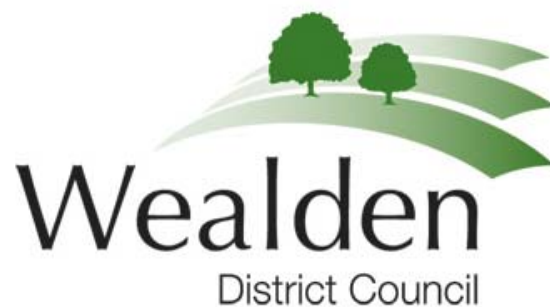


Hellingly Flood Awareness Project

Evaluation Summary Report



Project Background

There are numerous organisations offering advice and guidance about flood risk, however residents do not always know who to contact for what. During discussions between Wealden District Council (WDC) and East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service (ESFRS) it was suggested that it would be useful to develop a sign-posting service for our residents, compiling key / contact information and sharing this with them. Working with ESFRS, the Environment Agency (EA), Hellingly Parish Council and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) it was agreed that the project would be piloted in the Hellingly area, with ESFRS providing volunteers to make home visits. Hellingly was chosen due to its manageable size with a known history of flood issues.

Project Objectives

- Provide a sign-posting service so that residents can easily access and identify information and respond quickly and appropriately.
- Develop closer, more effective links with partners to better serve our residents and offer a more efficient service.
- Encourage Town & Parish Councils to take the lead on similar projects in their areas if the pilot is successful.

Project Activities

- Work with ESFRS and the Environment Agency to identify the properties to be targeted for the trial in Hellingly
- Make contact with people living in properties that are identified as at risk of flooding or the effects of flooding in the pilot area, initially by letter, followed by a personal visit by trained ESFRS volunteers
- Re-write the existing WDC branded 'Flooding – Advice for Home Owners' leaflet, jointly with partners
- Design and produce a fridge magnet showing key contact details
- Consider encouraging Town and Parish Councils to run the scheme in their areas if the pilot is successful.

Project in Operation

The project was launched on 17th September 2014 with a briefing for those who would undertake the door-to-door visits in Hellingly. The door-to-door team was comprised of 6 ESFRS volunteers, 5 ESFRS paid staff and 1 Sussex Police Community Support Officer.

Using data supplied by ESFRS and the Environment Agency, 335 properties in Hellingly were identified as at risk of flooding from surface water, rivers or the sea, or at risk from the effects of such flooding (i.e. road closures). Information letters, outlining the reasoning for the project, were sent out to each of these identified households during the two weeks prior to the visits.

The properties were split into 8 routes and visits were made on 23rd, 24th and 25th September 2014 between 10am and 3pm.

Due to the rapid new development taking place in Hellingly, during the visits it was realised that a number of new houses had not been included on the property database. This meant that somewhere in the region of an (estimated) extra 140 households were added to the project during the 3 days of visits.

Where residents were out, a pack was posted through the door comprising of an information letter, a leaflet and a fridge magnet. After each successful visit (when a resident was available to talk), an evaluation form was completed by the volunteer.

During property visits residents were made aware of their own responsibilities and encouraged to call the most relevant number on the fridge magnet supplied in the event of flooding. Residents were encouraged to register for the Floodline Warnings Direct Service, and to look online for flood prevention products or contact the National Flood Forum for further advice.

This report summarises the results of the collated data.

- Out of the 475 properties visited, residents were available in 124 (26%) of these.
- 98% (122) were receptive to the visit.

