

FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

Wednesday 11 January 2023

PRESENT: Councillors David Cannon (Chairman), Ewan Larcombe and Gerry Clark, Parish Councillors Louvaine Kneen (Bray PC), Ian Thompson (Datchet PC), and Colin Lemmings (Bisham PC)

Also in attendance: Laura Ragazzacci, Brianne Vally, Victor Freeney, Natasha Gibbs, David Harding, Emily Merritt, Bob Austen, Claire Taylor and Doug Alexander

Officers: Laurence Ellis and Ben Crampin

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies received from Parish Councillors Jane Perry, David Burfitt, Mike Williams and Jim Cooke. Councillor Larcombe also informed that Horton Parish Council had sent their apologies as well.

ELECTION OF A VICE-CHAIRMAN FOR FLOOD LIAISON GROUP

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson proposed Councillor Larcombe as Vice-Chairman. The Chairman nominated Councillor Clark.

No other Forum member seconded either proposal. As such, the Chairman declared that the item would be deferred to the next meeting in April 2023.

MINUTES

AGREED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2022 were a true and accurate record.

ACTIONS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

ACTION: Denise Kinsella to discuss with Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer on the next steps on arranging a meeting regarding the flooding in Old Windsor.	Completed – Brianne Vally informed that she had liaised with David Harding, who was taking over from Denise Kinsella, and Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer to arrange a site visit on the afternoon of 23 rd January 2023, providing access could be facilitated in which Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer would investigate.
ACTION: Denise Kinsella to update Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on Thames Water's response to the build-up at Datchet Common Brook.	David Harding could not give an update in time for the meeting. He explained that this depended on a specialist surveying the site.
ACTION: Ben Crampin to contact Councillor Walters on whether he wanted to meet for a site visit in Bray to investigate flooding issues in the area.	Ben Crampin emailed Councillor Walters shortly before being away. He had not received a response yet and therefore would chase him up on this.
ACTION: Brianne Vally to arrange a meeting between EA and Lightlands Lane, Cookham residents over concerns with the culvert.	While a meeting had not taken place, Brianne Vally had notified colleagues in the Asset Performance team of the concerns raised and the RBWM report which Ben

	<p>Crampin forwarded. She explained it was believed that the culverts were not the responsibility of the EA and thus further inquiries to check what the arrangements were.</p> <p>Nevertheless, Brianne Vally also added that EA had been on site and had met Cookham residents, and the culverts were cleared; and therefore, the immediate concern was no longer there.</p> <p>The Chairman suggested that Brianne Vally engage with Councillor Clark offline regarding this action as he was experiencing technical issues as well as there being no other Cookham representatives during the meeting.</p>
<p>ACTION: Brianne Vally to forward the letter regarding maintenance of flood warning signs in Cookham to Councillor Brar.</p>	<p>Completed – Brianne Vally forwarded the letter to Councillor Brar.</p>
<p>ACTION: Ben Crampin to meet with Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer to investigate the flooding issue on Straight Road, Old Windsor.</p>	<p>Completed – Ben Crampin had met with Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer on site and discussed the issue. Ben Crampin needed to do some more work with VolkerHighways, namely conducting further investigations and contact the landowners around that area regarding the private section the drainage.</p>
<p>ACTION: Parish Councillor Ian Thompson to forward details of the flooding issues surrounding the drain near Datchet Village Green to Ben Crampin, who would then forward these details to VolkerHighways to allow them to investigate the issue.</p>	<p>Parish Councillor Ian Thompson had been unwell in the previous 2 weeks and therefore a meeting between him and Ben Crampin had not taken place.</p> <p>Ben Crampin requested that Parish Councillor Ian Thompson forward his email again, to he agreed to do so.</p>

ACTION: David Harding to update Parish Councillor Ian Thompson on Thames Water’s response to the build-up at Datchet Common Brook after a specialist had surveyed the site.

ACTION: Ben Crampin to chase up Councillor Walters on whether he wanted to meet for a site visit in Bray to investigate flooding issues in the area.

ACTION: Brianne Vally to contact Councillor Clark or a Cookham representative after the meeting regarding the action relating to concerns surrounding the culverts in Cookham.

