0 LIAISON ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 Details of specific arrangements between the various authorities to be included here. Arrangements must have been confirmed between authorities in writing. Reference should be made to site or location plans.

11.0 FOLLOW UP ACTION

11.1 The following action is advised during and after a flooding incident:

• Keep people informed of what is going on and implement media plan when appropriate.
• Provide information to local authority emergency planning support groups to enable them to assist and advise affected property owners.
• Maintain action and financial records.
• Investigate flooding and record information including flood levels.
• Supply details of properties flooded, extent of flooding and flood levels to Environment Agency.
• Inform riparian owners of remedial measures needed to watercourses.
• Identify schemes to alleviate serious flooding of property.

11.2 Add specific information here detailing who is responsible for the follow-up action.

12.0 LOCAL COORDINATION

12.1 Details should be included here which show:

- Location of local flood coordination cell (eg village hall).
- Means of reporting incidents.
- Method of passing information (phone numbers, notice board and so on)
- Flood risk areas (including properties at risk).
- Sandbag stockpile locations.
- Overlap areas covered by special arrangements between towns/villages.

Community Emergency Plan

<u>TEMPLATE</u>

Name of Community

Record of amendment

No.	Date	Nature of amendment
1.		

Date of this plan	

Cumbria County Council

Distribution

Copy No.	Location / Holder
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
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20.	

1. Definitions

A community emergency is any combination of events that:

- Endangers life.
- Severely impacts on the medium to long-term habitability of our homes.
- Causes structural damage to property.

and

- Affects a significant proportion of the community.

An “alert” may be given when there is heightened risk of such events occurring e.g. a flood warning.

An “emergency” may be declared when there is a heightened risk of such events occurring, or when there is no obvious cause e.g. environmental contamination.

In general, a community emergency situation is obvious due to the associated disruption e.g. the situation is such that individuals have stayed at home rather than travel to work.

2. Aims and objectives

The aim of this plan is to increase short-term community resilience.

The objectives of this plan are:

- To protect lives and property.
- To promote mutual assistance within our community.
- To sustain acceptable living conditions.

This will be achieved by:

- The identification of vulnerable elements within the community.
- The identification of hazards and possible mitigatory measures.
- The identification of resources and key contacts within the community.

3. Planning assumptions

The content of this plan is based on the assumption that some utility services have failed and that the emergency services will be restricted in their ability to immediately respond to ours and to neighbouring communities. Obviously where utilities remain functional, they will continue in use.

The foreseeable consequence of this situation is that for an indeterminate period there may be:

- No electricity.
- No gas.
- No water.
- No telephones.

Consequent to the loss of these utilities, the following services may become unavailable:

- Cash dispensers.
- Fuel in service stations.
- Mobile telephones.

4. Emergency coordination team

A team of local volunteers who are resident within the community should be identified whose role is to:

- Undertake the completion and maintenance of the Community Emergency Plan.
- Provide the focal point and management of the community response to an emergency.

This group should appoint an Emergency Coordinator whose role will be to:

- Chair meetings of the Emergency Coordination Team.
- Provide a link to the County Emergency Response Structure.
- Provide a link between the community and other organisations planning and responding to an emergency.
- Call a community meeting during an emergency (if deemed necessary)

This group should also appoint a Deputy Emergency Coordinator who will fulfil the role of Coordinator in the absence of that individual.

Team members will assume the role of Local Emergency Coordinators to specific geographical areas within their parish.

The names and contact details of volunteers for this role can be recorded in **Appendix A.** This appendix also contains more information on the needs and requirements of the role.

It is vitally important that this team coordinates its activities with any existing parish or village group that is endeavouring to fulfil an emergency planning function so as to avoid duplication of effort.

Any member of this team should be prepared to declare an emergency, either singly or in consultation with others in order to ensure a prompt response to the situation.

