

Research and Information Service Briefing Note

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Building Resilience: Flooding in Northern Ireland National Flood Forum Workshop Summary Report.

The following paper gives a summary of the *Building Resilience: Flooding in Northern Ireland National Flood Forum Workshop and Discussion* 29 June 2016 hosted by the National Flood Forum and Watertight to discuss both local and national responses to flooding in Northern Ireland.

The purpose of the event was to bring together people who have been affected by flooding, as well as a range of organisations who have an interest in the area, to share experience and expertise. It featured contributions from different organisations including community groups, as well as the National Flood Forum, who gave an overview of how they have been effective in England, Wales and Scotland, and to potentially develop a similar network in Northern Ireland.

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1 Chair's Opening Remarks: Quintin Oliver

 Introduction: Quintin Oliver, Stratagem, also Northern Ireland Adviser to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF).

- Context of event taking place in the aftermath of "Brexit" vote; uncertainty of future arrangements and relationship with the EU – relevant given strong role EU has played in policy around flooding in Northern Ireland.
- Statutory sector can't work without people: local communities need government framework of public services/regulation/funding.
- Private sector has a role to play in developing new products, innovating and coming up with new ideas – they also need people and statutory framework within which to operate.
- Health service, which accounts for around 50% of public spending, relies heavily on cross-sectoral working, with co-design and co-production a key part of how it operates.

2 Watertight Overview: Chris Keir and Gareth Boyd

- Watertight work extensively in the UK with communities affected by flooding, mainly through the Environment Agency and local government.
- Local company looking at best practice across UK and globally, as well as exporting skills that are world-leading.
- Watertight are working to develop new products, including telemetry with Kingspan Environmental and Dublin City University.
- Watertight as a leading provider of Property Level Protection (PLP), working with local authorities and councils in England to protect individuals against flooding.
- Examples of their work can be seen in Horncastle Council, Dorset County Council,
 Devon and Budley, and their work includes working with listed buildings.
- PLP was initially about products, however it is becoming much more focused around people, and this is the approach that Watertight have adopted: people, not products.
- Very easy to patronise, but also easy to listen: learning in working with communities. Key is ensuring community take ownership of issues, actions and solutions.
- Resilience as key in responding to and mitigating risk of flooding; general acceptance that water will breach defences, and so it is about minimising damage.
- Importance of understanding the ability and capacity of the individual property owner.

Watertight work with the community in understanding what products will help them, as well as the capacity of the individual to deploy these when flooding occurs/is at risk of occurring.

- Includes accounting for planned maintenance and annual inspections about a process and not just one-off installation.
- Need for communities to have a strong voice, and persevere in finding a solution to flooding.

3 Paul Cobbing: National Flood Forum

See PowerPoint slides Appendix 1

- Flooding is not just an environmental issue, it is about people and the impacts on their lives, it is about contingency planning, health and economy.
- NFF is a national charity with 13 employees. Works throughout England and Wales
- NFF supports flood risk communities by helping people prepare and recover from flooding.
- Aims to put flood issues at centre of policy making and operational delivery
- Supports communities to work with partners to find solutions
- Therefore gives communities the control
- Provides and Advice Line and Property ProtectionTool-however this is not being utilised in NI
- E.g. of community led flood action group supported by NFF:
- Calderdale Flood Commission- created own plan from previous flood experience often local community is first on the scene before national services arrive.
- Adur Floodwatch Group- independently engaged with landowner to start putting provisions in to prevent flooding further down river
- Brompton by passed national Agencies as they couldn't respond quickly enough. Applied for loan from bank, employed a hydrologist, spoke to local land owners and now getting planning for new measures.
- Local communities develop action plans which they practice annually- NFF is invited along to contribute.
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation work paramount in getting insurance for high risk areas in England.

4 Paddy McLaughlin, Cushendall Resilience Group

See PowerPoint slides Appendix 2

 Does not rely on emergency services- drew up own local plan after last floods and relies on local services.

- Store sand bags on site- learnt that waiting for DOE is too slow- flooding comes too quickly.
- Local plan not just about flooding- collating local resources and expertise to provide as many services as possible e.g. first aid as nearest hospital 55mins away, local search and rescue, aid during heavy snowfall of 2012.
- Works in partnership with Fire, Police, RNLI, Mountail Rescue, Red Cross, Health Trust, Coastguard, local Doctors, Rivers Agency etc.
- It developed coordinated emergency plan, logged all risks and opportunities, identified all key assets in area, identified suitable building to use as emergency centre, developed plan with key stakeholders, new generator and afety equipement in place, received £10,000 in lottery funding which helped towards new sandbag storage facility.

