

North Yorkshire County Council

Richmond (Yorks) Area Constituency Committee

Flooding Working Group

Notes of the meeting held on 17 March 2022, commencing at 12.30pm – held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

Present:-

Members: County Councillors David Hugill and Yvonne Peacock.

Officers: Emily Mellalieu (Development Management Team Leader, Highways) Robin Derry (Flood and Coastal Risk Management Advisor – Environment Agency) and Steve Loach (Democratic Services)

Apologies: County Councillor Annabel Wilkinson.

1. Flooding Working Group – Discussion with Environment Agency

The following issues were highlighted:-

- The role of Mr Derry within the Environment Agency, was from a community perspective, he explained. He assisted with work alongside various partner agencies to address flood risks in local communities and developed initiatives at a strategic level, together with schemes developed through Government funding.
- The level of flood risk continues to rise and the Environment Agency prioritises properties and businesses at risk. More funding has been made available to protect properties, however, funding resources for flood prevention work was limited and had to be managed carefully to maximise the protection provided.
- Other sections within the Environment Agency deal with different aspects relating to flooding including flood resilience – warnings, wardens, risks in communities, preparing plans, etc.
- Mr Derry stated that he had previously worked at NYCC, within Emergency Planning, addressing flooding issues in local communities, and had initially been seconded to the EA to consider the causes and prevention of flash flooding with little or no warning, therefore, he had a good background in respect of flooding issues. He had spoken to Members of the Flood group on previous occasions in respect of flooding in their communities.
- He stated that a great deal of work was currently underway to address flooding in the City of York, with their Council working alongside NYCC, to develop a huge scheme that would also have beneficial implications for North Yorkshire communities in terms of flooding.
- A Member asked whether there was a high level of local communities that had Flood Wardens, and received flood warnings, within their local Parish representatives. In response it was noted that this varied between communities. Efforts were made to have wardens with a high risk of flooding and communities are encouraged to have one appointed as this allows warnings to be disseminated more effectively and efficiently. Wardens will work with the EA to co-ordinate warnings and assist with the circulation of flood prevention materials. The development of a Community Emergency Plan allows additional resources to be acquired.
- A Member noted that the community at Appersett preferred flood gates to sand bags, and the co-ordination and planning outlined had enabled them to utilise these in flooding situations.

- It was also noted that the community at Appersett wished to obtain funding to carry out dredging in the river to try and alleviate flooding, and it was asked how this could be achieved. In response, it was stated that despite many thinking this would resolve flooding issues, dredging was not a panacea for flooding, and could have a detrimental effect as it could increase the velocity and change the flow of the water. It was emphasised that communication across all the relevant authorities was important when undertaking flood prevention work to ensure this would not create problems in other areas. The most effective way of controlling the flooding from rivers in areas such as Appersett is to create holding lakes for the excess water to flow in before it reaches the residential areas.
- A Member referred to the development of dams that allowed the water to seep through during flooding events, which had been utilised in Ripon, and considered that these could be useful in preventing flooding in the Upper Dales. She also noted that landowners around Ripon had been asked whether they were willing to let excess water run onto their land to prevent the area from flooding. It was noted that the two techniques were “leaky dams” and “attenuation pools”. In respect of leaky dams it was stated that whilst these did provide some relief from flooding the benefits were not extensive. In respect of these being utilised in the Upper Dales it was emphasised that care had to be taken so as not to create additional problems, such as the collection of debris.
- Proposals within the City of York project would utilise these and other techniques to relieve flooding and, as this was a joint project (NYCC and CoYC) and it was expected that several areas within the NYCC boundary would benefit from the project, including the Upper Dales. It was thought that the project would develop a holistic approach to the flooding situation, with benefits for a number of areas.
- The project will look to make full use of the wash-lands already in place and would look to ensure that their capacity is fully utilised.
- The York Project had the potential to have a huge impact in reducing flooding in the area, with substantial funding being identified for this and the EA would be co-ordinating the developments at a strategic level. It was expected that benefits would be seen in the locations identified. Members welcomed the proposed project and suggested that initial consideration should be given to higher lying areas as this would provide benefits to the lower areas. It was emphasised that a co-ordinated response was required to ensure the proposals were effective and maximum use could be made of the available funding.
- It was noted that the York Project was currently in its infancy and required further consultation with Councillors and Communities before it became widespread public knowledge. Extensive discussions and negotiations will also be required with landowners, and some of the plans would require their permission.
- Modelling work was underway to consider opportunities and the best place and priority for projects. In terms of the Upper Dales, consideration would be given as to how best those communities could be accommodated within the project. There was great enthusiasm for the project as it had the potential to provide wide-scale solutions to local issues.
- A Member asked if the modelling referred to included that mentioned by the IDBs at a previous meeting. In response it was clarified that the IDBs were carrying out their own modelling for their own purposes and it was not related to this project. The IDBs would be consulted on the project, however.
- Voluntary organisations would be involved in the project to ensure that additional community led resources were available to assist with the delivery of the project. This would also assist in sharing the message that there would be many organisations working closely together to address flooding issues.
- Members suggested that to ensure relative feedback continued to be provided Councillors should be kept abreast of how the project was developing. It was noted that the initial proposals for developing the project were currently going through the appropriate procedures both at NYCC and CoYC, including the production of a memorandum of understanding.

- It was emphasised that the proposals were at an early stage currently and publicising the initiative would be undertaken at an appropriate stage, rather than raising expectations too early. A programme of engagement would be provided at an appropriate stage.
- It was asked whether the project would co-ordinate with the funding being made available through ELMS. In response it was stated that efforts were being made to do this, however, there was some uncertainty currently as to ELMS funding can be utilised in terms of core funding provisions, therefore, a link between those providing the funding and those receiving the benefits had to be established.
- A Member emphasised the importance of local emergency plans and their co-ordination with the Emergency Planning Team, to ensure that the specific needs of local communities are met in flooding situations. Their importance was acknowledged and it was noted that these also provided vital local details for other events such as snow, power outages, storm damage, etc. The plans assist with the co-ordination of the various services and organisations responding to a situation, enabling the local community to receive the specific assistance that they require and assists the community in understanding the risks at that location.
- A Member noted that advice had been provided that the initial contact in a flood risk situation should be the Police as the most appropriate reactive organisation. In response it was stated that this was not necessarily the case and contact details would be held on the local resilience plan or could be made via the County Council's Emergency Contact number, as this would generate a co-ordinated response. However, it was noted that, on occasions, there had been either confusion as to where the issue should be directed, or there was no-one available to take the call, which was why contact with the Police had been recommended. It was stated that Area Highways had an emergency contact number available 24/7 which could be contacted to escalate incidents to a higher level. Members emphasised that it was important that a single point of contact was in place for emergency situations and that details of what constituted an emergency were established, with all local representatives provided with the information. It was stated, in response, that consideration would be given to the issues raised with a view to providing a consistent number, available to everyone, 24/7 for emergency situations.

IT WAS AGREED:-

That the details obtained from the meetings of the Group be collated into a report and fed back into the ACC to determine how to take the issues raised forward.

The meeting concluded at 1:35pm.

SML