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**Investigating the Impact of the 2015
Cumbrian Floods on Political Trust and
Voting Behaviour**

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ABSTRACT

When do natural disasters become political disasters? During the 5th and 6th December 2015, Storm Desmond hit the county of Cumbria, resulting in wide-spread devastation. The political consequences of natural disasters have previously been explored within the US; investigating the disaster/politics relationship in the context of the UK is absent from current literature. The aim of the research is to explore how political trust levels were affected by government performance in regard to the 2015 Cumbrian floods. It further aims to understand the wider political consequences concerning voting behaviour in the 2016 EU referendum and how the local media framed the disaster. The study adopts a mixed method approach through conducting eight semi-structured interviews and a content analysis of local newspaper stories. Citizens display less trust in the national government, appearing critical of both the level of preparedness in place, and the slow response in the recovery process. Trust in the local government appears more stable, with positive evaluations exhibited regarding the relief efforts. Positive evaluations are also displayed towards local Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron. The local media were critical of the national government and the EU; presenting a more favourable stance towards the local government and local MP. The floods also influenced the voting behaviour of respondents regarding their reasoning towards voting leave in the 2016 EU referendum. The findings have implications for UK government policies towards flood prevention.

Keywords: Political trust; Natural Disaster; Flooding;

UK Government

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ABBREVIATIONS

EU – *European Union*

SLDC – *South Lakeland District Council*

UK – *United Kingdom*

US – *United States of America*

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In the wake of natural disasters, peace and harmony can arise, as people from afar come together to help affected communities and residents rebuild their lives. Short bursts of increased trust levels may be visible towards other people but can such levels of confidence be applied to the government? (Uslaner and Yamamura, 2016) (Omelicheva, 2011).

The trust an individual has in their government and its elected officials is considered a critical part of sustaining a successful political system. It is based considerably on citizen's expectations of how well government performs. (Uslaner and Yamamura, 2016) (Blind, 2006). Severe-weather related incidents present unexpected challenges for incumbent politicians. Albeit weather is beyond human control, the response issued by the government is the result of politicians. The electorate uses a 'finger to the wind' approach to assess the performance of the incumbent, using information that is easily accessible to inform their vote choice; both the severe weather and the response effort from political players arguably may influence that retrospection (Gasper and Reeves, 2011).

When catastrophe strikes a community, the responsibility attribution theory proposes individuals residing in the affected area are motivated

to search for an explanation behind the incident. Attributions of responsibility are a fundamental part of democratic citizenship. The government plays a salient role in both preparing for and responding to a natural disaster, thus when a natural disaster occurs, voters may blame their government if they feel they are not doing enough. This blame is simply strengthened if individuals consider the government could have prevented the disaster (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006). Achen and Bartel's (2004) hundred-year longitudinal study, spanning across forty-eight US states, found incumbent presidents are punished for extremes of weather, either too much or too little rain. In the wake of a natural disaster, an opportunity therefore presents itself; the electorate is able to view the competence of politicians as orchestrators of relief (Velez and Martin, 2013). Disasters thus have the potential to alter an individual's perception about the ability of political elites (Selves, 2012).

From the 4th to the 7th of December 2015, Storm Desmond resulted in a period of prolonged rainfall across Cumbria, which became particularly intense over the 5th to the 6th December, causing widespread flooding across the county. Over this period, new 24-hour and 48-hour rainfall records were set for the UK, after 341.4mm of rainfall was logged on Honnister Pass, Cumbria. The town of Kendal reported 1,400 individuals were left temporarily homeless, in addition 2000 businesses were flooded directly. Power cuts swept through the county, with an estimated 100,000 households impacted; 44 schools were forced to close across the region (Zurich, 2015) (Environment agency, 2016).

This was not the first time the county has endured the impact of widespread flooding¹. During the 7-8th January 2005, flooding occurred across the Lake District. It affected more than 2,500 properties, with regard to damage. It was deemed one of the most

¹ See Appendix 1 for details of Kendal's flooding history

significant fluvial floods in the UK during the last 50 years (Environment agency, 2006). Moreover, during the 18th-20th November 2009, the area was subject to further flooding, with 314.4mm of rainfall documented in Seathwaite, Cumbria which broke the current record at the time. The damage was estimated to have cost £276 million according to Cumbrian County Council, with towns such as Cockermouth taking years to rebuild (BBC, 2010).

The devastation caused by Storm Desmond has resulted in criticism of the government after multimillion-pound defences built following the 2005 floods failed to keep the deluge out from people's homes. Thus, there was widespread consensus the government's previous responses were inadequate. This is particularly evident in Carlisle where £38 million had been spent on flood defences along the river Eden. (Zurich, 2015).

Criticism not only circulated around the government but also appeared visible at the EU level. Throughout the 20th Century, removing sediment from UK rivers through dredging was a key part of river maintenance. The aim of the process is to remove silt that has built up at the bottom of the river; deepening the channel and reducing water levels (Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management, 2014). The European Water Frame Directive passed in to UK law in 2000. It was undertaken by all EU members and demands rivers are kept in undisturbed natural conditions (European Water Frame Directive, 2000). Article Sixteen and Seventeen of the European Water Frame Directive makes reference to improving UK waters to a "good" standard, with the aim to protect biodiversity and rare species (Mink, 2006). The decision to stop dredging is thus often attributed to the increasingly stringent environmental regulations set forth under this EU directive. The dredging of rivers is strictly prohibited without permission from the Environment Agency, which subsequently is locked in to the EU green agenda and seldom allows dredging to happen (Thorne, 2014). The salience of river dredging in contributing

to flooding remains controversial and debated. Nonetheless, the government have continually made reference to its significance. David Cameron, stated “People who say dredging won’t make a difference are wrong” (Flood Prevention Society, 2015). It is presented as a missed opportunity that could have protected Cumbrian communities from wide-scale damage. This viewpoint circulated in national newspapers in the aftermath of Storm Desmond vis-à-vis headlines reported "*Brexit is an opportunity to rethink flood protection*" (Weaver and Carrington, 2016) and "*Banned River Dredging That Allowed Water To Be Drained Away Say Farmers*" (Drury and Tozer, 2016).

The media play a salient role in defining a social problem by diagnosing the cause and presenting potential solutions. In this way, the media has the ability to lead audiences to conjure up attributions of responsibility by informing citizens on who is responsible for the event occurring and whose role it is to provide a response to fix the problem (Chang, Kim, Shim and Ma, 2016). Framing involves selecting certain aspects of a perceived reality and then making these aspects appear more important to the reader. The use of framing by journalists is arguably unavoidable because it is deemed necessary in order to interpret, organise and understand large amounts of information (Houston, Pfefferbaum and Rosenholtz, 2012).

The headlines published by the media conjured up a negative image of both the European Union and the government regarding the priority of Britain against other nations, a view portrayed just months prior to the EU referendum on the 23rd June 2016. Headlines outlined the funding from the UK's Development for International Development of £100 million towards nations who had suffered flooding. Meanwhile, Serbia experienced flooding at the same time as Storm Desmond hit - "*As Cumbria is Devastated... YOU pay for Serbia's £1 million flood defence*" (Mowat, 2015). The outcome of the referendum results displays 5 out of the 6 areas in Cumbria voted to leave the EU, with South Lakeland being the only area producing a majority (48% vs.

52%). The area of Copeland in Cumbria received the highest leave share in the whole of the UK, with 62% voting 'leave' (The Electoral Commission, 2016).

Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research is to provide understanding and insight into how the 2015 Cumbrian floods politically affected individuals in the South Lakeland area. It seeks to investigate if political trust has declined, through exploring citizen's perceptions towards the government response effort and if citizens' feel the scale of the flood damage could have been prevented. It examines whether the assistance provided by both the local and national government is viewed differently, if one is regarded more positively than the other. It also aims to examine whether the impact of the natural disaster had influenced over the way an individual voted in the 2016 EU referendum. This research also investigates the framing of responsibility and blame for the flooding in local newspaper coverage at the time of the floods and for the months afterwards.

This research has the potential to explore attributions of responsibility in the wake of a natural disaster and to add to the existing literature surrounding how flooding can affect political trust levels. Whilst political consequences of flooding have been documented in the US, there is limited investigation surrounding the political impact of a natural disaster in a UK context. Multiple levels of government typically coordinate in both preparing for and responding to flooding. This study has the potential to investigate if contrasting views towards the local and national government exist regarding the response effort. Furthermore, the damage caused by Storm Desmond was still visible as the electorate in Cumbria entered the polling station on June 23rd; thus this study has the potential of providing a unique insight in to understanding why individuals voted the way they did in the referendum on whether the UK should leave the European Union. Scholars are still trying to piece together the factors that influenced

why an individual chose to vote remain or leave, therefore exploring people's attitudes and opinion towards the natural disaster provides an opportunity to investigate if the flooding impacted on voting behaviour.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Disasters are political in nature. Political considerations are a significant factor before, during and after a natural disaster, as they can ultimately determine who is most vulnerable, who can intervene, what action will be taken and who will benefit from this action (Selves, 2012) (Hapeman, 2012). One of the fundamental principles of the disaster/politics relationship holds disasters and their aftermath affect the political environment of a community, state or country. A disaster has the potential to alter public perceptions regarding the ability and concern of political players. It can result in them being increasingly sensitive to criticism of response efforts (Selves, 2012).

The literature review is organised in to three parts. The first portion of the review is to offer a discussion of natural disasters and political trust, focusing on the role of the government. The second part builds upon this by analysing relevant literature regarding responsibility attribution and voting behaviour in the aftermath of disasters. Following a disaster, perceptions of government response has been shown to be shaped by media influence, thus in the third portion of this discussion, attention will turn to media framing.

Political Trust

Political trust provides an important indicator of how positively citizens regard decision-making actors and institutions (Seyd, 2016).

To obtain the trust of the people, the government must deliver basic services. In the wake of a natural disaster, expectations of government are high, since government assistance is required in helping communities recover. If government agencies are able to restore essential services, people will have confidence in political elites, thus those in charge must show strong leadership qualities and understand people's problems. When government's fail in the wake of a natural disaster, trust levels in political leader's decline, since individuals believe the government could have done more to prevent the disaster (Uslaner and Yamamura, 2016). The response issued by the incumbent government is weighted heavily against an individual's expectations, thus ultimately it is not about the disaster itself, rather it is concerned with the government's actions. When the government acts in the electorate's interest, they are subsequently rewarded with increased support. However, a deemed weak response will lead to the incumbent being punished (Hopkins, 2013). Citizens will sanction the incumbent government if they fail to adequately address the negative consequences (Fair, Kuhn, Malhotra and Shapiro, 2013). This line of argumentation is important for our investigation since it explores the UK's government response in the aftermath of the floods. Nicholls and Picou (2012) examined how Hurricane Katrina had impacted on political trust in the US government. Those affected were critical regarding the governmental performance both in the lead up to the natural disaster and in its aftermath.

The reward/punishment theory has been documented extensively in literature, particularly in examining the political consequences of flooding. In 2004, widespread floods hit Bosnia and Herzegovina. The most affected region was Republic Srpska. In the aftermath, the incumbent ruling party in this area lost both power and support, in direct response to the government's negligence in dealing with the disaster. Moreover, this had spill-over effects towards the political system as a whole, with the erosion of both public trust and confidence noted (Szpala, 2004). Pelling and Dill, (2006) state the way in which a

state and other sectors act in response and recovery is largely predicated on the kind of political relationship that existed before the crisis, thus in the case of the 2014 Kashmir floods the perceived weak response is considered a reflection of the troubling relationship that exists between the Kashmir government and the Kashmir people. The floods confirmed the widely held belief that the government did not prioritise the Kashmir citizens as widespread complaints circulated around the state government (Venugopal and Yasir, 2015).

Gasper and Reeves (2011) found damage from a natural disaster is negatively associated with an incumbent governor's vote share in a given country, but they also show that the governor is rewarded for granting disaster declarations (Velez and Martin, 2013). Furthermore, Gasper and Reeves (2011) show when a governor makes a request for disaster declaration which is granted by the President, both incumbents receive increased support from the electorate. However, when the request for disaster declaration is rejected by the President, voters reward the governor but punish the President. Abney and Hill (1966) conducted one of the first studies in to responsibility attribution in regards to voting in the 1962 New Orleans election following Hurricane Betsy. However, they found the hurricane was not a decisive factor in voting decisions, with those affected no more likely to vote against the incumbent mayor than residents who were unaffected. Furthermore, Potluka and Slavikova (2006) investigated the political consequences of the floods in the Czech Republic in 2002 vis-à-vis if the flooding had impact on the results of local elections. They found no statistically significance influence of floods on re-election of candidates standing for their office again. However, they did note a moderate influence on the participation of voters in the election.

The reward/punishment theory has been studied in the US context through observing the political consequences of natural disasters on city mayor elections; the re-election of state governors or the national government. Albeit providing evidence for said theory, limited studies

are apparent in demonstrating its existence within the UK. The US and British political systems differ in terms of power distribution. British constituencies have limited individual powers as opposed to their transatlantic counterparts where the 10th amendment of the American constitution grants federal powers to US states. The US flood management system is overseen by the federal government and then implemented in conjunction with the state government (O'Neil, 2006); whilst in the UK, the British national government provide funding for flood defences and manage flood protection measures. In this way citizen's expectations of local and national governments may differ across countries, since the role of the federal government in America is greater. Local governments and authorities in the US have the power to develop and execute emergency preparedness plans for their towns. It is regarded a bottom-up process whereby local officials and agencies are considered the first respondents when a disaster strikes (Carter, 2012). In the UK, the approach taken is considered top-down, insomuch as the power for flood protection lies with the political elites at Westminster. Thus, whilst the research in the US helps in understanding the topic and provides comparisons for our own research, it showcases an evident research gap, since there is a noted difference regarding who is responsible for dealing with natural disasters.

