



**Consumer
Futures
Unit**

Riding the Waves: Keeping the community on board

Lessons for community involvement in investment work to mitigate flooding





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Lessons for community involvement in investment work to mitigate flooding



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Contents

About us	3
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	7
Key findings and analysis: the experience of communities affected by flooding	10
An initial framework for community engagement - a recommended approach	12
Appendix - Community case studies	14

About us

The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU), part of Citizens Advice Scotland, uses research and evidence to put consumers at the heart of policy and regulation in the energy, post and water sectors in Scotland. We support government, regulators and business to put consumers first, designing policy and practice around their needs and aspirations.



CONSUMER FUTURES UNIT PURPOSE

Providing a voice for consumers in Scotland on energy, post and water

By working under a framework of internationally recognised consumer principles, we seek to deliver strategic outcomes through a combination of:

- ▶ Gathering and sharing evidence
- ▶ Developing consumer focused policy
- ▶ Improving consumer experience through advocacy

OVERARCHING CONSUMER PRINCIPLES

Information | Access | Choice | Redress | Safety | Fairness | Representation

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

- ▶ Markets are shaped around consumers
- ▶ Services are accessible to consumers regardless of their income or location
- ▶ Consumer principles are at the heart of government policy and regulation
- ▶ Utility products and services deliver the right outcomes for consumers



Executive Summary

Engaging affected communities in decision making by public bodies is an evolving practice. Over recent years, various frameworks assessing and promoting community engagement have been developed to help public bodies deliver better outcomes for consumers. These range from high level principles and academic analysis, to more detailed identification of good practice in specific settings. In 2011, Consumer Focus Scotland published high level principles for promoting consumer engagement in public services¹. The principles in turn drew upon earlier work, including:

- > The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 which placed a duty on community planning partners to “consult and co-operate” with community bodies in the design and delivery of services².
- > A framework for measuring performance standards³ for community engagement, introduced by Communities Scotland in 2005.
- > The Christie report⁴ which, in 2010 set out recommendations for the future delivery of public services, including that “public services are most effective and provide best value for money when users have a pivotal role in designing and evaluating them.”

¹ Consumer Focus Scotland ‘Consumer Engagement in Decision Making: Best Practice from Scottish Public Services’ 2011

² This was replaced by the Community Empowerment Act in 2015.

³ Communities Scotland ‘National Standards for Community Engagement’ 2005

⁴ Dr Campbell Christie ‘Commission on the future delivery of public services’ 2010

Activities undertaken by public bodies to mitigate flooding can include hard measures such as capital investment for example, building physical defences. Also, as the research has revealed, softer measures are also developed and applied such as working with communities to educate and build community capacity that will help increase protection from flooding.

Surface water flooding events during the winter of 2015-16⁵ highlighted the vulnerability of communities in terms of material loss, personal and financial cost of recovery and impact on the health and wellbeing of those affected. Local authorities have provided a range of support to affected communities in response.

Scottish Water’s Consultation Code⁶ sets out how and when Scottish Water will engage with communities within their capital investment programme. Our view is that this should include consulting with affected communities during the design and delivery of investment work where appropriate, which includes schemes to alleviate sewer flooding.

It makes little difference to a community whether flooding is from surface water or sewerage. Therefore, it is likely that transferable lessons exist between different types of public bodies with similar responsibilities for community engagement related to flooding issues.

⁵ During the winter of 2015-16, storms severely impacted communities across Scotland and resulted in residents being told to evaluate their homes and flooded property

⁶ <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/contact-us/our-promise-to-you/keeping-you-informed>

Executive Summary

Communities' experience of engagement by public bodies to address flooding can therefore offer wider lessons for other circumstances necessitating public body intervention, particularly in terms of planning and delivery, for example Scottish Water's capital investment programme and actions contained in Local Flood Risk Management Plans. We therefore commissioned research to explore those experiences with individual communities. In order to provide a comparator by way of policy and practice, we identified four projects: one Scottish Water and three local authority areas across Scotland.

Our research found a range of experiences among the four communities who took part and this report highlights both barriers they faced and examples of good practice in the support they received. While individual communities have learned from their experiences, we believe there is more potential for the public organisations involved to improve both the consistency and range of support they offer.

Accordingly, the main output from this research are the technical consumer engagement principles shown in the table, overleaf. These applying principles to the particular circumstances of communities affected by both capital investment projects and softer measures used to mitigate flooding.

The Consumer Futures Unit will work with Scottish Water to refine and embed this approach, both in relation to flooding and across capital investment schemes more widely.

