

**Flood Risk Action Group (FRAG)**  
**6 July 2021 @ 4pm - Virtual Meeting via Teams**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Present**

Councillor Karen Shore – Chair

Councillor Hugo Deynam

Councillor Paul Roberts

Councillor Sam Naylor

Councillor Gillian Edwards

Councillor Andrew Cooper

Councillor Bob Cernik

Mr William Briggs (BB)– Briggs and Partners & Northwich Flood Protection Group (NFPG)

Kieran Collins (KC) – Highways Commissioner

Jim Gibbins (JG) – Place Area Commissioner

Phill Green (PG) – Media and Communication Manager

David Brown (DB) Environment Agency

Stephen Ballard (SB) Canal and Rivers Trust

Simon Fox (SF) - Atkins

Andrew Coward (AC) – Major Flood Event Management Engineer

Members of the group introduced themselves.

**Apologies**

No apologies were given. It was noted that Cllr P Williams had previously been omitted from the invitation list, and this is to be corrected for the next meeting

**1. Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of meeting 4 held on the 22 June were accepted as a true and accurate record.

**2. Approval of Actions Matrix**

KC updated the group on progress against the action points:

FRAG 1: Remained open.

FRAG 7: The brief for the modelling was in its final stages of approval by the various RMA's and would soon be commissioned.

FRAG 9: London Road sumps. KC had arranged a meeting with the design team to progress the design of the sumps.

FRAG 12: Additional CCTV works to the surface water drainage had been arranged for the areas affected by Storm Christoph.

FRAG 13: Awaiting a response from CRT.

FRAG15: DB had sent the appropriate documents so was now closed.

FRAG 16: KC would forward questions onto United Utilities (UU).

No other comments were made from the group.

### **3. Update on Storm Christoph S19 Investigations**

Cllr Shore outlined two specific areas for discussion: Simon Fox to update the group on the S19 investigations and a discussion regarding Acton Bridge.

SF: the new S19 report would follow the same format as the 2019 report with background detail on the rainfall flood event. This would include the information from the other RMA's in terms of their monitoring data from the event and any incident management reports. Site meetings were being held with several of the affected residents and the first of these were due to be complete by the 15 July. These site meetings would certainly trigger further discussions. The interim report would record the relevant information on an area by area basis. AC's investigation works continue and where possible the site meeting would follow the site investigation work. It was hoped that the discussions would be concluded by the end of July/early August. A 'front end' report would hopefully be ready by late August early September but there were certain constraints on that timeline, mainly the need to understand the information gained from the site visits as further site work and discussions with the RMA's may be necessary and this will take time, RMA's – Awaiting on the RMA data request, some are struggling with the sheer volume of requests for data and information and the initial interim report would need the RMA's comments as it impacts on their assets and the time required for this should not be underestimated

Cllr Shore referenced the Hooton site that had generated some correspondence. Kate Thompson of Atkins was due in Hooton to meet the affected residents next week. SF: There was a lot of information on Northwich which would be built on for the 2021 investigation.

#### **4. Member Discussion and item 5 Questions from the public.**

Cllr Shore opened for questions from elected members.

Cllr Gibbon asked why the initial contract was for a report in 3-4 months but it was taking 6-7 months.

Cllr Shore: There was to be an update report in 3 months with members briefing then an interim report. KC: when the process was started we were not aware of the scale and complexity of the flooding. We had been 'hit hard' and the investigations are more difficult. We need to be factual and report our findings. We were also in 3<sup>rd</sup> party hands for some of the information from the other RMA's who were also inundated. Some of the systems were large and complex, Ashton Hayes had taken 4 weeks to clean and survey with 20t of silt and debris being removed from the system. We are working as fast as we can.

