

North Yorkshire County Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Flooding Working Group

Notes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021, commencing at 10am – held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Present:-

Members: County Councillors David Hugill and Yvonne Peacock.

NYCC Officers: Emily Mellalieu (Development Management Team Leader, Highways) and Steve Loach (Democratic Services)

Apologies: County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson

1. Flooding Working Group – Issues of Concern and Parameters for Group

The following issues were highlighted:-

- There had been some difficulty in engaging the Environment Agency with the Group, which was probably due to there being a number of groups within the EA, with different responsibilities – Robin Derry was the flood team Liaison Officer and probably the best point of contact to determine who should be involved from their perspective.
- A discussion around the structures of those operating to control and alleviate flooding in the area was held. NYCC is the lead local flood authority (LLFA) with an overarching co-ordination role to the management of flood risk in the county . Other risk management authorities with flooding roles and responsibilities include the Environment Agency, Internal Drainage Boards and District Councils, with co-ordinated work being the aim.
- The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee covers the Yorkshire Region, with County Councillor Jeffels being the NYCC representative on that body. Funding for flooding schemes is available through this group, this is available through a levy which all LLFA's contribute to based on a national calculation relating to council tax.
- The North Yorkshire Flood Risk Partnership includes NYCC, City of York Council the EA, Yorkshire Water and a representative of the Internal Drainage Boards. County Councillor Jeffels shares the Chairmanship of the meeting with the City of York. Officers representing NYCC are Emily Mellalieu and Barrie Mason. The group meets quarterly.
- NYCC in its role as LLFA has powers to deliver flood schemes to reduce the risk of surface water and ground water. Locations where formal investigation has been undertaken are scored against a criteria agreed by BES Exec. This affords a prioritisation to locations where higher numbers of properties are at risk, where there is a risk to life and a risk to the critical infrastructure..
- The present programme includes Malton/Norton, Great Ayton, Tadcaster, Upper Dales Villages, Rye villages and the lower Aire Villages.
- Investigatory work is often undertaken alongside the Environment Agency as flood mechanisms can be interlinked. Consequently there is a quarterly officers meeting to address joint issues and provide a link, this is attended by Emily Mellalieu, Allan McVeigh and Barrie Mason from NYCC and is an opportunity to raise strategic issues with the EA management team.

- Work is undertaken with the Rivers' Trust when appropriate, through catchment work and various partnerships which look at wider water management issues in the NY area. Members considered that a more holistic approach was required with all relevant agencies and bodies, including the Rivers Trust.
- There are a number of community groups operating in the area also engaged with the catchment approach.
- Six Catchment Partnerships consider catchment issues in the area – a number of wider organisations are involved with these, including the NFU, Rivers Trust, Natural England, etc. The NYCC CEO sits on the Derwent Catchment Partnership, which covers a number of areas. Liz Small, an Ecology Officer from NYCC works with the partnerships. These Partnerships work separately to each other.
- Members raised concerns that there appeared to be a large amount of uncoordinated work taking place, which made it difficult to know who to contact when flooding occurs. It was suggested that the various meetings required liaison and a more coordinated approach. It was explained, in response, the action that came from the various meetings, how schemes were prepared and how the work was coordinated. It was suggested by the officer that rather than the work not being coordinated perhaps something could be introduced to make it more visible, as there was a great deal being undertaken, for example, an annual report to the ACC. From a flood risk perspective, traditional funding often means it is difficult to demonstrate the benefits of a wider catchment approach, however the EA has introduced new measures which account for some of the wider environmental benefits. Often, interested landowners also deliver flood prevention schemes, hence the interest of the NFU, but it is difficult to coordinate these with the other schemes taking place, as they pay for and deliver these schemes separately. York/NYCC were collaboratively currently trialling a new approach to flood prevention funding through a national scheme, the business case for this is currently in preparation.
- Many of the low cost flood prevention schemes have high maintenance costs, which also causes issues, as local land owners have to pay for these. This is one of the issues of Natural flood management and is something that is very important in consideration of the rural communities in NY.
Liaison with the National Parks Authorities takes place in respect of where schemes are being delivered.
- A large amount of flood prevention work is delivered through the Catchment Partnerships.
- Members considered that Highways should be involved within the planning of schemes and could deliver some very small, local schemes that would have a meaningful benefit in terms of infrastructure flooding. It was noted that some communities would be willing to fund such projects but found it difficult to identify whom to approach. In response it was agreed that a better approach was required to address these issues, particularly in relation to the clearing of gulleys/drainage points, and a revised policy was being developed, alongside local representatives, to address this issue. The details from the policy review would be fed into the Flood Action Plan and into the overall Risk Management Plan. It was suggested that, as the review was currently taking place, it would be a good opportunity for Members to feed into that. When the review was completed the ACCs would be provided with an update on how the actions were being addressed, which would then be followed up with an annual report to ACCs on this matter.
- Members asked whether there was a single point of contact or a body that community groups could approach for help and advice on flooding and prevention schemes. In response it was stated that all Parish Councils were provided with contact links to the Resilience and Emergency Team for information during flooding events. In terms of advice on flood prevention that was with the Flood team at NYCC and, although the team had a focus on priority areas, advice will be provided when appropriate. Support and training for Flood Warden schemes are available through the Environment Agency,. It was emphasised that different flooding issues required different contacts, as there were different areas of responsibility.

- It was emphasised that when creating a flood plan Parish Councils had to ensure that this was done effectively, probably involving the Clerk, to ensure that it was appropriate and fit for purpose. It was stated that work undertaken in relation to flooding issues by Parish Councils would enable appropriate action to be taken to alleviate flooding problems whether this was a full-scale plan or not, with assessment and assistance provided. All Resilience Planning was seen as important and Parish Councils were encouraged to develop this.
- A Map detailing the areas of responsibility for the Internal Drainage Boards and the Environment Agency was shared. This provided details of where flooding problems were throughout the area following extensive analysis. The details were available to Members, but not available publicly, to assist with flooding issues. A public flood plain map was available from the Environment Agency.
- Members stated that closer work with local communities was required to assist their engagement with the relevant bodies as many were unaware of whom to contact in flooding situations. It was suggested that it would be helpful if there could be a single point of contact. In response it was stated that the current Flood Strategy was available to everyone, on-line, and this gave advice in respect of who to contact in specific situations. In terms of a single point of contact it was stated that Emily Mellalieu could be contacted to ensure that community representatives were directed to the right person/body to deal with their issue.
- It was noted that there had been large-scale changes to subsidies for farmers, which in turn was likely to have an effect on their ability to address flooding issues. It was suggested that this issue could be discussed further at a subsequent meeting of the group when the NFU representative was in attendance. It was stated that the NFU were very supportive and provided an appropriate challenge on flooding issues. Members considered that the diminishing budgets could also have an effect on Highways ability to respond to flooding issues, highlighting run-off flooding in areas with steep hills been a significant problem. It was suggested that a better approach to this was for landowners to obtain available funding to address this, rather than trying to do this through the County Council.

IT WAS AGREED:-

- (i) That a further meeting be arranged involving representatives from the NFU and the Internal Drainage Board;
- (ii) That Members be provided with advice as to how to access the current Action Plan and advised how to provide input into the revision of the Action Plan;
- (iii) That the details obtained from the meetings of the Group be collated and fed back into the ACC.
- (iv) That further attempts be made to invite the Environment Agency to a meeting.

The meeting concluded at 11:10am.

SML