

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**LOCAL COMMITTEE (RUNNYMEDE)****DATE:** 21 September 2015**LEAD OFFICER:** DOUG HILL, STRATEGIC NETWORK RESILIENCE MANAGER
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**SUBJECT:** MULTI-AGENCY FLOOD RESILIENCE 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.

In particular, Runnymede was badly affected with internal flooding to homes and businesses.

Partners including Surrey County Council, Runnymede Borough Council, the Environment Agency and Thames Water have been working together and with the community to prepare for future flooding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To note and comment on the work achieved to date by SCC, RBC and the Environment Agency in promoting flood resilience in the Borough.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

To keep the Runnymede Local Committee informed of progress.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

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. In particular, Runnymede was badly affected with internal flooding to homes and businesses.

Since then agencies have been working in partnership to improve our preparedness as well as communities resilience to future flooding. This is in addition to developing flood alleviation schemes, including the River Thames Scheme, as well as maintenance of existing assets and watercourses.

This paper provides an update on the work being carried out by the different organisations as well as the multi-agency approach to community resilience.

2. Community Resilience in Runnymede

A multi-agency working group has been set up to discuss, plan and coordinate community resilience and severe weather activities within Surrey. The Surrey Community Resilience Partnership includes the Boroughs and Districts, Surrey CC, SFRS, EA, utility infrastructure providers and other partners.

We are working with communities in Runnymede to help them to develop the skills to be less vulnerable to harm in emergencies – such as flooding – as strong connected communities are better able to prepare, respond and recover from adversity.

This includes:

- A comprehensive web based resource package, including complete review of SCC materials to support residents and communities in incidents – this will include a one stop web portal, newsletter, and downloadable information and planning templates, (with paper copies available on request),
- A modular training programme for resilience volunteers and groups, with support around contingency planning, and on correct ways to report for prevention and incident management, including developing two way communication channels with trusted community contacts,
- Better links between residents and communities and services that can benefit them – such as support provided free of charge to residents fitting a wide eligibility range if there is loss of power, heat or water.

Agencies are working together to hold a **Severe Weather Forum**, planned for October, to provide community groups with information and to assist in developing plans and procedures and foster trust and cooperation between the communities and responding agencies.

3. Environment Agency

Maintenance Activity

Following the 2013/14 floods the EA has implemented a thorough review of their maintenance programme which is being progressed. The programme is published on

the EA website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-and-coastal-maintenance-programme> and details both frequent and intermittent maintenance.

Maintenance work carried out this year has focussed on the River Thames, River Wey, the Chertsey Bourne and the Meadlake Ditch. In particular, extensive maintenance was carried out on the River Wey and on the Chertsey Bourne downstream of Eastworth Road as part of the “State of the Nation” work.

The EA have also carried out shoal clearance where needed, including 840 tonnes from Penton Hook Lock cut, 1260 tonnes from Chertsey Weir pool and 420 tonnes from Dumsey Bend (road bridge area). A list of all their shoal clearance sites can be requested from the Environment Agency directly.

The EA have been carrying out bathymetric surveys of the Thames to establish what the requirements are for maintenance on the River Thames. They are expecting the most recent results in October 2015 when they will be able to produce a report on the need for maintenance and dredging on the Thames going forward.

River Thames Scheme

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. Work is currently being delivered that will improve the resilience of communities in Runnymede, before the construction of the channels begins.

The updated estimated cost of scheme construction is £302 million. Additional contributions of approximately £45m are required for construction.

A Funding Strategy is being collectively developed for the scheme. The purpose of this is to set out how the scheme can be funded across its lifetime (through development, construction and maintenance).

Work on the flood channel is expected to begin in 2020 and will take approximately 3 to 4 years to complete.

Community Engagement

The EA continues to meet with community groups with Surrey County Council to help residents keep up to date with the River Thames Scheme as well as other localised issues. Personal and community flood plans are being produced to help residents become more resilient.

The EA is holding nine public drop-in events about the River Thames Scheme (Datchet to Teddington) over a 4 week period in August and September. They are spread across the River Thames Scheme area, to give as many people as possible the opportunity to attend. They are not community specific, so anyone can attend any of the events.

