

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL****LOCAL COMMITTEE (RUNNYMEDE)****DATE:** 19 September 2016**LEAD OFFICER:** DOUG HILL, STRATEGIC NETWORK RESILIENCE MANAGER  
SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**SUBJECT:** MULTI-AGENCY FLOOD RESILIENCE UPDATE**DIVISION:** ALL**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Local Committee last received a multi-agency flood resilience update in September 2015. Although there has not been a significant flood event since this time, many flood resilience activities have taken place in the Borough. This report provides an update of progress to date by a number of partners including Surrey County Council (SCC), the Environment Agency (EA) and Applied Resilience (AR) which is Runnymede borough council's appointed contractor for emergency management.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To note and comment on the work achieved to date by SCC, EA and AR in promoting flood resilience in the Borough.

**REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To keep the Runnymede Local Committee informed of progress.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Although the flooding that significantly affected Runnymede in 2013/14 took place over two years ago, the impact of this event still very much lives on. There has not been an instance of severe weather quite on this scale for a reasonable length of time; however this does not mean that flooding as an issue has gone away.

It is still imperative that Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) work together and continue to learn from the events of 2013/14 by building more resilient communities, maintaining drainage assets effectively and constructing flood alleviation schemes, such as the River Thames Scheme.

This report provides a summary of the flood resilience activities undertaken by partners in the past 12 months.

## **2. Community Resilience in Runnymede**

ADD a couple of paragraphs from Liz (refer to Tabitha & NFF work).

## **3. Environment Agency**

### **Maintenance Activity**

The Environment Agency's annual maintenance programme for April 2016 to March 2017 has been published on the EA website at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/river-and-coastal-maintenance-programme> and details both frequent and intermittent maintenance.

The EA have carried out a number of maintenance activities which have helped improve conveyance specifically on the Addlestone Bourne, Rive Ditch and the Chertsey Bourne. Shoal clearance in Wey Meadows and on the Thames was carried out where needed towards the end of 2015 based on information collected in 2015 establishing the maintenance requirements of the catchments.

This work also included removing fallen trees between Free Prae Road to Chertsey Meads. At the same time more tree clearance was carried out below Fordwater Road to Hamm Court and below Thames Lock.

A programme of weed spraying of Japanese Knotweed and Pennywort has been carried out at Stevens Yard (below Fordwater Rd) through the year and more recently from Coxes Mill Pond to the River Thames. Weed spraying was also required to control volumes of Pennywort from Thames Lock to the Chertsey Bourne adjacent to the top of Addlestone Road and was carried out last winter.

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

The costs and benefits of the River Thames Scheme have recently been updated to bring them in line with 2015/16 prices. The cost update has caused costs to rise, largely due to the effects of inflation (particularly in the construction industry) but also due to the increases in landfill tax. As a result the construction cost of the scheme has risen to £476m. Although benefits have also increased (largely due to factoring in climate change projections) costs have risen more sharply resulting in the partnership funding score reducing to 33%.

The River Thames Scheme still offers excellent value for money, approximately £5 of benefit for every £1 spent, however the amount of Grant in Aid the scheme is potentially eligible for has reduced, leaving a current funding gap for construction of £227.6m.

Although on the face on it this represents a large increase in funding requirement, we have a large number of options to investigate before OBC and a clear strategy on how this requirement can be realised provided we are fully supported by our scheme partners. These options are explained in detail below and include;

- Contributions to the scheme from public and private organisations spearheaded by the Funding Strategy Group,
- Financing options such as developmental gain, levies and taxes,
- Scheme efficiencies

### **Community Engagement**

A Community Resilience Team was set up in November to meet and work with communities to raise awareness of the scheme and local flood risk. Working with council partners, they help communities to create flood plans and develop volunteer training programmes. Their work also includes working with students in local schools and other volunteer groups and charities. The team will be seeking local knowledge to help achieve the most appropriate form of flood reduction for each community. This could be temporary defences, permanent defences, individual property defences (property level products) or property raising. With this approach and with local support and input the community will become more resilient to flooding and other emergencies.

