


Introduction: Institutional Adaptation

A photograph of a flooded field with a wooden gate and a signpost. The gate is made of dark wood with a lattice pattern. To the left of the gate is a signpost with a blue circular sign at the top and a red rectangular sign below it. The water is calm and reflects the sky and the gate. In the background, there is a line of trees under a grey, overcast sky.

**Pennine Water Group,
Universities of Bradford
and Sheffield**



Pennine Hills
~ 780m



Bradford

Sheffield

“City of
Wales”

Cardiff

land

North Sea

Wales

English Channel

Water utilities and climate change

Climate change removes the certainties that underpin traditional planning in water utilities.

PREPARED has developed adaptive approaches to help water utilities prepare for climate change.



Adaptive approaches

- designed for systems that are uncertain, complex and unpredictable;
- work through collective experimentation and learning;
- favour flexibility over the optimisation of short term operational needs.

Include:

- Technical adaptation
- Institutional adaptation

Institutional adaptation

The capacity to respond to unexpected events and trends with imagination, such that opportunities can be embraced as well as challenges addressed.

...but how do we achieve this?

...once we have it, how is it maintained?

Literature on adaptive management shows:

- We need structures & processes – but to make these ‘adaptive’ we need to review;
- ‘Future’ – most think short term;
- Learning needs to involve all stakeholders;
- Genuine debates about values and priorities.

Requirements of institutional adaptation

Learning and review processes must:

- Incorporate and balance the range of preferred priorities;
- Consider a variety of plausible futures;
- Provide a clear route forward to taking action;
- Be fully embedded and recurring over a period of time.

Institutional adaptation

Challenge: How can we support water utilities to become more adaptive?

Method:

1. Investigate what adaptation meant in the utility through 50 interviews;
2. Work collaboratively with utility to develop an 'Adaptation Planning Process' to enable utilities to systematically work in teams to think about the future.

This session

Talks

1. Framing adaptation in a water company (Simon)
2. The Adaptation Planning Process (Liz)
3. Collaborative research: the opportunities and challenges of enabling change (Emma)

Team

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