**Press Release**

**15/04/10**

**Lancaster University launches Cumbria Flood workshops**

A special workshop has been held at Rheged, Penrith, to explore the role that research can play in Cumbria’s recovery from the November 2009 floods.

The event, which took place on March 24, was organised by researchers from Lancaster University, in tandem with colleagues from Cumbria County Council and NHS Cumbria. It was funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council.

The workshop enabled stakeholders involved in the recovery to meet flooded residents and social and physical scientists in order to discuss issues around flood and flood recovery. There were two key purposes to the day: firstly, to enable lessons to be learnt from previous research – particularly those looking at people’s recovery from the 2007 floods (for example, Lancaster University’s study of residents’ experiences after the June 2007 floods in Hull). Secondly, people were encouraged to think about the priorities for future research into flooding, in order to ensure that any research undertaken in Cumbria is coordinated and appropriate to the concerns and challenges currently faced by the community.

During the run-up to the workshop, Lancaster's researchers used funding from the National Institute for Health Research Research Design Service for the North West to organise a series of community events across Cumbria in order to talk to flooded residents and listen to their concerns.

Lancaster University’s Dr Rebecca Whittle, who has been working on the Hull study, said: “Our research in Hull shows just how long and difficult the flood recovery process can be, so we really sympathise with the situation that people are facing in Cumbria.

“Floods are very dramatic events but, for those affected, the flood itself is only the start of the much longer process of getting the community back on track. Those affected by this disaster will continue to live with its effects for a long time after the national news crews have gone, so it’s really important that people in Cumbria are given as much help and support as possible during this difficult time.

“As researchers, we have an important role to play in this process. The floods of 2007 prompted a lot of research into flood and flood recovery and the findings from these studies could be harnessed to help the recovery work that is currently being done in Cumbria. Our workshops are all about joining up researchers with local stakeholders, policy makers and the community in order to give that learning a chance to take place.”

“We also want to bring the research community together with residents and stakeholders so that they can think about the kinds of research that would be helpful in the months and years that follow.”

Professor Jennie Popay, the regional director of the NIHR research design service added:

“The NIHR research design service is funded by the National Institute for Health Research to support researchers in the NHS and the universities to develop high quality proposals to attract income into the region to support research that will help improve the health of the region’s population and increase the quality of health and social care services. Research has an important contribution to make to the flood recovery process in Cumbria in the short term and over the long haul but it is really important that people with local experience are involved in deciding what research is needed. The RDS is pleased to be able to support this process”.

Further meetings are now planned with a view to developing a research agenda for the future, subject to sufficient funding being obtained to carry out this research in Cumbria.

To view presentations from the event visit [www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/AboutCumbria/Floods/November2009.asp](http://www.cumbriaobservatory.org.uk/AboutCumbria/Floods/November2009.asp)

**NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is the UK’s largest organisation for funding research on economic and social issues. It supports independent, high quality research which has an impact on business, the public sector and the third sector. The ESRC’s planned total expenditure in 2009/10 is £204 million.  At any one time the ESRC supports over 4,000 researchers and postgraduate students in academic institutions and independent research institutes. More at [http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk](http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/).
2. The Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) is the UK's main agency for funding and managing world-class research, training and knowledge exchange in the environmental sciences. It coordinates some of the world's most exciting research projects, tackling major issues such as climate change, environmental influences on human health, the genetic make-up of life on earth, and much more.   NERC has a budget of around £400 million a year to fund its research and training programmes. [www.nerc.ac.uk](http://www.nerc.ac.uk/)