

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

TUESDAY, 23 JANUARY 2018

PRESENT: Councillors Jesse Grey (Chairman), Malcolm Beer, Richard Kellaway and Parish Councillors: Thompson, Clasper, Cooke, Coker, Hewer, Scarff, Williams

Also in attendance: Cyril Mitkov (Thames Water), Brianne Vally (Environment Agency), James McFarlane from Bisham and Ewan Larcombe from Wraysbury / Datchet

Officers: Wendy Binmore and Simon Lavin

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor John Lenton and Parish Councillor David Burfitt.

MINUTES

RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the Part I minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2017 be approved.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

Members noted the following main points from the Environment Agency (EA) update:

- The Eton Wick Waterways Group were proposing some environmental enhancements on the Roundmoor Ditch. These proposals were being led by Thames 21
- A recent discharge from Slough Sewage Treatment Works was being investigated and was the subject of discussions between Thames Water (TW), the EA and other local parties.
- A strategic review of the Environment Agency's charges was taking place and the associated consultation ended at the end of the week. The aim of the review was to ensure that the charges fully reflect the Environment Agency's input and were fair and transparent. Harry Clasper asked whether the changes also applied to navigation licences. It was confirmed that this was the case and that the changes would be implemented later on in 2018.
- With regards to dry weather; the 2016/17 winter was the driest since 2010/11. The beginning of the 2017/18 winter was "dry" to start with. Overall December had been quite "wet" and the catchment and rivers were starting to respond to rainfall and groundwater recharge was occurring. Some neighbouring areas had however moved to drought status.

The Chairman queried if the charges review would introduce new charges or, if it would be raising the costs of current activities. The EA confirmed that there would be an increase in charges depending on the type of activity. The EA added that mooring licences would not be covered by the review but, any works that related to a flood risk activity would require a permit, which would incur a charge.

With regards to the discharge at Slough sewage treatment works, the Environment Management Team were having a meeting with TW to establish if it was an accidental or intentional discharge and the Environment Agency were unable to provide an update at present. An update would be provided at the following meeting.

- ❖ **Action** – Thames Water and the Environment Agency to provide an update on the discharge from Slough sewage treatment works to the next meeting.

Parish Councillor Fiona Hewer stated there had been a flood alert issued for the Thames from Hurley to Cookham that was removed after a few hours. This made dealing with flood wardens and the community difficult and could lead to complacency if there was another wet day and the flood alert was reinstated again. She requested an update. The Chairman stated it was a good thing the alerts were put in place as they came in three stages and the flood alert was a pre-warning of a flood warning. PCllr Hewer responded stating it could make people ignore the alerts if they did not stay live long enough and wardens were stood down. The Chairman stated alerts should be meaningful so if alerts were short term, people could start to be complacent. The EA said they would take the comments back to the team and find out more information.

With regards to the ground water recharge, Brianne Vally said she would need to find out more information but, it was possible to go direct to the [.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website and search for the groundwater recharge situation report.

Parish councillors asked what provisions were in place to stop water extractions from the Thames taking place following sewage spills further upstream. Cyril Mitkov, Thames Water, stated he would need to check on the provisions that are in place. Rigorous water treatment processes were however in place and many thousands of checks were carried out each year in the Thames Water area before water supply reached homes. 99.6% of the tests carried out confirmed the supply was safe and top quality in the Thames area. He added there was, however, a threshold during storms that if breached, would allow discharge from sewage treatment works to be released into the Thames. But, the discharge was not the same as sewage being released into the river as the discharge would have been partially treated. While it would not be raw sewage and it was still not ideal it would be diluted by large amounts of rain. The Chairman stated there were 4.6bn litres of sewage treated every day in the Thames region with some 5,000 pumping stations. With developers building more houses, there was a need for reassurance that the increase was adequately covered. Cyril Mitkov responded stating one of the biggest issues for Thames Water was keeping up with demand. He stated it was their duty to work with developers and the EA and they were always looking at infrastructure and looking to make upgrades all the time.

