



**FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT
SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
24 FEBRUARY 2020**

PRESENT: COUNCILLOR P A SKINNER (CHAIRMAN)

Councillors C Matthews (Vice-Chairman), W J Aron, T R Ashton, Mrs A M Austin, M Brookes, A G Hagues, Mrs C J Lawton, C R Oxby, C E Reid and R A Renshaw

District Councillors R Austin BEM (Boston Borough Council), P Vaughan (City of Lincoln Council), C Leyland (East Lindsey District Council), Mrs L Hagues (North Kesteven District Council), M D Seymour (South Holland District Council), C Benn (South Kesteven District Council) and I G Fleetwood (West Lindsey District Council)

External Agencies – Robert Caudwell (Chairman, Steeping River Catchment Steering Group), Jonathan Glerum (Anglian Water), Simon Love (Anglian Water), Andrew McGill (Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board), Peter Riley (Environment Agency), David Sisson (Lindsey Marsh Internal Drainage Board) and Morgan Wray (Environment Agency)

Councillors Mrs W Bowkett, C J Davie, D McNally and E J Poll, attended the meeting as observers.

Officers in attendance:-

Paul Brookes (Flood Risk Manager), David Hickman (Head of Environment), Daniel Steel (Scrutiny Officer) and Rachel Wilson (Democratic Services Officer)

28 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE/REPLACEMENT MEMBERS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mrs F Martin MBE (East Lindsey District Council).

It was noted that Councillor C Leyland was in attendance to represent East Lindsey District Council, however it was clarified that he was not a replacement member and therefore did not have voting rights, as he was an Executive Councillor.

29 DECLARATIONS OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED

That the minutes of the previous meeting be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE CHAIRMAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS
AND LEAD OFFICERS

The Chairman advised that following the last meeting, he had written to Peter Simpson, Chief Executive Officer at Anglian Water Group to highlight the concerns of the Committee about the increasing number of incidents of sewage flooding events reported by local communities. To support tackling this issue, he suggested the Committee would welcome an update from Anglian Water at a future meeting to explore the current issues, background and ongoing works being undertaken to minimise sewage flooding events within Lincolnshire.

The Chairman also reported that he had written to Executive Director Andy Gutherson following the last meeting, to emphasise the importance of communicating a clear message to the public and having one clear point of contact in the event of a flooding issue.

The Committee had highlighted concern as members of the public would often find it confusing identifying who was responsible for dealing with specific flooding incidents and the Chairman had sought confirmation that arrangements were in place to minimise the need for members of the public to call multiple agencies. The Chairman confirmed that the Executive Director had replied and advised that the committee would receive a further update on this at a future meeting to review the working arrangements.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place wished to record his thanks to Norfolk County Council for the work that was carried out to produce the report into the investigation of the flooding in Wainfleet during June 2019. It was noted that during that time the region had suffered unprecedented rainfall. He reported that it was clear that government would have to have difficult discussions going forward about the management of water. These conversations needed to take place at the highest level of government, as there would be big issues around how houses were built in the future. There were a lot of small farmers who were worried about their livelihoods going forward, and there would be a need to look at how they could be supported as a community.

He advised that there were currently 140 Section 19 investigations underway by the County Council, which was putting pressure on resources.

32 TO REPORT ON THE OUTCOME OF THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE
FLOODING AT WAINFLEET IN JUNE 2019 IN ACCORDANCE WITH S.19
FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010

Consideration was given to a report on the outcome of the investigation into the flooding at Wainfleet in June 2019 in accordance with S.19 Flood & Water Management Act 2010.

It was reported that following a prolonged period of heavy rainfall in June 2019 there was widespread flooding across Lincolnshire. The eastern side of the county was particularly affected, especially Wainfleet (All Saints), Holbeach, Spalding and Great Steeping. Most notably, a significant number of properties in Wainfleet were flooded from at least two sources, initially surface water compounded by a breach in the embanked Wainfleet Relief Channel.

