

Interactive comment on ““Are we talking just a bit of water out of bank? Or is it Armageddon?” Front line perspectives on transitioning to probabilistic fluvial flood forecasts in England” by Louise Arnal et al.

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This paper is a fascinating glimpse into the day-to-day operations of flood forecasters. It is very helpful to have this described in the published literature, to understand how information is communicated and how forecasters interpret model results before issuing alerts.

While the concept of the paper is excellent, my major suggestion is to re-work the framing. As a reader, it is difficult to follow the logic of the paper. Often, it seems to be

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an interesting mix of quotes from interviews, lacking some analysis to identify relevant points and present them in a structured manner.

The introduction provides interesting context to the flood forecasting situation in the UK, but the details often seem disconnected. It is not quite clear how the authors are leading up to a solid research question. At the end of the introduction, it becomes clear that the EA is going to transition to probabilistic forecasts, and that the researchers will interview the forecasters about this transition. However, it is not really clear what the purpose is for the interviews. My suggestion is to re-write the introduction with a clarified mandate, leading up to the question that will be then answered in the paper.

Similarly, the section 4 is very interesting; it is neat to have a window into the ways of working of these flood forecasters. However, the quotes and text do not form a coherent story for the reader. The section 4 does not seem well linked to the recommendations in section 5 – it is not clear to the reader how the interviews resulted in the recommendations. They read more like a policy brief than a research output; perhaps this would be better suited as a commentary than a research article?

In particular, section 5 seems to bring in the idea of decision-makers, but all of the interviews were with forecasters and those responsible for issuing warnings. There was no analysis in section 4 of who the decision-makers are, what decisions would be made based on the warning, or how that affected the information that was released.

The recommendations in section 5 seem to be generally good practice recommendations for whenever a forecasting system might have some sort of change, but not necessarily linked to the research results. In addition, most of the recommendations do not seem to have any relation with the characteristics of this particular change in forecast systems; the fact that the new system is probabilistic rather than deterministic.

Here are some examples of additional places where the text could be changed to present a clear research statement to the reader: Section 3.3 question 2 – as a reader first encountering this statement, I am not sure what you mean by this. Section 3.3

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question 3 – when you say “potential impacts”, what does this mean? As a reader, I can’t anticipate what exactly you are looking for.

The text would benefit from a few additional examples, if possible.

Some additional points for clarification: Page 6 line 213: How is running the NFFS different from the information given by the FFC? How will those NFFS localized model runs update or change the flood forecast of the FFC? It would be helpful to have a worked example, of what was produced by the FFC, what was communicated to the forecasters, what additional data they gathered, and what warnings they then communicated to people and what decisions were made based on that information.

Page 6 line 234: What do you mean that they wait for the forecast to be “confident”? Is this not a deterministic forecast?

The title is eye-catching, but the question that is being asked by the interviewee (water over bank vs. Armageddon) is about the magnitude of the event rather than about probabilities, while the paper is about transitioning to probabilistic forecasts.

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