

Scottish Flood Forum Opens

On Monday 10th of November the Scottish Flood Forum was officially launched in Scotland. SFF is based in Perth, and is working alongside SEPA with funding from Scottish Government. Paul Hendy who has

extensive experience of working both in Carlisle and Humberside will be working as project manager. Deputy Chairman Phil Awford who attended the launch of the Scottish Flood Forum said.

*"It has always been our ambition to open a branch in Scotland and
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Hereford Flood Defences Opened

The defences for St Martins area of Hereford have finally been completed after a six year campaign. Bob Binnersley, from the Hereford Campaign for Flood Defences, reports.

It has been a long process that started about six years ago when the funding for river defences was changed from local funding to national prioritisation. A campaign

was launched after a meeting of interested parties in the area confirmed that they would support it.

A postcard campaign was focussed on Elliot Morley, the then Minister for the Environment. Approximately 2000 petition postcards were signed by the local public and posted in batches over a short period to the Millbank

Offices. The Minister asked a delegation to attend for an interview and we were accompanied by our local Member of Parliament, Paul Keetch.

Pressure was maintained by the committee through interviews and reports to the local newspapers and television. Repeated publicity given to recurrent flooding was certainly a help.

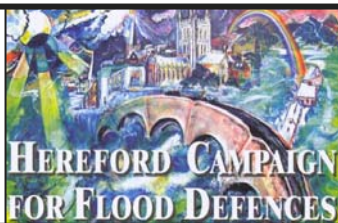
Funding was finally given and we waited for our turn in the queue to arrive. When the plan for the flood defences was eventually published, *Continued on Page 2...*



Hereford flood defences are officially opened by Paul Keetch MP. Also pictured is Chris Mills, Environment Agency Regional Director

The NFF have been working alongside the Hereford Campaign for Flood Defences since its inception. Mary Dhonau was invited to the official opening and said "its always an emotional experience for me to attend the opening of a flood alleviation scheme and to be able to watch close partnerships develop as the scheme evolves, I felt privileged to be part of this happy occasion"

Hereford Flood Defences Opened



The Deluge reproduced by kind permission of the artist Christine Hunt

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there was a campaign by some locals to change the design, or even stop it progressing.

After heated meetings and support from Flood Forum representative, Mary Dhonau, the scheme was finally adopted.

The next hurdle was local planning permission. The local council seemed to offer little support for a scheme that was to benefit the local community.

Members of the committee were involved in applying pressure at all stages in the process. It is possible that without their enthusiasm and energy the whole process may have been lost.

The final result has drawn compliments from many local residents. The design, which is minimally intrusive, is adapted well to the local buildings and landscape. The most important feature, however, is that at a recent flood of the river, houses, businesses and the local roads were shown to be protected.

Bob Binnersley

Chairman, Hereford Campaign for Flood Defences

Scottish Flood Forum Opens



(Left to right) Paul Hendy, Phil Awford and Mike Russell MSP
Continued From Front Page...

to give the much needed and necessary support to people at risk of flooding in Scotland. Our plans are to work with SEPA in raising awareness of flooding in the communities at risk, to encourage the establishment of community-led groups for mutual support and partnership working with all agencies that manage flood risk and to secure effective and appropriate action by working with Scottish Government, SEPA, Local Authorities and where necessary Scottish Water and the insurance industry."

"On behalf of the National Flood Forum, I wish the Scottish Flood Forum every success - we will enjoy working in close partnership with you."

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National Flood Forum News



Staff at the NFF have been incredibly busy over the last few months and have organised and attended numerous

flood protection exhibitions and flood awareness events. We have also visited many community flood groups to lend our support.

Chief executive, Mary Dhonau has worked closely with Defra throughout the property-based flood protection consultation. She has spoken at many conferences on Flood risk Management and has appeared regularly on TV. Mary said

"Flooding isn't just when the Minister visits, or when the media comes calling, Flooding has far reaching consequences, often for years afterwards. It is our job to keep flooding high on the political agenda and I enjoy trying to take people out of their 'comfort zones' and using photos gathered from our flood groups. I try hard to get listeners to put themselves in the very wet shoes of the flood victim!"

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A Chance to Help Others Prepare for Flooding - and Influence Government!

We want to use your experiences to help other people at risk to understand the devastation that floods can cause and what they can do to prepare.

We are currently working with the Environment Agency to bring your experiences of flooding to life through the creation of case studies. These case studies would be used both internally within the Environment Agency and externally by the media. They would be used for internal presentations to help influence the Environment Agency and other Government Departments on how they do their job, and for staff training so that staff understand what it is like to be flooded. Externally they may be used in newsletters, printed material and radio. Ideally you

would be happy to talk to the media about your experiences, but this isn't essential and we would not provide your information to the media without your prior consent.

We are looking for stories from all sorts of people and all types of flooding, so don't rule yourself out!

So... if you think you have a story that could help other people understand flooding, and why preparing for flooding is so important, why not give **Heather Shepherd** a ring on **01743 741725** or email her at heather.shepherd@floodforum.org.uk

We look forward to hearing from you soon. We will need responses back to us by the middle of January 2009 but if you are able to contact us sooner, that would be wonderful!

A View From the Met Office

by Phil Evans, Met Office Chief Advisor to Government



Summer 2008 was damp and dull. And for anyone whose home was flooded for a second year running, a great deal more miserable than for the rest of us. While it may not have matched summer 2007 for either the intensity or the cumulative impact of the rain that fell, that fact will be of very cold comfort to householders in parts of the Midlands, Northumberland and Northern Ireland.



Nevertheless, a lot has happened since June 2007. In England and Wales the Met Office and the Environment Agency have been working even closer together to ensure that emergency services, water companies and electricity providers receive clearer, better warnings, further in advance. Early indications from this summer are that hard work alongside much improved science has better prepared the relevant authorities for the type of flash flooding that in the past could have caught communities off guard – with well documented consequences.