The EA is holding two discussion workshops in September, one in the Royal Borough and one in Surrey. Representatives from community groups and professional partners have been invited to give their opinions on the various flood channel route and design options.

There will also be a number of smaller surgery events held in each borough in October and November for all residents to drop in and talk to their local representatives about the scheme's progress.

### **Temporary Defences**

Ten communities have been identified within the River Thames Scheme area, two of which are in Runnymede, where temporary defences may be used to reduce the impact of flooding to homes and businesses. We are carrying out investigations in these locations to help develop plans that will enable us to deploy defences before and during a flood. We still need to carry out computer simulations of flood scenarios (hydraulic modelling) to ensure that temporary defences, if used would be effective and would not increase flood risk to anyone else.

## ITEM 8

Nationally the Environment Agency is purchasing 40 kilometres of temporary flood barriers, 250 additional pumps and 500000 sandbags to support the barriers. These assets will be stored in seven depots in key locations around the country and will be transported to site and deployed by EA staff and contractors when required.

### **Property level products**

The River Thames Scheme will have provided Property Level Products to around 540 homes by the end of January 2017, to reduce the risk of flooding to homes which will still be vulnerable after the flood channel has been constructed.

We have reviewed our approach to how we manage community resilience to flooding. From January 2017 will be working with communities to explore whether temporary or permanent community level defences could be provided in some locations, before continuing to install PLP to more homes.

## **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.

### **Strategic Network Resilience Team**

SCC has strengthened the capacity of its Strategic Network Resilience Team in the last 12 months by successfully recruiting to a number of vacant posts. The team leads on flood resilience work for the County and focuses on three key work streams:

- Capital Programme
- Sustainable Drainage
- Strategy and Partnerships

The Capital Programme team are responsible for submitting bids to Central Government for the construction of flood alleviation schemes across the County. They are currently progressing a number of schemes for Surrey to outline business case stage and will shortly be preparing a prioritised list of areas in the County that will be considered for pipeline scheme bids. We are particularly focussed on supporting the development of the River Thames Scheme alongside the Environment Agency and Runnymede Borough Council.

The Sustainable Drainage team works closely with Local Planning Authorities to ensure that new development does not increase flood risk and uses opportunities to enhance the local environment and improve local drainage. Having filled vacant posts the team has been able to assign dedicated officers to specific parts of the County for the assessment of ordinary watercourse consents, which means that we are able to develop expertise and knowledge of these areas. Furthermore, the team has been raising awareness of riparian responsibilities and enforcing works where landowners are either unaware or refusing to maintain sections of watercourse that they own and have an impact on flood risk.

The Strategy and Partnerships team focuses on engaging with local communities and partner RMAs in order to facilitate the joint delivery of partnership projects. In the last year they have been working with a number of Flood Action Groups alongside RBC and the EA in order to understand flooding issues in local communities and agree measures to resolve them. The team have recently been working with the

National Flood Forum, a national charity that specialises in supporting communities at risk of flooding. This work has proved to be invaluable in building relationships with hard to reach groups, and has resulted in the establishment of Flood Action Groups in parts of Surrey that have been very recently affected by flooding.

### **Local Flood Risk Management Strategy**

One of SCC's responsibilities in its capacity as LLFA for Surrey is to "develop, maintain, apply and monitor" a Strategy for Flood Risk Management. This was first published in December 2014; however it is now in need of updating. This is due to a number of reasons including the fact that Central Government legislation has changed and that national flood events have forced LLFAs to reassess their priorities. There is also a need for Surrey's Strategy to be more public facing and accessible.

