

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (RUNNYMEDE)****DATE: 1 DECEMBER 2014**

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SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

**SUBJECT: SURREY FLOODS UPDATE****DIVISION: ALL****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Over the winter of 2013/14, the county of Surrey was hit by extreme weather conditions that resulted in a prolonged spell of flooding that affected several districts and boroughs.

The borough of Runnymede was significantly impacted by the floods, with hundreds of homes and businesses suffering internal property flooding, with many more being impacted by flood waters reaching their gardens or causing disruption in their local area.

A coordinated multi-agency response and recovery was implemented and an update on progress was reported to the Runnymede Local Committee on 9 June 2014. This report provides a further update to the Committee on the progress that has been made since June.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that the Committee notes the multi-agency work that has continued over recent months and the ongoing flood resilience work that is taking place.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To keep the Runnymede Local Committee informed of progress.

1. BACKGROUND - MOVING FROM RECOVERY TO RESILIENCE

The flooding events that hit the County of Surrey predominantly took place between December 2013 and February 2014, with two major incidents being declared. Flood warnings were first issued along Surrey stretched of the Thames in early January and on 09 February, nine sever flood warnings were issued and a major incident was declared. The multi-agency emergency response to this incident was led by Surrey Police, with official responsibility for flood recovery passing to Surrey County Council on 21 February 2014.

A multi-agency Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) was established consisting of representatives from all those who had been involved in the response to this incident and was chaired by the Assistant Chief Executive of Surrey County Council. The group implemented a Strategic Recovery Plan and on 26 September 2014, the RCG met for the last time, closing recovery and moving into a programme of flood resilience activity.

This programme of flood resilience work will now be overseen by the Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board, with some elements falling to the governance of the Surrey Local Resilience Forum. Main workstreams include:

- The River Thames Scheme (RTS)
- Flood Alleviation Schemes (other than the RTS)
- Engagement
- Community Resilience

Through these governance structures, agencies working together include the Environment Agency (EA), District and Borough Councils, Surrey County Council, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), Surrey Police, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), Public Health England (PHE) and various utility companies including Thames Water.

The following provides an update on the local activity from key organisations.

2. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY- UPDATE ON LOCAL ACTIVITY

Maintenance Activity

Maintenance has been carried out on the key watercourses within Runnymede including the Meadlake Ditch (Egham/Thorpe) and Chertsey Bourne.

In September and early October, The EA's contractors completed maintenance work on the Meadlake Ditch between Tinsey Close and Green Lane. As part of this work, a short section 40m upstream of Norlands Lane of maintenance work was completed, and blockages were cleared along the Chertsey Bourne through Chertsey. This was carried out as part of annual maintenance plans and included removing obstructions and trimming vegetation.

The EA has been working with other land owners along the Meadlake Ditch, such as Cemex and Thorpe Park, who have carried out maintenance on their land. Divers have recently cleared debris and blockages from the culverts under Norlands Lane and the adjacent service road. In September, they cleared obstructions from the culvert under Green Lane.

It is intended that further maintenance will be carried out along the Meadlake Ditch and Chertsey Bourne in the coming months, which will include some silt removal and further vegetation clearance. This is likely to start in early December once the plans have been finalised.

During the winter flooding the flood flows scoured the Thames river bed and in places washed away material. As the flows receded, the silt and gravel was deposited on the river bed, particularly in the slower-flowing sections of the river. This has caused some shallows that impede navigation. Works are ongoing in the River Thames to clear the shoals and remove the build up of this material in approximately 20 locations between Windsor and Teddington. This work will re-profile the riverbed so that boat traffic can continue to use the river safely and smooth the conveyance downstream.

The EA have met with Chertsey Flood Action Group, Thorpe Ward Residents Association and Laleham Reach residents to address a number of issues they have. A meeting is planned with the Egham Residents Association to do the same.

After the 2013/ 14 floods the Flood Warning Areas in Runnymede which were issued were reviewed. There were no changes to the extent of the Flood Warning Areas but changes to the thresholds of **when** the Warning Areas are issued were made where necessary.

