



Self-funded flood defence the future

23 June 2011 | By [Jo Stimpson](#)

A flood defence scheme in Bucklebury in West Berkshire is to act as a blueprint for "big society" flood defence funding, after village residents successfully part-funded their new defences.

Villagers paid 10% of costs

Environment minister Richard Benyon hailed the new flood bunds, dry ford and bypass channel project as a prototype of the government's new payment-for-outcomes flood funding scheme, after villagers and local benefactors contributed 10.8% of the project's £600,000 cost.

West Berkshire Council contributed £45,000 and the remainder was provided by the Environment Agency's Thames Regional Flood Defence Committee. Benyon officially opened the scheme – which will protect 25 homes, a Norman church and a village hall – last Friday.

Benyon said the project – which was initiated by villagers soon after the 2007 floods – partly inspired the government's new funding policy, which involves the Environment Agency offering partial funding to projects with the shortfall made up by local communities.

"It has certainly been one of the schemes in my mind as we developed payment-for-outcomes," he told *NCE*. "It is an exemplar."

But he admitted the project had highlighted an issue that has to be resolved for future payment-for-outcomes projects.

"To be able to present the Environment Agency with a technically worked up scheme is a huge game changer. It allows things to progress at a much faster rate"

Environment minister Richard Benyon

Where new defences create new flood plains, affected landowners may demand compensation, meaning more money must be raised than originally expected.

"It's certainly got me thinking that we've got to incentivise landowners if they [are] to be involved," Benyon said. In Bucklebury's case, he said, a "benevolent" landowner has voluntarily "taken a bit of a hit".

Benyon said he would encourage other communities to follow Bucklebury's example in taking on a consulting engineer before proposing a scheme. "To be able to present the Environment Agency with a technically worked up scheme is a huge game changer. It allows things to progress at a much faster rate," he said, but he acknowledged that "not every community has the resources that Bucklebury has".

Bucklebury Pang River Community Interest Company (CIC) director Piers Allison – who led the residents' group for the project – said he was unsure whether the scheme could have run so smoothly on a larger scale. "We have the benefit of having 25 houses. If you go much bigger the management does become a bit more difficult," he said. "It

worked for us. It hasn't been tested anywhere else."

Some 'arm-twisting' needed

Funds were collected from all 25 of the homes protected by the scheme on a pro-rata basis where each property's contribution was based on its council tax band. Allison said "a little bit of arm-twisting" was needed in some cases, but on the whole "everyone thought it was sensible".

Allison said the scheme had created a precedent for similar projects. The contract which was drawn up between the CIC and the Environment Agency will act as a template for future schemes, he said.

The Environment Agency became involved in the project from 2008, and work began on site late last year. Also pioneering community-funded flood defences is Portsmouth City Council, which plans to use Community Infrastructure Levies (CIL) to make developers pay for coastal flood schemes.

Related images



Related Jobs

[Sign in](#) to see the latest jobs relevant to you!

- [Contract Senior Sewerage / Flooding Engineer - £22 - £25 p/h](#)

£1000 - £1100 per week + benefits

- [Principal Flood Management Specialist- Edinburgh - circa £45K](#)

£42000 - £47000 per annum + benefits

- [Wastewater Modeller](#)

£20000.00 - £30000.00 East Midlands; Derbyshire

- [Senior Consultant](#)

£35-45,000 South West; Bristol

- [Water Design and Build Team Leader](#)

Competitive

- [Electrical Engineer - Water](#)

£30000 - £45000 South East; Berkshire

[Find more jobs](#)