

**Flood Risk Action Group (FRAG)**  
**25 May 2021 @ 5pm - Virtual Meeting via Teams**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Welcome, introductions and apologies**

**Present**

Councillor Karen Shore – Chair  
Councillor Andrew Needham  
Councillor Paul Roberts  
Councillor Hugo Deynem  
Councillor Sam Naylor  
Councillor Paul Williams  
Councillor Gillian Edwards  
Councillor Andrew Cooper  
Mr William Briggs (BB)– Briggs and Partners & Northwich Flood Protection Group (NFPG)  
Mark Averill (MA) – Head of Highways and Transport  
Kieran Collins (KC) – Highways Commissioner  
Jim Gibbins (JG) – Place Area Commissioner  
Phill Green (PG) – Media and Communication Manager  
Andrew Coward (AC) – Major Flood Event Management Engineer

Members of the group introduced themselves.

**Apologies**

No apologies were given

**1 & 2 Minutes and Approval of draft Terms of Reference (ToR)**

The Terms of Reference were proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Cooper and were accepted.

The minutes of meeting 1 held on the 12 May were proposed by Cllr Roberts, seconded by Cllr Cooper and were accepted.

**3. Officer update on recommendations from 2019 Northwich s19 with a brief explanation as to what a s19 investigation does?**

KC introduced the S19 investigations – it was the who, what and when combined with public engagement. Legislation around the scope and scale of the investigations. The TOR is oversight of the 2019 S19 and Strom Christoph S19. KC started to update the group on progress of the 19 recommendations coming out of the 2019 report:

1. What is the drainage system? The catchment is a huge one covering a massive area converging on a pumping station. Need to understand the hydraulics, size and volumes etc. The modelling was a highly specialised activity and it was anticipated that the scoping would take around 3 months to prepare with the modelling a further 6 months at least. Due to the size of the area there would be many people with responsibilities. The model should identify 'problem' areas.
2. Flap valves: further work to assess Weaver Court and Theatre Court. Not Highway assets but would survey.

3. Cleaning and survey work had taken place after Storm Christoph. 461 page report produced covering much of the city centre. The CCTV report would drive a programme of work, defects were categorised in severity. The gullies on London Road had been replaced. Still some debate over the best position for any potential sump on London Road.

Questions on the first three items:

BB had passed the pre meeting information including CCTV report onto the Northwich Flood Prevention Group (NFBG) for views and comment. They felt that immediate action to progress the sump on Waitrose carpark was a terrific idea with the potential for three locations either side of the Dane. There were big issues on London Road and the Dane Road flats where they were river locked. Farming community were pumping the water off. The sump was a potentially affordable solution not 'millions' but still a significant amount. The sump could give some emergency capabilities for the coming winter. The NFBG had reviewed the CCTV report concerned that it didn't cover the whole of the city centre and all drains. A proportion of surveys had also been abandoned.

KC: In terms of the sump there were potentially better locations for them and these were being assessed. It would also create a focal point in an emergency.

Cllr Roberts: In terms of the hydraulic modelling, what was the return year in the model? Storm Christoph was a 1 in 100 year event. KC: once the model is built then a number of scenarios could be run through the model with varying event intensities. The model should give flexibility to run several events including events as severe as Christoph.

Cllr Cooper: Would the model suggest increases in capacity; the diversion of flows; the reduction of water levels through sluice control or storage in sumps? Are these in the scope of the model? Which is best? KC: there could be many solutions, nothing is predetermined and may include several solutions including diversion of flow combined with other measures. Cllr Cooper: was the scope of the tender for the modelling work broad enough? Were other RMA's included? KC: Scope document was out for comment by the other RMA's, all have visibility of the scope document.

4. Acton Lane – discussions with Atkins and Betts to programme.
5. UU flap valves. Appendix B in final report. Not all valves are UU's. two UU outfalls had not been identified. The Environment Agency had done a survey in 2019 with the resulting drawing pasted into the Section 19 Northwich Recommended Actions Update and represented a good record of what was there and land ownerships.

Cllr Cooper had checked with Northwich Town Council who were unaware of any flap valves in their ownership. KC would check the data. BB – regular walkabouts to inspect and apparent that some were silted up. Important to understand maintenance/cleaning going forward. KC it would be for the asset owner to arrange inspection and cleaning. Would include contacts for the various valves. Cllr Shore: important to know who to report the issues to, the other RMA's. BB said the Whalley Road flap had been cleaned but late last week was silted up again and open. Cllr Naylor said it was clean.

6. CSO update from UU in the report.
7. Pumping Station – would be included in the modelling, volumes and capacities. The Environment Agency (EA) permit discharges into the rivers. The UU system is complex with a lot of assets in the area.

Cllr Cooper: the diagram showing the UU sewer network included may be out of date with a section of sewer being replaced due to riverbank erosion. BB It would be helpful to have a comprehensive plan showing everything, a position of knowledge that would be helpful

for everyone. KC there was a mix of ownerships to bring together to feed into the model. Don't want to mix data, land drainage consents for example.

