

Achieving closer collaboration between Catchment based Approach (CaBA) partnerships & Flood Action Groups

Report

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ACRONYMS

CaBA	Catchment Based Approach
NSG	National Support Group
NFM	Natural Flood Management
RT	The Rivers Trust
NFF	The National Flood Forum
MAM	Multi-Agency Meeting
FAG	Flood Action Group
FAP	Flood Action Plan
EA	Environment Agency

Executive Summary

This report was commissioned by the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA), researched by National Flood Forum (NFF) and was funded by the Environment Agency (EA).

The CaBA National Support Group (NSG) worked with the National Flood Forum (NFF) to identify how Flood Action Groups (FAGs) and CaBA groups could work more collaboratively and why some catchment partnerships either struggled or chose not to work with Flood Action Groups (FAGs) and vice versa. The NFF conducted research to understand the types of engagement that CaBA and FAGs had with each other. Initially the NFF visited CaBA events across the UK making observations on what type of interactions were used to communicate to communities/FAGs. Quantitative and Qualitative data was collected in the form of two surveys; one aimed at gathering responses from CaBA partners and the other aimed at gathering views from FAGs. Specific areas around the country were focused on, chosen in collaboration with CaBA NSG to distribute these surveys. The hypothesis before this research was conducted, was that engagement between CaBA and FAGs would be on a partial scale and this engagement would need to be expanded and refined when moving forward. Analysis of the results revealed that whilst there was engagement between CaBA and various members of community, there was little active engagement between CaBA and FAGs. The engagement that did exist focused predominantly on presenting, highlighting, and distributing information on pre-determined CaBA projects rather than collaborative work together. The results also identified that both CaBA and FAGs would like to develop closer working relationships. Some FAGs had misunderstood what a CaBA was and did. FAGs also had preconceptions of what aims CaBA have. These aims were perceived to not include flood risk. Some CaBA partnerships felt that FAGs were insular groups who did not understand managing catchments. They felt that inclusion of FAGs into their CaBA would dilute their primary aims and objectives. Overall, however, the commonalities that came across between both groups was the desire to work together, to understand each other's direction better, specifically when tackling the issues such as development and planning policies and the mechanics of the catchment. Seventy-two per cent of CaBA Partnerships felt it would be advantageous to have FAGs as partner organisations. This report concludes that to help closer collaboration between CaBA and FAGS there needed to be more information exchange and

to encourage FAGs to join CaBA, an understanding of each other's objectives was needed. Help and support in merging the two groups to work together productively would consolidate the process by ensuring FAGs are partners in the co-creation of a project. An example of CaBA best practice can be seen in Shropshire where 5 FAGs are working in collaboration within a catchment group of which include CaBA partners, farmers, businesses, and flood risk management. A national event here for CaBA's would showcase working with FAGs and give an opportunity for further development. It is essential that early and effective engagement takes place with FAGs where water management is a component of the project. Funding for this ideally should be mandatory and be built into all grant making schemes, linked to core output indicators.

1 Introduction & Rationale

Collaboration empowers through the pooling of resources and expertise, providing for a strengthened collective voice. Collaboration can yield more holistic solutions and draw upon a greater diversity of stakeholders and funding sources.

Both CaBA partnerships and Flood Action Groups (FAGs) have representation at a national level through the CaBA National Support Group (NSG) and National Flood Forum (NFF), respectively, hence enabling barriers to working together to be taken up with Government and other stakeholders at the national level. Consequently, this project was proposed to research those relationships and identify the type of collaboration between CaBA partnerships and FAGs.

1.1 Strengths of Catchment based Approach Partnerships

CaBA partnerships hold considerable information directly relevant to flood risk including multiple data layers in the CaBA Data Package relevant to both rural and urban flooding. CaBA partnerships often have good relationships with landowners 'up-catchment' helping expedite implementation of natural flood risk management (NFM) measures. CaBA also typically work closely with water companies; future drainage and wastewater management plans may offer distributed Sustainable Urban Drainage solutions to flood risk. CaBA

partnerships can have strong links to local businesses some of whom may be at risk from flooding. Some CaBA partnerships also work with Local Authorities with several examples of the latter providing funds directly to a partnership.

1.2 Strengths of Flood Action Groups

FAGs are familiar with local flooding issues, including those arising from surface water flooding that are not well represented in predictive models. They are also likely to be aware of local solutions to reduce or mitigate flood risk. FAGs commenced with the support and guidance of The NFF are familiar with working in a collective partnership through Multi-Agency Meetings (MAMs) that can involve diverse partners but always have as standard; The Environment Agency (EA), local authorities, including parish/town/district/borough/county councils and their appropriate departments, and the Water Companies.

FAG establishment of close working relationships with local authorities is of benefit to CaBA partners as a key stakeholder.

FAGs come with a passion and drive to reduce their flood risk and are well supported by their wider community, businesses, and their farming community. Once on board they can bring multiple benefits such as introductions to community members, volunteering, monitoring and evaluation, hospitality, sustainability, civic pride, and promotion for the project. FAGs are the ideal people to lead, host and promote visits from other interested parties with the *background* support of the CaBA partners.

2. Aim

The aim of the project was to understand better what the potential barriers are, and the possible enablers, to encourage and support successful integration/closer collaboration of FAGs with CaBA partnerships. This report was undertaken by NFF, as part of a collaboration with CaBA, and funded by the EA.

3. Methodology

CaBA partnerships in Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire and Surrey offered their participation for initial research. Presentations were also made with the CaBA National Support Group (NSG) about this initiative to partnerships during 3 CaBA workshops, held in London, Leeds, and Solihull, respectively.

The intention was to discover where close collaboration had led to successful outcomes and what methods had been used to engage with communities generally and FAGs in particular. CaBA partnerships from selected areas (see fig.2) were then encouraged to give feedback on their thoughts and experiences of working with communities and FAGs.

Stakeholder engagement included:

- Presenting the project at CaBA NSG regional events
- Asking selected and non-selected CaBA partnerships to complete a CaBA specific survey
- Asking selected FAGs to complete a FAG specific survey
- Presenting at CaBA NSG partnership days held in Leeds, London, and Warwickshire.
- Short, semi-structured interviews with select members of FAGs and CaBA partnerships who undertook the surveys.

The key themes identified during the project proposal stage provided the overall structure of the stakeholder research:

- The type of collaboration between CaBA partnerships and FAGs.
- What barriers inhibited wider collaboration between CaBA partnerships and FAGs?
- What constituted a FAG from a CaBA partnership viewpoint?
- What constituted a CaBA partnership from a FAG viewpoint?
- Did FAGs contribute and work with their local CaBA partnerships?
- Best practice for better collaboration between CaBA partnerships and FAGs.

Achieving closer collaboration between Catchment based Approach (CaBA) Partnerships and Flood Action Groups

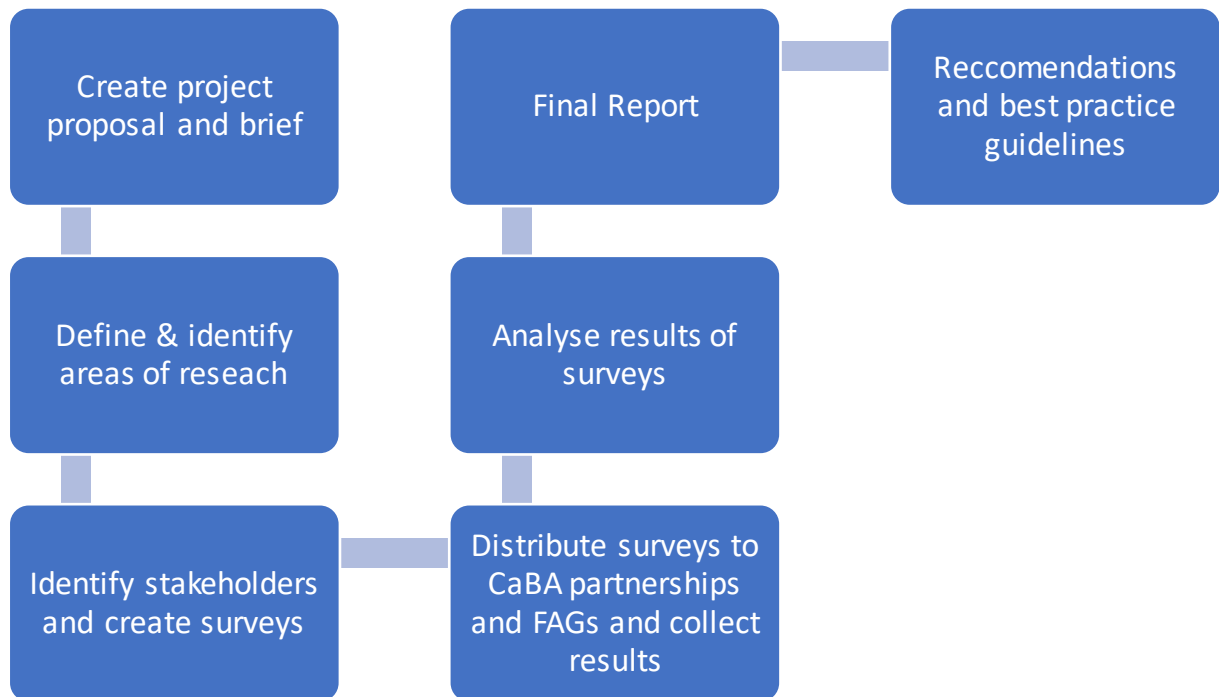


Fig.1: Methodology diagram

Fig.2: Flood Action Group Areas that participated in the survey

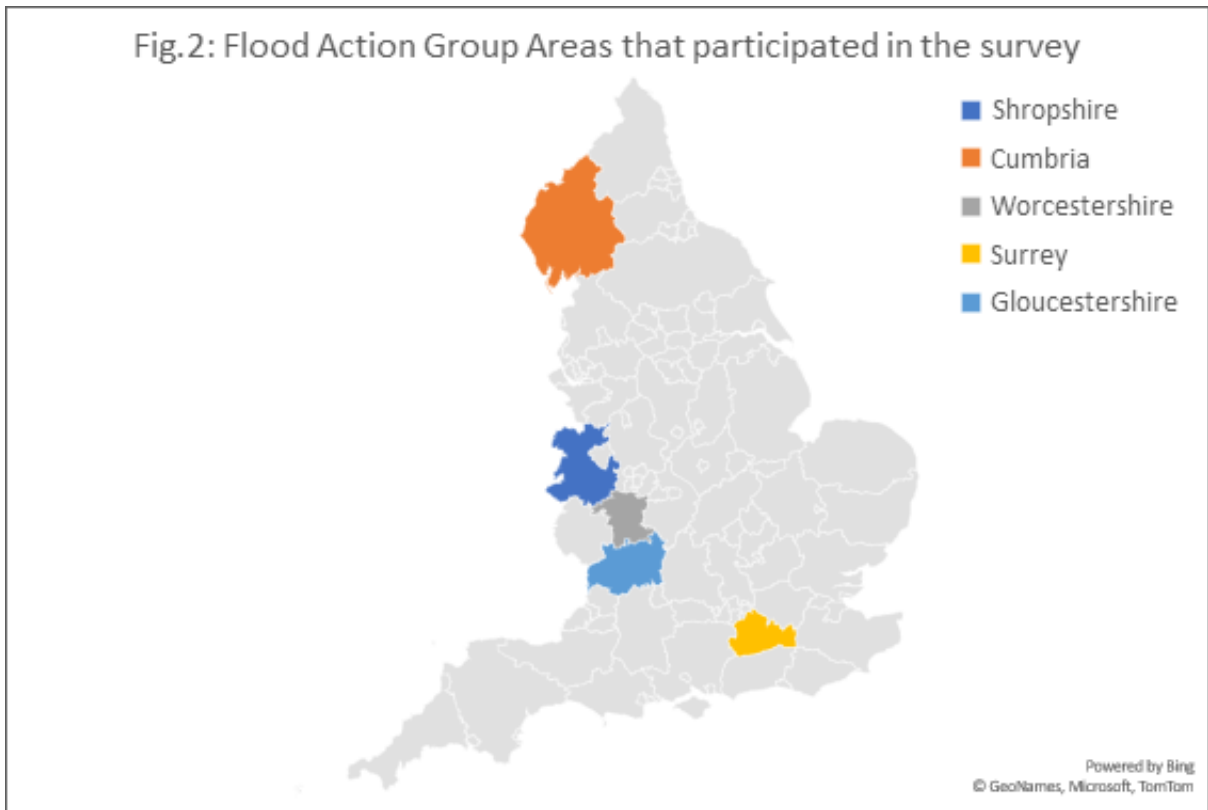
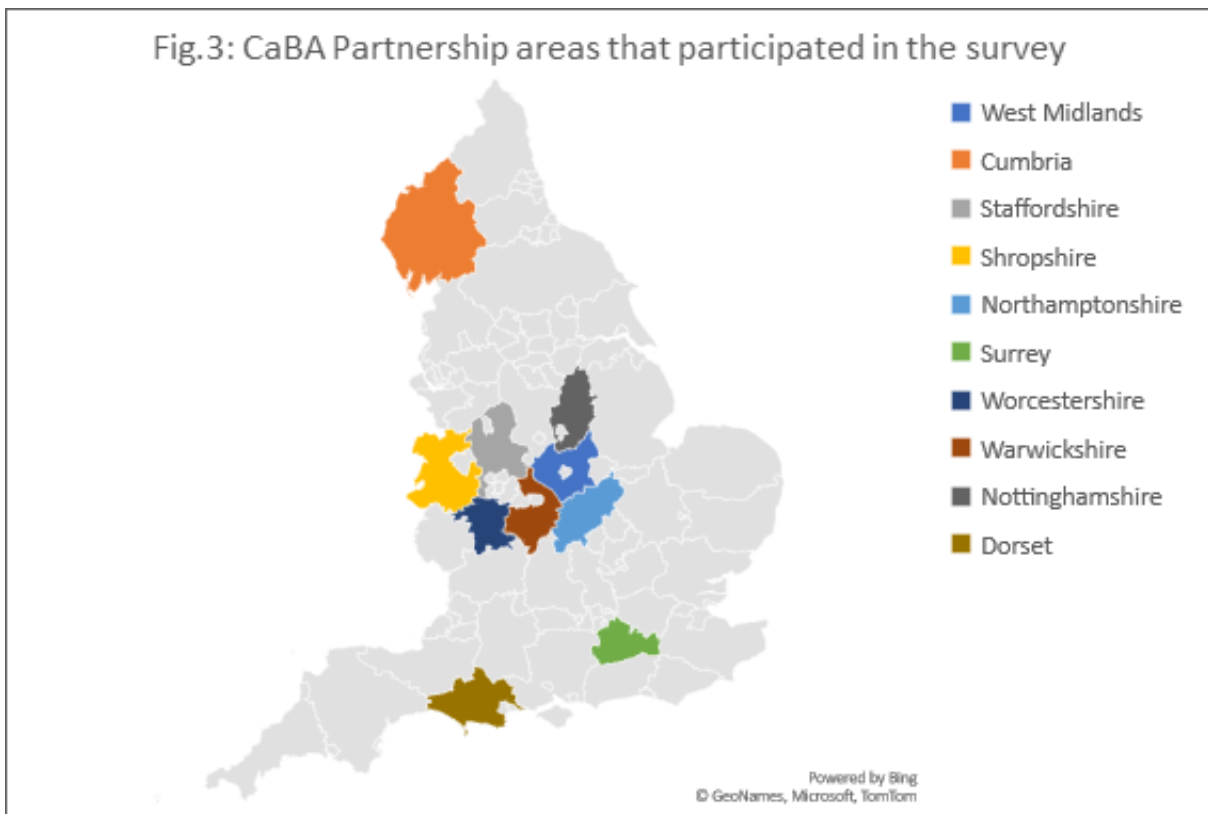