The updated main Strategy document has been refreshed and is focused around the following key themes:

- Data management
- Effective maintenance
- Risk Management Authority responsibilities
- Riparian responsibilities
- Community resilience
- Sustainable drainage
- Capital works
- Flood investigations

The draft main Strategy document is attached at **Annexe A** and is now at a stage whereby Members and partner organisations will be approached to provide their feedback on the proposals. A public consultation will also be launched in September to capture the views of residents. Following this, the Strategy will be submitted for approval by SCC Cabinet in December.

### **Ongoing maintenance**

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 on local need. In addition to this, the County undertakes a programme of routine gully cleansing which is designed to ensure that 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 gully 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 gully 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.

<b>5. Applied Resilience</b>
------------------------------

**RBC Sandbag Policy changes**

The previous system for distributing sandbags to Runnymede residents was inefficient and unsustainable in the face of another flood on the scale of 2013/2014 (a 1 in 20 event). The widespread flooding witnessed in 2013/ 2014, combined with the resources available, meant that it was impossible to provide a supply which met the demand for sandbags. There were also significant and genuine health and safety implications for Runnymede Borough Council (RBC) staff during distribution and the benefit the sandbags were providing, in terms of stopping internal property flooding was minimal. On top of this, many sandbags were being stolen and sold on for profit. This led to an unnecessary drain on RBC resources, and many residents being left without.

It is true that sandbags are neither a statutory responsibility of the Council, nor prove useful in many situations. However, they remain a visible element of response to flooding, and something the community have come to expect. Therefore, it was decided that a new approach to sandbags needed to be adopted, which maximised the output of sandbags based on the resources available to both RBC and the community. In short, the Council have the equipment necessary but lack manpower during an emergency. Community volunteers were very willing during the previous major event and so it has been recognised that in the future the shortfall in personnel can be supported by working more closely with the volunteers through a more formal joined up approach.

During 2013/2014, many community members set up their own sandbag filling centres, at locations such as the Magna Carta School and a Church in Chertsey. It was decided to build on such efforts in preparation for the future. Therefore Instead of delivering prefilled sandbags, RBC will now deliver sand, bags, filling equipment etc to a formalised Community Sandbag Distribution Centre(s) (CSDC(s)). It was also recognised that products which are designed to be more useful alternatives to should be explored by the Council, and promoted among the community.

Outcome: Through consultation with the relevant business centres in the Council, and representatives from local community resilience groups, and Surrey County Council, Applied Resilience (AR) developed a new Sandbag Policy. This policy was unanimously approved by RBC Committee on 23 March 2016. AR worked closely with the Council depot to identify suitable locations and logistical requirements for the CSDCs and also worked to source equipment for these centres, which included 'sandhoppers' (to make the filling of sandbags safer and more timely), and hydronakes (alternative products to sandbags, which are more effective). Community resilience group leads were consulted on the purchase of hydrosnakes, which are alternatives to standard sandbags. The hydrosnakes can be deployed much quicker as they do not need to be filled and so they are intended to be used in the interim whilst Community Sandbag Distribution Centres (CSDCs) are set up.

Work is ongoing on the operational plans, and AR has also begun developing aid memos to assist Council call handlers in triaging those who are vulnerable and require assistance with sandbags. Whilst it is still a priority of RBC to focus on the most vulnerable residents during a flood event, the Council will stress that those who are vulnerable and do not have a support network should evacuate rather than stay in a house with sandbags.

Engaging with the community has been a major element of the new policy. AR has been working with Royal Holloway Volunteers, who have given a commitment to do their best to help staff the CSDCs where resource allows. AR has also been consulting with community resilience groups to identify their capacities to get involved and help us source volunteers. Work has also been undertaken on improving the communications between Voluntary Support North West Surrey (VSNWS) during an event, so that spontaneous volunteers can be directed towards the centres, which will help in preventing any public order issues.

A final outcome of this policy is that, should the military become involved in a flooding response in the future, there will be more clarity on the roles they can take up by assisting in running the CSDCs.