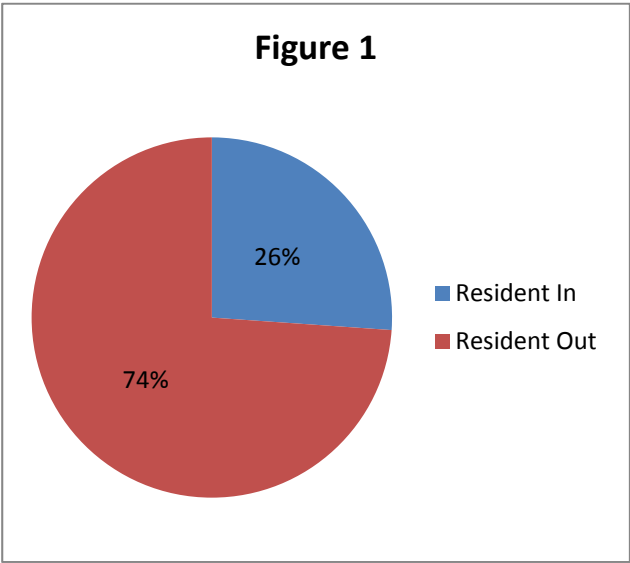
- 51% (63) were expecting a visit following receipt of the letter, despite the fact that 28 of these properties were last minute additions and hadn't been written to.
- 40% (49) were already prepared for flooding, and 55% felt confident following the visit.
- 90% (111) found the visit useful.
- 17 residents expressed an interest in ESFRS contacting them about a free home safety visit.

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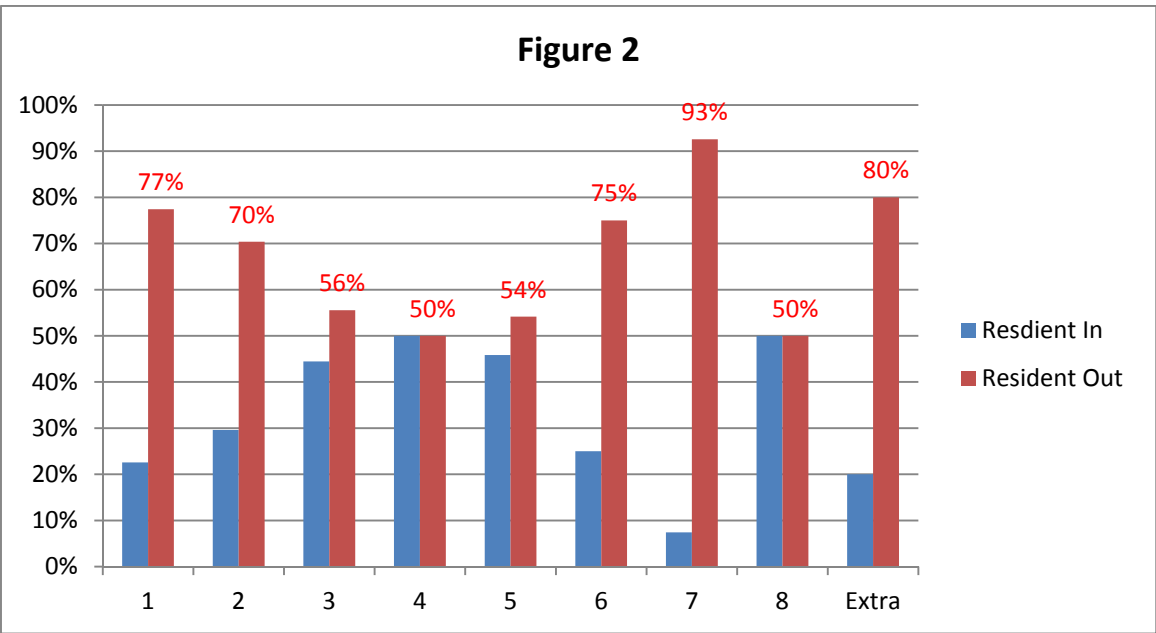
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Hellingly Flood Awareness Project Evaluation Form Results

