Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee


Present:
Chair Ms Amanda Nobbs

Members
- **Ms Jaco**
- **Mr Bob Collington**
- **Cllr Richard Cornellius**
- **Cllr Feryal Demirci**
- **Cllr Nigel Edey**
- **Mr Frank Farquharson**
- **Ms Karen Fisher**
- **Mr Tom Forde**
- **Cllr John Furey**
- **Cllr Jesse Grey**
- **Cllr Barrie Hargrove**
- **Cllr Russell King**
- **Cllr Nick Paget-Brown**
- **Cllr Eddie Roach**
- **Mr Paul Roper**
- **Cllr Rodney Rose**
- **Cllr David Schofield**
- **Dr Steven Shuttleworth**
- **Cllr Alan Smith**
- **Cllr Barry Tebbutt**

Officers
- **Ms Rosemary Redmond**
- **Mr Peter Ainsworth**
- **Mr Peter Quarmby**
- **Ms Alison Baptiste**
- **Ms Lindsey Ions**
- **Mr Howard Davidson**

In Attendance
- **Mr Simon Beavan**
- **Mr Ian Tomes**
- **Ms Holly Foreman**
- **Ms Samina Khan**
- **Mr Mark Douch**
Mr Doug Hill
Mr Lee Stevens
Ms Emma Hoyle
Ms Sara Heron
Mr Andy Hardstaff
Ms Deborah Fox
Mr Stephen Blythe
Mr Kyle Robin
Mr Chris Brown

Mr Doug Hill Partnership & Strategic Overview Team Leader
Mr Lee Stevens Bucks County Council
Ms Emma Hoyle South East Senior FCRM Team Leader
Ms Sara Heron FCRM Team Leader
Mr Andy Hardstaff Hertfordshire County Council
Ms Deborah Fox Surrey County Council
Mr Stephen Blythe Hampshire County Council
Mr Kyle Robin Thames Water
Mr Chris Brown Surrey County Council

Secretariat

Mrs Karen Jouny Flood and Coastal Committees Officer
Acronyms used in these minutes:

EA = Environment Agency
CC = County Council
FDGiA = Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid

LLFA = Lead Local Flood Authority
RFCC = Regional Flood and Coastal Committee
Defra = Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs

Agenda item

1. Announcements

Welcome to new attendees

The Chair welcomed several new members to this meeting of the Thames RFCC:

Peter Ainsworth (new board member for the Environment Agency)

Cllr Russell King (Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Transportation at Wandsworth, representing the SW London LLFA Partnership and deputising for Stuart Thom)

Cllr Richard Cornelius (new member, Leader of London Borough of Barnet and representing the West London Flood Risk Management Partnership)

Ms Christodoulides (Independent member, experience in the water industry, works for MWH and currently seconded into Thames Water working on Periodic Review 14).


It was noted that from the end of January, Peter Quarmby will be taking up the post of Manager of the London Environment Team. The Chair thanked Peter for all he has done for Flood & Coastal Risk Management on behalf of the Committee members and introduced his successor, Alison Baptiste to the Thames Committee, welcoming her into post.

The Chair welcomed Holly Foreman into the role of RFCC Technical Advisor that Lindsey Ions has moved on from.

Cllr Grey expressed concern at the continuing rate of change in officers and the effect this could have on delivery.

Apologies for absence

Mr Nigel Jones
Mr David Renvoise
Cllr Stuart Thom

2. Declarations of interest

Karen Fisher continues to work in a consultancy capacity for Slough Borough Council on flood risk.

3. Chair’s announcements

The Chair reported that the period since the last meeting in November 2012 had been very productive and that she had met many of the Thames Lead Local Flood Authorities to discuss scale of risk and investment needs. The Chair noted that looking strategically at what we want to achieve, taking a longer term perspective and using the Communities at Risk packs had proved to be a very productive approach.

She invited Mr Davidson to brief the Committee on Defra’s Triennial Review of the Agency. Mr Davidson reported that the review is underway to see whether the EA and Natural England fulfil the needs of coalition policies. Ministers are keeping an open mind on the outcome and Government is
seeking views.

Mr Ainsworth noted that a review such as this is not usually undertaken without an underlying feeling that changes may need to be made.

