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'Flood Advocacy & Support Service for Communities in Wales'

Final Research Report and Recommendations

Executive Summary

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This document has been prepared by Jake Elster Jones and Andrew Darnton
AD Research & Analysis Ltd for the Welsh Government Flood and Coastal
Erosion Risk Management Team

Executive Summary

This is the final report of a project investigating support needs in communities affected by flooding in Wales and how these might best be met. The project has been carried out by AD Research & Analysis Ltd, with Dr. Lorraine Whitmarsh and Dr. Catherine Butler from Cardiff University, for the Welsh Government.

The whole study, and this final report, has been designed to provide practical recommendations for developing flood support provision in Wales. In so doing, it answers the call of the project brief, to respond to the Sustainability Committee of the National Assembly for Wales' Flood Inquiry's call for a "*Welsh Flood Forum*". In the end, the study has developed recommendations not only for a Flood Support Service for Wales, but also a National Framework for Flood Support, to be owned by the Welsh Government and co-ordinated by the Flood Support Service.

This report moves from an objective overview of the evidence on what makes a difference to flood impacts, through an identification of the required tasks in flood support (structured around the flood cycle: before, during, and after flood), before reaching clear recommendations for the Flood Support Framework, and Service for Wales. The main points from the final report are summarised below, using that same structure.

i) The Challenge of Flood Support

The opening section of this report presents the wide range of interacting factors and influences that the evidence suggests can make a difference to flooding outcomes for individuals and communities. These range from the nature of the flood incident itself and underlying socio-economic conditions, via individual psychological factors (like attitudes and awareness) and individual/community actions, to support provision and flood management by agencies, and approaches to policy and governance.

In addition to these factors and influences, flooding inherently presents a range of other challenges that need to be considered. Many of these include challenges shared with other sustainability problems; these include:

- the unpredictable nature of flooding;
- the need for local and context-specific responses;
- the fact that no one actor or organisation can address flooding on their own;
- the fact that flooding is often a source of disagreement and contention.

Following on from these challenges, the study identifies a number of implications for the provision of flood support to communities in Wales. The implications include that:

- Locally specific, tailored and flexible responses are required.
- Certain principles and approaches need to be consistently applied and widely practised in all places by those providing flood support.

- A whole system perspective and approach is necessary, while nonetheless attending to specific details and parts of the system (such as effective warning provision).
- Collaboration and partnership is essential (between delivery partners and with those affected by flooding).
- Care needs to be taken, and assumptions critically examined, with respect to individual attitudes and behaviours; existing approaches and knowledge should also be drawn on where they are found.
- It is important to acknowledge existing community capacities, as well as the need for external expertise, support and facilitation.

Crucially, developing support for communities affected by flooding needs to be seen in the context of existing frameworks and provision. These include emergency response and flood risk management legislation (and associated frameworks and practice), as well as frameworks and provision that do not explicitly relate to flooding (such as community development work; Sustainable Development frameworks; and Fire and Rescue Service safety work).

ii) **A Framework for Flood Support**

A broad framework for the development of flood support in Wales is identified. This consists of:

- An idealised series of tasks that can be mapped onto a flood 'cycle' (or Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) cycle): broadly before, during and after flooding.
- A set of cross-cutting themes relevant to many or all phases in the flood cycle, which describe ways of working or general principles which all flood support provision should aspire to.

These elements can be outlined as follows:

Tasks

- T1. Identify, and develop a shared understanding of, a flood risk or problem
- T2. Identify and address differential vulnerabilities
- T3. Identify existing capacities and resilience
- T4. Emergency planning
- T5. Planning for recovery
- T6. Identify and enact risk management responses
- T7. Emergency response
- T8. Support recovery
- T9. Assess, learn and improve (including building resilience; and regeneration)

Cross-cutting Themes

- x1. Working with those affected by flooding – community participation and involvement
- x2. Building capacities and resilience
- x3. Organisational aims, framing and approaches
- x4. Taking a whole system approach
- x5. Understanding and influencing individual psychological factors and behaviours
- x6. Learning, change and improvement
- x7. Joining up

The Flood Support Framework is designed to complement, not supersede, existing elements of provision and existing frameworks. It should be seen as an overarching layer which highlights the integrated nature of the challenge of providing flood support and opportunities for joining-up, both between providers, and across phases of the flood cycle. The Flood Support Framework should also help to identify where there are gaps in provision, or current provision needs to be refined. Meanwhile, the cross-cutting themes identified should be used to design future provision, and be integrated into current activity. In cases where this proves impossible, it could suggest that current activity needs to be reviewed.

