

Common understanding of complex places – flood management at the Ouse Washes

client | partner Environment Agency

The Ouse Washes is one of the largest and most complex pieces of flood defence infrastructure in the UK and in some places is nearly 400 years old. It is also an internationally important nature reserve and when full can hold up to 900,000 cubic metres of flood water from the River Great Ouse.

Unlocking a long-term strategy

Agreeing a long-term strategy has proved difficult over successive generations due to the diverse interests and the scale of challenges faced.

A four-month Accelerated Collaboration programme created a visual model of the role and operation of the Ouse Washes and demonstrated the key issues facing the system.

This involved aligning the thinking and the evidence from the Environment Agency and 12 other key stakeholder organisations including the National Farmers Union and the RSPB.

Don't just tell them – show them

Now the visual model is being used by all of these stakeholders for much wider engagement regionally. The model and the collaboration involved in the visualisation process are providing agreement around the strategy development process.

As part of the project a living, online document was developed: www.ousewashes.org

Find out more:

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A visually engaging, accessible way to demonstrate technical information on flood risk and management.

“The approach using Accelerated Collaboration is an excellent means to get common understanding of complex places. The Fens and particularly the Ouse Washes has significant sustainability challenges ahead, requiring key decisions on local strategy and capital investment.”

Dr Geoff Brighty, Environment Agency Anglian Region Central Area Manager