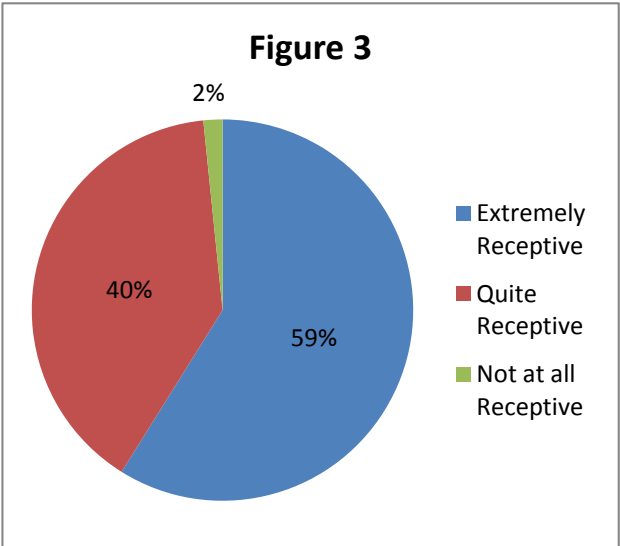
Out of the 475 properties visited, residents were available to talk in 26% (124).



As Figure 2 shows, there doesn't seem to be a general correlation or pattern in where residents were in and where they were out. Overall though it was disappointing that so few people were in – as low as 7% (route 7) – so there are fewer evaluation forms than we would originally have liked.

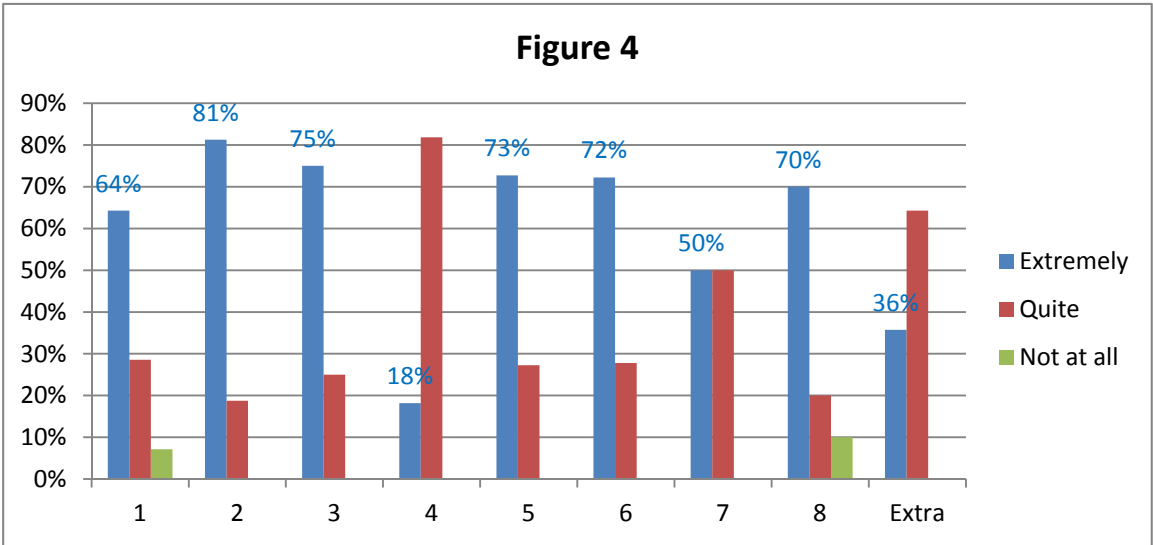


59% of residents spoken to were extremely receptive to the visit; 40% were quite receptive, and only 2% were assessed as not at all receptive.



As Figure 4 below shows, most routes match the general pattern described above, with a majority of residents being extremely receptive, reaching as high as 81% (route 2). There were just two properties classified as not at all receptive; one from route 1 and the other from route 8.

Route 4 had a relatively low proportion of extremely receptive residents in comparison to the majority of routes. However, the remaining residents consist of 82% quite receptive and none at not at all receptive. It is important to emphasis that this analysis is only based on those residents who were at home at the time the visit took place.



Interestingly, all the residents who received unplanned property visits were receptive.

