



Supported by:

Devon • Cornwall • Isles of Scilly



Local Resilience Forum

Devon Prepared

Conference and Forum Report

- Kenn Centre, 18th March 2024
- Online, 6th March and April 30th 2024



Introduction

Devon Prepared was planned and delivered by Devon Communities Together on behalf of the Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum (DCIoS LRF). It was put together in response to the DCIoS LRF Voluntary and Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) cell seeking to clarify its role in Whole of Society Resilience. It is one of a number of events in Devon and Cornwall.

DCIoS LRF is committed to Whole Society Resilience as one of its work areas, and kindly agreed to sponsor the event. More information on the LRF can be found at www.dcisprepared.org.uk.

In addition to the Devon events, Cornwall presented a [Whole Society Resilience Learning event](#) on 17th June 2024.

64 delegates attended Devon Prepared, from a range of organisations including all tiers of local authorities, governments agencies, voluntary sector organisations, small businesses, flood and emergency groups.

Recommendations

1. To develop a county-wide Whole of Society Resilience online portal for Devon, building on the “Devon Prepared” concept which was approved by participants of the event held in March, will require senior level buy in and investment from the Local Resilience Forum and of County and District Councils, VCSE organisations, business leaders, the health sector and the emergency services. At this level it will be possible to unlock resources to create a county-wide, cross-sector approach.
2. DCRF to communicate the ideas, concerns and needs of delegates to the Local Resilience Forum.
3. Devon Community Resilience Forum to undertake a review of its current resources and determine how these can be updated or supplemented, to meet the concerns raised about access to information.
4. DCRF to further develop its relationships with district councils in order to best support emergency planning.
5. Research into how to improve ‘joined up thinking’ between county, district and parish/town councils and statutory agencies. It is proposed that DCRF convene an online conference to address this issue.
6. Devon Community Resilience Forum to create a set of targeted communications to ensure that questions raised in the conference are addressed. This will include information sheets, newsletter content, website content and agendas for future meetings and forums.
7. Explore additional ways to improve communications between resilience partners and share best practice, for example using social media.
8. A call for examples of best practice from local authorities, VCSEs and statutory agencies, to be hosted on the DCRF web pages / shared via newsletters.
9. Engagement with the emergency services and other responders in order to advise on:
 - a. how to maintain support before the emergency services arrive
 - b. the relationship and command lines between the emergency services, agencies and communities
10. Research into available training relevant to resilience and emergency planning in order to provide a single source of information
11. Ask the LRF to provide further guidance on data sharing and GDPR with reference to vulnerable people.

Objectives of the conference

This report does not seek to summarise all of the presentations given and cannot fully encompass the rich and far-reaching discussions that took place. Rather it aims to reflect the main concerns, questions and comments of delegates in order that these can be researched and addressed in due course.

The conference asked the question:

'How can we best harness community power to plan, prepare and recover from emergencies in Devon?'

And invited delegates to:

'explore how can we work together to build resilience in our communities.'

Outline of the day

Vic Ebdon, a Trustee of Devon Communities Together welcomed everyone to the day. A keynote address was given by Becky Maynard, Regional Engagement Manager from the Voluntary and Community Sector Emergencies Partnership. She stressed the importance of partnership in dealing with potential emergencies and reminded delegates that flooding is only one risk that we should prepare for.

Five panellists then gave short presentations about their duties and how their organisations are supporting community resilience:

- **Niki Warner:** Emergency Planning and Business Continuity Officer, Teignbridge District Council
- **Leo Hansen:** Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor, Environment Agency
- **Chris Khan:** Flood Resilience Officer, Environment Agency
- **Philip Cole:** Mayor, Kingsbridge Town Council
- **Tegan Faulkner:** Neighbourhood Highways Officer, Devon County Council

The slides from the morning presentations can be found [HERE](#)

Delegates were then invited to discuss and share a list of **key questions** for the panel. These were captured for later response.

They were also asked to discuss the following questions (**Table Talk**):

- What are you already doing to promote resilience?
- What would you like to do more of?
- What are the barriers?

- How can we best support vulnerable people?
- Where next?
- Devon Prepared website – ideas and feedback

The discussions were recorded on flip chart sheets to be collated and analysed.