In addition to these tasks and themes, our study identified a large body of detailed evidence about the specifics of flood support, such as improving access to affordable flood insurance, increasing uptake of household-level resistance and resilience measures, and the provision of effective flood warning systems. All of this detail is relevant, yet context-specific; what is appropriate in a particular time and place will need to be worked out by support providers in collaboration with communities, as part of the process of undertaking tasks and applying themes.

iii) Delivering the Flood Support Framework

Delivering the Flood Support Framework for Wales will require close collaboration between Government, delivery partners and communities.

Based on the challenges identified from the evidence on flood support, our study identifies a list of attributes that the Welsh Government will need to deliver the Flood Support Framework effectively:

- Flood expertise, and the ability to develop expertise
- A public facing capacity, with the ability to: meet the needs of communities (e.g. for specialist post-flood support and advocacy); and feed information from communities back up to senior policy makers and other stakeholders (e.g. about their needs).
- Close involvement with, and influence over, multiple stakeholders.
- Capacity to provide hands-on advice, expertise and training to stakeholders.
- Ability to work across and integrate all stages of the flood cycle.
- A role in, or links with, national level debates and deliberation.

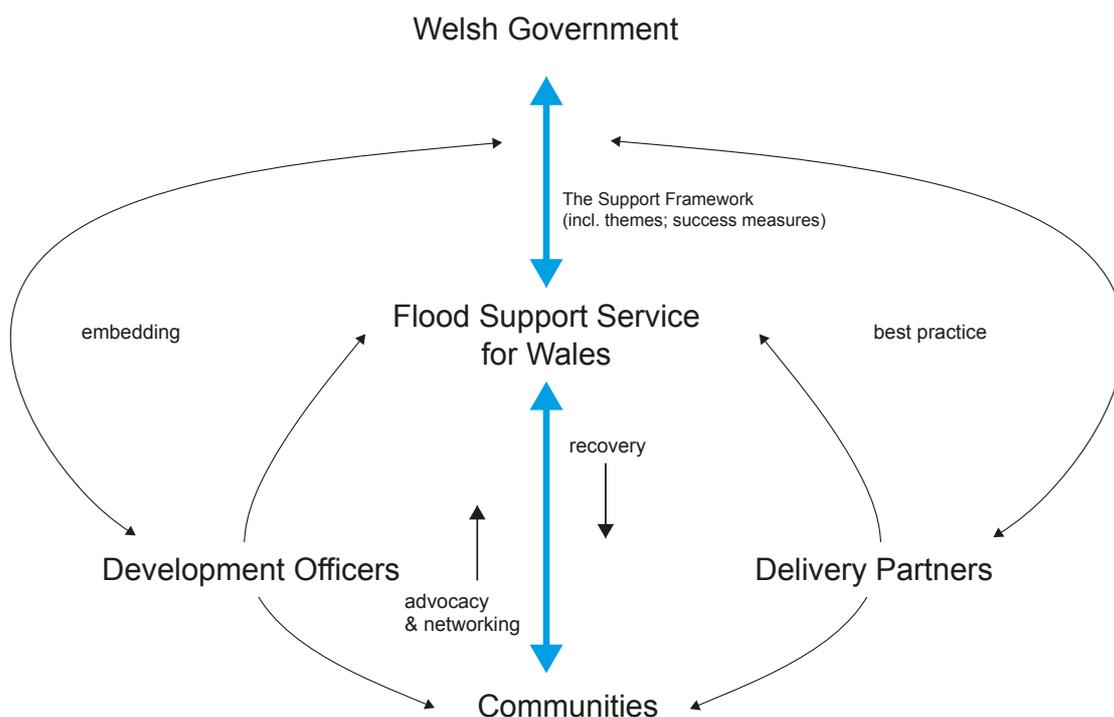
In order to acquire and develop these attributes, we propose that the Welsh Government Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team set up a dedicated and arms length **Flood Support Service for Wales** (FSSW). The Service should be designed to meet the identified needs for:

- Expertise in the experiences and needs of flood affected communities.
- Provision of hands-on support to flood-affected individuals and communities.
- An arms-length body that is able to advocate for communities affected by flooding and which is trusted by communities.
- Better joining-up and communication between the local community level and delivery agencies/policy makers.

