

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

Monday 10 July 2023

Present (virtually): Councillors David Buckley (Chair), Devon Davies (Vice-Chair), Richard Coe, Ewan Larcombe, Ian Thompson (Datchet PC), Colin Lemmings (Bisham PC), Louvaine Kneen (Bray PC) and Mandy Brar (Cookham PC)

Also in attendance (virtually): Councillors Mark Wilson and Suzanne Cross; Bob Austen, Stuart Mollard, Laura Regazzacci, Claire Taylor, Brianne Vally, Natasha Gibbs and Dick Scarff

Officers: Laurence Ellis, Ben Crampin and Emily Merritt.

ELECTION OF A CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR OF FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

Councillor Coe nominated Councillor Buckley as Chair. This was seconded by Councillor Davies.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: Councillor David Buckley to be Chair of Flood Liaison Group.

Councillor Buckley nominated Councillor Davies as Vice-Chair. This was seconded by Councillor Coe.

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: Councillor Devon Davies to be Vice-Chair of Flood Liaison Group.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Forum members then introduced themselves.

Apologies were received from Parish Councillors Anna-Louise Regan (Cookham PC) and David Burfitt (Hurley PC).

It was highlighted that David Harding, Thames Water, was unavailable to present an update from Thames Water.

MINUTES

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th April 2023 were a true and accurate record.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

ACTION: Joshua Hardcastle to share the presentation document on the Colne Brook Pioneering works with Laurence Ellis who would then circulate it to Flood Group members and flood wardens.	COMPLETE – Laurence Ellis had circulated the presentation document to flood attendees.
ACTION: Richard Hancock to forward instructions on signing up to the flood warning service to Laurence Ellis, who would then circulate this to Flood Group attendees.	Brianne Vally believed that it had been forwarded. Laurence Ellis stated that he would check his email inbox.

ACTION: David Harding to update Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneen on the drain cover near the Jolly Gardener pub.	Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneen confirmed that David Harding had informed her; but after forwarding the information to residents, questions were raised regarding Colt Telecoms being written on the drain cover. She requested someone to come and investigate this. Ben Crampin stated that it had to go back to Thames Water and suggested that she contact David Harding to highlight this.
ACTION: Parish Councillor Mike Williams to report on the issue of drains in Wraysbury through the RBWM website, followed by Ben Crampin confirming who was responsible in resolving this.	COMPLETE – Ben Crampin informed that the issue of the Wraysbury highway drains was reported to RBWM and then forwarded to VolkerHighways to investigate. He added that he believed that VolkerHighways had resolved this.
ACTION: Laurence Ellis to circulate Ben Crampin’s presentation to Flood Groups members.	COMPLETE – The presentation was circulated to Forum members.
ACTION: Ben Crampin to forward a map of the projects related to the Wraysbury Drain taking place to Laurence Ellis who would then circulate this to Flood Group members.	COMPLETE – The map was circulated to Forum members
ACTION: Ben Crampin to relay to Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on the funding for flood defences in the Borough in the last 4 years.	Ben Crampin informed that this had not been completed; and stated that he would pick this up for the next meeting.
ACTION: Ben Crampin to forward the flooding issues in Wraysbury which Councillor Larcombe highlighted to VolkerHighways.	COMPLETE – The flooding issues were highlighted to VolkerHighways.

Outstanding actions:

ACTION: Laurence Ellis to circulate Richard Hancock’s instructions on signing up to the flood warning service to Flood Group attendees.

ACTION: Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneen to contact David Harding regarding the drain cover near the Jolly Gardener pub, namely the cover having Colt Telecoms written on it.

ACTION: Ben Crampin, RBWM Flood Risk Manager, to relay to Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on the funding for flood defences in the Borough in the last 4 years.

The Chair requested that any presentations and documents which had been circulated before the meeting could re-circulated to the new members of Flood Liaison Group.

ACTION: The circulated presentations and documents to be re-circulated to the new members of Flood Liaison Group.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Brianne Vally, Environment Agency (EA), started off by reporting on the catchment situation. She highlighted that her updates came in every Tuesday; therefore, the update was based on the receipt of information from Tuesday 4th July 2023 and did not take into account the recent rainfall over the weekend.

As of Tuesday 4th July 2023, Brianne Vally informed that the Thames catchment had received 3% of the average rainfall for July. Natural river flows had decreased at all sites compared to the week prior to 4th July, with river flow at all sites (apart from one) being below the percentage of monthly mean for July.

Brianne Vally informed that if anyone wanted to find more information on the catchment situation, they could go onto the gov.uk website to find the catchment situation report.