However, our remit means our ability to engage with public bodies on flooding issues is limited to engaging with Scottish Water. We will seek to identify others who are better placed to provide the exchange of experience and support we believe is needed to ensure communities receive the support they need.

The following table sets out good practice for Scottish Water and other relevant bodies to guide their engagement with communities at risk of flooding. It sets out measures to take within the context of consumer engagement principles.



Consumer Engagement Principle	Good Practice Measure	Responsible Party
Engagement should aim to make a difference	Prompt engagement with the affected community	Public body
Organisations should know who their consumers are	Effective engagement with the affected community	Public body
Methods of engagement should be appropriate	Develop a process to identify the needs of the community	Public body
	Agree how the community and public body should work together to meet these needs	Public body and community
Methods of engagement should be accessible	Agree a process for regular engagement	Public body and community
	Agree a process for providing updates on progress such as correspondence, social media, email, etc.	Public body and community
	Encourage the formation of a community group with an elected Chair	Public body and community
	Identify a single point of contact point with relevant engagement skills within the public body to liaise with and respond to community enquiries	Public body
Engagement should make a difference to the outcome	Appropriate levels of engagement and participation agreed between the public body and the community	Public body and community
	Agreed processes to support a proactive response by the community to issues	Public body and community
Consumers should be kept informed ⁷	Publicise minimum standards of community engagement, including a commitment to use clear, simple language	Public body
	A process of agreed, regular engagement between the public body and community	Public body and community
	A process of agreed updates using agreed processes such as correspondence, social media, email, etc. by the public body to the community informing them of progress	Public body and community
	Provision of regular updates by the local community group to the wider community	Community
Organisations should continually improve their engagement practice	Identify where joint working can be improved through a process of regular engagement	Public body and community
	Conduct a formal evaluation of community engagement following the completion of work to promote future improvements	Public body and community

⁷ The above framework is based on pre-existing consumer engagement principles; information exchange should be a two way process between the community and responsible public body.

Introduction

Consumer Futures Unit - who we are and what we do

The Consumer Futures Unit puts consumers at the heart of policy and regulation in the energy, post and water sectors in Scotland. Part of Citizens Advice Scotland, we research and gather evidence, which we use to improve outcomes for consumers.

As part of this remit, we work closely with water industry stakeholders advocating for a stronger consumer voice at the heart of the industry to inform and improve consumer outcomes. We are a statutory consultee for Scottish Water's Consultation Code⁸. The Code sets out how Scottish Water will engage with consumers when planning the delivery of capital work that may affect them, including measures to protect communities against sewer flooding.

Engaging the community in identifying solutions

Community Engagement in Decision-Making

Engaging affected communities in decision making by public bodies is an evolving practice. Over recent years, various frameworks assessing and promoting community engagement have been developed to help public bodies deliver better outcomes for consumers. These range from high level principles and academic analysis, to more detailed identification of good practice in specific settings.

The Consumer Futures Unit (CFU) believes that such engagement should form part of all decision-making and service delivery. An important theme of our ongoing work seeks to understand how best to engage consumers in different settings, and to ensure lessons are transferred between sectors.

Scottish Water's Consultation Code sets out how and when Scottish Water will engage with communities within their capital investment programme. Our view is that this should include consulting with affected communities during the design where appropriate, and delivery of investment work, including schemes to alleviate sewer flooding. The experience of community engagement in measures to protect against

flooding can therefore offer wider lessons for other circumstances.

Trends in Weather Patterns in Scotland

Weather patterns in Scotland are changing. Although the number of rainy days did not change much between 1961 and 2011, average rainfall increased by 27% over the same period⁹. This greater concentration of heavier rainfall means that 1 in 22 homes and 1 in 13 non-domestic properties were assessed as at risk of flooding in Scotland in 2011, and the average annual cost of flooding to homes, businesses and agriculture could be between £720 and £850 million¹⁰.

Types of flooding and responsibilities

It is important to understand the distinction between the causes and responsibility for flooding events which affect communities in Scotland.

Scottish Water is responsible for sewerage flooding. These types of flooding can be made worse by weather conditions, and can be extremely distressing for consumers. However, technical solutions – for example, increasing the capacity of pipes and surface water storage – are often available, and Scottish Water has a relatively high degree of control over investment decisions.