River Thames Scheme (RTS)

The EA is working with seven local council partners, DEFRA and Thames Water to develop the River Thames Scheme. It will provide significant economic, social and environmental benefits alongside the reduction in flood risk, including new wildlife habitats and areas for recreation. All communities between Datchet and Teddington will benefit from the scheme, so the scheme will benefit communities in Runnymede. Exact timings of the scheme are uncertain, but work is anticipated to extend to 2025. Updates on elements of the scheme currently being worked on include:

Funding: The capital cost of construction for the proposed River Thames Scheme was estimated in 2009 as being £302million (£256 million present value cost). 53% of the costs qualify for central government grant with the remaining funding needing to be secured from other sources, such as local councils, local enterprise partnerships and other beneficiaries. The scheme can only go ahead if the full funding is secured and a funding strategy is being developed to explore a wide range of options to secure the funding required.

Property level products (PLP) to improve the resistance of homes to flooding: Property Level Products are being installed for up to 1,200 homes within the River Thames Scheme area to make them more resilient to flooding. This project has been reviewed and revised in response to the experiences of the pilot areas during the 2014 floods, such that the most effective products are now provided under the scheme. Detailed surveys have been completed for residents in Chertsey and other areas. Following a resident signing a legal agreement, installation of measures is then scheduled on an individual basis. Drop in sessions are being held locally with residents that have received their detailed surveys to enable them to ask questions.

Major incident planning: The local council emergency planners, the Environment Agency and the emergency services are working together to prepare a major

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incident plan for flooding. This plan will improve the emergency response to support communities during floods, based upon the experiences of 2003, 2012 and 2014. As part of the Scheme, investigations are looking at where temporary flood defences may be deployed to defend properties during a flood. Meetings have been held with local council emergency planning officers and alignments have been amended in line with their feedback. This information will form part of the EA's and Surrey County Council's emergency plans for major flood incidents in the future. A desk top validation exercise took place on 5 November 2014 with Local Resilience Forums in order to test the plan.

Capacity improvements and channels project: The River Thames Scheme will involve large scale engineering work to construct a new flood channel between 30 to 60 metres wide and 17 kilometres long, with some parts of this work falling within Runnymede. The EA have appointed consultants to complete the appraisal phase of work and they have almost completed a very intense period of data collection and project understanding which has included site visits and meetings with EA staff.

Community Engagement: Meetings are being held with interested community groups to respond to enquiries in the River Thames Scheme area and to help explain the scheme. Engagement work is also looking to help communities become more resilient to flood risk by developing community plans, which is joined up with the wider multi-agency community resilience work.

3. THAMES WATER - UPDATE ON LOCAL ACTIVITY

The following provides an update from Thames Water on the work they have been carrying out on pumping stations, their waste network, and communications improvements to aid response:

Pumping Station Upgrades: Like sewer mains, pumping stations are designed to take wastewater from homes and businesses, not floodwater from highways or rivers. Upgrades include:

- Stepgates, Chertsey: Site overloaded. Temporary new pump was installed and pumps later replaced with larger units (Cost of £34,000).
- Penton Hook, Chertsey: Site overloaded. Station fitted with compressor motor and new pump (cost of £5,000). All valves in pits replaced (cost of £100,000). Flood defence wall proposed (requires planning permission, cost of £60,000)
- Stoneylands, Egham: Site overloaded. Short term new NRVs installed. Longer term: station to be overhauled (cost of £130,000).
- Hamm Court, Addlestone: Site overloaded. New compressor motor fitted (cost of £1,000). All valves in pits replaced (£100,000). Flood defence wall proposed (requires planning permission, cost of £60,000).

Waste Network: The majority of flooding from the sewer network in the Runnymede area was due to hydraulic overload of the system.