5 Q&A

Joanne McKenna, British Red Cross: What is the added value that the NFF can bring to NI, given there is already a multi-agency approach to flooding in place?

Paul Cobbing, NFF:

• Role of statutory agencies is very important, however programmes are most effective when engagement comes first, rather than "top-down" solutions that people participate in rather than "own".

Michael Patterson, Belfast City Council: How do we ensure community resilience is included in the Programme for Government?

Quintin Oliver, Stratagem:

Need to respond to the consultation by 22 July, making the case for how this aligns with the overall focus on outcomes and wellbeing.

Terry Hoey, Palmerstown Residents Association: Is the Cushendall Resilience Group independent from the RNLI and what insurance do you have to cover

use of equipment including defibrillators?

Paddy McLaughlin, Cushendall Resilience Group:

 Resilience Group is independent from the RNLI but RNLI lends resource to the group – useful network to locate people who are "do-ers".

 Work with Ambulance Service to ensure people are trained to use equipment and this is regularly maintained by the Ambulance Service.

Quintin Oliver, Stratagem: How do Watertight engage with communities?

Chris Kerr, Watertight:

- We would prefer to engage with communities much earlier but due to tender and procurement processes, the groups are already formed.
- Best results come from early engagement as communities have the local knowledge which can inform Watertight what solutions are most appropriate for their particular problems.

Leigh Gould, Clarawood Residents Association: Local area has been flooded six times in the last 10 years, and personal experience has not been of bottomup, statutory sector ignored (his) voice in identifying source of flooding, and only activity occurred when flooding, so reactive rather than preventative.

6 Claire Hanna MLA: Political Perspective

- Praised work of statutory agencies, and hoped for further positive developments under new Department for Infrastructure.
- As MLA, and previously as Councillor for Balmoral ward in South Belfast, Claire spoke of significant experience in helping constituents in relation to flooding.
- Cited example of Sicily Park, which has flooded several times since 2012; whilst some resilience measures are in place, significant problems with infrastructure – sewer system is 100 years old.
- Flooding disrupts lives and has huge impact on quality of life always conscious of heavy rain.
- Insurance as big issue for many, some have been "cleaned out" from previous flooding events.
- Different reasons for flooding, but for constituents, issue is to prevent water from entering their home.
- Gap in legislation to underpin multi-agency approach lack of clarity in the different roles of NI Water, Rivers Agency and Transport NI (formerly Roads Service).

 Looked at Civil Contingencies Act in operation in UK and how it only applies to a limited number of organisations in NI delivering non transferred functions e.g.
 PSNI, Coastguard and telecommunications.

- Issue of Floodline needs to be addressed acknowledged that some work has been done on this – essential that people-centred approach is adopted, e.g.: callers being asked to identify the source of flooding/MLA cannot ring on behalf of constituents.
- Issue with the Hardship Fund being one off fund of £1000 individuals can only get it once no matter how many times property floods.
- Need ring-fenced resilience funding
- Need to plan long term for flooding and infrastructure needs to match changing weather.
- Agencies and communities are willing to engage but need to have support in the form of legislation and resources.

7 Workshop feedback

The following questions were put for consideration by the groups:

- 1. What are the three highlights you have heard so far?
- 2. What are you three top priorities for action now?

These are summarised in the table below:

	Highlights	Top priorities		
1.	Need for Community-led approach – identify people to talk to. Community planning is essential.	1.	Education key in informing and empowering people with good examples such as Cushendall. Need bottom up	
2.	Communication aimed at all sections of community –no one size fits all	2.	approach. Resilience awareness should be included	
3.	Legislation and funding –lack of legislation means no dedicated funding-£300 set up for groups is not enough. Lack of funding for Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG).	3.	in school curriculums Community engagement - Need development of a toolkit and analysing effective ways of engaging. Ensure community empowerment.	
4.	Reactive approach taken- need more preventative action. Early warning essential. All hazards approach is needed similar to Cushendall.	4.	Need for specific legislation to deal with flooding in NI with a lead department. NI falls behind other parts of the UK in terms of Civil Contingencies legislation.	
5.	Potential for widening the remit of resilience in other areas e.g. security, RNLI and partnerships with sports clubs, use of catchments and "upstream" partnerships.	5.	Should also look at climate change legislation e.g. Welsh model. Consider Brexit issues and make reference to sustainable development within legislation development.	
6.	Need forum for resilience groups to access advice on best practive models and funding opportunities.	6.	Lack of funding - Legislation needed to ensure agencies have the necessary resource to fund resilience groups.	

