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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Water Detectives: Managing the water where you live.**

A decade on, memories of the 2007 floods in Gloucestershire are still raw, and with climate change predicted to bring more extreme weather events, communities are taking it upon themselves to protect their areas from flooding in the future. To achieve this, local residents, organisations, groups and farmers are working together across Gloucestershire to map water flows and restore the wildlife habitats, ditches and streams that help divert water away from towns and villages.

Community action in Gloucestershire is facilitated and supported by The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and ACRE Network member Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) through [the WILD \(Water and Integrated Local Delivery\) project](#), an initiative which encourages an integrated approach to managing the local water environment. Partners committed to using this [Catchment Based Approach](#), including FWAG, GRCC, ACRE (Action with Communities in Rural England) and others are today launching the **Community Guide to Your Water Environment**. This guide demonstrates a decade of learning after the terrible floods of 2007 and provides detail, advice and case studies about how communities can launch their own natural flood management work.

The Community Guide recognises the role of volunteers, who play a central part in the WILD project activity. It includes a simple to use "5-Step" process which provides a framework for any community wishing to consider this integrated approach to managing water in their local community. At present communities in Gloucestershire are able to access facilitated one-to-one support from FWAG and GRCC, however it is hoped that such services could be made available in other parts of the country if appropriate funding is made available.

The **Community Guide to Your Water Environment** is available to download from the ACRE, GRCC and FWAG websites or hard copies can be accessed through contacting Jenny Phelps MBE - 01666 503668 or [Jenny.Phelps@fwagsw.org.uk](mailto:Jenny.Phelps@fwagsw.org.uk)

**Jenny Phelps MBE, FWAG Senior Farm Conservation Adviser says** "We hope that this Community Guide will enable people to take local action, to become resilient to climate change and help policy makers understand the cost benefit of supporting specialist facilitators to coordinate integrated action at a local level to deliver multiple benefits"

**Helen Richards, GRCC WILD Project Officer says** "Empowering local communities to make decisions and affect change in their area is a key component of the WILD project. GRCC has supported Gloucestershire's communities through times of change since we were founded in 1923, this Community Guide provides a key resource for those residents wanting to manage the water environment where they live."

**Chris Cowcher, ACRE Community Manager said** "It is fantastic to see that one of our ACRE Network members, GRCC is involved in such a project which truly encourages grassroots, bottom up action. We all know how devastating flooding can be to rural communities, so the opportunity to take proactive steps to learn about and manage water flow, therefore reducing the risk of flooding can only be a positive action to take."

***Ends***

***Issued 27 July 2017***

#### **Notes to editors:**

- Land use changes over the last century have dramatically increased flood risk, as the natural features and processes that slow water flows have been degraded by intensive agriculture and extensive urbanisation. Affordable and sustainable flood protection demands the restoration of these environmental 'services', often across the vast catchments that feed individual rivers.
- This is a huge job, and it relies on the help of dozens of communities across any given water catchment area. The Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) and ACRE Network member Gloucestershire Rural Community Council (GRCC) have been working with villages in Gloucestershire. With the help of the local residents in each community, they are working to uncover how the land once looked and functioned, drawing on historic memories of villagers, archived maps and easily overlooked clues such as street names. Using the information they find, they then work with businesses, farmers and volunteers to restore the most important natural process for flood protection.
- In doing so, they are finding radical new solutions for how our countryside and environment can be nurtured and protected to provide wide benefits to all of society, from healthier food and stronger rural economies through to climate change mitigation.

#### **Contact details:**

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