

Improving Institutional and Social Responses to flooding Work Package 4: Mainstreaming collaboration with communities and stakeholders for FCERM

Science Summary SC060019/SS

This research provides a new analysis tool to help Environment Agency staff decide how much collaboration is appropriate in different situations, to improve flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM).

The need for such a tool is based on a review of literature and practice which shows that FCERM solutions can no longer be imposed or delivered by the Environment Agency using traditional decide-announce-defend (DAD) approaches alone. Instead, a broader range of approaches is required, especially those which enable others to engage-deliberate-decide (EDD). Many examples of the EDD-type of collaboration exist, and programmes such as Building Trust with Communities are helping to develop these examples.

However, the research found that two myths pervade, preventing the consistent use of collaboration to improve FCERM outcomes:

Myth 1: Collaborating with others is expensive and time-consuming

Reality: There is a range of ways of collaborating with others, each with a range of associated costs and benefits. Matching the most appropriate approach to the situation at hand offers a cost-effective way of achieving multiple goals and added value. Collaborative methods also offer a precautionary approach which can reduce the costs and risks associated with non-delivery of flood schemes. The critical factor is for collaboration to be tailored to the situation.

Myth 2: It is possible to choose whether or not to work with others on FCERM

Reality: All FCERM work will involve some type of engagement, which will increasingly be needed to deliver essential services. Working with others is sometimes the only way of getting things done – not just

at the local level, but also nationally. Choices to be made are about the extent and type of engagement with others, not whether or not to collaborate.

To counter these myths, the report suggests that new processes are needed to help the Environment Agency decide how much and what type of collaboration is required, in a similar way to current Environment Agency processes which assist engineering-based decision-making. For collaboration to be used effectively within FCERM, a clear decision-making process is needed at the start of any project or programme that looks at what type of decision or situation is being dealt with, how much and what type of engagement is appropriate (and how much it will cost).

The report suggests that use of the proposed analysis tool could not only improve Environment Agency decision making, legitimacy and trust, but could significantly reduce the risk of non-delivery of flood risk projects, and reduce the costs of controversial decisions. The tool will enable staff to decide on the most appropriate amount and type of collaboration for a given situation, whether the situation is a unique project or the delivery of ongoing work:

- **Type A situations** are characterised by low controversy and/or few alternative options due to constraints of time, procedure and resources, or by the existence of a crisis (and need to act immediately).
- **Type B situations** are characterised by a greater number of options, increased uncertainty around the 'right' decision and/or the need to make trade-offs and compromises.

Type C situations are characterised by the need to make a decision that will affect many stakeholders (individuals, communities and/or organisations) in a

situation with much complexity or uncertainty and a range of (often entrenched) views on the 'right'

- decision and a strong likelihood of conflict and resistance.

The report describes classic engagement processes for each of these decision or situation types. It also analyses the current organisational readiness for mainstreaming collaboration in this way, and identifies a number of barriers including:

- procedures and systems which do not enable staff to spend time on/reward collaborative efforts;
- inconsistency in messages and leadership on the desirability of collaboration;
- gaps in individual collaborative skills, abilities and knowledge.

The report does not recommend changing the 'culture' of the Environment Agency to address these challenges, but rather that staff (including managers) should be aware of and make efforts to mitigate the inward-focused tendencies of the organisation during outward-facing collaborative tasks including:

- Build up skills of rapport and planning collaboration (making it a less seemingly chaotic process) with staff in relevant roles and give them recognized formats, systems and processes to execute.
- Recruit and assign or enable people with outward-facing and interpersonal skills to support outward-facing activities, for example through *Building Trust with Communities* mentors and 'key contacts' as well as technical staff who have these skills.
- Work strategically and tactically with other organisations who are culturally better equipped to carry out some tasks, and build recognition of what they do (and how the Environment Agency will link to their work).
- Retain consultancies and agencies skilled not just in public relations and consultation (DAD), but in collaborative approaches (EDD). Make it possible for staff to call on them for assistance in designing and delivering collaborative programmes – not just for one-off support, but over the longer term and day-to-day work that is being done.

This summary relates to information from Science Project SC060019 Work Package 4 reported in detail in the following output(s):-

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