5. Risk analysis

Risk and hazard analysis is a useful exercise which will aid the Emergency Coordination Team in "scoping" potential problems within their locale, and in identifying potential solutions. The exercise can appear daunting but is surprisingly easy to achieve. A template to assist with this process is included in Appendix B.

6. Communications and records

In preparation for and during an emergency, communications are organised into layers to ensure that:

- Information is distributed to everyone in the community and that no-one should be left feeling isolated.
- Individual concerns and needs are addressed by coordinated action.
- External agencies and services are contactable and respond appropriately.

It is anticipated that the Emergency Coordination Team will be better prepared to identify the needs of their community, and will be able to communicate more focused requests for assistance.

A Communications Schedule is included for completion in Appendix C.

Following declaration of an emergency, it may also be useful to record the time and nature of actions taken. A template Log Sheet to assist with this is included in Appendix D.

7. Resources, equipment and skills

Pre-identification of individuals within the community with particular skills, together with locations of resources and equipment which can be called upon is essential. A template to assist in the compilation of this information is included in **Appendix E.**

8. Key locations and facilities

Pre-identification of key locations and facilities is essential and can be supplemented by the use of area maps. A template to assist in the compilation of this information is included in **Appendix F.**

9. Activation of the plan

Any preparation prior to the event has the effect of reducing the risk in any decision making. To this end it will be useful to prepare action "check lists" as an aide-memoire, to be used in any emergency. A template to assist with this is included in **Appendix G**.

10. Testing and validating the plan

The plan should be tested and validated on a cyclic basis. The following is a suggested schedule for this purpose.

a) The contact list	The relevant numbers should be rung every **three months** to test the contact details of each person named in the plan.
b) The activation process	The staff responsible for triggering the plan activation should be physically asked to do so in a short test. This should be **every twelve months.**

11. External links and further information

Much information exists that can assist in the compilation of emergency plans. A list of many useful reference points is included in Appendix H.

Appendix A: Emergency Coordinator and Emergency Coordination Team

Emergency Coordination Team

Local Emergency Coordinators should:

- Be vigilant to any potential emergency in the community, e.g. awareness of potential flood through local knowledge.
- Keep area data up to date with a review at least annually.
- Where new people move into area, ensure that they have copies of emergency leaflets and offer the opportunity for their details to be held by the Coordination Team.

In an emergency, Local Emergency Coordinators will:

- Check and help the vulnerable or those with special needs, or request help via the Coordinators network.
- Maintain communication with the community in their area e.g. morning and evening, whilst using household information to best effect. Note that Coordinators first priority should be their own household.

Name and Post	Address	Telephone Numbers	E-mail	Availability	Other Information

Appendix B: Local risk analysis

Risk analysis is simply a structured approach to thinking through threats, which can assist you in directing your efforts in a way that can produce the most value.

To carry out risk analysis, follow these steps:

1. Identify threats that are particular to your community – some likely potential threats have been listed below. Much work has already been carried out on this and it may be of assistance to refer to the Cumbria Community Risk Register, which can be viewed online through the Cumbria Resilience Website at http://www.cumbriaresilience.info. Don't duplicate a risk that has already been assessed elsewhere unless you feel that there will be direct benefit in this to your community.

2. Estimate risk. Risk can be defined as the likelihood of an event happening x the impact of the event, where both likelihood and impact are measured on a scale of 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high, 5 = very high.

3. Manage risks. Once you have worked out and prioritised the value of risks you face, you can start to look at ways of controlling and mitigating them. This plan is obviously one controlling/mitigating factor; other factors can be determined as appropriate to your community, your locale and the resources available to you.

4. Review risks. Circumstances and situations change, so it will be essential to carry out periodic risk reviews. We would suggest quarterly for the highest risks and annually for the medium to low risks.

