

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY, 11 MAY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon (Chairman), Gerry Clark, Ewan Larcombe, Gary Muir, Donna Stimson, Carol Aisladie, Mike Williams and Ian Thompson

Also in attendance: Councillor Mandy Brar, Councillor David Coppinger, Councillor David Hilton, Councillor Samantha Rayner and Councillor Shamsul Shelim and Dick Scarff

Officers: Andy Carswell, Andrew Durrant, Simon Dale, Sue Fox, Joe Hitchman (Project Centre), Denise Kinsella (Thames Water), Mark Kellie (Volker Highways), Daron Mizen (Volker Highways), Carolyn Richardson, Ashley Rymer (Map 16) and Brianne Vally (Environment Agency)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Bob Austen, Martin Coker, George Fussey and Jane Perry.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on January 13th 2021 be approved as an accurate record.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

Brianne Vally to share the PDF maps with Sue Fox and the Chairman	Completed. Brianne Vally said the maintenance programme had also been circulated, and she would seek further information from colleagues in Hertfordshire and north London. Some limited data was available online.
Denise Kinsella to update on the clearance of the Datchet Common Brook blockage	Ongoing. Denise Kinsella said discussions were ongoing to see where work needed to be carried out and a site visit with the contractor was proposed for the week beginning May 24. Action: Denise Kinsella to liaise with Ian Thompson to confirm a date for a site visit.
Brianne Vally to inform the Chairman if potential structural examination of the embankment adjacent to Black Potts Weir was to take place	Brianne Vally advised that a flood operations team was due to carry out the examination the following day, and an update would be provided afterwards.
Brianne Vally to review if there were plans for the railway tunnel near Black Potts east bank	Completed. A study and investigation had been conducted and their results shared.
Brianne Vally to review the level boards upstream of Black Potts weir and commonality of river level measurements	Brianne Vally advised members that the measurements were available to view online.

Brianne Vally to circulate the latest newsletter to Jim Cooke	Completed. Brianne Vally said she had clarified Jim Cooke had requested information relating to a scheme being conducted by Buckinghamshire Council. She said she had put Jim Cooke in touch with the relevant officer, but had not heard back from him.
Denise Kinsella to recirculate Lightlands Lane information to Dick Scarff	Completed. Denise Kinsella said she had re-sent the information to Dick Scarff immediately after the previous meeting.

GULLY MAINTENANCE REGIME

Simon Dale, Interim Head of Highways, introduced the item and welcomed Daron Mizen and Mark Kellie of Volker Highways to the meeting. Daron Mizen started by introducing Ashley Rymer, Managing Director of Map 16. Daron Mizen explained Volker used Map 16's software programme to track and record gully work that had been undertaken, or was planned. Ashley Rymer told members that the programme enabled records to be updated in real time by teams carrying out maintenance work, and held information over the course of many years in order to build up a picture of what work had been carried out and to identify where problem areas may occur. The software contained details on matters such as any defects that were recorded, excessive levels of silt, gullies that could not be accessed due to obstructions such as parked cars, and it was also possible to upload photos of each location and the work carried out onto the system. Over time it would be possible to identify which locations were at most risk. Daron Mizen added the entire system had been digitised.

Members were shown an example of one of the vehicles used for gully emptying and cleaning. Daron Mizen said it was possible to use CCTV to examine problems that could not be cleared, and the vehicles were on standby for use 24 hours a day. There were more than 50 supply chain operatives available to provide this service. An out-of-hours team could be on site within two hours. The team also had access to more than 300 temporary road signs, traffic lights, and at least 5,000 bags that could be filled with sand. Of these, 500 would be kept full at any time. Volker had access to 10,000 tons of sand to fill the sandbags when required.

When a gully was cleared, the waste was collected and used for other purposes. For example sand and small stones could be used in concrete mix, organic waste could be used for topsoil, and oil could be extracted for further uses. Any litter that could not be reclaimed was sent to landfill. Daron Mizen said this helped to provide financial savings to the Council.