In his acclaimed report Sir Michael Pitt acknowledged the scientific problems associated with pinpointing summer rainfall and matching those forecasts with hydrological warning models. For its part, the EA has developed mapping of areas susceptible to surface water flooding, plotting in detail the topography of England and

Wales. This expertise fully integrated with detailed weather prediction offers a degree of consistency and clarity simply not previously possible.

The Met Office significantly accelerated its own research programme and this summer has successfully delivered detailed forecasts of heavy rain a further day in advance (up to three days from two) with probabilistic forecasting and pinpointing of storms within 30 square kilometres' accuracy. Extreme rainfall alerts highlighting the risk of flash flooding are now being communicated under the auspices of a joint Environment Agency-Met Office team based in the Met Office Operations Centre. The response from the resilience community has been positive and a number of incidents have been successfully anticipated.

This significant breakthrough has happened thanks to developments in computer modelling and the interpretation of radar data in a way that better replicates the way that intense storms develop. But it is also down to enhanced computer technology. Thanks to a new supercomputer, from 2009 the Met Office will be able to run forecast models that could underpin severe rainfall and flood forecasts for an area beyond thirty square kilometres. With future enhancements to computer capacity even more localised forecasts will be achievable.

Very soon Hilary Benn will lay the foundations for the future of flood risk management in England and Wales. One of the key Pitt recommendations he is considering is making best use of combined Met Office and Environment Agency expertise.

In France, a review of flood risk management earlier this decade led to the establishment of a joint centre staffed by meteorologists and experts in hydrology. If the experience across the Channel is anything to go by, the benefits of a joint centre→

→could extend far beyond better warnings for emergency services. A pooled approach could also provide a focus for fully integrating research on both weather and water flow for improved flood forecast modelling. And not only that, it could provide the basis for improved communication with the public.

The French Central Service for Hydrometeorology and Flood Forecasting (SCHAPI) was set up in 2003 in the wake of devastating floods and tens of fatalities. Since it commenced operations a number of technical and scientific innovations have served to provide what is widely regarded as the best flood risk management system in Europe. These include interactive 'vigilance maps' providing river flow probabilities directly to the public as well as soil saturation assessments combined with topographical data and weather forecasts to produce predictions for the risk of surface water flooding.

The use of accessible and clear means of communicating directly with flood affected communities was cited by Pitt as a key benefit of the approach taken by SCHAPI. And his report suggests that such an approach could similarly empower ordinary people to make properly informed decisions around flood risk in this country too. The French have in place a tool that converts real time river monitoring data into simple online maps which have a traffic light colour-coded warning system corresponding to the level of threat. The maps are updated twice a day every day and more frequently during an emergency incident. It is testament to a system that is still in its infancy that 80 per cent of the French public now feel that they are well informed about the specific flood risks affecting them.

It remains to be seen precisely how meteorology and hydrology will become better joined up here in the UK, but the fact remains that things have improved and will continue to improve. And whatever the detail of the Government's response to Sir Michael's recommendations, it is clear that weather and flood forecasting will be integrated in a way that will provide tangible benefits to emergency responders and the wider public alike.

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Defra Regional Consultation Workshops

Household Flood Resilience and Protection

Household-level flood resilience and protection measures can help reduce damage, disruption and negative impacts on health. They offer a more effective alternative to the use of sandbags and can significantly reduce recovery times and clean-up costs, making it easier and quicker for people to move back into their homes.

During October, Defra and LANDSFARM, the local authority network on drainage and flood risk management, held workshops in York, Manchester, Bristol and Reading to consult on Defra's draft proposals for promoting household flood resilience and protection. National Flood Forum chief executive, Mary Dhonau, was amongst the speakers at the workshops, whose three hundred delegates included local authority officers, Environment Agency staff, insurers and people who had themselves been flooded.

Less than 30% of people who have been flooded currently take any steps to make their homes more resilient to floods or to reduce water entry. At the workshops, independent social scientist, Dr Tim Harries, argued that people will only normally take such steps when they have been flooded more than once. The main factor encouraging people to implement flood resilience or protection measures, he argued, is when they believe that these measures will make them feel safer in their homes. The main disincentives are the perception that they will be expensive and the feeling, amongst some householders, that flooding is the fault of the authorities and

should therefore be dealt with by the state rather than by individuals.

Defra outlined their draft proposals, in which people living in areas with very frequent flooding would be offered free advice on how to reduce flood damage and, possibly, subsidies towards the costs of those measures. The money available from the Government could only pay for a limited number of homes to receive these offers. However, Defra hoped that this scheme would increase the supply of products and advice and encourage flood protection by households and make increased resilience and protection a more normal response to high levels of flood risk. Defra had already run a pilot scheme that gave flood protection grants to householders around England. Delegates at the workshops were told of the results of this pilot and of the lessons learned.

Delegates proposed a number of changes to the Government's draft proposals and provided a great deal of useful input into the policy development process. These views will be taken on board by Defra's John Goudie and consultant Tim Harries as they revise the proposals over the next few months. The final policy will be announced in April 2009.

Further information on the draft proposals can be found on the Defra website

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/corporate/consult/flood-protection/index.htm>

For information on the workshops please visit the LANDFORM website

www.ciria.org/landform

Future Investment in Flood Defences

by David Rooke, Environment Agency



Starting with the programme currently being compiled to deliver new and improved flood defences from 2009/10 onwards, the Environment Agency will be using the specific Government commitments set out in Outcome Measure

targets to determine which projects are started first, and to maximise the programme's benefits for communities at risk of flooding.

With the time and money available, it has never been possible to allow work to start on all of the cost-effective flood defences that could be built across the country. For the last decade we have been using a 'Priority Score' system to rank potential new projects, ensuring that the highest priority areas are tackled first, and giving communities at risk some indication of where they stand in relation to the nationwide priorities.