Fig.3: CaBA Partnership areas that participated in the survey



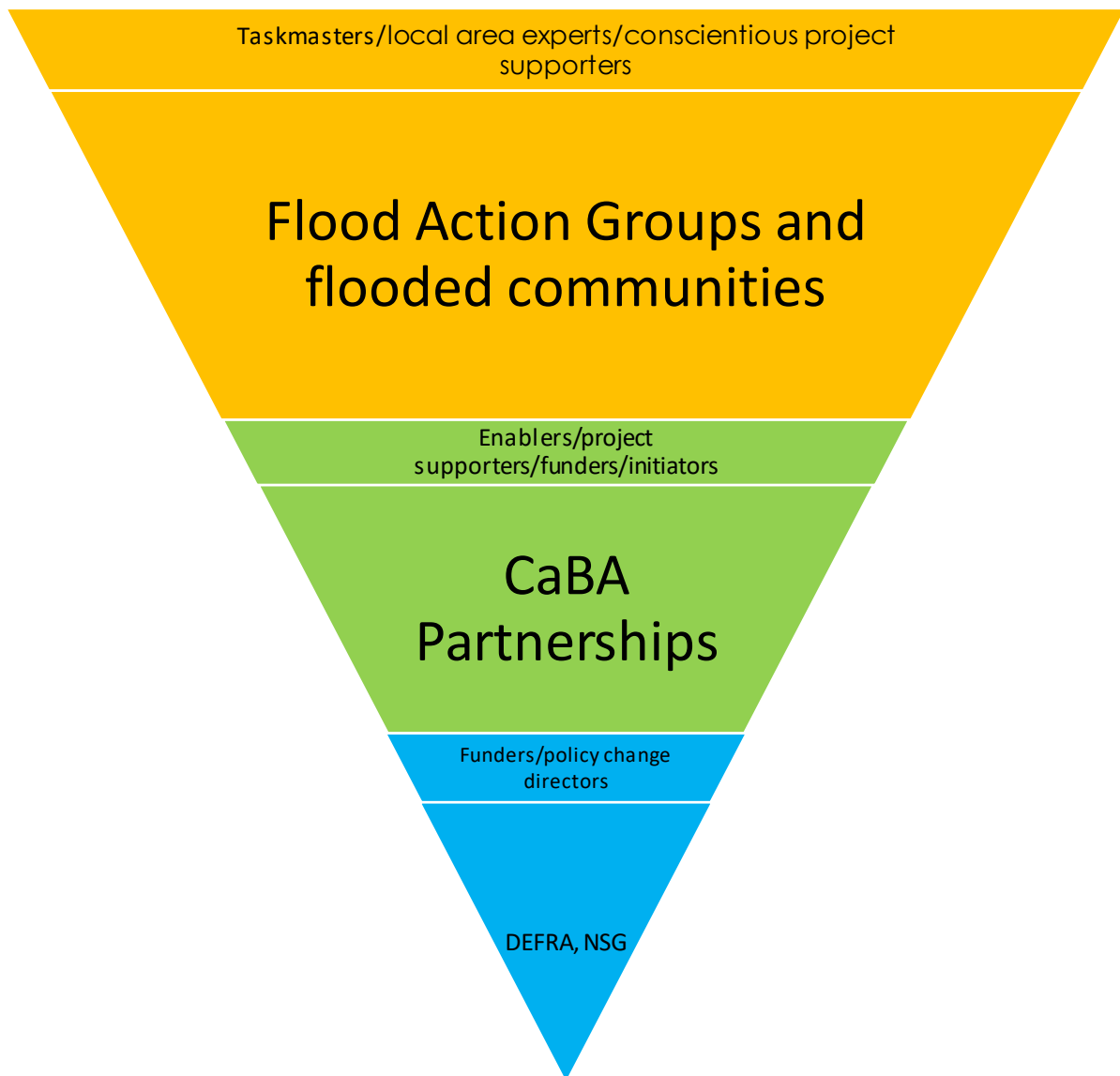


Fig.4: Inverted pyramid displaying the importance of collaboration at grass roots.

Throughout the project, the importance of collaboration at a grass root level was recognised. Any activity planned and instigated may have an impact on the people living there. Therefore, the usual triangle of top down direction has been inverted to show (Fig.4 above) that often the best collaboration and success is when it is rooted in the community itself. To gather viewpoints to see if this was supported, both surveys were sent to CaBA members and FAG members. Question 1 in both surveys identified which areas respondents were from (Fig.2 and Fig.3, pg. 6).

4. Research Findings

Results from the CaBA and FAG surveys are presented in sections 4.1 and 4.2, respectively. The total number of responses that were sent to CaBA members and FAG Members can be seen in table 1 below.

Survey	Total number of members survey was sent to	Total number of surveys completed (%)
FAG Survey	72	31 %
CaBA Partnership Survey	72	44 %
Total	144	38%

Table 1: total number of CaBA and FAG members surveys were sent to and total number of completed surveys. Source: *Survey Monkey data*

4.1 CaBA Survey Findings

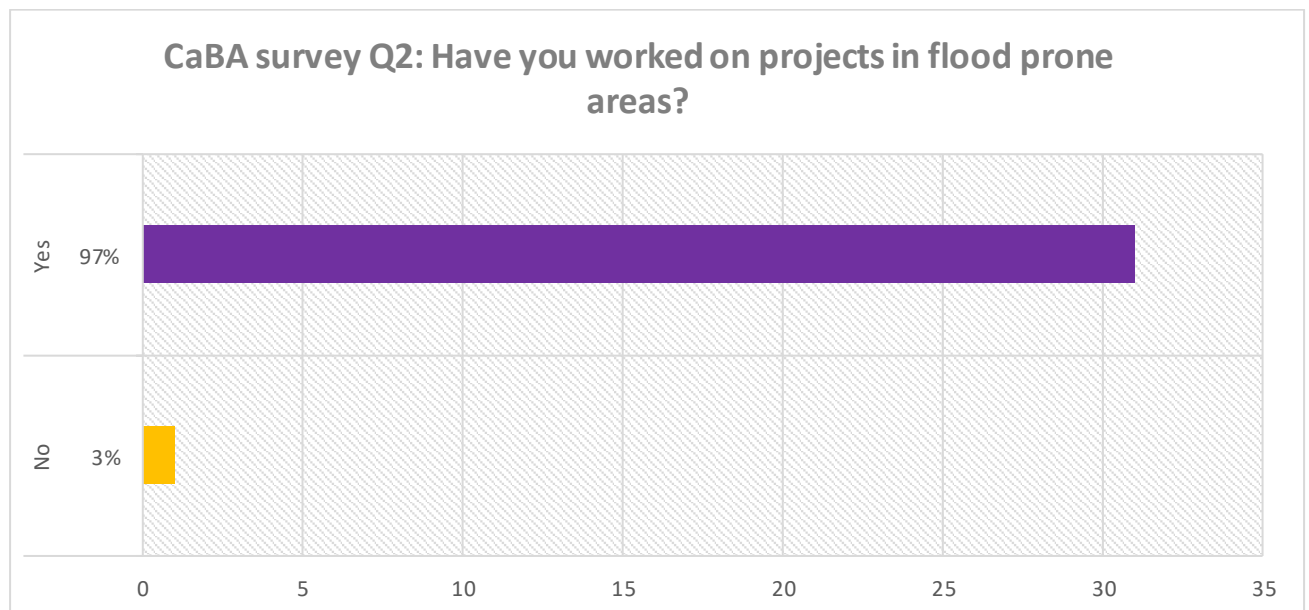


Fig.5: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q2**.

Results from question 2 (Fig.5 above) from the CaBA survey indicated that 97% of respondents had worked on CaBA partnership projects in flood prone areas.

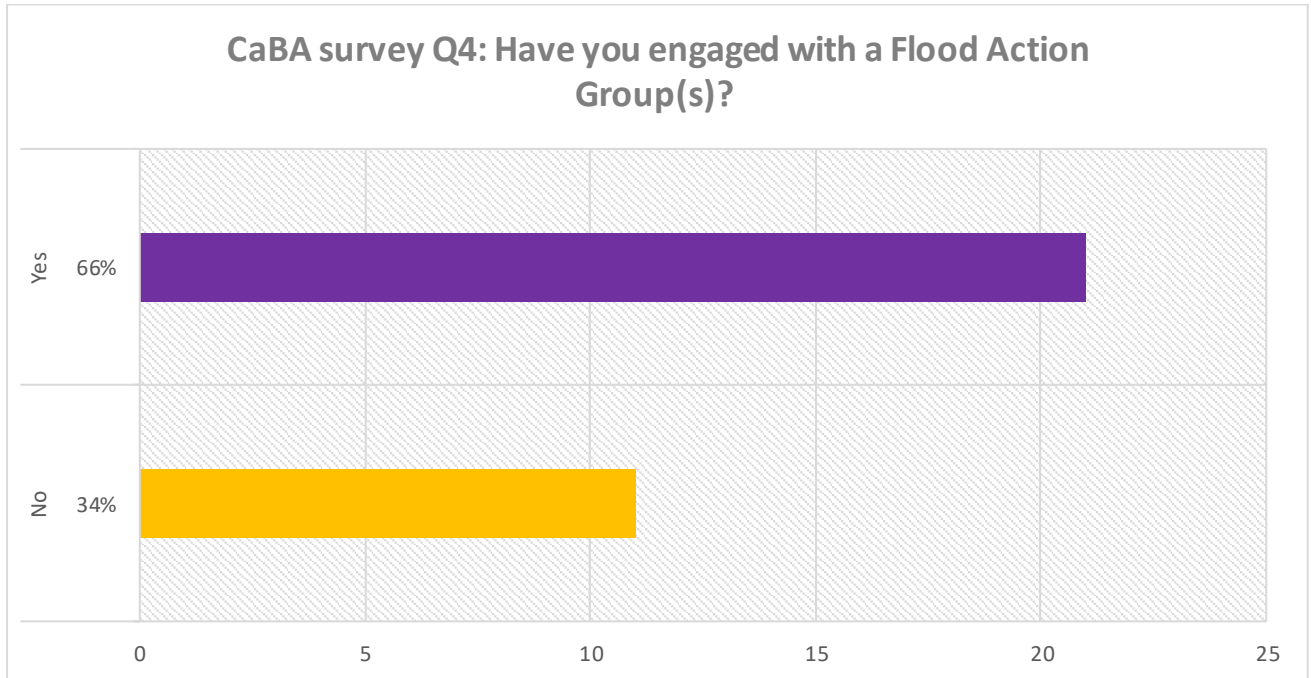


Fig.6: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q4**.