One of the main roles of an MP in Britain is to represent local interests in parliament. The official constituency representative is expected to play an active role in the community, communicating the needs of their constituency to the government. In the aftermath of a disaster, these expected roles are simply heightened, as constituent's demand their local MP take action on their behalf, independent of their collective and party roles. Citizens have begun to view their local MP as a service provider, who works and acts on behalf of the local people, whereas the perception of the House of Commons remains one of empty green benches and adversarial conflict. In this way, an individual's views of the local MP can exist independently of the views of the Westminster

and the establishment (Norton, 2012) (Norton, 2005: 195-196). This is an area of particular relevance for this research study, in the aftermath of a natural disaster, evaluations of a local MP may be distinct from the evaluations held towards the national government, since citizens have differing expectations regarding their roles.

Attribution of responsibility and voting behaviour

Psychologically, individuals are motivated to attribute responsibility for unpredictable events in order to maintain the viewpoint that the world is ultimately predictable and controllable. This motivation may especially be evident in the context of natural disasters, since such forces of nature go beyond human capability to control. Asserting blame in the wake of a natural disaster helps an individual recapture that feeling of control, alongside obtaining a belief that future disasters can be potentially averted (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006). While political leaders are not responsible for the weather per se, individuals often tend to view the government as the responsible party. Noll (1996) found in contrast to many policies in the United States, disaster preparation and response is widely viewed as an appropriate role for government, with individuals often expecting the government to take on an active role. Thus, after the occurrence of a natural disaster, citizens are likely to attribute blame towards the incumbent. They are perceived to uphold a position in which they can prevent the extremity of a natural catastrophe – disasters are thus “an excellent test of government performance” (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006).

Barnhart (1925) suggested droughts and poor harvests contributed to the weakening of Nebraska’s Republican party and the rise of the populists in the 1890 gubernatorial election. This same argument can be attributed to the rise of populism in Kansas during the late 1880s (Miller, 1925). Meanwhile, outside of the US, Healey (2011) argued the successful effort of Juan Peron in the wake of the 1944 earthquake led to the creation of what was deemed the most powerful Labour

movement in Latin America. Ultimately in none of the above cases, do the electorate believe the government controlled the weather that led to the occurrence of these disasters, yet this made no difference. The simple argument that hard times affecting a community or country threaten governments is not new one. Historical records show Egyptian court officials wishing a good Nile flood upon their Pharaoh; whilst an earthquake which struck Sparta in 465/464 B.C. led to a Messenian revolt that unfolded for over a half a decade. Thus, such evidence documents 'angry' retrospective citizen's span across both countries and centuries (Achen and Bartels, 2004) (Nel and Righarts, 2008).

Arceneaux and Stein (2006) examined blame attribution in Houston, where Tropical Storm Allison had hit just months prior to the cities mayoral elections. Houstonians who resided in the most affected areas were increasingly likely to blame, as oppose to credit the government for inadequate flood preparation. Voters deemed the government could have done more to prevent the scale of the damage and therefore were willing to attribute blame and punish incumbent political leaders accordingly. Nonetheless, the authors reported individual differences with regard to degree of political knowledge. Citizens who possess higher political knowledge, comprehend how a government functions, subsequently affecting responsibility attribution (Zaller, 1992: 1-5). In the context of the Houston floods, the country as opposed to the city set the flood policies. Individuals who knew more about the government, were prone to have knowledge of this fact and as such attribute credit or blame to the country for flood preparation (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006).

While citizens see natural disaster relief as a legitimate function of government, they vary widely in their perceptions of what level of government and which specific actors are to blame. Dennis Thompson (1980) has argued, "because many different officials contribute in many different ways to decisions and policies of government, it is difficult even in principle to identify who is ... responsible for political

outcomes". This was particularly documented in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, where blame was assigned at all levels of government vis-à-vis FEMA Director Michael Brown resigned, four out of seven New Orleans Council members lost their seat and President Bush's approval rating fell (Gomez and Wilson, 2008). This is important for our investigation since it showcases assigning blame can differ across levels of government. This case study relates to the context of Hurricane Katrina. Previous literature focusing on responsibility attribution in the event of flooding seldom examines if this notion is similarly apparent, therefore displaying an evident research gap for our study.

Hopkins (2013) argues natural disasters not only concern the government's response but also the government's planning and preparedness to avoid such disaster from occurring. Whilst, Healey and Malhotra (2009) observed the electorate 'reward' disaster relief spending, holding incumbent political elites responsible for their actions taken in the aftermath of the event; they found voters show no response to preparedness spending, even though it is logical to assume preparedness spending would produce a great social benefit. In the US, the disparity between government spending on disaster relief and government spending on disaster preparedness has extensively grown since 1988. In the months prior to Hurricane Katrina, there were repeated warnings in Central Valley regarding a high risk of flooding, nevertheless large-scale action was only implemented after the event had occurred. Following Hurricane Katrina, the citizens of New Orleans placed great importance in the investment of disaster preparedness projects vis-à-vis in 2006, 30% of New Orleans residents stated the repairing of 'levees, pumps and floodwalls' should be a top priority. By mid-2008, it was reported only 2% of voters in New Orleans placed this item in their top concerns. Thus, this change in priorities showcases importance in preparedness spending is temporary (Selves, 2012). This notion is important to consider, since Central Government Spending on flood defences in the UK was cut soon after

the coalition formed. Spending was reduced by £30 million. In the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review (2011-2012 to 2014-2015) a total of £2.17 billion in central government funding was provided for flood and coastal defence. This represented a 6% fall in central government funding. After 2009, funding for a £4 million project to protect 440 homes from flooding from the River Kent, which runs through the centre of Kendal. However, following such flood-defence cuts by the Conservative-led government, the project was postponed on numerous occasions, namely in 2015 just weeks prior to Storm Desmond (Bennet and Hartwell-Naguib).

Media Framing

In various contexts, attributional tendencies have been shown to be systematically affected by a variety of factors including media exposure. The media is deemed a salient source of information for individuals in the wake of a natural disaster. During crisis' news media communicate "basic information about what happened, the scope of the harm, how the crisis developed, who was affected and what response was initiated" (Gomez and Wilson, 2008). This is important to consider for our research which intends to investigate how the local media framed the 2015 Cumbrian floods. A study conducted by Barnes (2008) on four prominent newspapers during Hurricane Katrina found of one-thousand-and-fifty-nine articles examined, 40% focused on the accountability of the federal government as opposed to the local government (Ngcamu and Binza, 2015). The findings of the study highlighted the media placed emphasis on disaster response (41%) over preparedness (24%) and mitigation (7%). After Hurricane Katrina, the media portrayed the federal and local agencies differently. The tone used to regard the government response was moderately neutral, with the federal government covered more positively than the local government, in which a predominantly negative tone was utilised (Brunken, 2006). Nonetheless, such study covered only the first five weeks of media coverage beginning from when the hurricane hit.

Furthermore, such study did not investigate the tone towards the varying levels of government in the months after the catastrophe occurred. Houston (2012) showed the mass media cover natural disasters for shorter periods of time than other issues; thus providing explanation as to why studies observing media portrayal of natural disasters do so within a small time frame. However, often the focus is on the coverage by national newspapers as opposed to local newspapers. Local news media is arguably likely to demonstrate a continuing focus on the event if both the community and residents have not yet recovered from the disaster.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Research Design

There is no pre-conceived hypothesis in this research study. It employs an inductive approach to research – a bottom up process, whereby the subjective experiences of participants are used to build broader themes. The researcher will thus look for patterns in the data gathered, so general statements can be developed about the phenomenon examined (Soiferman, 2010). The results will thus determine if participant's political trust levels have been affected by the flooding and what the wider consequences of the disaster have been, regarding voting behaviour.

This research study used a mixed method research design. In a mixed methods approach, researchers can employ two separate methodologies in research, this is not simply used in order to validate the results of one another; rather it can be used to gain a variety of information, alongside allowing different aspects of the phenomenon to be looked at (Flick, 2009: 18-19). Qualitative data values the experience of the research participant and can provide valuable insight in to a topic since it is geared towards general explorations (Christianson and Jack, 1998). Existing literature that has explored the political impact of natural disasters has often used qualitative research methodology. Qualitative research is used to capture expressive information that is not conveyed in quantitative research regarding beliefs and feelings

that underlie human behaviour (Berkwits and Inui, 1998). The data collection method for the qualitative research is interviews. The research study also uses a content analysis of media sources.

Interviews

Kvale (1983) defines the qualitative research interview as "an interview, whose purpose is to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena". A semi-structured interview format will be used in this research study for data collection. The questions used in semi-structured interviews are pre-planned prior to the interview, but the interviewer gives the respondent the chance to elaborate on their given answers. Questions are often 'open-ended', in their nature, probing researchers to ask 'how and why', which has the advantage of allowing participants to use their own words as opposed to simple fixed 'yes' or 'no' responses (Mack et al, 2005) (Alshenqeeti, 2014). The interview will be face-to-face; such technique permits the researcher to take advantage of social cues that may be exhibited, such as voice or body language, thus providing additional information on top of the verbal responses (Opdenakker, 2006).

The interview consisted of four key sections which aimed to understand the political impact of the 2015 Cumbrian floods: *Background and Context; The flooding; Political Impact of the Floods; The EU Referendum*. The interview schedule set 22 questions that were asked to each participant². These were approved by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee for Non Clinical Research involving Human subjects³. The themes utilised in this study were derived mainly from the literature review and were crucial in developing the questions that were raised during the study. The semi-structured format

² See Appendix 5 for interview schedule

³ See Appendix 4 for full Ethics form

allowed for flexibility with regard to probing for further elaboration or clarity, which resulted in a series of questions specific to each participant individually, where I as the researcher felt further valuable information could be extracted.

Respondents were first asked questions relating to demographic variables (age, gender, employment), which were then followed by a series of questions relating to political trust. The questions focused on what they expected from both their local and national government in a functioning democracy like the UK.

The next two sections focused on the flooding itself and its political impact. Participants were asked what they thought were the causes behind the flooding. It further aimed to focus on the responses from both the local and national government, particularly if individuals held negative or positive opinions regarding how each level of government was able to help improve the situation. This is where the advantage of using a semi-structured interview format was visible, as the questions could be tailored to each individual since their experience of the floods was unique.

The fourth section focused on the EU referendum. Participants were presented with an image, exhibiting a sign that had been placed in Kendal town centre in the weeks prior to the referendum, blaming the EU for the flooding which had occurred. The sign read: “*EU TO BLAME FOR KENDAL’S FLOOD, BREXIT NOW*”⁴. The key questions aimed to understand their opinions behind the sign and if it had influence in their voting decision.

The research study involved eight face-to-face interviews. The interviews lasted approximately 20-30 minutes. The interview was

⁴ See Appendix 2; photograph of sign

tape-recorded with a transcript of the audio recording made⁵.

Pseudonyms were used to ensure participant confidentiality remained intact.

The method of analysis chosen was thematic analysis. Such method is considered most appropriate for any study that seeks to discover using interpretation. It works to detect and identify factors that influence any issue generated by the participants (Alhojailan, 2012). The themes were derived as they emerged from the data. The interview transcripts were read and the themes were identified on a sentence to sentence basis. The research study followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six step process for conducting thematic analysis. The initial first phase begins with the researcher familiarising themselves with the data. From this, initial codes are generated, such as flood prevention and response efforts. These initial codes then went on to form main themes. Potential sub-themes were then gathered, ensuring they fit the theme. A theme map of the analysis was created. The themes are then further defined and named, for they are used to analyse the data with.

Content analysis

Content analysis can be defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1278). Content analysis, is arguably “useful for examining trends and patterns in documents” (Stemler, 2001). One of the main issues with content analysis is it is impossible to devise coding manuals that do not entail some interpretation on the part of the coder(s). Thus the coder(s) must draw upon their everyday knowledge as participants in a common culture in order to be able to code the material, as such results may be inferred subjectively (Bryman, 2012: 305). The size of this sample and the nature of the research, permitted

⁵ See Appendix 6 to view example of interview transcript

only one coder; nonetheless using a second coder could improve inter-rater reliability, where future work is conducted in this research area.

The time frame chosen for the sample was May 2016 to January 2017. It was chosen as the newspaper circulated weekly in the South Lakeland area where the flooding occurred. This research used a sample of stories which focused on Storm Desmond. The coder read each article to determine the overall tone. The article was then rated as either positive or negative. Positive articles were ones that discussed action that had been taken to help the recovery. Negative articles were those that were critical of the flooding with regard to how the scale of the damage could have been prevented and action taken in the relief effort. Once this had been established, the primary coder (the author) then coded the negative and positive articles separately regarding who the article targeted and what matters the article addressed.