Two recent developments now give us an opportunity to deliver more benefits from our programme, and to focus our investment on communities at greatest risk. The first is increased Government funding for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management, rising from £600m in 2007/08 to £800m in 2010/11, and mostly reserved for new defences and major refurbishments. The second is the implementation of Outcome Measures from April 2008. These define the outcomes that Government wants the Environment Agency, Local Authorities and Internal Drainage Boards to deliver in England in the future, with specific targets set for the next three years.

The new performance framework was informed by public consultation, and although it does not represent wholesale change, it places a greater emphasis on benefits to people. In addition to an overall target for the number of households benefiting from reduced flood risk, there are now specific targets set to benefit communities at significant (rather than, say, moderate) probability of flooding, and to benefit the most vulnerable communities.

The Priority Score system has provided a fair and

consistent comparison between competing priorities, but the formula has not evolved in line with changing priorities. If we were to invest in the highest ranking projects based on the old formula, we would not be able to maximise delivery of the target outcomes, especially the newly defined outcomes, in the future.

For that reason, we are now moving away from the Priority Score, and applying the funding to a set of projects which will deliver against all of the Outcome Measures.

In August, we communicated our proposals for future prioritisation of new and improved flood defences to our stakeholders. For the current planning round, we will replace the Priority Score system with an equally transparent score that is derived from Outcome Measure delivery against targets, per pound of whole life cost. The full method and formula has been published on our web site at

http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO1008BOTR-e-e.pdf?lang=_e

This will not cut off funding for projects that are already in progress and have already received significant investment based on their original priority. The effect of the change in approach will therefore not be felt overnight, but will come on stream gradually during the next few years.

This means that we are now in a transitional period. The method for prioritisation is only right if we have the right measures to base it on. In Spring 2009, Defra will complete an initial Outcome Measures review, evaluating whether we are measuring the right priorities in the right way, what other priorities we should measure in the future, and what data we will need. Having established the principle that the programme should be aligned to hit targets on the agreed measures, any refinements to priorities arising from the review can be reflected in the prioritisation process in the future.

We cannot make regular radical changes to the priorities on which we build our programmes. However, provided that change is incremental, the new approach allows the programme to be gradually aligned and focused on clearly expressed priorities, and will contribute to a more sustainable and efficient approach to Flood and Coastal Erosion risk management for the future.

The Setting of Local Levy for Flood Risk Management Schemes



**Tim Farr - Severn Trent
(Midlands) RFDC**

Since 1st April 2004, the majority of flood risk management funding has been provided by Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA), but with the important provision that Regional Flood Defence Committees (RFDCs), using their executive powers, may raise a Local Levy on County Councils,

City Councils and Metropolitan Borough Councils in their region. This Local Levy is to fund projects for flood risk management which are designed to meet local needs and priorities across each region where the criteria for national funding have not been met.

The Local Levy is set by the RFDCs in each region in accordance with the Environment Agency (Levies) Regulations, 1993. The Local Levy is set at the January round of RFDC meetings and raised and spent in the financial year starting shortly afterwards in March. Local Authorities receive from the Government, through their Formula Spending Share (FSS), an allocation of funds for setting a Local Levy, and any Levy which is set must have the majority consent of the Local Authority members on the RFDC. All Local Levy investments have to comply with Defra and Environment Agency policies, processes and the scheme of delegation, but RFDCs can retain unspent local levy in Section 47 balances or use balances to fund larger projects.

The Local Levies account for around 5% of flood risk management resources nationally (but much more in some regions, and much less in others) for which Committees are accountable to the levy paying councils and their council tax payers. Over the five years that Local Levy has been raised, a cumulative total of £124 million has been raised from Local Authorities by the eleven RFDCs in England, of which almost £27.5 million has been raised in the current year.

Local Levy expenditure priorities are solely at the discretion of RFDCs and RFDC members take the decisions on the programmes of works funded by Local Levies. RFDCs remain accountable to local stakeholders for the shape of regional investment

programmes as well as for the level of locally raised funds and their investment.

Local Authority members comprise a bare majority on each RFDC and through this local input some incentive is provided to Local Authorities to continue to invest in flood risk management through the Local Levy. Sir Michael Pitt's report into the floods of the summer of 2007 has highlighted the importance of local accountability in respect of flood risk management decision making, and his call for a significant increase in the roles to be played by Local Authorities in future will be one of the defining features of the forthcoming Floods & Water Bill (the political and financial climate permitting).

Severn Trent (Midlands) RFDC

Since 2004 the Environment Agency has completed over fifty projects across the Midlands region, all of which have been selected by the Local Authority members of the Severn Trent RFDC (the representatives of the 33 Upper Tier Local Authorities within the Severn and Trent catchments). These have included constructing flood banks, flood walls and new outfalls, renewing embankments, replacing culverts and trashscreens, constructing new pumping stations, purchasing demountable and temporary flood defences and providing new Flood Alleviation Schemes. In the current year the Severn Trent RFDC has raised £3 million in Local Levy and is currently undertaking a dozen separate schemes and projects with that money.

In several instances, the Environment Agency in the Midlands region has worked in partnership with Local Authorities and other organisations to bring additional benefits while undertaking flood risk management work. At the same time as alleviating flood risk to local communities across the region who would not otherwise be given that service, it has been possible to improve local amenities and create new habitat for wildlife, and to employ pioneering and cost-saving methods to achieve results (such as using an innovative steel anchoring system for stabilising a wall at Matlock Bath, which won an award from the Institution of Civil Engineers). The good working relationships and close communications between Environment Agency staff and landowners has resulted in minimal claims for compensation on many of the projects. →

The Setting of Local Levy for Flood Risk Management Schemes

→ The procedure for generating a Local Levy programme begins with Environment Agency Area teams developing potential schemes for consideration as future Local Levy projects. In many cases recently Regional and Area Environment Agency staff have worked closely with local communities and their elected representatives, particularly in areas affected by the flooding in the summer of 2007. This work generates a "long list" for consideration by the RFDC Local Authority members.