8 Jonathan McKee, Rivers Agency

See PowerPoint slides Appendix 3

- Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG) established 2013
- Multi-disciplinary team to establish a regional, standardised method of engagement with communities to develop resilience.
- Jointly chaired by NILGA, membership includes: Councils, Emergency Planning Co-ordinating Officers, Belfast Resilience, PSNI, NI Fire and Rescue, NI Water, Met Office, Transport NI, Red Cross, Consumer Council, NI Electricity, Public Health Agency, Ministry of Defence.
- Develops Household Emergency Life-Saving Plan, Household Flood Plan, individual Community Emergency Plans.
- Delivered Pilot Project in 10 areas with focus on flooding (to be rolled out to other weather related emergencies)
- Pilot project based on concept of Community resilience -empowering communities, sharing flood warning and information e.g. sharing Met Office Alerts, predeployment of resources e.g. sandbags, delivery of new Individual Property Protection grant aid scheme Jan 2016.
- Review revealed 7/10 communities have developed a community emergency plan.
 It concluded that the Pilot was successful and should be continued in NI.

9 Chairs Closing Remarks

- Similarities between debates on resilience with fuel poverty a few years ago people now understand the "buzz term" and recognise what it means.
- Contributions acknowledge the need for clear communications on a range of issues – education, access to funding, communicating positive work of RCRGs – and updating and refreshing information.
- Collective endorsement of people at heart of resilience, and appreciation of the social capital which comes from community confidence and cohesion.
- Recognising the need to develop relationships externally and develop new partnerships.
- Legislation and policy framework is key to enabling agencies etc. to be able to deliver on the ground – not enough to rely on "good will".
- Positive relationship between agencies is key.
- Need for effective action; what can you do to improve flooding response in Northern Ireland?

