

Working together on climate adaptation

Climate change may increase flooding or coastal erosion for many communities. Developing a common understanding of climate change is challenging when predictions are uncertain and the range of options are unclear.

We're therefore developing new, innovative ways to work with communities and allow more collaborative decision-making.

We're doing this by working with stakeholders and residents in two pilot locations to trial new engagement approaches.

We're working with:

- Hemsby in Norfolk, which has lost homes to coastal erosion and storm surges
- Caterham and Old Coulsdon in Surrey/Croydon, where surface water and sewer flooding are ongoing issues, which will be made worse by climate change

Challenges

We reviewed evidence on community engagement on climate adaptation.

The six main challenges we found are:

- readiness – the knowledge, skills and capacities needed to engage in adaptation planning
- framing – we need to ask what is meant and understood by climate change, adaptation and success
- mental health impacts – we need to take emotional challenges seriously
- place attachment – emotional connections to places can affect how people think about the future
- scale – people and organisations can work at different scales which can lead to a mismatch of priorities
- power and politics – engagement and adaptation processes can be contentious

We're developing and trialling an engagement programme to respond to these challenges.

In Hemsby we're trialling a readiness assessment tool so that we can understand the knowledge and interest of residents in local flood and coastal risks. This has included a community wide survey to help us understand a broader set of perspectives from across the community. We're also learning what residents value about their area.

In Caterham and Old Coulsdon we're delivering a simulation exercise, which asks participants to consider a range of options to manage flood/coastal risk, recognising the benefits and trade-offs with each choice. It encourages them to think from multiple different perspectives. It has been well received

by a range of people and organisations.

Practitioners and decision-makers will have more ways to engage with communities on long-term adaptation. The readiness assessment is already being adapted for use in the Innovative Flood and Coastal Resilience Programme.

This research, in addition to the new national strategy, gives us a real opportunity to think differently about community adaptation to climate change. It puts people at the heart of what we do and recognises the importance of local decisions being made together with communities.

Read the [community engagement on climate adaptation evidence review](#).

Get in touch

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