Potential projects are initially assessed for suitability against a number of basic criteria, to ensure that Area teams focus on those projects that would be viewed most favourably by the RFDC. The main objectives that potential projects are considered to achieve are:

1. Economic viability – all projects should have a positive Benefit Cost Ratio.
2. Local priority – projects should address a specific local need or problem.
3. Deliverability – projects should not have an unreasonable delivery risk.
4. Spread of work – an equitable distribution across the Environment Agency region and the areas that Local Authority RFDC members represent is desirable.
5. Funding of projects – the aim is to identify work for which national Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) funding is unlikely to be available.
6. Type of project - With the introduction of Outcome Measures (the new method of national prioritisation) this year it has been harder to assess than in previous years, and some projects have been put forward for possible national funding as well as for Local Levy. In the past low point-scoring capital schemes or capital maintenance projects and any projects that involved the protection of a SSSI or a heritage site or a net gain in habitat to meet the requirements of the Biodiversity Action Plan ("BAP").
7. Significant community assistance – projects should enjoy the full support of, and offer a wide benefit to, the clearly identifiable local community whose flood risk it addresses. This is important to the Local

Authority members in guiding them when difficult prioritisation decisions have to be made.

At the pre-meeting to consider the candidate projects on the long list, the RFDC Local Authority members draw up a provisional shortlist of projects for the RFDC meeting in October. Local Authority members then have the opportunity to consult with their Local Authorities before the Local Levy is set at the RFDC meeting in January each year.

This year the Severn Trent RFDC have put a huge emphasis on taking any opportunities to attract as great a financial contribution from developers and Local Authorities as possible.

The view of the members at the pre-meeting in September this year was that that even a small contribution on each scheme could allow an additional scheme to be funded somewhere else in the region. By way of comparison, the long list for the Severn Trent RFDC to consider for 2009-2010 is nearly three times the size of previous years at £14.8 million (many of the 23 projects having been generated by the experiences of last summer). The RFDC will have to take a longer term approach to Local Levy, probably by creating a three year programme to accommodate these and future requests for flood risk management projects.

Everyone associated with flood risk management funding recognises that Local Levy funding continues to provide good value for money. It represents an excellent opportunity for relatively large sums of money to be raised, thus enabling activities to be undertaken which substantially benefit flood risk communities, for whom the cost would often otherwise prohibit a scheme or any other work to alleviate flooding.

It provides a balance to the requirements of the national programme, which focuses on the larger scale flood risk management options, and offers local input and accountability within the allocation process via the RFDCs, which in turn has produced a flexible and responsive system, geared to meeting the needs of many smaller communities.

Tim Farr
Chairman
Severn Trent RFDC

REPORTS

The Environment Agency Uses Local Levy Funding in Gunthorpe

The problem of the lack of flood resistance (protection) and resilience in modern properties has been well documented. Prior to the Defra flood resilience pilots, the Environment Agency in the East Area of the Midlands Region started a project to improve the flood resistance to 40 properties within one village.

Funding and support came from the Regional Flood Defence committee, without whom this project would not have been possible.

The village of Gunthorpe is typical of many within the floodplain of the River Trent in Nottingham. It has grown from a small community, initially built on



Homeowners showing one of the larger patio door guards

high ground and spread to become a sizable village. Successive infill development moved away from the high ground and with increased urbanisation and reduction of the floodplain upstream, there are now some 140 properties at risk from a 1 in 100 year flood. Previous attempts to bring flood defences to the village had always failed due to the high costs and relatively small amount of properties at risk. A different approach was required.

Forty of the most vulnerable properties were chosen, many of which suffered severe flooding in November 2000. Of the 40 people we approached, 23 accepted the initial offer to be included in the project, and a further 9 followed on later.

Our intention was to offer each property an individual flood risk survey by an independent surveyor. The survey was designed to highlight any possible routes for water entry into the property and

suggest solutions to increase flood resistance. These solutions would then be agreed with the homeowner and the contractor.

The contract was won by Floodguards Systems Limited and the surveys were undertaken by Flood Risk Management Services Limited.

Due to the diversity of the properties selected, it became clear that a bespoke solution would be required for each home. We decided to initially fund the installation of Floodguards and air brick covers for each home, then to use the remaining money to fund as much as possible of the other recommendations of the survey reports.

This proved to be a good decision as by leaving some flexibility in the budget for each property, depending on their needs, we were able to fund a wide variety of measures such as water proofing brick work, fitting non return valves on the main drains, supplying submersible pumps for under floor voids and also smaller items such as sealing around pipes where they enter the house.

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The EA Uses Local Levy Funding in Gunthorpe (Continued)

All of the work for each home was installed by the team at Floodguards. The workmanship was of a very high standard with many commendations from local residents.

Quotes from Residents

- “My wife and I would like to thank you for your visits and the flood prevention work that has been carried out to our home. We now feel much safer in any future flood.”
- “Installation team was very good, efficient and considerate of our house and explained things clearly. Fortunately we have not had need to test the guards yet..”

Lessons Learned

- Flood protection products are not the solution for everyone in every location. Several homeowners declined our offer and despite our advice did not see the need for the work. Some people simply didn't like the look of the guards.
- The number of possible routes for water entry into a home is surprisingly large. Don't assume just because you've fitted some flood protection products that the problem has been solved. A

survey before hand is a must and only an individually tailored solution will give the best results.

- Obviously the installation of guards is pointless without a good flood warning service to allow adequate time for them to be fitted. Lead times are a key factor in choosing the location.
- Overall the project was a great success and we will continue with this programme as long as funding is available for areas where more traditional flood defences are not possible. The Regional Flood Defence Committee has approved more funding for this year and other villages will now benefit from the experience gained during this project.

Although we are trying hard to reduce flood risk across the region there are many properties at risk. If you have been flooded or are at risk of flooding there are many ways you can help yourselves.

We would advise you to act now and take precautions to improve the flood resistance of your home.

Dave Bartram

Environment Agency Project Manager



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Local Levy Funding - Uckinghall Flood Defence Scheme

A Unique Opportunity!

Uckinghall Flood Action Group (U.F.A.G.) looks to the Local Levy Scheme to support the Environment Agency's proposed flood bank scheme.