It was agreed that the Chair would draft a response to the review based on the following four key themes raised by Members;

1. To keep sight of the importance of retaining effective Flood Risk Management bodies with a catchment focus and the capacity to respond to emergencies and manage significant investment programmes
2. The need for stability to deliver the benefits of arrangements for flood risk management under the Flood and Water Management Act
3. The importance of retaining the partnership approach of the EA and in particular arrangements for working with Local Authorities as LLFAs
4. The challenge of remaining effective as well as delivering efficiencies

**ACTION:** The Chair to draft a response.

**4. Environment Agency report**

Mr Davidson provided an overview of the recent floods from a national perspective. Flooding has been significant across the country this year - particularly in the south west, midlands and north east. It was noted how fortunate we have been in this part of the country. To date, nationally 8,000 properties have flooded. Over half of these properties were flooded as a result of surface water which has emerged as a key issue. Ground water flooding is also an issue as the sheer volume of rain has filled the aquifers and the ground is saturated.

In comparison to where all the flooding has occurred, versus where the risk actually is, we were very lucky, as Thames has the highest proportion of properties at most significant risk. During the last period of flooding in November and December, the South East had significant rainfall and the River Thames has been running very full. 60,000 properties were at risk during that time. The water level rose to just below a significant threshold of flooding. Over 500 staff were involved in incident management during this period.

At the last Committee meeting, members supported the intent to take a long term view of funding. If we look at investment over the last 50 years, the coastal flood event in 1953 prompted a significant investment programme. We estimate over the next 50 years we will need to invest a similar amount, around £4 billion, to renew existing and build new defences for tidal and fluvial flooding. The emerging risk of surface water flooding will require investment of over £2 billion by LLFAs and Water Companies and also risk reduction linked to redevelopment.

Cllr Grey queried Thames Water’s involvement; do they have a forward plan to respond to repeated incidents?

Mr Davidson said that the Floods and water Management Act put responsibility on the EA and Thames Water to work jointly to develop solutions.

Members noted the areas where ground water flood risk is once again an issue in the Thames catchment.
5. Developing a Five Year Programme: Responding to the Risk

5.1 Proposal to set a Levy of £10.5 million for 2013/14

Rosemary Redmond introduced this item with a presentation. To summarise; Thames RFCC has 30% of the properties and people at risk of flooding nationally.

Historically we have spent half our funding on capital replacement and upgrading of aging assets and half on providing new defences to reduce tidal and fluvial risk. Surface water schemes are a rapidly growing part of our RFCC programme and there is a challenge to balance all three investment priorities under the current funding arrangements. Maximising external contributions including Levy allows us to lever in approximately £3 of GiA and external contributions for every £1 of levy invested.

It was outlined that the investment needs over the next 5 years outstrip the current level of Levy and that we may need to forgo national Grant in Aid investment and slow down or stop projects to deliver within current levels. For example, Lewisham and Catford Flood Alleviation Scheme (which has attracted government funding as part of the £120million acceleration and growth fund) relies on Levy investment of £2.3m to lever in £9million of Grant in Aid and external contributions.

It was reported that LLFAs in Thames have been awarded £13.8 million by Defra to support their new flood risk management responsibilities this year.

Opening discussion, the Chair said there had been a very helpful discussion at the November meeting, comments from that meeting stand and this is a continuing discussion. It was also outlined that LLFA Members of the RFCC, when consenting to a Levy on LLFAs in the Committee’s region, will be expected to take into account the impact of the Levy on risk management activity in the region and be informed by discussion between the Committee and the Environment Agency regarding proposals for work and the funding needed.

Cllr Tebbutt said that, when we talk about flooding, it touches a nerve if someone has previously been affected by flooding.

Cllr Rose said he would like to clarify that, since the last meeting, Oxfordshire had taken a decision to agree to the 5% Levy increase at the moment.

Cllr Smith reported that London Councils had met after the November RFCC meeting and that the general feeling was that the London Councils could not support the increase in Levy at this time given the difficult settlement.

Cllr Hargrove said that he subscribes to a long term strategy and that there is a responsibility to people and organisations. He said that he had worked well with officers and motivated them to work up schemes following the funding the Government has given to Lead Local Flood Authorities for decentralised flood work. Communities are working together with the expectation of funding. Recent events have shown how important it is we all work together and take forward schemes. This does not work if we do it on our own. We have a localised system and we need to make the best of it. We either believe in climate change or not, and these schemes are an example of how we can all work together to combat its effects. He indicated that, based on need, the funding given to LLFAs and the national funding that would be attracted for local schemes, he would vote in favour of a 5% rise.

Cllr Paget-Brown said the problem we face in London is that we were asked for a decision before all the facts had been collated. London Authorities have £7.5 million of new responsibility funding. We need to be alert to the knock on effect of not investing.

Cllr Roach said that Hertfordshire supported the increase for the next year.

