

**Notes from the meeting held between Forest of Dean District Council and representatives of
Lakeside Avenue Residents at 10.02 am on Thursday 6 February 2014 in Council Chamber,
Claremont House, High Street, Lydney**

Present: On behalf of Forest of Dean District Council (FODDC)

Mr P Hibberd **(PH)**
Mr C Johns **(CJ)**
Mr J Westmoreland **(JW)**
District Cllr Martin Quaile (Chairman) **(MQ)**

On behalf of Lakeside Avenue Residents

Mrs R Christodoulides **(RC)**
Mrs A Howells **(AH)**
Mr J Wildin **(JuW)**
Mr C Legg **(CL)**
Mr W Bishop **(WB)**
Mr G Blake **(GB)**
Mr W Owen **(WO)**

On behalf of Gloucestershire County Council (GCC)

Mr D Graham **(DG)**
Mr M Panou **(MP)**
Mr B Watkins **(BW)**
Mr C Saunders **(CS)**

Interested Parties

Cllr B Pearman – Lydney Town Council **(BP)**
Cllr B Thomas – Lydney Town Council **(BT)**
Mrs J Smailes – CEO, Lydney Town Council **(JS)**
Miss C Wheeler – EO, Lydney Town Council (Note Taker)
Mr J Bevan **(JB)**

MQ informed all present that no practice fire evacuation had been scheduled for the duration of the meeting. All attendees were then informed of the locations of the nearest fire exits.

MQ welcomed all present to the meeting which had arisen as a result of a residents' petition which had been submitted to the Head of Paid Service at FODDC. Confirmation was sought that residents had been provided with a copy of the reply from the Head of Paid Service. MQ encouraged attendees to avoid adopting a "blame" culture and embraced the need to obtain a solution to the flooding issues.

PH gave a brief overview of his role as the District Council's Emergency Co-ordinator. It was noted that all District Councils have a Duty to respond to emergencies (emergency defined as a situation which cannot be managed under normal circumstances), with their primary responsibility being to provide shelter. Whilst FODDC possessed an Emergency Plan, it did not possess 24 hour cover, nor were staff placed "on call". PH explained that the operation of the Emergency Plan relied on volunteers in order to be able to react; that he was personally on call at all times; that whilst the Plan included a number of designated rest centres the decision was taken on the day of the Emergency as to which centre would be utilised.

GB highlighted that as the first instances of flooding occurred during the Christmas period residents were unsure as to whom they should contact. PH advised that contact should initially be made with the Fire Brigade if internal flooding was experienced in properties. PH then explained the chain of command (e.g. the Fire Brigade would inform GCC who would in turn inform FODDC). PH advised that GCC provided for an Officer to be on call 24 hours a day and that a rest centre would only be implemented for situations when large numbers of residents were affected.

GB advised that the culvert to the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue had become blocked due to logs which had entered the watercourse from upstream and that CL had risked life his own public safety to remove the logs. RC highlighted that due to the flood water elderly residents had needed to be evacuated from their property by the Fire Brigade and she felt that the “system” had failed. PH suggested that as the elderly residents had been taken in by neighbours it may have been that the instance was not construed as an emergency as it had been managed under “normal” circumstances.

Historical Works

CJ advised that FODDC played a supporting role to GCC when addressing flooding issues; that DEFRA and Central Government set strict criteria in order to obtain funding for flooding issues and that efforts were made to obtain multi agency solutions. It was noted that a small revenue budget existed at FODDC for works undertaken throughout the District; budget having already provided for a reconstituted manhole cover in Lakeside and clearance of the ditch at the back of Federal Mogul and also the ditch by the Bypass. CJ advised that FODDC also monitored drains which had been cleared by GCC Highways; that in 2009 and 2010 residents of Lakeside Avenue were offered personal property grants to purchase individual property protection, however, these were not well supported by residents. CJ also explained that FODDC had cleared the screens at Lakeside on an ad-hoc basis.

JW advised that dye testing had taken place to establish the actual flow route of the water which had clarified that the system was connected; that the actual flow rate of the water had not been established; that all rubbish on the Wyedean Housing side of the watercourse had been cleared. MQ expressed thanks to CJ for the work undertaken to date and requested CL monitor the area and inform CJ if the rubbish accumulated again.

Action by – C Legg

JW stressed the need for open lines of communication to be operated between residents and FODDC; that a CCTV survey had recently been undertaken on a stretch of the culvert (need to expand the survey was noted) which had demonstrated 90% of the section beneath CL’s property was blocked, with an estimated 25% blockage occurring further down the pipe. JW appreciated that all present were aware of the riparian ownership responsibilities placed on land owners, however, he stated that FODDC would clear the aforementioned blockages as soon as conditions permitted. PH advised that attempts to remove the blockages through jetting had failed, which resulted in the need for a person to physically enter the pipe to remove the blockage under CL’s property. It was hoped that the work could be undertaken during W/C 10 February 2014, however, this was weather dependent. CL expressed a wish to be present when the work was undertaken and requested that he be advised of the date the work would commence. However, CL agreed that he would arrange for a representative to be present should it not be possible for him to be present on the day concerned and suggested that the best means of accessing the pipe was via the manhole cover in his drive. CJ explained how the work would be undertaken (water to be diverted to overflow pipe which would allow the person to then enter the pipe via the culvert or the manhole). However, it was noted that no checks had been undertaken to establish if any blockages existed in the overflow pipe. Thanks were expressed to CL for offering alternative means of accessing the pipe.