Hazard	Hazard Impact	Likelihood Score	Impact Score	Total Score	Controls in Place	Further Action Required
Flooding						
Loss of electricity supply for up to 2 days						
Loss of electricity supply for between 3 to 7 days						
Loss of gas supply for up to 2 days						
Loss of gas supply for between 3 to 7 days						
Loss of water supply					Water companies are obliged by law to maintain supplies of potable water.	
Loss of telephone service						
Gale force winds						
Snow						

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Other severe weather						
Loss of road access						

Appendix C: Communications

Means and methods of communication, together with relevant numbers and electronic addresses can be recorded on this sheet.				
Communications System	Contact / Responsibility	Numbers / Frequencies	E-mail	Comments
Information Boards (inc. location)				
Leaflet Drop				
Community Magazine				
Cascade Telephone System				
Local Council Meeting				
Local Public Meeting				

	Emergency Services	999 or 112		Emergencies only
	Cumbria Constabulary	0845 3300247		Non-emergency number
	Cumbria County Council	01228 606060 01228 606327 (fax)	information@cumbriacc.gov.uk	
	Cumbria County Council Emergency Planning Unit	01228 815700	emergency.planning@cumbriacc.gov.uk	24-hour answering service
	Environment Agency Floodline	0845 9881188		
	Highways Hotline	0845 6096609		
	NHS Direct	0845 4647	www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk	
	Social Services	01228 526690		Out of hours and emergencies

Radio	Abbey FM	107.3	www.abbeyfm.co.uk	Barrow in Furness
Radio	The Bay	102.3	www.thebay.co.uk	Windermere
Radio	BBC Radio Cumbria	95.6	www.bbc.co.uk/cumbria	N & W Cumbria

		96.1 95.2 104.2 104.1 AM756 AM837 AM1458		S Cumbria Kendal Windermere Keswick/Whitehaven N Cumbria S Cumbria W Cumbria
Radio	Radio Borders	96.8	www.radioborders.com	Borders
Radio	105.4 CenturyFM	105.4	www.1054centuryfm.com	NW England
Radio	CFM	96.4 102.5 102.2 103.4	www.cfmradio.com	Penrith & Borders Carlisle West Cumbria Whitehaven
Radio	Lakeland Radio	100.8 100.1	www.lakelandradio.co.uk	Windermere Kendal
Radio	LVR Lune Valley	TBC	www.cbit.org.uk	Kirby Lonsdale

Appendix D: Log sheet

Date	Time	Information / Action / Decisions	Initials

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Appendix E: Resources

This template can be used to pre-identify equipment and persons with particular skills, together with their locations and contact details.

Equipment	Person	Skill	Location	Contact

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Appendix F: Key locations and facilities

This template can be used to identify key locations and facilities within your community area that may benefit the community in an emergency. These may include telephone boxes, public rooms and filling stations and could include such information as capacity and whether the location has independent utility supply, heating, water and conveniences. If possible it is useful to include mapping information of the locale.

Name and address	Possible use	Notes

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Appendix G: Activation check lists

Emergency Activation Check List

In a major emergency affecting your community, the safest place for anyone not directly involved in the incident is usually in their own home or if not near home, in a building. Thus people who believe they may possibly be affected by the incident should follow the standard advice "GO IN, STAY IN, TUNE IN", which means go inside a safe building, stay inside until you are advised to do otherwise, and tune in to a local radio or TV for information.

Dial **999** ensure the emergency services are aware of the emergency and follow any advice given.	
Contact your local council (see contact sheet)	
Use the suggested log sheet at Appendix D to record: • Any decisions you have made • Who you spoke to and what you said	
Contact other members of the community that need to be alerted: • Those specifically under threat • The local council via the community clerk • Volunteers and key holders that may be needed	
Contact initially may be to inform them of the emergency or inform them of current emergency service advice regarding any action to be taken.	

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Case Study from the Hampshire Guide – HAMBLEDON PARISH COUNCIL

MANAGEMENT OF 2000/2001 GROUNDWATER FLOOD EVENT

This short case study records the role that the Hambledon Parish Council played in the management of the Hambledon 2000/2001 groundwater flood event. The key points are highlighted to assist other Parish Councils in Hampshire plan their responses when flooding occurs in the future.

