

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

THURSDAY, 21 APRIL 2022

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon (Chairman), Gerry Clark, Ewan Larcombe and Parish Councillor Colin Lemmings

Also in attendance: Bob Austen and Victor Freeney

Officers: Laurence Ellis, Oran Norris-Browne, Joseph Hitchman, Brianne Vally, Denise Kinsella, Claire Taylor, Ben Crampin and Carolyn Richardson

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence received from James Thorpe (Risk Management Team), Emily Merritt (Emergency Planning Officer), Parish Councillor Ian Thompson (Datchet), Parish Councillor Janet Crame (Horton), Parish Councillor Jane Perry (Cookham) and Parish Councillor Mike Williams (Wraysbury).

MINUTES

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 31st January 2022 were a true and accurate record.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Actions from previous meeting	Minutes
Denise Kinsella to contact Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer on arranging a meeting regarding the flooding in Old Windsor.	FURTHER ACTION NEEDED
Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer to contact James Thorpe regarding the issue on the A308 Straight Road.	Joseph Hitchman and Malcolm Beer had been in touch about the work going on there.
Councillor Rayner to contact Denise Kinsella regarding progress on the Thames Water project in Eton Wick.	Denise Kinsella provided an update after the last meeting and put them in contact in order to speak directly with them.
Jo Hitchman to contact Parish Councillor Ian Thompson with information on the Barrel Arch works in Datchet.	While Parish Councillor Ian Thompson and Joseph Hitchman had contacted each other in the previous week, they were going to make further contact at some point.

ACTION: Denise Kinsella to contact Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer on arranging a meeting regarding the flooding in Old Windsor.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Brianne Vally (Environment Agency) introduced the Environment Agency update by starting with the catchment situation. The Thames Catchment had not received a lot of rainfall recently. As of Tuesday 19th April, only 31% of average rainfall for April was received. As a result, river flows were lower than expected at this time of the year.

For further information, she advised attendees to go to the official government website (gov.uk) and search 'water situation local area reports' to find flooding situation updates or reports in local areas.

Brianne Vally then moved onto maintenance and capital works carried out in the RBWM area. In terms of capital works, hydrometry and telemetry works were happening; with works in Taplow taking place around July and August 2022. There were also going to be cross river signal cables being updated on the flow gauge at Maidenhead in June 2022.

Two bunds in Cookham were identified as being 'below condition'. Therefore, there were plans to resolve this once the 'Let's Rock the Moor' festival had passed.

Water leaks had been identified at one of the recent flooding events near the Cookham Wall. These had been investigated, but it was yet to be confirmed when the works would take place. It was also identified there was a need for the access track to be maintained in the Cookham area. There were plans to deploy water pumps in the area so that it would be safe for flood operatives to access the area.

Some works were also planned for the North Maidenhead Bund after some surveys were carried out last year on the flood risk of the bund.

Brianne Vally confirmed that it was not expected for there to be road closures along the A4 Bath Road due to maintenance of the retaining wall of the Jubilee River in late-May and early-June 2022.

There were also works on the pipeline, including refurbishment in Old Windsor Bell and Penton weir over the next couple of years as well as a program of gathering data and surveys. There were also wider navigation and works taking place in some areas around the Borough.

Brianne Vally then moved on to give an update on the Datchet to Hythe End flood improvement measures project. She shared an image of the EA Project lifecycle. The project was still in the initial stages of the Datchet to Hythe End flood improvement measure, seeking an alternative to channel section one of the River Thames schemes and possibly viable to reduce flood risk in the Datchet to Hythe End area.

The EA (Environment Agency) were continuing to work with one of their framework contractors to review the existing information to be able to justify a project. The main work carried out would enable the EA to justify the project and invest further into looking at options that would be viable in the area.

The EA were also ensuring that the project team was resourced adequately and have appointed a project manager.

The Chairman asked about the timeframe of the project, as the project had been running for two years. Brianne Vally said that the project team was currently preparing a programme for the project, but it was not yet available to share.

In response to Brianne Vally's stating that the Environment Agency was working closely with RBWM, the Chairman commented that the last two strategic meetings were cancelled and therefore questions were not answered. He asserted that the project needed to engage with the community and RBWM needed to know the timeframe. He also added that strategic meetings needed to take place so that RBWM could have the necessary information.

Brianne Vally stated she hoped to provide an answer regarding the timeframe at the next meeting.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to give an update of the timeframe of the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures Project.

Councillor Larcombe requested the names of the people on the Programme Steering Group. The Chairman requested for Brianne Vally to provide a list of members to be circulated amongst the panel.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to provide a list of members of the Programme Steering Group.

Victor Freeney (Environment Agency Independent Consultant) stated a workshop took place a few weeks prior to investigate how much work would be needed for the strategic outline case phase and the outline business case phase, as part of the EA Project. He said that at the next meeting they would aim to provide a date for the first stage of work but that it would not be possible to provide dates for the later stages as it would depend upon what the preferred options were to be delivered.

Brianne Vally then gave an update on the flood warning signs. The EA had been made aware of some degraded warning signs in Cookham and subsequently in Bisham. The parish councils of Cookham and Bisham had been contacted a few weeks prior to be informed that the EA would use its permissive powers under section 165 of the Water Resources Act to replace the signs.

There were also flood warning signs around the Borough which were going to be de-commissioned, mainly because the EA's phone number displayed on the signs was out-of-date.

