

**Guidance to support engagement with flood risk communities.**

**Engaging Flood Risk Communities  
Methods & Approaches**

**Introduction:**

There are many methods and approaches that you can deploy to engage flood risk communities. Community engagement comes in all shapes and sizes, but the issues that affect them are often the same or very similar. They are not set in stone and can be used flexibly to suit different local circumstances.

**Table: Methods & Approaches**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Engagement Methods</b>	<b>Issues To Consider</b>
<b>Informing The Community</b>	Flood related exhibitions and open public meetings.	Using visual displays can be an effective approach. Information about planned activities or opportunities can be explained. Can be useful in reaching a broader cross-section of flood risk communities, and cheap to run. Attendance can be low and unrepresentative of local views. Little opportunity for constructive debate or decision making.
	Flooding publications and leaflets.	Good to convey brief information to large numbers of people, but securing feedback is difficult. The timing of distribution needs to be considered carefully in flood risk communities as does the intended purpose and audience.
	Online web-based communication.	Growing in importance and a useful way of disseminating information and documents to large audiences. Not everyone has digital access but useful as an additional way of informing the community.
	Television, radio and wider media.	Useful way to reach large and local audiences through local radio and regional and national TV to inform communities. Skills in handling the media may be useful to consider.
	Attending 'target group meetings'	Targeted consultation and information can be achieved by attending meetings of the target groups you are trying to reach in flood risk communities. This could be a one-off or you may have a regular slot at their meetings. This can be time consuming and may involve visiting a number of groups. A good way of engaging focused groups in discussion. May miss sections of the community not represented by these groups.
	'Piggybacking' on community events	This involves using fun-days or fairs or other community events to present information or have a stand where you can meet people and talk with them. Can reach people who would not otherwise come to public meetings. Limit to the amount and complexity of information that can be conveyed.

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<b>Seeking local views to choose priorities and make decisions.</b>	Surveys/questionnaires	Using questionnaires and formal research methods to interview a sample of local people on flood risk issues. Could be done by professional researchers, or a local community group may be able to assist. Requires a lot of organisation and some knowledge of research, but can be a useful way of generating new information about an area and people's views. Care must be taken in phrasing questions, so as not to be misleading.
	Workshops	Representatives of the various interest groups and views are invited to participate in an event to discuss flood risk issues in a structured way. Could be half a day or a day. Independent facilitation can be useful so that all participants are equal. A very interactive and useful way of exploring flood issues, debating more complex problems and making decisions. Commonly used. Need to give people time to think about the issues and prepare for it, if possible.
	"Planning (flooding) For Real"	Like a workshop but often based on the use of real flood models or flood plans of an area. This very visual and interactive approach has been used particularly well across a range of community engagement topics. Can sometimes take a day or even a weekend to deliver. More complex event to organise and may require outside assistance. Also, time consuming for local people, but often fun and constructive. Allows local people to explore issues in more depth and with the experts.
	Flooding scenario planning workshops	A structured approach to defining different possible future flooding scenarios, choosing between them and planning ahead. A more complex but rewarding tool to use with communities. Would require careful planning.
<b>Building a common vision.</b>	Flooding brain shower workshops	These are more flexible opportunities to take on board a wide range of views and seek consensus on what the key issues in an area or project might be. This is a flexible tool. It relies on using representatives rather than just members of the public, but could still access a wide range of views. Workshops can be a good place to 'float' new ideas.
	Flooding mediation/external advisors/independent support	Using external advisors or negotiators can help to bring opposing sides together.
<b>Resolving Conflict</b>	Dialogue	Bringing different sides together regularly to discuss flooding issues can be an important safety valve for flood risk communities. Some conflict situations are serious and require expert advice and mediation.

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		Maintaining ongoing dialogue with flood risk communities is very important to build relationships and trust. An independent chair for such discussions can help build trust.
	Community Flood Forum	Can be open or membership based, but provides an opportunity for a broad network of community groups and individuals to come together to discuss issues of concern with local authorities and key partners. Could be used to elect representatives to a strategic flooding partnership. This method can be used with other approaches and is very inclusive. Membership can be large, but often informally organised. Not always representative of local opinion, depending on membership and who turns up to meetings. Can be hard to manage and define a clear mission in practice. There should be a clearly understood relationship with the forum and flood risk communities on role, purpose and responsibilities.
<b>Long term engagement and participation.</b>	Sub committees/consultative groups	These are specific groups set up as part risk communities to fulfil particular needs or requirements. There are many ways of using committees and groups. They usually have clear roles and defined memberships, may be time-limited and are quite commonly used.
	Community flood action/resilience groups	These are grassroots community groups that can be set up in different ways to focus on their issues and work in partnership with key agencies before, during and after flooding. The autonomy of these groups should be recognised, and support identified to build their capacity. These groups can be informal or formal and exist as subgroups of existing community structures such as community councils or other community bodies

**Good Practice Point:**

Remember, consider the right methods and approaches for each issue you want to engage with a flood risk community, as they are all valid and have benefits and disadvantages.

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