ACTION: Parish Councillor Ian Thompson to forward details of the flooding issues surrounding the drain near Datchet Village Green to Ben Crampin, who would then forward these details to VolkerHighways to allow them to investigate the issue.

UPDATE FROM THE ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

(Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer entered the meeting at 18:34)

Brianne Vally, Environment Agency (EA), gave an update on the Thames Catchment Area. She explained that the Catchment Area received about 53% of average rainfall for January. While this was a lot less than the rainfall in November and December 2022, the rainfall in January 2023 nevertheless caused the catchment to be saturated as well as River Thames levels to be high in most locations. Most of the weirs along the Thames were drawn but not all were fully drawn yet. The Jubilee River's radial gates were not being operated at the moment, but EA were continuing to monitor the situation carefully.

As of the day of the meeting, Brianne Vally informed that there were no flood warnings in RBWM, and none were expected imminently. There were no flood alerts along the Thames River area between Cookham and Wraysbury, but there were some flood alerts along the Thames River between Shepperton and Molesey. EA resources were being scaled up and were ready to escalate further if the situation changed, such as doubling staff on the rosters. Brianne Vally encouraged residents to report any concerns via the incident hotline.

Regarding the weather forecast in the next few days, Brianne Vally reported more rain was expected in the next few days, which meant river current high flows may continue to rise. Groundwater levels had also risen at 14 of the indicator sites across the River Thames Catchment Area and therefore EA were monitoring the situation carefully in Bray. In spite of this, there were no groundwater alerts in force at the moment in RBWM. She recommended that updates on local area water situations could be found online.

Brianne Vally then moved onto providing generic updates relating to an overview of flood risk planning. The Flood Risk Management plan was published in December 2022, which included details of measures identified nationally at significant risk of flooding. This plan could be accessed on gov.uk website by searching 'Thames River Basin flood risk management plan'.

Brianne Vally then explained that the EA had changed its terminology: EA were no longer going to refer to 'area benefiting from defences' and instead they would refer to 'areas having a reduction in flood risk from rivers and sea due to the presence of defences'. She then explained that the flood risk mapping portal (used for planning purposes or strategic flood risk assessments) was no longer met customer needs or provided a false sense of security for users, and therefore would no longer be available online. Instead, EA would provide areas having a reduction in risk of flooding due to the presence of defences on its product 4 (Detailed Flood Risk Assessment Map) where the information could be accessed and could be used to help planning applications.

Brianne Vally then presented an update Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures. Regarding the project lifecycle, she explained that the EA were in the initial assessment phase and were preparing to submit the Strategic Outline Case (SOC).

Brianne Vally then explained the key activities of the programme:

- EA continued to work with its framework consultants (Jacobs) to develop the Strategic Outline Case, which would outline investigating viable alternative options to reduce flood risk from Datchet to Hythe End.
- EA were preparing to review Jacobs work to date and finalise the Strategic Outline Case.
- EA were preparing for the Outline Business Case by starting to draft the scope of work and develop the timeline for OBC stage.
- EA were working out logistics for itself and RBWM to visit the 4 relevant parish councils prior to pre-election period.
- Since the last meeting we have created a webpage on Battlebourne embankment on.gov.uk to raise awareness of the reduction in flood risk.

Regarding the timetable for the programme, Brianne Vally informed that there had been a slight change whereby the development of the SOC was to end in January 2023 rather than December 2022. Despite this, the SOC sign-off was still intended to be March 2023. In

addition, the Outline Business Case stage would start in April 2023, assuming that the SOC was signed-off and procurement arrangements are in place.

Brianne Vally then continued onto explaining updates on recent maintenance works. These included works around the A4 Bath road wall (an integral component of the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton flood alleviation scheme) being completed in November 2022, though additional unrelated work was taking place relating to the removal of a tree stump.

Brianne Vally then informed that work continued on North Maidenhead Bund whereby some hydraulic modelling of the 2019 Lower Thames model was being utilised to conduct a local assessment of the bund and its function before planning any further action.

Some repairs, Brianne Vally explained, took place on the flood walls repairs in Cookham, primarily consisting of repairing defects in the mortar joints and mortar joint seals. The work was expected to be completed by early 2023.