Local authorities have a responsibility for coastal, river and surface water flooding. The causes of flooding in these cases can be more difficult to determine. Solutions can require significant investment and involve a more complex combination of measures and land management. Often Scottish Water and local authorities will work together to identify the cause of and address surface water flooding issues, and their interaction with the sewer network, for example recent integrated catchment studies in Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen¹¹. Indeed, Scottish Water and local authorities across Scotland are working together to manage flood risk by developing and publishing Local Flood Risk Management Plans.

⁸ <http://www.scottishwater.co.uk/assets/about%20us/images/contact%20us/kyitp.pdf>

⁹ http://www.environment.scotland.gov.uk/climate_trends_handbook/

¹⁰ SEPA, National Flood Risk Assessment 2011

¹¹ Scottish Water and local authorities all across Scotland are working together to manage flood risk by developing and publishing Local Flood Risk Management Plans

Introduction

Current actions to address flooding

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 placed a duty on community planning partners to “consult and co-operate” with community bodies in the design and delivery of services¹². Flooding events during the winter of 2015-16¹³ highlighted the vulnerability of communities in terms of material loss, personal and financial cost of recovery and impact on the health and wellbeing of those affected.

In July 2016, the Scottish Government announced¹⁴ a ten year strategy providing £42 million each year to protect 10,000 homes. This will be used to deliver 40 new flood protection projects and support local flood risk management plans¹⁵.

The technical research report identified examples of good practice in engagement, but also gaps and inconsistencies. While support measures such as those provided through the Scottish Flood Forum¹⁶ can and do help communities build capacity and learn from each other, affected communities – understandably – have much less experience of dealing with flooding and flood prevention than public bodies.

Further context is provided by a study by the

Environment Agency which identified a number of recognised factors as helping raise flood risk awareness at community level¹⁷ in England and Wales:

- > Knowledge of ‘at risk’ populations and geographic areas.
- > Continuity in relationships with local people.
- > Good relationships with decision makers and influencers.

Aim of the research

Following from the discussion above, we wanted to assess the experience of engagement between public bodies and members of communities who had recently experienced flooding. We wanted to provide a full view of community involvement, and so included cases of both surface water and sewerage flooding. Specifically, we wanted to better understand:

- > Methods of community engagement by public bodies during the design and implementation of flood management measures, their effectiveness and what they achieved.
- > The emergence of good practice in community engagement by public bodies during the design and implementation of flood management measures.
- > The degree to which community involvement influenced the design and delivery of flood management measures.
- > The degree to which the experience of working with public bodies helped build community resilience, should they experience future flooding events.

¹² This was replaced by the Community Empowerment Act in 2015.

¹³ During the winter of 2015-16, storms severely impacted communities across Scotland and resulted in residents being told to evacuate their homes and flooded property

¹⁴ <http://news.gov.scot/news/flood-protection-for-10000-homes>

¹⁵ Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009

¹⁶ <http://www.scottishfloodforum.org/> The Scottish Flood Forum is working with local authorities to develop good practice to support engagement with flood risk communities before, during and after flooding.

¹⁷ Improving community and citizen engagement in FRM decision making, delivery and flood response, Environment Agency, 2005.

Introduction

Methodology¹⁸

The CFU, with the support of the Scottish Flood Forum, commissioned BMG to explore these issues. Representatives of four communities and three public bodies contributed, as shown in the table below (Appendix 1-4):

¹⁸ The methodology is described in greater detail in the technical report

¹⁹ Dumfries and Galloway Council was unable to participate due to significant flooding in the areas during the time of the research, and related demands on personnel

Name of local area	Type of flooding issue	Public Body	Flood community group
Perth and Kinross	Sewer flooding	Scottish Water	Milnathort residents
Dumfries and Galloway	River/ Surface	Dumfries and Galloway Council (did not take part ¹⁹)	Moffat Community Flood Resilience Group
Aberdeenshire	River / Coastal	Aberdeenshire Council	Stonehaven Community Flood Action Group
Angus	Surface	Angus Council	Edzell Community Flood Group

The experience of communities affected by flooding - key findings and analysis

Overview

The experience of the individual communities obviously differed, in terms of both the flood events they experienced and later responses, and is detailed in the technical report. This section provides a summary of the common aspects of their experiences.

Initial response by communities affected by flooding

In all cases, community members looked first to each other for support following a flood. All communities formed a voluntary action group to seek solutions to protect against future flooding. Members of groups told us that the main reason for getting involved was due to personal distress and frustration at damages to their property caused by flooding. They wanted to be proactive in doing something to reduce or eliminate the risk of future flooding.

