

Working together to promote greater resilience to flooding

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Flooding in Exeter during 2012. Credit: Fiona French

Researchers from the University of Exeter are working to help communities become more resilient to natural hazards like flooding. The project is being carried out in collaboration with the Climate Outreach Information Network, a charity specialising in public engagement around climate change, and a range of regional stakeholders.

As recent floods in the South West region have highlighted, the issue of flooding can be controversial and this [project](#) will use innovative techniques to 'co-produce' knowledge about the impacts, causes and management of flood events in a local community. The approach seeks to provide a voice for different types of knowledge about the environment – from scientific models of river catchments and flood levels to peoples' memories of past flood events and local knowledge about how and when floods occur.

The research team, led by Dr. Stewart Barr and Dr. Ewan Woodley, aims to explore the potential of using such knowledge co-production to enable communities to derive their own strategies for managing and becoming resilient to flood events. This takes on particular significance given increased rainfall intensity as a result of manmade

[climate change](#).

Dr Barr from Geography at the University of Exeter said: "This project provides a valuable opportunity for researchers, scientists, policy makers and communities to come together and discuss the impacts, causes and ways to respond to flood events. By doing this, there is a much better chance that the approaches we adopt to become more resilient to flooding in the future will be accepted and supported by all those involved".

The project is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and has been developed in collaboration with Devon County Council who will, as the co-ordinating local authority with responsibility for emergency planning, provide local knowledge and expertise. The project will also include contributions from the Environment Agency and Devon and Somerset Fire Authority.

The year-long project will be based on dialogue with local residents, statutory agencies and researchers in the case study locality. Group meetings will explore current understanding of flood risk and associated vulnerabilities, the ways in which such vulnerabilities will change in the future and the most effective way of making the community resilient to future flood events. As a result of the project, a plan will be produced to promote resilience to flooding and act as a show case for other communities concerned about flooding.

Provided by University of Exeter

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