

Attleborough Second Public Forum on Flooding

Connaught Hall 5th December 2023

Hosting: Attleborough Councillor Taila Taylor (Chairing)
Sharon Smyth – Attleborough Town Clerk (Note taker)
Rob Walker Deputy CEO - Breckland District Council
Mark Ogden Norfolk County Council – Flood & Water Manager
Steven Halls Norfolk County Council – Senior Flood Risk Officer
Tony Watling – Besthorpe Parish Council

The intention was to update the meeting on the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) S19 investigations into the event and what has been carried out. Over 100 homes were believed to be flooded but only 58 written reports have been received from those households confirmed as internally flooded. Forms were available to collect after the meeting. The LLFA can only act on what they know and all were urged to submit forms in order to complete the full report. This is also really important for future funding and affected homeowners' eligibility for Property Flood Resilience "Repair Scheme Grant" being offered by DEFRA to NCC LLFA as part of post recovery response to Storm Babet

Officers investigating so far have found that there was not one single point of failure. Places investigated included Norwich Road, Ferguson Way, Mill Lane up, Silver Street, Kenan Drive, Briar Gardens (also Whitehouse Lane but different area)

Completed and ongoing Actions following multi agency findings so far:

- 1) The trash screen at Mill Lane. There is now a commitment by Anglian Water, Breckland DC and the LLFA to redesign and replace it with AW contractors (Clarets). No set timescales but it is aimed to replace within 6 months pending conditions in the stream. Potential access from the centre of the parapet is being investigated with a double hinged gate, which will have a coded entrance. Alternative is a gangway from the right bank (viewing downstream) to the working platform. Operators will be able to rake material onto the highway and into Bins. Possible that a footway will be required for safety reasons
- 2) The Briar Gardens/Norwich Rd culvert – Multi-agency commitment to clear gravel/debris with AW being one route using their VacEx machine (or if not possible to flush/remove by grab lorry). Timescale from mid Feb due to hibernating bats.
- 3) Gables development – an unconsented structure was found on a site visit and officers instructed for it to be removed immediately, which was complied with as found at a subsequent site meeting.
- 4) An instruction by East Harling IDB (Mr Bingham) for National Highways for the A11 culvert clearance.
- 5) The upstream flood management project – a meeting was held last Monday between George Freeman MP and Steven Halls with landowners with ongoing talks around compensation in exchange for measures to be carried out. A short-term request was proposed by the LLFA for an in-channel measures next year. With a second phase B looking at longer term approaches to create a reservoir (offline basins) which may involve loss of productive land and so this has no set timescale due to legal discussions but all have pledged to move this along more quickly.
- 6) Defra funded packages to improve homes and make them more resilient to flooding are open to application by flooded homeowners with certain criteria/caveats and deadlines. Defra will be billed back by LLFA in conjunction with each household. More details will be released after Christmas.
- 7) Other grants include £500- and three-months discounts to Council Tax or £2500 and discount to business rates. This may be extended to second homes. All are urged to claim as soon as possible to help speed up the refunds Breckland can get back from Central Govt.
- 8) Any clearances of the trash screen can be collected by SERCO if laid out on side of the road.

Residents' Questions/Officers Answers in brief:

Q. Did Mill Lane culvert and corner of Ferguson Way get cleared out?

A. As a good will gesture, it was cleared out in May this year. It could be done again at the same time as doing Briar Rd to clear further debris.

Q. Is the bed of the river going to be lowered as when Ferguson Way was put in it was lower?

A. We need to be cautious as where the lip is any works could undermine/de-stabilize the entrance to Ferguson Way where the bank is already very narrow due to erosion and also protected by revetments. NCC Highways/LLFA will take this away to look at – sheet piling mentioned.

Q. Ownership of culvert Mill Lane to Ferguson Way was owned by AW but passed to residents. How can residents upkeep a structure they can't see into nor access? Do residents know they are responsible?

A. Agreed it is now the responsibility of households and is a big issue,

Q. Unconsented structure on the Gables – we attended the webinar and Hill said it was always there.

A. Channel surveys of Besthorpe Brook dating back to 2012 show there was a land crossing (i.e., bridge). LLFA can't find any evidence or photos between 2012 and the recent multi-agency visit to the site to confirm if this was removed or altered in anyway. During the site visit a 600mm culvert was discovered at the same location and according to IDB was unconsented. Anyone who has information can submit it to LLFA or IDB. But unconsented structure has now been removed. BPC did attend an on-site visit. The investigation is still ongoing. Hills did comply immediately and are positively engaging. The bridge is being looked at.