The Chairman stated after the last floods, 3,500 homes were identified as in need of improvements to make them flood resilient. In 2017/18, 1,000 of those homes had been improved. Cyril Mitkov stated lots of modelling had been carried out and Thames Water wanted to work with homeowners to help prevent flooding to property.

Parish Councillors raised concerns as sewage had been discharged on to Maidenhead Road, Cookham. Thames Water had been called out to investigate this incident, but the pipework needs to be looked at as residents believe that it is too small and have been told that there is a reduction in the pipework's size. Residents were aware of the bin it, don't block it campaign.. Councillor Saunders had reported the issue but it did not look like anything was being done. Cyril Mitkov stated Denise Kinsella had been looking into this and issues at this location were usually the result of blockages not a lack of capacity. Simon Lavin, Principal Engineer (Flood Risk), suggested any issues should be reported to Thames Water in the first instance.

Parish Councillor Dick Scarff requested information on catchment workshops that he understood were taking place. He was concerned that environmental enhancements being planned on the Bisham Brook and Widbrook could have an adverse effect on flood risk in the Cookham area. Brianne Vally stated discussions with a number of organisations were ongoing. She proposed that workshop sessions be set up to discuss the changes and what impact they may have. The EA were not however leading on the proposed environmental enhancements. The Chair asked whether the Thames Flood Advisors Team would be able to assist with this, and Brianne stated that she believed that this was beyond their remit. She would however seek clarification on this. Workshops would possibly take place in April 2018.

Dick Scarff asked for an update on the provision of hydraulic modelling outputs relating to Strande Water / Fleet Ditch / White Brook and enlargement of the culverts below Sutton Road. It had been promised for a long time but it had still not been received. Brianne said the Widbrook area was only a small part of the modelling being undertaken. The deadline to update flood maps was March 2018.

Simon Lavin, Principal Engineer (Flood Risk), stated there were fundamental concerns with the initial modelling report relating to Strande Water / Fleet Ditch / White Brook and the potential benefits of increasing the size of culverts on White Brook. Brianne Vally stated that any change in the culverts size would not make a difference and the EA would provide evidence of the outcome of the modelling.

Members noted that parishioners had received copies of flood maps but, were concerned that the mapping was not accurate and needed to be updated. Simon Lavin, Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) stated he had been sent a letter from residents in Bisham which expressed concern regarding the mapped extents of the January 2003 and January / February 2014 flood events. He explained that the extents of flooding actually experienced were less than that show on the maps. Brianne said she had received a number of requests from residents and explained that the flood event outline was recorded in a different way. She had told residents that the EA was reviewing the process to validate the methods used. The Lower Thames modelling was ongoing so it would be possible to see the changes to the flood maps following the completion of that.

Parish Councillors stated that LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) results for recording the flood outline were totally inaccurate. Brianne responded stating the process was being reviewed. The EA accepted people wanted to challenge them and they would provide details of the process. The EA wanted to provide the best possible evidence. PCllr Ian Thompson said Datchet Parish Council had very accurate flood maps from the flood event of 2014 and that the LiDAR based mapping was very inaccurate. The Parish Council had the correct information and he was happy to sit with the EA and look at the LiDAR based mapping. He added he also had very detailed information on the 2003 floods in Datchet. Brianne explained that residents could raise flood map challenges and she was happy to explain the process and go through it with the Parish Councils.

Brianne Vally stated that addressing funding issues was the current focus of the River Thames Scheme delivery team.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

Cyril Mitkov, Thames Water, explained that December 2017 saw 125% of the long term average rainfall which helped refill reservoirs. The London reservoirs were typical 80% full.

The soil moisture deficit was at zero so rainfall could contribute to groundwater recharge and runoff to watercourses. That gave a better chance of avoiding drought in the summer. The water supply was looking encouraging but, he did not want to be complacent.

There were a couple of consultations ongoing – a water resources management plan and a business plan – which were both starting in February 2018 and would run until the end of April 2018 (closing on 29th April). It was a good opportunity for customers and stakeholders to give feedback; details could be found on the Thames Water website and local engagement forums were taking place. The closest forum taking place for RBWM was in Bracknell and Wokingham. PCllr Harry Clasper stated Parish Councils welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback and requested a formal invite from Thames Water to the events.

