

**East Sussex Community Emergency Planning Conference, Eastbourne Town Hall,  
Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2010.**

East Sussex Emergency Planning Officers organised a study period in Eastbourne to raise awareness of how local communities can support the emergency services and local authorities during an emergency. The objectives were to:

- Share good practice and understanding of how community emergency response is being managed in differing parts of the country.
- Provide an outline of the response by the emergency services and local authority.
- Outline the type and value of the support that local communities can provide the emergency services and local authority.

The Mayor of Eastbourne, Councillor Carolyn Heaps and Derek Stevens, Chief Executive of Rother District Council and the District Local Authorities' representative on the Sussex Resilience Forum opened the conference.

**Speakers**

There were two keynote speakers:

- Graham Thompson from Keswick in Cumbria told of his experience with the community volunteer team during flooding in 2009.
- Col Anthony Kimber from Rye spoke about the work to establish REACT, a team of volunteers who are working to develop a risk-based community emergency plan.

There was also a team from the emergency services and local authorities who explained a scenario involving evacuation and shelter. The evening was rounded off with an opportunity to ask questions of all the speakers and the emergency planning officers.

The presentations are available on request.

**Participants**

Some 120 community representatives, councillors and others attended from across Sussex.

**REACT**

Following the public meeting in September, REACT is pressing on with the action plan to reduce flood risks in the west of Rye. REACT has also registered to take part in the planned national flood exercise in March 2011. This arises from one of the key recommendations of the Pitt review of the serious 2007 floods. More details of this exercise are enclosed.

Anthony Kimber PhD  
Colonel  
Chair REACT  
Rye Town Hall  
Dec 2010

## National Exercise Watermark – Community Involvement

At the meeting place of three rivers, proximity to the coast and with a hinterland of higher ground, the likelihood of flooding in parts of Rye is very real. The Environment Agency, which is responsible for managing the flood risk of main rivers and the coast rates over 1000 homes “at risk” in the community.

Exercise Watermark is a national exercise, to be held over period 4 to 11 March 2011, which aims to involve a large number of individuals, communities and businesses to raise awareness and increase preparedness for flooding. The Government emphasises that community involvement in flood planning has a number of benefits not only for those who live in the area but also for the emergency responders whose job it is to deal with a major emergency.

WATERMARK at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/planning/watermark.htm>

The Rye Emergency (Planning) Action Community Team (REACT) has registered for involvement in the exercise. As part of the exercise, REACT intends to:

» **Review all those at flood risk.** The Environment Agency flood maps are at: <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31650.aspx>

» **Further encourage those at risk to sign up for flood warnings.** To provide early flood warning, FLOODLINE Warnings Direct provides a free service to the public by telephone, mobile, email, text message and fax. Individuals can sign up for FLOODLINE Warnings by calling 0845 988 1188 or through: <https://fwd.environment-agency.gov.uk/app/olr/home>

» **Organise a short (3 hour) local “table-top” exercise in Rye Town Hall during the exercise period (date TBC) to consider:**

- ✓ **Local Risks:** Particularly in the west of Rye, REACT is already considering the flood risk and encouraging the many professional partners involved to take measures to help reduce the risk and act quickly in the event of localised flooding.
- ✓ **Rye Area Multi Agency flood plan:** REACT will be involved by the Local Authorities in the update of the flood plan for the Rye District Area.
- ✓ **Preparedness:** REACT encourages the community to take measures to ensure home insurance and to prepare for flooding. It also coordinates any community effort to support the Local Authorities and Emergency Services in the handling of serious flooding and other emergencies.
- ✓ **Involving volunteers, including young people:** REACT will consider measures to ensure a wider understanding of the flood risk and preparedness, such as establishing community flood wardens and circulating flood awareness literature.