- Vicarage Road, Egham: Hydraulic overload and blockages (including drain rod which was found to be cause of blockage at The Ridings)
- Manor Farm Day Centre: There were issues with a private sewage pumping station and blockages in the sewerage network. Manholes which needed to be accessed on Hummer Road were tarmacked over and delays in lifting

manholes were due to full road closure being required. There have been no further blockages since September, but there are still outstanding issues regarding access to manholes. In all, the sewer system following surveying and cleaning is considered to be operational and no major structural defects have been identified.

- Manor Croft School, Egham: No issues recorded since February 2014. Issues were due to hydraulic overload at Quincy Road Pumping Station.

Wider Response Improvements: Improvements have been made to the Thames Water telephony system to provide faster response times and to enable the company to identify flooding hotspots sooner. The number of directly employed customer representatives has been increased to enable improved direct contact for customers and communities. The communications area of Thames Water's winter event team has also been expanded to provide a better response and increased visibility on the ground during any future flooding events. Thames Water are also members of over 60 flood forums (across the areas they serve) which aim to tackle specific flooding problems through multi-agency and community working.

4. HIGHWAYS AND DRAINAGE UPDATE OF ACTIVITY

Roads and bridges in Surrey County Council's highways network suffered a large amount of damage as a result of the floods. In 2014/ 15, Surrey County Council is investing £55 million in their highways network, which includes a £17 million Flood Recovery programme to help secure and improve their road network for future adverse weather conditions following a successful funding bid to Department for Transport. This recovery programme includes the resurfacing of 100km of road and removing more than 20,000 potholes. Local completed works within this programme include works in the following roads:

- Windsor Road
- Chertsey Lane
- London Street
- The Avenue and High Street
- Priest Hill
- Lyne Crossing Rd
- Callow Hill
- Bakeham Lane
- Mead Lane
- Lyne Lane

In response to the flooding and ongoing flooding issues, SCC and Runnymede Borough Council have also either completed or are scheduled to carry out drainage works in locations that include:

- Little Green Lane Addlestone: Drainage works have been carried out to alleviate flooding to properties.
- Chaseside Gardens, Chertsey: Drainage investigation/ cleaning to drainage system has been carried out.
- Aybridges, South, Park Avenue, Egham: Drainage investigation has been carried out.
- Woodham lane, Addlestone: Drainage investigation/ report.
- Christchurch Road, Virginia Water: Drainage investigation/ report.
- South Avenue, Park Avenue, Ayebridges Avenue, Pooley Green Rd, Roundway and Braywood Avenue: Starting in the week of 24 November,

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these roads will be subject to parking restrictions for five days to enable the drainage systems to be thoroughly cleaned and if permissible (time allowing) carry out repairs.

- Chertsey Lane, opposite Thorpe Park: Construction of two high capacity soakaways.

All reports of flooding in the borough are initially investigated by the Community Highways Officers and if necessary the site will be added to a programme for further investigation by jetting machinery. If the problems are not resolved they are programmed for investigation and repair by a drainage construction team.

Ongoing ditch cleaning/ excavation is also being carried out across the borough.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On 30 September 2014, a 'market stall' event was held at the Hythe Centre in Egham. A number of organisations attended, including Runnymede Borough Council, Surrey County Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire & Rescue, the National Flood Forum and various voluntary groups.

The event was well attended by members of the public, with approximately one thousand residents being present. Their feedback on the flood events was readily received, and the following main themes were raised:

- Support for Flood Wardens/ Flood Fora
- Communication between the Council, partner agencies and residents
- Distribution and use of sandbags
- Clarity of information around 'what to do' in a flood event
- Use of local residents/volunteers in the response phase

Runnymede Borough Council is also carrying out some detailed operational planning with community groups, at a meeting held with residents on 17 November. This is to discuss how resident volunteers who wish to, can work more closely with emergency services during an incident to build community resilience.

6. BUILDING COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Following the floods of winter 2013/14, there have been many lessons learnt by responding agencies which are being addressed to improve response efforts in future major incidents. The floods highlighted a number of residents and community groups who under their own efforts helped provide local coordination and support in their local community.

There are also examples across the county where communities have established flood forums, either new or as part of existing groups. Driven by the local community themselves, such groups can help improve communication flow between local communities and responding agencies during a major incident, like the floods, and for actions performed by the local community to better recognised by responding agencies.

