



Devon Resilience Innovation Project (DRIP)

Stakeholder Engagement End Report 2025



Devon Resilience
Innovation Project
DRIP



helping communities help themselves

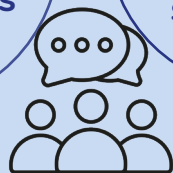
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Key Achievements



Contributed
to **88** events
and meetings



32
contacts
directly
supported

26
Parish Council
areas supported



32%

of councils had
or were working
on Emergency
Plans

2021



70%

of councils had
or are working
on Emergency
Plans

2024

15
presentations
delivered





Executive Summary

The DRIP project is funded by DEFRA as part of the £150 million Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP) which is managed by the Environment Agency to develop and test new approaches to help communities become more resilient to the effects of flooding and climate change.

This six-year initiative aims to reduce the impact of flooding to communities across Devon through a combination of interventions to improve flood resilience. The impact of stacking resilience measures will be evaluated as part of the projects learning.

DRIP runs from 2021 until 2027, working with 19 organisations to improve resilience to flooding in 26 communities across Devon.



DRIP is broken down into four work packages (WP):

- WP1 Natural Flood Management
- WP2 Property Flood Resilience for targeted community assets
- WP3 Surface Water Flood Warning App (using rainfall radars, smart gullies and soil sensor technologies)
- WP4 Flood Hub resource.

Many of the communities selected in WP 1-3 would not typically be high priority within the local flood risk management strategy due to the low numbers of properties at risk. DRIP is a unique project to help neighbourhoods be better prepared for and able to recover more quickly from flooding by improving community resilience.

Devon Communities Together (DCT) was selected as a project partner to focus on stakeholder engagement. The definition of a stakeholder, in the broadest sense, is an individual or organisation that has an interest (stake) in the project.



1) Project Objectives

The emphasis on stakeholder engagement within DRIP underscores the importance of community and partner involvement in developing effective and sustainable flood resilience. By fostering active participation, the programme aims to co-create solutions that are both scientifically sound and locally relevant.

DCT's role was to support, advise and help the project partners to engage constructively with their stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is key to the success of DRIP as for communities to be more resilient, they need to engage with the processes that will enable this. Nature based solutions need to be maintained and monitored, property flood resilience needs to be in situ and deployed at the appropriate time, surface water flood warnings need to be received, understood and acted on and the flood hub online resource needs to be easy to access, clearly communicated and used by the public for it to have a purpose.



The first step in the engagement process is to ascertain who your Stakeholders are. In order to do this workshops were held at the project outset. Stakeholders included Elected members, Council Officers, Funders, Utility Companies, Parish Councils, Community Groups, Landowners etc. The **interest/influence matrix**, as seen below, was then used to decide how these stakeholder groups could best be communicated with e.g. Elected members may not want the same level of local engagement as a community group or Landowner might, but they may want to be regularly updated on strategic decisions.





2) Project Deliverables

The DRIP stakeholder engagement strategy utilised the content from early project workshops attended by partners and created a working document. Its purpose is to guide the project, as well as the individual project leads. The engagement strategy determines how the project team/partners will interact and engage with the stakeholders identified.

Stakeholder Engagement Plans are an important part of the engagement process as they define how, where and what type of engagement is expected to happen. Partners were encouraged and supported to develop their project specific stakeholder engagement plan before starting their engagement activities.

Stakeholder Engagement Plans enabled pilot projects to consider their geographical area, the type of stakeholders they will be engaging with and the best ways to approach this engagement.

Some DRIP pilot projects were already well established, with their role in DRIP being an extension of work they had already carried out e.g. Connecting the Culm (CtC), Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) while other pilot projects were starting from a less well-established position. It was difficult to engage with some of the pilot projects in part due to their time constraints but in some cases due to sensitivities around the projects themselves e.g. Devon Wildlife Trust (DWT).

Engagement activities took many different forms as you would expect in a project of the scale of DRIP. Most projects used project staff to engage with landowners to establish a relationship. In one case, a farm advisor who already worked for project delivery partners was engaged, and in some cases project staff had already built up local relationships and earned the trust of the groups they were engaging with. Community engagement had to be tailored to the audience, so some events started from a more basic level of understanding, using appreciative enquiry techniques, slowly building trust. Other engagement was with flood groups or at resilience forums, so a baseline level of knowledge had already been established.