Q. Re culvert cleaning we got a letter saying it wasn't cleaned due to bats.

A. 80% was cleaned out in Feb but had to be left in May due to bats. Finished in May but we will recheck when Briar Gardens is programmed in

Q. When will the report be issued?

A. Deadline for flood reports – there will have to be a cut off which will be late January in order for us to get on and publish the report. The report is not intended for use of legal action.

Q. The retention tanks with non-water proof terram. Who checks these out as installed correctly?

A. Building Control officers.
(Resident is in industry and has never known these to be checked) Rob W will ensure this is followed up by an Officer.

Q. is the Flood Risk Assessment 2010 followed up for the Gables? In July 2010 3/5 pits did flood indicating the water table made it impossible to dig any more pits. The FRA doesn't indicate existing waterways and since the IDB East Harling objected. The planning papers indicate that the consultants carried out a desktop survey only. At the Hill Group presentation, they stated that they are not liable for any flooding that occurred from that flooding event. Also, there is the issue of riparian ownership and of the culvert who will take it on, a management company?

A. Our understanding is the Besthorpe Brook within Gables site only may be offered to the IDB as stated in the FRA. As the Planning Inspectorate approved the application, the planning conditions set out have to be followed but for future phases BDC will have the ability to keep an eye of any flooding matters.

Q The question of riparian ownership (inaudible).

A. This issue is ongoing with conversations going on between the Local Partnerships of BDC, NCC, IDB etc. but any maintenance is being done as goodwill gesture and without prejudice. BDC are disappointed that who did own it let it go to household riparian ownership. It will be a hard one to solve. Could be one agency or a collaboration.

Q Please clarify the route of the culvert cleaning?

A Whole route from Briar Gardens through to Norwich Road.

Q Out of hours calls to Fire Service

A. NCC will feed this back to the Norfolk Resilience Forum for information and response

Q Who follows up that the requested works at the Gables were carried out?

A Breckland Planning and Building Control.

Q The issue of applying to Defra and Breckland is complicated.

A. NCC Highways will take that away and look at it. In terms of future PFR Repair Grant Scheme the LLFA will contact homeowners who have reported being effected in the new year on details of the grant and how it works. All we know so far is that we are eligible for grant payments.

Q Can present riparian owners please ensure that they do maintain their part of the watercourse?

A NCC LLFA will ensure all concerned are aware of their responsibilities.

Q The upstream sensor for an early warning system – is that being furthered?

A. Application is in to the Environment Agency/Defra for a capital funding grant called £25m NFM Programme and if successful as part of that funding the LLFA will have to install "water level monitoring scheme" involving vegapulse radar systems. However this is not guaranteed. Resident pointed out that once the radar is activated and fire service is called but fire officers can't pump water anywhere. Officer stated the radar is always on and EA in future years could operate them to provide flood warnings and an alert system for this area. This is where homeowners would receive alerts by text or phone call to prepare in terms of mobilizing resilience measures, moving valuables as preventing flooding may not be possible due to the inherent risk of being so close to the river channel. Emergency responders could also use the warnings to ready pumps much earlier when capacity is available. And locate pumps in the right places.

Resident says it all doesn't stop them being flooded. Also, when the flood line is rung they say to ring back once you are flooded. **Post meeting note:** full prevention may not be possible as weather extremes are getting more severe and more frequent, reducing the likelihood and frequency is more attainable within the current technical constraints and land availability. Once it is a gauged catchment more can be done regarding alerts and emergency planning too.

Q Grants what about households not temporarily housed within Breckland?

A. Rob W will follow this up.

Q. Can a contribution be sought from Hills to go towards a water mediation scheme?

A. This has been raised.

Q Of the 3 separate planning applications its hard to find the applicable FRA.

A Any reports that exist will always be published on the planning portal. Also, all developer contributions are contained in the S106 agreements and are allocated. In certain circumstances, if not already paid out can be altered with all parties' agreements.

Q Upstream there was talk of creating a weir.

A. LLFA are investigating this and an historic weir upstream of railway culvert. The land is steep behind the railway embankment which does limit useable floodplain plus there are 4 houses already affected in this area of Bunwell Rd and any proposed measures would have to be designed to not worsen their risk..

Q re the 20 October rainfall, is if things had changed.

A NCC/IDB (Mr Bingham) will be looking into this amongst all other investigations including the IDB fluvial locking/A11 areas, backwash effects from confluence with the A11. All allegations of possible causes will be included in the upcoming report. Resident urged an enquiry into another headwall near the Gables, with no flap on it. NCC are aware of this and will investigate this further with relevant asset owner.

The Chairman Cllr Taila Taylor drew the meeting to a close and reminded residents that the Ward Councillor emailed are all published on the Breckland website.