Results from question 4 (Fig.6 above) from the CaBA survey suggested that 66% of respondents had engaged with a FAG. The survey also indicated that 34% of respondents had not engaged with a FAG.

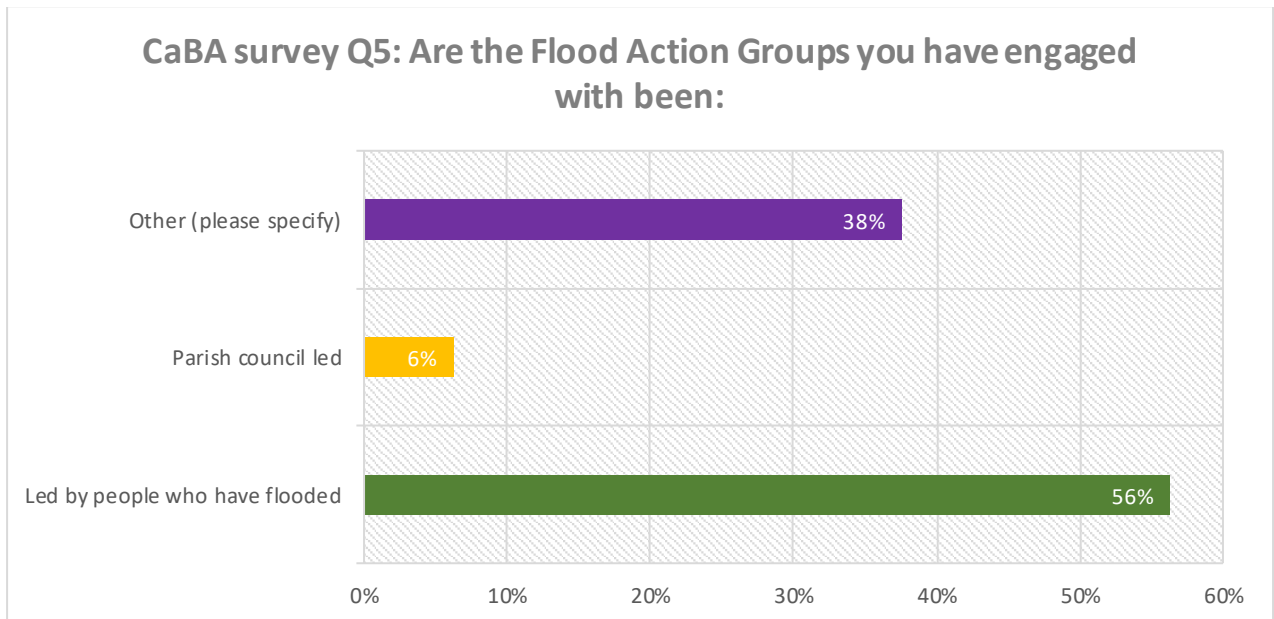


Fig. 7: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q5**.

Question 5 of the CaBA survey asked what type of FAG the CaBA partnership had been engaged with. The question looked to determine who constituted the makeup of the FAG. Results showed that 56% of FAGs that CaBA respondents had engaged with were formed of people who had been flooded (Fig. 7 above). 37% responded with other. "Other" was specified with responses such as:

- Have not engaged personally with Flood Action Groups
- Town Council
- Not aware of any in our catchment
- Through Local Authority
- Not managed to find them
- Not applicable

6.% of respondents said their FAG was formed of people from their local parish council.

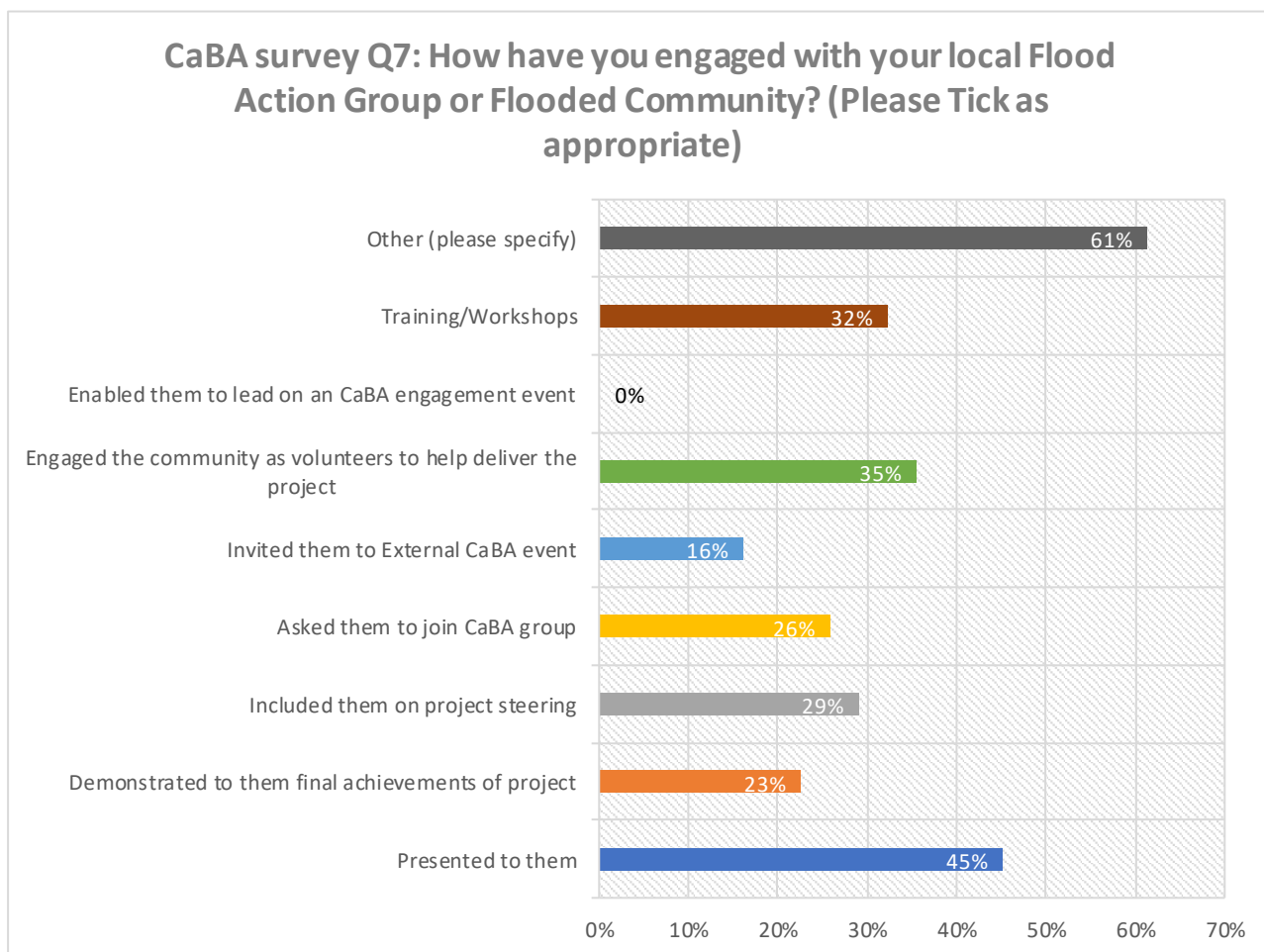


Fig.8: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q7**.

CaBA respondents were asked how they had engaged with their local FAG or flooded communities (Fig.8 above). 45% of respondents said they had presented to their local Flood Action Groups or flooded communities. 26% of respondents said they had asked their local FAG or flooded communities to join the CaBA partnership. The largest response by respondents was other (61%). These included:

- *“Spoken to members of community as part of role, and whilst attending meetings.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“Conversations about options e.g. NFM.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“During flood events.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“Flood forum event.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*

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- *“Engaged with Parish Councilors and Natural England.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“Flood warning advice and promotion of NFM projects.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“Attended their meetings and site visits with them.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- Not applicable (n/a).

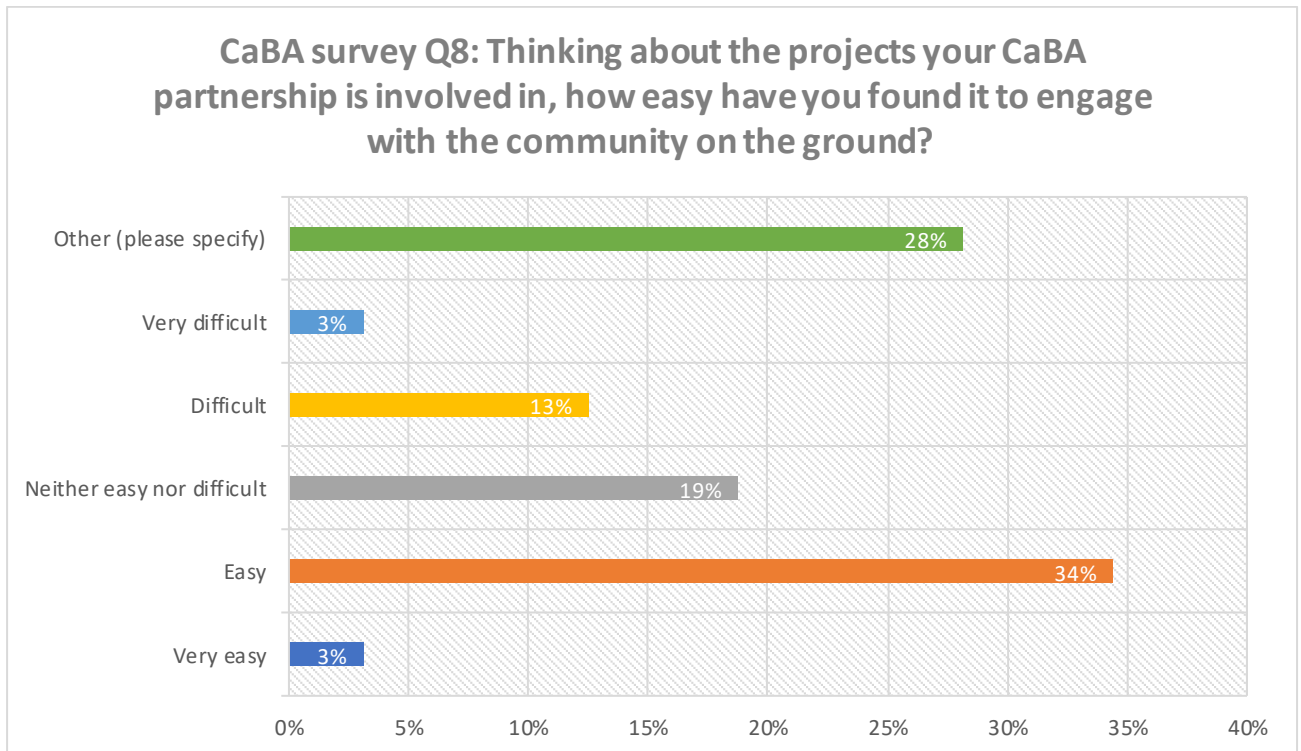


Fig.9: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q8**.

