

Taking a step backwards to see...

## The bigger picture

### e-Bulletin #11



In the last issue we looked at how the different workshops sit in the project, where we are at and where we are moving towards. This issue is complementary, and takes a step backwards to see how the project in Hebden Bridge is a crucial piece of research, developing methods that go beyond the Upper Calder and begin to answer questions that are high up on the UK flood risk agenda. It looks at why we are doing what we are doing, and why it is important.

In this bulletin:

- We look at how our research in Hebden Bridge sits within national changes in flood risk thinking, and why what we are doing is valuable in the form of a series of questions and answers.

Q. How does our research fit in with national changes?

*A. For decades, flood risk solutions in the UK have been made from the top-down, by a team of 'experts', often engineers, who designed highly technical solutions to stop our towns from flooding. Today, our towns are still flooding, with an even greater frequency, so we are challenging that traditional way of finding solutions. We are recognising that solutions can only act to reduce flood risk, and that flooding will not be engineered away.*

Q. Why our research is timely and important?

*A. It is increasingly being recognised that individuals and organisations living and working in affected communities have expertise and experience that is complementary to that of the traditional 'experts'. It is written into European and UK legislation that stakeholders should be 'actively involved' in developing sustainable flood risk solutions. The problem we face is that there is no clear way in which to do this, no method or handbook, or set of instructions to follow, and this project is exploring exactly that – whether it is the right way of doing it, or even the best way, is yet to be seen.*

Q. What are we trying to produce at the end of it?

*A. This project is about developing a method of involving stakeholders in decisions about flood risk, and in particular to see if they can be effectively involved in modelling that flood risk. We are constructing the method as we go along, it will change on a workshop by workshop basis. Sometimes we will feel that we have explored a dead end, but hopefully sometimes we will feel that we have really learnt something from working together and are able to offer advice and support to others that will want to embark on a similar project in the future.*

Q. Will it work?

*A. To be honest, we don't know whether it will work. In all likelihood there will be elements that work well and others that need a great deal of improvement. We are at a very early stage in a process, and making mistakes along the way should be seen as a really valuable outcome in itself. The series of workshops being undertaken in Hebden Bridge is an important first step in developing national strategy, and ground-breaking in the sense that we cannot be sure that it will work. This is the nature of research: we are willing to give it a go – to take the risk of trying something completely new because we recognise that the alternative is to let things go on as they were. And they weren't working.*

## Next steps

Workshop 4 will be held at The Terrace Room, Hebden Bridge Town Hall on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2013. Refreshments from 6:45pm for a 7pm start. Please RSVP with your attendance or apologies.