Cllr Demirci, supported Cllr Paget-Brown’s comments. Cllr Demirci also highlighted that she represents six boroughs and that she was aware Enfield would stand to benefit from Levy investment.

Cllr Schofield reported that Buckinghamshire supported 5% this year and a long term commitment
to 5%.

The Chair proposed that the Thames Levy for 2013/14 be set at £10.5 million

7 in favour
- Cllr Nigel Edey
- Cllr Jessie Grey
- Cllr Barrie Hargrove
- Cllr Derek Schofield
- Cllr John Furey
- Cllr Rodney Rose
- Cllr Eddie Roach

5 against
- Cllr Nick Paget-Brown
- Cllr Russell King
- Cllr Feryal Demirci
- Cllr Richard Cornelius
- Cllr Alan Smith

1 abstention
- Cllr Barry Tebbutt

Decision: The Committee supported a Levy of £10.5 million for next year. Cllr Cornelius suggested that, as a new member, more timely information for London Councils would have been useful to make a wiser decision.

The Chair observed that the annual cycle starts at the April meeting and that the Reporting Sub Group had identified this meeting as a crucial opportunity to agree priorities for the coming year. Based on this discussion, we prepare a bid for national funding in July, review our indicative allocation of national funding and the Levy implications in October and seek to set our Levy at the November meeting. Programme needs and Levy discussions start in April.

Cllr King commented that Local Government does not find out its funding until December.

Dr Shuttleworth suggested two strategies were required; one to identify investment needs, the other to plan liaison with councils.

Mr Quarmby said that the Levy decision had been brought forward from January to the November meeting at the behest of Local Authorities to assist their financial planning, to increase the opportunities to attract national funding and to enable investment beginning in April to be planned cost effectively. We may need to start the dialogue at an earlier stage so that it flows through the right groups before the Levy decision. He advised that setting the Levy in November works best with the possibility of extending the decision into January if necessary.

ACTION: The April meeting will be used to consider a plan for liaising with funding partners linked to the timetable for developing the programme and setting the levy.

5.2 Proposal to agree in principle to a Levy increase each year for the next 10 years

Ms Redmond said at the November meeting Members had supported a longer term commitment, as it gives time to collate national funding, secure planning consents and third party contributions.

The Chair asked if there were any questions regarding moving to a longer term approach to funding based on a rolling five year programme.

Cllr King advised that, rather than referring to 5% annual increases, the Agency should work to inflation plus increases in investment.
Supporting a long term strategy, Cllr Furey anticipated year on year savings. Members looked to the Agency to refine estimates of the efficiencies to be achieved and to work with partners to establish a longer term programme. There was a consensus that a longer term approach to the Thames investment programme would be more effective for delivering the required mix of large and smaller capital infrastructure projects, raising contributions and negotiating favourable contractual terms.

Reflecting the discussion, the Chair proposed that the RFCC agrees to work to a five year rolling programme and to work to the principle of an above inflation increase each year for the next five years, the level of the rise to be reviewed each year.

**Decision:** Members agreed unanimously.

In view of the efficiencies members wished to secure, the Chair invited Members to consider committing to a base Levy of at least £10.5M for the next five years to enable the EA to achieve the benefits to be gained from a longer term approach to securing contributions and to managing works and contracts.

**Decision:** Members unanimously agreed to secure Levy of a minimum of £10.5 million for the next 5 years.

**ACTION:** EA to meet with LLFAs/Partnerships, and where appropriate Thames Water, and further develop and agree high level aspirations and priorities for the short, medium and long term for each Partnership. These will be considered at the April meeting to identify high level Thames Programme aspirations and priorities and inform the five year rolling programme and bid for 2014/15.

### 5.3 Proposal to agree the Thames Programme for 2013/14

Ms Redmond gave a presentation on the development of the Thames Programme for next year, highlighting key schemes.

Cllr Roach reported on a meeting between Hertfordshire and the EA, which the Chair had attended. He welcomed the proposal to support development of integrated surface water and fluvial schemes in Hertfordshire to a stage where they can apply for funding. Detail would be put to the Programme Sub-Committee.

The Chair reported on two communities which had suffered recent flooding where residents were raising contributions towards schemes. Residents in Eastbury had pledged £56,000 and were proposing West Berkshire, or possibly the Parish Council, could undertake the long term maintenance of defences as a contribution in kind. Similarly residents at South Hinksey in Oxfordshire were working to raise £50,000 towards a scheme and the Parish Council was proposing to enter into a lifetime maintenance commitment. She proposed the Programme Sub Committee should consider these initiatives.