34% of CaBA respondents thought it was easy to engage with the community on the ground when thinking about CaBA projects (Fig.9 above). 12% of respondents found it difficult to engage with the community on the ground when thinking about CaBA projects. 28% stated other in their response these included:

- *“Engagement is straightforward but getting permission for meaningful environmental improvements in the farming sector is difficult.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“It depends on the project and the community in question. If they are already engaged in local activity i.e. site management, they are usually willing to get involved with the CaBA group. If they want their voice heard, some also see CaBA groups as a way of getting their voice heard by EA and others.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“Variable but most very open to people being involved.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*
- *“I think it has been a mixed response - some people are very much on board, sometimes because they are desperate for any measures that may provide even some relief,*

others have a wait-and-see if it works elsewhere mentality, and others simply do not want to engage, perhaps because of past experiences or a feeling of blame.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

- *“Communities can be wary because flooding can affect insurance and property value.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)*

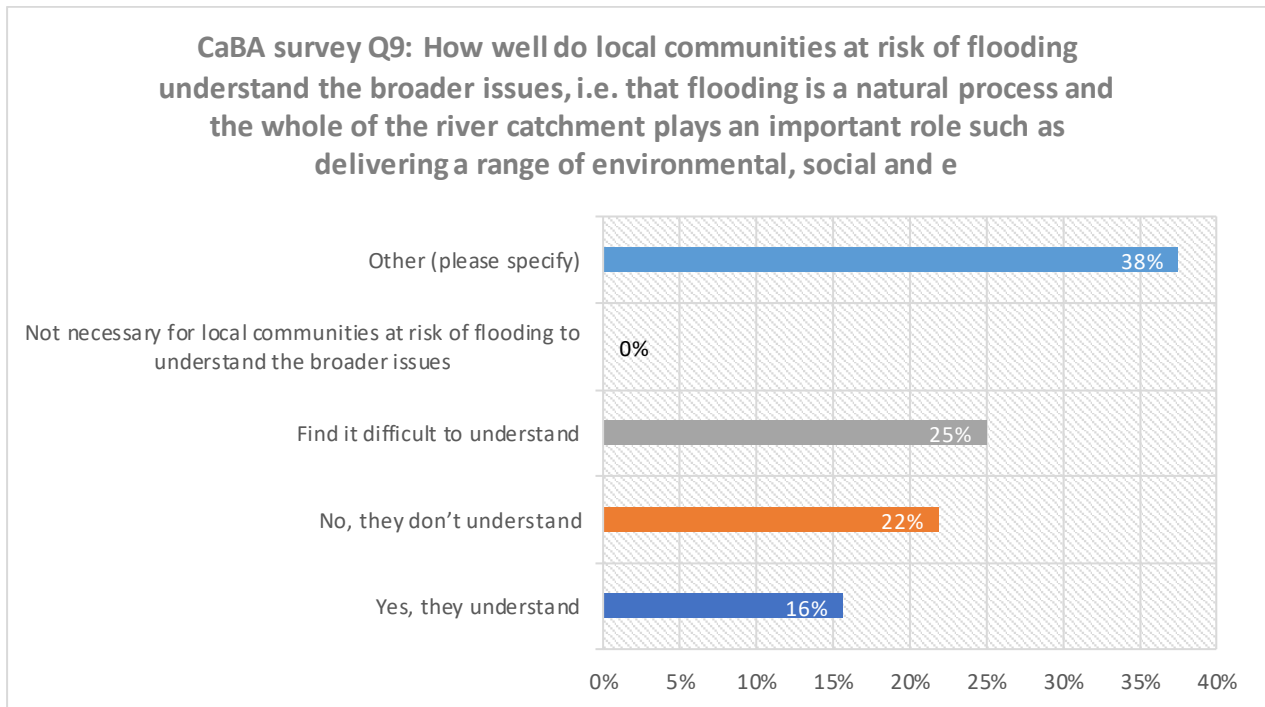


Fig.10: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q9**.

CaBA partnerships were asked how well they thought local communities at risk of flooding understood the broader issues within their river catchment (Fig.10 above). 25% of respondents said they thought local communities at risk of flooding found it difficult to understand the broader issues within their river catchment. 22% said that local communities at risk of flooding did not understand the broader issues within their river catchment. The largest response by respondents was other (37%). These included:

- “Again, it is a mixed response. Some understand fully, to the point of providing informative reports on the catchment and flood events, others concentrate on a small area that they deem to be the root cause e.g. a narrow culvert in the village.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)
- “I don’t know, but suspect they don’t understand the increased flood risk caused by agriculture field drainage, dredging, soil compaction from sheep grazing, silt run off blocking drains etc.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)
- “I think a lot of them understand to some extent but at the end of the day it comes down to whether it will affect them directly and if anything is being done about it. It

is still very much a local issue and the catchment scale aspect is often missing.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

- “They understand some of the issues. Some are starting to work at wider catchment level as well. Not many understand the technical issues involved but usually take this on board once talked through.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)
- “Within a flooded community you will have all levels of understanding. It depends on individuals’ interest & education. The issue of a broader understanding is often difficult too.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)
- “Very little community involvement in CaBA Groups - they tend to be made up of agencies and NGO's and other representatives. They very rarely, if ever have a community representative.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

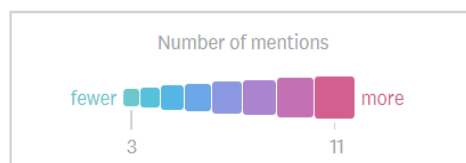


Fig.11: word cloud displaying the key words mentioned by respondents when answering **question 11 of the CaBA survey**; ‘What benefits, if any, do you see to closer collaboration between CaBA and Local Flood Action Groups?’

The key words stated by respondents when answering question 11 of the CaBA survey (Fig.11 above) were highlighted in a word cloud.

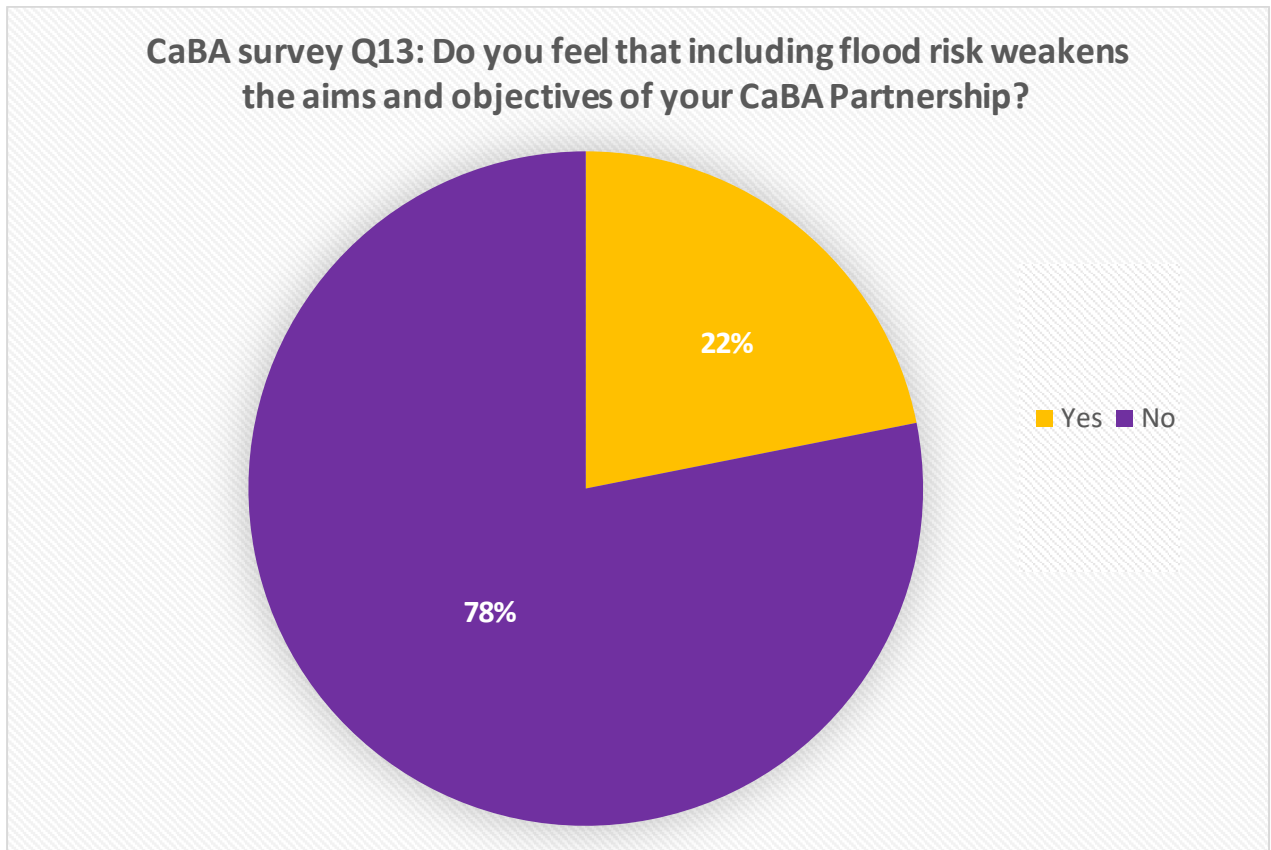


Fig.12: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q13**.

Question 13 from the CaBA survey (Fig.12 above) asked if CaBA partnerships felt including flood risk weakened the aims and objectives of their CaBA Partnership. 78% of respondents said No, it would not weaken the aims and objectives of their CaBA Partnership.

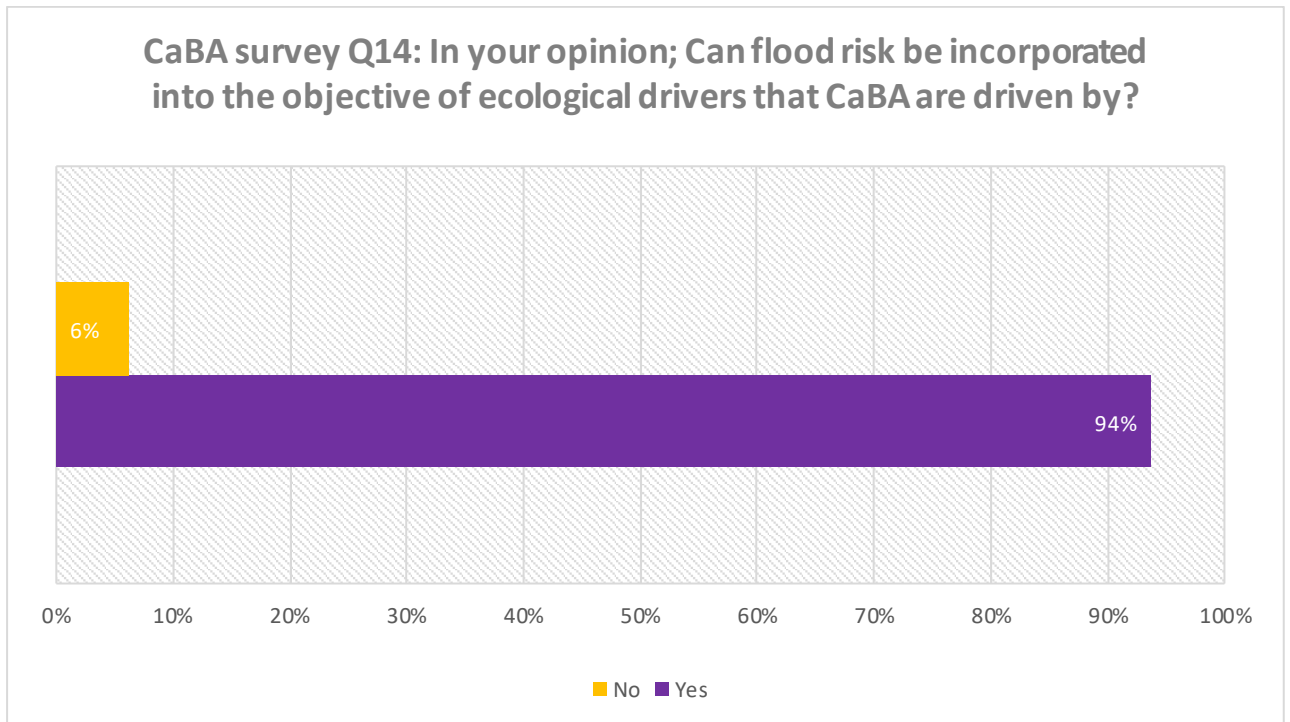


Fig.13: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q14**.

CaBA survey question 14 asked respondents if flood risk could be incorporated into the objective of ecological drivers that CaBA are driven by? 94% of respondents said it could (Fig.13 above).