Brianne Vally moved onto funding from SSEN. Since 2015, SSEN ran the resilient communities fund, mainly to support and improve the local resilience in the area.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

Denise Kinsella (Thames Water) gave a verbal update from Thames Water. Thames Water continued to work with businesses. As work programme schedules ran from April to March next year, plan maintenance from 2021-22 had been completed and Thames Water had started plan maintenance for 2022-23.

The plan maintenance of 2022 was to ensure the sewage system flowed adequately. One method was to increase the use of blockage alarm systems which would raise any issues before a resident became aware of it.

The 'Bin It – Don't Block It' campaign continued throughout the year to discourage residents from flushing wet wipes down toilets. Furthermore, Tesco and Boots had stopped the selling of wet wipes which contained plastic, helping the environment and potentially reducing blockages in sewers.

In terms of work in individual areas, work in Moneyrow Green had been completed. Calls from residents experiencing issues had not been received. Denise Kinsella commented this may have been due to the weather patterns as mentioned by Brianne Vally.

A lot of lining work took place in Waltham St Lawrence to prevent infiltration into the sewer.

The Chairman informed Denise Kinsella that there was positive feedback from Councillors and residents on the work by Thames Water.

Regarding the Slough Sewage Treatment Works, Thames Water was undertaking further designs and refinement for the sewage treatment works upgrade and pipeline. This had to reflect the latest survey information which was received over the last few weeks. Denise Kinsella hoped Thames Water would be able to update stakeholders with the latest plans and programme by the end of June 2022.

Denise Kinsella considered to hold drop-in sessions for the local community. They were originally planned to be scheduled in late-April 2022, but the planned schedule changed to the end of June 2022.

Regarding the costs of living, the priority service register scheme had increased by 37% since March 2021 to help customers. There were an extra 2,000 customers on the customer assistance fund, as well as about 240,000 being added to the social tariffs to help residents struggling with the rise in living costs.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Ben Crampin (Flood Risk Manager, RBWM) gave the update from RBWM.

- In terms of projects with RBWM, some works were completed on the Wraysbury drain, which saw a small increase in flow on the drain.
- Ben Crampin mentioned he was reviewing the legal position statement to gain a better understanding of whether RBWM or landowners held responsibilities before starting works or enforcement around Feathers Lane and other locations.
- Surveys of the Datchet barrel arch took place with works expected to start in the following week; however, there was a possibility of slight delays due to traffic management permits. These works are set to start in the evening of 9th May for 3 nights.
- Ben Crampin stated that requests for quotes were put out for modelling work on the Datchet flap valve to get a better understanding of costs. While one quote was received, one or two additional quotes were requested before looking at the next steps.
- A review of how RBWM was carrying out its duties as a Lead Local Flood Authority took place. This review had identified where the borough was undertaking its duties well but had also identified areas for improvement, such as an Asset Register. Ben Crampin said he would be looking to implement changes to improve these processes moving forward.
- Ben Crampin said there was a request for information on who was responsible for what within the Borough in terms of water courses. He drafted a factsheet with this information. Once completed, it would be made available to the panel.

Councillor Larcombe asked if Ben Crampin was visiting Wraysbury at the start of May 2022. Ben Crampin confirmed this.

Councillor Larcombe asked Ben Crampin for assurance that public money was not being used to maintain ordinary water courses, which had been either deliberately blocked, or the landowner deliberately made it difficult for people to get in or had received enhancements in respect of the work that had been done where RBWM is not the responsible party for that work. Ben Crampin assured him by stating he had plenty of experience in the enforcement process and legislation from when he worked as the project lead for investigations and enforcement at Surrey County Council.

The Chairman asked Ben Crampin to cite Datchet Parish Council as the Datchet Barrell Arch was on Parish Council land.

Joseph Hitchman (Project Centre representative) then gave an update.

- Since the last meeting in January 2022, Project Centre provided comments on 26 major planning applications across the Borough.
- Project Centre drafted a technical note on the flood risk situation on Stud Green and set out recommendations to follow up on.
- A site visit was undertaken with Thames Water and the EA (Environment Agency) at Waltham St Laurence to undertake a coordinated effort to address the impact of flooding from ordinary water courses, main rivers and public sewers.
- Project Centre had been consulted on two ordinary water course consent applications which were being worked on.
- In terms of the schemes in the current financial year using flood risk grant-in-aid funding, earmarked funding was provided by the EA to undertake study of surface water flood risk in the south of the Borough, namely the area between Stud Green and Oakley Green. The objective of the study was to better understand of the flood risk

- with a view to identify fundable mitigation measures to reduce risk in the next two years.
- Project Centre were also applying for funding to begin works on an attenuation basin in Maidenhead to address surface water flood risk. 90% of the funding was eligible through the flood risk grand-in-aid, while the remaining 10% was to be funded through the Thames Water surface water management plan.

UPDATE FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS

Councillor Larcombe said he attended Horton Parish Council on Tuesday 19th April. They discussed two drains on either side of Horton Road, Horton, travelling from Horton North and adjacent to Wraysbury Reservoir. He stated they were in a dreadful state and Horton Parish Council tried to get it cleaned out, but the highways responded that it was not their responsibility.

The Chairman replied that Sue Fox mentioned it was the responsibility of RBWM to handle the issue. He added that there were some disputes on the land with Jayflex Construction Ltd when they were asked to create a path. He believed that the drains needed to be investigated and clarified.

ACTIONS: Councillor Larcombe to email Ben Crampin of the location of the drains on Horton Road, Horton in preparation for a site visit.

The meeting, which began at 6.05 pm, finished at 6.55 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....