Over the period 10 – 13 June 2019, around 62 properties were flooded in Wainfleet, Thorpe St. Peter and Thorpe Culvert, with further significant flooding elsewhere in East Lindsey district which fell outside the scope of the scrutiny committee report.

The consequences of the breach at Wainfleet were severe enough to trigger a multi-agency response in order that military aid could be called upon. Lincolnshire County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty under S. 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to investigate flooding. The events at Wainfleet met the requirements to carry out a flood investigation. Due to the increased pressure on resources as a result of the widespread flooding, Norfolk County Council was approached to carry out the flood investigation on behalf of Lincolnshire County Council. The final report was attached at appendix A to the report.

The Committee was advised that the recommendations in the report were fairly clear and linked well with the works which were being explored on the ground through the Steeping Steering Group.

The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place advised that it was now for the Committee to review the report and recommendations and add anything further that the Committee felt was relevant.

The Chairman of the Steeping River Catchment Steering Group addressed the Committee and advised that he had been asked to Chair the steering group on behalf of the Flood and Water Partnership. The group was looking at the whole catchment from source to sea, including improving the conveyance of water throughout the catchment and the resilience of the flood banks, particularly the relief channel, and ensuring that weed growth did not occur in the channel. There was also a need to ensure that the flows of water coming into the River Steeping were appropriate for the banks. The recommendations from the report would inform the work of the Partnership, for the Steeping Steering Group to implement on their behalf.

Representatives from the Environment Agency, Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board and Anglian Water were all in attendance and confirmed that they were committed to continuing to work with other flood risk partners and authorities.

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Councillor Mrs W Bowkett, local member for Wainfleet, was in attendance, and informed the Committee that many of the members of the public attending this meeting had been flooded. The Committee was informed that 60 families had been flooded, and every time it rained, it was causing significant stress to residents. There was concern that the river had been close to flooding again in the day's preceding this meeting, and Councillor Mrs Bowkett had been in constant contact with several agencies during this time.

Members were provided with the opportunity to comment and ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- There was a need for a discussion about how flood defences should be funded in the future. The flooding in Wainfleet had been a serious event, and members wanted to be able to give some assurance to the people of Wainfleet that the risk of this happening again would be minimised. There was a need for the government to look again at flooding issues nationally, as this was not something which should be dealt with on a regional level.
- The representative for West Lindsey District Council commented that he was disappointed with the report and felt that it talked around the topic. The main issue seemed to be who the water 'belonged to' as in times of flood, it appeared that no-one wanted to take responsibility for it. There were 1000 miles of embankment within Lincolnshire that the Environment Agency looked after. It was reported that there had been another breach at Short Ferry, and it was not acceptable to allow water to flow out of the channels and into other areas.
- It was queried when was work was going to commence and how long it would take to complete. Members were advised that it was hoped that work would commence as soon as possible, however there were funding criteria which would need to be met, and a process to follow whilst bidding for funding. It was thought that the work which had been carried out so far gave clear evidence of what should be done. However, it was not certain how long it would take for the work to be completed. The Steering Group was looking for a long term sustainable fix rather than a quick fix.
- The Environment Agency advised that the Steering Group was looking at four main key themes, but it was noted that each would have different timescales.
 - Flow through catchment – total outfalls and conveyance through the system. Some work had been done on this but it was not quite complete.
 - Raised defences and resilience – it was important to ensure that these assets had regular maintenance carried out. It was expected that there would be a need for additional funding going forward.
 - Flood water storage and catchment – flood management work over the upper catchment area could have a beneficial impact further down the system.
 - Managing residual flood risk – it was not possible to totally eradicate flooding in the future, but it was important that the flood risk was managed going forward. This would include improving the resilience of the community and the flood defences.