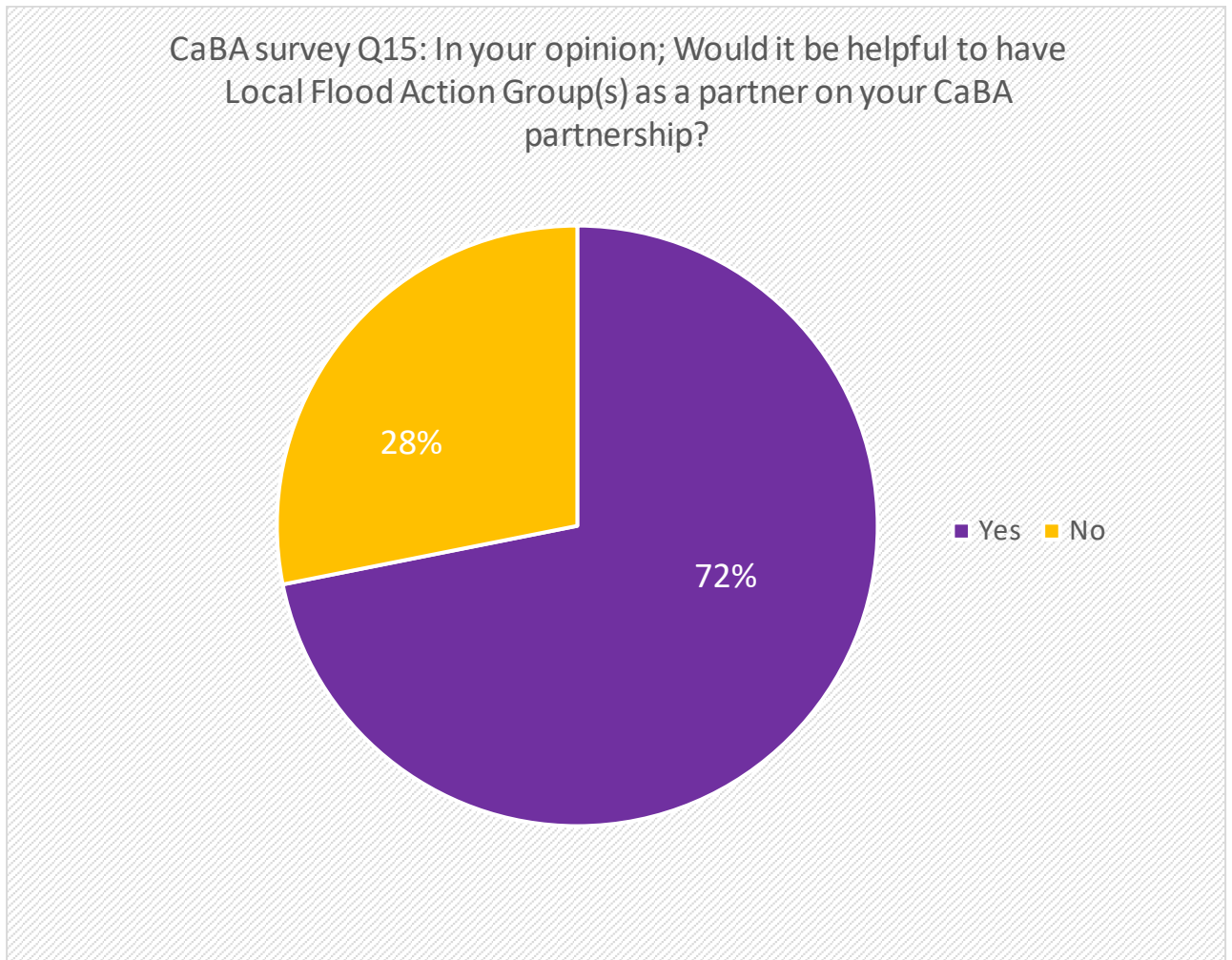


Fig.14: Chart displaying response from **CaBA survey Q15**.

Question 15 from the CaBA survey (Fig.14 above) asked if it would be helpful to have Local Flood Action Group(s) as a partner on their CaBA partnership. 72% of respondents answered yes it would. 28% of respondents answered no it would not.

4.2 Flood Action Group Survey Findings

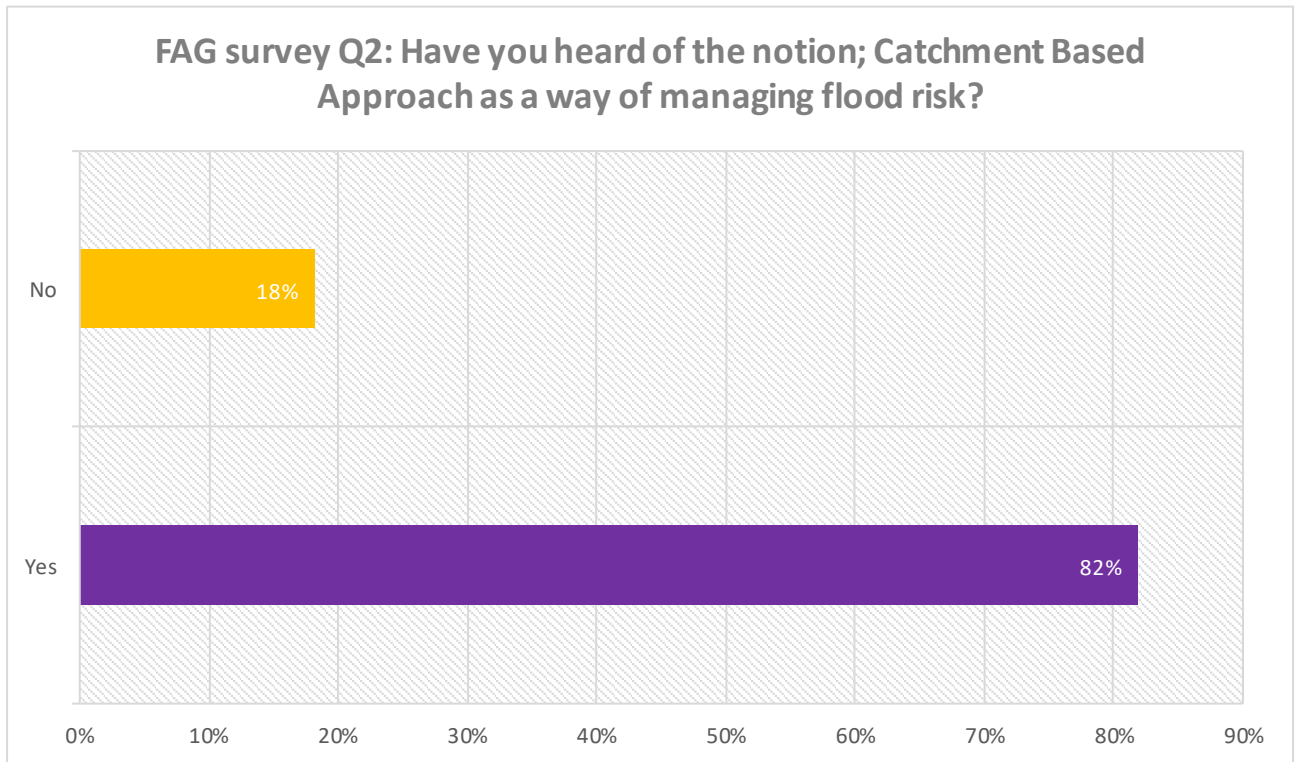


Fig.15: Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q2**.

82% of FAG respondents said they had heard of this notion (Fig.15 above).

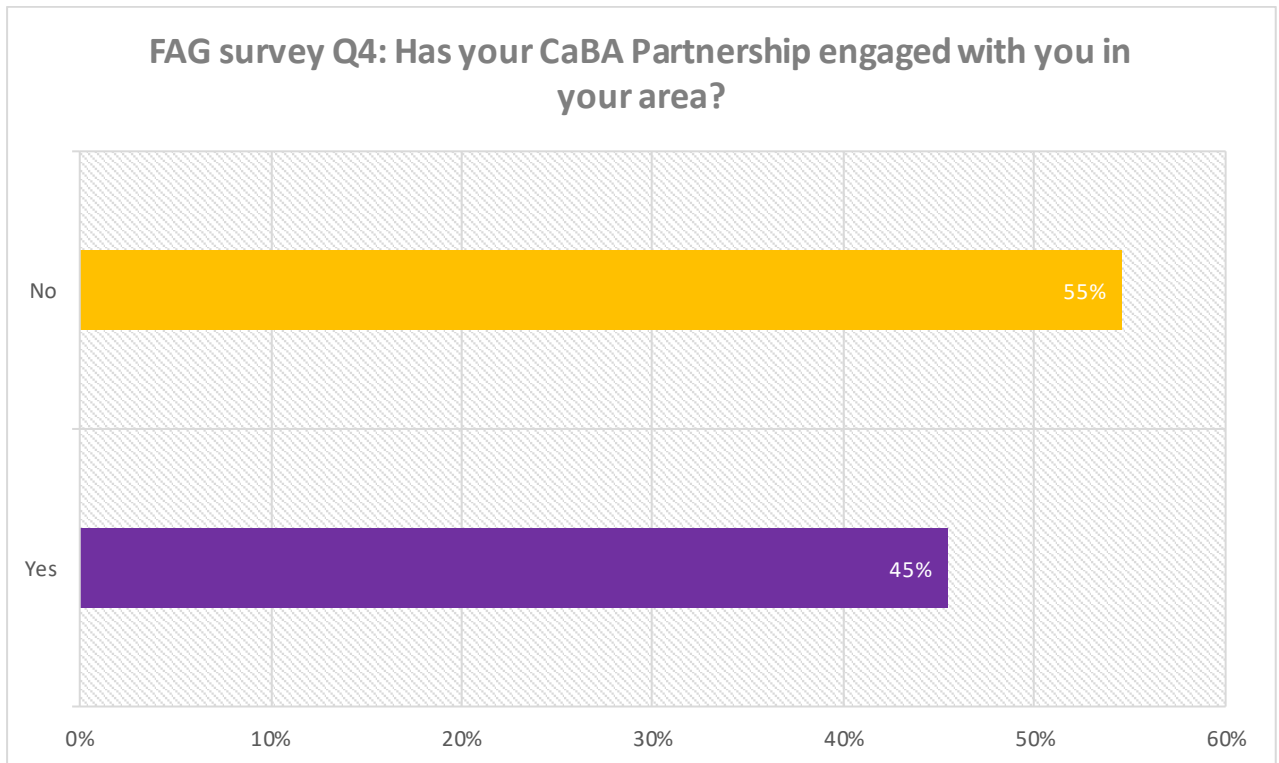


Fig16. Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q4**.

FAGs were asked if their CaBA partnership has engaged with them in their area (Fig.16 above). 55% of respondents said their CaBA partnership had not engaged with them.

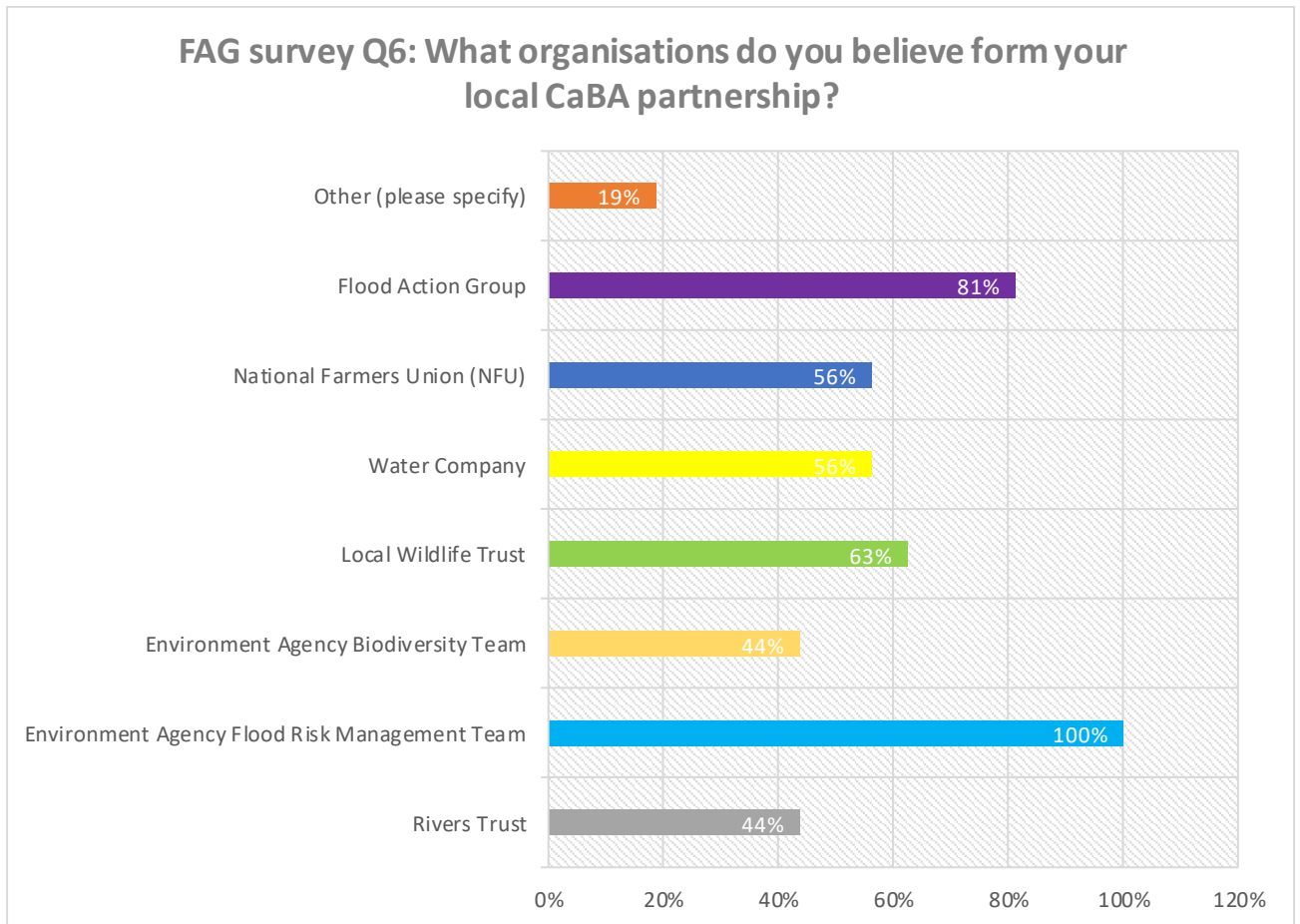


Fig.17: Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q6**.