Know the threat

Hambledon is located at the bottom of a chalk valley, along the course of an ancient river. The village has suffered frequent groundwater flooding since records have been kept. During the 2000/2001 winter, a 'river' with a depth up to 18 inches and a flow rate of 10 knots ran for two miles for over two months along the main streets of the village.

Know the likely flood interval

Hambledon has had four serious groundwater flood events – ground floors of properties under water – in the last 40 years. The likely return period for serious flooding in the future is estimated to be one in 10 years.

Know the responsibilities for flood water management

Hambledon is not located on a 'main river' and therefore is outside the statutory responsibility area of the Environment Agency for providing flood warning and flood protection measures. Whilst groundwater flooding is not covered by the formal flood warning service, the Environment Agency provides information on groundwater levels. The Parish Council has no statutory responsibilities per se for water management, but as the elected representatives of the community can provide local knowledge of the state of the drainage system and exert pressure on those organisations with statutory responsibilities.

Know the floodwater management plan

Following the 1994 major groundwater flood event, which was handled by the Fire and Rescue Services for many weeks, the local authorities concluded that, in any future event, the floodwater should be allowed to flow down the main roads of the village confined by sandbag walls on the pavements.

Establish a flood warning system

One of the important lessons learnt after the 1994 flood event was the need to establish a flood warning system run by the Parish Council. The duties of the Flood Warning System Coordinator appointed by the Council are: to identify a householder with a suitably located well who is prepared to take readings every day and report them (preferably by email); to establish strong links with the Environment Agency, who installed remote telemetry facilities in the Broadhalfpenny Down borehole in 1995; to compare levels and agree on the issuing of flood warning alerts; to issue various types of flood warning to the village – cellar or ground floor – for various sectors of the village using the community communication system.

The flood warning system worked well in late October 2000 and hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of damage was avoided because the property in cellars and on ground floors was moved out of harms way in time.

Establish a community communication system

The Parish Council has established a communication system around the community. The village has been divided into manageable sectors, with Sector Coordinators linked by email. It is known as the Community Cascade Network. Messages are passed on by email or printed out as hard copy for circulation or distribution within each sector. For serious or difficult messages the elderly may be called upon personally by the Coordinator. Types of message include: flood warnings; Neighbourhood Watch crime alerts; parish business, etc.

Establish a flood action coordinator

In October and early November 2000, the Flood Warning System Coordinator issued various degrees of flood warning to the community calling for the clearing of cellars and warning of the likely threat to ground floor property. Serious flooding began around 8 November 2000. It was immediately apparent that the Parish Council needed to establish a link to the residents and to the local authorities in order to manage the increasingly worsening situation. There was a need to call for assistance (sandbags etc) from the local authorities and to provide advice to householders (flood prevention measures, insurance etc) being flooded.

The Flood Warning System Coordinator by chance had been closely involved in the 1994 flood event, providing local information to the Fire and Rescue Service. He knew the importance of establishing a known 'point of contact' for all concerned and therefore transformed his function and title into Flood Action Coordinator (FAC). The FAC tasks involved: patrolling the village to make on-the-spot assessments of the flood situation; reporting the situation to Winchester City Council Chief Engineer either by telephone or email at the end of the day; being available to the community with advice and supervising the placing of sandbag barriers etc around the most vulnerable parts of the village.

Managing the flood

The FAC continued his involvement in the management of the first flood event, which lasted from early November to the end of the month, much of the time on his own, but with the assistance of Parish Councillors when able to give up their business commitments and from individuals in the village.

There was a continuing need to supervise the placing of sandbags by "Dads Army" and by the
Royal Navy volunteers, who fortunately came to our rescue. Regular visits from WCC Engineering Department greatly assisted the timely delivery of sandbags and their positioning. We were learning as we went along and the spirit of self-help was everywhere.