Major Flood Incident Planning:

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The EA have produced a Major Flood Response Protocol which will enable all agencies to coordinate their response to a major flood on the Thames. This protocol will provide the link between existing incident response plans. It focuses on communication arrangements and issues that need to be considered at a strategic level.

The EA have worked closely with partners in Surrey and Thames Valley Local Resilience Forums and Local Council Emergency Planning teams of the boroughs to agree this protocol. A flood mapping visualisation tool has been developed which helps to identify where properties and local critical infrastructure are at risk, as water levels rise during an incident.

Eight communities have been identified within the River Thames Scheme area where temporary defences may be able to be used to help protect homes in a flood. Computer simulations of flood scenarios (hydraulic modelling) need to be carried out to ensure that these temporary defences would be effective and would not increase flood risk to anyone else.

Property level products

The EA are continuing to provide Property Level Products to a targeted 1,200 homes within the River Thames Scheme area. A review of the process in supplying the products has taken place looking at customer feedback and the EA is in the process of streamlining the way products have been provided in an aim to make it more straightforward for residents. The EA have started to send out the most recent package of property reports in the Staines area with a view to start the work on these properties in this financial year. Drop-in sessions for residents with reports are held locally, with the next one coming up on Thursday 8 October in the Hythe Centre.

4. Surrey County Council – managing flood risk

Surrey County Council is designated as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for Surrey and it has the 'lead' role in managing flood risk from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses across the county. This involves close working with partners involved in flood and water management, known as Risk Management Authorities.

Over the last 9 months, SCC has strengthened its role by creating the Strategic Network Resilience team to lead managing local flood risk. The new team will focus on three key works streams: The first will be the development of a capital improvement programme, the second to improve our flood risk management strategy and partnership working and the third to ensure major developments have appropriate surface water management strategies through our role as Statutory Consultee.

More information about the council's role can be found on their website:

<http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/people-and-community/emergency-planning-and-community-safety/flooding-advice>

SCC has been working closely with the Environment Agency and other partners in developing the River Thames Scheme. This has included preparing a major incident plan for flooding. We have also been engaging with communities in Runnymede

To ensure that the public highway is protected from flooding, Surrey County Council undertakes regular ditch maintenance, which is scheduled on an annual basis depending upon local need. In addition to this, the County undertakes a programme of routine gulley cleansing, which is designed to ensure that the highway drainage systems function effectively. Through this programme, gulleys are rated according to risk, and cleaned at an enhanced frequency at locations with a higher risk of rainfall related flooding. The gulley programme is audited to ensure that this maintenance regime is carried out effectively. An annual programme of soakaway cleansing is also carried out to complement the gulley cleansing maintenance work. For more details see <http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/roads-and-transport/road-maintenance-and-cleaning/drainage-and-flooding/drain-cleaning>

In addition to the planned maintenance programmes, through the Local Area Maintenance teams, reactive maintenance work is carried out in response to issues of blocked drainage systems and flooding that arise during the course of the year. This work is carefully prioritised to ensure so far as is possible that the public highway is safe to pass and repass.

9. Runnymede Borough Council

At Runnymede's Full Council in October 2014 a detailed report into the 2013/14 flooding was presented and an Action Plan agreed. Details of work to implement the ten aspects of this plan are detailed below.

Action Plan Summary

- Identify a network of severe weather co-ordinators and volunteers and liaise with them before and during a severe weather event.

The borough held a Flood marketplace event at the Hythe Centre at the end of September 2014 where an estimated thousand local residents attended. It was attended by RBC, SCC, Surrey Police, Surrey Fire & Rescue Service, Environment Agency, Thames Water, National Flood Forum, RHUL volunteers and Chertsey Society. Volunteers to assist with future flood response were recruited as well as individuals contacted who had played major roles in the recent floods.

In November a very well attended meeting of these wardens was held at RBC attended by various agencies that gave presentations on their respective roles and the groups of volunteers were invited to role-play various flood scenarios.

- Work with community and voluntary groups, as well as charities and the faith sector in supporting community resilience.