The questions and discussions will be used to inform:

- Responses from DCRF and relevant agencies
- Design and dissemination of DCRF information and resources
- Whether a Devon Prepared website would be a valuable addition to information sharing
- Approaches to community engagement
- Relationships and communication amongst agencies and between agencies and communities

After lunch there were presentations and workshops on the following topics:

VILLAGE HALLS AND OTHER COMMUNITY BUILDINGS AS REST CENTRES

(SLIDES HERE)

- Alice Moorcroft-Hughes: Groundwork South
- Followed by a group Discussion led by Danielle Wootton: Community Development Officer, Devon Communities Together

CLIMATE CHANGE: PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS AND COMMUNITY ADAPTATION

(SLIDES HERE)

- Emily Reed: Project Manager, Devon Climate Emergency, Devon County Council
- Sam Trethewey: Public Health Registrar, Devon County Council

ENGAGING HOUSEHOLDERS IN MANAGING GARDENS TO PREVENT RUNOFF

- Liza Oxford: BRIC Project Lead, Plymouth City Council

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ARE COMING TOGETHER IN NORTHERN DEVON TO BUILD YOUTH RESILIENCE AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH (KAILO)

(SLIDES HERE)

- Kristian Tomblin: Commissioning Manager, Public Health, Devon County Council
- Dr Tim Hobbs: CEO, Dartington Service Design Lab

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

(SLIDES HERE)

- Dr Alex Arnall: Associate Professor in Environment and Development, University of Reading - Community Led Response to Sea Level Rise
- Angie Weatherhead: Events, Projects and Tourism Officer, Dawlish Town Council - Putting your emergency plan into action

Results and analysis

Key questions

The following questions were raised during the discussion section of the event. They have been grouped by topic and the topics ordered according to how frequently they were raised.

Devon Communities Together will respond to these questions in future communications, including the quarterly DCRF newsletter, emails and bulletins, on our website and at future events. Some require a multi-agency response, so will take a little time to put together.

- **Communication/sharing information**
 - How do we share best practice, lessons learned, resources? / How do we 'join up' thinking between parish-town-district-county-statutory authorities and communities (stop siloed thinking)?
 - How can we improve daily & weekly communications? (Up and down / across communities / authorities & cross community)
 - How can communities understand what they are allowed to do for themselves (not be liable!) when agencies aren't able to help?
 - Do communities help councils or should councils do more to help communities take action?

- **Engaging the community**
 - How does a community identify what voluntary groups can help them? / What does 'engaging individuals beyond communities' mean?
 - How can we approach community members who say 'I already pay my taxes, why should I help'?
 - How can we enable communities to engage when they worry about litigation, blame & responsibility?
 - Resistance to change – What's the best way to encourage communities to engage with an emergency plan?
 - What's needed for communities to take more responsibility for themselves?
 - Is there scope for more generic volunteers, not just specific roles eg flood/snow wardens?

- **Infrastructure**
 - How can drain clearance be improved / more frequent?
 - Can we focus more on prevention – eg connection between blocked drains & potholes?
 - Are developers funding infrastructure needed for runoff and how do we get them to?
 - How prepared are [the authorities] to deal with telephone digital switchover?

- **Access to resources**
 - How can emergency plans be more easily accessible and more flexible?
 - Simplified template for emergency plans?
 - Does DCC have staff who support communities with their own resilience plans?

- **Emergency response**
 - How does the lead emergency planning team trigger a response from the appropriate local teams?
 - What other established organisations are available to respond?

Table Talk

Delegates responded to five questions, producing the following themes

What are you doing already?

- **Response groups and warden schemes** including flood, snow, roads, farms and neighbourhood watch
- **Providing resources** such as community hubs, warm spaces and community food boxes
- **Training**, including first aid and defibrillator
- **Planning** – reviewing and promoting community emergency plans, creating a WhatsApp group
- **Community engagement** through awareness campaigns, mailshots, events and resources

What do you want to do more of?

- **Partnerships and communications**, including with the emergency services, local businesses, community groups, young people and via community information points and standardised information. More communication about climate adaptation.
- **Source funding**
- **Establish an emergency hub**
- **Identify vulnerable people**
- **Improve equipment resources**

Barriers

- **Skills and knowledge**: access to training
- **Resources**: people and funding
- **Legal**: GDPR, insurance
- **Perceptual**: fear of the consequences of taking action
- **Local circumstances**: geography, mobile signal
- **Communication**: with agencies and the community

How to support vulnerable people

- **Identification**: Local knowledge, businesses, other agencies, GP, care homes
- **Defining 'vulnerable'**: Knowing what makes people vulnerable / what they need. Talk to them – engage

What next?