SF: the information from the RMA's was the critical issues and they would also need to check the report. KC: we are dealing with other RMA's assets and we need to be accurate in what is reported. Cllr Naylor: Clarify the terms of reference who is the 'owner' of the investigation? Gleaned all the facts and figure and witness statements. SF: Atkins were out in many areas to capture as much information as they could. Cllr Naylor was on the ground until late with Cllr cooper, will they be asked for their views? SF: yes and an open invite for information from anybody. Sources would be referenced in the report. Contact with other RMA's as well to get their officer information to get the full story. Cllr Naylor: the police incident control unit could also be a source. Cllr Shore: the Emergency Response Team would also produce a report on the response to the incident. KC: all relevant information would be passed onto SF. Cllr Naylor: Collette at Weaver Court was a key witness. KC: we would be making contact with Weaver Court as they were badly affected. Cllr Naylor: Collette should have been first on the list to contact.

Cllr Gibbon: two questions I which 3 areas have been completed and ii have the Silver Command forms that were completed in February been passed over? SF: Upton, Mickle Trafford and Blacon had been done, linked to the teams on site. Antrobus and Northwich were to be visited then Hooton, Willaston and Farndon. Cllr Cooper: Antrobus had been flooded. KC would check the records with Chris Samuel in relation to question ii.

BB: updated the group to say that over 60 businesses had been affected from information provided by the Northwich BID. Few businesses had been contacted by Atkins, concerns

that it was now summer and it would soon be Autumn/Winter, timing was critical. The interim report in August/September was later than planned and it was the final report that would contain the recommendations. SF: would catch up with Kate on contacts. The interim report would present the accounts and information, presenting the evidence with the full report containing the analytics, why they occurred. There can be long conversations. There was an ambition that for some of the simpler areas for the reports to be produced more quickly. It was not possible to give a firm date on the publication of the final report as the information from the RMA's was outside our control.

BB: wanted to challenge the 21 months since the 2019 event and the difficulties and stress for those who live and work in Northwich. It was essential that no stone was left unturned to get responses. If the final report with its recommendations was not delivered until 2022 then there was a possibility of another flood. Cllr Shore: we were working through the recommendations from the 2019 report and we recognised the effect of the flooding on those concerned. There will be two separate reports with two sets of actions. KC: reiterated that we would not wait until the publication of a report and if there were any quick wins then we would do work in the interim. Whilst carrying out our Site Investigation works we are also taking the opportunity to carry out any minor repairs

BB: in the previous meeting it was clear that the 2019 CCTV drain survey has no relevance. KC: it was not irrelevant, and it was not correct to say that it was. SF: in response to BB the two events were different but there were a lot of commonalities between them. The larger effects/impacts from 2019 will be referenced in the 2021 report.

## **6. Acton Bridge David Brown of EA and Stephen Ballard of C&RT.**

DB and SB would respond to specific questions.

KC: introduced Acton Bridge with an emergency response to riverside properties in a flood plain. There had been no recent visits. Cllr Edwards: the residents were now in the recovery phase and would say the residents were let down until quite late on. Two elements in the lead up to the event the drains along Warrington Road were being attended to. By 4/5pm there was quite a pool on the A49 and a road closure was requested but that didn't happen. Recognised that there was little that could have been done to prevent flooding from the river. Was there a S19 done previously as it was only damage to gardens? KC: The 2019 report for Northwich included Acton Bridge. The main issue was the drainage system to the river being river locked. The system was being confirmed and the work was being programmed. Storm Christoph was a borough wide event and we are sorry that our response was not sufficient enough to respond to all issues. . Cllr Edwards: a potential quick win was the creation of the drainage ditch to drain

the water over a private field. This could be made permanent to give some reassurance to the residents. Cllr Shore had visited and had not seen that amount of water before. If the trench was a solution, then plans should be made for it as a permanent solution. DB: Had been having discussions with CWaC and the landowner. The ditch had been filled in due to livestock being in the field. KC: would bring it into the S19 report. As there was highway flooding. Cllr Shore: there was also a wellbeing/safety issue. SF: the original report did reference Acton Bridge but it was possibly not prominent enough. Cllr Edwards: needed to do better next time, it was horrific to be rescued by boat. It had taken the event to sort out localised emergency plans and a local group had been formed. Cllr Shore agreed that some good work had been done in the ward.

## **7. Member discussion and 8 Open Questions.**

Cllr Shore opened to questions.

