

Open Report on behalf of Environment Agency

Report to:	Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee
Date:	01 September 2020
Subject:	Environment Agency Update

Summary:

To update scrutiny committee on Environment Agency activities, primarily in relation to COVID-19 with particular reference to ongoing delivery of capital programme and recovery.

Actions Required:

The Flood and Water Management Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider and comment on the detail contained in the report.

1. COVID-19 Delivery Impact

- 1.1 We are continuing to deliver all of our Flood and Coastal Risk Management projects where it is safe for our teams and delivery partners to do so. We are following the latest guidance from Public Health England regarding safe working on construction sites.
- 1.2 We are also carrying out maintenance, operation and repair of our assets, again where it remains safe to do so.
- 1.3 Our current focus remains on how best to deliver the £100m in year Defra Grant-in-Aid allocation efficiently in terms of governance structures and allocation of existing and new resource. We are working on this in collaboration with our supply chain partners.
- 1.4 We remain ready to respond to flood incidents should the need arise and we continue to support partners as our own operational requirements permit. We continue to support our LRFs (Local Resilience Forum) with Mutual Aid in the form of equipment and some staff time.
- 1.5 Overall, we accept that productivity will be impacted yet progress is and will continue to be made and we will seek to emerge from lockdown as an even better organisation.

2. Recovery Programme Update

- 2.1 All affected main rivers were inspected and asset conditions recorded; with over 5200 assets inspected as a result of the 2019/20 winter flooding.
- 2.2 February 2020 heavy rainfall prompted further asset inspections with an additional 11 assets identified.
- 2.3 Breach repairs at Timberland Delph and Barlings Eau have been completed.
- 2.4 The recovery programme consists of 138 recovery projects with an approximately £50 million approved budget. These include works at Barlings Eau, Timberland Delph and a number of sites in Lincoln.
- 2.5 COVID-19 has slowed mobilisation, however, work is now underway at a number of sites, all following government social distancing rules.



Figure 1: Environment Agency's social distancing signage

- 2.6 All recovery works are delivered in accordance with Government policy and treasury rules and are prioritised according to protecting people and property.
- 2.7 Our work maintaining and refurbishing existing assets is essential to mitigate increased flood risk for people, homes and businesses. We are continuing to work with both our contractors and engineers to prioritise, design and construct permanent repairs. We are working through these as efficiently and as timely as possible.
- 2.8 We are supporting our contractors delivering work on our behalf with clear guidance, carrying out assurance checks and providing public signage on site.
- 2.9 We are continuing to liaise directly with affected landowners and parish councils, keeping them informed of progress on local repairs.

- 2.10 For further information on the programme, or on specific projects as well as a map of the locations, please contact the Environment Agency's Recovery Team on recovery.lincsandnorthants@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Key Recovery Work Sites Underway

- 2.11 **Black Sluice and Lock, Boston:** Since the decommissioning of Black Sluice Pumping Station, we have updated our operating procedures at the Black Sluice Complex to utilise the lock as a gravity sluice more often during rainfall events. This was successfully put to the test over the winter, with only minor over-topping of tributaries in the South Forty Foot Drain despite some of the highest levels recorded. To ensure the resilience of this asset both for flood risk and navigation, a 2-phase programme of works begun in March this year. This has, through careful planning by our site officers and the contractors, been able to continue without delays whilst applying strict Coronavirus protection measures.
- 2.12 The first phase is complete, with repairs to the hinges on the guillotine gate finished in April and replacement of the straps on the pointing doors completed at the end of June. This work was expected 'wear and tear' due to heavy use of the asset over winter.
- 2.13 The second phase is a larger piece of work jointly being carried out by FCRM, Waterways and MEICA. Refurbishment of the stop logs and a full drain-down of the lock is needed for the Waterways 10 year detailed inspection, and FCRM elements below water will be inspected and repaired (if needed) as well. Again, this is to ensure this essential secondary discharge sluice remains operable during flood events. This is programmed during August.

