

Three Rivers Flood Meeting

Moreton Area Centre

18th October 2013

Present:

Geoffrey Clifton-Brown – MP (GC-B)
Cllr David Fowles, Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Cotswold District Council (DF)
Cllr Rod Hooper, Cotswold District Council (RH)
Cllr Robert Dutton, Cotswold District Council (RD)
Cllr Sheila Jeffery, Cotswold District Council (SJ)
Laurence King, Flood Defence Engineer, Cotswold District Council (LK)
Claire Lock – Head of Environmental Services, Cotswold District Council (CL)
Kevin Field – Senior Planner, Cotswold District Council (KF)
David Graham – Flood risk Management Team, Gloucestershire County Council (DG)
Barry Russell – Environment Agency (BR)
Peter Collins – Environment Agency (PC)
Spencer Whiteley – Regional Performance Manager, Thames Water (SW)
Mark Mathews – Town Planning Manager, Thames Water (MM)
Nigel Emes – Network Operations Manager, Thames Water (NE)
Geoff Brown – Network Modeller, Thames Water (GB)
Bob Skillern – Gloucestershire Highways (RS)

Agenda:

1. Welcome
2. To receive apologies
3. Reports from representatives from the Environment Agency
4. Reports from the County Council/Cotswold District Council/Town Council
5. Reports from Thames Water
6. Questions invited from Members of the Public
7. Close

1. Welcome

GC-B – welcome to everyone. Thank you all for coming. Can I pass around the attendance sheets.

2. Apologies

Cllr Dominic Collier.

PC - Environment Agency

I am team leader for your area for the Environment Agency. Fairly quiet in your ward - not delivering much maintenance as they are designated not as main rivers. Only permissive powers to do work in main rivers. However, happy to take specific questions from you.

NE – Thames Water

Quite a bit of work on the flood plain. Have cleaned the whole system out.

LK – Cotswold District Council

2 steps to the issue in Spring House. Have now diverted the water. Regarding the big scheme for Naunton - will require us to achieve partnership funding from DEFRA.

DF

Nothing to add from Laurence. We are aware of the issues affecting your community. Once solutions have been identified we need to source the funding.

GC-B – Can I now throw open the meeting to the floor.

Mr J Noble – Naunton. May I ask what is the duty of care to the community in the prevention of sewage working backwards – so that foul sewage from my house does not end up in my neighbour's house? There is a legal obligation on Thames Water to make sure that foul sewage is got rid of. In the correspondence I have received from Thames Water they don't seem to understand that the situation changed from 2007 to last Christmas. Changes had been made and had worked – there was no flooding as such but this was chronic overflow of foul sewage for two and a half months. What is the duty of care?

MM, Thames Water – you pay us to remove your foul waste from your property. Most rain we had ever had in 100 years. Sustained rainfall throughout the year. We cannot absolve ourselves from the responsibility.

NE – major contributory factor - when the connection to the spring was capped off the water stopped. The whole system has been cleaned.

Lawrence Holden - Manhole on Dale Street – no flow coming in from Spring Cottage . Pumps were and are simply too small. No guarantee that having replaced the manhole covers the same thing won't happen again. The sewer was overloaded.

GC-B – presumably we can find out if the solution works. There is a difference of opinion.

David Pickup – Naunton – although the brown water levels may have been high. It took 10 days over the Christmas period for the tanker to arrive to take away that water. No tankers were available.

SW - Thames Water– last year we had less tanker contracts. Whole of the Thames Valley was flooded so all the water companies were unable to obtain a tanker. Whole review on response times in our centres in Reading. One hour response in flooding and pollution. Have taken on 2 new contracts – invested in 3 times as many tankers. We now have our own tankers and not have to compete with other water companies.

Ian Hanks –Naunton Parish Council – regarding planning. We have had a lot of planning applications over the last 10-15years all connecting into the sewer system. Each one makes the problems worse. When Spring cottage was changed – all the complications were pointed out but it went ahead. I

believe with some new properties - surface water is going into the main sewer system. Planning department should be able to ensure that all new properties are not connecting surface water to the main sewer system. Surface water should not be allowed into the main system at any point in Naunton because of flooding. I think we also need to make the authorities aware of the changes to properties in the village, Only a few new dwellings have been built but a large number of annexes to existing properties have had planning approval, each with bathrooms, toilets, showers, patios, and it is all adding problems to the system capacity.

KF - CDC – this is really a building regulations issue rather than planning system. When we give permission we will undertake consultation to ascertain if there is capacity in the system. We will then pass that on to the agencies concerned. Unless we have a good reason we will not refuse an application. We would also approach the developer to ask them to undertake surveys. We cannot refuse the application. We could go back to the applicant to say we have reservations and that they should reconsider their application.

GC-B – the moment you receive any detailed plan will you insist on knowing how foul water and clean water is to be disposed of?

Kevin – the information we ask for is standard. If you want extra information then you must have a Validation check list. If you're talking about patios, sheds, they do not need planning permission.

GC-B – having got that far – will the building regulations sign it off before they have done the work asked for?

MM – Thames Water – in discussion with CDC on how we can improve how we respond to planning applications that may impact upon our drainage infrastructure. Need to ensure that the drainage reports provided by developers are robust.

Ian Hanks – when will we know when sewer capacity is full?

MM – Thames Water – trying to work with CDC to ensure that the right developments are going in the right place. Met with CDC councillors a few weeks ago and talked through some of the issues.