For the past eighteen months the Environment Agency has been carrying out a study to determine the feasibility of erecting a permanent flood defence for the village of Uckinghall, Worcestershire. The EA have concluded the scheme is viable and have submitted a proposal to obtain funding from the RFDC Local Levy. There are a number of reasons why approving the scheme **this year** would significantly reduce its financial and environmental impact.

The Uckinghall Flood Action Group have an excellent working relationship EA and all its members are fully supportive of their proposal. Whilst we empathize with the many other schemes under consideration, there are unique and compelling reasons why this scheme should receive funding under this year's proposals:

- The Environment Agency has confirmed there is an abundance of clay available from the excavation of the new marina basin at Upton-on-Severn which would be used to form the flood defence in Uckinghall.
- **The clay will not be available for an indefinite period.** Once the clay has been mined for the new basin any surplus will be disposed of. Utilizing this clay will substantially reduce the cost of the proposed scheme for Uckinghall and, as it would be delivered by barge, there would be significant environmental benefits.
- Failure to exploit the availability of the local clay would lead to significantly increased costs (excavation, transportation etc.) and vastly increased environmental impact in terms of rural disruption, and CO2 emissions.
- The village flooded in 1947,1990, 2000(twice) and again in 2007. In 2007, over a third of the homes in the village flooded and access to the village restricted for several weeks. Nine families spent over 8 months away from their homes. Six of these were OAP's who spent the winter living in caravans.

Sometimes Uckinghall feels like a forgotten village; situated on the East bank of the River Severn in South Worcestershire, its suffering during the floods of July 2007 (and many previous to that) is inevitably eclipsed by the vast amounts of publicity given to its neighbours, Upton-upon-Severn and Tewkesbury.

It is a small village of some sixty homes, not a "chocolate box" village but a genuine living one where young families are growing up, the men play skittles in the pub and the work of local farmers marks the passing seasons. One of the highlights of the village's year is the Christmas Carol night when,



towed by a tractor driven by Father Christmas, youngsters from Tewkesbury Brass Band who live in the village accompany the carollers as they proceed through the village.

Uckinghall has a strong sense of community and this is displayed particularly when the village is flooded; neighbours help to move each other's furniture, dinghies are used to evacuate vulnerable members of the community and milk, papers and post are delivered by boat for several weeks at a time.

The community spirit was very much in evidence a meeting at the village hall earlier this year, attended by people from the majority of homes in the village where they voted overwhelmingly in favour of forming a Flood Action Group.

Throughout the summer UFAG has worked closely with the Environment Agency, who have been willing to listen to our concerns and provide us with information. We have assisted them collating detailed individual household flooding information and planned a "Flood Buddy" system of self-help to assist vulnerable households in future floods.

Local Levy Funding - Uckinghall Flood Defence Scheme (Continued)

Facts, Figures and Feelings...

- 1) **Uckinghall** has a long history of flooding, however its frequency has increased over the last ten years. Many homes were flooded twice in 2000 and **over half of the village** (35 houses) were severely affected by floodwater in 2007.
- 2) The total cost of insurance claims and personal loss following the 2007 flood total over **£1,800,000.00**. The average level of floodwater entering homes was over 3ft.
- 3) As of **30th September 2008**, one family is **still living in a caravan** and is unlikely to return to their home until January 09, **five families** are still living in partially repaired homes and two homes are now unable to obtain flood insurance.

"We had put all our savings into buying a small cottage for our retirement, our new carpet was down for just one day before the whole house flooded and our lives changed forever"



"The floods have dominated our lives and well-being since 2000. Our house is unsellable and we live in constant fear of further flooding. Our entire savings have been used in trying to restore our lives"

Local Flood Groups, The Key to Success? - East Hanney

Like many communities we were flooded during 2007. For us, in rural Oxfordshire, it was in July. With houses and businesses flooded and vehicles wrecked it was a day that many will remember with horror, relief or gratitude. Horror, if your property was ruined, relief, if by inches the water level did not reach your door sill and gratitude to the many people who pushed cars, moved furniture and fed the marooned.

I remember working in the dark outside my house desperately trying to build an improvised bund and then noticing a lot of complete strangers in my house moving furniture upstairs for me. This did lift my spirits enormously.

After the event there was a sense of anger and a natural feeling that some one must be to blame. The ditches have not been maintained, the drains are not working, too much new building and loss of flood plain. It is the fault of the farmers, the council, the Environment agency, Thames Water, government or just those in charge. Someone must be to blame and someone must fix it.

Then came the realisation that the problem is not simple, there is no one organisation responsible and with so many communities affected a small village like ours would not be high on any priority list.

So what could we do?

A few residents and parish councillors decided to

investigate the issues. After many conversations, water and land level surveys, river level data logging, visits, phone calls, e-mails, meetings and walking the neighbourhood we developed a better understanding of who was responsible for what and where the problems are. We formed a community flood group and started to build up good relations with our district and county councillors, Member of Parliament, Thames Water, County Highways department, local farmers and of course the Environment Agency. Then with the Environment Agency and the county highways department we started to work together on a joint action plan.

The action plan identified a number of flood alleviation projects that could be carried out by the community flood group.

Our first project was to remove a substantial amount of weed from our local main river. Of course we had to address the issues of safety, permissions, approvals, water voles, crayfish and the like but over a weekend in June 2008 over 100 volunteers worked in shifts to carry out selective weed removal over a 1km section of river. The difference has been astonishing, before weed removal the river was a sluggish silt filled river that was never much below 6inches from bursting its banks. Now it is a fast flowing gravel bottomed proper chalk stream river which is about 2 feet lower, even after heavy rain, and it is still full of fish with plenty of plant cover.

Local Flood Groups, The Key to Success? - East Hanney (Cont.)

Our second project was to increase the bank height along a 140m stretch of river. Again using volunteers from the flood group, 120 Tonnes of soil and 45m of pre-planted coir rolls were used to eliminate the low points in the bank and reduce bank erosion of our local river.