A key part of the activity of such groups was to identify public bodies with specific responsibilities for protecting affected properties. Engagement with these bodies is most commonly initiated by the community to find out both the cause of the flooding and what public bodies can do to protect the community from further flooding incidents (Appendix5).

Joint working between public bodies and communities

The research shows that joint working between responsible public bodies and communities is more likely to produce positive outcomes, in the view of both sectors. Initiating the process quickly following a flood helps ensure momentum and community engagement is maintained.

Levels of participation²⁰ during the design and delivery of work to mitigate flooding²¹ seem largely to be determined by the public body's perception of its need to involve the community. If this perception differs from that of the community, tension can build between the public body and the community, clearly showing the challenge of determining where and when community participation is appropriate. In our case studies, local authorities clearly demonstrated different approaches.

The timing of community engagement following a flooding event and during the design of measures to mitigate flooding, and how engagement is managed, can also vary depending on the nature of the flooding and what is required to protect the community. Often a simple system of communications is all that is needed to ensure ongoing and effective engagement until greater interaction is required.

Effective community engagement helps to inform understanding of the causes, impacts, and development of appropriate solutions to flooding based on local knowledge. However, there can be a mismatch between communities' abilities to discuss, in technical terms, issues on which public bodies are seeking views. The onus can fall on the local community to source technical skills, and this will not always be possible, meaning that some communities could find themselves at a distinct disadvantage. More needs to be done by public bodies to bridge the technical gap with communities for example, by using clear, simple language to facilitate participation and building time into the process to develop community capacity.

It is also clear that the need to engage with the community may vary with the investment solution. Lower levels of community engagement by a public body, and the provision of information, may only be necessary to help manage the impact of the delivery of a scheme on every day community life.

²⁰ See, for example, David Wilcox, Levels of Participation 1994

²¹ A scheme can include both physical measures and elements of community capacity building

The experience of communities affected by flooding - key findings and analysis

Other types of capital investment work however, may require public bodies to adopt a more participative approach to community consultation and engagement during the design phase to ensure residents' views are taken into consideration.

Key points and discussion

Joint working between communities and public agencies in relation to infrastructure projects has the potential to deliver positive, productive and trustful relationships between the parties, and greater community confidence in the outcomes.

Effective and timely community engagement by public bodies achieves the establishment of safer, confident and more resilient communities that are informed, equipped, empowered and mobilised to respond appropriately to flooding events in the longer term. These communities are liable to be more self-sufficient and self-supporting, better at contingency planning and communication and less reliant on public body involvement.

Given the nature of changing weather patterns with the likelihood of further flooding events, and increasing pressure on public agencies to deliver local flood risk management plans, greater focus may need to be placed on establishing a stronger engagement framework between communities and public bodies to build local capacity, as part of a more

formal mitigation strategy for Scotland²².

How public bodies engage in relation to infrastructure projects is largely discretionary. However, there is a risk that the volume and severity of flooding may outstrip the speed at which approaches are developed. It is probably fair to say that more robust engagement strategies between public bodies and communities have been developed in areas that have experienced flooding. Frameworks already exist to embed partnership working practice. However, more could be done on a Scotland-wide basis to establish a framework of minimum requirements for community engagement by public bodies that acknowledges the wider benefits that constructive partnership working can deliver.

Greater levels of participation between public bodies and communities offer both parties the opportunity to explore not only issues and solutions, but also how they work together to deliver the best outcomes. Case studies demonstrate that levels of participation can go beyond the provision of information or simple consultation on two or more options towards joint identification of solutions; not surprisingly, the communities involved reported that deeper engagement achieved stronger outcomes.

²² Fourteen formal Flood Risk Management strategies for Scotland with an emphasis on community engagement and delivery in addition to capital actions.