8. Fat deposits in Weaver Way required further investigations. Fat was cleared as part of the CCTV work. We do have enforcement powers to investigate.
9. Sluices. The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) were not a RMA but understand they have a role. The EA and CRT share data.
10. River level monitoring. Update in report.

Questions? The CRT and EA were invited to the next meeting. Cllr Naylor asked for an explanation of river level monitoring. KC assess if more is needed to understand river levels. Cllr Naylor: is dredging relevant to item 10? The EA and CRT invited to next meeting so could be addressed by them. Cllr Naylor the group needed 'outsiders' there are a lot of people out there with a lot of knowledge. Dan Cross for example had a lot of information, could he be invited to the meeting?

KC would take advice but couldn't see why not. Would be better to get information/questions in advance submitted to KC.

11. SUDS linked back to item 1.

KC outlined that less progress had been made against recommendations 12 – 19. Items 1 – 10 were seen as the priority ones.

12. Atkins had started to engage with affected parties following Storm Christoph.
13. Action Plan: LLFA develop plan including timescales and milestones.
14. Improve the website with further links to Flood Hub.
15. Service requests of flooding were captured in the highways Confirm system. Sharepoint site to be established for FGAR and S19. Governance for the LLFA.
16. Engagement
17. Caravan Park – Atkins to lead.
18. Any quick wins?
19. Localised recommendations.

KC these items would be picked up as we move forward.

Cllr Naylor is the Weaver Court area included as we need to make sure we are not in a position where elderly people need to be moved following the events of 2021.

Cllr Shore funding sources need to signpost people better to grants and financial help that is available. ID other resources, everyone plays their part but where does the money come from?

Cllr Naylor – the safety of the residents was important and future rescue plans. KC: in the remit of the Emergency Planning Team who have a plan that would be updated following the events of 2021. The state of readiness with the partner RMA's would get greater emphasis this year.

BB item 13 was the most important one. Any short to medium term plans to reduce impact. The longer term items could take some years to come to fruition. Dates and timeframes for the activities were important for the group to oversee.

Cllr Shore outlined that an interim report would be taken to cabinet in July. At this stage the FRAG was 'Northwich heavy' but would expand to cover those areas affected by Storm Christoph in 2021.

#### **4. Open Questions, Prior Notice Given.**

BB: He was very focused on Northwich where there were a number of aspirations and issues. These were probably not for this forum but later discussions. BB had issued a series of points before the meeting. The need to solve at pace. The NFPG had long serving residents who know Northwich well. They appreciate involvement in the group.

#### **5. Member discussion.**

Cllr Shore opened the floor for any other comments.

Cllr Williams had written a ministerial correspondence to ask about the availability of the Property Flood Resilience scheme. The initial correspondence had been followed up with several others copied in and a ministerial response had been received which he would share with Cllr Shore and KC. Also noted that some residents in Weaver and Acton claimed to be unable to get insurance and as a result had suffered significant financial loss. Cllr Williams' partner was an experienced insurance broker and could advise if required.

#### **6. Approval of forward works programme.**

For meeting 3 the Environment Agency and Canal and Rivers Trust had been invited and Dave Brown of the EA had accepted. Dan Cross may bring a different point of view but would need to submit his queries in advance. Cllr Shaw: we need to give the other RMA's who attend the FRAG notice of the questions to enable full answers to be given.

Discussion regarding future meeting clashes with Audit and Governance. The Purdah period had pushed a lot of day to day business back.

Cllr Shore: meeting 4 would start to bring in the borough wide S19 areas. Need to focus on engagement, insurance difficulties and flood mitigation. Invite a representative of the Emergency Planning Team, Chris Samuel for example with other members to discuss best practice.

BB: the initial meeting were focusing on Northwich and the NFPG would not have much to input for the borough wide S19s. they would attend the next couple of meetings and take it from there.

Meeting 4 would focus on Engagement and Emergency planning. Meeting 5 would start to consider borough wide S19's.

Cllr Roberts: we needed to be as inclusive as possible so the group doesn't miss anything and local people can bring their information forward.

Cllr Williams wanted to put a 'marker in the sand' for Acton Bridge and Weaverham who were downstream of Northwich. Individual properties were installing flood protection in the short term.

Cllr Shore suggested 2 hours for meeting 4 that was agreed. Meeting 5 and 6 would look at the other S19's borough wide with the group having general oversight.

#### **7. Actions Matrix**

KC: the matrix would be updated as we progressed. Item 4 was closed as EA and CRT had been invited to a meeting. The matrix would track the work of the group. Cllr Shore: standing item to review, early in the meeting after the minutes have been agreed. Item FRAG 1 was an ongoing item. FRAG 5 was concerned with technical questions and was

there a possibility of posting the answers on the web site. Needed to post meeting minutes and Action logs on the web page. The website needed to be more accessible. PG: Had had a meeting with KC and are planning to update the website. Stoke and Stafford were seen as good examples. Work was underway and he would report to the next meeting.

## **8. Any Other Business**

None.

## **9. Date and time of next meetings**

8<sup>th</sup> June, potential clash with Audit and Governance

22 June

6 July Cllr Williams will have to make arrangements to join.