

science summary



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Improving Institutional and Social responses to flooding - Work Package 3: Collaboration with civil contingency parties and communities for improved FCERM outcomes

Science Summary SC060019/SS

Recent efforts to cope with and recover from major floods in the UK have mainly been successful where professional partners and communities have worked together. Collaboration will become more important with the need to prepare for future flooding in the UK.

This summary provides the outputs from Work Package 3 of the project Improving Institutional and Social Responses to Flooding which aimed 'to understand what is needed to achieve a successful partnership with the Environment Agency's professional partners in effectively responding to a flood incident. And in the light of this information, to provide whatever practical tools and guidance might be useful for developing the institutional capacity required, so that staff can work more effectively in partnership in flood incidents across England and Wales.'

The focus on 'partnership with professional partners' was later broadened to encompass 'collaboration with professional partners and communities'.

The approach to this work involved:

- 1) Establishing current practices to ensure this report builds upon and feeds into rather than duplicates what is already happening.
- 2) Developing practical tools/frameworks to help boost collaborative working with professional partners and communities on flood management.
- 3) Encouraging the use of the tools/frameworks.
- 4) Reviewing findings and making recommendations for taking the work forward.

The research finds that there is significant room for improving the way that the Environment Agency collaborates with professional partners and communities on flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM).

The research results suggest that examples of good collaboration result from individual initiative rather than

from corporate incentives and processes. It is of some urgency now that the approach to collaboration is improved across the organisation.

Three possible levels of change are put forward:

- Level 1: Improving collaboration through the provision of better expert analysis and data
- Level 2: Improving collaboration through the development of more accessible and actionable information and relationships
- Level 3: Improving collaboration by enabling integrated planning and action

The Environment Agency may naturally focus on level one. This however, will not enable the Environment Agency, professional partners and communities to manage the complexity and urgency of flooding and coastal erosion. It is proposed instead, that effort should focus on developing actionable information and relationships through:

- Equipping staff with the permission and skills to collaborate with professional partners and communities as a core part of their work.
- Greater emphasis on recovery and planning for collaboration in the future, rather than relying on collaboration in a crisis.
- Greater recognition of the value of what others do, and developing processes which enable the Environment Agency to support their work.
- Improving the way that day-to-day meetings and 'partnerships' with professional partners and others are planned for and run, building in a greater element of two-way collaboration to overcome the current emphasis on one-way information giving.
- Improving the way that data and information is shared with professional partners and others.

- Bringing clarity to the way the Environment Agency works with/supports efforts by communities, including the use of drop-ins, flood ambassadors, flood wardens and community flood plans.

A toolkit which includes examples of current practice is provided with the aim of supporting the immediate application of some of these findings.

This summary relates to information from Science Project Improving institutional and social responses to flooding (SC060019), reported in detail in the following output(s):-

Science Report: SC060019/SR

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