Participants

The research study used the snowball sampling technique to recruit participants. This sampling strategy allowed the researcher to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents, providing the researcher with an ever expanding set of potential contacts. This sampling method was chosen on the assumption a bond or link existed between the initial sample of participants and others in the same target population (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). This sampling technique makes it impossible to determine the possible sampling error and make statistical inferences from the sample to the population, thus snowball samples should not be considered representative of the population being studied. Nonetheless, this sampling method is well suited to this research as it concerned relatively private matters which fundamentally required the knowledge of insiders to locate individuals for the purpose of the study (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981).

The interview was voluntary, and a total of eight respondents took part ranging in age between 20-67. In the EU referendum, four of the participant's voted 'Remain' [*Brian, Roger, Fiona and Laura*] and four participant's voted 'Leave' [*June, Mark, Ciaran and Cameron*].

The minimum age accepted for the interview was 18, since the interview comprised of questions regarding the EU referendum, where 18 was the minimum voting age.

For a full description of the research methods, including materials and sampling procedure see Appendix 3.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

A. Content Analysis

One of the key aims of the research was to investigate the framing and response by the local newspaper (The Westmorland Gazette) regarding the 2015 Cumbrian floods. A content analysis provided the following results:

Content Analysis: Local Newspaper articles				
Tone	Theme	Who the article targeted	What the article discussed	Frequency of References
Negative	Blame	National Government	Funding	8
			Flood Defence Cuts	4
			Forgotten Villages	3
			Benefits stopped	1
		Local Government	Construction	6
		EU	River Dredging	3
Positive	Helping Residents and the Communities recovery	The Community	Donations	2
			Community Spirit	1
		Local MP (Tim Farron)	Putting Pressure on government to act	2
			Helping residents and businesses	5
			Flood defence planning	1
		Local Government	Flood Grant Scheme	3
			Housing	2
			Re-opening of Bridges	1
			Re-opening of Roads	1
		National Government	Initial Funds	1

Table 1: The results of the Content Analysis framework

In conducting thematic analysis, the articles were initially identified as either negative or positive. Of the 44 Westmorland Gazette articles that were examined, the table displays 57% of the articles could be broadly characterised as ‘negative’, while 43% could be broadly characterised as positive. Two main themes were identified from the corpus of data. These themes included: ‘blame’ (*negative*) and ‘helping residents and community’s recovery’ (*positive*). Both of these themes will be discussed in this chapter, alongside who the article targeted and what the article discussed – both of which are identified in table 1.

Negative Articles

As detailed in Figure 1, 64% of negative articles focused on the national government, this is in comparison to the local government, where 24% of the articles were directed and the EU at 12%.

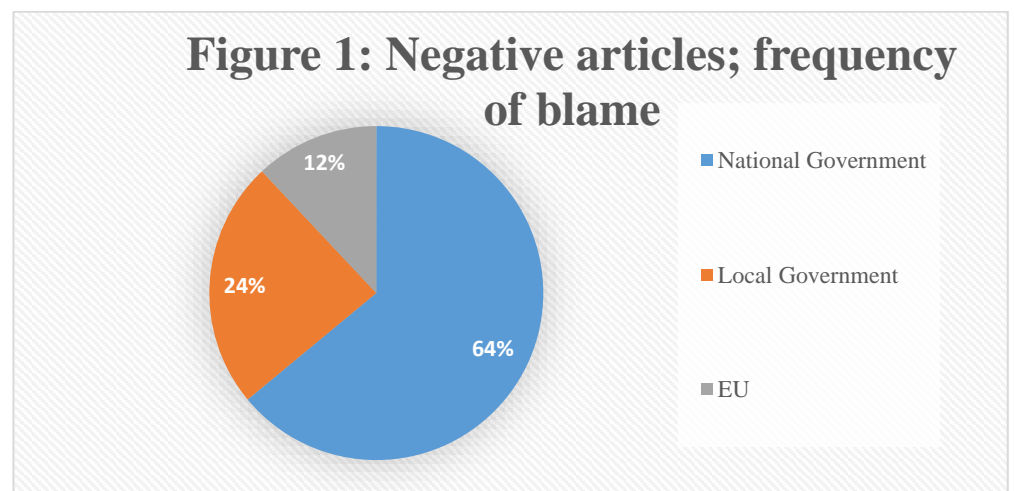


Figure 1: illustrates the targets for blame in articles published by the Westmorland Gazette

Depictions of the national government were critical with regard to the limited funding; and being regarded as a ‘forgotten community’. The articles also negatively addressed the local government regarding the building of houses on flood plains, and the EU concerning the issue of river-dredging.

National Government



Sixteen articles focused blame towards the national government, primarily regarding their response efforts. In eight of the sixteen articles, reference was critically given to the lack of funding that was received, particularly in providing funds which would ensure devastation of this scale would never happen again. It was noted in one article there was a £40 million shortfall of funding needed across the whole of Cumbria. There was an emphasis on the lack of commitment by David Cameron in helping both residents and businesses recover,

three articles stated he could and should do more in helping the recovery process.

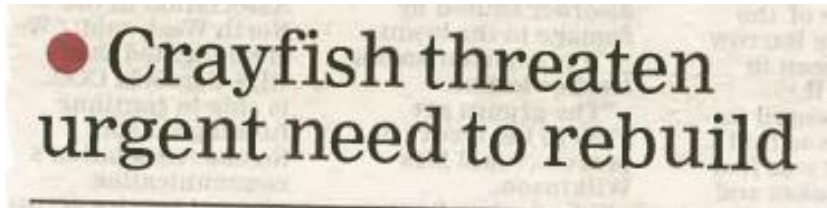
Indication was also made in to the ‘forgotten villages and forgotten people’ in the remote areas of Cumbria – 19% of the sixteen articles, whereby funding for repairs to road access was yet to be received six months after the flooding had occurred, detrimentally impacting both businesses and tourism. One article claimed national media coverage of the floods had fallen off the agenda, thus it would lead to many individuals forgetting about the people who were still out of their homes. It was observed the negative articles towards the national government increased over time, in which appears to reflect the growing dissatisfaction from the community.

Local Government

‘Construction is to blame’

Of the 44 articles, six made a negative reference to the local government. Those that did focused on the local government’s ability to prevent the scale of the damage, as opposed to their response. SLDC had given permission for new housing developments in the North-East of Kendal Town to go ahead prior to the floods, areas that were regarded as ‘swamp land’. Concerns were raised in 2011 but local authorities were reported as ignoring them.

EU



● Crayfish threaten
urgent need to rebuild

Three out of the sixteen negative articles were directed towards the EU, with all three referencing the issue of river dredging. It is argued river dredging is an historic tradition in Cumbria, thus the adoption of the EU Water Frame Directive resulted in a role reversal towards good ecological status, through allowing rivers to reconnect with the flood plains. One article deemed priority was given to crayfish and mussels thus river dredging was not permitted, since such process could wash away rare species.

Positive articles

Of the forty-four articles in this research study, nineteen were identified as positive. As figure two depicts, 42% of the positive articles referenced the efforts of Tim Farron, the local Westmorland and Lonsdale MP. The local government were acknowledged in 37%, which stands in contrast to the national government who were positively referenced in only 5% of the articles. The community effort was acknowledged with 16% of the articles referencing the positive role they played.

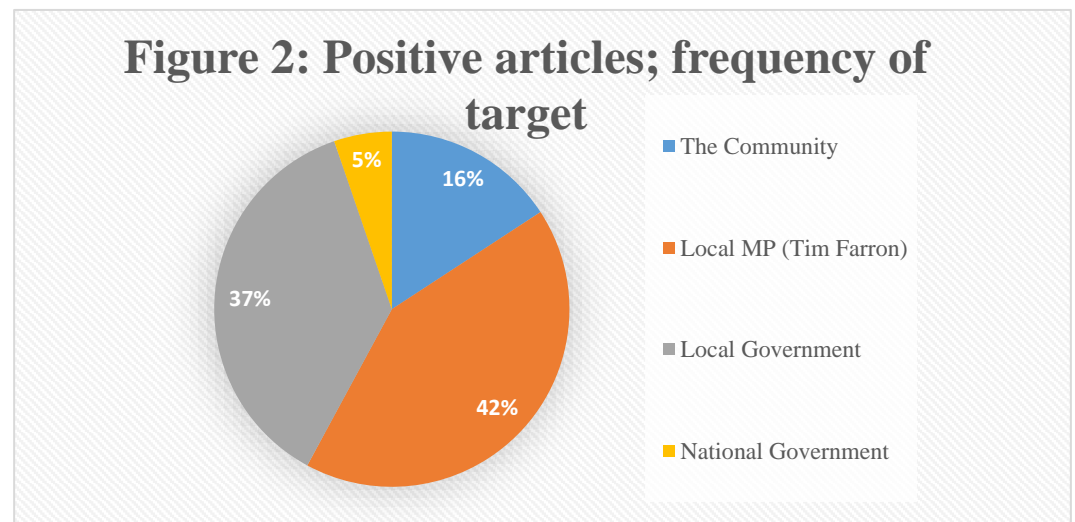


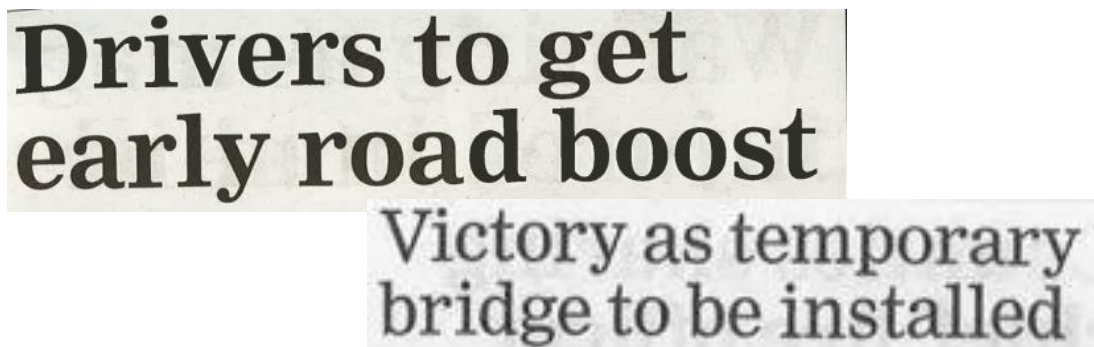
Figure 2: illustrates the frequency of who the positive article targeted

Community



Of the 19 articles identified as positive, three focused on the response efforts of the community. Reference is made to the generosity of the people, who have pulled together to help those affected. One article noted that the effects of the disasters would have been worse were it not for the remarkable community spirit that was exhibited. Two articles reference the donations towards victims of the floods - £9 million was generated, helping over two-thousand-three-hundred families on their road to recovery.

Local Government



The local government received seven positive articles, predominately focusing on the action by local authorities. One article referenced SLDC in their ability to offer help to residents by removing furniture. Reference in one article was also given to SLDC in helping set up the 'Kendal Cares' Centre, which enabled affected residents to receive information and help regarding insurance and housing matters. Two

articles referenced the work of Cumbria County Council, who worked with the Highways agency to quickly repair the A591 – the main road which links Grasmere and Keswick.

Tim Farron (Westmorland and Lonsdale MP)



Eight out of the nineteen positive articles referenced the action taken by local MP Tim Farron. Five article discussed the work of Mr. Farron in assisting residents recover, through knocking on the doors of those affected to understand how he could help. In one article, his meeting with the Environment Agency was documented, whereby he was noted for putting pressure on the plans to build flood defences along the River Kent. Another article discusses him collecting signatures for the petition, in which asked for the government to fully fund a £25 million defence scheme for Kendal. In two of the articles, the author refers to Mr. Farron as ‘Tim’ – as is evident from the photograph above. By using the first name, it is suggestive of knowing him on a more personal level, as part of the community.

National Government

Flood defences given £24m boost

Only one article was identified as positively referencing the action of the national government. The article focused on the government's pledge to fund flood defences in order to protect the towns of Cumbria from future flooding.

