

## Case Study: Menstrie Primary School

This case study gives an example of engagement with a flood risk community using a local primary school as the main vehicle to engage and draws in a wide range of other partners to support the process. Menstrie is classified as having extremely high flood disadvantage.

### Introduction:

Menstrie is a Hill Foots village that has a steep water catchment area of the Menstrie Burn from the Ochil Hills and the area has a history of flash flooding. On 29 August 2012, the burn overflowed its banks and 38 elderly residents of Menstrie House had to be evacuated to other care homes within the region. The Community Centre and some nearby roads and houses were also flooded and the A91 road was closed for some hours while structural engineers checked the integrity of the bridges over the burn.

The name Menstrie comes from the Scottish Gaelic *Meanstraidh* and this does have an association with water plain or valley – a reminder that even place names can tell us something about historical flood risks



### Key Flooding Risks:

Menstrie is identified as part of a potentially vulnerable area (PVA 09/04) in the local flood risk management plan. In total this PVA has 890 properties at risk of flooding with estimated annual damages of £1.6 million, with Menstrie itself having 170 residential and non-residential properties at risk. A flood protection / natural flood management study will be carried out for Menstrie and an assessment of the benefits of a property level flood **What Happened?**

Around the time when the local flood risk management plans came into effect the council's Principal Roads and Flooding Officer, Stuart Cullen was looking for new ways to engage flood risk communities. Stuart attended an Education Scotland event in Glasgow and it's here that an idea of how to engage the community on flood risk developed.

Stuart attended a local education in-service day to promote flood risk and emergency planning and met teachers from Menstrie Primary School. The links between the school's curriculum, flood risk and pupil activities became immediately apparent and a scoping meeting was arranged with key partners. A steering group was established to plan the



activities that culminated in a community engagement event in Menstrie to promote each partner's role in communicating flood risk using the school as a community focal point.

### **Good Practice Point:**

Using schools as a vehicle for engaging flood risk communities can be effective as they are an important social asset and act as a focal point for the wider community.

The following partners supported this case study and fulfilled important roles to engage the flood risk community in Menstrie.

### **Menstrie Primary School:**

Agreed that the scope of an existing event being planned by the school could be widened to include other aspects of sustainable flood risk management and community resilience. Also, provided a meeting venue for the steering group and coordinated pupil visits to on-site works with forestry contractors working within the catchment. Linked the project's activities to pupil's classwork on science and individual household resilience.

### **Clackmannanshire Council:**

Brought all the partners together to identify relevant links to various awareness raising and flood risk management actions in the Forth local flood risk management plan. Communicated with key stakeholders throughout the development of the project to manage the partnership.

### **Tilhill Forestry:**

Carrying out forestry works in the Menstrie Burn catchment on behalf of landowner and implementing forestry management techniques to ensure flood risks do not increase in discussion with Clackmannanshire Council. Provided on-site day visits for Menstrie Primary School and its pupils to gain experience and learn from leading forestry contractor.

### **The Conservation Volunteers:**

Provided support through outdoor Citizen Science engagement sessions to Menstrie Primary School and its pupils to make on-site visits to gauge stations on the Menstrie Burn to monitor sediment movement, blockages and record water levels and rainfall.

### **Heriot Watt University:**

Carrying out a PhD study for Clackmannanshire Council on the impact of forestry management techniques on water run-off as part of the local flood risk management plan actions. Devised a range of educational activities for pupils to engage with as part of their

learning with links to the university study. Provided link between Menstrie Primary School and the University and arranged a visit for pupils as part of the schools positive destinations process.

### **Scottish Flood Forum:**

Provided Menstrie Primary School with templates for household flood plans so teachers could consider for classroom activities with pupils. Provided property level flood protection exhibition for the community and offered free household assessments for household flood protection. Provided a range of flood risk reduction information to support the project, promote self-help and raise awareness of flood risks.

### **Good Practice Point:**

Linking the actions in flood risk management plans to local schools' curriculum can be a powerful engagement tool as it develops a practical partnership between a variety of stakeholders with shared aims.

### **Issues Encountered:**

Recognising the different needs and goals of various partners was a challenge during this engagement process including the need to recognise commercial and flood risk management priorities.

### **Solutions:**

Recognising each partner's roles and responsibilities early in the process by sharing information and accepting that there can be disagreement but commitment to shared goals can help to manage disagreement constructively.

### **What Actions Were Taken?**

- On site educational visits for pupils and staff to view forestry operations first hand
- Monitoring and recording of rainfall and surface water data by pupils
- Classroom activities with pupils on household flood plans and individual resilience
- Pupils engaged in educational activities linked to understanding flooding and flood risks
- Households offered free property level flood protection assessments by Scottish Flood Forum



Community engagement event held in Menstrie to link together all aspects of local flood risk management plan to inform and raise awareness of flood risks, actions and self-help. The event also creates a platform to establish new links with other local community groups and individuals in the Clackmannanshire Council area.

**Good Practice Point:**

Ensure that a relevant exit plan is considered to sign off the engagement process with all partners so expectations are clear for all partners.

Although there was no formal evaluation of this type of engagement with a flood risk community early indications suggested the following benefits.

- Increased flood risk awareness in young people and the wider community
- Increased flood resilience individually
- Improved partnership working
- Stronger relationships between flood risk communities
- Improved skills, knowledge and experience of engaging flood risk communities
- Better communication between responsible authorities and flood risk communities
- Increased job satisfaction for responsible authority staff.

The benefits of engaging flood risk communities will not happen overnight and will evolve over time as effective information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

**Good Practice Point:**

Ensure that the contributions of all partners is recognised and valued, especially those of any volunteers.

**Partnership Working:**

It's clear that good partnership working lay at the heart of this success in engaging a flood risk community to get involved at a level that is relevant to them through schooling and education. The very nature of flood risk management necessitates partnership working with a wide range of stakeholders with





different roles able to contribute to reducing flood risks.

To ensure effective delivery of flood risk management will require the statutory authorities to “*work closely with individuals and communities to understand their needs, maximise talents and resources, support self-reliance, and build resilience*”, as recommended in the Christie Commission Report (2011) on the future of public services in Scotland.

Responsible authorities already develop and deliver a vast area of services in partnership with the people and communities. There is a great deal of excellent practice in partnership working and good examples can make use of the [National Standards for Community Engagement](#). These are widely used as an engagement and good practice tool and can improve engagement with flood risk communities.

#### Good Practice Point:

When engaging local schools identify the links between flood risk management and the school's curriculum to ensure the activities are relevant and beneficial to pupil's education

#### Next Steps:

The studies of the catchment will continue and feed into the wider flood risk management process. Clackmannanshire Council, Conservation Volunteers and the Scottish Flood Forum are investigating other actions on local flood/resilience groups.

#### Key Contact:

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Stuart says: “*This successful engagement came about by adopting a non-pressured and open approach and discovering that informal partnerships can be flexible and supportive to achieve shared goals*”.

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