FAGs were asked What organisations did they believed formed their local CaBA partnership (Fig.17 above)? 100% of respondents thought the EA flood risk management were part of their local CaBA partnership. 81% of respondents believed that FAGs were also part of their local CaBA partnership.

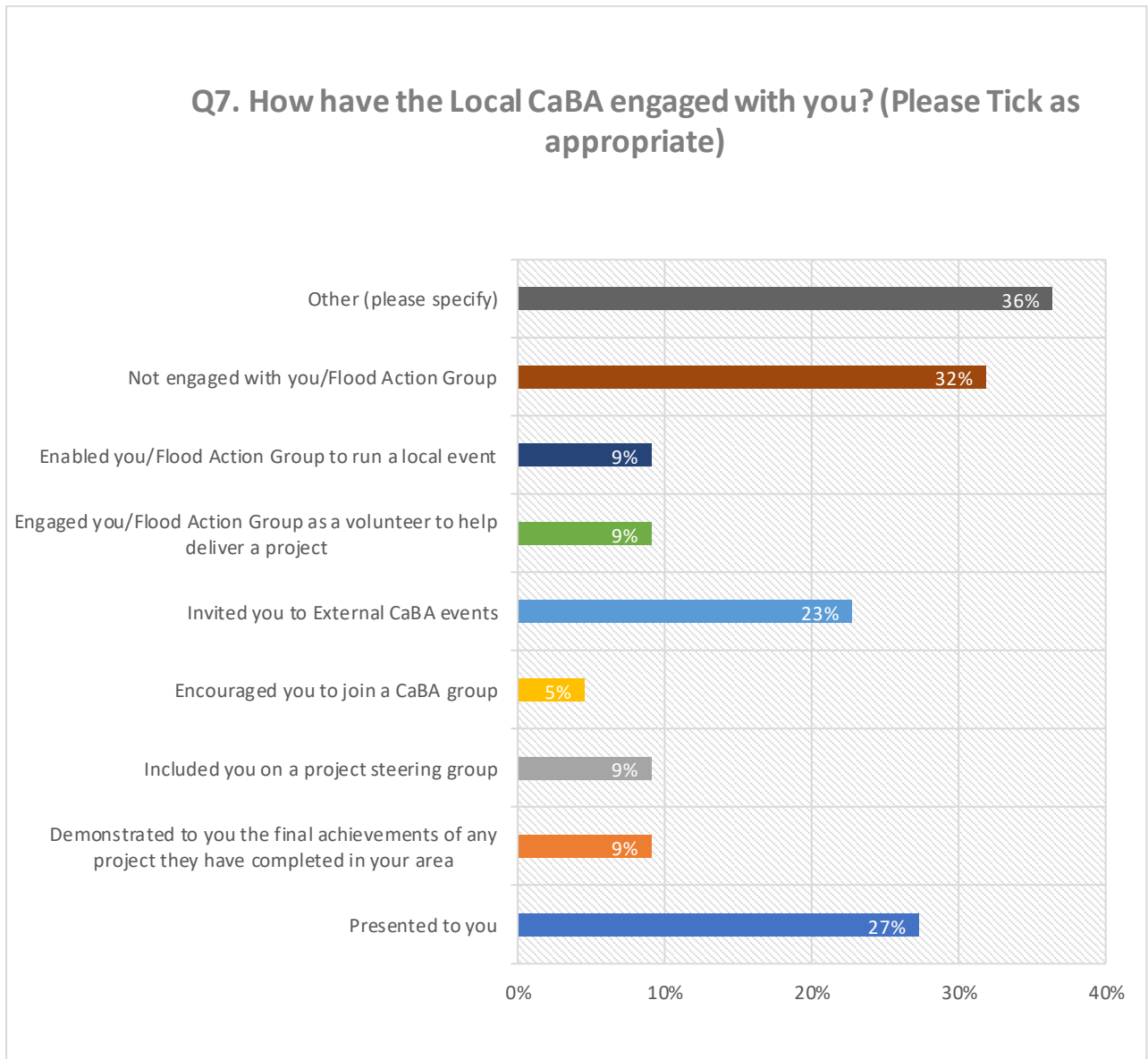


Fig.18: Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q7**.

FAGs were questioned on how their local CaBA partnership had engaged with them. 32% said their CaBA had not engaged with them/their FAG (Fig.18 above). 23% of respondents said they had been invited to external CaBA events and 22.27% of respondents said their local CaBA partnership had presented to them. The largest response by respondents was other (37%). These included:

- Various agencies attended Flood Action Group MAMs.
- Working on specific projects arising from Flood Action Group MAMs.

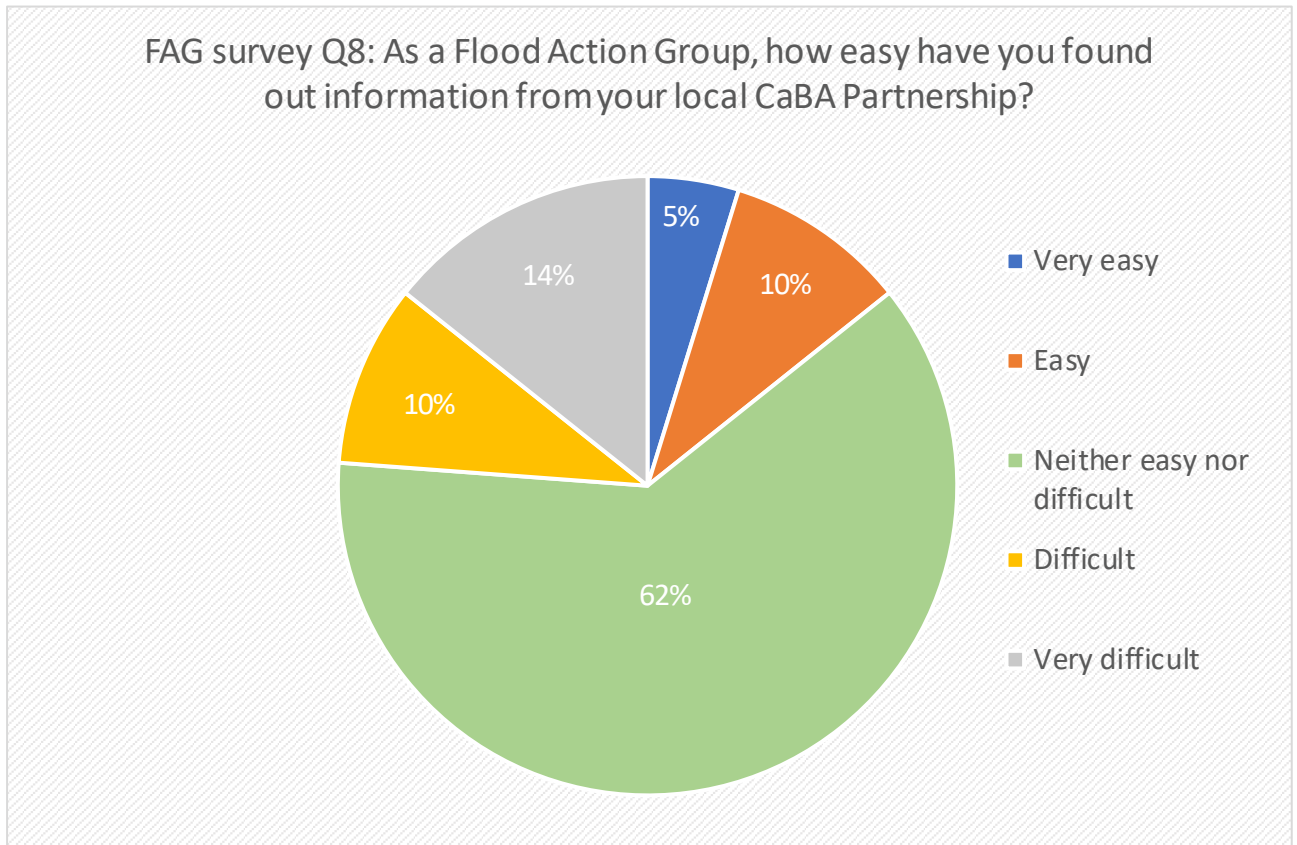


Fig.19: Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q8**.

Flood Action Groups were asked how easy they found it to get information about their local CaBA partnership; 14. % found it very difficult whilst 5% found it very easy. Most responses stated that it was neither easy or difficult.

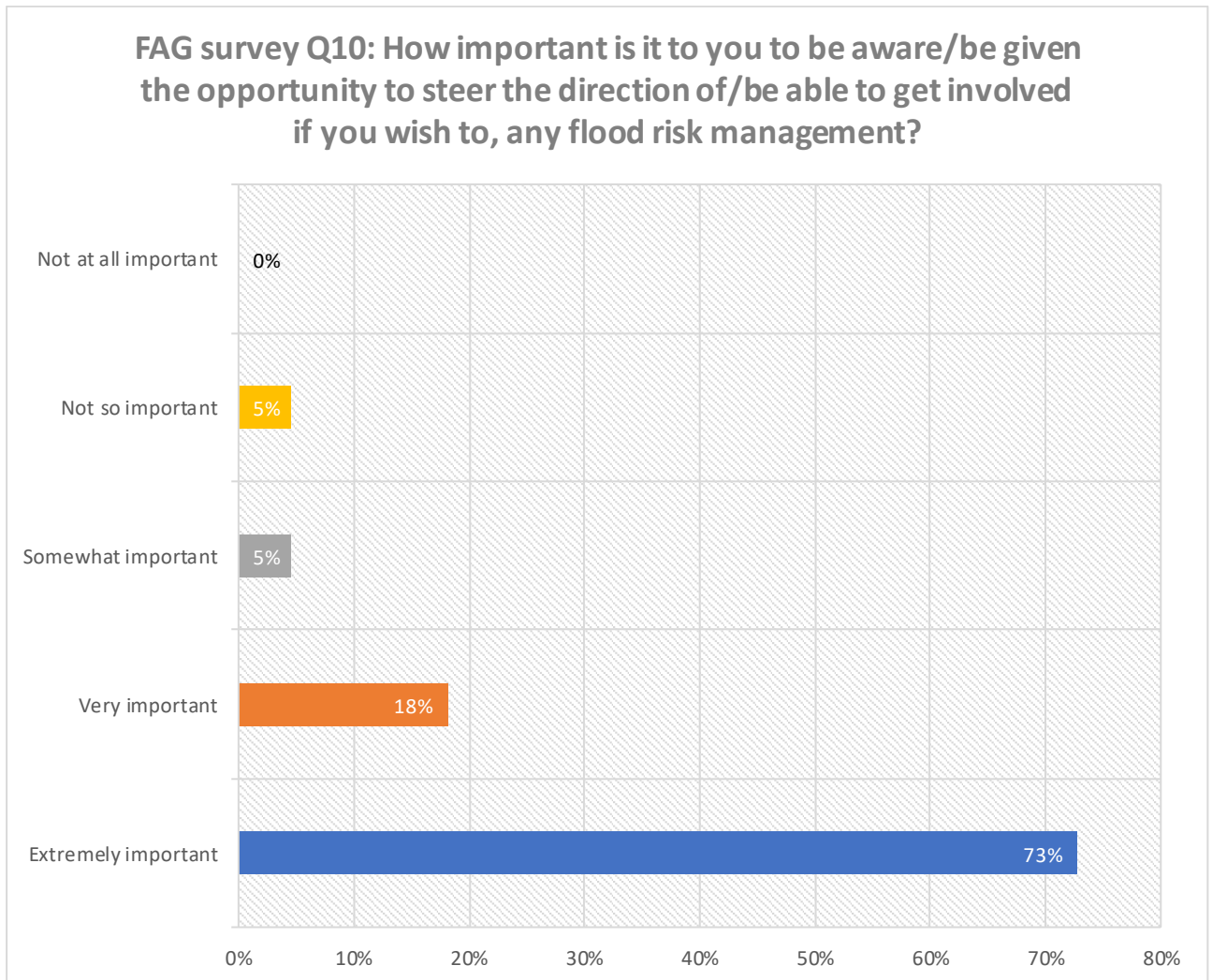


Fig.20: Chart displaying response from **Flood Action Group survey Q10**.

73% of FAG survey respondents said it was extremely important that they were aware/be given the opportunity to steer the direction of/be able to get involved if they wished to. 5% said it was not so important and 0% said not at all important (Fig.20 above).

5. Analysis of findings

A key theme of the results of both the FAG survey and the CaBA partnership survey was a willingness from both FAGs and CaBA partnerships to engage with each other and form stronger links (Fig.20, pg.28 and Fig.13, pg.21). FAGs were keen to understand more of what their local CaBA partnership did within their area. The FAGs contacted to take part in this survey consisted of 100% community led FAGs who had all been working with the NFF at some stage of their formation. CaBA survey respondents listed FAGs they had engaged with as being constituted from other sources such as parish/town councils (Fig.7, pg.13) and indicated they had used a host of methods to engage with flooded communities in their area (Fig.8, pg.14). Respondents from the FAG survey suggested that the least embraced option was to invite them on to join a CaBA partnership (Fig.18, pg.26). Delivering presentations and hosting events seemed to be the main type of engagement used by CaBA partners to engage with communities/FAGs.