- **Preparation**: write an emergency plan, tabletop exercises, training, build on covid actions
- **Communication**: engage and inform the community, promote resilience, use various formats (eg audio, braille)
- **Focus on prevention**

Future agenda items

Delegates asked for the following issues to be covered at future Devon prepared Resilience events:

These have been grouped by type with summaries of individual comments. There is some overlap with the questions asked, above. We will ensure that these get raised at future meetings as appropriate.

- **Examples of best practices in communities that show whole society Resilience**
 - Lessons learn from incidents, e.g. The Keyham UXO
 - Self-help examples between groups sharing what they have done
 - Presentation from local community around an event / incident - focused on their learning from that incident/ emergency

- **The relationships between various organisations**
 - How agencies, local authorities, flood groups etc relate to each other.
 - How to implement more collaboration between local authorities and people

- **Structure/content of emergency plans**
 - How to present the information needed by the emergency services clearly.
 - Construct of simple emergency plan
 - Draw up a typical plan together simplified from the 38 page DCT plan

- **Other risks than flooding**
 - Heatwave/drought
 - Power+ communication failures

- **Climate change**
 - How we engage with the least tangible likely outcomes of climate change & how we get that moving before we start to hit the crisis points.

- **Expert input**
 - British Red Cross
 - Emergency responders

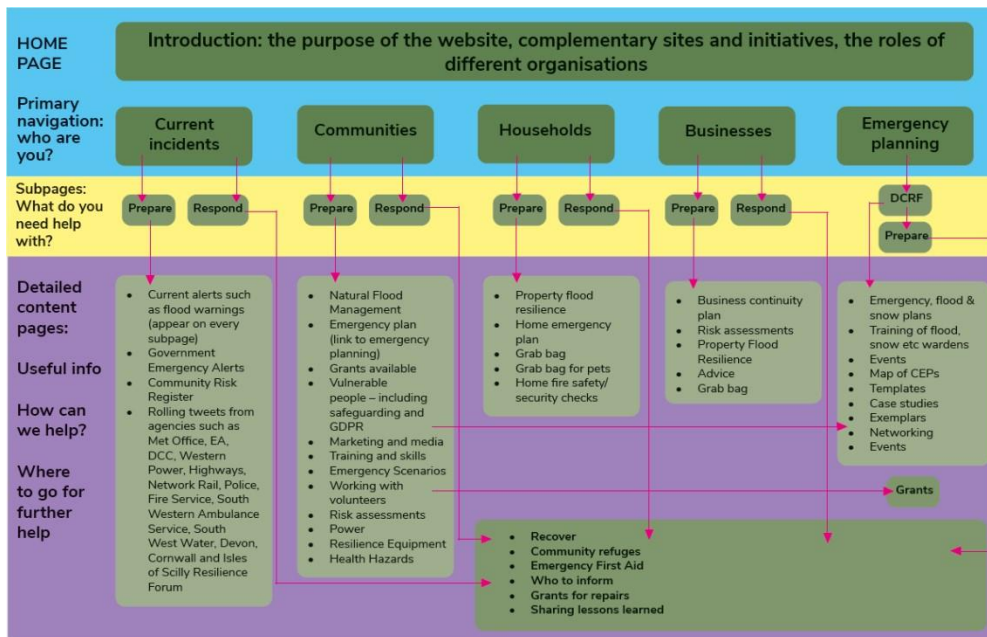
- **Public health / mental health content**