On the gantry work near the Jubilee River in the Taplow area, Brianne Vally informed that the works had been completed with the only outstanding action being the transfer of assets back to the EA area team. Brianne Vally emphasised that this was not impacting the operation of the Jubilee River should it be required.

To conclude, Brianne Vally then gave a brief update on industrial action. She informed that some EA employees had and would continue to strike in a dispute over of pay. Some contingency measures included the automation of the flood warning service being instated. She also stated that severe flood warnings were not automated and therefore were going to continue to be issued by EA staff. Brianne Vally explained that the automation of the service meant that flood warnings could be issued overnight and users could notice an increase in flood warnings as these were being sent automatically as opposed to being sense checked by a employee initially.

Regarding the Datchet to Hythe End Flood Improvement Measures, Councillor Larcombe asked if partnership funding was still relevant in that scheme; and if so, what would stop RBWM from “going around the same loop again” in comparison to the River Thames Scheme Channel One. Brianne Vally replied that the partnership funding was relevant. She also explained that partnership funding did not only encompass Grant-in-Aid funding, but also sometimes broadened to include other partners that may benefit from works surrounding a flood alleviation schemes. Brianne Vally did not exclude the possibility that there may also be a gap in funding alternative options.

Natasha Gibbs, Hertfordshire North London EA, gave some updates on local issues. She explained that the Lower Colne modelling would include areas in which the Colne River interacted with the River Thames in the Windsor and Maidenhead area. She explained the models for each catchment which give EA an overview of the flood risks and the defences put in place. She also explained that current version of the Lower Colne Brook’s modelling was from 2012; and it was revealed that there were some inconsistencies with some of the flood risk information after the 2013-14 floods. In addition, there were some uncertainties over the third runway at Heathrow airport (further up the catchment). As such, Natasha Gibbs explained, EA were updating the modelling for the Lower Colne which was expected to be completed by the end of calendar year (2023).

Natasha Gibbs hoped that this new modelling would give an overview about the Colne Brook’s interaction with the Thames River. She added that the River Thames Scheme modelling would be added so that EA had some sensitivity analysis and therefore create more interpretive modelling around the Colne Brook. In addition, the new modelling would provide some interpretation on key EA assets responding to flood risks.

Regarding maintenance, Natasha Gibbs informed that there was an online mapping which illustrated EA's assets and maintenance regime, allowing residents to understand what was going on in their area. She shared a link of the online map for the Colne Brook.

Natasha Gibbs then informed that there was maintenance surrounding aquatic vegetation, flora on the riverbed floor, to ensure there was conveyance flowing through. This was evaluated every financial year.

Other updates on maintenance works included dredging taking place at Stanwell Road as well as more maintenance works being expected in the Colne Brook area near the reservoir, including tree maintenance around April 2023. These works required analysing the area for health and safety as well as ensuring permitted access from landowners. Natasha Gibbs suggested that she could provide a further update on the tree maintenance works in the Colne Brook area.

ACTION: Natasha Gibbs to provide further update on the tree maintenance works in the Colne Brook area.

The Chairman asked if Natasha Gibbs was the point of contact for the parishes and RBWM Council in relation to this category. Natasha Gibbs confirmed this, explaining that from a flood risk perspective, she was the Council's partnership strategic overview link.

UPDATE FROM THAMES WATER

David Harding, Customer and Stakeholder Manager (Thames Water), reported that the general update was that there was a large volume of emergency calls due to the recent rainfall causing some localised sewer flooding. Thames Water were not experiencing high ground water levels affecting the sewer network except in isolated areas in the western part of the Borough in which Thames Water was closely observing.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson asked if David Harding could contact him outside of the meeting where he could discuss with David Harding on the Datchet Common Brook. David Harding agreed.

Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneene raised that there was a planning application around Moneyrow Green and that this was in a flood area. She informed that the sewers and pipes in the area were inadequate. David Harding replied that he could directly update her after the meeting.

Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer commented that the planning application encompassed a huge area and would require a lot of work to handle the water; and therefore, would cause a major problem. David Harding said he would include Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer in the update.