Respondents from the CaBA survey indicated that they would find it helpful to incorporate FAGs into their CaBA partnership (Fig.14, pg.22). This involvement of FAGs needed some clarification as respondents from the CaBA survey indicated that while understanding of the wider catchment by FAGs was developing, they were still unsure as to how much FAGs understood the broader issues within their river catchment (Fig.10, pg.18).

When asking the FAGs how understanding can be improved between themselves and CaBA the key points that were discussed highlighted the need for closer partnership working between CaBA partnerships and FAGs, greater awareness of flooded communities and having CaBA representatives also attend FAG MAMs (Appendix.5, pg.46).

Respondents from the CaBA survey suggested that the key barriers to better engagement between FAGs and CaBA partnerships revolved around the perceived 'narrow' focus of FAGs and their lack of a wider understanding of the catchment as a whole (Appendix.2, pg.43). Respondents from the FAG survey felt that far from having a 'narrow' focus, their voice became diluted amongst a plethora of different groups with varying agendas (Appendix.3, pg.44). Sixty-six percent of CaBA survey respondents said they had engaged with a FAG (Fig.15, pg.23). The FAG survey respondents had a more equal response rate between engagement and no engagement (Fig.16, pg.24). This slight disparity may have been down to

the type of FAG that CaBA survey respondents had engaged with (Fig.7, pg.13). Another anomaly that occurred in the FAG survey was when asked who they thought formed their CaBA partnership, 100% of respondents believed that the EA **flood risk management team** sat on their CaBA (Fig.17, pg.25). This result may have been due to the fact the FAG respondents confused the CaBA partners with the partners who regularly attend their FAG MAMs.

6. Discussion

6.1 The value of engagement

The aim of this project was to understand what potential barriers stopped good engagement between CaBA and FAGs and what possible enablers there were to encourage and support successful collaboration of FAGs with CaBA partnerships. Throughout this project, the main theme that transpired was what type of engagement CaBA and FAGs desired between each another. The views from both CaBA and FAG surveys showed there had been an inherent history of under engagement between each party, be it collaboration on schemes or any other interventions/projects. These feelings appeared to stem from barriers such as project funding limitations, time restraints on delivery date, available funding to specifically focus on engagement, or a total lack of consideration of engagement such as in WEG funding. Responses from the FAG survey highlight that engagement between FAGs and CaBA is apparent, but the sentiment is that the main necessity of engagement is to progress the project (i.e. farmers for NFM projects) rather than one of co-creation. There is a perception that engagement is something that can be thought about later, tagged on somewhere and in a top down format of presenting to the community (Fig.8, pg.14) what has already been decided and worked upon, or when the time comes for the need of volunteers.

One FAG survey response to the question of their experience of being informed as to how a local CaBA project is progressing was:

"It does tend to take on a life of its own, so we are not always aware of what is happening unless input and help is needed for information or contacts for landowners." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

Meaningful engagement gives time to research; individual conversations and understanding of community concerns. It also needs thought as to how the project can bring about understanding, learning, trust, and a feeling for those affected by flooding that they have some sort of control over their flood risk. This would help to calm thoughts of flooding again when it rains and the constant anxiety this brings.

The rewards this type of engagement brings to a project adds value through local knowledge, introductions to community members, volunteering, monitoring and evaluation, hospitality, flood affected health and wellbeing, sustainability, civic pride, and promotion for the project. CaBA survey respondents suggested that time and resources to achieve the above would always play a limiting factor.

"CaBA has limited resources and groups are at different stages of maturity. Some CaBA groups do not have the capacity to work with Flood Groups. If there is a desire for CABA to become more active, then the level of funding needs to be increased." (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

The perception from FAG survey respondents was that at the inception of a project, CaBA partnerships' primary aim was to focus engagement on the farming fraternity. This perception could lead to a break in the cohesion of a community i.e. Within that community rumours could become rife; suspicion created, and a malaise occur that may produce withdrawal and an unwillingness to collaborate. Farmers mix with their wider community in many ways every day and a discussion held by them to another member of the community that is not a farmer or involved in the project can bring interest from the community or FAG, but this could in turn also bring detachment from involvement by the rest of the community/FAGs because they feel that they haven't been included or needed at the same time (inception) as the farmers. (Appendix.6, pg.47).

Lack of quality engagement leads to misconceptions of FAGs and their purpose in being part of the CaBA partnership. One CaBA survey response to the question of their experience of the barriers to engaging with their local FAG was:

“... Lack of recent action and good governance by EA and government has given a free hand to FAGs to come up with non-science and rumour as fact. It needs grappling with and action (for me that means river restoration at scale and other NFM treatments first) to happen.” (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

The key to good partnership working requires a deeper level of understanding of one another. This can only come to maturity when all parties work jointly in meetings that discuss their interconnected objectives.

Quality community engagement is needed to bring about an understanding and managing of FAGs expectations of specific projects (such as NFM). One survey respondent highlighted why the need for wider understanding is vital when discussing solutions with people and communities affected by flooding (Appendix.6, pg.47).

Helping communities understand specific NFM projects is just a part of the bigger picture of many interventions that need to be introduced to help provide a broader understanding of tackling flood risk.

The types of engagement shown in response to the CaBA and FAG surveys reveal that both parties feel engagement tends to be interpreted to fulfil the objectives set by the funder/project. Apart from the need to engage with key stakeholders, the favoured approach tends to be one of informing the wider community of what has been achieved and/or providing educational workshops and/or asking for volunteers to help implement the project outcomes (Fig.18, pg.26 & Fig.8, pg.14). These approaches are admirable and have a place, but for communities to embed, promote, and grow to be custodians as well as feel assured of their flood risk, there is strong evidence that the project benefits from them as co-creators. However, there is also evidence that all parties benefit.

“Through the social relationships established in the co-creation process, consumers engage easily in dialogue with others in each stage of the product design or delivery process (Payne et al., 2008), which induces consumer learning. This dialogue during the co-creation process encourages shared emotions, behaviours, and knowledge (Payne et al., 2008), resulting in

interactive processes of learning (Ballantyne, 2004).” (Martínez-Cañas, Ruiz-Palomino, Linuesa-Langreo & Blázquez-Resino, 2016)

The survey results highlighted that both CaBA and FAGs need to come together and form relationships that establish clear expectations of how their partnership working will develop.

“Understanding of the extent of effectiveness of NFM is vitally important to manage expectations and emphasise to these communities, that NFM is not necessarily, by itself, going to provide adequate protection against large storm events.” (DEFRA/Report FD2713/The Enablers and Barriers to the Delivery of Natural Flood Management Projects April 2020)

6.2 Understanding of roles and leadership

Confusion within FAGs when discussing CaBA partnerships (Appendix.3, pg.45) was shown in areas such as:

- CaBA’s existence
- The make-up of CaBA members
- How/if they work collaboratively
- What is it CaBA do?
- CaBA relevance to surface water flooding
- Is all the work CaBA do project based?
- Preconception that a CaBA partnership tips the scales to themes such as biodiversity and water quality and that CaBA partnerships will have difficulty understanding the impact flooding has on lives and the mental trauma this brings.

The importance of working collaboratively with all partners and promoting this, seems to be paramount in helping FAGs to understand CaBA’s objectives and the positives of a FAGs

involvement. FAGs suggested that within a CaBA group there tends to be a lead from one of the partners that is more visible on the ground than those that have other roles within the project (Fig.17, pg.25). This lack of promotion of other project partners leads communities to make assumptions, that the organisation they see is the sole initiator. Collective promotion of all partners would help to show a united CaBA partnership working collectively.

Said by a FAG member of a collaborative project:

“Most of the actual physical work carried out in our catchment was designed, funded and executed by the Wildlife Trust.” (anon FAG Member, 2019)

Said by another FAG of a collaborative project:

“The connection between us appears to be project based. If the projects stall for one reason or another we go off the radar and the CaBA team move onto more productive areas. I may be misunderstanding our situation, but this is my perception.” (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

The FAG survey revealed that many FAGs assumed that the flood partnership they formed and were already working with (FRM teams) was a CaBA partnership. What CaBA partners can achieve to help support a reduction in flood risk alongside biodiversity and water quality can be seen in Gloucestershire, Yorkshire, Shropshire, and many other initiatives around the country in many different forms. Yet the FAG survey responses showed that there are FAGs that dismiss working in partnership with CaBA due to the perception that CaBA is just rural delivery – which is of no help to their situation, around surface water flooding. The value of creating stronger engagement between CaBA and FAGs could help information circulation over urban solutions within the CaBA partnerships (i.e. wetland creation and other SuDS projects in urban areas). The opinion of FAG survey respondents below highlights the need to promote better information between both parties.

“This approach isn’t relevant to us” (anon FAG survey respondent in urban area, 2020)

“I’d like to know how a catchment-based approach could be considered for us.” (anon FAG survey respondent in urban area, 2020)

“...Need to understand how their actions will impact on flood risk and flooding.” (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

Promotion of understanding of wider CaBA projects could bring about broader thinking to FAGs. One of the biggest anxieties for FAGs is the interim period of immediate flood risk. FAGs shown to have a full understanding of the long-term benefits of projects are most happy to embrace it, but where flooding is more prevalent and people are suffering repeatedly, apprehension prevails when they see this is the only action being taken. The FAG survey illustrates (Appendix.6, pg.47) the friction this can cause and questions not only the approach to the community, but also the promotion of what else is being attained alongside the intended project. FAGs need to see CaBA as part of a more holistic picture that includes other forms of interventions, i.e. hard defences, SuDS, housing development, property resilience and climate change adaptation.

Confusion for CaBA partnerships (Appendix 2, pg.43) is shown in areas such as:

- The make-up of a community and its interaction with each other
- What constitutes good engagement
- What a FAG does and how it communicates
- The understanding of the integration of a project within the wider community (as against a standalone project)

Communicating with any 'group' in the community is an easy route to form relationships, although this may not be the right approach when we are wanting to engage with FAGs and flooded communities specifically. FAGs need to understand and obtain information on what CaBA is and what it does. This will help towards a deeper understanding of what partnership work between themselves and CaBA can achieve. The benefits to both parties when funding is applied for a project in a flood risk area could be very beneficial. FAGs are non-political grass root volunteers, affected by flooding and working in partnership with flood risk management teams from all agencies and authorities collectively. They are often the catalysts in bringing other community partners closer together in enhanced coordination by way of a more meticulous focus. Through a more integrated partnership with CaBA, FAGs will be able to look at the benefits from the catchment as a whole and be given the ability to expand their knowledge through CaBA experts. FAGs are working on behalf of their wider community, communicating, and seeking opinion on a regular basis. This will often be businesses (including farming), riparian owners, other community groups in the area and Parish/Town Councils. Responses from the CaBA surveys show that FAGs need to change their focus from a doorstep level to encompass the wider picture when thinking about their flood risk. Understanding the make-up and agenda of a CaBA could help to create more effective partnerships that have a substantial impact on proposed catchment projects within their area. The combined FAG/CaBA partnership could help to create investment which brings the multiple benefits already described by both parties in this report.

“Yes. Community engagement is key to successful projects and relationships within the communities you are trying to help. Often knowledge of an area and how water behaves recorded at agency level is not necessarily accurate and only those living in the locality can reflect a true picture. You also need to foster good relationships with that community to gain cooperation of landowners and it is therefore essential to be aware of potential pitfalls and difficulties which might arise/have arisen in the past. It is people you are helping at the end of the day and therefore they need to be engaged with and feel part of the solution.” (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

6.3 Connecting differences

Overall, we can see there is much positivity around the of inclusion of FAGs within a CaBA (Appendix 1, Pg.43). Apprehension, however, is also seen in the survey (Appendix 2, pg.44) in relation to the possible dilution of an NGO's objectives.

"There is already confusion about floods, flooding & responsibilities regarding flood risk management. CaBA is a voluntary group/loose affiliation between organisations there is a danger that CaBA could be used as a lobbyist and risk the partnership with those Flood Risk Management Authorities." (anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)

So, what would be the expectation from CaBA partners of the role FAGs will play? Would it be one of observer or co-creator?

*('What is your experience of being informed as to how a local CaBA project is progressing?')
FAG - "In a condescending way." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)*

FAGs can fear that the focus on biodiversity and water quality issues is at the expense of managing flood risk effectively and therefore puts lives and wellbeing at risk. The survey shows that there needs to be a balance between perceptions of what FAGs think CaBA aims are (biodiversity, water quality, river management) and the reality of what CaBA partnerships want to achieve. This balance will clear FAGs preconception that CaBA focuses solely on biodiversity and water quality and that CaBA has difficulty understanding the impact flooding has on lives and the mental trauma this brings. One benefit of FAGs working with CaBA partnerships is that the latter can be smart in terms of securing funding as they have learnt that it is the other benefits that can often tip the cost-benefit of the work favourably. Working together with CaBA means that FAGs can understand in-depth that flood risk is still the primary driver of CaBA projects – and working in partnership allows more input into how the funding is shaped and used.