DCT worked closely with Devon Community Resilience Forum (DCRF) to encourage pilot project communities to create and adopt Emergency Plans (EP's). EPs are one of the resilience measures that help communities to be self-sufficient in a flood incident until the Emergency Services can get to their community and take over the support as required.

70% of the pilot project areas either had an EP or were starting work on an EP by April 2025. This was achieved by persistent and tactful contact with parish clerks who tend to be time poor but interested in support if this can be made simple for them to access.

DCT's time on DRIP has delivered/introduced 13 PowerPoint presentations, Lessons Learned Log, List of engagement tools and Case Studies that can be found as appendices to this report.





10 key principles of stakeholder engagement

The following principles were shared with partners and form the backbone of the stakeholder engagement strategy...

1

Communicate

Before aiming to engage and influence stakeholders, it's crucial to first seek to understand and ensure the intended message is understood and the desired response achieved. Consistent and clear communication will ensure that affected parties will understand the intended benefits of the project and some may become third party endorsers.

2

Consult, early and often

Ask the right questions to gain useful information and ideas. To engage their support, ask stakeholders for their advice and listen to how they feel.



4

Plan it!

A more deliberate approach to stakeholder engagement is encouraged. Careful planning and investment of time in this area has significant payoff.

3

Remember, they're only human

Operate with an awareness of human feelings/potential personal agendas. Accept that humans do not always behave in a rational, reasonable, consistent or predictable way. As flooding is a very emotive subject, the partners are aware that engagement should be approached in a sensitive way.

5

Relationships are key

Commit energy and time to building high-level relationships – this engenders trust. Seek out networking opportunities. We cannot make any assumptions and need to ensure that we have done enough to understand their needs and interests, perceptions, concerns and culture. Working with stakeholders isn't a one-off activity. It is an ongoing process and the partners will keep stakeholders involved and informed about what's going on throughout the life of the project.





6
Simple, but not easy

Effective stakeholder engagement requires subtle skills such as being empathetic. Engage, interact, listen – show you care.

7
Just part of managing risk

Stakeholders can be treated as a category of (and/or a mitigation of) risk and opportunities that have probabilities and impacts. Stakeholder engagement will increase the chance of success of pilot projects identifying supporters and potential saboteurs and winning them over is part of project risk management.



8
Compromise

Find the best compromise across a set of stakeholders' diverging priorities. Assess the relative importance of stakeholders to establish a weighted hierarchy.



9
Understand what success is

Examine the value of the project to the stakeholder. Ask what their success criteria are. Seek to clarify expectations - perception of success is influenced by the who, what and how? We need to define what this project isn't, to manage expectations: we are carrying out an experiment as DRIP is an innovative project.

10
Take responsibility

Good project governance is key to any project. It's the responsibility of everyone to maintain an ongoing dialogue with stakeholders.





3) Timeline and Schedule

From the table below you can see the stakeholder engagement process throughout the life of the project:

Workstream or Task Title	2021	2022			2023			2024			2025			2026			2027	
	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3			Phase 4										
	Dec	Jan	Jun	Dec	Jan	Jun	Dec	Jan	Jun	Dec	Jan	Jun	Dec	Jan	Jun	Dec	Jan	Mar
Stakeholders' Engagement & Communication Plan/Strategy																		
Phase 1 Early Community Engagement and Communication Activities																		
Phase 2 engagement																		
Specific consultation																		
Phase 3 Consultation and Testing phase																		
Phase 4 Implementation																		
Share learning and experience																		

DCT commenced its involvement in the DRIP project in April 2021, leading on the stakeholder engagement strand of this multi-partner initiative. Initial workshops were held with all project partners in September and October 2021 to understand why stakeholders are important for the project, identify who the stakeholders are and why different stakeholders need different engagement approaches. This workshop supported 20 attendees. The second workshop, which supported 24 attendees, reviewed the stakeholder list and carried out a grouping and inclusivity exercise to decide how best to communicate with each stakeholder group using the **interest/influence matrix** (see p.4). The second workshop also considered barriers to engagement, confirmation of engagement principles and merits of different engagement approaches, tools and methods. Based on the outcomes of these sessions, DCT developed the DRIP Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