BB: the 2019 S19 report had mentioned one sump but now there were more proposed but dialogue was required to get the right machines in place. The fire and Rescue service had high volume pumps on independent power supplies. KC: wanted to avoid electric or permanent power supplies in the sumps. The EA could source high volume pumps. The council tended to use agricultural pumps. KC was meeting the design team with a potential site towards the end of the car park towards the river. DB: existing chambers were best but the grassed area was a good location. It was hard to find a spot due to buried utility services. DB: the contingency during the 2021 event had been overwhelmed the multi agency response. In the short terms we needed to understand the capacities. It was an extreme event 1:100 year storm. BB: once the EA got the trigger alerts the pumps could be deployed when low lying areas get flooded. 6/7 hours after the pumps were started areas had started to dry out. DB: contingencies had been put in place 2 days prior with the first point of flooding being London Road. On Friday water out of the drains flowing into the town centre overwhelmed the pumps. Be assured that the pumps were deployed at the right time they were just not big enough to respond to an extreme 1:100 year event.

BB: how was the modelling progressing? KC: a meeting had been arranged with comments received from the scoping document. It needed to be a 'proper' scoping documents, it was a science and would get the modellers around the table.

Cllr Gibbon: question to SB in relation to the sluice gates. Were 4 out of the 6 not working? How many of the sluice gates were open and operational through storm Christoph. There was a big impact where those at Saltersford and Dudtton Locks were

marooned. SB and SF were working together. SB was unable to confirm how many of the sluice gates were working during the storm Christoph event. Cllr Edwards requested that the CRT come back to her. SB was trying to get the locks back open and was working closely with Atkins. Cllr Shore: would come back to Cllr Edwards with a written answer. SB confirmed that they had been affected right across their network, not just the Weaver. Some booms were also not in place leading to damage to boats. There was £135k of work planned to replace the booms and a reconditioning project of all the sluices on Dutton locks. They were doing a lot of work spending substantial sums. SB reiterated that the sluices are controlled for navigation not flooding. If the navigation is in flood then it is closed to navigation. Cllr Shore: the CRT and the Council are investing considerable sums and it was disappointing that there was no funding from central government. Resources were needed to reduce the impact of flooding.

Cllr Cooper: was there a legal duty to manage the sluices? Were there powers to suspend the navigation and drain it down? SB didn't think there was legislation to suspend their statutory navigation powers and the control of levels was dependant on tidal levels down stream with only certain windows available. DB: there was an Act covering the navigation Dutton locks can convey water and there was a capacity to manage flooding with the CRT asset and how they operate. If the locks were opened sequentially it could ease levels.

Cllr Naylor was keen to see the Daniel Adamson steam ship being able to make its way up to Northwich to Barron's Quay. SB confirmed they had done their dredging for this year and reiterated the £500k spend on dredging on a 3-year cycle. There was a finite budget and they had 2000 miles of water course to tend. Cllr Naylor would campaign to get larger boats to Northwich. DB reiterated that it was the structures that affected water levels and not dredging.

BB: could Betts appointment brief be shared? Cllr Shore: would respond in writing.

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

The next meeting was to be held on Monday 19 July and the change of day should be noted.

Cllr Roberts: A common problem was those who had suffered internal flooding not wanting to share this information in case of affecting property prices and saleability. KC: this was a pertinent point when combined with the data security issues with Freedom of Information and General Data Protection Regulations that some partner organisations were not subject to. Some people in their 'hour of need' required help but now might have second thoughts about reporting internal flooding. We need to be able to view flooding extents on a map

possibly with broader extents. Cllr Roberts: we didn't want to go 'touting for business' but needed to ensure we had captured all those affected. Cllr Roberts for example had only just been made aware of a resident who had suffered flooding from Storm Cristoph in the past few days. Cllr Shore: any questions would need to be submitted in advance of the meeting as usual. Cllr Cooper: was this the point to raise flooding to other issues? Roads for example other than internal flooding. KC: if information could be provided in advance so investigations could take place for more substantive answers.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

No.

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

Monday 19 July at 16:00