

Cockermouth, Cumbria

Profiling Partnership Funding

August 2013

Summary

The old market town of Cockermouth and its surrounding communities suffered extensive flooding in the November 2009 Cumbria floods, when 900 properties flooded in Cockermouth. The scheme consists of a self-closing flood barrier and marks the first time that these passive barriers have been used to protect a community in the UK.

The opportunity to reduce flood risk

Cockermouth is located on the natural floodplains of the Rivers Derwent and Cocker and has a long history of flooding. The scheme consists of approx 1.65km of flood defences incorporating floodwalls (with glass panels), embankments, flood gates, new flood warning telemetry, and a 120m self-closing flood barrier (SCFB). The innovative barrier will rise and fall automatically when the river is in flood. The scheme is also supported by a gravel management strategy to ensure channel capacity is maintained.

The new scheme protects 361 homes and 55 businesses in Cockermouth against a flood event with a 1 in 100 (1%) chance of occurring in any given year from the Rivers Derwent and Cocker.

Vital statistics

Total scheme cost - £4.45 million
FCRM GiA - £3.35 million

Contributions: £1.1 million
Local Levy - £100k
Cumbria County Council - £600k
Allerdale Borough Council - £100k
Cockermouth FAG & local people - £215k
Cockermouth Town Council - £120k.

A referendum was held in the town and residents voted to pay additional council tax in order to help to fund the scheme.

PF score - 100%.



Key issues

Value engineering reduced the initial cost estimate of £5.35 million, which would have required a contribution of £2 million to achieve a 100% PF score.

After the 2009 floods the existing Flood Action Group (FAG) organised themselves into key sub groups, dealing with communication, technical/engineering, social wellbeing and fund raising. The FAG was initially seen as a pressure group but was soon recognised for the essential role it could play as part of the wider Environment Agency led project team.

One of the primary challenges of the scheme was retaining and enhancing riverside views that are a key part of the historic identity of this market town. The glass panels on the floodwalls help meet these needs.

Extra local outcomes

Through effective partnership working, the scheme provides a better protected environment for social and economic growth. There has also been significant investment in refurbishing the local shops including a £1 million street improvement scheme. Cockermouth has re-established and reinforced its 'brand' as a vibrant and historic independent market town.

Engagement and partnership working

A partnership built on mutual trust and respect with the FAG played a key role in the decision-making process and the communication with local community as the scheme progressed. The FAG represented the community and was able to raise any community concerns with the Environment Agency project team and could then re-assure the community that their concerns were being addressed sufficiently and appropriately.

The project team, including the FAG, led on several key meetings/public consultations to explain the scheme proposals and reinforce how partnership funding was key to the success of the scheme. Without partnership funding contributions the scheme would not have been able to progress.

The FAG, supported by the Environment Agency Project team, helped gain the community and local business support for the scheme and facilitated discussions around financial contributions.

Environment Agency staff met with senior authority directors to discuss partnership agreements and later secure legal agreements.

Partner perspective

Sue Cashmore, Chair of Cockermouth Flood Action Group, *"It's fantastic that through working in partnership we have a flood protection scheme in place that may otherwise have not been possible. This is the result of much hard work and I'm proud of the commitment shown by the Cockermouth Flood Action Group and local community."*

Contacts

Project manager - Keith Roddy

Stakeholder engagement - Maria Ulyart and Craig Cowperthwaite

Contributions analysis - Craig Cowperthwaite

Negotiations and realisation - Keith Ashcroft and Craig Cowperthwaite



TIMELINE

2009

November - 900 properties in Cockermouth and surrounding area flood as part of the Cumbria floods. Intensive period of public meetings. Emergency works to clear debris from the rivers.

2010

The Cockermouth flood action group became part of the wider flood risk team and new ways of working were established. As part of the recovery phase a £1.6m programme of Emergency Works to rebuild damaged river walls commence. New flood defence scheme (£650k, incl £88k contributions) for the most vulnerable area of the town was completed by first anniversary of the floods.

2011

Business case for a £5.35m scheme approved with a potential funding shortfall of £2m! Detailed design value engineering reduces costs to £4.45. Partnerships identified and agreements in principle established.

2012

Construction works commences in parallel with detailed negotiations and legal agreements. Contributions received as either part and or total payment.

2013

Scheme completed in June 2013. Two remaining partnership contributions to be fully paid October 2013 & October 2014.