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- It was commented that the Authority had a responsibility to produce this report as the Lead Local Flood Authority. However, it was very bland and did not provide any information which was not already known. It was suggested whether there was a need for something similar for Lincolnshire to the Government's COBRA committee which would meet when severe weather events were forecasted. There was a need for the emergency committee to have some powers so that resources could be provided where needed.
- It was queried whether there were any quick temporary solutions which could be implemented to give people some relief and assurance that things were being done.
- It was confirmed that the pumping station had been switched off for an hour during this event, and members were advised that this was because the Steeping River and bypass channel were getting very full, and a request was made to switch it off until the water level subsided.
- There was a need for funding from national government, as there was not enough funding within Lincolnshire to do the work which was needed.
- It was noted that the river bank had broken three times in the same place.
- One member wished to draw attention to one of the positives highlighted in the report, which was the existence of the Flood and Water Partnership. This was an example in Lincolnshire of organisations accepting that they had a shared responsibility for water, and it was the responsibility of all agencies to protect people. There were lessons learned after the Louth and Horncastle flooding and this brought the IDB and partner authorities together. Under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, it fell to Lincolnshire County Council to take the lead, but all agencies came together. The recommendations in the report were welcomed and endorsed.
- One member commented that they had read all the minutes of the Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board, who had identified that there would be issues at some point, and had set a plan to address it, but it was never implemented.
- In terms of the work which would be carried out through the Steering Group on the flows through the catchment area, it was queried when it was likely that there would be an action plan, as that was what residents would be interested in. The report, and any action going forward, was welcomed. Members were advised that it was the intention to have an action plan ready and costed out by the time of the public meeting, which was due to take place on Saturday 4 April 2020.
- It was commented that there was a need to consider that as the North Sea was rising, eventually the river would not be able to discharge into the sea, and that water would need to go somewhere.
- It was highlighted that any work would require funding and it was noted that there would be occasions when this would cost more than the local members of the partnership could afford, and so it was queried whether the partnership was collectively lobbying hard enough for its share of national funding.
- In terms of grant and aid funding, there was money that the Environment Agency received from Defra on behalf of risk management authorities. The Partnership received a certain amount of funding per outcome.
- The Executive Councillor for Economy and Place commented that the report followed a set format and it was acknowledged that it was bland, and was not

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as clear as the public would like to see. There was a challenge around funding, as the main issue was that the government had never properly understood the value of Lincolnshire's agricultural land. There was a need to have a conversation with government about this, as the price of food would increase the following year as a result of the floods. There was a national problem around water management.

- There was very good scenario planning in Lincolnshire, and the Partnership had worked well. The Executive Councillor paid tribute to Councillor Mrs Bowkett as the local member, for all her efforts during the flooding as she worked constantly with the emergency services. Tribute was also paid to East Lindsey District Council for their response to the incident, and how they continued to manage the response.
- There was a need to get to a point where places like Wainfleet would not be flooded again.

RESOLVED

- a) That the flood investigation report attached as Appendix A to the report be noted;
- b) That Lincolnshire County Council be endorsed as the Lead Local Flood Authority to lead on the partnership approach in delivering the recommendation as set out in Appendix A to the report;
- c) That the Committee requests to see the action plan by 18 May 2020.
- d) That the Chairman writes to the government on behalf of the Committee regarding funding for flood prevention.
- e) That an update report comes back to the Committee in six months to set out what actions have been taken so far.

The Committee adjourned from 10.55am until 11.18am

33 TO REPORT PROGRESS ON THE INVESTIGATIONS MADE IN THE COUNTY UNDER SECTION 19 OF THE FLOOD & WATER MANAGEMENT ACT 2010 (FWMA)

Consideration was given to a report which informs the Committee of the position of all current S.19 flood investigations in the County. It was reported that the team was working through the 140 flood investigations listed in Appendix A to the report. It was acknowledged that this work was resource intensive and it would take time. It was important to be able to get on site as quickly as possible in order to start gathering evidence.

It was also noted that there had been recognition from the County Council that more needed to be done to address flooding issues, as additional money had been allocated in the budget.