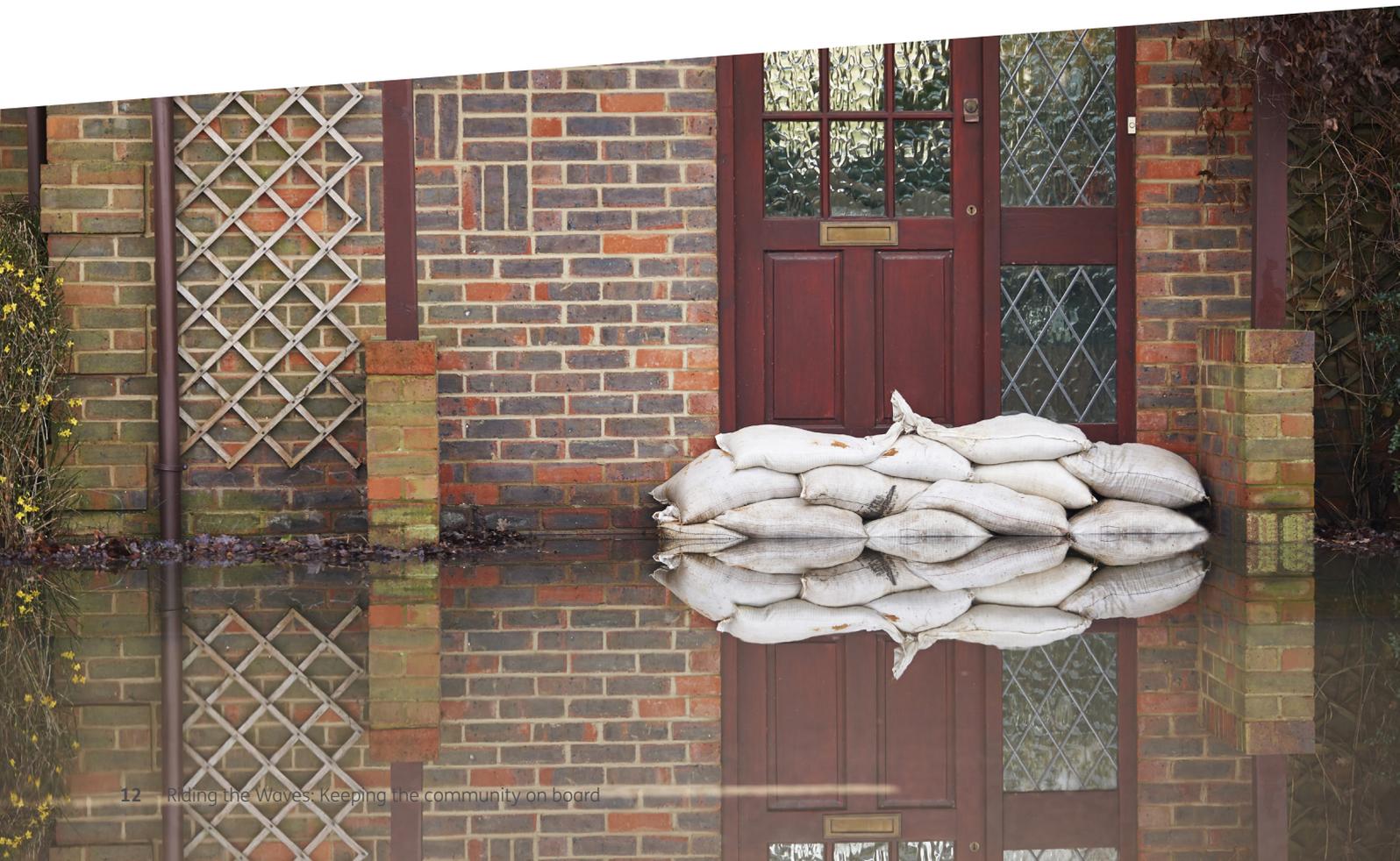


An Initial Framework for Community Engagement - a recommended approach

Drawing on the CFU research, the table overleaf illustrates a recommended approach for engaging with communities within flood risk areas. It is based on the Consumer Focus Scotland principles, with additional columns that identify good practice measures and responsibility for delivery.

The Consumer Futures Unit will work with Scottish Water to refine and embed this approach in relation to consumer engagement for capital investment work, including sewer flooding prevention.

However, our remit means our ability to engage with individual local authorities is more limited. We will seek to identify others who are better placed to provide the exchange of experience and support we believe is needed to ensure communities receive the support they need.



Consumer Engagement Principle	Good Practice Measure	Responsible Party
Engagement should aim to make a difference	Prompt engagement with the affected community	Public body
Organisations should know who their consumers are	Effective engagement with the affected community	Public body
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	Agree a process for providing updates on progress such as correspondence, social media, email, etc.	Public body and community
	Encourage the formation of a community group with an elected Chair	Public body and community
	Identify a single point of contact point with relevant engagement skills within the public body to liaise with and respond to community enquiries	Public body
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	Agreed processes to support a proactive response by the community to issues	Public body and community
Consumers should be kept informed	Publicise minimum standards of community engagement, including a commitment to use clear, simple language	Public body
	A process of agreed, regular engagement between the public body and community	Public body and community
	A process of agreed updates using agreed processes such as correspondence, social media, email, etc. by the public body to the community informing them of progress	Public body and community
	Provision of regular updates by the local community group to the wider community	Community
Organisations should continually improve their engagement practice	Identify where joint working can be improved through a process of regular engagement	Public body and community
	Conduct a formal evaluation of community engagement following the completion of work to promote future improvements	Public body and community



Appendix

Appendix: Community Case Studies

Appendix 1: Milnathort

Milnathort differs from other case studies as the project was led by Scottish Water. The scheme was established to protect residents against sewer flooding, which affected five properties in the village.