Appendix 1: Paul Cobbing slides

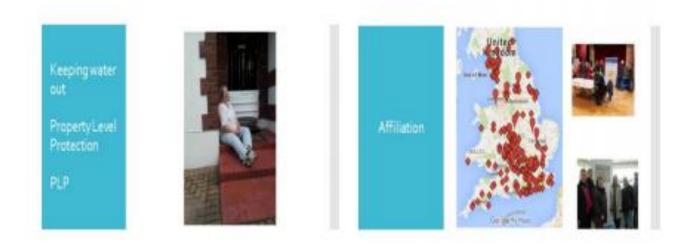












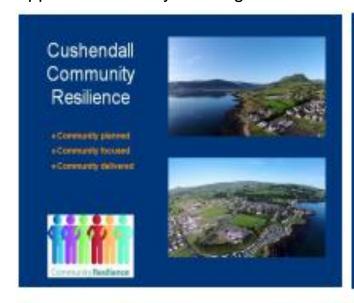








Appendix 2: Paddy McLaughlin slides

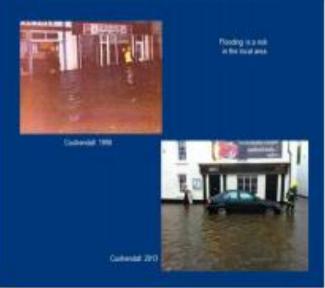


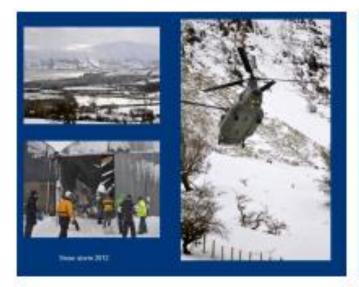


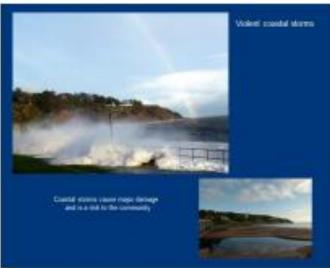




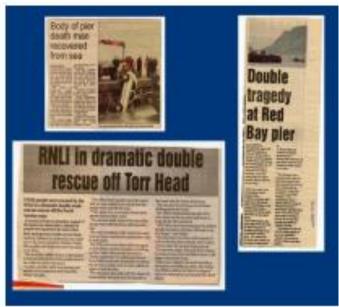


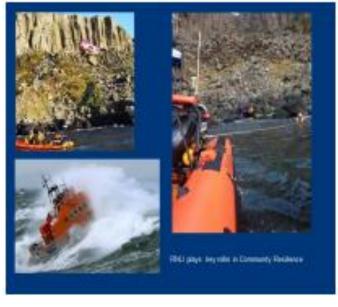




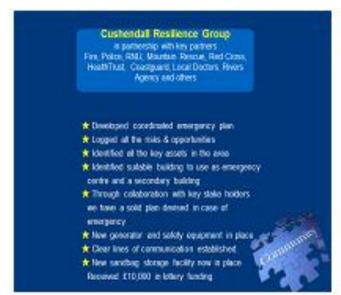


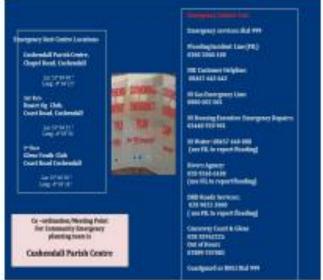




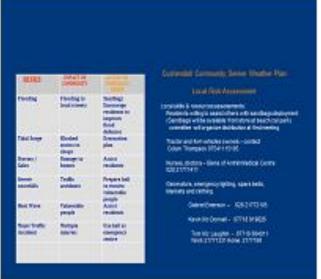




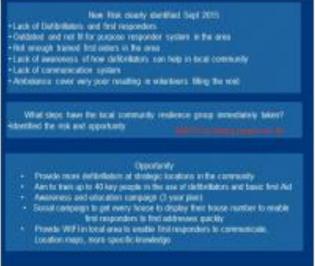
















Appendix 3: John McKee slides



Regional Community Resilience Group (RCRG)

- Established in 2013.
- + Willingness of a multi disciplinary team to come together to work out a regional, standardised method of engagement with communities to support and empower them to develop resilience.



Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"

Membership of RCRG

- Jointly chaired by Local Government and Rivers Agency, RCRG membership includes:

 - Emergency Manning Co-ordinating Officers
 - Belfart Smillenen
 - Police Service of Northern Ireland
 - Northern Ireland Fire and Bescue Service

 - Met Office
 - Thereport NI
 - Red Crass
 - Consumer Council
 - Northern Ireland Electricity
 - Public Health Agency
 - Ministry of Defence

Regional Community Resilience Group

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RCRG Objectives

- Raise awareness of Community Resilience.
- Inform of Responder limitations.
- Help Communities to develop Emergency Plan's.

 Develop an effective Household Emergency Pack.

· Provide 'Alert' information.

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Pilot project

· Initial focus on flooding.

(Although Work of the Group will extend to other weather related emergencies)

 Communities selected using a <u>standardised</u>, regional scoring system.



Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"

Pilot project

Some unique NI flood risk factors

- Those at risk here compared to GB.
- 2. How we provide Flood Alleviation Schemes
- 3. Funding.
- 4. DFI-Lead Government Department.
 - Decision making.
- 5. Accountability.



Regional Community Resilience Group

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Pilot project areas

- 10 No Pilot areas identified by RCRG:
 - (Belfast) Sicily Park and Sydenham
 - (North) Ahoghill and Broughshane
 - (South) Coalisland and Banbridge
 - (East) Cregagh and Braniel/Whincroft



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Be Ready

Community Resilience (What is it in practice)

- 1. The concept:
 - a) Empower, Enable & Support communities to assist householders and each other if 'Government' response is over-stretched.



Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"

Community Resilience (What is it in practice)

- Sharing Flood 'Warning & Informing' information;
 - a) Met Office weather warnings can be accessed, explained and the potential community risk assessed.
 - b) River Level alerts provided via text message if appropriate.



Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"











Review of Pilot

An independent review of this work concluded that most residents felt better prepared and informed about flood risk. Some notable points identified in the review include:-

- Seven out of ten communities have agreed a community emergency plan.
- All ten communities have designated community lead
- A flood warden scheme is being implemented.



Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"

Review of Pilot

In addition:-

- 72 per cent of residents felt better prepared for flooding after this pilot project; and
- 74 per cent felt better informed about flood risk.
- The review highlighted a number of considerations and these are being taken forward.



A fundamental conclusion is that this initiative has been extremely beneficial, suitable to the unique needs of Northern Ireland, and should be continued.

Regional Community Resilience Group

"Be Ready"

Further Development

- Community contacts and pre deployment of resources have also been established at:
 - Cushendall
 - Annsborough
 - Aughnacloy



Regional Community Resilience Group

Further Development

- Red Cross Funded project (Community Resilience in Urban Areas - CRUA) developed to expand the work of the group. Work well under way in engaging with communities in:
 - Newry
 - Ballymena
 - Antrim (Riverside / Massarcene; & Abbey View)
 - Finaghy Rd North, Belfast
 - Omagh

Regional Community Resilience Group

Further Development

Another 14
 Communities indentified in the EU Hoods Directive Flood Risk Management Plans!

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Regional Community Resilience Group

Further Development

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Regional Community Resilience Group

Further Development- other Emergency Management Risks

- Flooding has been one the most prominent emergency planning issues in recent years.
- However there are other Emergency Management issues.





Regional Community Resilience Group

Further Development- other Emergency Management Risks

- Rollout of community engagement to identified communities affected by snow/severe weather to begin in late 2016.
- Consideration how the work of the Group could integrate with Education initiatives in Schools.



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