The word cloud below was created from the findings of the early stakeholder engagement workshops facilitated by DCT in 2021-2022:





From summer 2022, DCT's work shifted to supporting the development of individual pilot project stakeholder engagement plans, as well as providing tailored stakeholder engagement support. This support took a variety of forms, including attending events, advising on engagement methodologies, creating plain English versions of public facing documents and presenting to both project partners and external organisations. DCT supported 16 stakeholder engagement plans and attended 24 engagement events.

DCT Stakeholder Engagement Delivery Staff Capacity

- During 2022-23, DCT's funded staff capacity was 0.4fte.
- In 2023-24, DCT's funded staff capacity was 0.3fte.
- In 2024-25, DCT's funded staff capacity was 0.2 fte.
- In 2025-26, DCT's final funded staff capacity was 0.05fte (frontloaded).

Financial Year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
Q1	N/A	Pre engagement awareness. Stakeholder engagement event support.	Community Engagement support, including 7 stakeholder engagements. Emergency Plan focus. Contacting community buildings re PFR. EA flood photo visit for EP promotion.	Community Engagement support & presentation. Surface water flood warning App plain English amendments.	PHD support. Flood preparedness information for engagement event.
Q2	Workshop A&B to establish stakeholders. Power & influence matrix established.	DRIP Stakeholder Engagement Plan approved.	Community Engagement support & plain English proofing. Encouraged AR Sandbox discussions.	Exit strategy paper circulated. Flood group meeting attended. Engagement tools reviewed. 4 x Stakeholder engagements.	PHD support. Lessons learned & final report.



Q3	Data analysis of workshop findings & pilot project Stakeholder Engagement Plan templates.	Pilot Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan support & baseline measurement. 1 x Stakeholder engagement	AR sandbox meetings. DCRF meeting re rural requirements for EP's. Stakeholder Engagement event support, including 5 stakeholder engagements.	Evaluation, lessons learned. Creation of simplified Emergency Plan template with DCRF. 5 x Stakeholder engagements.	
Q4	Draft DRIP Stakeholder Engagement Plan created.	Pilot Project Stakeholder Engagement plan support & Emergency Plan communication. AR sandbox research. 1 x Stakeholder engagement.	Parish Council Emergency Plan cluster meetings arranged. Community engagement support, including 1 x Stakeholder engagement.	Presentation to Rural Flood Resilience Partnership. Presentation to Exeter University undergraduates.	

4) Budget and Financial Summary

DCT kept to budget throughout the duration of the project with funding allocated for staff time (project management and marketing) and travel expenses. The funding was front loaded, with DCT's input scaled back to 12 days for 2025, then DCT's funded delivery into the project was completed.

DRIP Phase2	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	Total
DCC Funding	£28,750	£23,150	£17,130	£4,300	£73,330
Match Funding	£3,818	£1,268	£2,288	£634	£8,008



5) Challenges and Risks

DRIP is an innovative project, so challenge and risk are inherent. . The programme adopted a Test & Learn approach in order to learn from early challenges presented.

Continuity of DCT staff capacity - there were 2 changes of project staff in the early stages, but from August 2022 onward, there was one DCT Stakeholder Engagement Officer until the funded delivery was completed in July 2025.

Involving some project partners with stakeholder engagement presented certain challenges. We actively sought to understand the reasons behind project partner's reluctance to engage with DCT. Occasionally, stakeholder engagement was perceived by pilot project leads as an added value activity, rather than an integral component of the overall project process. This was due in part to recruitment challenges and therefore capacity issues but also due to sensitivity around the project.

In addition, three of the established pilot projects already had effective local stakeholder engagement strategies in place at the outset of the programme, and so required less stakeholder engagement support from DCT.

Longstanding projects that predated DRIP typically operated on an annual schedule of engagement activities and served as strong examples of good practice from which newer pilots could learn. DCT was able to facilitate peer learning opportunities , but in some cases, where DCT had less direct involvement, due to there being experienced Project Leads in situ, it could be a challenge to monitor multiple stakeholder engagement activities at times.