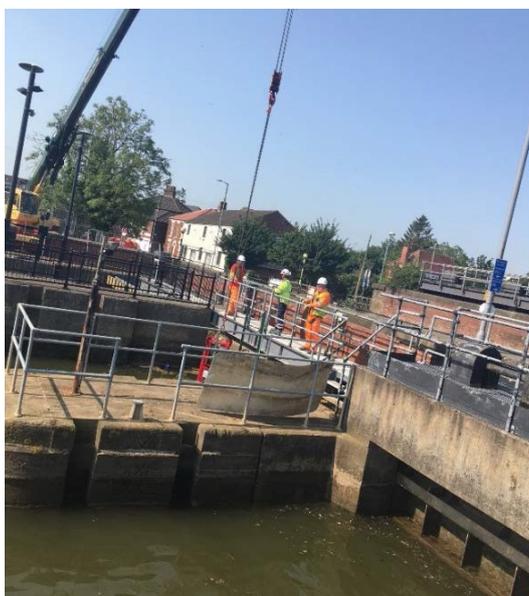


Figure 2: Black Sluice

- 2.14 **Lincoln Defences Project:** Last year, Lincoln also suffered some damage and isolated flooding from heavy rainfall and high river flows. The Lincoln Defences Project is a series of refurbishment works that will maintain the existing standard of

flood-risk protection for around 4,000 homes and businesses in Lincoln. As part of these refurbishments, locations which did suffer damage last year have been encompassed into the project.

- 2.15 The £6m project began in June 2019 and, subject to reasonable weather conditions, is expected to be completed by the 31st March 2021. More than two kilometres of riverside walls and three sluices will have been renovated, as well as environmental improvements, generating economic benefits valued at almost £33m.
- 2.16 Naturally, despite regular maintenance, defences need repairing and improving every now and then. This investment will ensure they continue to offer the same reliable standard of protection for years to come, while – at the same time – introducing measures that will enhance the environment for wildlife.



Figure 3: Lincoln Defences Works

3. Boston Barrier

- 3.1 The Boston Barrier scheme once finished will provide better protection to over 14,000 properties against tidal flooding and is deemed a ‘National Priority Project’ within the Environment Agency’s Six Year Programme.
- 3.2 Work continues to progress on the Boston Barrier project, which is classed as a critical infrastructure project by the Government. Construction activities will continue as long as they can comply with Public Health England advice and Site Operating Procedures published by the Construction Leadership Council. The site construction team, Bam Nuttall, have put a number of temporary measures in place to make sure the site is made safe for both workers and the general public during this period.
- 3.3 The Boston Barrier works have recently seen a key milestone realised with The Haven navigation channel re-diverted on the 1 June 2020 to pass through the new Barrier channel.

- 3.4 Further works continue downstream of the Barrier on the Port estate with the installation of steel sheet piles being driven into place and the by-pass channel due to be closed over the coming months. This will facilitate an enhanced level of protection to a number of the 14,000 properties covered by the project before the overall completion of the scheme.
- 3.5 Next steps for the scheme include installing over 2500 tonnes of steel sheet piles for new flood walls along the North Bank, the installation of a replacement flood gate at the Port of Boston wet dock entrance in 2021, and associated works to tie the project into the Haven Banks Improvement Scheme – a separate Environment Agency project which will raise and strengthen 5km of existing flood banks running from the Barrier towards the Wash.
- 3.6 If works remain on programme under the current circumstances, the primary Barrier will be fully operational by the end of summer 2020 with the project as a whole complete within the 2021/22 financial year.