In addition to these and similar projects the flood group has been very active in liaising between residents, farmers, the councils, Thames Water and the Environment Agency. This has helped everyone to understand their rights, responsibilities and opportunities in regard of flood alleviation and defence. Now many landowners are becoming much more active in maintaining ditches and water courses because they understand the mechanism for obtaining any necessary permission and can see how their actions fit into the overall management of water in times of flooding.

Our work has been financially supported by the Environment Agency, Parish and County Council and the District Council have promised support in future.

We feel that we have been able to act as coordinator and so ensure there is a common plan, everyone knows what is happening or is going to happen and that nothing is left hanging with no group taking responsibility.

Communication has been key, and we have held public meetings as well establishing a web site, informing residents through the village magazine and putting up notices.

A big change we have noticed in the community is that there was a general fear of flooding every time it rained. Now, although we know that there is still a probability of flooding, the probability and its consequences has been substantially reduced and we as a community have brought this about.

So are local flood groups the key to success? On their own no, but by working closely with other agencies we believe that they play an essential role in bringing about improvements by providing a co-ordinating role and encouraging a self help approach by the community.

“We feel that we have been able to act as coordinator and so ensure there is a common plan....

....Communication has been key...”



Flooding Reduction, and Adoption of Sewers in Albrighton, Shropshire

Albrighton is a village of some 7000 people, formerly part of Shifnal RDC, and now in the Bridgnorth District Council area. Properties have suffered flooding over a number of years from foul and surface water.

These problems have got much worse over the last 15 or so years as more development has been connected to the estate sewerage system.

In 2003, the two Parish Councils serving the village managed to persuade Severn Trent Water, the Environment Agency, and County and District Councils to attend joint meetings. Three years later, STW tentatively agreed to put forward a limited scheme for their next asset management plan.

Parish Councillors continued their investigations, and found more problems, including a large number of unadopted sewers. A professional meeting, attended by one of them, addressed by a senior EA manager alerted top executives of STW, and their subsequent correspondence found its way to the local MP, a PPS in Defra. The outcome was an OFWAT allocation to STW of £1.6m sewerage works in Albrighton.

After the storms of July 2006 the local MP became involved. He called a public meeting, including representatives of STW, the District Council, the EA and Highways. The result was the appointment of an independent Consultant to investigate the causes of flooding in the village.

The MP later arranged for two Parish Councillors to meet the Environment Secretary, then Ian Pearson MP. We believe that this added significantly to the pressure on the agencies to come up with comprehensive solutions to flooding here. In the Spring of 2007, Mr Pearson published a consultation paper on the potential adoption of existing private drains and sewers, giving a Government commitment to transferring responsibility for these assets to the sewerage undertakers.

Work by STW, EA and Highways engineers began in earnest. Both the brook course and sewerage system were modelled and a tentative STW scheme devised which included the replacement of an outdated and under-powered pumping station.

The EA were reluctant to do anything, but agreed to share the costs of clearing the brook course and removing a significant "pinch point". County Highways also agreed to reduce some flooding by diverting certain road gullies to another brook, and to do whatever was necessary to improve road drainage on the estate when STW completed their re-sewerage.

Readers will note that the successes achieved by Parish Councils are due to a number of factors – persuading the appropriate agencies to meet together; the involvement of

MPs irrespective of party; taking matters to the highest practicable level; a level of expertise within the Councils; and a great deal of persistence by individuals in the community. We also had a year start on the rest of the country!

The Parish Councils invited Mary Dhonau, Chief Executive of the charity The National Flood Forum, to speak to individuals whose properties had been flooded.

The STW contract began in January 2008; the projected cost exceeds £8m. The scheme is on target for completion by the end of 2009.

Adoption of Sewers

Our concerns now centred on the non-adoption of sewers. Severn Trent treated most of the sewers in Albrighton's largest estate, built in the mid-sixties, and areas later connected through it, as 'private', because adequate drawings of the sewerage system cannot be found, nor can the RDC minutes.

Around half of Albrighton home owners are thus held responsible for the maintenance and replacement if necessary of foul and surface water drains upstream of the sewers STW acknowledge as theirs.

The NFF subsequently invited the writer (one of the Parish Councillors) to attend a meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Committee on sewers and sewerage, chaired by Paddy Tipping MP. It was generally agreed by this Group that responsibility for all private sewers and drains serving private homes would be best transferred to the Water/Sewerage companies and advice given that it could be accomplished by an Order in Parliament, i.e. without new legislation.

A further meeting was attended by the (new) Minister of State (Environment), Mr Phil Woolas MP in July 2008, who said that the costs of so doing were likely to exceed £3bn including bringing private sewers and drains up to adoptable standards, and carrying out the necessary mapping.

Mr Woollas agreed at the meeting that sewers and drains serving all new development should be constructed to an agreed standard, and transferred to the water companies on satisfactory completion; responsibility for oversight of sewerage should be transferred to first tier local Councils. Advice received privately since then states that Defra is considering adopting the latter items only, so that existing unadopted sewers would remain the responsibility of private owners or occupiers.

It is suggested that the matter should be drawn to the attention of Members of Parliament so that their pressure may cause a rethink before such a decision is taken at the political level.

Meet the New Trustees

In September the NFF interviewed applicants for the role of Trustee of the board of the NFF. Below are brief biographies of the successful applicants.

Piers Allison

Piers Allison has been leading the Bucklebury Flood Alleviation group since its formation after the floods of July 2007. Within his village, 24 of the 26 houses were flooded – but his house stayed dry. Professionally Piers works a programme manager, bringing together different organisations to deliver large projects, and saw his skills as key to helping his fellow villagers alleviate the risks of future floods.