Summary: Content analysis

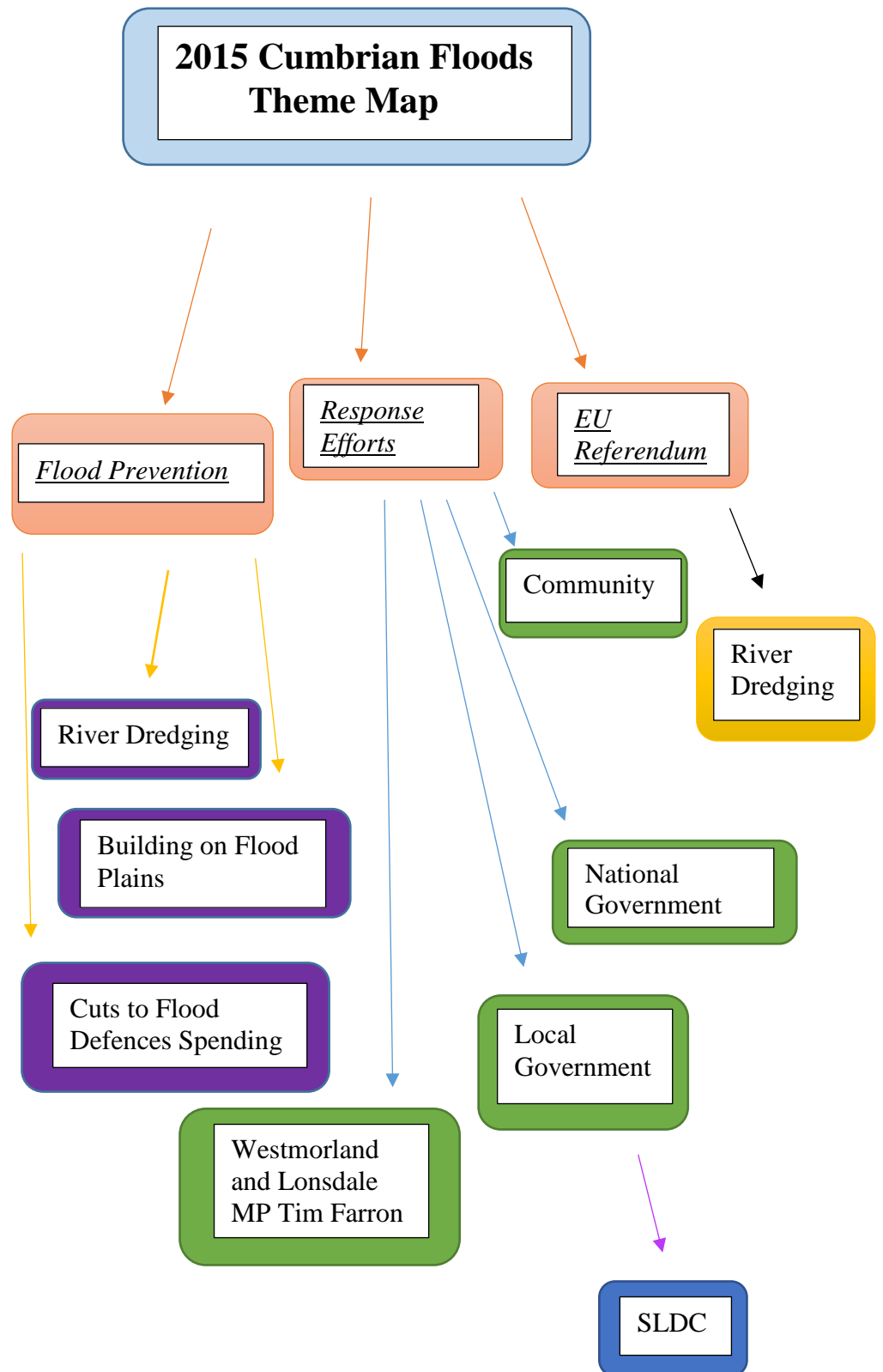
The content analysis showcases the national government received almost completely negative coverage, with blame directed towards their inability to provide adequate help in the response efforts and in the cutting of flood defence budgets. The EU received complete negative coverage, with articles critical of river dredging. The local government received more positive coverage regarding their role in the recovery; helping to rebuild Cumbrian roads and bridges. Thus in the framing of the 2015 Cumbrian floods response efforts, the local newspaper distinguished between the two levels of government, with the local government viewed more favourably than the national government. Despite being a member of parliament, local MP Tim Farron was positively referenced in helping those affected and also on placing pressure on the government to act.

Interviews

Interviews were used in investigating how the 2015 Cumbrian floods have impacted on political trust levels. It also served to explore people's personal experiences of Storm Desmond and the wider impact

it had towards voting behaviour in the EU referendum. Several key themes and areas of interest emerged from the interview transcript data; flood prevention; the response efforts and the EU referendum. These particular themes were identified through word-based repetitions. Through reading the initial transcripts of the participants, words or phrases that were frequently referenced were therefore seen as salient in the minds of the respondents. As stated previous, a theme map was created of the analysed interviews transcripts in line with Braun and Clarke's six step process for conducting thematic analysis.

Figure 3: Theme map created from interview transcript data



The theme map identifies the main themes derived from the data transcript. It also displays the generated sub themes. It is important to note Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron is regarded as a separate sub-theme, since the data transcript revealed participants distinguished between him and the political establishment to which he is part of. Both the main themes and the sub-themes will be discussed more extensively below.

1. Why did the flooding occur?

When discussing participant's experiences of the floods, a key theme which arose was how the scale of the flood damage could have been minimised. As the area had experienced a history of flooding prior to 2015, participants were generally vocal in pinpointing where blame lay regarding measures that should have been taken in advance, as opposed to viewing the floods as simply a freak occurrence to which nothing could have been done to prevent. Sub-themes emerged in regard to flood prevention: river dredging, cuts to government flood defence spending, and building upon flood plains.

River Dredging

A key sub-theme relating to flood prevention was river dredging. This was the most referenced area of interest in regard to how the damage could have been minimised. Several participants' argued if the River Kent has been dredged, the scale of damage to houses, particularly in the Kendal area would have not been as severe. One participant spoke of how "*the government should have dredged the river when flooding hit in 2005*".

The houses of Aynam Road [kendal] have had a history of flooding since as long as I can remember and they never have received the proper government help to get the river sorted”

(Laura, 26)

One participant referenced the role of the EU in regard to obstructing river dredging due to wildlife habiting in Cumbrian waters, questioning the EU’s priorities. One participant spoke of a reversal of “*power from local farmers and local communities to the EU*”.

“We need to dredge the rivers that is just a must but I know we can’t because of the cray fish in Morecambe bay. The farmers in the fields have got to be able to do what they have to do, if they need to dredge the rivers they should be allowed to. The fact the EU have put a stop to it is absolutely wrong”

(June, 56)

Cuts to government flood defence spending

As was discussed previously in the introduction of this research study, the national government made cuts to the flood defence budget prior to Storm Desmond. The media, in the immediate aftermath of the floods published this information. Four respondents referenced how the flood defence scheme had been cut in Kendal.

“I read in the Guardian that there was meant to be a £4-million-pound project planned for Kendal but David Cameron and his team stopped the investment”

(Roger, 67)

The language and tone used towards the national government was negative and critical across the majority of respondents. Participants often referenced David Cameron and George Osbourne, as individuals who they attributed responsibility and blame too.

“David Cameron... George Osbourne they are all the same. If they had wanted to help then they shouldn't have cut from the flood defence budget in the first place, and then they act like it was a total shock when an event like this happens”

(Mark, 44)

“If George Osbourne hadn't cut funds... the state of Cumbria could have been a whole different story”

(Brian, 67)

Building on flood plains

Five out of the eight participants made reference to the increased building of houses on flood plains in the Kendal area. It was cited as a reasoning towards the “*shock that it had affected people in certain areas*”, since residents without any past history of flooding were affected.

“By the river you could understand it but not down here, Sandylands road even on Whinfell drive”

(Fiona, 32)

Albeit go ahead for housing projects is often authorised by the local government, participants were critical towards the national government, particularly as they addressed the wider problems facing the UK, namely Britain’s housing shortage.

“The government want to build so many houses because there is a UK housing crisis so it is bound to cause flooding. They built on Strawberry fields which is prone to flooding. They put new drainage systems in but then it impacts on houses further down in the fields”

(Laura, 26)

2. How effective were the response efforts?

When discussing the response efforts, participants were asked for their opinions regarding the response efforts from both the national government, the local government and the community.

The National Government

Discussion of the response effort and public expectations towards the national government was the area of the interest that attracted the most criticism, with all participants voicing criticism over the government’s

absence in helping to aid the recovery and towards the limited amount of funding the area received.

*I mean where is all this money that we were promised.
Staveley bridge is still out.*

(Brian, 67)

*“You would expect them to do something...but I just feel
they were useless”*

(Laura, 26)

Participants drew upon stories that had been published in national newspapers in the weeks that followed the flooding, which spoke of the national government's funding to help other countries who had similarly experienced flood devastation. Once again, several participants appeared critical, particularly as they felt a sense that they were at the bottom of the government's priorities, and the “*government just doesn't care*”

*“The government were quite happy to give Bosnia £2
million pounds... but where is our £2 million”*

(Mark, 44)

“Our community was forgotten”

(Fiona, 32)

David Cameron was discussed disapprovingly. National newspaper coverage appeared to have played a role since the photographic

evidence of him taken in Cumbria in the days that followed from Storm Desmond was referenced by participants.

“David Cameron in his brand new wellies which had never been worn before wandering about. He didn’t do anything whilst he was up in Appleby, he only wanted his picture in the newspaper to look as if he was helping when really he was doing nothing”

(Ciaran, 20)

The Local Government

Perceptions towards local government response efforts were spoken of more positively particularly the work of the SLDC. However, it is important to note when participants were asked towards the response efforts of the local government, six out of the eight participants predominately spoke of the efforts of local MP Tim Farron, in spite of him being a representative of the national not local government. The expectations of the local government appeared to be lower than what was expected from political elites at Westminster.

“David Cameron and his men are meant to help, that’s what we voted them in for... but they never did”

(Roger, 67)

Two participant’s noted the SLDC were able to relocate them without delay, it appears expectations concerning the issue of housing were met.

“The Council were able to find me a room in the Castle Green Hotel when I was evacuated... when I went to see them they managed to find me a flat in Kirkland really quickly”

(Mark, 44)

“The SLDC did deal with my housing situation. I thought I would have to live with my son’s family over Christmas, but they managed to find me a house”

(Brian, 67)

One participant spoke positively towards the Flood Resilience Grants the SLDC has administered. Households affected can apply for a grant worth up to £5,000, which can be put towards resilience and restructuring work; if flooding happened again, the scale of the damage would be minimised.

“I have applied for one of the Flood Resilience Grants they are offering ...so we can spend the money making sure this never happens again”

(June, 56)

Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron

As stated previously, when participants were asked to evaluate the response efforts of the local government, respondents referenced the action taken by local MP Tim Farron. One participant drew a

comparison between the efforts of Tim Farron and David Cameron in the wake of the floods, which appears to further show participants do not consider the local MP as part of the Westminster establishment and view them separately.

“I think Tim Farron provided a lot of help. He was always about after the Storm had happened. He called round on the next street to us knocking on doors of the people..., speaking to the people. It was more than David Cameron did. He didn’t stick around. He didn’t come and speak to us and ask about how we were coping”

(June, 56)

One participant spoke of the limited funding local government agencies received, once again it appeared there was an attempt to direct blame towards political elites at Westminster. However, one participant stressed the funding that was received was well invested with regards to rebuilding Hawes bridge.

“I think he [Tim Farron] tried his best with the resources he had”

(Cameron, 32)

The Community

The most positive perception regarding response efforts was towards the community. Several participants spoke of how the people of the towns and villages came together to help those affected recover.

“the community came together”

(Brian, 67)

*“If it wasn't for the people of this town, I don't know
how I would have been able to cope”*

(June, 56)

3) How did the flooding influence views on maintaining EU membership?

One of the aims of the research was to investigate the impact of the floods on voting behaviour regarding the EU referendum. Participants were shown the image of the sign located in Kendal Town Centre: “*EU TO BLAME FOR KENDAL'S FLOODS: BREXIT NOW*”. When the participants were asked if they agreed with what the sign claimed, seven out of the eight respondents stated they did. When asked for further elaboration regarding why they agreed, the general consensus pointed to the issue of river dredging vis-à-vis the EU exerted too much control over the national government in decision making.

Of the eight participants, four voted to leave the EU and four voted to remain.

The four participants that voted to remain, gave an account of their reasoning. They mirrored the standpoint of respondents across the UK, vis-à-vis “*needing to stick together during hard times*” and “*a stronger economy*”. Thus, although three of the four participants agreed with

what the sign claimed, the flood and the issue of river dredging did not prove a strong enough factor to influence their voting decision.

Three out of the four participants that voted to leave the EU referendum cited the floods in their reasoning.

*“They have started to make the River Kent wider and deeper but now they have stopped... Those people in the EU are directing to us what we can and cannot do with the rivers. Maybe once we leave the government will start to care and not listen to them and get on with what is really needed” - **June***

*“We should have left the EU a long time ago... the EU have so much say over whether we can dredge the river Kent it was another reason to exit” - **Cameron***

*“I will not say I voted to Leave the EU. I think the economy will improve and then with the sign you just showed me... I mean we can get the Kent sorted... I think we need to get our sovereignty back” - **Mark***

All three participants spoke of river dredging regarding why they thought the EU was to blame for the scale of damage Storm Desmond caused. Thus, in this instance the flooding appeared to have influence over the voting decision taken by these three participants in the 2016 EU referendum.

Summary: Interviews

The results from the qualitative research showcased perceptions towards the local and national government differed. Expectations of the national government were higher; their failure in minimising the scale of the damage and poor governmental performance in responding to the disaster were voiced. The local government, namely SLDC were viewed more positively, providing assistance to help rehouse affected residents. Local MP Tim Farron – as discussed previously, was perceived by respondents as part of the local government. He was regarded positively in his efforts to help the recovery process. The EU was discussed in regards to preventing the dredging process of the River Kent.

The results of both the content analysis and the interviews will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

A key aim of the dissertation was to investigate the political impact of the 2015 Cumbrian floods on trust in political institutions, addressing the main research gap through exploring the relationship between political trust and natural disasters within a UK context. This aim was pursued via two research methods: interviews of Cumbrian adults who had experienced flooding and a content analysis of relevant newspaper articles from local newspaper, the Westmorland Gazette during the period May 2016 to January 2017. From analysing the interview transcript data, it appears to show blame lies with the national government both in regard to their ability to prevent the scale of the flood damage and towards their weak response in the aftermath, with particular criticism voiced over the efforts of David Cameron and George Osborne, two key political elites. The local government appears to be viewed more favourably vis-à-vis the response effort demonstrated by South Lakeland District Council. It suggests public expectations regarding what is required in the aftermath of a disaster vary across differing levels of government, thus subsequently negative perceptions of the national government were greater than the local government since citizen's expectations of the national government were higher.

