



“Floods are fascinating and miserable” and other things we can all agree on. The UK experience of academia, industry and government working together in flood hydrology.

Anita Asadullah

National Flood Hydrology, Environment Agency, England (anita.asadullah@environment-agency.gov.uk)

For science to really serve people, we need to bring together the broadest possible expertise but how we do that is extremely challenging. This project is an example of how we have developed a joint strategy for flood hydrology with academia, government and industry in the UK.

It was devised in part as a result of the catastrophic flooding in 2015, when floods hit northwest England overwhelming flood defences that had been designed and built only a few years earlier, flooding 1000s of properties. This led to questions being raised around UK methods and a government review which calls for improvements in our methods and the way we work.

To start working with others, the Environment Agency contacted 50 organisations with a questionnaire. These included universities, water companies, city councils, the insurance industry, research councils, consultants and other national regulators. We collated thousands of ideas, representing the views of over 230 people across the UK who work with flood hydrology. We then met together and wrote a joint vision for flood hydrology.

Many expected that the politics or rivalries between different sectors would lead to arguments, but we have been pleasantly surprised at how much agreement there has been and how willingly people work together. There has been greatest agreement over the need for joined up methods that address multiple flood risks. We are now producing a plan for operational and research needs in UK flood hydrology covering both real-time flood forecasting and non-real time flood risk. It covers groundwater, surface water and sewers, reservoirs and fluvial systems.

By joining up with a wide range of institutions we have produced a strong body of evidence and voice to influence decision-making, lobby central government and research councils to fund the change that is needed. At this event we will share some of the learning from our initiative and invite discussion and sharing of ideas.