Moving onto maintenance, Brianne Vally reported that there had been some maintenance activities around the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme. Presenting the highlights, she informed that security fencing would be installed around Marsh Lane as well as navigation booms around various structures along the Jubilee River. There would also be some discrete work on some of the in-channel structures, starting with the Taplow area.

Brianne Vally stated that any queries or concerns related to these works could be emailed to her where she could direct the questions and concerns to the relevant team, or the generic enquires team.

Brianne Vally then thanked Eton Wick residents for reporting the recent flooding in the area. She then listed the actions taken from Environment Agency:

- Contacted Slough Borough Council and requested for footpaths to be closed with appropriate signage until the flooding recedes,
- Contacted the relevant riparian owners in the area to encourage good repair and ownership to ensure the water flowed freely and any blockages were removed accordingly,
- Notified relevant local authorities about any potential impacts on local and surface water drainage,
- Collaboration between Eton Town Council and Thames Water to jointly fund some weed clearance around Roundmoor Ditch and Boveney stream, in which it would start once fish spawning had passed,
- One of EA's catchment co-ordinators had been in contact with local Borough Councillors from Eton Wick and another meeting was being arranged.

Councillor D. Davies asked if there was an update on the installation of a new fence at Dorney Common. Brianne Vally replied that she was aware of there being discussions regarding this but was unaware of the result of this. She offered to take this away and forward a response from the relevant team.

Councillor Davies then asked when weed clearance would commence and whether it could start earlier. Brianne Vally was aware of some discussions regarding fish spawning season and weed clearance. She agreed to raise it with the Catchment Coordinator, Jeanette Wooster, and then forward an update to Councillor D. Davies.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to ensure that Councillor Devon Davies received updates on the installation of a new fence at Dorney Common and weed clearance around Roundmoor Ditch and Boveney stream.

Laura Regazzacci, Eton Wick Waterways Group (EWWG), informed that Eton Town Council was working with Eton College, who were the main landowners from the River Thames to Queens Road. According to Laura Regazzacci, they combined the costs to pay the contractors to clear the weeds which was cleared two weeks prior. She then stated that the main issue was fish spawning occurring every year which then contributed to flooding because the weed could not be cleared soon enough. She added that the issue needed to be resolved by Autumn 2023 so that EWWG and repairing landowners could make plans on weed clearance without disturbing fish spawning.

Laura Regazzacci then commented that residents had not received any communication from EA and asked for clarification on which riparian landowners EA had contacted.

Brianne Vally responded that EA had been mostly contacting riparian owners around Colenorton (north of Eton Wick) due to reports being received from this area. She mentioned that EA were aware of ongoing issues around the Roundmoor.

Councillor Coe asked whether the issue of flooding caused by weed blockage in Eton Wick could be automatically resolved instead of occurring every year and maintenance taking place only when floods happened, adding that this issue had been taking place for a long time.

Brianne Vally replied that EA was aware of recurrent issues around maintenance. She stated that Jeanette Wooster was intending to organise a meeting at the end of July 2023 (alongside a member of the Asset Performance Team) to give advice on a maintenance plan which would take into account weed clearance and fish spawning. She then informed that there was finite amount of finance for river maintenance activities and therefore EA needed to prioritize activities to protect lives and property in line with government policy. The position around Eton Wick was for EA to work and encourage landowners to maintain the rivers where it was not affordable for taxpayers to fund the maintenance work. She offered to investigate if there had been any changes to maintenance plans.

Councillor Coe then asked if enforcement action had gone beyond a polite reminder. Brianne Vally replied that she was not aware of but offered to investigate and forward an answer or inform him in the meeting at the end of July 2023.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to inform Councillor Coe on any update to water maintenance plans around Eton Wick.

The Chair requested for an action point for weed clearance around Eton to be revisited in the next meeting agenda in October 2023.

ACTION: Update on weed clearance around Eton in the next meeting agenda in October 2023.

Natasha Gibbs, Hertfordshire North London Environment Agency, informed that there was some seasonality whereby silt would build up during dry periods which would then encourage high vegetation growth. As there would be less river flow to wash this vegetation away, this increased the likelihood of blockage and flooding. From this, she stated, the maintenance of the previous year, which had to handle a drought, may not be suitable for the following year and therefore required reconsideration of the maintenance programme to respond to certain situations.