The Chairman stated he received a lot of queries from residents asking how Thames Water were dealing with climate change and the increase in water demand. Cyril Mitkov responded both climate change and population growth were being looked at to make sure Thames Water

were able to provide enough water to meet demand. The government had asked Thames Water to look into the future as far as possible so they were looking at an 80 year timeframe and trying to plan for that. Cyril added that he would send the information to parish clerks and stated the information was also on the Thames Water website.

Ewan Larcombe said he understood that TW needed to sell land but, the land should be offered to the council or parish councils and not immediately offered to the private market. Cyril explained that TW had to look at the land as an asset held by the company and that they needed to get the best value for it. Mr Larcombe responded that Parish Councils were not notified of sales. TW had a duty to customers to do right by them and not shareholders. Parishes were impacted when TW made an adverse sale. Cyril responded that he understood the issues but, when the company had land they did not need, it could be sold and sold for the highest value.

Councillor Beer highlighted a proposal relating to the proposed expansion of Heathrow airport. A current Heathrow Airport consultation indicates Ham Island being used as a borrow pit to provide materials to allow the elevation of the proposed third runway. The Chairman stated he would liaise with the Chairman of the Aviation Forum and officers in order to provide feedback and a response to Heathrow. Cyril indicated that this was not something he had been involved in.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Councillor Beer raised the issue of Heathrow expansion and stated that their consultation started the previous week. He had noticed that Heathrow Airport were trying to use land around Heathrow to provide materials, to avoid importing material from any great distance. Councillor Beer added that they wanted to use Ham Island as a gravel pit but, there were houses, a horse sanctuary and an important sewage treatment works on the island. The Chairman explained the Aviation Forum had to respond by 25 March 2018 and he would get the Aviation Forum feedback to the Flood Group. However, any response to the plans were part of the Aviation Forum's remit. Councillor Beer responded that the impact would fall within the Flood Group remit. Heathrow wanted to increase capacity and were looking at land grabbing all over to build bits of the third runway offsite. The Chairman said he would take the issue back to officers and see how the Borough could make the biggest impact. It was possible the best strategy would be a combined effort. The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) requested that Thames Water and the Environment Agency ensure that their colleagues within appropriate areas of the business were made aware of Heathrow Airport's consultation and its potential impacts on Ham Island.

Wraysbury Drain

PCllr Ian Thompson stated there had been some questions regarding the routing of existing channels in relation to channel one of the River Thames Scheme. He had done some work to see where existing channels ran and had clear maps which he said he would pass on to the EA. The maps had thrown up how water flowed and how the watercourses would connect with channel one. One concern that had been raised at a meeting with the Environment Agency's consultant, GBV at a meeting at Red Hill, related to the height of water in the Thames at the time of flood, water levels in channel one at the time of flood; and water levels in lakes and watercourses that would be connected to channel one. He was concerned that water levels in the flood channel could influence water levels in the lakes and watercourses and increase flood risk in parts of Wraysbury. He added that he would like to look at this with the EA. The Chairman requested the issue be followed up at the Red Hill meetings. PCllr Ian Thompson stated to clarify, he had walked channel one and the land was overgrown; it was easy to get disoriented. The lakes and watercourses were all at different levels which was the problem; PCllr Ian Thompson said he walked the route with Scott Salmon from the EA.. Brianne Vally requested the Borough lead on the interaction so the team could focus on funding the project. No further work was likely on the design until more funding was secured. The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) said he attended the Red Hill meeting and Ian Thompson and Ewan

Larcombe were correct to express concerns regarding the flood channels influence on water levels in the lakes / local watercourses. The EA needed to consult the Borough before altering any watercourses and it would help to have conversations prior to that.