One pilot project considered its subject matter particularly sensitive and therefore chose not to engage the wider community or bring additional parties into discussions. Other pilot projects, working closely with consultants due to the nature of their projects, were not ready to begin stakeholder engagement until later stages of their timelines.

Throughout, DCT consistently offered support by advising on best practices, assisting with events, facilitating discussions, presenting stakeholder engagement techniques and actively contributing to the overall engagement journey within DRIP.

Stakeholder engagement plans play a key part in the stakeholder engagement of DRIP as they set the geographical parameters as well as the engagement parameters at the outset of the project. In some cases, project partners chose to adapt the format/ approach locally and this added complexity to the delivery of the stakeholder engagement planning process in some cases.

With a multi-partner project and some geographical crossover between DRIP and other work packages, a joined-up approach to stakeholder engagement was sometimes challenging, particularly when the work packages were at different stages in their development. In these cases, the DRIP pilot projects needed to be planned and delivered in the context of and in alignment with other local live Environment Agency work programmes.



Flood risk is a highly emotive subject with multiple agencies involved and we learned that communities are often confused about which agency is responsible for which aspect of flood protection. Mixed messaging and multiple engagements were something that the DCT and the wider project team tried hard to mitigate, but didn't always manage to achieve.

The key lessons learned, in relation to effective stakeholder engagement, from this programme to date are as follows:

1. Consistency and Alignment Are Crucial

A unified format and approach to stakeholder engagement helps reduce confusion. Allowing partners to use different approaches creates inconsistency and unnecessary complexity.

2. Challenges of Multi-Partner Collaboration

Multi-partner projects require careful coordination, especially when there are overlapping geographical areas or work packages at different stages. Without a joined-up approach, stakeholders may receive fragmented or conflicting messages.

3. Stakeholder Confusion Increases with Complexity

Flood risk management already involves multiple agencies, which can confuse communities. Adding another layer (e.g., DRIP) risks making communication even more complex unless roles, relationships and responsibilities are made very clear.

4. Timing Matters

With work packages at different stages, stakeholder engagement needs to be carefully sequenced or coordinated. Otherwise, stakeholders may receive premature or outdated information at different stages.

When engaging with communities, they often had to offload their frustrations about lack of support with local flooding.

Devon County Council (DCC) employees were sometimes confronted (due to dissatisfaction with DCC Highways) as there wasn't an appreciation of the different departments within DCC and at times disconnect between directorates. This made engagement difficult on two fronts; firstly, because the time needed to engage was longer than planned and secondly because it made engagement more of a challenge for DCC staff in some cases. This was overcome by engagement being carried out with a different emphasis (e.g. Emergency Planning) so that the focus of the engagement activity was primarily directed towards a tangible offer of support to the community. When varying levels of engagement from a project partner were observed, the issue was acknowledged but not explored further. This highlighted a gap in supporting the engagement strategy, as some milestones were delayed and opportunities for proactive action were missed. There is a risk that communities/landowners will lose enthusiasm for the nature-based solutions once the project closes. This can be mitigated by implementing a sound exit strategy that ensures communities/landowners remain engaged, enthusiastic and have the correct skills and support to continue to monitor and maintain the assets.

With a project of the size and duration of DRIP, it's no surprise that changes take place throughout the life of the project. Four pilot project area changes were made due to a variety of reasons from lack of staff time to staff leaving and positions not being backfilled. Pilot project areas of Ashburton and Lympstone were removed in 2024 after considerable engagement had taken



place. These were well considered strategic decisions made in the best interests of the project, but did impact on stakeholder engagement time and effort as relationships take time to establish.

Complexity of language, use of jargon and lack of clarity of message were real risks for DRIP. DCT played a key role in ensuring that plain English was used in public facing documents such as information leaflets and questionnaires.

The May 2023 local elections returned different officers in many of our pilot project areas. This challenged DRIP as relationships that had been nurtured now had to be started again as the project was approaching delivery stage. With the benefit of hindsight, we could have been more proactive and benefitted from the enthusiasm of newly elected representatives sooner than we did.