The Committee was provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

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- It was highlighted that more people were experiencing water coming into their gardens, garages and outbuildings, but not entering their property. The County Council was encouraged to use the report to ensure that external buildings were included, as there were so many near misses which should be included as a S.19 investigation, but currently did not meet the criteria.
- One member commented that their village suffered from sewage flooding, and it was queried whether these incidents needed to be included as the water was flowing into a fresh water beck.
- It was confirmed that there was an extra £2m of funding into the flood arena, £1m was for S19 investigations, and £1m for joint works.
- It was queried whether the numbers of staff were being increased to accommodate the increased numbers of investigations. Members were advised that the flood investigations were commissioned internally, and the team that they were commissioned through had taken on extra staff, and there was additional capacity through the use of the Professional Services contract.
- It was queried whether there were trained professionals who were available to deal with the increase in the number of investigations. Members were advised that they were sufficiently able to do the work that needed to be done under S.19. There was access to relevant resource through the contract with WSP. However, nationally there was a shortage of trained water engineers.
- It could be seen from the graph included within the report that it had been an exceptional year in terms of the number of flood investigations undertaken.
- A member commented that if it had been their property that had flooded they would be frustrated if they had to wait for a reason for the flooding due to a lack of resources.
- It was queried whether, for surface water flooding that did not go into a property, there could be a list of these incidents. This was especially important amongst villages.
- It was noted that in Appendix A, the investigations were grouped according to date rather than by location. There had been several incidents in Horncastle, but they were spread throughout the document. It was queried whether it would be better to group them together for easier analysis.
- It was reported that during the recent heavy rain, residents in Horncastle had received flood alerts, despite the alleviation scheme being at 25% capacity and it was queried why these alerts had been sent. Members were advised that a flood alert was the first stage of warning, and was to advise residents to be prepared. A flood warning was issued when it was expected that flooding was likely. The issuing of a severe flood warning meant there was a danger to life and a decision to issue this would be taken in conjunction with partners and the emergency services. It was noted that in the previous weeks, all three of these had been issued. Residents were encouraged to stay signed up for flood alerts, as the flood alleviation scheme did not remove all residual risk.
- It was noted that a list of 'near misses' was kept and was used as a basis for investigations in those areas. It was noted that investigations of near misses could be carried out without the constraints of a formal process.
- It was noted that some of the near misses were caused by surface water run-off from the highway, and there was now a joined up approach to this as the County Council had committed additional money for highways.

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- Investigations needed to be done properly and provide actions which could be followed up. This approach was welcomed, and it was also commented that the hard work that the team did in regard to S.19 investigations had been seen and was not celebrated enough.
- The incidents which did not qualify for a S19 investigation included sewage going into outbuildings, but this would only trigger an investigation if the water entered living accommodation. However, this situation often meant that residents were unable to flush their toilets. This was a situation which had been ongoing since the 1980s, but under present legislation this was not considered internal flooding.
- Members were advised that where there were issues with sewage, whether it triggered a S19 investigation or was dealt with elsewhere, it would still be investigated, but was not part of the S19 process. S.19 had been introduced to examine and manage surface water flooding. Issues around sewage should be dealt with by Anglian Water as the water management company.
- The opportunity for Highways officers to speak with the Committee would be welcomed.
- It was highlighted that some of the older reports had an estimated date of completion of 2015 and were still listed as on-going. It was queried whether these could be brought up to date with a more accurate estimated completion date.
- It was noted that there were things that people could do to prevent flooding in their properties. This was a message that needed to be delivered back to the public. There was also a lot that could be done to contain water further upstream.
- It was suggested that at the next meeting, Anglian Water gave a presentation about the work that they had done and also to reflect on the impact of the recent weather.
- There was also the need to consider water as an asset and how it could be moved around.

RESOLVED

1. That the comments made in relation to the investigations undertaken in the County under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 be noted.
2. That the Committee receive a report at a future meeting regarding 'near misses' in terms of S19 investigations
3. That the Committee receive a presentation from Anglian Water

34 ENVIRONMENT AGENCY UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report from the Environment Agency which updated the Committee on its activities, primarily in relation to the autumn flooding, response and recovery.

