



Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research Programme

Community engagement on climate adaptation – an evidence review

From the project: Working together to adapt to a changing climate: flood and coast FRS17192

Background

This evidence review is part of a larger project looking at community engagement for long-term adaptation to flood and coastal erosion risk.

Climate change may increase flooding or coastal erosion for many communities. The aim of this project is to develop approaches to engagement on climate risks and future options in locations where existing measures will not work in the long term.

The Environment Agency wants to work closely with affected communities to help them make decisions about their future. This project is producing resources for practitioners and decision-makers to guide this collaborative engagement process.

Why is the project needed?

The Environment Agency and other risk management authorities have a substantial body of knowledge on engagement for flood and coastal erosion risk management. However, there is less evidence on how to engage effectively with communities facing limited protection from flooding or coastal erosion. Practitioners and decision-makers need comprehensive guidance on good practice, barriers to success and the resources required for a potentially complex and lengthy engagement process.

The project will also provide evidence for the implementation of the new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The Strategy aims to help create climate resilient places. Frontrunner places will be identified, with the help of this project, to pilot the generation of adaptive approaches in collaboration with local partners. This will lead to the development of a national framework to identify steps and decisions needed to take an adaptive approach to flooding and coastal erosion. Learning generated by the project will feed in to this national framework.

What are we doing?

An evidence review was carried out to generate recommendations for the piloting of a community engagement programme in several locations.

The pilot engagement programme will be designed and implemented in collaboration with government organisations, stakeholders and communities. The project team will test different approaches to engagement, explore what would help local communities to understand and respond to the risks they face, and share the learnings widely.

It is particularly difficult to tell communities that authorities may be unable to protect them from flooding or coastal erosion in the face of future climate risks. This project will identify, address and provide recommendations for overcoming barriers to engagement. Practical engagement resources will be produced to help risk management authorities to design, facilitate and evaluate the engagement process.

What have we found so far?

The evidence review is based on an assessment of over 300 reports and academic papers. Recommendations include:

- Assess the readiness of communities, stakeholders and authorities to make adaptation decisions.
- Consider how people's attachment to places affects decision-making on local change.
- Frame issues sensitively. Using appropriate language can increase people's comprehension of adaptation and reduce contention.
- Be attentive to local needs and conditions. Set realistic engagement goals based on this.
- Adopt a co-production approach. Include engagement practitioners, technical specialists, artists and local residents.
- Use participatory methods to build understanding and capacity. Suggested approaches include simulations, visualisation, storytelling and conflict analysis.
- Create ways to better share learning within risk management authorities.

How will the findings be used?

Findings from the research are primarily aimed at 2 audiences within risk management authorities:

- decision-makers – to enable them to make more informed decisions about who to engage with and when
- engagement officers – to equip them with resources to work with communities where maintaining protection from flooding or coastal erosion may not be viable in the long term

This summary relates to information from project FRS17192, reported in detail in the following output(s):

Report: FRS17192

Title: Working together to adapt to a changing climate: flood and coast – evidence review

August 2019

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This project was commissioned by the Environment Agency's FCRM Directorate, as part of the joint Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Research and Development Programme.

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