

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (Spelthorne)****SURREY**

DATE: MONDAY 15 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 Spelthorne 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 Spelthorne Local Committee on 30 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 Spelthorne 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 stretches of the Thames in early January and on 09 February, nine severe 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.

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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.

There are two significant ongoing concerns for the local community that should be noted by the Local Committee. The Police led inquest into the tragic death of a seven-year old boy from Thameside is still to be concluded and it is not possible at this time to comment further until the outcomes of the inquest have been published.

The River Ash Action Group have also submitted a petition to Surrey County Council, which has been responded to by Cllr Furey, SCC Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Planning, on 12 November. The River Ash Action Group have replied to the SCC response and at the time of writing SCC is preparing further clarification to the questions and concerns raised by the group.

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

2. ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE ON LOCAL ACTIVITY

Maintenance Activity

River Ash: The Environment Agency (EA) currently exercises permissive powers to do some regular maintenance work on the River Ash. This work includes general bank clearance, and removal of aquatic vegetation and debris. As part of this regular maintenance programme, trash screens are checked at Birch Green, Boundary Road, Ashford Road and Gaston Way on a weekly basis. The Ash off-take is also checked weekly and its trash screen cleared. It is also inspected once a year by the EA's maintenance contractors.

On top of this regular maintenance and work leading into the winter months, reed and silt removal and gravel replacement is planned to be carried out on the River Ash this year just downstream of the Boundary Road Screen.

The EA will continue to work with Thames Water to agree a revised protocol to minimise flood risk in the Staines-upon-Thames area, to use in the event of any

flooding this winter. The EA is currently developing new flood modelling of the river systems in this area as part of the wider River Thames Scheme and both the River Ash and Staines Reservoir Aqueduct will be considered as part of the model. An additional survey of the area has been completed to enable this work to take place. The outputs of this work will then be used to review the options available to manage flood risk in the area. This will include additional modelling to assess the impact of each option. The EA will work with other flood risk management authorities and local communities to do this.

Any preferred option will be subject to funding. The EA will only be able to secure funding if the scheme has a high enough cost benefit ratio (depending on the protection it will provide to people and properties) and the remainder of the funding is secured through contributions from beneficiaries, as stated under the Department for Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) partnership funding rules.

The Environment Agency will be contacting members of the River Ash Action Group and other stakeholders over the next few weeks in regards to the EA's preparedness for winter and potential flooding. This will include information on a revised protocol for operating the Thames Water Aqueduct sluice gate in the event of flooding.

In the longer term, the EA will continue to better understand the flood risk in the area, in conjunction with the River Thames Scheme, exploring potential schemes to alleviate the risk. The modelling for this is in early stages and will not be complete until late 2015.

Sweeps Ditch: The EA have looked at temporary measures for the Sweeps Ditch area. However, it is not believed that fixing a barrier to the outfall of the Sweeps Ditch would address the main mechanisms of flooding. During the flooding last winter, groundwater affected many parts of Staines, including the area around Sweeps Ditch. As the river levels rise, the water in the gravel underlying much of the area also rise. In addition, simply closing off the outfall would not address water overtopping the banks of the Thames itself and inundating the floodplain in that area.

The EA have carried out a study into the use of temporary defences along the River Thames including Staines. This information is available for emergency responders to use should it be required in any flooding in the near future and will eventually be used to make the case to purchase additional equipment needed to defend communities.

Sunbury Flood Volunteers: The Group has been provided with some flood maps of the Sunbury area to assist the Sunbury Flood Volunteers as part of their emergency response/support to the community during future floods.

Chertsey Bridge Road: Thameside, Abbeyfields and Chertsey Bridge Road residents were flooded by a mix of surface water, groundwater and water from the Thames via the Littleton Lake owned by Brett Aggregate Ltd behind their properties. Thames flood water overtopped the banks, spilled into the northern lake, flowed through culverts under the M3 to the southern lake and then flooded properties. Water then returned into the river downstream of Chertsey Lock and Dumsey Meadow.

Chertsey Bridge Road residents have built an earth bund made of unconsolidated spoil 150 m long and 3.5 m high. Construction on the bund started on 28 August 2014, in the belief it will protect properties in Chertsey Bridge Road.

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Brett Aggregates (as landowner) are working to lower water on the lake, supported by Surrey County Council, Spelthorne Borough Council and the Environment Agency. This is to increase its capacity in advance of the winter and help reduce flood risk. Pumping started on 14 November and will last for approximately two weeks. The water pumped out of the lake will discharge into the River Thames. The EA expect that the pumping will lower water levels in the lake by between 20-30cms and depending on the success or otherwise of this, the results will feed into a medium term assessment of what can be done to reduce the level of flooding in the area.