GC-B – I don't think the system allows the planning authority enough strength to resist the planning application where there are known problems with infiltration. They consult Thames Water to find out if there is capacity. What it does not say is that a new development could cause problems to the existing sewer. I have discussed this with Nick Boles, the Planning Minister, as recently as this week so I think we are building up problems for ourselves in the future.

DG – Gloucestershire County Council –surface water run-off issue – there is new legislation that says that all new development will need approval to put surface water through the sewer or drains. Two or more properties - anything that has a drainage implication. They will need surface approval, can be part of the planning process or not. GCC is the lead authority and taking much more of an overview – last few days of our consultation process - please let us know your views. Lots of work with Lawrence King – we are aware of all the issues. Working with Thames Water and Environment Agency.

Mr Noble – I don't think that Mr Hanks' question has been questioned. Are there legal provisions that prevents people to run off surface water.

GC-B – planning doesn't cover garden sheds, patios which are not in a conservation area. None of the agencies can do anything. New planning applications will require surface water approval.

KF - Unless someone comes forward to say that there is a problem, but patios, sheds are out of our control. Some

Mrs P Hanks – Thames Water own the system – they must have jurisdiction as to whether a developer can connect. Seems extraordinary that someone can build 10 houses but can't be stopped from putting their surface

MM– Thames Water – Developers have a right to connect to our system unless a 'Grampian style' planning condition is put on the planning permission which requires the developer to ensure the appropriate drainage infrastructure is in place ahead of occupation of the development.

Neil Vincent – Naunton – some good news this evening. Within the village we think there is more work to be done. Has been progress - Man holes have been sealed on Mill haze. Recent survey. Outstanding – we would welcome feedback on the surveys. Is there any plan to look at the pumping station, and whether the sewers will be inspected regularly.

NE – Thames Water – ensured that the pumping station had been serviced and the system had been cleaned – can get the survey results – will be on the website.

Mr Pickup – who is responsible for enforcing the building regulations?

KF – building inspector in the first instance or if someone is breaching then they should contact Thames Water. If the complaint comes to the council they will direct you to building regulations department.

SJ – CDC - When a planning application comes in it will go to the planning officer, but it can be taken to your district councillor.

95% of what we deal with everyone is in agreement. If someone objects it will go to the planning committee.

Neil Vincent – surface water and drainage. Part two – imminently. Perennial request for Upstream storage – is there any investigation being carried out. Assessment of the upstream storage – is there any investigation to be carried out?

LK – tied up with other main schemes, Moreton, Lechlade. We don't have the resource to look at onsite surveys. It will be next summer before we can start. Very expensive scheme. Can't really commit to the upstream storage

Mrs J Pickup - Just had a resurface on Summer Hill – used to be gullies and ditches. Now with smooth tarmac the water will run down the hill to our house.

LK – I will take that up with highways.

Lawrence Houlden - Follow up on the point regarding the former fish ponds on the Hawling Brook – I have raised this with DC – spent a long time. The fishponds are in a very poor condition. If they were to fail during a storm – the amount of water would be very dangerous. Requested that the Environment Agency were asked to determine whether they should be regulated under the Reservoirs Act.

LK – We have carried out searches. Not sure they are sufficient to achieve the level of protection required. DCC agreed to make enquiries with the Environment Agency to determine whether the former fishponds should be subject to the Reservoirs Act.

Lawrence Houlden - Three small fishponds that were built in the 1920s. One of them is collapsing. The third is a concrete dam – patched up.

Mr J Noble – with regard to power and capacity of pumps - would it be a useful exercise to study how close to full capacity we are under normal climatic conditions. At the next meeting can you tell us how close we are please?

MM – Thames Water – we can look at our database and let you know the size of the network capacity, etc and provide this information ahead of the next meeting.

GB– Network Modeller, Thames Water – when we look at planning applications we can do tests at the station and look at volumes, etc.

GC-B – how much is in the public domain?

Andrew Harvey, Guiting Power – Can I raise the question of the dams? They are in what is called the nature reserve and they are part of the Guiting village trust. They are almost entirely silted up. The most effective way of protecting Naunton would be some kind of bund with a restrictive sluice on the flood plain above Naunton.

LK – we are going to look at these things next summer. Already carried out some surveys and are in land negotiations. They are very interesting structures but they need a lot of maintenance.

DF – funding. When Laurence makes comments about lack of funding, I wouldn't want you to think that as a small community you are not important. Schemes we are working on at the moment are Moreton, Lechlade, Cirencester, South Cerney, those schemes are being worked through but we have limited resource. When we have some time available – next summer – we will look at the work that needs doing and will put a bid in. Scheme currently in Moreton that has been 6 years in the making which affects over 300 houses. We will do what we can to provide you with a level of protection because we have a commitment to do that.

Ian Hanks – tactical funding. Is there funding available from CDC for that?

LK – Very recently the Environment Agency have made available funds to bid for such things. I think it will be relatively simple. As soon as I know more I will contact you.

DF – not only is there money made available from the committee but we will check if there is any available from the community resilience fund. Use to be up to £10k for each community.

GC-B – thank you to all the reps from Thames Water, the Environment Agency, Town Council, District Councils, GCC, etc. There will be another meeting in March where we will have further updates.

Subsequent to the Meeting, it has now been decided that the Date of the Next Meeting will be on Friday 4 April 2014 from 1745-1845 pm.