The Chair proposed agreement to the Programme subject to:

1) refinement by the Thames Programme Sub-Committee
2) scope to support measures for communities affected by recent flooding events
3) understanding that projects in the Levy-funded category are reliant on contributions
4) EA agreement that all Levy contributions to any scoping or delivery phase of the Lower Thames Scheme, including to early works such as Phase 1, will be counted as contributions to the whole Scheme. Mr Quarmby assured the Committee that this was the case.

**Decision:** The Committee unanimously approved the programme with the four provisos.
6. Key Issues
The Chair stated that this item is used to enable the Committee to keep track of key issues and projects.

6.1 Recent Flooding Events in Thames RFCC
Members reiterated their thanks to Agency staff for their much appreciated work to manage flood risk in November and December.
Dr Shuttleworth proposed that LLFAs should be encouraged to collect data to improve understanding of groundwater risk.

ACTION: Relevant LLFAs were encouraged to record data on ground water flood risk while water levels are high.

6.2 Communities at risk
Ms Ions introduced this item and set out the progress made and challenges faced by the area teams taking forward the Communities at Risk packs.

The Chair explained for new members that these packs are being produced for each county and unitary Lead Local Flood Authority and provide a clear summary of flood risk based on clusters of households at risk. She reported that at her meetings with Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire the maps from the draft Communities at Risk packs had been very well received by partners and used to consider possible actions and priorities. Officers in Hertfordshire had suggested incorporating the packs into Local Flood Risk Management Strategies.

6.3 Oxford Flood Risk
Mr Quarmby commented that the Agency is working in partnership with the County and Oxford Flood Alliance to review possible scheme options and that partners had worked together well both during and since the recent floods.

The Chair commented that in the wake of recent events, communities have been raising contributions and that she hoped the review of possible schemes would identify affordable options for members to consider.

6.4 Thames Estuary 2100
Mr Quarmby updated the Committee that the TE2100 Plan, a 100 year strategy for managing the risk of tidal flooding in the Thames Estuary, had been endorsed by Defra and work was ongoing on the implementation of this plan.

6.5 Update on Local Flood Risk Management Strategies
Ms Ions drew members’ attention to the progress that has been made and also to the role of independent appointed members in assisting LLFAs with Local Flood Risk Management Strategy consultation. Annex 2 of the paper sets out the proposed pairings between appointed members and LLFA partnerships.

Ms Ions agreed to find out timescales of individual Strategies so members can feed in.

The Chair proposed a workshop with Members and officers to look at this work. Members agreed this would be very helpful.

Action: EA officers to investigate a workshop
7. Lower Thames Scheme

The Chair drew Members’ attention to the report showing that phasing construction of the channels to provide a steady supply of extracted gravel could reduce scheme costs. Members were encouraged the Agency was looking at how best to take Phase 2 of the scheme forward. As time was short, the paper was noted.

8. Periodic Review 14

Mr Robins provided an update presentation on Thames Water’s strategic priorities and ongoing work on Periodic Review 14. This built on the presentation given to the Committee at the November 2012 meeting. Mr Robins reiterated the changes to PR14 compared to previous price reviews. Ofwat is looking at outcomes not outputs and also the increasing role of customers and willingness to pay. Customer engagement and support for business plans are key to this price review. Mr Robins talked about Thames Water’s priorities for flooding; reduced sewer flooding (both blockages and hydraulic flooding) and increased resilience of assets. Members had expressed concern at recent sewer flooding issues in Berkshire and in Oxfordshire.

The Chair noted the review timetable assumes by April - and based on the Local Flood Risk Management Strategies - LLFAs will have fed in priorities for investment relating to sewer flooding and resilience of water supply and treatment works. As companies are drawing up plans for the next five years and this is the first Periodic Review where water companies are flood risk management authorities, we should take the opportunity to work together and set the bar for investment at an appropriate level. Mr Robins responded by saying that the capital programme is constantly changing but we do need to start looking at potential joint schemes now.

**ACTION:** It was agreed that Ms Ions would liaise with Thames Water over sharing risk and programme information before the April meeting to see if there are any joint opportunities.

9. Thames RFCC Programme Update 2012-13

Noted

10. Insurance update

Noted

11. East Coast Flood’s Review

The Chair suggested the 60th Anniversary of the 1953 floods was an important opportunity to use the media to highlight what has been done to protect London from tidal flooding and to promote what needs to be done in future.

12. Minutes of meeting held on 21 November 2012

The Minutes, including the confidential item, were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

13. Matters arising from the Minutes

None.

14. Action Log

Noted

15. Date of Next meeting

26 April 2013 at Thames Barrier. Full details to follow in advance of meeting.