Devon Prepared portal

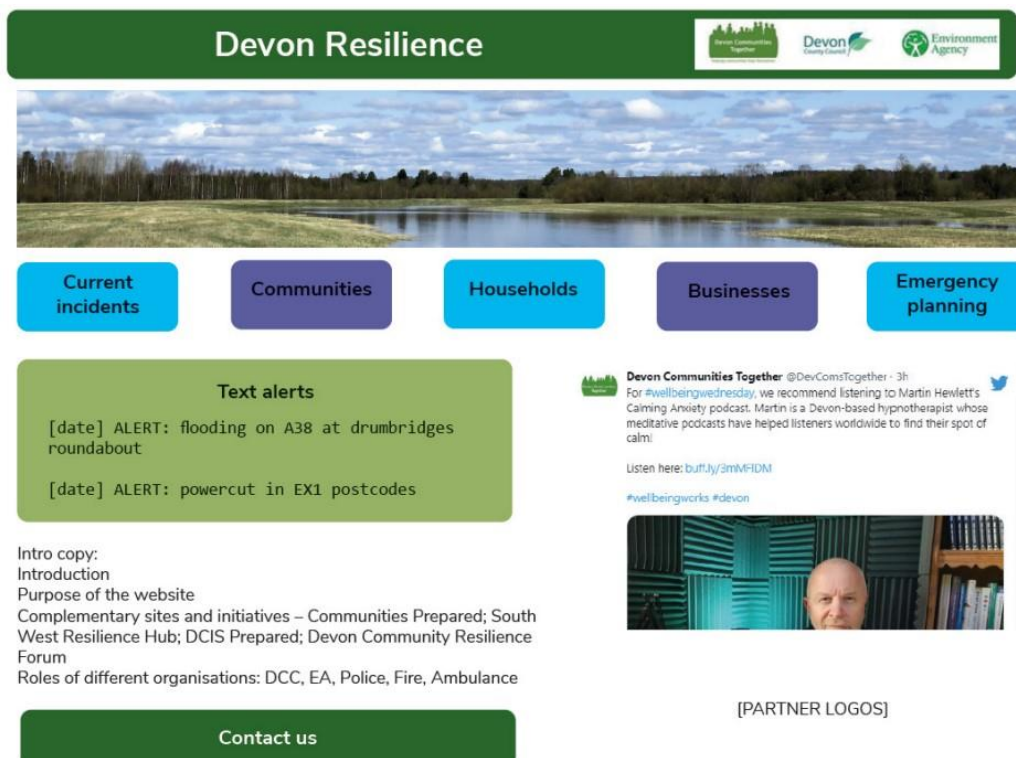
Delegates were asked to discuss and comment on the value of a proposed Devon Prepared website which would serve as a central point for advice, information sharing and resources for communities, households and service providers.

Two sample web resources were shared for comment. These show:

- An outline structure / contents:



- An example of how the home page might appear:



[PARTNER LOGOS]

In discussion a number of delegates indicated that a well-planned and designed central resource could make information such as guidance on insurance and liability, case studies and other resources more readily available.

There were some concerns that it might not be clear from the title Devon Prepared what the site was about or who it was aimed at.

Further research is needed, including: desk research to assess the content and value of other counties' resilience websites; further input from communities, local councils and VCSEs; and how such a site might be funded and hosted.

Reports on the afternoon presentations

VILLAGE HALLS AND OTHER COMMUNITY BUILDINGS AS REST CENTRES

[\(SLIDES HERE\)](#)

The Communities Prepared team from Groundwork South gave a presentation about Community Hubs, locations which support the mobilisation of local community assets, human and physical, before, during or after an emergency.

They identified that hubs are diverse, and need to be community assets which represent their local area.

Challenges facing hubs echo those which arose in other sessions: lack of resource (time and financial), lack of established networks, burnout of those involved and apathy of those not, a perception that they duplicate other (statutory) services.

Participants then addressed three questions regarding what might be needed to set up a hubs/emergency rest centre in their community:

- What volunteer roles are needed?
- Three actions that might be most important/useful when running a hub
- What facilities/equipment might be the most useful?

Delegates discussed these and a list of their findings is available [here](#).

CLIMATE CHANGE: PUBLIC HEALTH IMPACTS AND COMMUNITY ADAPTATION

[\(SLIDES HERE\)](#)

Emily Reed of Devon Climate Emergency outlined the Climate Adaptation Strategy for Devon, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

The strategy has three parts:

- Risk Register, which identifies climate impacts and their risks and opportunities
- Adaptation Plan, which sets out how the region can create conditions to adapt to climate change
- Action Plan, which sets out priority actions

The main impacts expected as a result of climate change are: flooding, extremes of temperature, sea level rise and drought.

The report considers five sectors: Natural environment, Infrastructure, Health and the built environment, Business and industry, Cross-cutting, including international.

Sam Trethewey presented on the Public Health Impacts of Climate Change. A short video focussed on the actions individuals can take to increase personal resilience.

