

Flood Management in Borderlands

The aim of this project is to help develop better resilience to flooding through natural flood management in a rural area. It will do so by supporting the development of networks and creative knowledge exchange and cooperation between stakeholders including land managers, members of statutory agencies, and local government, businesses, and people. The area to be studied lies on the English-Scottish border, covering sub-catchments of the river Tweed: Bowmont Water and Eddleston Water in Scotland; and Wooler water and the Glen Till catchment in England. The landscape includes moorland, forestry, upland livestock grazing and arable farming. The area suffered severe flooding in 2008 and 09 and climate change projections suggest more severe weather in future. There is thus strong need to increase the flood resilience of the region. In addition to the administrative difficulties of managing a river across a border the area is subject to complex environmental designations and rural development regimes that make integrated management difficult. The project will work with the Tweed Forum, a charitable organization committed to sustainable catchment management that brings together stakeholders across the border. Tweed Forum will give administrative support and will work shadow the project to ensure continual exchange between researchers and stakeholders.

We will help the individuals and organisations involved to break down the problem of flooding so they can see it from different perspectives, locales and experiences. The project will be organised through four work packages. The first is concerned to build upon existing data and evidence. It will focus on how data come together and are recognised as evidence for policy making or planning, or how they are lost in the system. This WP will also look at how knowledge is transmitted through the system, which sources are trusted or preferred, and which carry less weight. Focus groups of academic experts will establish what has been previously learned about natural flood management and how we can use that information in the current study.

The project will use ideas and information gained to ask groups of expert stakeholders to make choices about the possible land management options. We will then use those results, along with the collection of wider community views, to produce maps of possible management options. The information collected from these two activities will be further extended into the community by asking people to comment on the options through a web-based questionnaire and presentations at the main agricultural shows in the area. This process will also allow us to link the views that are emerging with social, economic and demographic data. The methods allow all parties to see what is being proposed and to comment as the work continues. Researchers will return to the expert group of stakeholders with the maps that combine both natural science information on soils and water in the catchments with a wide range of local views. An important part of the project is to understand how different stakeholders learn as new knowledge becomes available.

The partners on this project are:

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