

From West Yorkshire to Whitehall

e-Bulletin #16

Nine months ago, when we embarked on this piece of research it would be honest to say that we were unsure where it would lead. I never could have predicted just how seriously this work would be taken, and far from the streets of Hebden Bridge.



In this bulletin:

- We have a look at the impact of our research in Hebden Bridge and what it might mean for flood risk projects across the UK

What does it mean for Hebden Bridge?

Keeping our research in the spotlight raises the profile of Hebden Bridge and the flooding events of July 2012. It will encourage agencies to adopt similar approaches elsewhere, and provide stakeholders with methods that allow them to share their local knowledge and ensure that it is embedded into the local understanding of flood risk.

It will strengthen the voice that members of local communities such as Hebden Bridge have, and help to demonstrate that they have the motivation and expertise, given the right tools and support, to make a real contribution.

On Thursday of last week, Nick and I were invited to present to representatives from DEFRA and the National Flood Forum at the government offices in London.

The focus of that presentation was the modelling work we have been carrying out in Hebden Bridge as a way of modelling the consequences of flooding alongside the more traditional modelling of likelihood which has dominated flood risk modelling in the past.

Both DEFRA and the National Flood Forum, which coordinates some 250+ flood action groups across the country, praised the work that Hebden Bridge stakeholders have done over the last few months, and see the promise of employing both our approach and others in different schemes elsewhere in the UK.

This support comes on the back of a positive reception at the Environment Agency's innovation team in Leeds two weeks before, who were interested to hear about how the project was progressing, and the potential that the approach has to be utilised more widely.

At both of these presentations, we discussed specific details of the workshops held in Hebden Bridge, as well as the theory behind involving stakeholders in environmental decision-making, and how this is currently limited in the field of flood risk management. We made the case that methods such as the one we are using have scope to:

- capture local knowledge in a structured way;
- map local understanding to see where it is strongest; and
- increase capacity within the local community to make a beneficial contribution to the process of designing flood risk solutions.

The potential for this and other similar methods to be used elsewhere to work with stakeholders is clear, and I look forward to developing plans about what this future work will involve.

Next steps

The sixth and final workshop on modelling flood risk differently in Hebden Bridge is booked for Wednesday 26th March in the Terrace Room, Hebden Bridge Town Hall. This workshop will run earlier than previous sessions, starting at 6:00pm and finishing around 8:30pm. Thank you to those that have responded to confirm attendance or send apologies.

Shaun Maskrey

shaun.maskrey@nottingham.ac.uk

07887 398337