



Partnership working: Time, Trust and Two-way communication

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Who am I? Dual role: researcher and 'floodie'

- Founding member of Loddon Valley Residents Association (<http://www.loddonvalleyra.org.uk/>), Steering group member of The Loddon Catchment Partnership (CaBA)

My flooding journey: from dredging to a more integrated approach

- PhD Reading University, '*Get your water out of my lounge*'

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Day job: Research Director for a food, drink and personal care research agency

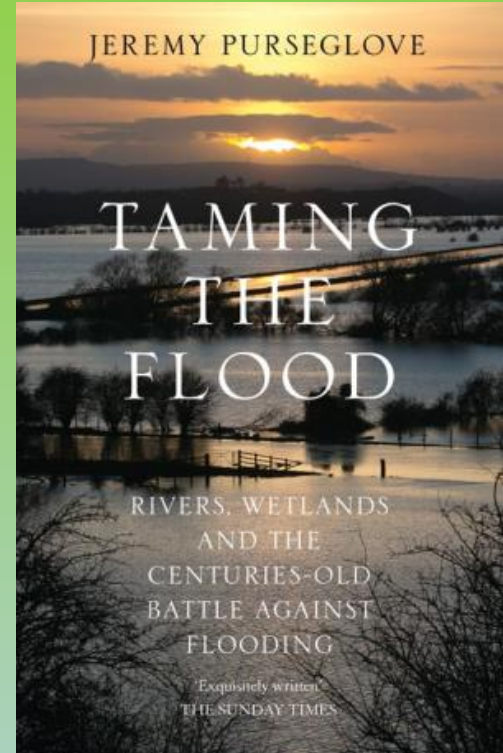
Land drainage

Flood defence

Flood Risk Management

- FRM has been on a journey: Starting historically where managing flooding was about land drainage:
 - Defending agricultural land from water.
 - Reclaiming land from water
- Flooding in the 40's and 50's changed the premise of what should be defended: from agricultural land to property/keeping people safe
- All set in a **top down technocratic** framing which excluded the communities impacted by flooding
- Flooding is a systemic risk and needs a holistic response: **integrated flood risk management** can not work under technocratic/top down ways of working
- Integrated flood risk management requires all forms of flood knowledge to be gathered and used: **partnership working** - **democratised ways of working**
- Knowledge deficits in the understanding of flooding have a **nasty tendency to leak**

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Environmental Values
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SCRASE, J. IVAN, and
WILLIAM R. SHEATE. "Re-
Framing Flood Control in
England and Wales."
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vol. 14, no. 1, 2005, pp.
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www.jstor.org/stable/30302056.

From technocratic top down ways of working to more democratised

Top down ways of working

Policy and target-centric

Flood Defence – FRM done
'to' communities

Decisions made and
implemented by the flood
authorities



People-centric

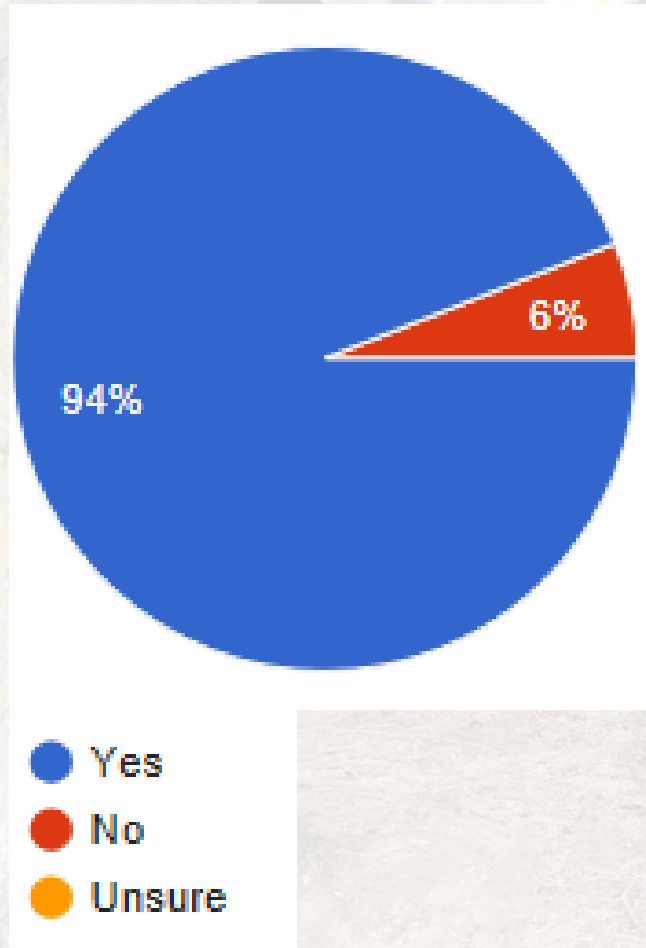
Integrated Flood Risk
management using
partnership working