JW stressed that the removal of the blockages would not solve the problem of high rain events which was appreciated by all present.

During discussion attendees were advised that it was not possible to increase the size of the culvert and the need to slow down the rate at which the water reached the culvert was raised. However, JW stressed to all concerned that it would not be possible to prevent all the water from reaching the culvert and that potentially there would always be instances when such defences would be breached. JW explained that FODDC were investigating the possibility of reducing/slowing down the amount of water which entered the culvert in order to minimise peak events. JW advised that FODDC were looking to keep the initial stretch of the watercourse clear, which would be undertaken by FODDC at least twice yearly. FODDC were also investigating the possibility of utilising attenuation ponds further upstream, potentially on land which it owned. JW emphasised the need to ensure that such work did not exacerbate the current situation and also did not create the potential for a large scale flooding event to occur. It was noted that the preferred method utilised natural flooding defences which would enable lower flows to proceed down the watercourse, whilst providing a barrier for larger flows which would allow for a staged release of water.

RC sought an assurance that no more water would be fed into the stream. JW advised that all new developments needed to demonstrate the current situation for water run off/absorption and were required to formulate plans for holding water on site and then discharging at the current rate plus 30%. JB noted that the Roman Park development had actually improved the situation regarding water run-off. Responding to a question which had been raised by RC, JW felt that the pumping station was discharging at a lower rate than previous, but stressed the need to check said figures.

MQ gave an overview of the commitments provided by FODDC during the meeting (e.g. clearance of blockages, inspections/clearance of watercourse on agreed frequency, investigations to commence into the capture/release of water upstream) and emphasised that time and money would be required to provide a solution. JS stressed that no monitoring was currently being undertaken of Severn Trent regarding the number of times that they have discharged in to the water course. JW was requested to contact the Environment Agency regarding the necessity to monitor the frequency of such discharges.

Action by – J Westmoreland

Attention was then turned to individual property protection (IPP) systems. During questioning MQ advised that funding had existed for those properties which were flooded in 2007, however, take up by residents had not been high. MQ advised all present of a system which had been developed by a Stroud family which had been flooded in the past from which experience they now marketed a flood protection product. Responding to a comment which had been made by CL, MQ advised that investigations would be undertaken to confirm if CL's property had been affected by the 2007 floods and if confirmed, an offer of IPP would be made.

Action by – District Cllr Quaile

PH stated that he would provide JS with a link to a website which offered IPP systems for sale and suggested that residents may wish to approach their insurance companies to ascertain if they would be willing to contribute towards the purchase of such a system as it may lower the cost of their insurance.

Action by – P Hibberd

JW spoke on the intention to catch larger items of material higher up the watercourse by utilising a staged approach. JuW suggested that FODDC/GCC may wish to consider changing the manholes surrounding 115 Lakeside Avenue to those with gully tops, as any flood water arising from a

blockage of the culvert would then flow over the ground and enter the drainage system again once it reached the gully tops. JW agreed that JuW had raised a valid point.

GB highlighted that in 2008 FODDC had undertaken a model based on the Lakeside flooding which had recommended the implementation of an attenuation pond at the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue, together with the upgrading of the pipework at a cost of £1.2M but work had not been undertaken due to lack of funding. JW explained that the consultant who had produced the model had provided a highly engineered system. Responding to a further statement made by GB, PH advised that the consultant had provided an unaffordable solution; stressed the effect of climate change and the need to afford JW sufficient time to consider the finer points of his achievable solution. Furthermore, PH advised that residents would be kept informed of progress via CJ's attendance at Lydney Flood Defence meetings and highlighted that in the future GCC and the Town Council may well be approached to provide a contribution towards the scheme suggested for Lakeside.

JW advised that he hoped to provide meeting attendees with an update in three months.

JuW questioned if further consideration would be given towards his suggestion to replace the manhole covers around 115 Lakeside Avenue with gully tops. BW agreed to investigate the feasibility of said suggestion and committed to provide a response to CJ by 14 February 2014.

Action by – B Watkins

DG stated that residents were able to view all the IPP systems available through the National Flood Forum site, however, he suggested that IPPs may affect the possibility of obtaining funding from DEFRA for attenuation ponds. Accordingly, he suggested that consideration may need to be given as to what was required in the long term. Attendees were made aware of the need for GCC to be informed as to the exact number of properties affected by flooding as it directly affected the ability to obtain funding for schemes. DG advised that according to GCC's records only five properties were affected by the 2007 floods and attendees were urged to ensure that any instances of internal flooding were reported to CJ or JW in order that the data could be captured. Furthermore, DG stressed that funding would not be obtained from Central Government without external contributions (e.g. FODDC, GCC, LTC, etc). MQ requested that Lydney Town Council obtain information on flooded properties and forward such information to GCC.