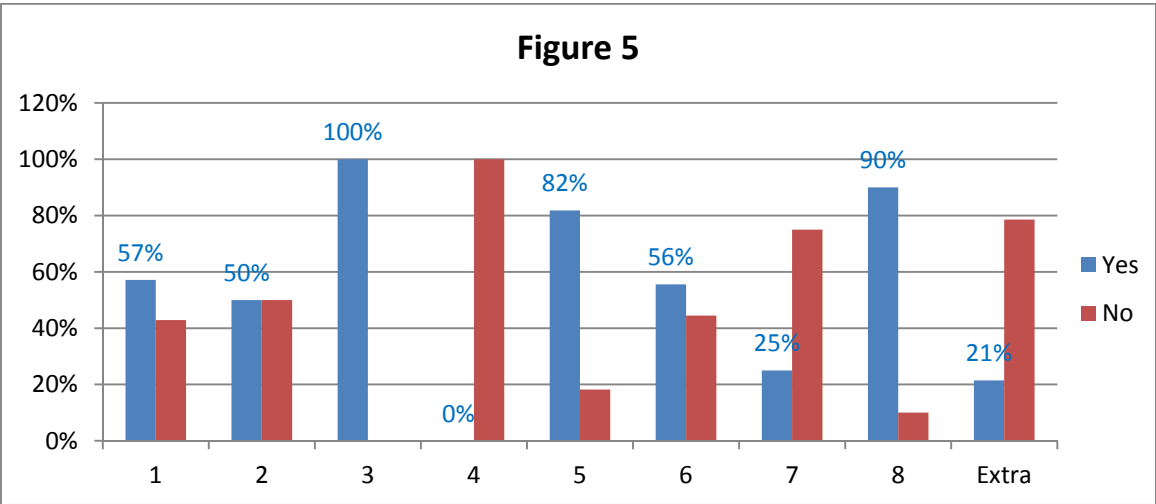
51% of residents were expecting a visit following the receipt of a letter.

Table 1

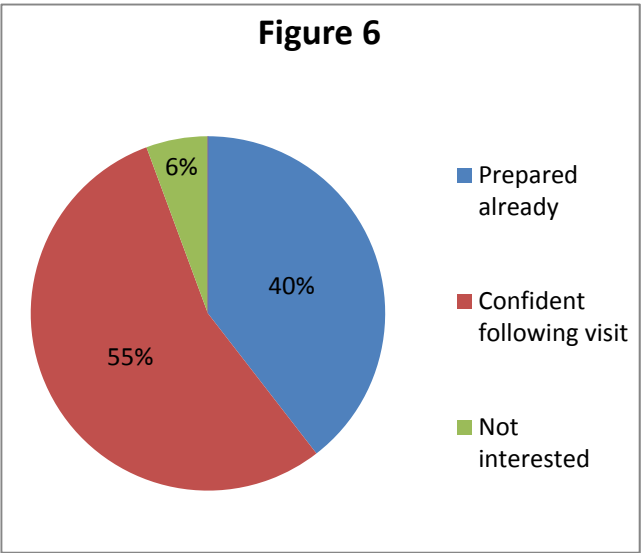
Route No	Yes	No
1	57%	43%
2	50%	50%
3	100%	0%
4	0%	100%
5	82%	18%
6	56%	44%
7	25%	75%
8	90%	10%
Extra	21%	79%
Totals	51%	49%

The results suggest that the process of letter distribution may have gone wrong, with all residents on route 3 acknowledging receipt yet none on route 4. Reflecting on this, the previous results on positive receptiveness may suggest that there is little correlation between receipt of the letter and reaction to the visit.

21% of the unplanned property visits claimed to have received a letter, which may reinforce the possibility that there was an error in letter distribution.



Following each visit, volunteers noted whether (in their opinion) the resident was prepared for flooding already, more confident following the visit, unprepared and not interested, or unprepared with further intervention required. On a positive note, no cases for further intervention were identified. Figure 6 shows the results.



40% of residents were already prepared; this was expected due to the area's relative vulnerability to flooding. For example, 92% of residents on route 3 were considered prepared already. Upon studying the Environment Agency maps 'Risk of flooding from surface water' and 'Hellingly Flood Map', it could be interpreted that route 3 is relatively prone to flooding – suggesting residents have had to be prepared in the past, or have responded to past flooding by taking appropriate precautions.