Councillor Davies asked if the footpath in Eton Wick could be reopened as, according to Laura Regazzacci, river water levels were at their lowest. Laura Regazzacci, while thanking Natasha Gibbs for her input, conveyed that rainfall had an impact where sewage treatment works had a greater amount of stormwater and thus causing the river in Eton Wick to be 99% sewage effluent. She added that the river at Eton Wick accumulated a lot of weed every year for the last 8 years due to the nutrients in the water from the sewage treatment works.

Natasha Gibbs responded that her experience may have reflected her area, Hertfordshire North London, more rather than Windsor and Maidenhead.

Laura Regazzacci then stated that it could no longer be tolerated to wait for river levels to increase every year and that action was needed. She requested for EA to take into account the full hydrology report in which EWWG, which contained the causes of flooding around Eton Wick, if they were investigating the river and considering future maintenance plans.

Laura Regazzacci was then critical of the idea of riparian residents being responsible in resolving blockage or flooding issues around the river as they had been affected by, for example, crumbling riverbanks, and paying money to mitigate flooding issues. She requested for residents to be included in any discussion to resolve the issue.

The Chair suggested that this issue should be discussed further with Councillors and officers and then resolved outside of the meeting.

ACTION: A meeting between EA officers, Laura Regazzacci and relevant Councillors on weed clearance and flooding at Eton Wick.

Brianne Vally then gave a presentation on the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures (DHEFIM), starting off by giving some background to DHEFIM for the new Flood Group members. As many communities between Datchet to Hythe End had been affected by several floods, DHEFIM was established after Channel Section One of the River Thames Scheme was no longer happening in the area. RBWM's commitment of around £10 million was still ring-fenced to contribute to flood alternative works.

Brianne Vally informed that EA and RBWM continued to work in partnership to find solutions that work for communities and the environment. While it was not possible to protect or reduce flood risk against all eventuality, EA were determined to reduce the risk of flooding and help secure the necessary funding. Alongside DHEFIM, RBWM was investigating several short-term flood risk mitigation measures during development of the wider project.

Brianne Vally then displayed the EA Project Lifecycle, illustrating the stages of the project. Since July 2020, an initial assessment was conducted, concluding with a Strategic Outline Case being produced. Presently, Brianne Vally informed, the project was entering the Appraisal phase which would conclude with an Outline Business Case.

The Strategic Outline Case was signed-off in late-April 2023 and its key activities included:

- Undertaking an initial screening of the long list of measures to identify which were most likely to meet the project critical success factors (e.g., value for money) and investment objectives.
- Presented a successful case that there may be viable alternative options to reduce flood risk from Datchet to Hythe End which would be investigated further.
- Entering the appraisal phase which concluded with the Outline Business Case, in which further screening of the options would be carried out during appraisal.

Brianne Vally then introduced Stuart Mollard, Environment Agency, who had become the project manager for DHEFIM, running it on a day-to-day basis, and would be giving updates on DHEFIM going forward.

Continuing her presentation, Brianne Vally informed that EA continued to work with Jacobs to produce the scope and activity schedule for the Outline Business Case, namely reviewing timescales to ensure they were realistic and achievable. The contract for the Outline Business Case was expected to be awarded in Summer 2023. Meanwhile, EA were progressing on critical activities with Jacobs, such as:

- Gathering adequate evidence for the appraisal of options,
- Funding and benefits, namely exploring additional contributions,
- Communications and engagement.

Brianne Vally then stated that Jacobs were looking into reviewing the draft communications and engagement activity schedule which tied into more technical work. In the meantime, EA were preparing for the establishment of the External Stakeholder Group. In addition, EA were also strengthening its governance arrangements to ensure successful delivery of the Appraisal Phase as well as maintaining links with the River Thames Scheme.

The Chair suggested a meeting in the near future between Brianne Vally, Stuart Mollard, Ben Crampin and Councillors in Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury to discuss flooding from Datchet to Hythe End and move the project forward.

ACTION: A meeting between EA officers, Ben Crampin and Datchet, Horton and Wraysbury Councillors on the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures.

Brianne Vally concluded by informing that EA had successfully recruited Flood Resilience Engagement Advisors as part of the Flood Resilience Team. Mat Lloyd (from EA) would be running a small flood awareness event in Datchet on 3rd August 2023 which sought to generate preparedness and ensuring that residents were aware of the risk. Brianne Vally mentioned that she would liaise with Emily Merritt, Emergency Planning Officer, on whether she wanted to get involved and support the event. The event would likely be in the afternoon.

Brianne Vally also encouraged residents to sign up to the flood warning service.

