Flood Action Group: Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can form a Community-based Flood Action Group?

There is no set format for Flood Action Groups, it can be a theme based group linked to an existing group or local residents wanting to set up a community group. Members include residents and businesses that have been affected or experienced flooding.

A common format that has previously worked includes having a small core group who meet on a regular basis who liaise with Agencies and Authorities and link with the wider community.

2. Who else should the community-based Flood Action Group engage with?

As well as building networks within the local community we advocate that the group has links with their local Parish or Town Council to support their activities. For contact information on your Parish or Town Council https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/location-directories/find-your-parish-or-town-council/

Your local WSCC Elected Member will be another useful contact and supporter for the group. For contact information on your WSCC Elected Member https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/location-directories/find-your-councillor/

3. Can we access funds to establish a community-based Flood Action Group?

You can apply to Operation Watershed Active Community Fund for £1,600 to be used for initial set up, basic equipment and training. Application form and information can be found on www.westsussex.gov.uk/watershed

The group can also apply for further funding from Operation Watershed to assist with future activities.

4. What does a Flood Action Group do?

They represent a voice for their community with the aim is to work in partnership on behalf of the wider community finding ways to reduce flood risk with the Agencies and Authorities

Examples of activities include
- Identify through a Flood Action Plan areas that have localised flood issues and actively get involved in reducing flood risk.
- Engage with agencies and authorities around routine maintenance to help reduce maintenance and plans for potential works.
• Be involved in discussions on the future of flood risk in their town or village.
• Organise activities to monitor localised flooding such as ‘flood watchers’ or ‘Flood Wardens’ within the community.
• Create wider awareness of the flood risk within the wider community.
• Help reduce the impact on the community should a flood event occur e.g. organising flood defenses such as sand bags.
• Help support the recovery process should a flood event occur e.g. signpost etc.

5. **Do you need to be a constituted group?**

A constitution is the ‘governing document’ of your group clearly setting out how you intend to run your group. The document will show funders that the group is well organised if you are going to apply for grant funding.

6. **Do we need to open a bank account?**

If the group is considering fund raising to undertake activities you will need to have a bank account.

7. **How do we approach tackling the local flood issues?**

First you have to identify and log local flood issues in the area by producing a Flood Action Plan. The group can then use this in a number of ways including planning activities, as a basis for dialogue with agencies and authorities etc.

8. **How do we put a Flood Action Plan together?**

• Issues: Collate all the concerns of the community into groups and locations onto the Flood Action Plan. There will be a lot of common themes and issues.

• Responsibilities: Identify who could be responsible this could be an agency, local authority or a resident/landowner through riparian duties.

• Potential Solution: As a group if you can suggest a potential solution you feel would reduce the risk of flooding, this does not need to be technical at this stage.

• The group’s action: Log what activity the group has undertaken about this issue so far.

• Update: This is to show progress.

9. **What are Flood Watchers/Wardens and how they can help?**

Flood Watchers or Flood Wardens are often the dog walkers/walkers in the community either from within your group or from the wider community.
They keep an eye out for blocked drains/culverts, tree branches in rivers, and anything else that may cause a flood risk, and reporting them to the appropriate authority and back to the group.

10. Who is the West Sussex Flood Action Group Forum?

The forum was formed for the different community-based Flood Action Groups to identify and discuss common issues concerned with flooding in the county. They share experiences, knowledge etc and work through common issues.

Representatives from the forum also sit on the West Sussex Strategic Flood Board representing community’s interests.

11. What is Riparian Ownership and Responsibility?

If you have a watercourse, ditch, stream, river or culvert on or next to your land you are known as a ‘Riparian Owner’. Riparian owners are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of watercourses on their land to ensure that they are not a flood risk to other people or property.

Well maintained watercourses can significantly benefit the local community by reducing local flood risk and create habitats for wildlife.

The riparian responsibilities for landowners under law are to:

- Ensure the flow of water is not obstructed or polluted
- Maintain the bottom and sides of the watercourse (including managing any trees and vegetation growing on the banks), remove any obstructions (like rubbish, fallen branches or garden waste) and look after any structures (such as trash screens, culverts, weirs and mill gates) on it.

For more information about Riparian Ownership