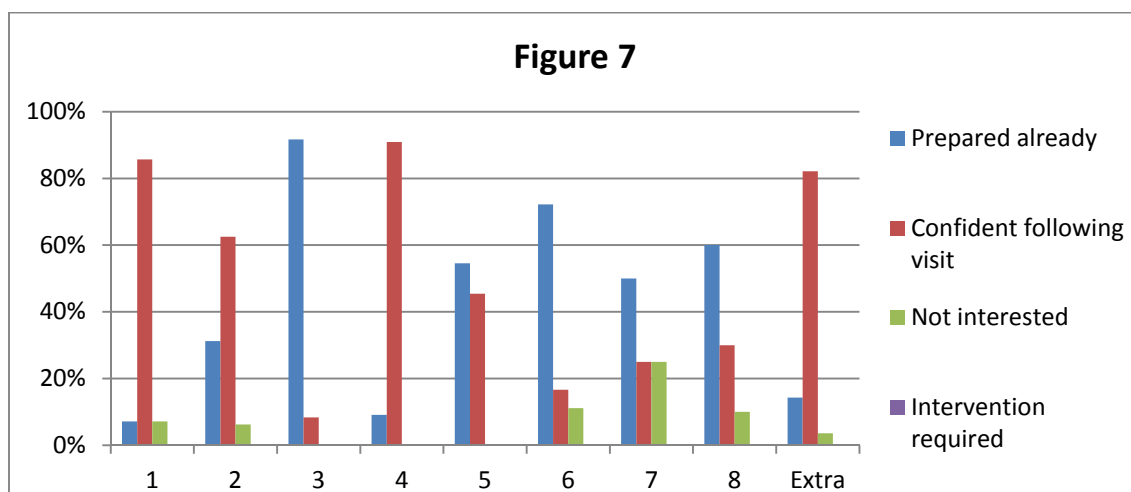


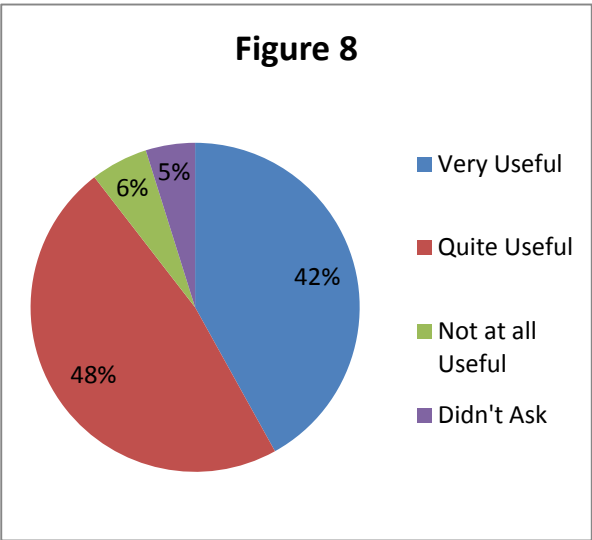
Table 2

Route No	No of Visits	Prepared Already	Confident Following Visit	Not Interested	Intervention Required
1	14	7%	86%	7%	0%
2	16	31%	63%	6%	0%
3	12	92%	8%	0%	0%
4	11	9%	91%	0%	0%
5	11	55%	45%	0%	0%
6	18	72%	17%	11%	0%
7	4	50%	25%	25%	0%
8	10	60%	30%	10%	0%
Extra	28	14%	82%	4%	0%
Totals		40%	55%	6%	0%

55% of residents were considered unprepared for flooding prior to the visit but more confident about steps to take following it – a clear success for the project. A small proportion of residents (6%) were considered not to be interested in the issue.