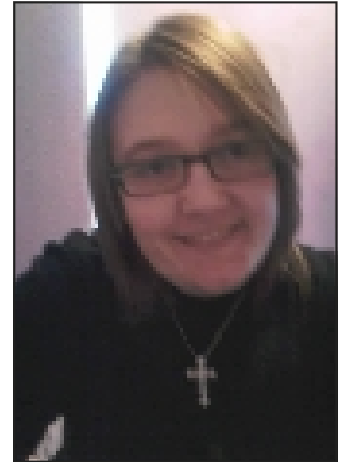


Since July 2007, Piers and the Bucklebury team have worked pro-actively with the Environment Agency, their local district council, their MP and landowners to deliver several alleviation projects, the largest of which is to be co-funded by the Thames RFDC and which is in its engineering design stage.

Piers' passion for flood matters has also led to contributions to the Pitt Review, the EFRA Committee Review into Flooding, DEFRA Consultation on Improving Surface Water Drainage and the National Flood Forum. As a trustee of the NFF, he is keen to promote with other communities the pro-active approach that his team have taken, and to work with the Environment Agency and DEFRA to ensure a thorough implementation of the Pitt Review recommendations and the EU Flood Directive obligations.

Laura Lindley

Laura is 18 and originally from Sheffield, South Yorkshire. She is currently studying a foundation degree in Health and Social Welfare in Carlisle. Laura has never been directly flooded but worked extensively in South

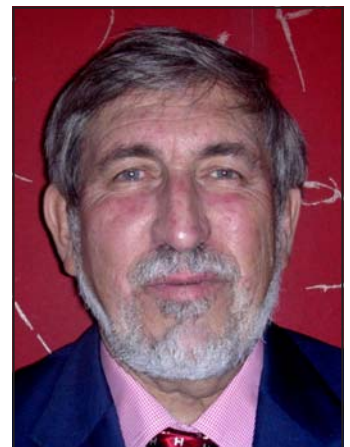


Yorkshire, and supported the set up of two community flood groups in Catcliffe and Dinnington. This is where she met the work of the National Flood Forum, following extensive flooding in June 2007.

She worked as a volunteer alongside others from the church, the community and the National Flood Forum, initially in the Flood Relief Centre and later in Drop-In Centres for flood victims. Laura was a valuable member of the team. She proved to be friendly and hospitable, responsible as well a patient listener. She was also involved in the challenging task of matching offers of help to those in need, a task which she performed with wisdom and care as well as efficiency.

Paul Roberts

Paul is a qualified accountant, with senior business experience in multinational companies in finance, marketing, sales, logistics, mergers etc. He has also worked for the management consultancy arm of a leading international accountancy firm, and taught business studies with the Open University.



He has been a member of the Wales committee of the Consumer Council for Water since its inception in 2006, leading the sub group dealing with the issue of



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Sewage flooding in the area covered by Welsh Water.

An elected councillor for 25 years, after taking early retirement in 1998 he was able to devote more time to Chester City Council, and was elected to the Council's Cabinet in 2001, serving as Leader of the Council in 2006/7.

Whilst holding the Environment portfolio on Chester City Council he was asked to help local residents affected by recurrent sewage flooding. By getting all the agencies together around a table he was able to get them to agree responsibility for resolving the problem. This led to approval of a major investment project to increase the capacity of the sewer network in the centre of Chester, which has now eliminated the problem for local residents.

Ron Smith

Ron Worked for General Electric Co, South of Scotland Electricity Board, Scottish Nuclear Ltd, British Energy and Mitsubishi Heavy Industry Takasago with whom he worked as a Power Generation Engineer



operating and commissioning a large variety of Power Plants including Nuclear, Coal, Oil and most recently Gas at various locations throughout the world. He is now semi retired and living in the East Riding of Yorkshire. He was severely flooded in June 2007 where the water stayed in his house for a week and the reparations are still ongoing in Oct 2008. Ron is chairman of Burstwick United Flood Group and acting vice chairman of Holderness Flood defence group. On behalf of his group Ron recently visited Wilnis in Holland to see how the Dutch control and live with water and as a result of his visit now has contacts with a major Dutch flood risk specialist company.

Jenny Truelove

Jenny lives in Slough and has worked within the Health and Social Care environment for the past 16 years. A qualified Social Worker, she currently works in a hospital social work team employed by the Local Authority.



Jenny has been a volunteer with the WRVS for the past 16 years and more recently has been volunteering with the Red Cross. As a volunteer in emergency services teams, Jenny has participated in training on a wide variety of topics including post traumatic stress, humanitarian assistance centres, rest centres, and providing emotional support. Over the past 16 years Jenny has provided voluntary assistance after a number of major incidents.

In 2006 Jenny was awarded a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship and visited the USA to explore the use of volunteers in disaster response. She spent time in New York with those who assisted at the World Trade Centre and then travelled to Washington DC, Houston and New Orleans looking at the support given during Hurricane Katrina. As well as looking at community resilience and those voluntary organisations that provide support at time of disaster Jenny also looked at the disability preparedness initiatives being developed in the US.

In 2007 and 2008 Jenny has been back to the US volunteering with various projects; from her travels and talks with those effected by disasters Jenny hopes to be able to share her experience and ideas with the Flood Forum. In the past Jenny has been involved with various local environmental groups working with children and young people on educational programs. Jenny has a particular interest in community response and preparedness initiatives.→

As you can see there is a wide range of skills and experience heading our way and we are delighted to be in the fortunate position of being able to appoint such a wealth of talent to the board! We look forward to them driving the future development of the NFF!

Charles Tucker

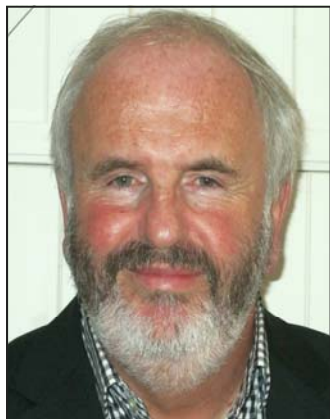
Charles had a 35 year career in rivers, water pollution control, drainage and waste regulation before taking early retirement last year from the Environment Agency. He has also been a town and district councillor in Pershore, Worcs for most of the past



25 years. He represents the town on Wychavon DC and was closely involved in the floods last year when about 130 houses were flooded from the Avon. Charles believes in putting the needs of people at the top of his agenda! In addition, he has a particular interest in Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) and has been instrumental in achieving SUDS for several thousand houses in the south Midlands as well as large industrial estates. Another passion is wetlands and he is involved in creating one on the Avon Meadows in Pershore at the moment.