Stating that he was not aware of the flood awareness event in Datchet, the Chair suggested that EA needed to further work with local communities to ensure they were informed of events like this.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Ben Crampin presented an overview of the recent work of the RBWM Flood Team from April to July 2023, mostly focusing on flooding investigations. He reported that there was a larger caseload compared to 2022: 238 cases April-July 2023 compared to 68 cases in April-July 2022. The issues included:

- Recurring highway flooding,
- Surface water flooding in urban areas affecting property,
- Flooding to infrastructure such as underpasses.

RBWM Flood Team had been working with VolkerHighways to resolve some of these issues.

Ben Crampin then explained the flooding investigation process. He mentioned that when he came into post, he sought to improve the Team's knowledge of the impact of flooding in the Borough to reduce re-investigation of similar issues and therefore improve efficiency. Ben Crampin encouraged residents to report flooding issues so that it would be catalogued.

The flood investigation process occurred as followed:

- Flood issue reported and received;
- Issue catalogued into the Case Management System;
- Desk study to understand the basic information on local flood risk;
- Site visit arranged (if necessary) to gather local views and information non flooding issues;
- Record information of flooding during the site visit;
- Further investigation (if necessary), such land registry information or additional information from other authorities;
- Write a report summarising the affects, causes, identify the relevant risk management authority (e.g., RBWM, EA), and recommendations;
- Recommendations forwarded to the relevant risk management authority,
- Investigation completed.

Ben Crampin added that the Borough could not always make risk management authorities follow the recommendations unless it had enforcement powers to do so.

From the reports and investigations on flooding issues, Ben Crampin stated, data would get collected to determine methods to mitigate flooding. Data being collected included property flood data, which covered internal (i.e., habitable space in home properties, commercial

property) and external flooding (i.e., garages, gardens, driveways). This data would be used to help identify areas to take forward flood schemes, such as obtaining Grant-in-Aid funding or Council funding for a projected. Ben Crampin stated that the data was sensitive and only shared with partners rather than, for example, insurance companies.

Data had also been collected on stretches of watercourse where enforcement action was being taken. In addition, information was being recorded on new Watercourse Consents.

Ben Crampin then gave an overview of recent projects from RBWM. Maintenance work had recently started around Datchet Barrell Arch, a culvert running through the village, to remove silt and conduct a CCTV survey. He added that residents and Datchet Parish Council had been notified of this. The works would continue until 16th August 2023, though heavy rainfalls could affect the timings of work. Once works were completed, it would be expected that landowners (e.g., RBWM, Highways Authority) would take forward any future maintenance as their responsibility, including any defects found through the CCTV survey.

Another project was the Penn Road Flap Valve, part of the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures (DHEFIM). Some modelling work had been completed to determine the suitability of a flap valve and whether there was any flood mitigation benefit to this structure being installed. It was concluded that there would be no benefit to installing a flap valve immediately in decreasing flood risks and that there would be some increases in local risks before the flap valve would be effective. Therefore, this project was not an immediate priority, though there would be continuous discussions with EA on the project.

Regarding the Wraysbury Drain, Ben Crampin informed that there was little update to this project due to the recent high number of flood cases which required investigations, highways drainage works and changes to personnel within legal department. However, he mentioned that he had some discussions with Councillor Coe, the Lead (Cabinet) Member for Environmental Services.

Another project focused on highways which was being prioritised to ensure money was being spent in the correct places as well as identify high-priority issues, highlighted from Flood Team or VolkerHighways investigations. These issues would then be prioritised and allocated between RBWM and VolkerHighways. Ben Crampin reiterated that it was important for flooding issues to be reported so that they were catalogued.

Other minor works included improving the RBWM flooding website, including more webpages; improving processes, such as how to apply for Ordinary Watercourse Consent; and build additional team resilience as well as recruit new members.

To conclude, Ben Crampin gave contact information on specific flood-related issues:

- Threat to life – call 999.
- Flooding to the highway, call RBWM Highways – 01628 683800.
 - Sewers and foul water, call Thames Water - 0800 316 9800.
 - Main river watercourse, call the Environment Agency - 0345 988 1188.
- Non-urgent enquiries but flood related: flooding.enquiries@rbwm.gov.uk

Parish Councillor Mandy Brar (Cookham PC) raised that there was some potentially collapsed drainage in Burchetts Green Road, close to the roundabout near Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA), which then led to some flooding. She asked for this to be investigated. Ben Crampin replied that he was aware of this and offered to take this away and forward an update on this.

Parish Councillor Mandy Brar then raised that she and some residents had reported a flooding issue in Cookham High Street whereby sandbags had to be used in front of shops and residential properties were affected.