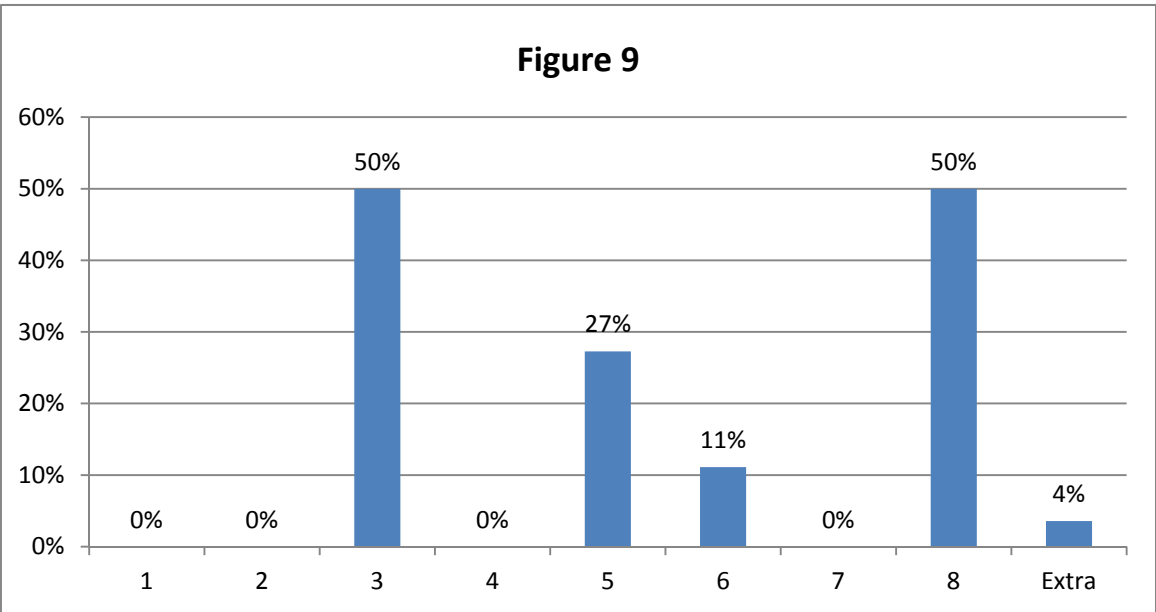
Volunteers asked residents about whether they found the visit valuable, and Figure 8 shows the results.

A significant majority of 90% found it useful; and 42% very useful. This supports the earlier findings that residents were receptive, and that they were more confident following the visit.



Just 6% didn't find the visit useful at all; possibly because they felt they were already aware of the situation and were prepared.

A total of 17 residents expressed an interest in ESFRS contacting them about a free home safety visit. The contact details of these residents have been passed to ESFRS.



Project Conclusion

The partners worked together to develop this project and run a pilot scheme in Hellingly, always with the intention of learning from what worked well and what didn't work so well. On the basis of the generally good reception by those residents who were at home, the pilot could be said to have been successful. However, it proved far more labour intensive than had been anticipated, with a very low actual engagement rate (26%). We have certainly learnt a lot about the complexities of working with a volunteer workforce and would do things very differently if a similar project were to be undertaken elsewhere.

From follow up discussions that have been held with all of the partners and the team involved in the visits, the following learning points have been noted;

- There is no 'statutory ask' for volunteers. As they are not paid staff, nor under contract, they can choose not to participate at the last minute which makes planning a project quite challenging. It is therefore important to have a fall back situation using paid staff in order to roll out a project in a timely way.
- It is difficult to monitor how effectively the message is delivered to householders when freelance teams are used. It would be beneficial to pair volunteers with an 'expert' for the first few visits to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach. However, this would increase the resource commitment and neither of the partners most involved have direct access to expert staff. To overcome this, it is proposed that for any future visits, a more comprehensive evaluation form / checklist is completed with the resident. Not only would this help us to gather more useful data, but it would ensure that the message being delivered is targeted and focused.
- Have either an expert advisor from the EA on site during the visits, or have a dedicated hotline that volunteers can call for specific flood advice.
- Undertake a de-brief with the whole team at the end of each day.
- Those undertaking the door to door visits need very clear, specific directions – a tick list of what they must and must not do / say is essential to ensure they stick to the message.
- Those undertaking the visits felt that the experience was very positive and useful and that residents really appreciated us taking the time to talk to them. They found it reassuring and calming.