Laurence Waterhouse

Laurence is the Managing Director of Floodconsult a multidiscipline consultancy specialising in flood risk and flood hazard assessments for international and UK based clients. He also advises on flood defence products for the commercial and domestic market



Made redundant in the DEFRA cuts in 2007 after 35 years of experience in the public sector mainly in the fields of surveying, flood control and emergency planning he started his own company, in mid 2007, offering advice to clients and flood victims.

A professional surveyor with detailed knowledge of :- Environmental Issues, Senior management, Emergency Planning, Flood Risk and Recovery, Damage Assessment and social and economic assessment of disaster zones.

A member of several Professional Institutions, he sits on the Geospatial Engineering Panel – a joint board of the ICE/ICES and is an advisor to local Members of Parliament on flooding issues.

He has worked extensively throughout the EU

advising on flood risk with a recent major project in Romania to help with emergency planning during flood events in that flood prone country, *“One of the most serious problems in Romania is that some houses are made of mud in some areas and just dissolve in flood water”*.

Other projects include working for the UN and many flood related projects in the UK and Ireland.

He has published many articles on flood surveying and lectured extensively abroad, mostly in the US. He is currently writing two books, one on flood advice for domestic properties, flood resilience and the legal aspects of flooding. The other for the professional market concerns statistical matrixes in Flood Risk and Hazard Mapping.

He has been flooded himself, five times since 2000 – *“as the result of inadequate drainage which was going to be remedied by the local council”*

He has now built his own flood defence system around his house and made his property ‘flood resilient’ He says:

“Well if I have got the design wrong for my own house, the next time it floods in my village, it will be embarrassing!!”

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Letters

Dear Flood Forum

Sir James Dyson has dropped plans for a School of Design in Bath in Flood Zone 3(a). Planning Permission was granted against objections from the Environment Agency and locals worried about increased downstream flood risk. The case was referred to the Minister, a Public Inquiry was called, and at this stage the application was withdrawn. The following issues subsequently raised with my MP may interest Flood Forum readers, especially in view of Government plans to build another 3 million homes.

Although claiming they cannot get involved in individual planning applications, national politicians supported the proposal, and un-elected and unaccountable local and regional bodies also influenced the decision. An Urban Regeneration Panel produced documents with no formal status in planning, these were highly critical of the

Environment Agency who upheld Government policy in PPS 25.

The 'Flood Risk Assessment' that accompanies a planning application is a misnomer. The Environment Agency as the Government's agent has already determined flood risk, shown on the national flood risk maps. What the applicant submits to the Local Planning Authority (LPA) is a proposed method of mitigation that it believes will overcome the flood risk already defined.

Responsibilities of Local Planning Authorities in PPS 25 are written as if one body, assuming Officers and Elected Councillors act in unison. Councillors over-ruled the Planning Officer's recommendation, this of course is democracy, but raises liability when flood risk is increased.

In one example, a legal challenge to a Council planning decision resulted in Councillors who voted against approval being served a writ along with those who supported the proposal. In the event, the case was dropped on a technicality. Councillors are 'jointly and severally' responsible for the decisions made by the committees on which they serve, but there has yet to be a test case when flood risk has been increased.

Elliott Morley MP, a previous Minister for Flood Defence, said at a European Conference in 2004 that it is invariably those downstream that suffer the effects of bad decisions upstream. A basic principle of PPS 25 is not to increase flood risk to others, therefore far greater consideration needs to be given to downstream consequences.

The opening paragraph of PPS 25: Development and Flood Risk, states that policies should be taken into account by regional planning bodies in the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies. Clearly PPS 25 should take precedence in developing Regional Spatial Strategy.

Many Local Authorities express disquiet about the number of homes required in their area out of

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Letters



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The NFF Needs YOU!

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Send us your story with pictures where possible to...

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the 3 million homes called for by the Government. A Freedom of Information request revealed that a 45 minute bus tour was all that led to a call for 21,300 homes to be built in one LPA area. Plans have already started to build 3,000 homes in a river valley in another area.

Any significant development 'outside' the floodplain of a catchment area will always add to problems 'inside' the floodplain of that same catchment, this is due to increased run-off. Politicians have ignored the cumulative effect of development over many years that leads to increased flood risk. Whether 3 million homes are built inside or outside floodplains, they are going to increase flood risk to the millions of homes that the Government keep telling us are already at risk of flooding!

Look at the Regional Spatial Strategy for your area, if you don't like it, object. Water will always flow downhill.

Alan Aldous

Retired Chartered Engineer

Alan has worked for 9 years on a Flood Defence Committee. He was flooded in October 2000 and has rebuilt his house to make it flood proof, "within limits of a Noah's Ark event" !

Dear Flood Forum

As you probably know, many people experience problems renewing or changing their insurance cover after a major flood. The Keswick Flood Action Group have discussed this significant issue and felt it is an area in which you could help.

We understand that in the USA, the premium charged for flood insurance is set by the government, based on the flood risk in that area. Thus insurance can be bought from a range of companies but the premium is fixed.

We ask you to consider this policy and persuade the British Government to introduce appropriate legislation. This would then make it possible for those living in flood areas to purchase insurance at a reasonable cost.

Graham Thompson

Chairman

Keswick Flood Action Group

Please send letters or emails for inclusion in the next edition to:

info@floodforum.org.uk

Or to the address opposite.

We would be interested in hearing your reactions. Anyone wishing to respond to these articles is more than welcome to contact us at the address opposite.

Whilst the NFF cannot endorse any products and services included in this newsletter we give thanks for the generous support of the organisations concerned.