

# **A Charter for Collaborative Action**

## **on Natural Flood Management**

### **Adopted by the Cumbria Flood Partnership in its Action Plan<sup>1</sup>**

In March 2016 a meeting was held in Keswick to discuss how farming and residential communities in the upper Derwent catchment could collaborate after the floods of December 2015. The emphasis was on how natural flood management on farmed land and grazed commons might mitigate flood damage to homes and businesses. This Charter for Collaborative Action emerged from the meeting which was refined with feedback from the wider Cumbria Flood Partnership, was adopted and is being tested through work in the pilot communities.

1. We RECOGNISE that prolonged rainfall and storms in Cumbria have caused repeated damaging floods and that such events are likely to reoccur. We acknowledge that floods pose a risk to our well being and to Cumbria's economic, social and natural capital and WELCOME the appetite to address this challenge.
2. We AFFIRM that Cumbria is a fantastic place valued by residents and its millions of visitors for a wide range of special qualities. All proposals to mitigate floods will be assessed for their impact, both positive and negative, on the range of outcomes the County seeks including the special qualities and outstanding universal values of the Lake District.
3. We AGREE that natural flood management<sup>2</sup> has a key role to play alongside other flood defences, infrastructure improvements and increased community resilience to mitigate future flooding. We will WORK collectively to raise our ambition to explore and implement measures including increasing water storage, water slowing and water infiltration.
4. We ACKNOWLEDGE we need to rebuild trust between local people and regional and national organisations through open conversations to identify and better understand differing perspectives and constraints as well as rights, duties and responsibilities.
5. We RECOGNISE the key role of farmers and landowners in the delivery of natural flood management and that the costs and benefits of flood mitigation are unevenly distributed; both between people, place and over time. This needs to be explicitly addressed through funding and other measures to enable schemes to proceed in an integrated manner without conflicting advice.
6. We RECOGNISE that our collaborative efforts for flood mitigation (and recovery) are undertaken in the context of many partnerships, institutions and individuals other legal responsibilities and duties and note that no one

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<sup>1</sup> Cumbria Flood Action Plan Action 22 Version 1 June 2016

<sup>2</sup> Natural Flood Management is a range of techniques that aim to reduce flooding by working with natural features and characteristics to store or slow down flood waters. Woodlands are one element and we adopt the principle of the right tree in the right place, for the right reason, with the right management.

organisation has overall responsibility for flood protection. We desire a flood protection lead role to be created.

7. We RECOGNISE that the distinctiveness of every place arises from its unique combination of geography, history, land use and communities and demands we adopt a place based approach.
8. We AGREE that ownership of schemes should be local, e.g. through community flood action groups and farmer/landowner groups, and that these place based schemes should be planned to link together within and across catchments to deliver the scale of mitigation required to minimise the impacts of future storms.
9. We AGREE to draw on best practice, local knowledge and science through talking to each other to create a shared understanding of the available evidence. We will be honest about uncertainty and gaps in evidence but will be wary of letting these be an excuse for prevarication and inaction.
10. We AGREE to improve our ways of working to focus on outcomes rather than institutions, to be evidence and reality based, to co-design and co-own bespoke plans while not shying away from tough discussions that address our differences.
11. We PROPOSE differences will best be overcome, learning achieved and mutual respect built by moving from “talking” to “doing” via full scale pilots and recommend such practical action is prioritised. These pilots will allow us to assess the possible and provide local examples for us, and others, to learn from and improve upon.
12. We COMMIT to positively supporting the practical delivery of Natural Flood Management in line with the above and that future proposals will be drawn up in accordance with this Charter.

#### **Charter to Slow the Flow: Plain English Version**

1. Floods can cause terrible damage: we need to reduce future impacts
2. Cumbria & the Lake District is fantastic; we must look after what we love
3. Slowing the Flow can help reduce flooding
4. We will work to overcome the mistrust between people
5. Slowing the Flow requires farmers and will need to be paid for
6. We ask for a lead for flood protection and recovery while recognising other legal duties, responsibilities and rights
7. Every place is different and requires its own solution
8. Local schemes need to coordinate to make a difference at the large scale
9. Scientists, communities, farmers, landowners and organisations will pool their knowledge
10. We will address conflict between people-not just paper over the cracks
11. We will now move from meetings to collective practical action
12. We commit to action for flood mitigation in line with this Charter