However, the second flood event started in early December and was much more serious. The
advice from the Station Officer, Waterlooville Fire Station, was that one man could not continue to discharge the total burden of flood management and that a Control Centre run on the line of the Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service needed to be set up in the Village Hall.

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Establish a flood information centre

The Parish Council set up the Flood Information Centre (FIC) in the Village Hall with the assistance of the Fire and Rescue Service and the unstinting help from village volunteers. In all, 145 volunteers made offers of help. HCC Emergency Planning provided the vital large-scale map of the village. This FIC Incident Map showed all the flooded properties. It was used to direct the teams laying sandbag barriers and to brief visitors, such as the MP and WCC and HCC officials on the overall situation.

The FIC quickly became the focal point for those in the village with needs and problems. The installation of a telephone enabled external contact to be established between the various local authority departments (social services, public health etc) in WCC and HCC.

The FIC opened on 16 December and continued in operation until the 28 December when the peak of the flooding had passed. It was manned between 9am and 5pm daily by a watchkeeping team of at least three or four people at a time. A duty roster was made out for the days ahead. Out-of-hours telephone calls were diverted to a Duty Parish Councillor's home number.

Keep the local authorities informed

At the end of each day, the Flood Action Coordinator compiled a Situation Report based on briefing in the FIC and his own assessment and sent the report to WCC Chief Engineer by email. This enabled the Chief Executives to be kept informed about the situation in Hambledon and the sandbag and other needs identified for the next day. Regular review meetings were held in the village between representatives from the Parish Council, WCC, HCC, Police, Fire and Rescue and the Environment Agency, who provided forecasts and assessments of the rainfall and flooding situation. The District andCounty Councillors were involved in giving assistance throughout the flood events and also attended these meetings.

Keep accurate records

The Fire and Rescue Service stressed the importance of keeping a timed Incident Log when every request and response was recorded. It is also important to keep a chronology of events and as much photographic and video material as possible. Once operational, the first FIC action was to establish the extent of property damage and human distress through the village. The Parish Council issued a Property Damage Questionnaire to all householders in the parish. This recorded that 129 out of 400 plus houses within the parish boundaries were affected to varying degrees by floodwater.

Control the traffic

Control of vehicle traffic through the village posed a major problem throughout the whole flood event from early November to mid January. Cars parked in the streets along the flood-line had to be removed and sections of road closed to traffic where the threat to properties was greatest. But the major problem was trying to control the speed of vehicles, especially those of the four-wheel drive type, through the floodwater in the streets. Any speed above 10 mph caused bow waves of water to surge across the pavements and into properties on the sides of the streets.

There was such a threat to the schoolchildren being brought to the village that the Primary School was forced to close early before Christmas. Steel traffic barrier chicanes erected across the B2150 (Green Lane and Lower West Street) failed to reduce the speed of the many inconsiderate drivers. Even the regular presence of the Police failed to deter the speeding drivers. A number of police warnings were issued for 'inconsiderate driving'. The threat to life and property continued until the B2150 had to be closed to through-traffic and diversion signs erected to keep traffic from entering Hambledon. Only when the water levels had receded in mid January could the roads through the village be opened again to normal traffic. But closing roads has significant impact on the operations of businesses.

Keep business open

Throughout the weeks of the flooding every effort was made to keep the village functioning as normally as possible and all the businesses open. Walkways had to be constructed to allow shoppers dry access to the shops. The sandbag barriers not only confined the floodwater to the roads, but also provided dry pavements for safe passage for pedestrians.

Obtain the necessary manpower

Despite representations to WCC, at no time was the Hambledon flood event declared a Civil Emergency. This would have enabled service personnel stationed in the area to be brought in the flood-affected area to perform the many heavy-duty tasks needed. The placing of 10,000 sandbags in flood barriers along two miles of road, moving water-logged carpets and furniture, digging ditches etc needs the lifting power of strong men. In the initial phase of the flood "Dads Army" – elderly gentlemen and some ladies - laid the sandbag barriers until volunteers from local service establishments came to our rescue. Serving Officers in the village saw the need for strong manpower and made the necessary links. A team of one plus six naval ratings made an enormous impact on the village morale well beyond the numbers involved.