6) Key Achievements

Emergency Plans (EP) are one of the resilience measures that DRIP promotes to increase a community's ability to better cope with and recover from flood events. Working with DCRF, Parish Councils in pilot project areas were approached to see if they would like help to create an EP. There was a lot of resistance as many Parish Councils feel that they're being pulled in numerous directions and just don't have the time or capacity to take on anything else. After numerous phone calls, discussions with Parish Clerks, talks at Parish Council meetings and support events DRIP achieved a 32% increase in EP take up. EPs should be updated every three years, so this percentage is a moveable feast, but it's much easier to update an EP than to start the process from scratch.





Exton was a pilot project area that had suffered from quite regular flood events, which only effected a small part of the village. At initial meetings with the Parish Council, it became apparent that they felt let down by several organisations and wanted something that DRIP couldn't offer – a hard engineering solution to flooding. This made engagement challenging and at times almost aggressive. After a lot of listening, we mutually agreed that creating an EP would help the community to increase its resilience. DCRF supported the community, and they completed their EP in October 2024. Storm Burt hit in November 2024, creating a flood in Exton and their EP was put into action. A group of children were rescued from the village hall; they had to paddle from the village hall door to the pavement, all were safely evacuated and the property flood resilience (PFR) deployed to keep the building watertight. Signage, bought with DCRF funding, was used to warn drivers not to go through the water and volunteers were in position to encourage sensible driving choices from road users. I attended a post flood event meeting where the EP was discussed, and some slight adaptations were agreed. Exton's development as a community with a Flood Group, EP and desire to learn about and improve their flood resilience is a great example of engagement success.



Communication of the DRIP message was as clear and simple as possible as we recognised that managing expectations was important. DCT marketing regularly promoted the DRIP message, circulated the newsletter to relevant contacts and advertised upcoming events. DCT presented a DRIP presentation to the Rural Flood Resilience Partnership, chaired by Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) in December 24, taking the project message and lessons learned to a new and wider audience.

The baseline data gathered in 2023 showed that **62%** of pilot project areas clearly understood the DRIP message. Having this data enabled us to think about the best way to communicate with Parish Councils, making sure that the message got to those who needed to hear it.

DRIP is an innovative project, so learning is part of the process. Resilience measures are stacked to see what combination of measures could have the greatest positive impact in a flood event. DRIP is not designed to stop flooding, but rather to increase community resilience to flood events, increasing preparation time and decreasing recovery time post flood event. This is why stakeholder engagement is so important for DRIP as when the flood water comes, communities need to be ready to act, in a safe, supportive and ideally planned way.



The Augmented Reality (AR) Sandbox

The AR Sandbox is an engagement tool that can be used for any level of engagement. By altering the topography of the sand and simulating rainfall (by placing your hand between the computer and the sand) you can show how water behaves in different geographical landscapes. NBS can then be used to show how this changes the path and ferocity of flow. I was very keen to have access to this engagement tool as its versatility made it useful to all project partners. After some discussion, persuasion and funding consideration it was agreed that Westcountry Rivers Trust (WRT) could create an AR Sandbox as a new pilot project. This has produced a DRIP engagement tool that all partners can be trained to use and will be a legacy of the project that I'm proud to have instigated.

“Adults and children were captivated by the sandbox, and it proved to be valuable for drawing attention and inspiring discussions on catchment functioning.”



“The AR Sandbox acted as an ice-breaker, and a high percentage of attendees at events visited the table first.”

“Great to be able to make the hills around us in the sand and see what happens to the rain as it falls.”



7) Lessons Learned

DRIP is an innovative project and there has certainly been learning along the way.

The DRIP programme would have benefitted from less staff changes and recruitment challenges. North Devon Biosphere lost two excellent members of staff and then took almost 12 months to recruit a replacement for DRIP. Devon Wildlife Trust struggled to recruit, leaving a gap in capacity for several months. Our original DCC project manager moved on and the position was backfilled by the project officer, but this post wasn't recruited to, so again this left a capacity gap.



Flood resilience engagement would be much more straightforward if there weren't so many different organisations responsible for different aspects of water containment/flow/flood. This complexity is a frustration for members of the public before, during and after a flood event and seems unnecessarily complicated. We appreciate that this is outside the remit of DRIP and would be a strategic minefield to streamline, but it impacts negatively on engagement and does the reputation of local flood authorities and the EA no favours.

