



University of the  
West of England

## Health: The Design, Planning and Politics of How and Where We Live

- **Paper / Proposal Title:**

A Proposal for a Community Engagement Framework for Co-Developing Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI) in the Built Environment

- **Format:**

Presentation (in-person): Glyn Everett

- **Author(s) Name:**

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- **University or Company Affiliation:**

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

There has been growing recognition that Blue-Green Infrastructure (BGI: parklands, swales, green roofs, ponds, wetlands, renaturalised rivers, etc.) can help deliver key benefits for public health and well-being, as well as reducing flood-risk in the built environment. Community engagement is critical in getting BGI right for those living around it and nearby. Yet the concept of community engagement differs from person to person and remains a difficult one to fix in place, in theory and in practice. A review

of the literature shows that many guidelines frame communities in “recipient” mode, and are silent about power relations in the engagement process.

This paper challenges the notion of communities as passive ‘recipients’, and advocates for forms of community engagement in which community members are recognised as ‘agents’ of change, with local and relevant knowledge that deserves to be listened to and that projects can benefit from. In this way, it is argued, BGI might be developed with enough local input that community members feel ownership of and investment in the outcomes, leading to greater awareness and appreciation of some multiple benefits (health outcomes, air quality, biodiversity, etc.) and tangible increases in others (leisure and educational opportunities, etc.).

The paper also considers that community engagement can be an arena of competing social orders wherein certain values, interests and discourses may dominate. Therefore, there is argued to be a need to acknowledge and carefully negotiate the place of power dynamics in the engagement process, so as not to end up with a one-sided or biased form of engagement that falsely claims to represent all voices. Based on lessons learnt from a review of the extant literature, a generic community engagement template/framework for co-developing BGI in the built environment project is proposed.

• **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Dr. Olalekan Adekola is a Research Fellow at the University of the West of England, Bristol. His work has been concerned with issues of environmental management, livelihoods and resilience. His research has focused on using interdisciplinary perspectives to understand and solve environmental challenges by feeding findings and outputs of academic research into policy. He has published in the areas of ecosystem services assessments, ecological economics, development studies, water resources management, health risk communication and flood management.

Dr. Glyn Everett is a Research Fellow in the Centre for Floods, Communities & Resilience (CFCR) at the University of the West of England (UWE). Glyn currently works on the EPSRC-funded project *Urban Flood Resilience in an Uncertain Future*, looking at public perceptions of ‘blue-green and grey’ approaches to flood risk management. The

research explores the potential for approaches to be co-constructed alongside the wider concerned public, to encourage awareness, understanding and ownership of proposed solutions with the goals of improving behaviour, willingness to help maintain and engagement with their multiple potential benefits. Glyn has a growing publication track-record in this area.

Dr. Jessica Lamond is Associate Professor in the Centre for Floods, Communities and Resilience at the University of the West of England (UWE). Jessica's research focuses on structural and non-structural responses to flood risk and climate adaptation in urban settings. Her research covers technical, social and economic aspects of adaptation including Blue Green Infrastructure. She was a Co-investigator in recent *Blue Green Cities* project and is currently working on the *Urban Flood Resilience in an Uncertain future* project. Jessica has published widely including leading journals such as *Housing Studies*, *Urban Design and Planning*, and the *Environmental Science and Policy*, and is joint editor for three books in the area of flooding and climate change.