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Lincolnshire had received 170% of its average rainfall in autumn 2019. During this time, about 1% of the agricultural land in Lincolnshire flooded. The Environment Agency had been working hard on recovery, and was processing more than 160 defects to assets, and 22 sites had been prioritised for completion during 2020. The Committee were updated on the works undertaken at Barlings Eau and Timberland Delph.

In terms of the Boston Barrier, it was reported that the gate was delivered from The Netherlands in the autumn and had been tested with 400 tonnes of water against it.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points made during discussion included the following:

- It was commented that the work at Barlings had so far not been successful and it had taken several weeks to get equipment on site. There were 3 - 4 pumps on the bank and some of those were not functioning and the electricity had also failed for the security cabins.
- Compliments were paid to the way that contractors operated the Haven Bank scheme, and it was queried what progress had been made. Members were advised that the piling work had been completed and the planned embankment work would start in April 2020 as soon as they were dry enough. This would be weather dependant as the banks were saturated. It was anticipated that the works would be completed by the end of the next financial year.

RESOLVED

That the report be noted.

35 DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR THE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OF THE COAST

Consideration was given to a report which outlined the work to establish a partnership approach to securing the future of Lincolnshire's coastal areas. This built on existing public and stakeholder aspirations. It aimed to provide a framework to shape and support delivery of strategic objectives in a way that was most appropriate to the coastal context.

It was highlighted that the report outlined some of the key issues, specifically on the east coast, as the coastal morphology and processes were different from those in the Humber estuary and the Wash. There was a need to consider what the aim was for what east coast would look like in the future. The report outlined some of the elements under consideration.

Members were provided with the opportunity to ask questions to the officers present in relation to the information contained within the report and some of the points raised during discussion included the following:

- In relation to the Towns Deal, it was commented that this was a great opportunity and East Lindsey already had a Local Plan in place. The

challenge would be about how best to manage the area. The focus would be on tourism which was very important to the area. There was also a need for partnership working, as it was likely there would be a lot of interest in this.

- It was commented that this was an opportunity for strong partnership working. There would be a need to make a strong case to government on how the economy could grow and demonstrate that the Lincolnshire coast would have an important role in the economy of the country.
- In terms of funding there was a need for a long term plan and it was queried whether local initiatives were needed.
- It was suggested that money could be raised from people that came to enjoy the coast, which could be used to fund initiatives to prevent flooding on the coast. It was suggested that a nominal amount of £1 per adult per week could make a big difference. This was endorsed by other members of the Committee and it was highlighted that there was a need for government to take action which would empower local authorities to create their own solutions.
- It was confirmed that Lincolnshire was involved in the 2021 coastal initiative, which was a national scheme. It was commented that this included the Lincolnshire section of the English coastal path and linked to the North Sea Observatory. It was thought that it would bring a lot more people to the coast.
- The traditional model on the coast had been to build bigger defences, and it was queried what the intentions were for the future. Members were advised that in terms of the Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point strategy, the council had been out to consultation and one of the options was to install rock groynes, an approach which had been approved, however this did not provide any additional funding. The only funding was coming from two beach nourishment campaigns.
- There was a strong business case to continue flood risk management on the coast.
- It was noted that the National Flood Risk Management Strategy should be published soon. It was thought that there would be a focus on the resilience of the community, and how communities could become more resilient and react to flooding incidents.

RESOLVED

That the Committee note the approach outlined and supported officers in the continuing development of the strategy and vision for coastal Lincolnshire.

36 FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report which provided the Committee with an opportunity to consider and comment on the content of its work programme for the coming year to ensure that scrutiny activity was focused where it could be of the greatest benefit.

During discussion of the work programme, the following items were highlighted for inclusion at future meetings:

- Anglian Water would attend the next meeting in May 2020
- Working with Highways
- A review of the Wainfleet Action plan to come back to the Committee in six months' time
- A report to be presented in relation to the near misses flooding events
- The Environment Agency would bring a report back to a future meeting on the recovery work at Barlings Eau

RESOLVED

That the additional items listed above be included within the Committee's work programme.

The meeting closed at 12.41 pm

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