

Defra & Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Stakeholder Forum

Notes of Meeting

Thursday 8 May 2014

1. Welcome

Pete Fox (Environment Agency) opened the forum and welcomed attendees. Reference was made to the aims and objectives of the day, and the opportunities to network. There were no outstanding actions from the last meeting.

2. Summary of latest FCERM developments

A summary paper was sent in advance highlighting the latest developments.

Dan Osgood (Defra) and David Rooke (Environment Agency) highlighted some of the key points within this paper.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Dan Osgood (Defra) confirmed that Defra was in discussion with DCLG and other Government Departments around balancing Government priorities and enabling communities to do more.
- Defra continue to work hard with the insurance industry. There will be a transitional period following the introduction of the new flood insurance approach.
- Concern was raised that Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) do not receive any additional funding or support to help with flooded areas, unlike National Parks. It was questioned whether there are any plans to expand support to cover AONBs. Action: Dan Osgood (Defra) to provide a response. Tim Collins (Natural England) confirmed that Natural England has provided some funding to help local authorities in affected areas.
- David Rooke (Environment Agency) confirmed that the Environment Agency is on track to meet its spending review target to reduce households at risk. A number of schemes are due to complete in March 2015 so timing will be tight.
- It was questioned when the outputs of the coastal pathfinder project will be published. A project to further evaluate these and look at further lessons has been agreed by the Defra/Environment Agency Research and Development Programme and is expected to be underway shortly.

3. Reflections on the winter floods

Pete Fox (Environment Agency) introduced the session providing a brief summary of the recent flood events. Paul Cobbing (National Flood Forum), Andy Bradbury

(Southern Coastal Group/New Forest District Council), Rob Cathcart (Natural England), Ian Moodie (National Farmers Union), and Crystal Moore (Flood Forecasting Centre) each gave a short presentation on their experiences and reflections on this winters flooding.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- We could see a repeat of this winters flooding in the future. The Met Office has recently published two papers:
 - The first looks at whether some of the disruptive weather seen in recent years is associated with [climate change](#), and
 - The second which documents the record-breaking winter weather and flooding, and considers the [potential drivers](#).
- Some flood warnings were issued and received but ignored. What more can be done to ensure people take action? Language improvements could be made so people know what to do when they receive a warning.
- Public interpretation of weather warnings can be similar to the traffic light system, where amber doesn't mean take action.
- How many sandbags were used across the country, how much did they cost, and how much was spent on sandbag disposal? Need to see a shift away from reliance on sandbags towards Kitemark products which can be reused.
- Some communities and individuals were waiting for local authorities to take action and help. Strongest people got the sandbags.
- Scale of public service involvement and military intervention led to an increased demand in temporary defences. Changed the response to flooding.
- Question whether there has been adequate communication on the impacts of the floods. Public perception that Somerset was the worst hit.
- Mental health impacts of flooding are not recorded. Huge impact when the 'blue lights' leave.
- It was questioned whether there would be an overarching report covering learning from the floods. How flexible will the six year programme of works be to accommodate those projects and beach replacement works which need to come forward.
- Need to engage effectively with communities and involve them in decisions. Critical for Defra and DCLG to work together.

4. Follow up to recent floods

Dan Osgood (Defra) and Alison Baptiste (Environment Agency) gave a presentation on the recovery from the winter floods and the next steps. This was followed by a breakout discussion session on possible improvements and lessons for the future.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Dan Osgood (Defra) confirmed that the new Cabinet Committee on Flooding had been set up to oversee the recovery effort and ensure that lessons are learnt and actions taken. Stakeholders should get in touch with Defra or Environment Agency Recovery Teams if they have any further thoughts on lessons and improvements for the future.
- Defra and other Government Departments are currently discussing how the lessons which have been captured will be shared.
- Suggestion that a conference should be run to capitalise on the recent flood events and to share knowledge and learning.
- The issues caused at Gatwick Airport this winter were as a result of flooding to a private substation and not a public supply.

Notes from the discussion session were captured on table record sheets.

5. Scoping a potential new national flood risk assessment

Mike Steel (Environment Agency) and Hannah Mitchell (Environment Agency) gave a presentation on the potential options for developing a new approach to flood risk assessment and the work done to date. This was followed by a breakout discussion session on what stakeholders both expect and want from a new risk assessment.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- The project is in its early days of development. Further engagement and involvement from stakeholders will take place.
- Any further ideas should be sent to Mike Steel and Hannah Mitchell.

Notes from the discussion session were captured on table record sheets.

6. Sustainable urban drainage systems

Lynn Fardon (Defra) gave a presentation on the policy development behind SuDS and an update on progress.

The following point was raised in discussion:

- No update or confirmation of when the SuDS policy would be implemented. The Government remains committed to implementing SuDS at the earliest available opportunity, but not in a way which affects development. While several departments are working hard on this, it has become clear that the Government will not be in a position to implement Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act from October 2014 as had been hoped. A statement will be made in the summer which will set out plans for implementation in greater detail.

7. Flood insurance

Karen Carr (Defra) gave a presentation on the progress of Flood Re and the future of flood insurance.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- There is a commitment within the Water Bill [now the Water Act] that people eligible for Flood Re will know they are, and will therefore know they are at high risk of flooding.
- There is a possibility that timescales could be longer depending on progress on the state aid notification.

8. Flood Risk Management Plans

Sue Reed (Environment Agency) and Roger Orpin (Defra) gave a presentation on the approach, progress and timescales for delivering Flood Risk Management Plans.

No points were raised in discussion.

9. Partnership funding evaluation

Celia McNally (Defra) gave a presentation on the outputs of the recent partnership funding review.

The following points were raised in discussion:

- Partnership funding contributions come from a wide range of sources.
- Measuring benefits when contributions come from multiple sources was not covered in the review.
- Break down of contributions from each sector is covered in the report appendices.
- Concerns that no changes are intended following the review. Minimal new partnership money coming into the system.
- Missed opportunity not to evaluate economic growth.
- Need to distinguish between public and private sector contributions, and understand the differences.
- Property values differ across the country.

10. Round-up and close

Pete Fox (Environment Agency) summarised the key points from the day and thanked all speakers and organisers. Any feedback and suggestions for future agenda items should be sent to [Jennifer Hines](#). All presentations from the meeting were shared with members of the Forum.