Pooling of knowledge and
co-creation of solutions –
working together

Flood communities want to be involved in partnership working

Democratised & equitable ways of working

Understanding partnership working: *'Should communities, residents groups and residents be involved in managing flooding?'*



- 'No's' tended to site safety reasons (for example dealing with sewage)
 - Perception of involvement being 'hands on' only.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ of 'yes' responses talked about community knowledge being **vital FRM knowledge**. The community are **THE** flooding experts
- Appreciation that communities have a vested interest to protect themselves – flood authorities should be using this interest

How do you 'engage' the 'Community'?

By understanding that communities are heterogenous:

- Each community is defined by the diverse characteristics of people, place, history, economics, etc.
- Appreciating that social capital plays a role:
 - A community with strong social capacity has more capability to bounce back (or forward)
 - Low social capacity has negative impact on disadvantaged communities

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Construction of flood communities

- Some look to the authorities to solve the problem (like LVRA in its early days) - *'Improve and update the drainage', 'get the rivers more capacity'* – **contractual relationship** (Geaves & Penning-Rowsell)
- Others are much **collaborative** seeking equitable partnerships – *'From there (forming the flood group) we got to know the EA people. Things continued with more frequent contacts and building relationships'*
- Hybrid communities - transitioning

There can not be a 'one size fits all' approach to engaging flood communities

Can't have a top down technocratic approach to achieve democratised ways of working



Impacts of poor community engagement

Being 'engaged' can be felt as *'obstructive, patronising and sticking to national policy'*

Being treated as if *'we are unintelligent'*

Encountering *'usual blocking tactics'* or *'just paid lip service'*

Subjected to a *'do they take sugar approach''*

X Experienced as being 'fobbed' of (so limited funds don't have to be spent).

X It adds to the barriers of 'getting something done'

This all adds to the stress of living at risk of flooding. Secondary stressors prolong the psychological and health impacts of flooding

How do you initiate good engagement?

- Starts by bringing everybody* together
 - *Are flood authorities to right people/groups to be doing this?*
 - *Need 'neutral' facilitators like the National Flood Forum*
 - *Avoids the problems of perceived stealth issue advocacy – NO pre-made decisions*
- This creates a situation where community groups are able and want to work constructively and proactively with flood authorities and other partners

*Who is everybody?

Why invest time in partnership working?

- It provides a more holistic understanding of flooding: it's sources, pathways and its impacts
 - It has long term psychological and health impacts – it degrades quality of life
 - It impacts other organisations: NHS, schools, businesses, etc. And infrastructure: roads
 - Impacts a wide variety of communities: the farming community, leisure communities, etc.
 - Real life experiential knowledge about how flooding occurs – ground truth models
 - Society buy-in for changing behaviors which exacerbate flooding
- It reconnects society to flooding which leads to increased preparedness and planning for flooding.



Recommendation – how to engage a flood community

- Go in as equals & with an open mind.
- Don't assume your knowledge is more relevant/important than community experiential & intergenerational knowledge
 - ***The importance of the 'Trusted Broker/Facilitator'***
- Initiate engagement by simply listening;
 - hearing about communities experiences, acquiring their knowledge, learning about their fears, understanding their ideas
- Appreciate that you may encounter antagonism.
 - These people have been through hell and back so they may have misplaced their usual sunny disposition.
- And from this stance of listening and understanding start to develop the relationships that are necessary to build trust and two-way communication



Summary

The three 'T's' of good engagement:

- ***Time***: take the time to listen to the community. And invest time in developing;
- ***Trust***: develop relationships based on trust, which will lead to;
- ***Two-way communication*** and from this will come an effective and efficient partnership

Engagement is to be achieved rather than something that has to be delivered (Barnes and Schmitz, 2016)

FRM policy must move away from being target orientated to being more people-centric