Members were told grips and grilles were cleared on a weekly basis, and Volker was responsible for keeping clear 118 small ladders that helped toads migrate without them having to cross busy roads. Daron Mizen said Volker was not responsible for car parks or private roads, although they would do works if requested to do so. Volker would liaise with Sue Fox, Principle Commissioning Officer, to prioritise budget areas. There was a budget this year for Volker to clean and clear up to 200 soakaways. Mike Williams said he was pleased with this, as there had been problems with soakaways around The Green in Wraysbury.

Responding to a question from Cllr Brar, Daron Mizen said sandbags could be delivered directly to residents if requested. Simon Dale said the policy had been updated following reviews into flooding in 2014 and 2021. However he reminded members that there was not an infinite number of sandbags and they would only be provided to habitable properties, so garages, sheds and outhouses at risk of flooding would not be sandbagged. Simon Dale asked if the unrecyclable litter collected during gully clearing could be taken to energy from waste plants for incineration. Daron Mizen said he would look into this and see what percentage of waste collected wasn't usually recyclable.

Daron Mizen said some gullies would be cleared on a more regular basis if they were identified as being at greater risk of causing flooding. All gullies would be cleared quarterly at the very least.

Simon Dale asked if the presentation slides could be circulated to members.

Action: Presentation slides to be circulated to members of the Flood Liaison Group.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Brianne Vally, Environment Agency, provided members with the update. She said the overall rain rate for April and May had been 33 per cent of the average rainfall for the time of year. Up until the end of April it had been 21 per cent; however rivers had responded well to periods of rain at the end of the month.

Members were told that a newsletter provided the latest updates on the Black Potts weir would be circulated at the end of the week. Brianne Vally said it would contain photos of the work carried out to date and details of works to the weir and surrounding structure. She said the next phase of the project would require the bed of the weir to be excavated to help control erosion and dissipate water. The work was anticipated to be completed by the autumn. Brianne Vally said work was also taking place at the Manor Farm weir, but this would be temporarily put on hold to allow horse racing events to take place.

Brianne Vally said the deadline to apply for funding bids for the 2022/23 programme was on Friday. The Environment Agency was compiling its flood risk management plan and was consulting with the Royal Borough as part of the strategy. Brianne Vally said Wraysbury and Datchet were mentioned to explain the work the Environment Agency was undertaking. A consultation had been due to take place in the summer but had now been pushed back to October. Brianne Vally said she would provide a further update when she had more information.

Members were told the Hertfordshire and North London branch of the Environment Agency covered Horton and Wraysbury as part of their remit, and they were conducting flood modelling for the River Colne. This information was due to be published shortly. Brianne Vally said arrangements for the modelling on the Lower Colne were being revisited to see if any additional work needed to be done. Channel management activities were likely to try and alleviate winter flooding. Brianne Vally said she would provide an update to members if extra work was required.

Cllr Rayner asked if there was an update regarding Eton Wick and Thames Water. Brianne Vally said a partnership meeting was due to take place on May 27th, where Thames Water would provide a presentation to discuss available options. She said the Environment Agency was liaising with Thames Water to arrange a further meeting to discuss the proposals. Denise Kinsella of Thames Water said there had been some reshuffling of staff, and would confirm and report back.

Mike Williams, Wraysbury Parish Council, asked if there had been any progress on implementing flood notification messages for the Jubilee River at Taplow. He was advised Twitter alerts were available or residents could phone to request updates, but there was no automatic alert system set up.