### **Community Resilience work**

It was identified in the wake of the events of 2013/2014 that there was a need to build on the willingness of local residents to assist the Council during a major incident by developing a network of volunteers and support them to develop the skills to be less vulnerable to harm in emergencies. Strong connected communities are better able to prepare, respond and recover from adversity.

On behalf of RBC, AR has been working very closely with our colleagues from partner agencies, including one day a week co-locating with the Environment Agency, to approach the issue of community resilience in a united manner.

Outcome: AR took the lead on organising a severe weather forum in November 2015, which brought together a large number of representatives from the community, who were at various stages of completing community resilience plans. The delegates were brought through a scenario, and asked to consider what they would do at each point. There was representation from RBC, SCC, EA, SFRS, Thames Water and Affinity Water on hand to assist and provide expert advice. This event provided a platform for information sharing, and for networks to develop between local groups. We have worked throughout the year to pass vital information on to communities, such as how to access funding and how to register vulnerable residents on Priority Services Registers (held by utilities).

AR has also created an 'Issue Log', which can be shared and updated by all partner agencies. Each community AR works with has their own dedicated section to which issues and actions are logged, as well as the date they came to light, and when and how they were resolved. It will be shared via Knowledge Hub in the coming weeks. The log is designed to increase the sense of ownership and responsibility of community group issues among partners, and to work to resolve these issues which sometimes act as barriers to progress and engagement in a timely fashion. Finally, AR, in consultation with the Environment Agency, has led on designing a new community flood plan template. It is designed to be operationally useful to partner agencies, with clear actionable steps for communities and information that will help to tailor RBC's response to the local context. It includes numbers of pets and vehicles, if the community would have use for volunteers if they present themselves, and local resources. It structured in a manner that allows sensitive information to be kept within the community, without diluting the information passed on responding agencies. We are currently piloting the plan with groups, and intend to sit down with each group lead to work through the plans in order to make it easier and less time consuming for communities who wish to engage with us to enhance future responses.

### **Vulnerable People Reporting System**

## ITEM 8

The previous procedures in place throughout the county to identify vulnerable people for special assistance during an emergency were very disparate. This led to the process requiring lots of resources in terms of time and personnel, both critical and scarce in times of crisis.

Surrey County Council's Emergency Management led on a project to standardise the process, using specially developed software. Internally at RBC, there was a need to put in place sound data-sharing agreements, standardised data templates and operational plans.

AR worked to deliver on the work necessary within RBC. This included working closely with community services and legal teams to ensure the necessary arrangements were in place before the system comes online (due Autumn 2016). AR has developed a new operational plan for RBC, detailing the procedures and protocols necessary to use the system effectively. The AR team were also trained in using the system, so that that this knowledge can be disseminated to the relevant people in the most efficient manner.

### **Updated Flood Plan**

There was a need to use the learning from the unprecedented events of 2013/2014 in Runnymede, as well as make the document more usable and useful during a flood event.

AR worked to redesign Runnymede's Multi-Agency Flood Plan (MAFP) to enhance its usability during a flood event, and incorporate important learning from events in 2013/2014. It includes details on properties, schools, public amenities and infrastructure within the flood warning area. It also details the history of flooding, and Officers' notes from previous events.

The Plan's structure is based on flood warning areas and action cards, meaning that the responding agencies can use the collated information to make well informed decisions in instances of high stress. The new structure also means that sections can be taken from the plan depending on the context of the response, meaning that hefty documents do not have to be carried by officers on the front line.

## **6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Since the last update to the Runnymede Local Committee, agencies have continued to work together to improve preparedness for future flooding.

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, the EA and AR in promoting flood resilience in the Borough.

---

**Contact Officer:** Doug Hill (Surrey County Council)

**Contributors:** Sarah Bouet (Environment Agency)  
Elizabeth Fowler (Community Resilience Officer, Surrey CC)  
Andrew Milne (Area Highways Manager, Surrey CC)  
Aisling Brophy (Applied Resilience)