Work Package two aims to install Property Flood Resilience (PFR) in selected community assets to help flood effected communities access food, medical treatment, shelter etc in/after a flood event. This work package was led by consultants who would carry out the surveys to see if the community asset would benefit from PFR and if so in what capacity. The project's approach was to send letters out on headed DCC/DRIP paper to the targeted community assets, offering them a free survey. Unfortunately, this wasn't received in the manner that was intended and was seen as a scam and disregarded by the majority of recipients. Face to face communication then had to take place to explain that the letters were legitimate and rebuild relationships. The lesson learned is that community face to face engagement should have been the first step, gaining trust and explaining the process with letters to follow once a relationship had been established.

We could have spent more time training Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as the mantra for DRIP's engagement activities. This would have predominantly captured the community engagement as landowner engagement was generally carried out by project partner staff who already had a relationship with that individual. This decision was the right one as landowner engagement is notoriously difficult. Lack of trust in authorities means that landowner engagement is best carried out by those who have an established relationship with the individuals concerned.

DRIP was a valuable project in terms of clearly demonstrating the importance of going to the community rather than expecting them to come to you. When targeting landowners, engagement at livestock markets in north Devon proved much more constructive than events where we asked the landowners to come to us. Having a local landowner who would advocate for the project also helped to break down barriers and encourage other landowners to trust what was being proposed and the people involved. Joining a coffee morning and produce market in a village hall enabled good engagement with local residents who were more relaxed and comfortable with participating in their own space.



8) Stakeholder Feedback

On the whole stakeholder feedback from events was good. Communities were interested in the topic, but this didn't always convert into volunteers coming forward. Engagement often felt that education was the key role as in many communities, Natural Flood Management (NFM) was a new concept.

Some communities didn't feel that they needed support as they hadn't recognised their flood risk. This again turned a community engagement event into an education event. Some communities with well-established flood groups weren't keen to embrace natural flood management. Other communities felt that our proposal, for example of water gardens wouldn't be impactful enough due to the small number of properties in the village.

Some communities were just grateful that we'd made the effort to come and meet them on site. They appreciated the time spent with them and the information that was shared.

Engagement tools were a big help to start conversations. The Slow the Flow Top trumps cards worked well in Ashburton not only as an icebreaker but also as an educational tool. The community asked questions about the different nature-based solutions and then started to take about riverbank restoration and issues with water flow in areas of the catchment.

The AR sandbox has been extremely well received at every engagement event. It's a tool that can be engaging for school children and flood resilience specialists alike as the topography can be adapted to the audience.



“During recent Tipton St John flooding, children were taken from school to home in a tractor and trailer. If we'd written that in an EP, H&S would have a field day!”

“It doesn't flood here. The village hall flooded once but that was because someone left the tap running...”



“We don’t plan, we don’t strategize, we just do”

“Rural people are happy to help but don’t like the formality of a plan”

One Parish Council was very clear that they didn’t need an EP, nor did they want another WhatsApp Group to join for the surface flood water warning system trail. This Parish Council didn’t recognise that their community was at risk of flooding, so the engagement proved a little difficult.

Another Parish Council reported that their landowners felt that nature-based solutions would negatively impact on their productive agricultural land. All landowners were compensated as part of the DRIP programme - this was a key part of our success. Landowners were compensated on Countryside Stewardship rates, although, in some cases it was communicated that the rates weren’t felt to be at an adequate level.



The Slow the Flow booklet, created by BRIC was extremely well received by communities. Its clear messages, use of plain English and simplicity of format made it feel non-threatening and easily digestible.



The project team takeaway message from Stakeholder feedback is that progress would have been easier if the pilot project communities had a better understanding of their flood risk and some concept of natural flood management. The pilot project areas that were already well established (pre-DRIP) already had this understanding (as well as pre-established relationships) and constructive engagement was much easier.