Agencies have been working together to coordinate a long term and sustainable approach to work more closely with volunteers to develop flood forums. A Community Resilience Officer is starting at Surrey County Council in December,

working in partnership with borough and district councils and the Environment Agency, to engage local community groups to develop Local Community Resilience Plans.

The postholder will work across the whole county and will be targeting priority areas identified by SCC and partner organisations, working in more than one community at a time over a period of about two to three months, before stepping away to leave a sustainable community resilience plan in place.

Whilst not dedicated to Runnymede alone, the post will be engaging and working with flood affected communities in the borough.

Residents interested in becoming a flood warden or volunteering in emergency response and recovery in their area can contact can complete an expression of interest form via the Runnymede Borough Council website at www.runnymede.gov.uk/floodinfo. Alternatively they can contact Surrey Council by e-mail at flood.forums@surreycc.gov.uk.

7. WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

There was much assistance from the voluntary sector during the floods. As well as looking to build community resilience through the development of flood forums, work is taking place to enable authorities to better respond to volunteers who step forward during an incident offering help and assistance.

SCC is working with the Council for Voluntary Services to support emerging resilience groups and signposting the volunteers who want to support their communities during an emergency. Meetings are planned with Voluntary Support North Surrey (Runnymede) to take this work forwards.

SCC is also working with the Community Foundation for Surrey to extend the work of the Foundation during the 2013/ 14 floods, so that in any future events they will be the central fund for any donations to support those who have been affected by winter emergencies.

8. FINANCIAL RELIEF AND SUPPORT FOR AFFECTED RESIDENTS AND BUSINESSES

Repair and Renew Grant: The Repair and Renew Grant (RRG) is available to residents and businesses who have been flooded internally and offers up to £5,000 towards measures to help make their property more resilient to flooding. Such measures include replacing windows and doors with water resistant alternatives or moving electrical sockets to a safer level.

The scheme is funded by DEFRA and administered by Surrey County Council for ten of the eleven borough and district authorities, including Runnymede. To date, there have been 73 applications from residents and businesses in Runnymede. Applications have been steadily rising since the RRG first became available in April and in order to allow more application time for residents who are not yet back or only recently moved back into their homes, the deadline for applications has been extended to **31 December 2014**.

Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) are also working with the RRG team at Surrey County Council to submit applications for RBC owned housing.

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Full details about the grant can be found on the Surrey County webpages at:

www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/flooding-advice/repair-and-renew-grant

Council tax relief and business rate relief: Three months of relief from council tax and business rates has been provided for those residents and businesses who have suffered internal property flooding.

9. SCC MEMBERS' FLOOD TASK GROUP

Following the floods, the SCC Environment and Infrastructure Select Committee established a Members' Task Group to consider what measures the County Council could implement on a strategic level to mitigate against the consequences of future events.

In order to achieve this, the Task Group visited local Members, residents, council officers and partner agencies in their affected divisions to gather evidence. The findings of the Task Group were approved by SCC's Environment & Transport Select Committee on 27 October 2014, and are due to be considered by the SCC Cabinet on 25 November 2014. The recommendations include:

- Improving communication during emergencies.
- Establishing flood fora across the County.
- Lobbying Central Government to encourage utility companies to invest more in their networks.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since the last update to the Runnymede Local Committee, agencies have continued to work together to deliver a recovery programme under the governance of the Flood Recovery Coordination Group. This work has naturally transitioned into a continued flood resilience programme, which will be overseen by the Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board.

Work is ongoing to take the River Thames Scheme forwards and secure funding for its full implementation and flood risk management agencies continue to carry out maintenance and improvement works in the Runnymede area.

Whilst capital schemes, such as the River Thames Scheme, will take years to implement, work to engage and communicate with communities continues and is very much seen by agencies as a priority. The multi-agency approach to engage with residents and communities who want to develop flood forums will take months and even years to fully see through, but commitment is in place and work underway.

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