

## Liverpool's Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder



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### 1. Summary

The overarching aim of the Liverpool Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder initiative was to build the resilience of the Woodlands Estate to flooding, an area within the Belle Vale ward of Liverpool. Liverpool City Council managed the initiative. Financial resource – 80% of expected expenditure - was provided by the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) as part of the Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder initiative. Other agencies, mentioned below, provided expertise and support. The initiative built on a previous scheme by Liverpool City Council that provided property-level flood protection and energy efficiency upgrades to residents of the Woodlands Estate.

### 2. Activities

The community resilience initiative targeted resources to address the vulnerability of the Woodlands Estate to flooding. Deprivation in the Belle Vale ward as a whole is particularly pronounced relative to national and Liverpool averages.

Eighty five percent of residents are in the bottom decile of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and the community is geographically isolated, with access to council services below the average for urban areas. Deprivation may be compounded where a disadvantaged area experiences a severe weather event. The initiative therefore aimed to address a number of vulnerabilities relating to flooding.

Residents who may not speak English as their first language received guidance in their preferred language on how to prepare for flooding. Representatives from the community were included in discussions on flood management resources. For example, community representatives asked Liverpool City Council to install CCTV cameras in surface water drains to ensure blockages could be detected. Furthermore, a request was submitted to the Environment Agency for a water height gauge to measure the height of the Netherby Brook. Both requests were accepted.

To further address the area's vulnerability to flooding, the initiative aimed to strengthen its economic resilience. Sources of grant funding were identified as part of the initiative to provide the Woodland Residents' Association with a means to raise further funds for flood risk management. Twenty seven properties received flood doors, brick sealant and flood air bricks to better prepare residents for flooding. Thirty eight households at risk from flooding received information and guidance on how to obtain flood insurance. Most importantly, providing resources to residents acted as a catalyst to encourage community engagement in flood-related activities.

A structure to organise and manage flooding activity has been established. A Flood Action Group, the first in Liverpool, was set up as part of the initiative. The group coordinates and carries out local responses to flooding and supports the community. Some of the flood group's members were taught how to operate equipment that aids the response to a flood. In addition, flood warden roles were set up to manage flood-related activities at the local level. The establishment of a new 'resilience hub' has created a meeting point for residents and other agencies and is a place to store equipment. Both non-physical and physical infrastructure set up as part of the initiative has provided a means to organise and deliver flood risk management actions on the Woodlands Estate.

The provision of infrastructure and resources helped to build community capital and galvanise residents' interest in flood risk management. In a further effort to develop community capital, the Valley Community Theatre Company worked with local schools to raise awareness of flooding among young people and their parents. The Company screened short films on flooding and delivered practical sessions to engage school children in flood risk management.

A notable feature of the initiative has been the involvement of local and national players, as well as their willingness to work with one another. Each player brought a particular set of skills to the initiative. The Woodlands Residents' Association acted as a link between agencies and local residents.

This was critical to the project, due to the importance of engaging local residents in the initiative and leaving behind a community-level legacy. The National Flood Forum provided training and expertise and occasionally mediated between residents and national agencies where necessary. Liverpool City Council managed the project and, in partnership with the Environment Agency, offered flood plan training. Mersey Forest worked with residents to explore how tree planting could improve the appearance of the estate and mitigate climate change. United Utilities worked with partners to develop a community and household flood plan. Multi-agency meetings acted as a means to keep parties informed of one another's actions.

### **3. Partners**

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Environment Agency, National Flood Forum, Liverpool City Council, United Utilities Mersey Forest, Liverpool Flood Action Group, Woodland Residents' Association.

#### 4. Length of time

Legacy from March 2013

#### 5. Outcomes

- Establishment of physical and non-physical infrastructure to support the governance and management of flooding in the Woodlands Estate.
- Linkage between national bodies (providing resources and expertise) and local residents (to carry on the legacy of the project and catalyse the interest of the wider community).
- Representation of the Woodlands Estate at decision-making levels on issues relating to flooding.
- Expansion of community-level expertise, awareness and resources with regards to flooding.

#### 6. Barriers

A lack of clarity of the roles and remit of involved agencies was noted to have led to the development of unrealistic expectations and misunderstandings by residents involved in the initiative. Many agencies do not have staff with skills in community engagement, which occasionally made challenging their relationships with community residents. The contribution made by the National Flood Forum in engaging the local community was therefore valuable.

#### 7. Guiding principles

**DEFRA:** “Enhance flood risk management and preparedness in ways which quantifiably improve the community’s overall resilience. Demonstrably improve the community’s financial resilience in relation to flooding. Deliver sustained improvements which have the potential to be applied in other areas.”

**Liverpool City Council:** “Raise awareness and reduce the public costs of emergency response. Support localism, community flood awareness and actions by householders to reduce flood damage. Increase understanding of the consequences associated with a changing climate. Increase understanding of risk in the local area. Increase community resilience and help people to feel more in control. Strengthen local networks and partnerships and communications within Liverpool City Council and Partners.”

#### 8. Links

- DEFRA, 2015. [Flood resilience community pathfinder prospectus](#)
- Liverpool City Council: [presentation](#) on the pathfinder experience

For an in-depth insight into the Liverpool Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder initiative, see the Joseph Rowntree Foundation report, [Case studies of community resilience to climate change](#) (Brooks, et al, 2015).

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