Prior communication research has suggested the way the news is told broadly affected attribution of responsibility by the audience. The manner by which stories are framed, alongside the tone and images used can shape perceptions of who readers hold accountable in the wake of a natural disaster (Ben-Porath and Shaker, 2010). The findings from the content analysis extensively showcase the failures of the national government, particularly in their response efforts. Moreover,

the results also reveal a positive portrayal of the community, the local government and the local MP in their efforts to improve the situation for affected residents. Media coverage of Hurricane Katrina centred on the inability of the government to provide aid and assistance; unsurprisingly 70 per cent of respondents stated the national government's response was too slow (Maestas, Atkeson, Croom and Bryant 2008). How the local media framed Storm Desmond, with regard to the stories used and who they attributed responsibility to, appeared to parallel the qualitative findings of the interviews; particularly as respondents discussed images and financial figures that were documented in this media source.

One of the key findings from this research regards participant's discussing Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron as being a part of the local government, irrespective of the fact he is a representative for the House of Commons. The critical evaluations of the national government appeared in stark contrast to the praise exhibited towards Mr. Farron for his response efforts. Our findings appear in line with Norton's research who claim citizen's views of the local MP can exist independently of the views of the House of Commons (Norton, 2005) (Norton, 2012). This notion is exemplified by the newspaper articles in the content analysis which discuss Tim Farron placing pressure on the government to act; therefore, portraying him as a 'powerful friend' for the community. Due to this, the views expressed towards the local MP will be considered separately to the views held towards the national government.

The qualitative findings in relation to voting behaviour in the EU referendum showcase the issue of river dredging was salient; albeit not wholly influential, it still was listed in three of the participant's reasoning why they chose to vote 'leave'. The aim of the content analysis was to investigate the role of the media and their framing of the floods. The frequency of the negative articles display blame was attributed heavily towards the national government, whilst in contrast

the local government, the local MP and the community efforts were discussed more positively. The findings from both the content analysis and the interview data parallel each other in regard to where blame lay and who was spoken of in more positive terms.

Political trust relates to the ratio of people's evaluations of government performance relative to their normative expectations of how a government ought to perform. Levels of political trust thus decline when the government fail to meet these expectations (Hetherington, 2006). The results suggest expectations between the national government and local government differed, which in turn led to the national government being viewed by citizen's more negatively. This evidence mirrors Uslaner and Yamamura (2016) findings regarding their study of the 2011 Japan Tsunami. The disaster led to a sharp decline in trust of the national government and a particular negative public perception of the Japanese Prime Minister, nonetheless they observed no loss of support in local governments. They revealed the national government failed to respond effectively to the needs of the people. The findings of this study similarly display the inability of the national government to provide adequate funding in Cumbria to help the process of recovery.

Natural disasters provide tests for political elites. Confidence in political leaders is a critical component for government legitimacy, for confidence to remain high, leaders must be able to display an understanding and a sympathy towards those affected and demonstrate their capabilities to improve their situation (Uslaner and Yamamura, 2016). The perception of political elites at Westminster, namely David Cameron was critical. The results suggest that he failed to demonstrate an understanding of the people's problems; concerned solely with the media exposure of his presence in the affected towns. Weight is arguably added to this unfavourable viewpoint regarding the limited financial assistance that was given in the first few months following the disaster. However, the assessment of Mr. Farron was more positive.

Citizens expected him to act on behalf of his constituents; photographic evidence displayed in the newspaper articles of him meeting with government ministers and residents, suggests these expectations were met. In addition, the question of housing in the aftermath of the floods was assigned to the SLDC. Their efficient and quick response to help relocate affected residents was positively discussed and thus this expectation appears also to have been met. This notion helps in understanding why our research found levels of trust differed between levels of government.

Preventive planning is vital in mitigating the impact of natural disasters. When citizens feel the incumbent government had the capabilities to reduce the scale of the damage, they are likely to attribute blame and punish the responsible party accordingly (Arceneaux and Stein, 2006). The knowledge of cuts in flood defence funding by the national government added to the blame citizens felt. Previous literature that studied disaster preparedness in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina similarly showcased the blame attributed towards the federal government as a result of the ineffective and limited number of measures that were in place. (Cutter and Gall, 2006). However, a study of households in the Netherlands logged half of respondents viewed disaster preparedness as an equal responsibility between themselves and the government (Terpstra and Gutteling, 2008). Nonetheless, it is important to note such study used a random sample of individuals, predominately concerned with investigating government policy and to whom had not been directly affected by flooding, as opposed to the respondents of this research.

The results of this study identify the dredging of the River Kent as a salient issue in regard to explaining how the scale of the flood damage could have been prevented. Although the issue of river dredging is debated regarding its ability to minimise the risk of flooding, participants in the interviews stressed it as not only a key variable that contributed to the scale of the damage but also as a key concern for the

future. The importance of river dredging highlighted by the findings, is in line with reports published by the Flood Prevention Society. They emphasise that reductions in channel maintenance is a public neglect; it is viewed as a crucial component of why flooding has occurred in the Cumbria area; additionally, documenting how it is responsible for Carlisle's flood history (Flood Prevention Society, 2015). The relationship between the EU and river dredging showcased that citizen's will punish the incumbents accordingly and thus is aligned with the responsibility attribution theory and its ability to affect voting behaviour. The results suggest that river dredging was part of citizen's reasoning when deciding whether to vote in or out on June 23rd.

Healey and Malhotra (2009) argued that individuals do not punish political elites for a lack of preparedness spending, holding them responsible only for their relief spending efforts in the aftermath of the disaster; whilst Selves (2012) claimed flood preparedness is an important issue for citizens, but only in the short term. However, our findings appear to refute this research, as one of the most discussed topics was the issue of river dredging. It was spoken of as a reason to which influenced the vote of participants in the EU referendum. Furthermore, the results from the interviews - conducted a year after the flooding occurred, demonstrated citizens were still heavily critical towards the government, regarding their decision to cut funds from flood defences prior to Storm Desmond. Thus, both of these preparedness measures appear to still remain salient in the minds of respondents.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The investigation of the 2015 Cumbrian floods has demonstrated this natural disaster had political consequences. Political trust levels towards the national government have declined since public expectations about the government, regarding their actions both before and after the flooding were not met; in contrast trust levels towards the local government and the local MP appeared unaffected. The local media framed both the national government and the EU negatively, but adopted a more favourable and positive stance towards the local government and MP Tim Farron. The findings show the views from both the local media and the participants appear to mirror each other, regarding where both blame and praise were attributed. The results showcased the importance of river dredging for citizens and why responsibility was ascribed to the EU regarding them preventing such process. The research study was able to display this issue influenced voting behaviour in the 2016 EU referendum.

These findings add to the disaster/politics literature, since the research demonstrated the 2015 Cumbria floods impacted on both political trust levels and voting behaviour. Although the research concentrated on a single case, it explored an evident research gap, since literature examining the political impact of a natural disaster in a UK context was yet to be investigated.

The findings also add weight to the work by Norton (Norton, 2005) (Norton, 2012) which identified that citizens distinguish between the role of the MP and the institution to which they are part of. Their

evaluations of the local MP existed independently from their views held towards the national government.

Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

Due to constraints of time, this research study had a small number of participants and was restricted to the South Lakeland area. Storm Desmond affected the counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire, together with the Scottish borders; thus conducting this research study with a larger sample across a widespread of affected regions would help further investigate the disaster/politics relationship within the UK⁶.

Political Implications

Declining levels of political trust can affect the stability of a democratic political system. This study has implications for government policy regarding flood prevention. The dissatisfaction from citizens stress the need for the government to rethink its flood defence policy and the measures which it currently has in place. This government need to assess their spending on flood defences and the issue of river dredging. Climate change is predicated by most models and as such this will only increase the occurrence of severe weather related accidents; increasing the likelihood of further floods and thus the possibility for further declining political trust levels - a situation not wished by any fully-functioning democracy.

⁶ See Appendix 3 for full limitations of this study

Appendix 1: Table of flooding events that have affected the Kendal area

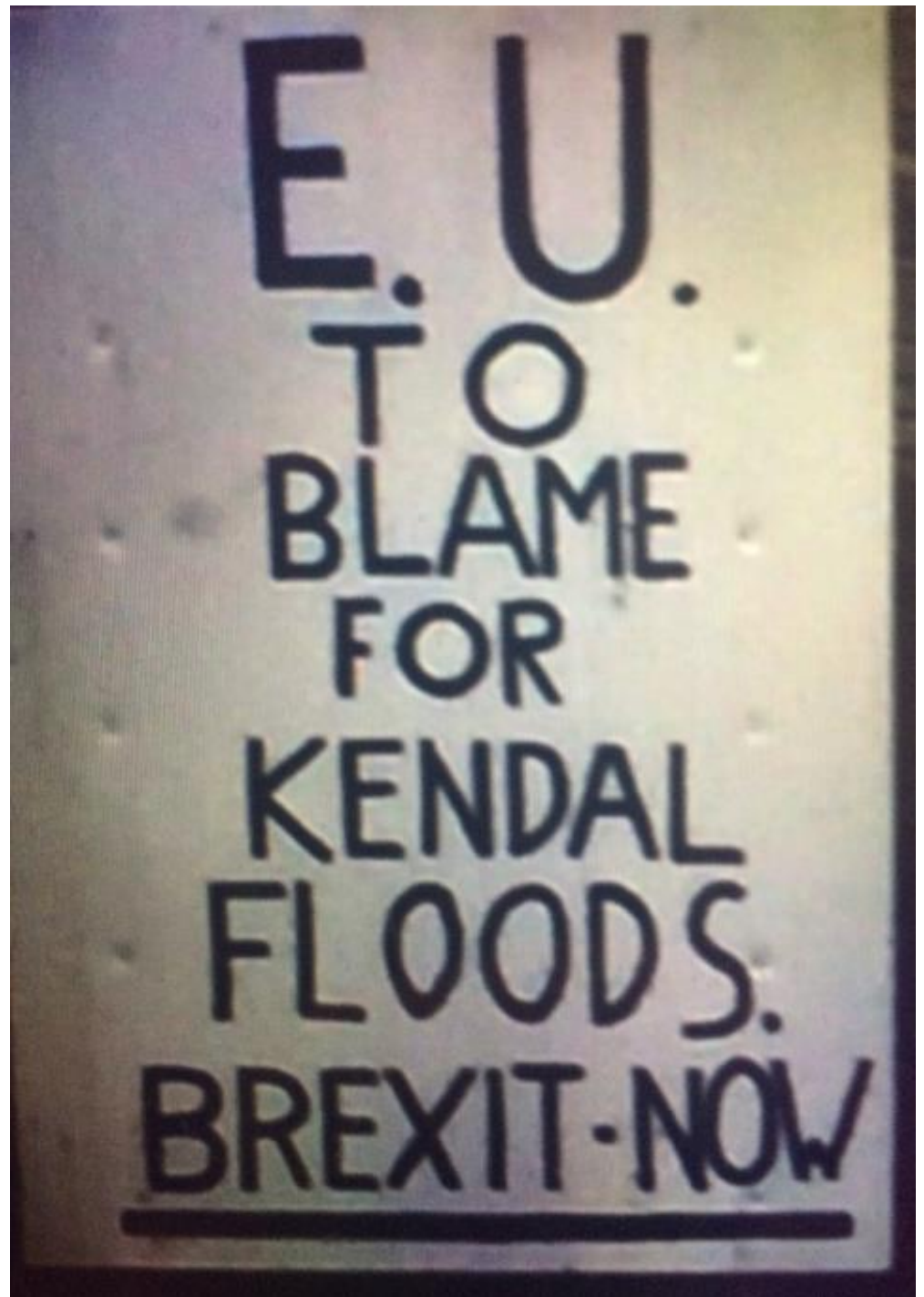
Taken from the Environmental Agency Flood Investigation Report for Kendal in partnership with Cumbria County Council, 5th-6th December 2015 (Environment agency, 2016). It outlines the date of the flooding event; the number of houses affected and the peak flow in the four rivers that run through Kendal and the neighbouring villages.

Flooding Event	Number of Properties Flooded	Peak Flow in River Kent @ Bowston	Peak Flow in River Sprint @ Sprint Mill	Peak Flow in River Mint @ Mint Bridge	Peak Flow in River Kent @ Victoria Bridge
December 1954	370	-	-	-	280.0 ¹
December 1964	100+	-	-	-	222.0 ¹
December 1968	-	-	-	-	188.0 ¹
December 1985	-	-	68.9	99.8	199.0
February 2004	80	109.0	71.9	112.8	253.6
January 2005	100+	122.5	80.5	115.4	268.5
November 2009	25	118.9	71.7	85.9	248.4
December 2015	2,150	177.0	94.8	170.0	403.0

Appendix 2: Image shown to participants during interview.