He outlined potential local impacts on human health including from infectious diseases and risks to food safety and security, health and social care delivery, and mental health as a result of extreme weather and the climate emergency. He then looked at the actions required to address these (outlined fully in the [presentation](#)).

Themes that arose in discussion were:

- A need to empower systems over individual actions, for example providing adequate recycling facilities
- A lack of communication between local authorities and GPs surgeries
- Lack of consistency in government policy
- Resources that are needed to integrate public health & climate change into local communities
- A lack of awareness that climate change and public health are linked and a need for simple messaging 'one thing at a time'.
- A question of how we measure impact.

ENGAGING HOUSEHOLDERS IN MANAGING GARDENS TO PREVENT RUNOFF

Liza Oxford from Plymouth City Council and her team used models to give a practical illustration of how runoff causes flooding and how managing gardens to absorb water can help reduce the problem. This was shown in the context of the Building Resilience in Communities (BRIC) project in France and England.

Delegates were interested and surprised by the variety of techniques and activities BRIC are using to engage with local residents and the amount of human resource and effort it takes to sustain a level that will bring about behaviour change.

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES ARE COMING TOGETHER IN NORTHERN DEVON TO BUILD YOUTH RESILIENCE AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH (KAILO).

[\(SLIDES HERE\)](#)

Dr Tim Hobbs and Kristian Tomblin delivered a presentation on the application of systems thinking concepts to community resilience building.

They outlined three key principles:

- Addressing inequality and ensuring that 'lesser heard' voices are valued

- Adding value by building on what is already strong
- Bringing young people and communities together

They stressed the importance of considering the whole system, not just parts and described a resilient system as being decentralised, self-sufficient, having variety and involving learning.

The main discussion points were:

- A recognition of the interdependence and that different parts of the system may act in non-linear and ways which may be, or appear to be unpredictable
- The importance of collaborative advantage that comes from working as system actors rather than in silos
- Recognition of the importance of the sum of that parts in creating outcomes in complex systems rather than narrowly defined interventions

ENGAGING THE COMMUNITY IN YOUR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

[\(SLIDES HERE\)](#)

Dr Alex Arnall, Associate Professor in Environment and Development at the University of Reading presented research on how communities respond to sea level rise using examples from Wales and the Maldives.

He noted that successful responses involved: local knowledge of how the local coastline 'works', including sediment, sea defences and flood risk; raising issues of social justice, such as fairness; the importance of solidarity; building a story about change and controlling the narrative. An important issue raised was the balance of 'expert' knowledge – external, scientific/academic - and local knowledge – a community's lived understanding of how tides affect them. The 'expert' often takes priority, whereas there is a need to take account of both.

Angie Weatherhead, Events, Projects and Tourism Officer at Dawlish Town Council, described the town's response to emergency events, from the collapse of Dawlish sea wall, through Covid to a series of flood incidents in 2020/3.

Angie noted the lessons from this sequence of events, describing the emergency plan as 'always a work in progress'. She noted the importance of engaging the community through public meetings and by working with partners, including local businesses and charities, district and county councils and Devon Communities Together.

Next Steps

- Explore the potential for a Devon WSR website aimed at promoting community and individual resilience and preparedness for emergencies.
- Delegates reported that there was value in this information sharing between agencies, local authorities and other interested parties. We invite the DCIoS LRF to provide funding for future such events to promote 'joined up thinking' between these bodies.
- Devon Communities Together / Devon Community Resilience Forum will research the themes and questions that arose during the conference and provide responses to community groups through its website, newsletters and future events.
- Devon Community Resilience Forum will review its current resources and update and supplement them to meet the concerns raised about access to information.
- DCRF will continue to develop its relationships with district councils in order to best support emergency planning, including running joint information events.
- Explore additional ways to improve communications between resilience partners and share best practice, for example using social media.
- A call for examples of best practice from local authorities, VCSEs and statutory agencies, to be hosted on the DCRF web pages / shared via newsletters.
- Engagement with the emergency services and other responders in order to advise on:
 - how to maintain support before the emergency services arrive
 - the relationship and command lines between the emergency services, agencies and communities
- Research into available training relevant to resilience and emergency planning in order to provide a single source of information
- Ask the LRF to provide further guidance on data sharing and GDPR with reference to vulnerable people.

Feedback from delegates

Delegates were asked to complete a short survey at the end of the event. 50% of attendees responded (a total of 31 responses). All respondents said that the content was EXCELLENT or GOOD.