Cllr Brar asked if flood maps were available to the Council and residents. Brianne Vally said she would discuss this with Cllr Brar outside of the meeting. The Chairman asked if there were any updates on the work plan for the Lower Colne, as this impacted on residents of Horton and Wraysbury.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

Denise Kinsella of Thames Water provided members with the latest update. She said the Drainage and Waste Water Management Plan was progressing, which looked at urban creep, future growth, and climate change. Also being progressed was the Ground Water Infiltration Impact Management Plan, which was likely to be published in November. Denise Kinsella advised that, of relevance to the Royal Borough, issues had been identified in Waltham St Lawrence and Moneyrow Green.

Members were told that 560km of planned maintenance was due to be carried out in the coming months. Issues had been brought to Thames Water's attention by customers and elected councillors. Denise Kinsella said sewer depth monitors were being introduced to help improve understanding of where issues were and what was causing them.

Cllr Coppinger noted the issues in Moneyrow Green as they were in his ward, and asked if any guarantees could be given that they would not arise again. Denise Kinsella said no guarantees could be given, but residents had been encouraged to report any problems so they could be investigated and a clearer picture built up. When calls from residents were received, it was possible to see if they coincided with issues either upstream or downstream. All of the pumping stations were being looked at to see how flooding issues were impacting on them.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Carolyn Richardson, Emergency Planning Manager, introduced the item and started by stating the current focus was on how the Council responded to the flooding earlier in the year, rather than what had caused it. There had been 24 individual responses from parish councils, flood wardens and ward members as part of the survey, which had provided useful feedback and lessons to take forward in future flooding events. As a result the Cookham Causeway Plan will be reviewed along with the sandbag policy; and training and ways of improving staff knowledge was being looked into. Carolyn Richardson confirmed this would include training for elected Members and communities.

Joe Hitchman, Principal Flood Risk Engineer with the Project Centre, said other risk management authorities were involved as part of the investigations into the flooding. However any report produced would not be in-depth and would not compel anyone to undertake any work. This was likely to be produced by the end of July. Sue Fox, Principal Commissioning Officer, said site visits would be made and affected residents spoken to. She said it was understood some of the flooding was caused as a result of ground water infiltration. Cllr Coppinger thanked staff for their work in helping residents in his ward.

Joe Hitchman said the deadline for applying for funding grants for 2022/23 was Friday. An application was being worked on for a project specifically related to Cox Green to address surface water flood risk. Similar problems had been identified in Fifield, Holyport and Oakley Green. The Council was looking to liaise with the Environment Agency on this issue.

Sue Fox said the Capital Programme had been approved since the group last met, which would provide budget for a survey of up to 200 soakaways. These would be prioritised based on need. The Flood Prevention Programme had also been compiled, which included work planned in Horton and Wraysbury and investigations into groundwater in Cookham. Sue Fox told the group that a non-return valve was due to be installed in Datchet, which would allow excess water to flow off the roads and into Datchet Common Brook. A programme of minor highway drainage works was also planned. Regarding the River Thames infrastructure project, Sue Fox said discussions were taking place with the Environment Agency to look at alternative schemes in Wraysbury and Datchet that had been suggested by the relevant parish councils. A scheme relating to the Datchet barrel arch had been delayed. Sue Fox said she had arranged for the CCTV survey report and a commentary from the Project Centre to be shared with members.

Cllr Larcombe asked when work would take place on the Wraysbury drain. He advised it was blocked downstream but had gone dry upstream as it had not been managed properly. Sue Fox said partner organisations would be assessing the upstream section over the course of the next month to determine what work needed doing to ensure it was flowing properly, so a coherent strategy could be developed. Regarding the downstream section, blockages had occurred over a number of years and work needed to be carried out to determine what was causing them. Sue Fox said this would be a longer piece of work.

Cllr Brar asked if there was any update on the culvert along the A404. Sue Fox said she was not familiar with this and said she would contact Cllr Brar outside the meeting about this. Brianne Vally said a study had taken place a few years ago and its findings shared with Cookham Parish Council and the Royal Borough. However she advised that the findings had been inconclusive and no more work had taken place since.

UPDATE FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS

There were no updates from any of the parish councils.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 7.40 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....