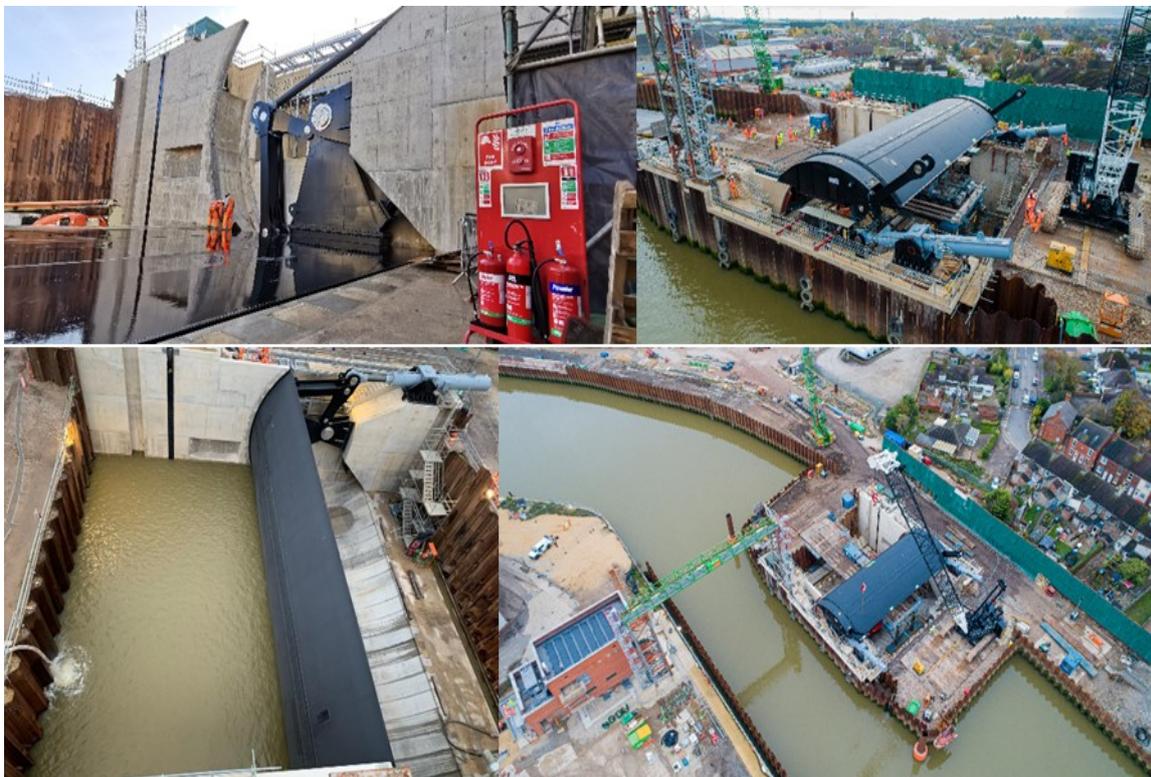


Figure 4: Assorted pictures of Boston Barrier

4. Interim Beach Management Lincolnshire Coast 2018 to 2021 (LBM2018to21)

- 4.1 This is a beach re-nourishment scheme protecting approximately 20,000 houses, 35,000ha prime agricultural land and 30,000 static caravans as well as major tourism developments between Mablethorpe and Skegness.

- 4.2 Following a significant amount work from our project team and our supply chain, the dredger arrived on site on the 1st June 2020 and works to maintain the beach protection were started.
- 4.3 The works were completed on the 24th July, before the main holiday season. There was a considerable amount of effort required to maintain the working standards required by government in the current environment, which included quarantine of the work force.
- 4.4 During the 6 week programme, more than 400,000 cubic metres of sand was pumped back onto beaches at Ingoldmells, Trunch Lane, Wolla Bank / Chapel Six Marshes, Boygriff, Trusthorpe and Huttoft.
- 4.5 As in previous years, the dredger transported the sand from offshore sites and pumped it onto the beach at high tide through a 630m long pipeline. Our contractors then pushed the sand into the right beach profile, using bulldozers and excavators. Through this work the sand lost to erosion was replaced, reducing wave overtopping during storms and protecting the sea defences from being damaged. For safety reasons, sections of beach were cordoned off from public access during the works.

5. Steeping Catchment

- 5.1 The Steeping River Catchment Action Plan Action 2020+ was released on 21 April 2020 to partners and the community.
- 5.2 The plan was drawn up by the Steering Group chaired by Robert Caudwell, this group feeds into the Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership (LFRWMP), chaired by Norman Robinson.
- 5.3 COVID-19 restrictions meant we were unable to host a public drop-in event linked to the release, but the plan is available publically on ELDC's website. People are also able to email any questions they may have.
<https://www.e-lindsey.gov.uk/flood2019>
- 5.4 The ability of the Steeping Action Steering Group to publicise this plan was compromised by the coronavirus drawing resource to support the Local Resilience Partners. There will be a delay in responding to questions. All media will be dealt with by the Chair of the Steering Group, Robert Caudwell.
- 5.5 This is a live document and any comments on its future direction should be passed onto Robert Caudwell as well.
- 5.6 The current coronavirus crisis continues to affect all aspects of public life. This plan will be no different. Whilst every effort will be made to ensure the timescales provided within this plan will be met, it is inevitable that they will be affected.
- 5.7 Partners are working hard collectively to deliver the actions and are working on a programme of activity for this financial year which includes some targeted dredging works.

- 5.8 There are four Catchment Action Plan Themes; improving the flow through the system, a resilient community and infrastructure, strengthening and maintaining defences and flood water storage. Each of these themes has its own list of actions, as well as a fifth list of additional actions not being taken forward at present, but are still highlighted and recorded.
- 5.9 Also linked to COVID-19, MHCLG have put the funding bid on hold having made the decision to prioritise getting funding to the private sectors. We do not yet have a date where we can expect a further response.

6. Consultation

a) Have Risks and Impact Analysis been carried out?

No

b) Risks and Impact Analysis

N/A

7. Background Papers

No background papers within Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972 were used in the preparation of this report.

This report was written on behalf of Morgan Wray, who can be contacted via 020 302 53344 morgan.wray@environment-agency.gov.uk.

This page is intentionally left blank