

NOTES ON MULTI AGENCY MEETING
WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 10 APRIL 2013 AT 10.35 AM

Present:

Cllr B Berryman – Lydney Town Council (LTC)
Cllr B Pearman – Lydney Town Council (TLC)
Mr D Street – NDP Steering Group
Mr C Johns – Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC)
Mr K Jones – Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC)
District Cllr M Quaile – Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC)
Mr B Watkins – Gloucestershire Highways (GH)
Mr D Graham – Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)
Mr M Young – Environment Agency (EA)
Mr P Adams – Dean Forest Railway Limited (DFRL)
Mr C Bull – Dean Forest Railway Limited (DFRL)
Mr R Frankton – Lydney Park Estate (LPE)
Mr B Hardman

In Attendance:

Mrs J Smailes – CEO, Lydney Town Council
Miss C Wheeler – Executive Officer, Lydney Town Council

Flood Defence Measures

Cllr Pearman welcomed all to the meeting and reminded attendees of the fact that Lydney was a tide locked area with a huge water catchment area which stretched behind the town (flood plain Lydney Recreation Trust Ground). Attention was drawn to the fact that already this year the Town had experienced a prolonged rainfall which had resulted in Councillors twice undertaking sandbag filling activities in order to prevent flooding in parts of the Town.

It was felt that the purpose of the meeting was to agree a way forward; to establish which authority was responsible for undertaking specific tasks and to note what could be done to alleviate flooding in the Town. Cllr Pearman accepted that confusion had arisen through the use of different terminology for parts of the Docks and he felt that standard phrases and identified pin pointed locations needed to be utilised. The need for all organisations to work together to resolve the situation was stressed.

Cllr Pearman referred to an occasion earlier in the year when the River Lyd had burst its banks over the Recreation Ground and informed all present that the level of the flood water had appeared to drop when the weir gates had been opened at the Docks. It was noted that the EA had been asked to examine the effect the opening of the weir gates and the sluice gates had on the level of the water and produce a model to determine the best flow of the water. However, initial thoughts by the EA were that this did not have a significant effect on the level of flood water at Lakeside Gardens; this point was however disputed by Councillors present.

The CEO likened the Town to a basin and she emphasised the need for SUDS to be looked at from all new developments stressing that Planning Enforcement needed to ensure that such provision was addressed within each planning application. It was also appreciated that the harbour gates at the Docks could not be opened when the tide was in, however, the Council wished to learn the effect opening the weir gates would have on flood water levels. The CEO explained that the Council believed that it was able to identify a point at which flooding was

likely to occur (e.g. when the River Lyd rose to nearly bank height across the Recreation Ground). Attendees were also asked to consider the potential benefit of re-opening the trout ponds at Upper Forge and New Mills, which were believed to be in the ownership of LPE and managed by DFRL, as it was felt that said ponds could be used as a contingency to prevent flooding in the basin (holding ponds with sluice gates working in a tandem system). The CEO advised that Lydney Fire Brigade had offered to clear out the ponds and it was felt that LTC may be able to gain funding to reinstate the ponds, if it was agreed that they would provide a benefit to the Town and not affect the flooding situation at Whitecroft. DFRL gave a brief overview of the history of the ponds at both locations and felt the ponds to be too silted up to hold significant quantities of water currently, but this was being addressed. Concern was also raised regarding the placement of the material which would be extracted from the ponds i.e. cost of removal etc.

During discussion FODDC felt that the ponds may assist with the regularised flow of water through the Town, but were unable to quantify the actual benefit. The need to maintain the ponds was noted, together with the need to undertake a model of the ponds in order to ascertain if their use would cause the water flow to back up. EA agreed to address/present such models.

Attention was drawn to the landowners liability under the Owner Occupier Landowner Act and it was highlighted that debris from upstream was washed downstream and did not help those landowners who were attempting to keep their stretch of the River clear. The EA felt that it may be advantageous to obtain an estimate of the volume of water which travelled via the ponds and explained that if the ponds became an impounding reservoir then an enhanced remit would be required.

Focus was then placed on the culvert between Plummers Brook and the Harbour as it had not been possible to locate the exit due to the height of the water. FODDC advised that the height of the water in said section never really dropped.

Regarding the models which were going to be produced by the EA, it was noted that they would be produced on the optimum position, as no further work would be undertaken unless the models demonstrated a benefit. The CEO recalled that during a site meeting with Mr A Perry (EA) and local residents, Mr Perry had advised that it would not be possible to open the lock/weir gates as it was necessary to maintain the correct water height for the yachts berthed at the Docks and LTC therefore would like to query with EA whether this was therefore the reason for the reluctance to reduce water levels? Concern was expressed over the likelihood that the water runoff from the new developments would undoubtedly end up at the bottom section of the River Lyd at some point, as it was commonly felt the attenuation ponds would overflow.

District Cllr Quaile called for clarification to be provided regarding the flow of the water along the canal and he referenced public perceptions regarding the height of the Dock wall, the locks, etc. District Cllr Quaile felt that a report explaining how the area from the culvert at Whitehouse Press to the Docks worked would alleviate concerns and would establish if the silting of the waterway impacted on the area. The EA advised that a model would be produced and informed all present that it was not possible to open the lock gates as they were opened by the force of the water only.