Mr Larcombe stated that the Borough had spent £180k on works on the Wraysbury Drain, but it still did not work. The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) explained that the Wraysbury Drain had dried out on a number of occasions during the summer months over the last 10 years. The Wraysbury Drain is fed by the Horton Drain and investigations undertaken in the past had indicated very little flow entering the Windsor and Maidenhead area from the north (Slough Borough Council's area). PCllr Mike Williams said it was dry at the moment, and the problem with it running dry was that it let things grow in it, the drain turns into a footpath and compromises property security and its effectiveness during floods. The possible influence of gravel workings on groundwater levels in the general areas was raised and the Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) said that any gravel workings would have conditions attached to the planning permission regarding the method of working. He would need to check how that might be affecting the dryness of the Wraysbury Drain.

- ❖ **Action** – The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) to investigate if the current gravel pit quarries had conditions attached to the planning permissions with regards to the method of working that may be relevant to Wraysbury Drain to drying out.

River Thames Scheme (RTS) Funding

Brianne Valley, EA, confirmed all available information was on the EA website. The cost of the scheme was £476m for the design and construction phase. The scheme was eligible for £212m of funding from central government and further communications regarding the scheme's funding would be released in the next few weeks. Members could sign up to receive the RTS newsletter which provided regular updates.

The Chairman stated the total scheme cost was £588m and that the original costs were based on the year 2000 prices. There was a £234m deficit with £354m of funding secured. The Chairman said there had been a meeting with the Chancellor the previous week with council leaders and the EA. Council's informed the Chancellor that they needed to confirm the funding in 2018 so that a planning application could be produced and submitted in 2020. The works would be scheduled to begin in 2022 subject to planning permission. The Chairman added the cost benefit ratio was better than that of HS2 which confirmed how important the RTS was.

The Chairman stated his personal view was that the government wanted partners and businesses to contribute to the scheme. The Borough had committed £12m along with other councils but, it still was not enough. The worst case scenario would be that only two channels would be built and not three.

Ewan Larcombe explained his understanding was there was meant to be PPP funding arrangements in place. The EA asked Surrey for £103m, asked another council for £80m and they went to the government saying they could not afford the scheme so asked for a loan and to raise council tax to pay for it. The Chairman responded saying he did not know the outcome of the meeting last week and that the current position was not satisfactory. A decision before this summer had been requested. The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk) confirmed that the Borough had offered £10m towards the scheme's construction but this offer was conditional on the whole scheme being delivered.

PARISH FLOOD GROUP UPDATE

The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk), confirmed that colleagues were working with providers to secure an 'on demand' bus service using suitable vehicles during flood events so that residents in the Cookham area were not stranded or cut off.

PCllr Clasper stated that he was still awaiting a response from Arthur Rabjohn, the Council's Emergency Planning Consultant regarding funding available to residents for flood resilience measures. The Principal Engineer (Flood Risk), stated that to his knowledge, there were no grants available.

The Parish Councillor for Bisham stated that they felt that the outcome of the report on flood defences for the village was unreasonable, as the conclusion was that flood risk could be alleviated to some extent (for smaller events) but flooding could not be prevented entirely. The Parish Councillor accepted that there would always be a risk of flooding and that this risk could not be eliminated, but felt the response was unreasonable. Brianne Vally from the EA responded that modelling was carried out to look at the north of the village. She disagreed with some of the findings of the report and if there was something that could be done to alleviate flooding risk, it should be looked into. However, the Environment Agency's view was that there was not a viable scheme due to the cost benefit ratio. Other avenues had been explored such as temporary defences, and the position could always be reviewed if there were changes to the way schemes were funded.

ACTIONS FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

- Sue Fox, Senior Project Manager to confirm if the funding for the feasibility study of the Widbrook scheme was to be funded from S106 contributions or other funding available
- With regards to questions about who the Canal and River Trust group were, Brianne Vally from the Environment Agency (EA) stated that discussions were ongoing regarding the transfer of some of the EA's responsibilities to the Canal and River Trust. She was therefore unable to provide an update at this stage. Once discussions had been completed, an invitation could be extended asking them to attend the Flood Liaison Group and provide a summary of their role and responsibilities.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members noted the dates of future meetings.

The meeting, which began at 6.00 pm, finished at 8.05 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....