In the medium term, other possible flood alleviation measures will be looked at including assessment of the impact of the earth bund, consideration of delaying overtopping into North Lake and further connections between the south lake and the Thames. However, in the longer term the River Thames Scheme will reduce flood risk from the Thames.

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 communities in Spelthorne will benefit. 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 to improve the resistance of homes to flooding: Property Level Products (PLP) 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 Spelthorne 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. Remedial and upgrade works to existing properties in Staines that had measures installed as part of the pilot phases for Staines commenced in September.

352 properties are eligible for PLP within Spelthorne. Of those, 132 have had a survey and are due to receive their products this financial year. An additional 100 of the highest risk properties should be surveyed and have products fitted in the next financial year.

Sunbury Court Island residents are eligible to receive PLP through a joint scheme that has been established to amalgamate the PLP scheme and the Repair and Renew Grant (administered by Surrey County Council) for residents eligible for both

schemes. These residents are being worked with to produce personal and community Flood Plans.

Major incident planning: The local council emergency planners, the Environment Agency and the emergency services are working together to prepare a major 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 incident in the future. A desk top validation exercise took place on 05 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 Spelthorne. 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 OF LOCAL ACTIVITY

The most severe flooding issues involving Thames Water assets were concentrated in two areas, Guildford Street, Staines and the Moor Lane Sluice and Aqueduct which serves Ashford Common Water Treatment Works.

Guildford Street Progress: Camera surveys of all foul sewers have been completed and have shown that there are no operational defects within the network. A manhole cover at the end of the road (near the allotments) has been replaced. Thames Water has also cleaned out the highways drains on behalf of Surrey County Council.

However, a surface water cross connection between the surface water system and foul sewer has been discovered which is believed to be the source of the inundation into the foul network. Thames Water is exploring if a bung between the two systems is the best option to prevent future inundation.

Moor Lane Sluice Gate and Aqueduct: Repairs have been carried out to the aqueduct and improvements to the sluice gate structure will be completed by Christmas 2014. These include:

- Solution agreed with the EA is stop plates immediately in front of the culvert pipes to seal off the culverts.

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- Aluminium stop plates will be held in place within guide channels against the culvert openings, a lifting frame and guides will be installed above the plates to facilitate lowering and raising when required.
- The existing screens in front of the culverts will be relocated along with a walkway to enable periodic cleaning of the screen.
- The solution will provide the flood protection requested by the EA and prevent, when plates are closed, any flood waters flowing through the culverts and along the Staines Aqueduct towards Staines Pumping Station at Birch Green.
- Contractors are looking to complete the works by Christmas 2014, and aiming to have the stop plates on site by 11 Dec
- Once stop plates have been delivered on site they will be available for use if requested by the EA during a potential flooding event.
- Once the works are completed the existing Moor Lane Sluice Gate will no longer be required by Thames Water and the existing gate will be removed as far as is possible.
- The solution will prevent flood waters from upstream of the culvert flowing down towards Birch Green
- The solution will not prevent any flood waters from downstream of the culverts from flowing into the aqueduct and Birch Green

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:

- Fordbridge Road
- The Broadway
- Laleham Road
- Clare Road
- Clarence Street/ Thames Street/ South Street – in Horizon 3 year programme

In addition to SCC's regular annual gully cleaning, SCC is investing over £125,000 in drainage maintenance in Spelthorne this Financial Year, at over 100 different sites. This includes repairs to broken connections, soakaway cleaning, root cutting, and cleaning of Surrey County Council's surface water sewers. For example in Guildford Street, Staines, SCC have been working to investigate, clean, map and repair the surface water drainage system both in Guildford Street itself and also in Laleham Road, to manage better the surface water in Guildford Street, and to reduce the volume of surface water discharging into Guildford Street for Laleham Road.

Members and residents should note that much of the surface water drainage in Spelthorne relies on outfalls to the River Thames, or depends on soakaways that are sensitive to ground water levels. This means that if the water level were to rise in the Thames, or if ground water levels were to be high, SCC's ability to manage and dispose of surface water would be seriously compromised.

5. 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 be 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 mid 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 post 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 Spelthorne alone, the post will be engaging and working with flood affected communities in the borough and will be working closely with Spelthorne Borough Council.

Spelthorne Borough Council are holding a meeting on 3rd December with residents who are interested in becoming a flood warden or volunteering in emergency response.

6. 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. A meeting has been held with Voluntary Support in Spelthorne 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.

7. 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 £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 Spelthorne. To date, there have been 65 applications accepted from residents and businesses in Spelthorne. 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.

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.

8. SCC MEMBERS FLOOD TASK GROUP

Following the floods, the SCC Environment and Transport 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.

9. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since the last update to the Spelthorne 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 Spelthorne area.

While 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 an ongoing 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 is underway.

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