

CASE STUDY: WHALLEY & BILLINGTON FLOOD ACTION GROUP

Background

The Whalley & Billington Flood Action Group formed in April 2016 in response to serious flooding on Boxing Day 2015. Over 300 homes and businesses flooded in the 1-in-370 year event. The newly formed Whalley & District Lions Club stepped in to aid in the crisis working alongside the local council and other agencies to help affected residents.

The Lions Club held a public event in March 2016 and people from the community came together. Funds were raised by The Lions, the local Masons and the Rotary club, who helped to give out grants to people who were uninsured. The Community Foundation for Lancashire also provided £5,000 grant funding to help uninsured residents, and Ribble Valley Borough Council provided flood resilience grants of up to £5,000 for equipment such as flood doors and barriers.



The Flood Action Group (FLAG) was formed by a local resident, a local Rotarian, and a local property developer who had already been on a local flood watch, and the members were residents both flooded and helpers. The group had a 3-point action plan; to become resilient, to create medium term resilience by building a string of walls around the river, and to work with agencies towards a full time flood defence.

Challenges

The FLAG has now been going for 5 years and is still waiting for a full time flood defence, and government funding issues have not helped with the length of waiting time. The FLAG feels more pressure is on the community to try to defend the area from flooding with limited resources. It causes anxiety for flooded property owners, with some being upset and worrying every time it rains.

In February 2020 there was another similar flood event which flooded over 100 homes. The group was then on flood alert every week until Coronavirus lockdown began. They had a visit from the Environment Agency (EA) and felt that they were getting closer to a full time flood defence, however there has been no progress during lockdown. The group is now preparing to do its best to help the villages again over another bad winter period.

Successes

The FLAG has so far achieved 2 of their 3 goals. They have a resilience team, flood wardens, PPE, resources, a local flood plan and storage. They are in communication with the local council and give out pre-warnings and get prepared if they are made aware of an event. They have worked with the councils to repair culverts, drainage, watercourses and monitoring in the area. They have also built a string of walls around the river which has saved the village from flooding on several occasions.

The group issues newsletters which are emailed to members and can be found on their website. They work with local voluntary engineers and agencies such as the EA and Lancashire County Council to come up with solutions and fixes on problem areas. They also work with house builders in the area and with the council, helping to overcome issues with watercourses that may have been affected.

The group has achieved a lot and their resilience team have saved properties from flooding many times by being vigilant, communicating with authorities, and with the use of flood sacks and the temporary flood walls.

Visit the FLAG's website here: www.whalleyandbillingtonfloodactiongroup.wordpress.com

Follow their Facebook page @wandbflag here: www.facebook.com/wandbflag