It was felt that assistance was required in other areas of the Town (e.g. Lydney Recreation Trust may require the assistance of Lydney Town Council to assist with efforts to move the water over the Trust's ground). A request was made to ascertain if the EA would be able to determine how the flow of the water could be improved and it was noted that FODDC wished to work in partnership with other organisations/interested parties, as it simply did not hold sufficient funding to fund clearance work itself. District Cllr Quaile suggested that an exercise, possibly instigated by FODDC, needed to be undertaken to educate members of the public on their obligations, including that of Riparian Ownership, and to ensure that they acted responsibly.

The importance of Riparian Ownership obligations was emphasised by GCC, who advised that they were responsible for enforcement of same. The education and influence which Town and Parish Councils were able to apply to local landowners was felt to be highly significant. District Cllr Quaile felt water to be a valuable commodity and spoke in support of utilising grey water to reduce the use of clean water in a number of household applications. Accordingly, District Cllr Quaile strongly recommended that the use of rainwater flow was considered through the planning application process suggesting that LTC may want to suggest the same in their NDP.

Grant Funding

Attendees were provided with details of a temporary barrage facility which could be purchased and utilised along a stretch of the River Lyd spanning from the Town to Lydney Lake. All present were invited to provide their thoughts on the possible benefit of such a system, together with any knock on effects. FODDC questioned the number of properties which would be saved from flooding through the use of such a system, as no data on property flooding had been recorded for the specified stretch of water. During discussion it was noted that properties in Cookson Terrace had suffered flooding internally during November and December. A question was raised as to whether it was possible for FODDC to once again extend the funding scheme for flood defence measures to residents of Lakeside Gardens, however, attendees were informed that the funding had been offered on a single basis and that take up of the scheme had not been large.

GCC drew attention to a DEFRA grant which was available and highlighted that the grant application would need to be submitted by June 2013. It was also noted that in order to be successful the grant application would need to demonstrate that a specific number of properties had suffered flooding internally and that the Local Authority was aware of the situation. The CEO advised that County Cllr Cooksley had informed LTC that the flood risk for the Town had recently increased.

DFRL highlighted that they owned large amounts of land throughout the Parish and acknowledged that they needed to give consideration towards Riparian Ownership obligations. However, they felt that residents needed to acknowledge the impact of climate change on their locality. DFRL spoke in support of the production of an action plan in order that improvements could be achieved and stressed that they were endeavouring to clear areas within their ownership which were sited close to a watercourse. Furthermore, it was highlighted that the obligations of Riparian Ownership had hit landowners hard. DFRL felt an exercise needed to be conducted to educate all parties which were affected by said obligations and ensure that members of the public were educated to help themselves.

LTC advised once again that an offer of assistance had already been received from Lydney Fire Station and felt sure that offers of assistance would also be received from members of the public. LPE felt that the key to the problem of flooding was understanding how the river system worked and advocated the control of the flow of water into the Town in order to facilitate a controlled release. GCC advised that the EA held permissive powers to undertake work on rivers; sometimes landowners required EA permission in order to undertake work and that in certain circumstances it may be advantageous to arrange for the work to be undertaken by the EA. The EA advised that their intention to provide the Town Council with a copy of the model which was being produced in order to ascertain if improvements could be gained and it was hoped that the initial report would be received at the EA later in the week.

During discussion a need to establish which organisation was responsible for undertaking specific works was unanimously agreed, together with the fact that the EA needed to clarify the point at which they would take action. GCC advised that they were now responsible for managing the River and were looking at Riparian Owners to fulfil their obligations.

Regarding responsibility for management, a basic explanation was provided that the EA were responsible for the main river, the Local Authority were responsible for all other areas and that GH were responsible for inspecting bridges/culverts. GH confirmed that all bridges were inspected annually and that culverts were inspected regularly, however, no timeframe was set for said inspection.

A suggestion was made that each representative at the meeting should be tasked with a project with feedback given at the next meeting. LTC felt that they should co-ordinate the project, with all communication channelled through its office. No objection was voiced regarding said suggestion. It was felt that LTC may be able to produce a plan of the Parish on which it would be possible to identify known “pinch points” and mark known ownership areas.

Agreed Actions

- EA to provide LTC with results of modelling exercise. Models to be produced for Upper Forge, New Mills and Lydney Recreation Trust land. (Presented at next meeting).
- FODDC to identify engineering costs for “storing water” at New Mills.
- LTC to attempt to produce a plan showing the watercourse from Whitecroft to Lydney Harbour.
- All representatives to submit information re ownership of land areas on above stretch of water to LTC.
- EA to identify (colour code on a map system) each gate element at Lydney Docks so as to enable a clear understanding.
- EA/FODDC to produce a myth-buster report to cover the section of the River which leads from Whitecroft to the Docks (including Lydney Recreation Trust land).
- Invitation to be extended to neighbouring Parishes to join group.
- GCC to ascertain if Lydney now falls within increased flood risk percentage.
- GH to establish when culverts last monitored. (Report required re inspection dates).

LTC noted that the EA were looking to flood specific areas due to coastal squeeze and questioned if the proposals would have any effect on the current situation in the Town. EA to request report from Mr Joe Martin and Mr Simon Culling.

It was agreed that the CEO would arrange a further meeting for end June/beginning July and would e-mail all attendees.

Meeting closed 11.54 am.