Fortnightly multi-agency meetings are being held to discuss, plan and co-ordinate community resilience/severe weather activities within Surrey, Runnymede and Spelthorne. Spelthorne and Runnymede are building on strong work already undertaken in bringing community leads together with multi-agency partners to discuss emergency preparedness, response and recovery. Agencies are working together to run a Severe Weather Forum, aimed for October, to provide community groups with information and assist in developing plans and procedures and foster trust and co-operation between the communities and responding agencies.

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- Identify locations where sand and sandbags can be delivered in anticipation of a flood event, where distribution can be managed by local volunteers.

Suggestion that car parks at Bemonds in Chertsey and Hythe Centre car park in Egham Hythe might be suitable for this use although security measures would be required.

RBC currently maintains around 1,500-2,000 ready filled sandbags, with approximately 5,000 unfilled bags. Additional sand is readily available from suppliers.

Acquisition of a supply of sandbags that are small in size to store but expand upon contact with water is being investigated. SCC has already acquired a supply of these which could be made available to borough's in an emergency.

- RBC will concentrate on supporting vulnerable people in terms of assisting appropriate agencies in evacuation and property protection.

RBC and SCC maintain lists of vulnerable people receiving services and will liaise with community groups about those persons not receiving support but who might become vulnerable in a flooding incident. RBC's response will prioritise support for the vulnerable. There is also a multi-agency project looking to dramatically improve the vulnerable people process and make better, quicker and safer information transfer and use mapping and other tools to inform and prioritise the response.

- Promote community and personal resilience in terms of taking responsibility for property flood protection and promote use of the Environment Agency's Floodline service.

In November and December 2014, RBC made available a leaflet on flooding guidance to all properties within the 1 in 20 year flood plain in the Borough. This set out the responsibilities of different agencies and their contact details and gave information on rest centres and on the River Thames Scheme.

At the same time, the same residents were offered ten free empty sandbags per property (with a list of local builders merchants where sand could be sourced) so that they could take personal responsibility in responding to any future flood event.

The Environment Agency continues to offer individual property protection packages to those properties that will not have risk lessened by the River Thames Scheme, although take up has been lower than expected.

- Aim to ensure that communications with the public in a severe weather event are improved, by using a range of media.

RBC has set up and promoted a Facebook page, 'RBCEmergency' and has also promoted the Twitter account '@RunnymedeBC' which has over 2,200 followers. There is a Surrey wide media group that seeks to ensure consistency of messaging across all partner agencies. Communications in a severe weather event would normally be led by Surrey Police or the Environment Agency.

- Continue to promote the River Thames Scheme and seek funding for its implementation.

RBC has representation on the Sponsor's group, Programme Board, Funding, Planning, Technical and Emergency Planning groups. Funding towards the project of £84,000 a year over the next five years has been committed.

- Work with the Environment Agency in the analysis of potential deployment of temporary flood defences.

The Environment Agency has appointed consultants to make recommendations on provision of temporary locations and types of temporary flood defences. Whilst some of these will be national assets (and therefore might be deployed anywhere in the country during flood events on a first call basis) it is understood that the EA will be able to fund local defences that will not be deployed elsewhere.

Further modelling is currently being undertaken to understand the impact of these temporary defences. It remains to be seen whether the very extensive and expensive temporary defences will be affordable.

- Work with Surrey Local Resilience Forum partners to update the Surrey Major Incident Plan.

We have updated our flood plans to reflect learning from the 2014 floods.

- Following turnover of staff, ensure that personnel are in place and trained, for key emergency roles.

Key roles are allocated and staff are trained and practised. However, with reducing staff numbers and an ageing workforce where experienced staff are leaving this will be an ongoing problem.

An issue that has always been a problem is staffing any emergency incident over a prolonged period. Unlike the emergency services, local authorities are not staffed to work on a shift system. This means that staff can be working for very long hours and maintaining this for more than a two week period.

10. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Since the last update to the Runnymede Local Committee, agencies have continued to work together to improve our preparedness for future flooding. A particular focus has been on working with community groups within Runnymede to help them become more resilient to flooding and severe weather.

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

Runnymede Local Committee is asked note and comment on the work achieved to date by SCC, RBC and the Environment Agency in promoting flood resilience in the Borough.

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