



Newsletter June 2015

Welcome to the third edition of the HARMONISE Newsletter! This month we have a very interesting [interview with Nick Lyness](#), Environment Agency Wessex Flood & Coast Risk Manager. Nick has a long experience in the resilience field, from preventing flooding to cleaning up after festival goers at Glastonbury!! His insight has informed policy in the UK and elsewhere. Nick emphasises the role of a holistic approach to planning and designing urban areas, the delicate financial 'balancing act' required, the benefits of informed communities and the potential of technology to mobilise, innovate and integrate resilience activity!! We see a strong role for HARMONISE in such a plan!

We have now passed the half way stage of the project - click [here for a detailed discussion](#) of the first 18 months. HARMONISE was recently showcased by Selex ES and Commune de Genova in Washington at the [Global City Team Expo](#). Coming up, HARMONISE will be showcased at [EXPO Milan](#) - find us in the Selex ES Pavilion. We have also been developing a suite of tools and field testing them in our Case Study Locations - check back in future editions for details!!

We hope you enjoy our material and look forward to hearing from you via our social media channels – remember to sign up on the links below! Please forward this newsletter to your contacts who may be interested in the HARMONISE Project and ask them to sign up for future issues via the [Newsletter mailing list link](#) here or via the button below.

Thanks for reading - see you next month!

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HARMONISE in context

HARMONISE Interview Series

**HARMONISE Interview with... Nick Lyness BSc. C.Eng., M.I.C.E., C.I.W.E.M., M.I.W.E.M.
Environment Agency Wessex Flood & Coast Risk Manager**

• Tell me how you first got involved in with the resilience field?

After two and half decades as a civil engineer constructing infrastructure, in 1999 I became a Flood Defence & Water Resource Manager in South West England. Within a month of taking up the post there was an intense summer rainfall event in a rapid response catchment in Dorset that had a major impact on a local community - damaging highways and vehicles, flooding many properties. This was a prelude to a period of sustained winter flooding which saw over 200 communities impacted in my area.

•What has surprised you most about working in the resilience field?

I suppose I shouldn't continue to be surprised at societies' ability to forget within about 18 months of the last major incident of the importance of investing in managing the risk (affected individuals will, but usually not society as a whole) for the future.

•What do you find most challenging about the resilience field?

Two things i) Making sure that I and my staff are working closely with our partners to make communities feel they receive a relevant joined up response during incidents and during the recovery period ii) Making sure communities understand the environmental risks surrounding them so they can take effective action themselves when a incident occurs (iii) preparing society for the future impact of climate change.

•What's the best/worst thing to happen since you started your career in the resilience field?

"Game changers" like the Civil Contingency Act, the Floods & Water Management

Act. So many good things have happened and progress made locally and national. Locally in my area, a typical one would be the work we have done with 53,000 properties vulnerable to ground water flooding - with the introduction of a warning system and self help flood warden network. Nationally, massive improvement in infrastructure providers (transport, energy, utilities) response to the need to improve and join up their approach to resilience. Locally the Local Resilience Forum effectiveness in managing the risks associated with the delivery of the Olympic Sailing event in Weymouth & Portland.

At a personal level the worst thing has been at a televised public meeting, after flooding being unfairly accused of causing a fatality from a naturally distraught relative. In terms of a particular low point for myself and colleagues, months and months of sustained media, politician and fairly harsh community criticism of our response to the flooding on the Somerset Levels and Moors whilst still dealing with 3 months of storms and flooding with 10 times the number of flooded properties in the rest of the area. The flip side has been the government's willingness to instantly respond and provide the funds needed to repair all the damaged defences

•If you could change one thing about urban resilience - what would it be?

Embed a greater sense of awareness and community ownership of the risks that surround people rather than the public expectation that it is someone else's responsibility!

•What do you wish other people knew about urban resilience?

