

science summary



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Improving stakeholder engagement in flood risk management decision making and delivery

Science Summary SC040033/SR2

The Environment Agency and its stakeholders have high demands of engagement processes, and in particular of participatory decision making for flood risk management. Stakeholder engagement and open dialogue for the co-development of decisions are needed to smooth and facilitate the delivery of the increasingly complex portfolio of flood risk management measures.

The Environment Agency is seeking to make stakeholder engagement contribute more efficiently and coherently to flood risk management decision-making. Stakeholders have to be engaged at different spatial levels and stages in planning and delivery, but opportunities are being lost because the different levels are too disconnected. This report examines the challenges and discusses possible solutions.

The study identifies different tiers of stakeholders: a top tier of 'original' decision-makers who are part of formalised, statutory or contractual partnerships, and a second tier of engagement, including a wide range of institutional stakeholders. Below these, with no clear understanding of how their views will be heard and used, are the citizens.

The report argues that the rise of citizen and community engagement demands a rethink of how views and effort at this level can be included more effectively. There should be a better interface with the stakeholder processes of planning and delivery because citizens will need to adapt their priorities and behaviour to prevent and manage flood risk.

The issues that have to be tackled are identified as the process of engagement and the shift in focus to catchment/coastal systems. This physical system scale crosses administrative boundaries, adding tension to today's locally negotiated partnership protocols. Regional institutions do not currently mesh with regional land and water resource use planning.

Increased co-ordination of planning is being driven by national and international processes such as planning guidance revision, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive and changes in catchment and shoreline planning. Many of these include stakeholder and citizen engagement obligations. Engaging in a fragmented way will not be effective. The report concludes that discussions need to begin now about how to streamline engagement.

This summary relates to information from Science Project SC040033/SR2, reported in detail in the following output:

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