

## Coordinating planning across resilience boundaries; the East Coast Flood Group and EU 'exchange of experts' programme

---

### East Coast Flood Group

**“As a ‘tier one risk’ to UK national security, coastal flooding provides a compelling backdrop to the challenges of effective resilience co-ordination at local, sub-national and national levels”**

One of the most important resilience innovations driven by ‘localism’ has been the creation, as a result of critical discussions with other Local Resilience Forum (LRF) and central government colleagues, of the ‘**East Coast Flood Group**’.

The group brings together planners from coastal LRFs, Environment Agency, Met Office Flood Forecast Centre, Utilities, the Voluntary Sector and lead government departments including DEFRA, DCLG, MOD, DfT and Civil Contingencies Secretariat, to *collaborate* on efforts to prepare for this major risk by removing geographical and structural barriers. Although this collaboration remains locally driven, its sponsorship within DEFRA’s flood emergencies programme has ensured synergy with wider flood risk management within England & Wales.

**“The group has the simple objective of influencing national, sub-national and local planning and policy designed around coastal flood risk”**

With terms of reference including raising the profile of East Coast Inundation, encouraging planning for inundation across the different LRFs, identifying and addressing gaps in the current capabilities program, funding opportunities to promote planning research, developing, coordinating and sharing learning amongst the LRFs at threat from East Coast inundation; this unique approach sets a good resilience collaboration model for other similar major risks affecting one or more regions, and was recognized as such within HM Governments’ response to the **Exercise Watermark** final report;

**‘Engagement & planning’ (key recommendation 2): wide-area planning and arrangements for flood response organisations on the east coast should be developed and adapted for different wide-area emergencies. These groups should consider producing wide-area plans or frameworks;**

**(Government response to the Exercise Watermark Final Report, DEFRA 2012)**

The group has brought together emergency responders and key partners along the east coast of England to work to improve plans for mass evacuation and improving the coordination of the emergency response by sharing best practices and improving mutual aid. As recommended, this includes the production of a comprehensive East Coast Flood Emergency Framework. A Central Government Group for coastal flooding has also been created to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach developing work that will improve UK flooding preparedness.

## Flood & Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee Report

Specific drivers for this project include an identified need to close gaps in resilience planning and understanding of the threat of a coastal flood (including community preparedness), addressing the challenges of effective coordination of resilience responses and recovery to a coastal flood event at national, sub-national and local level, and establishing the groups' role as a recognised consultative body to examine contributions to, or recommendations from, government papers such as the Exercise Watermark Report.

**“Their (*Lincolnshire Resilience Forum*) work has helped drive work forward at a national level, making a significant contribution to flood resilience, and supporting a co-ordinated approach amongst all Local Resilience Forums at threat from East Coast Inundation”**

**(Christina Scott, Director of Civil Contingencies Secretariat, 2012)**

We continue to engage as many key stakeholders as possible, including elected members, the LGA Coastal Special Interests Group and others. We have recently welcomed members of the national flood forum to advise on community resilience and recovery. The East Coast Flood Group has shared some its learning through the National Resilience Extranet, case studies (see Lincolnshire’s Resilience Forums ‘Using Coastal Flooding as a Programme for Change’) and sharing specific research examining mass evacuation and needs of vulnerable people.

### **EU ‘exchange of experts’ programme (2010-14)**

Following a visit to the Charente-Maritime, France in the immediate aftermath of ‘Tempet Xynthia’ in 2010, the UK was also successful in initiating an **EU coastal flooding ‘exchange of experts’** programme to learn from colleagues in Holland, Iceland, France, Germany and Poland, all of whom face similar coastal threats. The exchange was developed by the co-founders of the ECFG and CCS; together with Professor Duncan Shaw which, in turn, enabled us to tap into the invaluable learning from the EU sponsored ‘Evacuation Responsiveness by Government Organisations (ERGO) project.

Funded by the European Union, the experts programme facilitates information and knowledge exchanges based on how prepared governments and responders are in the event of coastal flooding. The criteria for participating in the programme (the first UK-led initiative of its kind), was based on a coastal flood risk where over 50,000 members of the public are at risk from coastal flooding, a significant portion are vulnerable and cannot evacuate themselves, and the focus is on emergency response and long term recovery

Six countries make up the core of the programme, each observing four significant exercises or events on coastal flooding, and a final fifth session on lessons learnt from the exchange (Feb 14) will lead to the publication of a report for the civil protection communities of the EU. The four host countries were the UK, Netherlands, France and Iceland. Poland and Germany are participating as official observers, with the USA and Australia also joining in the exchange as ‘guests’, ensuring we were able to draw on lessons from Hurricane Irene and Australian wide-area flooding events in 2012..

## Flood & Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee Report

Lessons from these exchanges have been fed back into the East Coast Flood Group and DEFRA, directly influencing the UK response framework, and a number of UK emergency planners were able to participate in the various events. Future EU collaboration and civil protection funding opportunities will now also be explored by the East Coast Flood Group.

### Conclusion

The **East Coast Flood Group** work programme and **EU exchange** continue at a pace through to completion in 2014. There is much left to do. Strengthening community resilience and flood response planning will continue to be the focus. However, 2013 provides a unique opportunity to recognize the work completed in delivering this successful collaboration; especially as it is the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the biggest-ever natural environmental disasters in modern times to affect the east coast of England.

Events up and down the east coast in January this year commemorated the '53 floods whilst celebrating the advancements made in defending the coast, keeping people safe and emergency response. A focal point for current planning was provided by the hugely successful conference run by the East Coast Flood Group and hosted by the Humber Local Resilience Forum. The conference was used to officially launch the emergency framework, and our outcome-related 'shared ambition' for the work of the group;

**“We want our coastline to be a safe, attractive and prosperous place for residents, business and visitors. We are all working together to protect and benefit the coastline. The coast is better protected now than at any time. However, everyone needs to know that there is always the possibility of flooding, and climate change will make this more likely. When flooding happens, we have plans to cope but we want to encourage individuals and communities to take action too, to help protect themselves, their homes and businesses”**

**(East Coast Flood Group 'shared ambition')**

The conference engaged the widest range of stakeholders to date, with over 200 attendees from emergency services and other response organisations, voluntary sector and community groups, and elected representatives. Delegates represented every coastal and neighboring county likely to be affected by a repeat East Coast event demonstrating the commitment to the groups work, as captured in the key note speech by DEFRA Minister, RH Richard Benyon;

**“I know the East Coast Flood Group plans to further consider mass evacuation, including sharing best practice and improving mutual aid arrangements ... and I welcome the publication today of the East Coast Framework as a document from which we can all draw learning and consider the lessons ... I congratulate the group as a great example of localism in practice”**

**(RH Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Natural Environment, Water & Rural Affairs, to Conference; Jan 2013)**

## Flood & Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee Report

Lincolnshire's Resilience Forum led by the County Council, East Lindsey District Council and the Environment Agency, has been pivotal in co-founding both the East Coast Flood Group and progressing the EU Exchange of Experts. This report updates scrutiny committee on work to date.

David Powell

Co-founder & Chair of ECFG

(Head of Emergency Planning, Lincolnshire County Council  
Secretariat to Lincolnshire Resilience Forum)

September 2013