Photograph taken: 11/05/2016

Location: Ann Street, Kendal, Cumbria



Appendix 3: Methodology; full details of research methods including materials, participant recruitment, limitations and personal reflection

Materials

As the researcher, I created an interview schedule (Appendix 5) which comprised of a set of twenty-two open, semi-structured questions aimed at extracting information from participants in relation the flooding. They were designed to understand participant's views of the response efforts from both the local government and national government. Furthermore, they were designed to understand if participant's believed the scale of the damage created could have been minimised. The questions also aimed to gain insight in to participant's voting behaviour in the 2016 EU referendum, vis-à-vis if the occurrence of the disaster influenced their voting decision. In addition, to the interview schedule, a Plain Language Statement (Appendix 6) and Consent Form (Appendix 8) were created and given to participants prior to the interview. The interviews were recorded on a mobile phone device. Once transcribed both the audio recording and the additional notes taken were destroyed in order to adhere to ethical guidelines and the consent form.

Participant Recruitment

The research study started with a single respondent, who I as the researcher knew on a personal level and who agreed to be interviewed. This participant agreed to contact a set of potential participants who had been affected by the floods. They provided them with my contact details (email)⁷, who they could contact if they wished to participate; alongside the consent form and plain language statement. Four potential participants' contacted me declaring their interest in participating in the study, stating they had read both the PLS and

⁷ See Appendix 7 for email sent to potential participants once they had contacted me

consent form. Emails were exchanged between me and the potential participants to arrange a place of meeting that was suitable and safe for both of us. At the end of these interviews, the four participants were asked if they knew of further potential participants who had been affected by the flooding and who were over 18, since the research required the participant's to be of voting age. I provided these individuals with my email address, alongside the PLS and Consent Form to which they could pass on. A further three participants contacted me. This process allowed the potential respondents to contact me, ensuring I did not hold any information about individuals who did not wish to take part. Before the interview started, respondents were made aware that participation was voluntary and confidentiality was assured. All interviews took place in Kendal Town centre, as this destination was easily accessible for all. The interviews themselves took place in a range of cafes located in the town centre, dependent on the preference of the participant. They were considered safe, easily accessible and quiet enough for audio devices to pick up the recording of the interview. After the interviews, participants were asked if they had any further questions they would like to ask. I also reminded them of my contact details if they had any questions at a later date. The recordings of the interviews were transcribed in to a Word Document (Appendix 8) using pseudonyms to conceal the participant's identity, in accordance with the ethical guidelines.

Limitations

Qualitative interviews were chosen for this research study. Such technique provides more depth and detail to the general picture as opposed to using quantitative social data. As the research aimed to understand individual's experiences and viewpoints regarding the Cumbrian floods, this method was regarded as the most suitable (Edwards and Holland, 2013). The content analysis research method used in this study, was too considered a suitable method, since it has been used frequently in studies which focus on how the media frames

events and can influence public perceptions (Freyenberger, 2013). Nonetheless, it should be noted that both of these methods come with limitations, namely the issue of reliability. Language is inherently instable; subject to continuous interpretation by the researcher and full of ambiguity and open-endedness. What a question or answer means to the interviewee can represent something different to the interviewer (Edwards and Holland, 2013). Achieving reliability is challenging because each interview is unique in some way. Similarly, content analysis can rely heavily on the subjective interpretation of the researcher when coding the textual data. These critiques are exemplified in this research study, as only one coder was used to interpret both the interview transcript data and the local newspaper articles. However, the transcripts of the interviews were produced on word, whilst the newspaper articles were kept, therefore if a second coder was available they too could interpret the data, improving inter-coder reliability.

When considering how the views held towards local MP, were independent from the views held towards the national government, the study only concentrated on Westmorland and Lonsdale MP Tim Farron, therefore once again limiting the ability to generalise the findings. Future research could investigate how participant's viewed local MPs in other affected areas i.e. Penrith and The Border MP Rory Stewart, then it would help in understanding whether such phenomenon can be observed across the UK or if such finding is only applicable to the South Lakeland area, resulting from the favourable position Mr. Farron holds.

Personal Reflection

One of the main concerns with this research study may involve the close ties I hold with the affected area. Having lived in the town of Kendal all of my life, I have witnessed first-hand the emotional and

financial impact flooding can have on a household, when my family was forced to re-locate in 2005 when the River Kent burst its banks. Being in the town during the 5th and 6th December 2015 when the disaster occurred, I was able to observe the devastation caused and the impact it had on the lives of residents and the community as a whole. This may have affected my ability to remain neutral. Nonetheless, in order to try and overcome this, apart from one participant who I knew on a personal level, I had no connection or relationship with the other seven participants involved in the research study. I held some pre-conceived ideas about what respondents would say; however, I felt this was unavoidable since the flooding has been a conversational topic discussed on a daily basis at my workplace, in the town itself and also in my personal household. I tried to minimise any interview bias, keeping an open-mind to participant's answers and by limiting any leading or suggestive questions.

Appendix 4: University of Glasgow Ethics Form



University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Student Application form for ethical approval

College Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Before completing this form, you should refer to the guidance notes available at:
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/undergraduateandpostgraduatetaughtstudents/>

This application form should be typed, and submitted electronically. **All questions must be answered.** "Not applicable" is a satisfactory answer where appropriate.

Applications should be submitted **at least 4 weeks in advance** of the intended start date for the data collection to allow time for review and any amendments that may be required.

1 Applicant Details

Student I.D. 2067026S
Name of Applicant: Ellia Stephens
School/Subject: Social Sciences/ Politics
Project Title: Investigating the Impact of the 2015 Cumbrian Floods on Political Trust and Political Preferences
Postgraduate Taught <input type="checkbox"/>
Undergraduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
(Programme Convenors Only) Full Course Project within a PGT or UG Programme <input type="checkbox"/>

Submit application via email to School Ethics Administrator: see Ethics website for contact

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/committee/ethicscontacts/>

1.1 Degree/Programme Title: *All student applicants*

Undergraduate Politics Degree/Dissertation

2 Ethical Risks: **The application will NOT be considered if this section is blank, both 2.1 and 2.2 must be completed by all Supervisors.**

Risk Assessment: Is this application considered to be a low risk or a high risk application?

Refer to **Risk Guidance Document** on College ethics webpages for clarification.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/undergraduateandpostgraduatetaughtstudents/>

HIGH RISK LOW RISK

2.1 Explain specifically why the low or high risk distinction has been made.

This research is considered low risk for it does not involve targeting any of the groups identified as vulnerable. It does not cover topics that are identified as high-risk or employ any of the methods or procedures identified as intrusive. The research will not involve participants under 18 years of age and does not involve participants who will be unable to give their informed consent or who have some degree of a learning disability. There is little risk surrounding participants disclosing illegal activities, additionally there is no risk that illegal material will need to be accessed. The research does not pose a risk greater than normal life.

2.2 Risk Assessment Comments from Supervisor

Comment on the research ethics risks involved in the project. It should be clear from the comments provided that the potential risks have been considered and information provided on what they are, with evidence of what is to be implemented to mitigate these.

The proposed research explores the impact of the 2015 floods in Cumbria on the political views and trust in political institutions of Cumbrian adult citizens using semi-structured interviews to take place at a neutral location. Participation will be preceded by informed consent, and participants will be assured of the confidentiality of all information disclosed in the interview. The student researcher is very sensitive to the fact that the subject of the floods could be potentially difficult for some interview subjects, and she will convey explicitly the voluntary nature of the interview and the fact that it can be paused or ended at any point based on a request by the interviewee or the perception by the interviewer of potential discomfort.

Declaration: I have checked this application and approve it for submission for review to the Ethics Committee.

Supervisor's Name :



Date: 28 November 2016

3 All Researcher(s) including research assistants and transcribers (where appropriate)

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	
Miss Stephens	Ellia	07932441103	

All Supervisor(s) Principal First (where applicable)

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	Email (This University)
Wright	Karen	X6920	Karen.

4 External funding details

Note. If this project is externally funded, please provide the name of the sponsor or funding body.

No external funding provided

5 Project Details

Start Date for Data Collection: 27/12/2016

(NB: This refers to data collection for the research covered in this application. **This must be at least 4 weeks from the date of application submission.**)

Proposed End Date of Research Project: 27/02/2017

(NB: This date should be when you expect to have completed the full project and published the results e.g. date of award, allow time for possible retrieval if required.)

6 Justification for the Research

Why is this research significant to the wider community? What might be the impact on your practice or the practice of others? *Outline the reasons which lead you to be satisfied that the possible benefits to researchers; participants and others to be gained from the project justify any risks or discomfort involved.*

Storm Desmond hit the north of England on the 5th-6th December 2015. It caused widespread flooding throughout the region, with the worst affected areas noted as Cumbria and Lancashire. The South Lakeland area was heavily affected particularly the towns of Kendal, Windermere and Burneside. Albeit, discussion of the flooding may be a sensitive issue, it can allow participants involved to express their views. It also allows others unaffected by the floods to gain insight into how the flooding has affected the area, whilst giving potential insight to the government at both a local and national level to understand why the individual could be frustrated at their actions. It can also provide insight in to the choices of affected voters in the recent EU referendum.

7 Research Methodology and Data Collection

7.1 Method of data collection *(Tick as many as apply)*

Face to face or telephone interview *(provide a copy of the interview themes. This does not need to be a list of questions but does need to provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to form a clear view of the project and its ethical implications.)*

Focus group *(provide details of themes or questions. This does not need to be an exact list of questions but need to provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to form a clear view of the project and its ethical implications. Also information on recording format)*

Audio or video-recording interviewees or events. Details should be provided, either in theme/questionnaire information or separately. *(Ensure that permission is evidenced on the consent form)*

Questionnaire *(provide a copy of at least indicative questions, final questions must be submitted as a separate document if not provided in initial application)*

Online questionnaire *(provide the address/ or electronic copy if not yet available online)*

http://

Participant observation *(provide an observation proforma)*

Other methodology *(please provide details here – maximum 50 words)*

7.2 Research Methods

Please explain the reason for the particular chosen method, the estimated time commitment required of participants and how the data will be analysed. Ensure that you include reference to methods of providing confidentiality as you indicate below in section 8.1

The research design will use qualitative methods as it involves understanding complex phenomenon requiring in-depth answers. A qualitative research method design allows for more open answers, allowing me as the researcher to probe for further elaboration. The data collection will be used a semi-structured interview. This method is utilised as it will allow me as the research to draw and provide an insight in to understanding the participant's experiences of the floods. The research will involve 8-12 interviews that will take place over a 2-week period. As qualitative methods will be used the data will be analysed descriptively.

The interview sample will be identified using a snowball strategy. In the first instance I will contact a colleague who has been affected by the floods and has indicated a willingness to put me in touch with other people. Using the plain language statement I will brief her about the project and the interview. I will supply her with an email that uses the language of the PLS to explain the project and what is involved in being interviewed. If appropriate I will then ask the interviewee whether they might know of others who might be interested in participating in an interview. If so, then they will be given the PLS information again to us in contacting others. This preserves the anonymity of those people at each stage who do not wish to participate.

The research will involve discussion of sensitive issues namely the revealing of political views surrounding party's preferences and the way an individual voted in the June 2016 EU Referendum. Revealing political opinions can be considered controversial and can lead to a feeling of being judged by the wider community. I will ensure participants know that any information provided will be kept private and confidential and a pseudonym will be used in order to ensure anonymity. I will remind participants that their answers will not be judged. The damage caused by the flooding can still be seen within the South Lakeland Area thus individuals may still be feeling emotionally distressed from the event and discussion of the flooding in the interview could trigger these distressed feelings. I will ensure that participants are aware that the interview can be stopped at any time if they are

feeling uncomfortable in any way and that there will be no consequences for stopping the interview. I also as the researcher will take the executive decision as the researcher conducting the interview to stop the interview from proceeding if I feel the participants is feeling uncomfortable through their responses, tone of voice or body language to ensure no emotional or psychological harm is inflicted. The interview will be conducted in a familiar, safe environment for both me as the researcher and the participant.

The interview will be tape-recorded and a transcript of the interview will be made alongside additional notes. A pseudonym will be used for each participant in order to protect the participant’s anonymity. Arrangements will be made for the participants to hear/view any of these items if they wish to do so. The recordings and notes will be deleted once the data has been analysed.

8 Confidentiality & Data Handling

8.1 Will the research involve:

**You should select all options that apply to your (different) research methods (insert the name of the method in shaded box at top of each column, e.g. interview / questionnaire) and make clear in section 7.2 above how these will be applied.*

<i>Degree of anonymity</i>	(insert method)	(insert method)	(insert method)
De-identified samples or data (i.e. a reversible process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location?)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Anonymised samples or data (i.e. an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete anonymity of participants (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are part of a random sample and are required to return	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

responses with no form of personal identification)?

Use of Names

Subject being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?

Participants consent to being named?

Any other methods of protecting the privacy of participants? (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific, written permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only):

provide details here:

Pseudonyms will be used for all direct quotes. Quotes containing information that could be used to identify participants will not be used.

Participants being made aware that confidentiality may be impossible to guarantee; for example in the event of disclosure of harm or danger to participants or others; or due to size of sample, particular locations etc?

8.2 Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?

***Tick all that apply**

Note: The more ethically sensitive the data, the more secure will the conditions of storage be expected to be.