Action by – Lydney Town Council

JS queried if FODDC had given consideration to the suggestion that the S106 relating to the housing development by Robert Hitchins Ltd be varied in order that it may then be borrowed against (with permission of the Secretary of State) in order to commence the project. PH agreed to ask FODDC to consider.

Action by – P Hibberd

BW agreed to approach County Cllr Preest to ascertain if he would be willing to utilise any remaining County Cllr Highway funding towards the scheme.

Action by – B Watkins

PH gave an overview of the developments which had taken place nationally following the 2007 floods which had resulted in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. It was noted that part of JW duties included providing a response on new planning applications. PH also advised that if an amber warning was issued FODDC would inspect the water course to ensure that it was clear and he suggested that the community may wish to join together to undertake litter picks of the watercourse. It was noted that problems were experienced with fly tipping at the rear of Wydean Housing Association properties and PH advised that meetings had already taken place with a

Housing Officer from the organisation regarding the issues. CJ advised that the Housing Officer from Wydean Housing would be writing to all tenants advising of the clearance work which had been undertaken and also advising against fly tipping at the rear of the properties in the future. MQ spoke on the need to provide evidence (ideally photographic) of fly tipping as this could be used to support warnings/legal action. PH and CJ advised that FODDC would support residents if they wished to undertake annual litter picks of the area, including the disposal of collected rubbish and provision of litter pickers, etc. FODDC would also arrange for the necessary licence to be obtained from Robert Hitchins Limited in order to allow residents to cross their land. CJ also advised that the rubbish collected recently from the land at the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue would be taken away. DG advised that FODDC possessed the legal power to undertake work on water courses.

JS suggested that there was a necessity to gain land ownership/riparian details and to enforce as necessary and also advised that given if a contractor undertook such clearance they would be adequately insured, raised concerns that if residents addressed FODDC ensured they were adequately prepared (PPE etc) for the task.

GB reported that soil had been deposited in front of a pipe which lay to the rear of a number of bungalows. CJ advised that the pipe was not a "running" pipe and was an interceptor channel.

WB spoke on the flooding issues which had been experienced by residents surrounding the Faller Fields housing development as a result of water not being able to reach the drainage channels due to the landscape towards the bottom corner of the development. MQ advised that FODDC believed that water did not run from the lane at the rear of the development, but originated from Mount Pleasant Road and the footpath in Faller Fields. CJ advised that he would meet with BW shortly to discuss the situation and that he had requested that FODDC Building Control locate the drainage plans for the development. JS spoke on the approaches which had been received from some of the residents of Fallers Field for the removal of the play area and questioned if this land could be used to provide a solution to the problems experienced; CJ felt that the land would not be suitable due to the difference in height. RC requested that she be informed once FODDC had determined the reason why the development had facilitated the entrapment of water.

GB sought confirmation on the ownership of the trash screen at the rear of 115 Lakeside Avenue. He advised that residents felt that section of currently unregistered land on the right hand side of the water course to be in the ownership of Wydean Housing/Forest of Dean District Council, with the land on the left hand side owned by Robert Hitchins Ltd. GB then referenced a letter from 2008 from Mr Howarth, Land and Property Manager, FODDC, which stated that attempts had failed to claim ownership of the trash screen due to legal reasons. PH advised that discussion could not take place on this matter in an open meeting. MQ advised that investigations were currently being undertaken on the matter, the outcome of which would be discussed at a later date.

Discussion then took place on how the culvert originated; MQ felt that originally the culvert had been a ditch; MB felt that the culvert had been installed in the 70s; RC advised that in 1975 Mr Sterry purchased 115 Lakeside Avenue and his family could recall Mr Sterry removing debris from an open pipe at the rear of his property, however, in 1984 the pipe blocked, a fracture was discovered in the pipe by the "District Council" who, it was believed, then decided to install the trash screen. MQ welcomed all information which could assist with the resolution of the ownership problem.

RC welcomed the presence of representatives from a number of organisations at the meeting and questioned i) if it would be possible for Lakeside to appear as a regular agenda item at Lydney Town Council's Flood Defence Meetings, and ii) if it would be possible for a representative from Lakeside

to attend said meetings. BT confirmed acceptance of both requests, as the meeting covered flooding in Lydney as a whole.

Action by – J Smailes

RC questioned the frequency of surveying the culvert and JW advised that it was normally undertaken every 5-10 years. BP requested that FODDC schedule their Bi annual water course inspections prior to September each year.

CL expressed his frustration that despite his warnings in February and October regarding problems with timber on the land at the rear of his property, no action had been taken by FODDC until his property had been flooded at Christmas. MQ offered his apologies for the lack of action and JW highlighted the need for open lines of communication between FODDC and residents going forward.

Consideration was given towards the date for a further meeting. PH felt that the most logical arena for dissemination of information was at the Town Council's Flood Defence meetings. JuW suggested that a further meeting should take place after JW had reached the conclusion of his investigations.

Thanks were expressed by numerous parties for the work undertaken to date and the desire to take the items raised forward.

Meeting closed at 12 noon.