ACTION: David Harding to update Parish Councillors Louvaine Kneene and Malcolm Beer on the planning application around Moneyrow Green.

UPDATE FROM RBWM

Ben Crampin, Principal Flood Risk Manager, informed that the Datchet Barrel Arch project had been ongoing whereby the contracts were being finalised. He stated that he had been in contact with landowners to discuss the initial phase of the project. He also stated that he would be able to provide further information once a start date was confirmed.

The Flap Valve project had been ongoing. There was a slight issue with the modelling where it underestimated the flooding in the area; therefore, this was being redone with the baseline modelling to be completed by 20th January and options testing completed by the end of

January. RBWM are then expecting reporting back from JBA in mid-February which will allow a decision to be made and reported back at the next FLG meeting.

Regarding the recent heavy rainfall, Ben Crampin informed that the RBWM Flood Team had been working on a number of inquiries which involved property flooding and issues with infrastructure. He informed that residents should report any flooding issues through to the Council. This can be done through the website or via flooding.enquiries@rbwm.gov.uk.

Ben Crampin also informed that work on the GIA projects and Wraysbury Drain had been put on hold while he was away; but was seeking to continue work on them.

Parish Councillor Colin Lemmings raised that there was old vegetation in gutters across Bisham which then blocks waterflows. He asked if these could be cleared, adding that he and other residents had reported it but received no response. Ben Crampin suggested that Parish Councillor Colin Lemmings forward him the reference number for the reports. From there, Ben Crampin would then forward them to the Highways Team and then chase them up on an update and when the next scheduled cleaning would be.

ACTION: Parish Councillor Colin Lemmings to forward the reference number for the reports concerning the build-up of old vegetation in Bisham gutters in which Ben Crampin would forward to the Highways Team.

Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer asked if the gullies could be dredged, as well as pressure jets being applied on the outlets at Straight Road due to continual flooding on the shop fronts. Ben Crampin replied that he was going to have a meeting with VolkerHighways to discuss a number of infrastructure issues across the Borough; therefore, he would raise this with them and discuss and resolution.

Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneene gave an update to Ben Crampin on Manor Grove. Following Ben Crampin's recommendation, she informed that the residents were contacted on cleaning the watercourse in which hopefully work could begin very soon. She informed that she would keep Ben Crampin updated.

UPDATE FROM THE PARISH COUNCILS

The Chairman asked the Parish Councillor representatives in the meeting if they had any updates.

Parish Councillor Colin Lemmings (for Bisham) stated that the Joint Emergency Planning Unit (JEPU) may be providing a new flood plan which may then cause Bisham Parish Council's flood plans to be updated. He asked when this new plan may arrive. Emily Merritt, Emergency Planning Officer, replied that the plan was still in the draft format and was expected to be released in the next few months. She added that there was not much change to the plan and therefore should not change much Bisham Parish Council's flood plans.

Councillor Larcombe informed that the Wraysbury drain was still left unrepaired but was looking forward to those repairs taking place. He also informed that the new planning application in Horton had been approved to extend a temporary gravel digging operation to a permanent waste handling facility. This was also next to the hundred new houses on Horton Road. He then stated that this could change the groundwater level in Horton Road, Horton.

Councillor Larcombe also raised that the ditches in Horton needed clearing out.

Ben Crampin stated that if there were specific issues which required immediate action, then an email should be sent to him and then he would forward this issue to VolkerHighways.

Parish Councillor Louvaine Kneene (for Bray) sent details in the Zoom call chat regarding an application for Thames Water.

Parish Councillor Ian Thompson informed that Datchet Parish Council had some minor updates to its flood plan and that it would be monitoring river levels as well as groundwater.

Parish Councillor Malcolm Beer thanked Brianne Vally for a meeting on Ham Island (with David Harding attending also) to find a resolution on this.

For Eton Town Council, Laura Regazzacci informed that there had not been much action apart from noting water levels of the Boveney River. The maintenance plan which was being monitored by Thames Water engineers would remain until June 2024 after which, it was hoped, there would be a resolution as to how the river weed would be managed from then onwards.

The meeting, which began at 6.03 pm, finished at 7.08 pm

Chair.....

Date.....