A FSSW would take a central co-ordinating role in the delivery of the Framework, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 1: Delivery model for a Flood Support Framework for Wales

As the figure shows, the Support Service would need to focus in two directions: providing a resource for Welsh Government, while also meeting the needs of flood affected communities. In order to do the latter, it would also interface with delivery partners, and with Development Officers, through whom it would provide additional expertise and support to communities.



The role of Development Officers is particularly critical given the evidence that building community capacity and resilience is one of the few aspects of flood support provision which can be considered universally relevant regardless of context – because community resilience is associated with improved flood preparedness and better outcomes. At the same time, embedding flood preparedness within wider community development work should offer a route in to communities who are currently less engaged in or sceptical about flood awareness and support work.

The FSSW should support all the other four parties in delivering the Flood Support Framework, and build their skills in order to do so. The role of each of the other parties can be outlined as follows:

Delivery partners (including those agencies and organisations already involved in flood risk management and emergency planning, response and recovery) will, for example: have ownership of specific tasks within the Flood Support Framework; ensure cross-cutting themes are integrated with existing activity;

work with communities (supported by the FSSW); help develop expertise; and play a role in evaluation, learning and improvement within their own organisation and the Flood Support Framework as a whole.

Development Officers (e.g. front line workers and organisations delivering support to individuals and communities in Wales, such as Local Authority community development workers, Pathfinder Officers, and grant-making Development Officers) would play a vital role in delivering the Flood Support Framework. As described above, this role would include embedding general and flood-specific capacity and resilience building into their work with individuals and communities. Associated with this, Development Officers should help normalise flood preparedness in communities, and support communities in addressing local flood risks (e.g. by facilitating more effective engagement with relevant agencies). Note that given the vital role identified for Development Officers, it will be essential to ensure there is sufficient Development Officer capacity to undertake flood preparedness and support work across Wales for a number of years. In turn this may mean funding additional Development Officer capacity – although these should not be dedicated ‘flood officers’, but officers for whom flood is one part of a wider community development and sustainability remit.

Communities (including individuals, businesses and community groups) would provide local expertise and knowledge to delivery partners and Welsh Government; and engage with flood risk identification, appraisal and response.

We propose that the **Welsh Government** should have ultimate responsibility for ensuring the integrated delivery of the Flood Support Framework, with specific tasks within it falling to different delivery partners (subject to their refinements and agreement). Ultimate responsibility for the cross-cutting themes and success measures is also proposed to rest with Welsh Government. The FSSW would answer to the Welsh Government and co-ordinate Flood Support Framework delivery on its behalf.

The cross-cutting themes and success measures effectively act as the core content which binds the providers together around the Flood Support Framework. The success measures should be developed in collaboration with the delivery partners, in a process co-ordinated by the FSSW. While that task lies in the future, the report concludes by setting out some indicative success measures which could serve as starting points; these include both process and outcome indicators.

We suggest that the success of the Flood Support Framework should be measured in various dimensions, including:

- The Flood Support Framework as a whole
e.g. greater integration between provision at different stages of the flood cycle, and between providers; development of expertise among all parties; reduced flood impacts.

- Success from the point of view of affected communities and individuals
e.g. quicker and better recovery, and reduction of risk / increased resilience, following flooding; levels of community involvement; effective communication with relevant agencies.
- Assessing a Flood Support Service for Wales
e.g. specialist support provided to communities; number of individuals supported, and their satisfaction; improvement in flooding outcomes over time; Specialist advice to Welsh Government and stakeholders; success in embedding flood-relevant work into existing Development Officer work; success in raising the profile of flood support in wider Welsh Government policy making)