- As an alternative, town and parish councils could hold information evenings in their areas, following the model used by Sussex Police for their 'Quality Street' visits. All partners could attend and offer coordinated advice about flood risk and prevention, as well as home safety visits and the promotion of other schemes like electric blanket testing. Likewise a display could be set up in Parish Council offices, showing surface water and other flood risk maps.
- Data from the Environment Agency (who have previously undertaken similar projects in other areas) shows that the cost of running this project ourselves (in terms of paid officer time from all of the partners) was not significantly different to using consultants to undertake the entire project. Using consultants could potentially have significant advantages, including the fact that staff used for door to door visits would be experienced in undertaking them and that they wouldn't be restricted by working during normal office hours.
- Partners or local councils could consider producing a pod cast that contains information about a specific area i.e. exactly where the flood risk is and what people can do to protect themselves.
- As we had a low 'in' rate (26%), consider making visits at different times of the day. Market research standard for door-to-door visits is between the hours of 3.30pm and 9pm, to obtain maximum engagement at the first visit. Other evidence suggests that second visits (where the resident was out on the first visit) also have a fairly high success rate. The conclusion from this is that primary visits during office hours followed by secondary visits during the late afternoon / early evening may offer the best rate of overall engagement.
- ESFRS are prepared to include the flood advice leaflets and / or fridge magnets in the pack that they distribute during their home safety visits.
- Evaluation forms need to be very comprehensive and should be completed as a checklist with the resident. They could also incorporate things like registration to the EA Floodline and should state where visits were ineffective i.e. house vacant, no suitable access etc.

Next steps

At the project de-brief meeting, held on 17th October, it was agreed by WDC and ESFRS that whilst the project was beneficial, it would be too labour intensive to roll it out in exactly the same way for other parishes. Further conversations have since

taken place between the WDC Chief Executive and the ESFRS Chief Fire Officer and the proposed next steps for the project are as follows:

- 1) Target the highest risk communities in Wealden of Forest Row, Uckfield and Pevensey Bay using the following model:
 - a. The Town/Parish Council (flood team / forum / stewards?) coordinate a flood prevention and preparedness project in their area, with support from East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (ESFRS) volunteer(s) and Wealden District Council.
 - b. The Town/Parish Council will be provided with leaflets, fridge magnets and evaluation forms (by WDC) and a WDC officer would be available to brief the team of volunteers.
 - c. Volunteers (assisted but not led by ESFRS) would undertake door-to-door visits to properties that are identified as at risk of flooding. The aim being to make residents aware of their own responsibilities for flood prevention and preparedness and inform them of who to contact if a flood situation occurs. The leaflet details which agencies are responsible for what, and the fridge magnet has three contact numbers on it – for Southern Water, ESFRS and the EA.
 - d. During each visit, a checklist / evaluation form is completed, which as well as providing useful data for the Town/Parish Council, would also identify any vulnerable / priority residents.
 - e. The forms are returned to WDC for analysis and an evaluation summary report is prepared for the Town/Parish Council by the WDC Policy team.
 - f. Visits to be completed by 30th November 2014.
 - 2) Produce an on-line toolkit for all other Town/Parish councils, to help and encourage them to coordinate similar projects in their local areas. The idea is that local councils would use their community stewards / volunteers with assistance (where available) from ESFRS volunteers to coordinate and deliver the door-to-door visits. Alternatively they may choose to run a single element of the project, for example just undertake a leaflet / information drop.
- The proposed toolkit could contain:
- a. A short guide to undertaking the project, based on the contents of this report
 - b. A copy of the flood guidance leaflet

- c. A copy of the information magnet
- d. A template to be used as an evaluation form and brief guidance on how to analyse and learn from the data
- e. Information on how to develop an effective Community Resilience Plan