ACTION: Ben Crampin to forward an update to Parish Councillor Mandy Brar regarding flooding issues in Burchetts Green Road and Cookham High Street.

Parish Councillor Mandy Brar then asked Brianne Vally on whether the Temple Bridge (near Hurley) would be opened after repairs. The Chair suggested that Brianne Vally answer this question outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to inform Parish Councillor Mandy Brar on whether the Temple Bridge (near Hurley) would be reopened after repairs.

Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneen (Bray PC) thanked Ben Crampin for his recent works around Manor Grove and politely requested for the final work to be completed. Ben Crampin replied that he had highlighted this to VolkerHighways and that this had been added to the priority list of flooding issues.

Claire Taylor, Eton Wick Waterways Group (EWWG), asked a couple of questions. Firstly, she asked Ben Crampin to check whether road surface flooding near LA Jaks barbershop between Bell Lane and Moore's Lane in Eton Wick had been reported. Secondly, she then asked if a section of the Roundmoor was recorded by RBWM.

Ben Crampin replied that he could update Claire Taylor offline regarding the flooding issue around Moore's Lane. Regarding the section of the Roundmoor, Ben Crampin stated that he was not personally aware of this. Therefore, he suggested to discuss this outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Ben Crampin to inform Claire Taylor on the flooding issues at Moore's Lane, Eton Wick, and the section of the Roundmoor.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson (Datchet PC) raised a couple of issues. Firstly, he highlighted that the retained water level in the Recreation Ground ditch in Datchet was at winter levels, in contrast to being usually dry during the summer period. He speculated that this was due to an issue with the Datchet Common Brook and suggested that this needed to be investigated. He added that this increased the groundwater level and therefore increased chances of flooding, pointing out that current water levels in the summer could mean flooding in winter. He added that Thames Water was supposed to come back to him regarding the Common Brook, to which they had not and that they only forwarded him the indication of costs to clear the Datchet Common Brook (around £120,000-£150,000). He requested some action regarding this.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson's second point was related to the flap valve at Penn Road. In spite of a statement from the Borough of suggestions for the water to flow from the Recreation Ground ditch to the Datchet Common Brook, this could not happen because the Common Brook was on higher ground than on the Recreation Ground ditch. He suggested that the modelling was incorrect and that it needed to be investigated again. He suggested that Thames Water, EA and the Borough investigate and then resolve the issue.

Ben Crampin responded that he would investigate on how the modelling was conducted and then come back to Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on this. Ben Crampin offered to go through the information regarding the water flows at the Datchet Common Brook.

ACTION: Ben Crampin to investigate the modelling regarding the Penn Road Flap Valve and Datchet Common Brook water flows, and then report back to Parish Councillor Ian Thompson.

ACTION: Thames Water to update Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on Thames Water's response to the Datchet Common Brook.

The Chair requested that decisions and actions should be made with the relevant individuals being included and engaged, and that this could be done in background meetings.

Emily Merritt gave a brief update from Emergency Planning. She stated that an audit for flood wardens would be circulated in the near future to check if they contained the correct details and that they consented to these details being held by the Borough. The annual meeting of flood wardens would be held at around November 2023, which would include updates from the Met Office, EA and the Borough for the winter period.

Emily Merritt informed that the Adverse Weather and Associated Flood plans was retained by the Borough as part of the Civil Contingencies Act. An exercise would be held in October 2023 to test the draft Adverse Weather Plans and make any amendments if required. The plan would then be circulated to the Flood Liaison Group.

UPDATE FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS

Reporting for Wraysbury, Councillor Larcombe raised that the Wraysbury drain at Feather's Lane was still blocked.

Reporting for Eton, Bob Austen, Eton Town Council Clerk, reiterated Laura Regazzacci's point that the watercourses in Eton Wick were affected by the Slough and Thames Water sewage treatment works. He also stated that uncertainty surrounding Thames Water's future performance was causing some concern.

Responding to Councillor Larcombe's comment, Councillor Coe, the Lead (Cabinet) Member for Environmental Services, stated that he had met with Councillor Larcombe regarding the Wraysbury ditch and that there had been some discussions in the administration regarding this. While conceding that it would not be resolved immediately, there would be a long-term plan to resolve it.

The Chair reiterated his request for a meeting on the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures (DHEFIM) and to include himself, Ben Crampin, Councillors Coe and Larcombe, and Parish Councillor Ian Thompson.

The meeting, which began at 5.07 pm, finished at 6.37 pm

Chair.....

Date.....