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The 1953 Floods:
Past Experience, Present and Future Risk Management
Fife, Scotland

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The 1953 Floods in Scotland

- Probably the most devastating flood of the 200 recorded in the past 500 years
- It generated a series of coastal and inland hazards including flooding, erosion, destruction of coastal defences and extensive wind damage.
- Caused 19 fatalities and numerous injuries –17 fishermen and 2 lifeboat men
- 130 lost in Irish Sea indirectly related to the storm
- Most attention focussed on the Netherlands and S.E. England

The 1953 Floods in Scotland

- 41 locations documented
- wind speeds of over 125 mph
- surge at Leith (Edinburgh) 0.82 m compared with 2.5 m on Canvey Island
- two areas affected: Orkney and N.E. Scotland
- flooding in Portobello, near Edinburgh
- last significant major damage was in 1920's
- these storms the most important and frequent natural hazard affecting Scotland

Present and Future Risk Management

- This rise in sea level will result in an increase in coastal flooding and the impact of extreme events
- It is still not possible to project increases in storminess or in storm surges with any confidence

Present and Future Risk Management

- Fife Shoreline Management Plan (2011)
- Particular focus on infrastructure: much in private ownership
- Investment in hard defences
- In SUSCOD: part of an integrated plan for a vulnerable, high value area
- Soft engineering and design with nature

Applying the Lessons of SUSCOD

- Design with nature
- Soft engineering
- Partnership approach
- The Importance of Volunteers
- Integrate social, economic and environmental factors