Location of Storage

Storage at University of Glasgow

Stored at another site

(provide details here, including address)

Paper
Data to be kept secure in locked room/facility/cabinet
Data and identifiers to be kept secure in locked room/facility/cabinet
Electronic
Access to computer files to be available by password only
Other
Any other method of securing confidentiality of data in storage: <i>provide details here:</i>

9 Access to Data

9.1 Access by named researcher(s) and, where applicable, supervisor(s), examiner(s), research assistants, transcribers.

9.2 Access by people **OTHER** than named researcher(s)/Supervisor(s), examiner(s), research assistants, transcribers.

Please explain by whom and for what purpose:

10 Retention and Disposal of Personal Data *

Please explain and as appropriate justify your proposals for retention and/or disposal of any personal data to be collected. (*for example names, addresses, contact information*)

It is normally appropriate to destroy the personal data at the end of the research project, if you do not intend to do so, you must provide **substantial** reasons in the box below.

Do you intend to destroy the personal data collected?

YES NO

If no, provide your reasons here:

* *“(personal data means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified –
(a) From those data, or
(b) From those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller, and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.” Data Protection Act 1998 c.29 Part 1 Section 1*

Further Information on the Data Protection Act (1998) is available on the webpages of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Office:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/dpfooffice/>

11 Retention and Disposal of Research Data

Please explain and as appropriate justify your proposals for retention and/or disposal of research data to be collected.

It is normally appropriate to destroy the research data at the end of the research project, if you do not intend to do so, you must provide **substantial** reasons in the box below.

Do you intend to destroy the research data collected?

YES NO

If no, provide your reasons here:

12 Dissemination of Results.

12.1 Results will be made available to **PARTICIPANTS** as: *(Tick all that apply)*

Note: Intended method of dissemination ought normally to take account of the age, capacities and situation of participants.

Written summary of results to all if requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Presentation to representative participants <i>school principal)</i>
Verbal presentation to all (information session, debriefing etc) <input type="checkbox"/>	Other or None of the Above <i>Please explain here:</i>

12.2 Results will be made available to **PEERS AND/OR COLLEAGUES** as: *(Tick all that apply)*

Dissertation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Journal articles
Thesis <i>(e.g. PhD)</i> , <input type="checkbox"/>	Book
Submission <input type="checkbox"/>	Conference Papers
Other or None of the Above <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Please explain here:</i>	

13 Participants

13.1 Explain how you intend to recruit participants. Provide as much detail as you can about each different age/type of group as mentioned in 3.7b

An initial sample of potential participants will be contacted by a work colleague who has agreed to so do. The initial email contact will include the PLS and consent form in the main body of the text. If they do not choose to participate I will not have their email address. If they do wish to participate they will contact me. I will then use the snowballing sampling technique in order to gather further participants for the research. I will ask the initial participants if they know other individuals who were personally affected by Storm Desmond and if they would be able to contact them, letting them know that I would be interested in interviewing them in order to gain further information for this research study. All participants will be over 18 and will not hold a learning disability. The participants will involve a selection of both genders and will also reside from a similar class and background as all the participants will come from the same area, which is noted for being middle class. Again I will not have information about them unless they choose to contact me about participating.

13.2 Target Participant Group (Please indicate the targeted participant group by ticking all boxes that apply)

Students or Staff of the University <input type="checkbox"/>	Adults (<i>over 18 years old and competent to give consent</i>) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children/legal minors (<i>under 18 years old</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>	Adults (<i>over 18 years who may not be competent to give consent</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>
Young people aged 16-17 years <input type="checkbox"/>	

If you require information on the age of legal capacity please refer to the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 available at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/50/contents>

14 Incentives

If payment or any other incentive (such as a gift or free services) will be made to any participants please specify the source and the amount of payment to be made

and/or the source, nature and where applicable the approximate monetary value of the gift or free service to be used.

Please explain the justification for offering payment or other incentive.

No payment will be given

15 Number of Participants *(give details of different age and types of groups involved)*

The number of participants involved in the research will be 10.

The participants will be over the age of 18, since the interview will discuss the EU referendum vote and those under 18 were legally not allowed to vote.

The participants will be from the South Lake area. Both male and female participants will be included in the research. The South Lakeland area is regard as middle class; thus participants may fall in to this class categorisation as all participants will be chosen from this area.

16 Dependent Relationship

Are any of the participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators, particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project? *(For example, a school pupil is in a dependent relationship with their teacher. Other examples of a dependent relationship include student/lecturer; patient/doctor; employee/employer)*

YES

NO

If YES, explain the relationship and the steps to be taken by the investigators to ensure that the subject's participation is purely voluntary and not influenced by the relationship in any way.

The participants will not come from an organisation and thus permission will not be needed.

18.2 Does this application involve contacting University of Glasgow students directly (specifically either via email or within classes) for the purposes of your research?

YES NO

*If YES, separate permission to survey students needs to be obtained prior to any such survey being undertaken. Normally this permission should be sought from the **appropriate authority after** ethical approval has been granted. (See Information for Applicants*

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/informationforapplicants/#d.en.191190> for details).

Once obtained, a copy of this permission must be forwarded to the Ethics Administrator.

Please list the student participants that you intend to contact (e.g. 12 students from TESOL course)

19 Is this application being submitted to another Ethics Committee, or has it been previously submitted to another Ethics Committee?

YES NO

If YES, please provide name and location of the ethics committee and the result of the application.

20 Informed Consent

20.1a Have you attached your Plain Language Statement (PLS) (also known as Participant Information Sheet) for participants? You must consult the guidance at:
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/#d.en.191149> for information that you are required to provide in this.

The Plain Language Statement is written information in plain language that you will provide to participants to explain the project and invite their participation. Contact details for Supervisor and School Ethics Officer MUST be included.

YES NO

If No, please explain here.

20.1b Please note that a copy of this information sheet should be offered to the participant to keep unless there are specific reasons for not doing so. These must be clearly explained below

20.1c What arrangements have been made for participants who might not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information or who have special communication needs in the preparation of the Participant Information Sheet/Plain Language Statement? (e.g. the use of child friendly language, or where English as a second language)

Provide details here.

All participants will have English as their first language and will not be deemed to have special communication needs.

21 How will informed consent by individual participants or guardians be evidenced?

In normal circumstances it will be expected that written evidence of informed consent will be obtained and retained, and that a formal consent form will be used: a copy of which should be should be provided.

If written evidence of informed consent is **not** to be obtained a **substantial** justification of why not should be provided.

(Note: Please ensure that you have checked the box for all types of consent to be used, e.g. signed consent form for interviews/ implied for questionnaires.)

Signed consent form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recorded verbal consent
Implied by return of survey	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other <i>Provide details here:</i>

Justification if written evidence of informed consent is not to be obtained and retained:

22 Monitoring

Describe how the project will be monitored to ensure that the research is being carried out as approved (e.g. give details of regular meetings/email contact).

The research will involve email contact with regard to details of the interview i.e. time and place alongside the attachment of both the plain language statement and the consent form. However, these emails will be deleted once sent in order to ensure confidentiality and privacy remain intact.

The individuals will also receive the contact details of my supervisor if there are any problems.

23 Health and Safety

What are the potential issues of personal safety for you, other researchers or participants involved in the project and how will you manage them? (*Other than lone field work – refer to question 24.1 for this*)

As I am carrying out lone field work this holds a potential risk to safety. However, I will always keep my phone with me in case of emergencies in which I will be able to contact a family or friend surrounding my whereabouts. I will ensure the interview is conducted in a public place and not in a personal home or out of public sight. As I will be travelling to the destination via car, I will ensure that the car has passed its MOT, seatbelts are secure and the airbags are fully functioning. I will also ensure when travelling to the destination, I will only ever cross the road where a zebra crossing or a green pedestrian light is flashing, checking for oncoming traffic and only crossing when the time is appropriate.

24 Risk

24.1 Does the activity involve lone field work, lone working or travel to unfamiliar places?

(E.g. Carrying out interviews alone and off-campus) You should refer to the Risk Guidance at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/#d.en.1911409>

NB: This does not apply to working within an institution such as a school.

YES NO

Give details here of arrangements to minimise risks pertaining to this.

As I am carrying out lone field work this holds a potential risk to safety. I will notify either my parents or a friend about my location and expected length of the interview. I will also give them the phone number for the

location of the interview. I will phone them to let them know when I have finished the interview. Should they not hear from me and be concerned they will contact the location and if necessary take further appropriate action.

I will always keep my phone with me in case of emergencies in which I will be able to contact a family or friend surrounding my whereabouts. If I lose my phone or the signal is not working, I will go to the nearest available location with a phone i.e. a local shop. As I will have valuable equipment on me during the interview, such as my phone for tape-recording purposes, I will ensure it is kept in an inexpensive bag and it is out of public sight. As I will be travelling to the location via car, I will ensure the car has passed its MOT test, the seatbelts are secure and the airbags are fully functioning.

24.2 How will you ensure that you minimise any possible distress caused to participants by the research process?

I will choose a location for the interview that is safe, in public sight and is easily accessible. It will also be a place where conversation will not be heard.

I will remember at all times that the participant has chosen to give up their free time for my research and therefore will ensure I respect the answers that they give and their decision to terminate the interview if they wish to.

I will also be aware at all times of their body language and tone of voice regarding them expressing discomfort in which I will make the executive decision to stop the interview from proceeding any further.

I will also remind participants at the start of the interview that their answers are confidential and will not be judged and there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer.

24.3 How would you respond if you think that the participant has become distressed by any of the issues raised by the research? (Examples of distress: emotional, psychological, economic, health)

Contact Supervisor

Contact details of support organisations provided on PLS/Information Sheet

Provide details of support organisations at interview

Any other responses you propose to provide:

Cumbria Community Foundation has been providing both emotional and financial support to victims of the floods in the Cumbria area.

24.4 Does this research involve any sensitive topics or vulnerable groups? You should refer to the Risk Guidance at:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/undergraduateandpostgraduatestudents/>

YES NO

Give details here of arrangements to minimise risks pertaining to this.

While the focus of the research is on the impact of flooding on political trust and political opinion, the research does not necessarily touch on the flooding itself. Much of the South Lakeland area where the participants will live is still damaged and thus talking about the subject could be somewhat sensitive. Thus, it is up to me as the researcher to notice if the participant is distressed and to take the executive decision to stop the interview from proceeding any further if this was to occur. The research will also discuss political views and opinion which can be a sensitive issue for individuals do not always feel comfortable discussing. However I will ensure the participant's that there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer and their political opinions will not be judged. I will state that the information they provide will remain confidential and a pseudonym will be used throughout the research to protect anonymity.

25 Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Does this project require Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) clearance?

YES NO

If Yes, evidence that this has been obtained **MUST** be provided with this application.

If PVG registration is held or an application is currently in progress, please provide details here:

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 came into effect on 28 February 2011. This replaced the previous Disclosure Scotland checking system for individuals who work with children and/or protected adults.

The University is a Registered Body under this legislation.

Please consult the University Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme webpages <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/mgrs-admin/mgr-guidance/pvgscheme/> for guidance.

Further information is available from <http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/> ([Disclosure Scotland](http://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/))

26 Insurance

Does this research come under the exclusions to the University insurance cover for research?

YES NO

If Yes: Please explain and detail how you intend to cover the insurance needs for this research?

The University insurance cover is restricted in certain, specific circumstances, e.g., the use of hazardous materials, work overseas, research into pregnancy and conception and numbers of participants in excess of 5000. Please refer to the Insurance and Indemnity advice on the website given below. Advice or authorisation given must be included with this application.

Information may be available at this link:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/finance/staffsections/insuranceandrisk/>

(If you have a problem accessing this link, please try a different browser e.g. Firefox instead of Internet Explorer.)

27 UK and Scottish Government Legislation

Have you made yourself familiar with the requirements of the **Data Protection Act (1998)** <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/> and the **Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002?** <http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/Law/FOISA.aspx>

YES NO

If NO please explain

See **Application Guidance Notes** available from: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/forms/undergraduateandpostgraduate/taughtstudents/> for further information.

In addition visit: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/dpfoioffice/> for University guidance on Data Protection.

The **Freedom of Information Act 2002** ["FOI"] provides a general right of access to most of the recorded information that is held by the University. The Act sets out a number of exemptions/exceptions to this right of access.


! Declaration over page must be signed/completed. The application will be returned if it is no.

28 Declarations by Researcher(s) and Supervisor(s)

The application will NOT be accepted if this section is blank or incomplete

- The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.
- I have read the University's current human ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University's Code of Conduct for Research and any other condition laid down by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee and the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.
NB: Full details of the University's ethics guidelines are available at:
<http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/aims/ourpolicies/committeestructure/>
- I and my co-researcher(s) or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal effectively with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data collection can commence until I have been granted full ethical approval by the School Ethics Forum (UG & PGT students only).

This section MUST be completed to confirm acceptance of Code of Conduct. If there is no scanned signature then please type the names (or use GUID) and date into the boxes below.

	Date	Signature
Researcher (All applicants) Ellia Stephens (20670265)		Ellia Stephens 23/11/2016
Principal Supervisor Karen Wright		 28/11/2016

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For Supervisors – Please note that by submitting this application the supervisor confirms that:

- The student is aware of the College ethics requirements.
- The topic merits further research.
- The student has the relevant skills to begin research.
- If interviewing, the student has produced an appropriate information sheet for participants.
- The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate.

End of Application Form

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Applications should be submitted electronically as follows:

Send to relevant **School Ethics Forum (SEF)** via email to School ethics administrative contact. Please see contact details on College ethics website.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/students/ethics/committee/ethicscontacts/>

Important Note:

Either student e-mails the application to their supervisor, who checks it and submits it to their local SEF contact. (***Education, Social and Political Sciences, Adam Smith Business School, Interdisciplinary Studies requires this process***)

Or student submits the application and the supervisor sends a supporting email direct to the SEF contact
(Law allows this option)

(Checklist follows over page...)