A project was put in place in the summer of 2015 involving an underground storage chamber near a busy roundabout on the main street, and a new emergency overflow pipe. The main impacts of the proposals on the community were the associated road closures and temporary traffic lights.

Residents received a letter from Scottish Water inviting them to attend a meeting and raise any concerns they had on proposed road closures. Generally engagement by Scottish Water was received positively by residents, as they recognised that the work would resolve the flooding issue and protect the community.

Appendix 2: Edzell

Edzell village has been affected by local flooding when water from the catchment area passes through the village. For example, the village has a culvert on one of its streets which can become blocked and flooded regularly.

The Edzell community flood group was formed by local residents after a major flooding event in December 2012 which affected some 33 landowners, 40 properties and caused over £1m of damage. The group contacted Angus Council to inform them about the frequency of streets flooding, and to find out what the Council could support and advise them to do to try and address the situation. Residents had lodged their concerns with SEPA and subsequently contacted the Scottish Flood Forum.

The Council recognised that residents had taken the initiative to form the group independently and has supported them since. Through ongoing collaboration and effective communication between the Council and the community flood group, flood management works were jointly planned and tested over the winter season of 2015/16.

The group and Council also worked together to ensure there was an effective communication process in place, as well as contingency plans in case of flooding and a key point of contact to help the community to prepare for flooding. The pace and the design of the works were driven by the group, and the Council described their relationship with the group as more an influencing rather than a controlling one. Members of the community reported that their ability to have open and honest discussions with the Council, and work with them in partnership, was essential to the successful delivery of flood management measures.

Appendix: Community Case Studies

Appendix 3: Moffat community flood resilience group

Residents of Moffat formed a community flood group following flooding which occurred in 2009. The group is made up of volunteers, some of whom have been involved from the start, while others joined later when they found out they lived in a flood-affected area.

Members of the community flood group did not feel they were very engaged with Dumfries and Galloway Council. They felt that an absence of planned flood management work limited opportunities for them to work in partnership.

All interviewees felt that the Council was more willing to liaise with individuals who had specific skill sets or technical experience. Members of the group engaged with private individuals and local professionals with relevant skills and technical understanding who provided them with support in report writing and conveying information to the Council and developers.

Members of Moffat community flood group reported that they independently arranged meetings and informed the community on what was being done to address flooding issues. The group advertised meetings in shop windows and via their community website called 'Moffat online'. The group also provided basic flood protection measures, such as sandbags, for local residents.

Appendix 4: Stonehaven community flood action group

Severe flooding in 2009 and 2012 affected some 50 properties in Stonehaven. The main issue was the overland flow of surface water.

Residents established the Stonehaven flood group following a community meeting held by the Chief Executive of Aberdeenshire Council. The group was formed to look at ways of protecting the town, including both domestic and commercial properties, people who are directly affected by flooding, and those living in the immediate flood catchment area.

The group and council representatives met monthly, with wider community meetings held quarterly during the period that the Stonehaven Flood Protection Scheme was being discussed. In addition, the council made reports and material available on both their website and in local libraries. Participants in our research were very positive about these levels of engagement and information provision, although members of the group noted that some aspects of flood protection measures that they had tried to influence were not taken forward by the Council.

Appendix: Community Case Studies

Appendix 5 : List of actions to be undertaken by Local Authorities, SEPA, Scottish Water and other responsible authorities

- > Flood protection scheme/works;
- > Natural flood management works;
- > New flood warning;
- > Community flood action groups;
- > Property level protection scheme;
- > Site protection plans;
- > Flood protection study;
- > Natural flood management study;
- > Maintain flood warning;
- > Awareness raising;
- > Surface water plan/study;
- > Emergency plans/response;
- > Maintain flood protection scheme;
- > Strategic mapping and modelling;
- > Flood forecasting;
- > Self help;
- > Maintenance;
- > Planning Policy.



For more information about the Consumer Futures Unit, visit:

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