

## Summary report - Dry Run workshop 1 Flood simulation exercise - Boroughbridge - Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2008

### **Note on this Summary Report**

This summary report was produced by The Environment Council, based on the record taken on flip charts during the course of the workshop. It has been produced as a record of the outcomes and outputs of the meeting and to inform non-attendees about the proceedings and discussion. It reflects participant's comments captured during the discussions. For more details, see the transcript of the workshop.

The aim of the day was to get further ideas for community actions in Boroughbridge.

The objectives were to:

- Understand what to do and why
- Understand who does what
- Identify the gaps in knowledge

***Following the introduction, the participants went through an exercise, where they identified what were the responsibilities / roles of various organisations / groups in the case of a flooding event. Following that, the group had a plenary discussion in order to build collective understanding of the roles of each organisation. The key elements of the discussions are summarised below:***

- There are overlaps in terms of responsibilities. There are sometimes confusions about who is in charge of what.
- There were some areas of confusion that could be clarified on the day.
- The British Red Cross is a voluntary organisation, which provides support at Rest Centres set up by the Local Authorities. The Primary Care Trust has a role in deploying staff in rest centres.
- A Gold - Silver - Bronze command structure is used by emergency services to establish a hierarchical framework for the command and control of major incidents and disasters, including flooding. Some practitioners use the term Strategic, Tactical (e.g. Environment Agency) and Operational (e.g. Boroughbridge Council) instead, but the categories are equivalent.
- Some participants were not aware of the existence and role of the Local Flood Committee in Boroughbridge.
- A question was raised about the possibility of calling military aid. It would have to be very serious because of the cost implications.

### **Simulation**

***Participants were then split into 3 groups that worked with 3 different media: a contoured 3D model, a coloured in base map, and an aerial photograph of Boroughbridge. The simulation was designed so that participants could discuss which actions were needed at each stage of the scenario. Pre-recorded newsflashes were broadcast and gave the pace to the discussions. Key points from the discussions are captured in the summary below:***

### **Communication**

Communication is really important.

- There is a lack of information that is accessible to the general community. There is a community flood plan in existence but few people appear to know about it. It is limited to those directly affected/involved. This does not encourage a wider community response.
- The current response from professional agencies often feels remote and is office and computer based whilst the Local community want a human face, someone to take charge.
- List and details of vulnerable people need to be available. In order to help with evacuation - local Committee / community need to know details of vulnerable. Could be held at Central point.

Information needs to be volunteered by those who feel vulnerable / at risk. Information then helps street "wardens" to help.

- Development of a Telephone tree was suggested.
- Flood committee needs to co-ordinate with the media to ensure the right information gets out to the residents. It was not clear who the contact was on either side.

## **Local knowledge**

Local knowledge is not well used. There is no real transfer of this knowledge to the professional agencies.

- People say they get too many flood watches. However, the risk of providing too many warnings is to make people complacent.
- There is a need for accurate information. This could be improved by using local knowledge. Local people 'watch the river' and provide a local perspective, which can complement the EA warnings, and provide reassurance.
- The EA warnings are given too soon, not too late. It is difficult to make the judgement of when is the most appropriate timing to release information.

## **Responsibilities**

There were discussions about various organisations responsibilities.

- It is unclear who does what in a flooding situation and who is in charge. It used to be the local police who took a very visible control [This was a theme throughout the discussions, that the local police response to a flood had changed and this was lamented by those present].
- What happens in areas of Boroughbridge not covered by the current flood plan? The rest of the community are not really engaged.
- Road closures have often been ignored, a situation made worse by lack of police presence.
- It was unclear who made the decision over road closures. The question arose as to whether road closure signs could be stored locally and the decision to close particular roads taken locally? Would still need police help with enforcement.

## **Volunteers**

Volunteers are a very valuable resource but they need to be trained and coordinated.

- Need to compile a list of volunteers who would help with the evacuation process (clarify which skills they have e.g. first aid).
- There is a need for voluntary help to move people's possessions upstairs. Who coordinates this need for volunteers? Currently there are 6 people on the flood committee's volunteer list. Other people offered help but it seems unclear as to how you become involved. Could this be co-ordinated better with help from some of the voluntary groups in the town? e.g. the WI.
- As flooding gets worse more and more of those designated by the flood plan to help will be affected by the flooding themselves. Volunteers from the areas not affected are KEY as they don't have to worry about their own property.
- There is a need for more people to be involved. Developing an 'adopt a family' scheme could be useful. This could be done through a system of street representatives.
- Local volunteers who have received first aid training via Red Cross can help at Emergency Centres.

## **The simulation exercise**

- This event raised awareness, but there is a need to keep the momentum in order to build resilience within the community.
- This kind of event would be really useful to replicate because it consolidates and improves community involvement
- Experience and comments from residents who have been flooded would have been useful.
- 1 day is too long; Half day (morning/afternoon) would allow more people to come along.