

News from Thames Flood Forum

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Making the best use of flooding information Forum's three-step call to Environment Agency, insurers and local councils

Despite the development of improved maps and tables, it is unlikely that individual householders and businesses will be able to get reliable information about the extent of future flooding in as much detail as they would like.

That was the message from the meeting of Thames Flood Forum on 22 May, when members met experts from the Environment Agency, Runneymede Borough Council and the Association of British Insurers to discuss the accuracy, reliability and use of estimates of flood probability in the Thames Valley.

After the meeting Forum Chairman Tom Crossett said: "People need reliable information on flood risk to their property so that they can make sensible decisions on flood proofing, making emergency plans and buying insurance on competitive terms. However, while we welcomed the improved maps and tables the Environment Agency has produced over the last five years we were disappointed that it is unlikely to be technically possible to predict probability, depth, flow and duration of flooding at individual property level.

"Although we can look forward to further improvements, there are technical limits to what is possible. We shall now concentrate on ensuring that available information is used as effectively as possible."

As a first step the Forum is asking the Environment Agency, local councils and insurers to work together urgently to:

- adopt a common set of risk bands for use in individual and community planning and in insurance matters
- resolve confidentiality and data quality problems so that all available information can be used to improve individual risk assessments
- explain the limitations to flood probability advice to everyone who asks for it, so that they are not left thinking that their questions have been ignored.

The Forum also heard that the Environment Agency and the Association of British Insurers have agreed a template for the flood risk information that the Agency can provide to householders and businesses seeking flood insurance.

Mr Crossett added: "Problems arise when insurance companies ask for flood risk information not included in the template. The Agency will always try to provide the information requested by insurers and property owners but may not be able to do so because it does not exist, is unreliable or confidential."

[more](#)

The Forum also considered:

- Environment Agency priorities for maintenance work on the river Thames – it was agreed that Forum members should consider the implications of the priorities in their localities before discussing maintenance at a later meeting.
- A negative response from DEFRA Minister Ian Pearson to a request for increased government money for flood risk reduction – it was agreed to form a sub group to look at financial issues before inviting the Minister to attend or be represented at the Forum's November meeting.
- Continuing concerns within community groups in the Wraysbury/Datchet area about the Jubilee River – the Environment Agency agreed to review points that the groups had submitted in writing and to meet representatives if that was the best way of resolving outstanding issues.

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Notes for Editors:

1. The Forum met on 22 May 2007 in Addlestone, as guests of Runnymede Borough Council.
2. The agenda and papers for the meeting are on the Forum's website www.thamesff.org.uk.
3. The next meeting of the Forum will be hosted by the Royal Borough of Kingston on Thames on the evening of 10 July 2007. Flood risk and development planning will be the main subject for discussion. A full agenda and papers will be posted on the website www.thamesff.org.uk early in July. All are welcome to observe proceedings.
4. Enquiries to Chairman Tom Crossett on 01273 473565 or tom.crossett@gmail.com

Thames Flood Forum

The Thames Flood Forum is a voluntary group that brings together organisations with an interest in reducing flood risk in areas adjacent to the Thames and its tributaries between Hurley and Teddington, including local authorities, community groups, the Environment Agency.

The forum promotes flood risk reduction by better mutual understanding of flood risk issues and options for their management. Membership is open to any organisation that shares the forum's interests. Anyone can attend its meetings as an observer.

More information can be obtained from the website that the Forum is developing at www.thamesff.org.uk

Forum resources are provided by local authorities and the Environment Agency. The forum is chaired by independent scientist Tom Crossett. He welcomes comments and suggestions for future business and can be contacted at tom.crossett@gmail.com