

Transcription

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHER BUSINESSES: HOW THIS WEBSITE WAS DEVELOPED

Lindsey McEwen: Welcome to this website for small businesses who want to make their businesses more resilient to flooding and flood risk. Our collaborative design process involved small businesses, university researchers and organisations that help businesses build their resilience to stresses such as floods and other challenges. This all took place between 2013 and 2016.

The design process began with in-depth conversations between the academics in the team and small businesses in flood risk areas in Sheffield, Swindon, Gloucestershire and Tyneside. These produced some of our initial thinking on what the tool should look like. Next came our workshops with small businesses from Tewkesbury and Sheffield (working with business people like Sam, Richard, Antony, and Nick), with local authorities and with organisations such as the National Flood Forum, Federation of Small Businesses and Tewkesbury Borough Council. These discussions were covered a lot of territory including the content of the website, its format, what media should be used to engage businesses, what existing resources were useful and should be signposted, and many similar topics.

It was clear from the workshops that the website should be built on the idea that businesses benefit most from exchanging knowledge and experiences **with each other**. Businesses themselves, therefore, provided most of the content for this site. It therefore contains their reflections, in their own words and voices, on their experiences of direct and indirect flood impacts and what they've learned from them. It also gives businesses the opportunity to speak directly with each other about running a business in a flood risk area.

Amanda Wragg: The website is structured around two options: 'I have been just been flooded' and how to 'Become more flood resilient', to prepare and adapt for floods, on the advice of our partner organisations that work with businesses build their resilience.

While we have drawn together some existing resources that are useful 'during floods'; the main focus of this new resource is on business to business exchange of knowledge and experiences. Seven of the most important aspects of business resilience to flooding were chosen based on what we learned in our conversations with businesses and also on previous research:

- The first part of the site covers the issue of how resilience is affected by relationships with customers and suppliers, and how these relationships can be strengthened by better communication;

- The second part discusses ways of managing the financial impacts of flooding;
- The third reflects on why floods happen and what makes premises more or less vulnerable;
- The fourth looks at ways of reducing a business' vulnerability to damage;
- The fifth considers building emotional strength for resilience;
- The sixth asks how stronger networks can help a business survive a flood;
- And, finally, the seventh part asks how small businesses can reinvent their business processes to make themselves more resilient to floods and other similar external shocks.

This list includes some very diverse approaches to flood resilience.

Lindsey McEwen: So this site is the result of a new collaboration of businesses, regional/national organisations and academia. We have worked **together** to capture and share the stories and opinions of a whole range of people who know about flooding or have experienced floods. We have co-produced these in the form of films, pictures, audio recordings, written stories and interactive activities where you can look at your own decision making processes about flood risk in relation to your own business. This information will also be shared with scientists in the SESAME team so they can check their assumptions about business behaviour.

Of course each person's situation is unique. However, we hope that by sharing these examples you might be encouraged to think about the strengths and vulnerabilities of your own business. You may also decide to make some changes that help your business avoid disruption the next time it floods – or else recover more quickly. Floods will happen, but those in our partnership (businesses and organisations that support them) believe that it is important to be prepared for when they do. We hope this site persuades you likewise and that you come away with some practical ideas on what to do!