Application Form Checklist: This is for your own use: do not submit with application

- Are all fields completed?
- Has the supervisor signed and dated Section 2.2 *and* 28?
- Are you submitting your application 4 weeks in advance of your data collection?
- Have you included a Plain Language Statement?
- Have you included a Consent Form?
- Have you included Interview Themes/Questionnaire/Observation Proforma?
- Have you provided details of numbers/circumstances of participants?
- Are you aware of the procedure for written permission, and when to obtain this?

Appendix 5: Interview Schedule

Interview schedule:

My name is ***** I am currently an undergraduate politics student at the University of Glasgow, conducting a politics dissertation. I would like to ask you some questions regarding the flooding which occurred in December of last year as a result of Storm Desmond. I hope to use this information to help gain insight in to how political trust could have been affected by both the local and national government's response and if the flooding impacted on the voting behaviour of individuals come the 2016 EU referendum. The interview should take around 30-45 minutes.

Background and context

In this section, we are interested in understanding the demographics of the individual

- 1) Firstly, please could tell me about yourself [age, location, employment, length of time the individual has lived in the area]

Political Trust

In this section, we are interested in the participant's personal understanding of political trust and would they consider themselves an individual who retains a high/low level of political trust. We are also interested in their perceived expectations of a democratic government; what democratic standards do they believe a government should uphold.

- 1) What do you expect from a government [both local/national] in an advanced democracy like the United Kingdom?
- 2) Prior to the flooding would you consider yourself as having a high level of political trust? [in both local/national governments prior to the flooding]
- 3) Why did you retain a high/low level?

The flooding

In this section, we are interested in knowing how the floods personally affected them and if it still affecting them. It also aims to understand the individual's views regarding the media's portrayal of the flooding particularly the local newspapers, allowing an insight in to the relationship between media and political trust.

- 4) How did the floods affect you? [Damage to property and the emotional impact]
- 5) If the flooding affected your property what was the scale of the damage? Are you now back living there? How long did it take for you to move back? What is your opinion regarding the help you received in repairing your property and enabling you to move back in?
- 6) Do you think the scale of the flooding and the damage it caused have been prevented? If so in what ways?

Political Impact of the floods

In this section we are interested in how the participant's viewed the response and actions of both the local and national government in the aftermath of Storm Desmond, was it positive or negative. It also seeks to understand the views of the participant's regarding who or what are is to blame for the flooding and why they take this stance.

- 7) What is your opinion of the response provided at the local level [local council and local authorities]?
- 8) What is your opinion of the response provided by the national government?
- 9) [If they have a perceived negative view of the response] – Do you think the response provided has affected your attitude and opinion of the local and national government? Do you have a more negative view towards them? Do you trust them less?
- 10) In Ann Street in Kendal, a sign was displayed saying “*EU to blame for Kendal Floods, BREXIT now*” what is your opinion of it, do you think it is true?
- 11) Do you mind disclosing if you have a party affiliation [which way you voted in the 2015 General Election]? What are your reasons for this?
- 12) In the Westmorland and Lonsdale area, local MP Tim Farron appears to be viewed favourably, do you think his response to the flooding has affected him [either positively or negatively]

Party affiliations and EU Referendum

In this section we are interested in gaining an insight in to EU referendum, was the participant happy with the result, do they believe the response of authorities could have impacted on the way an individual voted at the ballot box on June 23rd.

- 13) Were you happy with the EU referendum result?
- 14) What was your reasoning behind your vote? [Were the floods a factor in how the individual voted?
- 15) In regards to sign on Ann Street “*EU to blame for Kendal Floods, Brexit now*” do you think the flooding could have caused people to vote to leave?
- 16) Why do you think the South Lakeland area was one of the only regions to have a majority vote remain?

Appendix 6: Plain Language Statement



College of Social
Sciences

Plain Language Statement (or Participant Information Sheet)

The study investigates the impact the 2015 Cumbrian floods has had on Political Trust and Voting Behaviour

My name is *****. I am a Politics student from the University of Glasgow conducting a study for an Honours Politics dissertation.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide on participating it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what the study will involve. Please ensure you read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. If there is anything you need to be further clarified or you require further information regarding the study, please do not hesitate to ask. Take time to decide if you wish to take part.

I am seeking 8-12 participants to take part in this study. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It will involve a 30-45-minute interview. The interview will take place in a location that is safe, comfortable and easily accessible for you, for example a café in the centre of Kendal town.

The purpose of this research study is to explore how the flooding as a result of Storm Desmond has impacted on political trust levels in those affected. The research aims to understand the opinions and feelings of those affected towards both the local and national government regarding their response in the aftermath of the flood. Has the perceived action influenced the way an individual chose to vote in the June 23rd EU referendum?

You have been chosen as you were personally affected by the flooding. You are also over the age of 18 and therefore was eligible to vote in the June 23rd EU referendum.

Consent for the recording of the interview will be asked for prior to the interview. Both a transcript of the interview will be made alongside additional notes taken by the researcher. Arrangements can be made at

a later date for you to hear/view any of these items if you wish to do so.

Interview submissions will retain your anonymity, your answers will remain confidential and pseudonyms will be used throughout the study. The information collected will be stored in a password protected computer and in a secure filing cabinet, both of which can only be accessed by myself and by my supervisor, Karen Wright. This information will be destroyed after the dissertation is submitted and marked. If you wish to view the interview submissions, then you can do so by contacting either myself or my advisor. If you wish to view the submitted dissertation on completion, you can once again contact me or my supervisor.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies

You have the right to withdraw your consent at any point in the study, and you do not have to provide any reason for doing so. I appreciate any amount of time you provide me for this study, should you decide to do so.

Cumbria Community Foundation has been providing both emotional support and financial assistance to those who have been affected by Storm Desmond. They can be contacted via email enquiries@cumbriafoundation.org or phone 01900 825760

There are no specific risks associated with this research topic.

This research study has been reviewed by the School of Social and Political Sciences ethics forum.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet, please contact me at 2067026S@student.gla.ac.uk for further information.

You can also contact my dissertation supervisor if you require further information also at Karen.Wright@glasgow.ac.uk.

If you wish to take part, you must sign a consent form. Please keep hold of this information sheet for further reference.

Appendix 7: Email sent on behalf of the researcher to potential participant's – once they had contacted me declaring their interest in participating in the research study

Re: Investigating the impact of the 2015 Cumbrian floods on Political Trust and Voting Behaviour

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for contacting me regarding participation in this research study.

You will have received both the PLS and the consent form prior to this email.

As stated in the PLS, my name is *****. I am a student at the University of Glasgow. I am conducting this research as part of my undergraduate politics dissertation.

As stated in the PLS, participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I am seeking between 8-12 participants. It will involve a 30-45-minute interview. The interview will take place in a location that is safe, comfortable and easily accessible for you. Arrangement for meeting can be discussed in a follow-up email.

Once again, the purpose of the interview to explore how the flooding as a result of Storm Desmond has impacted on political trust levels in those affected. The research aims to understand the opinions and feelings of those affected towards both the local and national government regarding their response in the aftermath of the flood. Has the perceived action influenced the way an individual chose to vote in the June 23rd EU referendum?

You have been chosen as you were personally affected by the flooding. You are also over the age of 18 and therefore was eligible to vote in the June 23rd EU referendum

Agreement to be contacted further by email or a request for more information does not obligate you to take part in this research study.

The use of email to recruit participants for this research study has been approved by the School of Social and Political Sciences ethics forum.

If you require additional information about the study please email me or my advisor Karen Wright: Karen.Wright@glasgow.ac.uk.

Thank you again for considering this research opportunity.

Kind Regards, *****

Appendix 8: Consent form



University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

Consent Form

Title of Project: Investigating the Impact of the 2015 Cumbrian Floods on Political Trust and Voting Behaviour

Name of Researcher: *****

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time throughout the interview, without giving any reason
3. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
4. I understand the procedures regarding confidentiality in this interview (e.g. the use of anonymisation of the data)
5. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Researcher

Date
Participant Signature

Appendix 9: Example of Interview transcript – June

Age: 56

Gender: *Female*

Location: *Kendal*

Employment: *Receptionist at the local leisure centre*

Length of Time Living in Area: *Born in Kendal*

Can you recount the day and night of the floods; do you remember it? *I was working that day. I got to the end of Sandylands road and the water was rising by the minute. The force of the water was so great down Peat Lane; the drain had flown up in the air. At 7'oclock I looked out and there was just water gushing down my street and by half past 7 it was coming in through the house, the drains had blocked up at the back. At quarter to 9 all the electric went out. Me and my daughter were trying to just grab as much stuff, like all the children's photos to take upstairs.*

How did the floods affect you? *I was out of my house for months. The whole of my downstairs was affected and we needed to have these huge blowers the council gave us to help dry the place out. I think the worst thing though was seeing all the Christmas presents from the children next door just chucked out on to the street because they couldn't be saved... I do think everyone pulled together, if it wasn't for the people of this town, I don't know how I would have been able to cope, they helped me so much in getting back on my feet. The insurance company was fantastic too.*

Do you think the scale of the flooding and the damage it caused have been prevented? If so in what ways? *Yes, I mean I think the whole thing could have been prevented if I'm being honest. I can't remember the last time they did anything to the River Kent. This was going to happen again, I mean flooding has happened again and again over the last 10 years... We need to dredge the rivers that is just a must but I know we can't because of the cray fish in Morecambe bay. The farmers in the fields have got to be able to do what they have to do, if they need to dredge the rivers they should be allowed to. Honestly if someone had dredged the River Kent then most of the houses in Kendal I don't think would have been flooded... The fact the EU have put a stop to river dredging is absolutely wrong...Farmers have always dredged the rivers and the fields, I mean we never used to have floods like this when they did. I just don't know why they don't see the connection that when they used to dredge the rivers, we never used to flood and now look what happens when they put a stop to it. I also think that if George Osbourne, I think he's the one in terms of all the money, well if he hadn't of cut all the flood defence work that was planned for the town then I think severity of the damage could have been a lot less. I mean if it had happened down South in London then I'm sure funding would not have been cut but anywhere north of Preston and it is almost*

like we don't exist. And then they turn up after the floods shocked by what has happened and wonder why people don't like them.

What is your opinion of the response provided at the local level [local council and local authorities]? *"I think Tim Farron provided a lot of help... He was always about after the Storm had happened... He called round on the next street to us knocking on doors of the people that were still left in the days that followed, speaking to the people. It was more than David Cameron did. He didn't stick around. He didn't come and speak to us and ask about how we were coping"*

What were your views regarding the response of the local authorities, for example the council? *I think the Council had done a good with like the financial side of things... I mean I have applied for one of the Flood Resilience Grants they are offering ...so we can spend the money making sure this never happens again, because I don't think I could go through it again... I did have to stay in the house for a month after the flooding, I moved out on the 13th January but I didn't get moved back in until the 15th August which is a long time and it took its toll on me. I mean my cats had to go and live with my daughter because the new flat that I was given wasn't allowed animals. I am getting a flood survey done and they tell you sort of what needs to be done so that if flooding ever happened again, touch wood it never does, but if it did then the damage is going to be a lot less.*

What is your opinion of the response provided by the national government? *I mean I don't really know where to start, I don't want to swear but they were bloody useless. I thought it was absolutely shocking, David Cameron in his brand new wellies which had never been worn before wandering about doing absolutely nothing. I mean where is all this money that we were promised, I'm still waiting on it. It's a disgrace, where was the help they were promising. Everything else seemed to suddenly take priority and the needs of all of us just seemed to slip down the agenda.*

In the Westmorland and Lonsdale area, local MP Tim Farron appears to be viewed favourably, do you think his response to the flooding has affected him [either positively or negatively] *Well in all the newspapers and on border news he was shown to be out and about helping people so I guess they showed him in a good light... Though when you compare him to what David Cameron actually did then he was bound to be seen more positively.*

Were you happy with the EU referendum result? Do you mind disclosing which way you chose to vote? *"I will out right say I voted to Leave the EU so yes I was very happy with the result... I was in the polling station counting the voting papers on the day.*

What was your reasoning behind your vote? [Were the floods a factor in how the individual voted?] *Well yes I guess they were. I mean my house could get flooded again but what are they are doing. They have*

started to make the River Kent wider and deeper but now they have stopped, so it was a pointless exercise and this shouldn't have been done after I flooded. Those people that sit in the EU are directing to us what we can and cannot do with the rivers, they don't even know where Kendal is... Maybe once we leave the government will start to care and not listen to them and get on with what is really needed"

In regards to sign on Ann Street "EU to blame for Kendal Floods, Brexit now" do you think the flooding could have caused people to vote to leave? I think absolutely it could, I think people want to be able to abide by rules that are made by our own people. This isn't a one off incident, them houses of Aynam Road have had a history of flooding since as long as I can remember and they never have received the proper help to get the river sorted because in both 2005 and I think it was either 2008 or 2009 the houses flooded horrendously. A lot of the basements in them houses were made in to flats. I know one person who rented a flat on there out and everything was ruined. Most of them houses now are completely unliveable... Something needs to be done about the River Kent but nothing is ever done. Maybe people just had enough and voted leave because they felt like they had no other option and if we leave then something might actually be done finally because those at the EU won't be able to control us anymore.