The village was extremely fortunate that the service volunteers were able to continue to support us during the second flood phase when a local farmer provided a "Matbro" tractor with a bucket. This vehicle was invaluable in moving sandbags, road barriers and other materials around the village.

It was also fortunate that the second flood coincided with the Christmas holiday period and enabled a group of younger residents to join the work force. The manpower provided by the local authorities was much appreciated, but insufficient to cope with the urgent demands to erect flood protection barriers along either side of the main streets for the safe passage of pedestrians.

Take care of the elderly

Of particular concern to the Parish Council was the welfare of the elderly and the sick. Each person at risk was allocated a nominated 'minder' who discretely kept the FIC informed of any problems and needs.

Check public health and security

Members of the WCC Social Department and Environmental Health Officers visited the village daily to check on the needs for re-housing and the state of the pollution caused by the main sewerage system being overwhelmed by floodwater. Portaloos provided by Southern Water in West Street needed regular emptying. In addition, the Police checked on the security of empty properties regularly and neighbours were asked to be vigilant.

Keep the village informed

The Parish Council used the Community Cascade Network, noticeboards and individual house drops, to keep the village informed about any health restrictions and general advice throughout the flood event. The Hambledon website enabled those connected to the world-

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wide-web to keep up- to-date with background information. Regular articles in the Hambledonian, the Parish magazine, looked to the possible flood alleviation measures and asked for memories of previous flood events.

Look after the media

Inevitably such property destruction and human misery attracted the attention of the media. Parish Councillors were nominated to look after the needs of the TV and radio representatives when they visited the village.

Call village consultative meetings

Two Village Consultative Meetings were held after the flooding had subsided for the whole village to attend so that they could be informed about the intentions of the local authorities in the future.

Take tidy up action

Although some cellars remained flooded until May 2001, the sandbag flood protection barriers along the streets were removed in April 2000. The Parish Council assessed that the chance of repeat flooding was minimal. The 10,000 sandbags were then cleared away by WCC Contractors and all the village streets were swept clean which brought life in the village back to some normality.

Capture the lessons

A major flood event like the groundwater flooding of Hambledon for weeks during the winter of 2000/2001 revealed many lessons to be learnt and acted upon. Extensive lists have been compiled and sent to the relevant local authorities and agencies. One of the most important lessons is the central role of the Parish Council to provide the vital focus and link between the community and the local authorities. Both the Flood Action Coordinator and the Flood Information Centre performed this essential function. Another lesson still to be resolved is the provision of manpower at the onset of these minor civil emergencies.

Prepare a flood emergency plan

The Parish Council has drawn upon its experience and involvement in the 2000/2001 flood event to produce its Flood Emergency Plan. The HCC Emergency Planning Unit template simplifies the process needed to record the actions to be taken quickly at the onset of a flood event. Important elements are the activation of the FIC and the maintenance of a list of local authority officers who can provide prompt assistance across a wide range of needs. An accurate photographic record has been kept of where the sandbag barriers were erected. The Hambledon Parish Council Flood Emergency Plan is reviewed and brought up-to-date by the Council every autumn.

Stockpile essential equipment

As part of the flood preparations for the winter 2001/2002, a stock of sandbags, ready for instant deployment should flooding occur, was built up in a farm building close to the village. At the same time, highway warning and control notices are stockpiled in the village to enable better traffic management in the future.

Conclusion

This concludes the short case study of the Hambledon 2000/2001 groundwater flood event. Other parishes will have had very different experiences, particularly those affected by fluvial flooding, but it is hoped some of the experience recorded above may be of assistance.

Nicholas Bailey
Hambledon Parish Councillor
Flood Action Coordinator

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enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

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