“The local knowledge which flood groups can give and boots on the ground will be more effective than communities relying on other agencies trying to sort out flood issues and the community’s priorities for them. The communities live and breathe their problems revolving around flooding and the devastation not just in materialistic terms (insurance cover) but more importantly mental stress and health. A major tool for all multi agencies is to learn, develop and talk to the communities” (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

7. Conclusion

The results from this report have shown the need for much closer collaboration between CaBA and FAGs that generally occurs at the moment. The results indicate that both parties perceive they would benefit from better partnership working and creating stronger links within each other’s groups. The survey results highlighted that the majority of CaBA were happy to embrace FAGs as part of their partnership and to drive closer collaboration. This collaboration and partnership building did have caveats and concerns (Appendix 1, pg.42) from CaBA partners such as; the direction FAGs will want to take the partnership, the scope of a FAGs vision for catchment wide working, and how well they understand the wider concepts of the catchment based approach outside their flood risk. These concerns could be addressed with closer working and communication between CaBA and FAGs by CaBA developing their engagement practices outside of the ‘norms’ of presenting and displaying projects. This can be achieved by co-creating projects with FAGs from inception. This may encourage FAG interest in joining their local CaBA. The report highlights the need for each party to understand what their individual roles and responsibilities are in relation to each other. The results indicate that CaBA and FAGs have misconceptions of how each other work. FAGs need a deeper understanding of CaBA’s primary drivers, one of which is flood risk and how to reduce the impacts of flooding through catchment management.

The research also suggests that FAGs feel strongly that they should be involved in anything related to flood risk within their local CaBA partnership. The knowledge, expertise, and passion that FAGs have when looking to reduce their flood risk expands to the whole of the catchment, not just their specific area. Having worked in partnership with various flood risk management authorities, FAGs state they understand the need to look at the whole picture

and not just the minutiae. The key concept that FAGs want CaBA partnerships to understand, is what it is like to flood, and the devastating mental and physical impact it has on their life. FAGs do not just want to be informed of the next steps, they want to be included in the shaping and direction of current and future flood risk projects. This reaction demonstrates the key aim of this report that FAGs can play an equal role within the CaBA partnership. CaBA can also form a key role in a FAGs objective to reduce flood risk and create lasting partnership

8. Recommendations

The recommendations below are split into three themes that we believe will strengthen the link between CaBA and FAGs. Information exchange and engagement are paramount to ensuring the success for future collaborative working.

8.1 Information

Table 2 below shows recommendations for a Suite of short information leaflets that could be published.

Leaflet	Suite of brief information leaflets	Content
1.	Who is who and roles of both parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. What is a CaBA partnership? II. What are their objectives? III. What is a FAG? IV. What is the purpose of one?
2.	How FAGs & CaBA can work together?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Understanding each other's objectives II. Understanding the benefits – to both parties - of collaboration III. Aiding both parties' objectives in a project. IV. Enabling funding.
3.	Best practice engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Engaging FAGs. II. Encouraging FAG's

Table 2: showing recommendations for the suite of short information leaflets to be produced.

Further information and communication products to consider producing

- Live interactive mapping of CaBA projects and FAG partnerships for ease and help with the identification of flood hit areas, working FAG partnerships and how to contact each party.
- Shared information platforms in selected locations to drive collaboration and capture and share key data

8.2 Engagement

- CaBA could seek out flooded people/FAGs as first steps to engagement to encourage FAG involvement to a CaBA project.
- Invite FAG as a partner organization to CaBA meetings to experience how CaBA works and to encourage co-creation
- Hold engagement meetings in the evenings to facilitate working people.
- Ensure FAGs are partners in the co-creation of a project.
- CaBA advised to embrace an understanding of the issues FAGs face and the range of interventions being sought.
- CaBA partnerships should be encouraged to support FAGs to progress their action plans.
- Road show to promote CaBA collaboration and the benefits this would have for FAGs in flooded communities.
- Webinar events to discuss engagement best practices.
- Webinar events to describe what a CaBA is with FAGs.
- CaBA best practice can be seen in Shropshire where 5 FAGs are working in collaboration and are also part of a catchment group along with CaBA partners, farmers, and businesses. A national event in Shropshire for CaBA gives a showcase of working with FAGs and an opportunity for further development
- It is essential that early and effective engagement takes place with FAGs where water management is a component of the project. Funding for this ideally should be

mandatory and be built into all grant making schemes, linked to core output indicators.

8.3 General

- Mapping of projects and FAGs to support better engagement
- Encourage sharing and integrating of different objectives and outcomes to permit one focus and unite the needs of all involved.
- Vigorously promote verbally to grassroots all partners involved in a project, to circumvent confusion and demonstrate united partnerships.
- Research into specific CaBA partnership projects which could include FAGs?

9. Reference List

Department for Food and Rural Affairs, Report FD2713, 2020. *The Enablers and Barriers to The Delivery of Natural Flood Management Projects.*

Martínez-Cañas, R., Ruiz-Palomino, P., Linuesa-Langreo, J., & Blázquez-Resino, J. (2016). Consumer Participation in Co-creation: An Enlightening Model of Causes and Effects Based on Ethical Values and Transcendent Motives. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2016.00793

Appendices

Appendix 1. Question 10 CaBA Survey: How helpful would it be for people who have flooded to understand the broader issues in the catchment? And why would this help them and their situation?

	<p>"I think this is a no-brainer. In the flood action groups we have some useful exchanges in relation to wider issues and actions, many of which involve or are, indeed, initiated by local groups of volunteers." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"It would be helpful, it could build understanding of the variety of work already undertaken in catchments. But, is caba the appropriate forum? The focus of the conversation is primarily project focused." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
In relation to question 9; How helpful would it be for people who have flooded to understand the broader issues in the catchment? And why would this help them and their situation?	<p>"It is always helpful to have a wide understanding of issues, but maybe not at the forefront of peoples' minds when they have suffered as a result of flooding and want immediate action to address the problem. It would be most helpful if it helps them to campaign for appropriate action across the catchment and to secure funding to deliver the work needed" <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"It should help to understand the causes though does not immediately help their situation. Being involved in monitoring and planning action is useful and helps to reduce feeling of helplessness- what can we do. They can also then understand that action is needed upstream as first priority, alongside property protection." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"Incredibly. Less time would be spent talking about flood defences and dredging and more time and consideration given to flood plain storage and NFM techniques." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"Very useful - it allows them to understand potential frequency of flooding and empowers them in terms of personal and community mitigation. Also enables them to understand limitations of any flood defence and have realistic understanding of future flood risk." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"It would be helpful as it would help them to understand some of the potential solutions, but also that flooding is a natural process and in some cases there will always be a risk of flooding." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"Very useful especially where flooding occurs from both a range of sources, especially knowing the difference between main river flooding (prolonged rainfall across a large catchment) verses smaller watercourses and pluvial flooding caused by localised rainfall near their home." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>

Appendix 1: chart displaying respondents' answers to question 10 on CaBA Survey.

Appendix 2. Question 12 CaBA Survey: What challenges, if any, do you see in closer collaboration between CaBA and Local Flood Action Groups?

What challenges, if any, do you see in closer collaboration between CaBA and Local Flood Action Groups?	<p>"CaBA has limited resources and groups are at different stages of maturity. Some CaBA groups don't have the capacity to work with Flood Groups. If there is a desire for CaBA to become more active then the level of funding needs to be increased." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"More talking and going around in circles unless funding, and knowledge exchange is improved." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"As in 11. Lack of recent action and good governance by EA and government has give a free hand to FAGs to come up with non science and rumour as fact. It needs grappling with and action (for me that means river restoration at scale and other NFM treatments first) to happen." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"CaBA would become more watered down and lose focus." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"FAG's need to understand the time it takes to identify a project and then secure funding. Many expect immediate action." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"Can be quite one dimension in what they want i.e just flood protection with little interest in nature of wildlife. If not done correctly could end up with a pressure group against the projects." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"There is already confusion about floods, flooding & responsibilities regarding flood risk management. CaBA is a voluntary group / loose affiliation between organisations there is a danger that CaBA could be used as a lobbyists and risk the partnership with those Flood Risk Management Authorities." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>
	<p>"CaBA groups need broad focus to encompass all issues. Flood Groups may be more narrow in their focus? Would need to try and keep the bigger picture in mind. Not all CaBA meetings are flood-oriented, so clear messaging prior to events is a good idea." <i>(anon CaBA survey respondent, 2020)</i></p>

Appendix 2: chart displaying selected respondents' answers to **question 12 on CaBA Survey**.

Appendix 3. Question 5 FAG Survey: If Yes to question 4, What members make up your CaBA Partnership?

If Yes to question 4, what members make up your CaBA Partnership?

"REDACTED, REDACTED, REDACTED Council, EA, REDACTED & REDACTED Town Council." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

"I am unsure but REDACTED Wildlife Trust, REDACTED County Council, REDACTED, EA have all been involved with our schemes. Apologies to those I've missed." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

"Not a formal CaBA but MAM involves REDACTED County Council / Environment Agency / REDACTED Water / REDACTED / REDACTED" (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

"We do have multi-agency meetings but they're not referred to as CaBA partnerships, this is a new phrase to me." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

"We have only recently been approached by NFF. The next proposed meeting has been delayed by the coronavirus problem. Once this takes place, we will know more but in principle we support the project." (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

.....What is needed is upstream storage and this could and should be provided by REDACTED, a reservoir owned and managed by REDACTED Management of its water levels for flood prevention would also benefit communities further downstream. Whilst NFM schemes might just eventually provide a minute amount of additional protection but no more than that - virtually useless in the short to medium term. As it turns out the partnership REDACTED Group is dominated by a range of groups with their own self interests. The voices of actual flood victims within communities are lost within the system. They have to compete with various groups pushing their own agendas. (anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)

Appendix 3: chart displaying selected respondents' answers to **question 5 on FAG Survey**.

Appendix 4. Question 9 FAG Survey: What is your experience of being informed as to how a local CaBA project is progressing?

What is your experience of being informed as to how a local CaBA project is progressing?	"I only know of CaBA through meeting and discussing flood Resistance at meetings." <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>
	"Not sure." <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>
	"Sadly non-existent." <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>
	"Little or no information" <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>
	"In a condescending way." <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>
	"It does tend to take on a life of its own, so we are not always aware of what is happening unless input and help is needed for information or contacts for landowners." <i>(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)</i>

Appendix 4: chart displaying selected respondents' answers to **question 9 on FAG Survey**.

Appendix 5. Question 11 FAG survey: What can be done to improve understanding between Flood Action Groups and CaBA Partnerships?



Appendix 5: chart displaying responses from Flood Action Groups to **question 11 on FAG survey**.

Appendix 6. Question 3 FAG survey: please can you explain how a catchment-based approach works/may work in your area?

Please can you explain how a catchment-based approach works/may work in your area?

"We have benefitted from Slow the Flow work undertaken by members of the REDACTED and Flood and Water Management from REDACTED. The result has been the installation of some leaky dams following flood risk assessments involving local land owners." *(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)*

"REDACTED have appointed a Project Manager with EA support, funded by DEFRA, for a 3 year term, technically expires Feb 2021. Working with farmers, predominately 1 so far to build woody debris dams. There is lots more work to do as relationships with other farmers are really only just being developed. The project needs extending." *(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)*

"It SHOULD look at the flooding aspects from source to sea. In our case the REDACTED Catchment area is a self contained river system with major flooding issues and as such is a good area for study. Members of local communities, who have been flooded, are already well aware of many of the problems and also possible solutions to their flooding issues that have caused so much distress. In the case of REDACTED, it took a second major flooding event to get improvements made to the town's river defences. These were overwhelmed by REDACTED REDACTED. What is needed is upstream storage and this could and should be provided by REDACTED, a reservoir owned and managed by REDACTED. Management of its water levels for flood prevention would also benefit communities further downstream. Whilst NFM schemes might just eventually provide a minute amount of additional protection but no more than that - virtually useless in the short to medium term. As it turns out the partnership REDACTED Group is dominated by a range of groups with their own self interests. The voices of actual flood victims within communities are lost within the system. They have to compete with various groups pushing their own agendas. Support for fish and other wildlife, tree planters (who are keen to plant trees but ignore their subsequent management and also leave the plastic protectors to clutter the landscape and get washed into the river systems). Farmers who understandably want to maximise income from grants regardless of whether they will help reduce flooding. The water company that wants to maximise its water stocks for the benefit of its customers and shareholders even though this could result in avoidable flooding further downstream. The Environment Agency which chooses to permit the water company to allow its reservoir to overflow uncontrollably causing major damage to the environment, property and the lives (physical and mental) of residents downstream. It would prefer to carry out studies on the effect of minor releases from the reservoir on the natural environment below rather than taking on board the damage caused by massive uncontrolled flows." *(anon FAG survey respondent, 2020)*