9) Recommendations for Future Projects

DRIP is an innovative project so is the ideal springboard for future project recommendations:

- 1 Levels of flood risk understanding in project communities would support engagement to be better targeted as knowledge was often varied, making communication levels difficult to gauge. Baseline community measurement was carried out as part of the stakeholder engagement programme.
- 2 Due to the likelihood of staff turnover in a project of this size and duration, simple project role descriptions would be helpful to ensure clarity of expectation for project delivery.
- 3 With a project of this duration, a review of project expectations part way through the project life cycle might be helpful. For example, the initial proposal was for communities to co-create natural flood management solutions. In reality this couldn't happen on private landowners' land so the engagement shift could have been towards NBS education generally and specific messaging around those catchments natural flood management.
- 4 A comparison of community co-creation of nature-based solution between estate/community land and privately owned land would be a useful exercise to undertake. The disconnect between privately owned land and the community often makes this impossible. Admittedly there is co-creation with the landowner, but the nature-based solutions aren't community owned and maintained in the way that traditional co-creation could achieve.
- 5 As some DRIP pilot projects were already well established, it would have been helpful to have had a better understanding of the level of stakeholder engagement support each project required at the outset. For future initiatives, implementing a graded scale of stakeholder engagement support could be beneficial, ensuring that resources are focused where they are most needed and most productive.
- 6 Better communication between work streams would reduce the likelihood of duplication of effort and engagement fatigue for communities. DRIPs stakeholder engagement landscape felt quite complex at times due to consultants working on some areas, some pilot project communities starting from a very low knowledge base and others being well established and functioning constructively within their own pre-established frameworks. Clarity of expectation needs to be clear for everyone on a project, ideally before the project starts and reviewed at predefined intervals.
- 7 It would be interesting to do an in-depth comparison of urban versus rural stakeholder engagement in a flood resilience project as part of the evaluation process. DRIP has 2 urban partners, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council. The Plymouth based programme (BRIC) was already well established when DRIP started and Torbay Council was working on a relatively new area of Miyawaki forests. The BRIC team is adept at using Appreciative Enquiry techniques and arranged numerous engagement events at a variety of venues. Connecting the Culm is another well-established project pre-DRIP but in a rural location. They have a strong following and run regular well attended Connecting the Culm forum events. A direct comparison of approaches could be quite informative.



10) Conclusion

The stakeholder engagement aspect of DRIP has been challenging due to the low levels of NFM understanding and a lack of awareness around risk of flooding in many of the pilot project communities. Without an appreciation of need, the desire to engage reduces. The co-creation element of DRIP was also an unnecessary diversion, with communities unable to co-created nature-based solutions when the land was privately owned and often inaccessible to them.

On a more positive note, DRIP stakeholder engagement has educated numerous communities about the benefits and co-benefits of nature-based solutions, it has raised awareness of flood risk in individual communities and has enabled the creation of EP's and flood groups, contributing to DRIP's goal of stacking resilience measures.

Community buy in is vital for projects like DRIP, particularly when project funding stops and nature-based solutions need monitoring and maintaining. Landowners/community groups need to be willing and able to carry on the work that DRIP started, and this is less likely if relationships haven't been created, and trust established.

DRIP is an innovative project, so we look forward to the learning and evaluation of the project informing future flood resilience projects.





11) Appendices:

[Arnsteins Ladder of Participation](#)

[Flooding & Riparian Rights & Responsibilities](#)

[Original DRIP Presentation RFRP 12122024](#)

[Pilot Project Communication Baseline](#)

[WRT presentation](#)

[DRIP Board meeting 16102024](#)

[DRIP Board Meeting 16042024](#)

[DRIP Board Meeting 09072024](#)

[DRIP Presentation 04112024](#)

[DRIP Board Meeting 210125](#)

[DRIP DCRF Board Meeting 10/2023](#)

[DRIP Presentation Stakeholder Engagement Exeter Uni 02/2025](#)

[DRIP case studies 2024 various](#)

[Lessons Learned engagement activities DRIP](#)

[Community Emergency Plan \(CEP\) Presentation](#)

[Devon Community Resilience Forum Resilience Hub presentation](#)

[DRIP End Presentation](#)

[DRIP Stakeholder Engagement](#)

Charlotte Squire

Project Manager, Devon Communities Together

June 2025

Thank you to the project partners:

