

**Flood Risk Action Group (FRAG)**  
**22 June 2021 @ 4.00pm - Virtual Meeting via Teams**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome, introductions and apologies**

**Present**

Councillor Karen Shore – Chair  
Councillor Hugo Deynem  
Councillor Paul Roberts  
Councillor Sam Naylor  
Councillor Gillian Edwards  
Councillor Andrew Cooper  
Councillor Paul Williams  
Councillor Paul Roberts  
Kieran Collins (KC) – Highways Commissioner  
Jim Gibbins (JG) – Place Area Commissioner  
Chris Samuel (CS) – Team Manager, Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team  
Rob Ruddock (RR) – Joint Cheshire Emergency Planning Team  
Ian Ratcliffe (IR) – Senior Media and Communication Manager  
Mr William Briggs (BB) – Briggs and Partners & Northwich Flood Protection Group  
David Brown (DB) – Environment Agency  
Gaynor Murphy (GM) – Head of Stakeholder Relations, United Utilities  
Craig Connor (CC) – Drainage Area Manager, United Utilities  
Tony Griffiths (TG) – Drainage Strategy and Planning Manager, United Utilities

**Apologies**

Apologies were given for Phil Green, Media and Communication Manager and Andrew Coward, Major Flood Event Management Engineer.

**1. Minutes of previous meeting**

Members of the group approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 8 June 2021.

**2. Approval of Actions Matrix**

KC provided an update on the action's matrix.

FRAG Action 1 – KC will raise the issue of resources at the next CMM Strategic Partnership meeting to be held on 19 July 2021 and will also update visiting Member, Cllr Matt Bryan.

FRAG Action 5 – It was agreed to close this action as Members are the point of contact and can ask Officers to provide advice on any technical question.

FRAG Action 7 – A meeting with the RMA's modellers to discuss the hydraulic modelling is being arranged and it was agreed that this action should remain open until this meeting have taken place.

FRAG Action 8 – Work is ongoing to utilise the 2019 CCTV drainage report in Northwich to start a works programme.

FRAG Action 9 – Part complete and the gully replacements on London Road completed. Sump work still needs to be done. Cllr Cooper raised the question of a temporary sump in Waitrose car park? KC has been speaking with the EA with regards to this and we are looking at underground low spots. This action remains open.

FRAG Action 12 – KC confirmed that the additional CCTV work has been programmed with our contractors and would stay open until works are completed.

FRAG Action 13 – KC was tasked to write to Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) regarding the number of operational sluices in 2019 and 2021 floods. KC, email almost already to go.

FRAG Action 14 – KC has provided a copy of Dan Cross's report on the historic dredging of the River Weaver and this action can now be closed.

3. **Chris Samuels, Multi-agency Flood Response Plans (Chris needed to leave before 5pm to attend Covid meeting, so this item was discussed first agreed by both the Chair and FRAG members)**

CS provided an update on the work he and his team are doing with partners and the emergency response plans following the major flood event that occurred in January 2021. Internal debriefs have been undertaken following the event with both local Councillors and Officers. Comments received from those internal debriefs will feedback into Management Board due to take place late August. Debriefs include logistics, recommendations and considers what improvements can be undertaken. Any information arising from the debriefs will be passed to Atkins to feed into the S19 flood investigations.

CS mentioned the multi-agency flood response plans that are currently in place and highlighted that these need an update and share with DEFRA for comments. This will look at site-specific issues, Northwich Marina for example, anything we can do better and looking at operational command and control with the numbers of incidents across the borough. This will apply to any major weather events including snow and a revised plan around autumn 2021 will highlight any learning from both 2019 and 2021 flooding events. CS also confirmed that there would be a "walk through" of the revised multi agency flood response plan this autumn in readiness for the winter season

Community resilience work ongoing. Since the flooding in January we have had 14 Parish Council's that have been in touch. CS and his team will continue with both Parish and Town Councils to develop their community resilience plans.

4. **Member Discussion**

Cllr Naylor made the group aware of Weaver Court, Waitrose Marina and Saxons Lane Marina to ensure that this is on the radar with many people marooned there for a few days. The question was asked on whether Northwich Town Council should pick this up? CS said he would pick this up as part of the response plan. Cllr Shore commended Northwich Town Council for the way they stepped up on the day and where a great help.

Cllr Williams mentioned the areas of Weaverham and Acton Bridge residents as part of the multi-agency response as this is centred around Northwich Town Centre and not those who live downstream. Cllr Shore acknowledged this, but it was agreed that we would start with Northwich. DB from the EA made the group aware the areas of Weaverham and Acton Bridge are not flooding coming specifically from Northwich, though very concerned with what happened in these areas but flooding did not occur as a result of the Northwich flooding mechanisms. Cllr Williams raised the question of the 8 sluice gates on the River Weaver and only 5 working at the time. DB had discussed this with CRT at the last meeting and a question to go back to CRT to confirm this. KC, this was one of the FRAG actions (13) and an email is almost ready to go back to the CRT.

**FRAG ACTION 15:** Dave Brown from the EA to share modelling and reports with FRAG members.

Bill Briggs, mentioned there is a need to understand what our assets look like, pumps, infrastructure is and proposed to look at 0.5mile radius from Northwich (Bull-ring) and understand what are assets are in total. Bill also mentioned the sumps that were discussed and where highlighted within the 2019 S19 report and the need to get on with the work required to avoid getting flooding again this winter by putting in preventative measures. Bill was concerned that the recent appointment of Atkins to undertake the S19's for Storm Christoph that they have not been in touch with him yet, though Bill has had discussions with Andy Coward, the Council's Major Flood Event Management Engineer. Bill also had concerns that the 2021 S19 interim reports will not be available for the July Cabinet meeting. KC confirmed the Cabinet report will be a summary of the 2019 recommendations, actions taken, flooding task group work and update of Storm Christoph. Cllr Shore confirmed that the S19 interim reports resulting from the January 2021 flooding event will not be reported to Cabinet in July but will be as soon as feasibly possible after the July Cabinet. Cllr Shore and KC to discuss this element outside of the FRAG meeting.

Cllr Cooper also clarified the commitment for July's Cabinet and action plan on the 2019 S19 and was very surprised to hear on Northwich local radio that the interim reports of the 2021 flooding event would be completed by July as he was not aware that that was the case. KC made the group aware that the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) guidance is that S19 flood investigations can take up to 12 to 18 months depending on the complexity and flooding mechanisms and that there were 19 section 19 investigations across the whole of the Borough due to the unprecedented nature and impact of Christoph. It was not just a single investigation at a single location.

Cllr Naylor, for the avoidance of doubt, the business side of Northwich requested an update situation report. Interim reports into the 2021 floods that will include that these are the measures that we will put in place to alleviate further problems. KC, this would come out of the final report and the interim reports will highlight any quick wins. Whilst Cllr Naylor accepted this, he did highlight that business people and the like Bill Briggs want some kind of assurance of comfort and basically this is what we think happened and some assurance that these measures that we put in will prevent further flooding.

DB from the EA mentioned the manhole chamber across the car park and have looked at rates of discharge of water away and a contingency plan to get a bigger pump in and operate more efficiently.

Bill Briggs, within the 2019 final report one immediate actions stated by Atkins was the work around the sumps issue and asked when this will be completed? KC, agreed and is trying to get the work completed as soon as possible and fully expect this to be done by Autumn, depending on programming with our Contractor. Cllr Edwards, not sure why the chamber is there and KC mentioned this is not historical.

## **5. Open Questions (Prior Notice Required)**

Mr Briggs provided some comments and questions prior to the meeting via an email and this was discussed at the meeting.

## **6. United Utilities, Tony Griffiths Drainage Strategy and Planning Manager, Environment and Asset Strategy and Craig Connor, Drainage Area Manager, Cheshire, Network and Capital Delivery.**

- Performance of UU assets in 2019, Northwich Floods

- State of readiness in advance of 2021, Northwich Floods and performance of UU assets
- Temporary resilience for Northwich following Storm Christoph

TG confirmed that the UU assets had performed adequately in 2019 but the volume of water had overrun the telemetry systems with Dock Road pumping station and they had lost the functionality of one of the three pumps and that not all of the UU outfalls to the river network were flapped in 2019.

Between 2019 and Christoph it was regrettable that the UU outfalls had not been flapped in this period and that there were now only 2 outstanding outfalls that were not flapped.

For 2021 they had provided extra temporary pumping capacity in readiness of Christoph. Dock Road and Barons Quay were manned 24/7 in readiness and enhance monitoring through the telemetry system was carried out and the assets were operating at an optimum level. They also had additional pumping facilities to deal with flows great than the 510 l/s pass forward rate and pumped direct to river to relieve the impact on the town centre. They worked closely with the EA to obtain the correct discharge approvals.

Throughout the NW region they had 1500 reactive wastewater jobs, compared to normally about 150 to 200 jobs. Northwich was prioritised. They did monitor and assess performance of their network throughout the event, mobilised tankers, carried out extra tankering to localising flooded areas and carried out pumping operations at numerous locations. They also put in additional pumps around Waitrose car park and pumped directly to the river. River levels and network performance, the pumping stations were fully operational and there was not a repeat of the 2019 event during the 2021 event.

TG from UU mentioned that since Storm Christoph, UU are attending fortnightly meetings with the Council and looking at resilience and options for temporary resilience arrangements and the full catchment hydraulic modelling will identify where there can be more permanent type interventions or solutions. TG said that all RMAs need to look at the art of the possible and what can be achieved and afforded in terms of the more permanent long-term solutions. Also, they are looking at additional pumping capacity at the Dock Road and Barons Quay stations. A lot of work needs to be done and the modelling also to be completed. CC, it is a complex and designed system and have asked their modelling team to look at options to remove surface water as UU felt they had a moral obligation to look at interventions. The modelling team have come back with some viable temporary options to remove stress off the system. The Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Studio layer for Northwich was mentioned and UU will share this with the Council and see if any quick wins can be undertaken. The SuDS Studio is essentially a software toolkit that recognises opportunities across large geographical areas where SuDS are feasible.

Cllr Roberts asked what has UU put forward in terms of Capital works for Northwich and had any of those proposals been refused and what are the projects that will be included into their asset management plan. TG, we are in year 2 of the 5-year plan and we did not submit any flood alleviation schemes in their area of responsibility. Within the plan there is a need to address flooding problems, look to reduce the frequency of floods, making the network more resilient and improve customer awareness. TG, the next asset management plan (AMP 8) will begin in 2024 and it is all about affordability at the end of the day and ultimately customers who are paying their bills. Cllr Roberts asked what influence Cheshire West Council has on prices as Northwich floods needs more

investment and can we influence UU in the next asset management plan. CC, does not know at this stage what precise interventions that are needed as the plan itself will dictate the interventions. TG confirmed that the learning gained from the Northwich 2019 and 2021 events will inform their submission. CC also detailed their industry leading Network monitoring project to monitor the performance of their network.

Cllr Cooper mentioned that the temporary measures of over pumping at Dock Road and Barons Quay could probably be done relatively quickly and cheaply, but not a permanent solution. UU will work with the Council over the temporary pumping and look at costs focus on removing surface water as we all have moral duty to all play our part and make the network resistant to these problems.

DB clarified that as UU have highlighted, the system does discharge to river if the river level is low, and there is a lot of rainfall, as high rainfall event brings surface and foul water into the town centre which then gets pumped through from Barons Quay on to Dock Rd, for treatment at UU's WWTW at Winnington. The pollution aspect is already happening when the river level is low, and the flap valves allow discharge to river, under the permit. Over-pumping to river would not be worse from a pollution aspect as there would be more dilution flows in the river, and it would prevent surcharging of the local network. Cllr Cooper confirmed that the RMAs should not be constrained by cost of a permanent solution, just because something is expensive, there is a need to put a proposal forward as an option and look to get sourcing from elsewhere if needs be.

Cllr Williams, moving from water to electricity, on the Thursday after the flood event in January the A49 pumping station adjacent to the Riverside restaurant. This is the pumping station in Acton Bridge just before the swing bridge. CC, in terms of the power, UU have a control centre for that station, it would trip if any inundation from flooding where to occur near to the station. Two of the small pumping stations in the centre that the power provider actually switched off themselves and they continue to monitor.

Bill Briggs, clearly everyone worked their socks off in January. We want to help with the centre of Northwich and take the lessons that have been learnt and apply quickly. Bill mentioned his email he sent the morning of the meeting but had not copied in UU and asked KC can he forward on his email to both Craig and Tony.

**FRAG ACTION 16:** KC to forward Bill Briggs email to both Craig Connor and Tony Griffiths of United Utilities.

Bill Briggs requested a comprehensive study and map those assets and to be done within 3 to 4 months, possibly a small but focused sub-group that mapped the town of the assets. Cllr Shore mentioned that this can be considered and will discuss this further with KC and Atkins as we don't want to duplicate the work that Atkins are doing already. KC highlighted that a lot of work has been done with all the RMA's with asset data and this needs to be brought together.

TG, in respect of Bill's earlier point re the 0.5 mile radius for survey information, he felt that did not add value and in respect of Bill's ask in terms of mapping assets, what we have now although is not 100% accurate, but they are good enough for the purpose and reliable catchment modelling and Atkins will be the judge of that. Bill Briggs does not believe the asset mapping is as good as it is. CC, any information that we need to share, we are always willing to help and share. Sewage cleansing programme and reduce levels of silt and goes hand in hand with the CCTV survey.

## 7. Member Discussion

Group members provided comments under item 6.

8. **Open Questions (Prior Notice Required)**

None received.

9. **Approval of forward works programme**

Cllr Shore mentioned that Acton Bridge area may need to be discussed at the next meeting. KC went through the works programme and the next meeting would be focused on borough-wide and funding streams and consider inviting Simon Fox from Atkins who is leading on the S19 flood investigation reports and provide an update.

Cllr Edwards would like to discuss more on Acton Bridge. Cllr Shore agreed and we can focus on Acton Bridge either at the next meeting or the following one.

DB suggested that if you are discussing Acton Bridge that you should invite CRT to the meeting.

10. **Any Other Business**

None

11. **Date and time of next meetings**

Tuesday, 6 July 2021 @ 4pm – Virtual meeting via Teams

**Note change of date and time of meeting** Tuesday, 20 July 2021 is postponed and replaced by Monday 19 July @ 4pm – Virtual meeting via Teams