There are so many interdependencies in a complex urban environment that predicting all the impacts can be a challenge, so we need to work with communities (it can be particularly difficult in some urban locations where there is no sense of community)to better understand what their priority needs would be.

•Tell me about some interesting people you've met while working in resilience

Because it covers such a spectrum of people e.g. "blue light services", Met Office, climatologists, coastal scientists, politicians, etc. I have found amazing people in impacted communities who have selflessly given themselves over to understanding their local issues and have worked to find a solution with a sense of realism.

•What's your personal philosophy on what should be done about urban resilience?

The "lens" through which the planning process works doesn't address resilience in any way - so that when incidents happen, it is hard work to make provision. It should be a "material consideration" in the planning process e.g. infrastructure failure and the unintended consequences, refuge areas for flooding, etc.

•Tell me about someone who has influenced the resilience field?

There is no doubt for me that people like Peter Bye in the late 90s and Michel Pitt in 2007, with their reports into flooding in England have seen major step changes in government and institutional approaches to flooding.

•What might (someone) be surprised to know about you?

I was born in Germany, despite being a Belfast boy. I have completed 4 London Marathons. Cycled from Lands End to John 'o' Groats with my family (3 sons aged 10 to 14) - partially on a Penny Farthing!!

•The interest in urban resilience seems to be growing. Why do you think that is?

When incidents happen, whether terrorism, environmental (such as flooding), etc. the

costs in recent years have been considerable, hence greater engagement from the insurance industry and government. Public expectations appear higher, with less acceptances of disruption. The global nature of news means that most days feature a disaster of sorts, so it is every present.

•What do you think will change about urban resilience over the next five years?

A difficult one, as we know what many of the measures are that need to be taken, but the costs of retrofitting an urban landscape and the political will to do it, seem to be dependent on a disaster happening (inevitable with the current economic situation). Having said that, as a consequence of some of the past incidents, investment is taking place and there is improved resilience on much of the infrastructure - but it doesn't tend to be a **holistic** approach. I think the biggest change will be greater use of more sophisticated communications with the public - we are increasingly using Face Book & Twitter, etc. Also greater real time exchange of data, with common platforms, between resilience partners calibrated against different scenarios.

•If you weren't doing your current role, what would you be doing instead, or what would your life be like?

My goodness, that's a cracker, likely still working on large infrastructure projects or in research. Given the choice, improving methods to represent the risks for planners and communities.

•As an engineer, what sorts of trends do you see?

We are improving our effectiveness at delivering schemes and there are many brilliant designers out there - but we need to be more effective in reducing costs and making our solutions more **holistic** with multiple societal benefits. Economists also need to give greater weighting to the confidence infrastructure provides to society.

•How would (someone) describe you?

Workaholic, passionate about my work (strong coastal interest), calm, always "up for it", good networker, lots of interests, keen to understand the bigger picture and join up the dots to make things work better.

•What do you do when you aren't working?

I used to do 3 or 4 big challenges a year usually physical, involving the outdoors, "knees not as good these days!". In the last 2 months I cycled the Way of the Roses - a Coast to Coast route, and been to Skye hill walking (and thanks to my wife some "wild water" swimming!) and kayaking and cycling in the Solway Firth and Galloway. I would like to get back to more reading and possible research. Also I have had periods of regionally supporting the Institution of Civil Engineers.

•What else can you tell me about your role?

It is a brilliant role, dealing with local matters and hard wired into the national response, informing policy, influencing local and national politicians, ensuring readiness for incidents of all sorts. it involves engineering, geomorphology, geology, hydrology, sociology, economics and taking an overview of processes such as flooding and erosion. Much of my work is working with partners - either during incident management or securing funding for future investment. Despite being based in the South West, last year has seen my involvement with the US Army Corp, Swedish resilience organisations, French politicians on the coast, Dutch and other European engineers. The problems we face are shared and we can learn a lot from speaking to professionals and communities

around Europe and further afield, to find better, more cost effective and more resilient solutions.

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