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- 9 OCT 2006

Rother and Romney Catchment
Flood Management Plan
First Stakeholder Group Meeting - 2nd August, 2006
Tenterden Town Hall, Tenterden, Kent

Report by Cllr Granville Bantick

The meeting was chaired by Mr Peter Dawson from the Environment Agency who welcomed and introduced everyone. There followed a series of overhead presentations.

1. **Developing the Catchment Flood Management Plan.** Rebecca Smith, the Rother and Romney CFMP Project Manager and Elisbetta Torricelli, from Peter Brett Associates each gave presentations in which the following points were highlighted:-

(i) **What is a CFMP?** It is a high level planning document with a 50-100 year horizon, setting out objectives for the catchment areas. It identifies long term sustainable policies. It was NOT a detailed plan for dealing with localised flood risk matters, neither was it just about flood defence. CFMPs will deliver an understanding of catchment processes and the sensitivity of the catchment to change. It will also deliver agreed flood risk management policies and an action plan with specific tasks.

(ii) **The Timetable:** Public consultation is at present taking place and ends in November. Thereafter a Draft Plan will be drafted between December, 2006 and May, 2007 with a further public consultation between May and July, 2007. The finalised plan will be available between July and September, 2007.

(iii) **Progress with the Rother and Romney Project:** The progress and aims of the plan were:-

(a) to present the findings of the first stage and show the progress with the subsequent scoping stage

(b) to offer a catchment overview with relevance to flood risk management

(c) to enable the discovery of further significant data

(d) to ensure that relevant issues in the catchment have been identified

The presentation included comprehensive background information taken from the Inception Report that included; topography, local authority boundaries, land cover, agricultural classification, environmental designations, designated sites, hydrology, known flood risk areas, existing flood defences, a review of existing models and potential catchment changes.

2. **Developing the CFMP:** The catchment objectives are high level statements about what we want to achieve with flood risk management in the catchment for social, economic and environmental issues. They will be used to appraise the appropriate policy for each area of the catchment during the main stage of the CFMP.

3. **Steering Group Membership:** Kent County Council, East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council, Shepway District Council, English Nature, Internal Drainage Board, English Heritage and National Farmers Union.

4. Opportunities and Constraints for Flood Risk Management: Richard Dawson introduced the idea of opportunities and constraints. Opportunities include strategic changes to reduce flood risk, as well as opportunities to improve other issues through flood risk management. Constraints are any issues that would prevent us taking these opportunities.

Attendees thereupon formed three groups, the ideas generated by them are summarised in the attached paper under each group with a summary of the session at the end.

I found the meeting often very technical. The best part was the Break out session when ideas for improvement came flooding in (excuse the pun). I would be willing to attend the Spring meeting if the Planning Committee approve. I believe it is very important that this Council is involved especially as I consider this town is vulnerable to flooding.

Opportunities and Constraints for Flood Risk Management

RD introduced the idea of opportunities and constraints. Opportunities include strategic changes to reduce flood risk, as well as opportunities to improve other issues through flood risk management. Constraints are any issues that would prevent us taking these opportunities.

Attendees formed breakout groups and the following ideas were generated:

Group 1

- Opportunities
- Regular dredging - River Rother upstream as far as Bodiam. It is suggested this has not been done for the last 20 years. This would increase channel capacity and aims to make drainage more efficient.
- Increase flood storage – possible location between Cliff End and Winchelsea
- Pumped drainage instead of culverts at Hamstreet
- Partnership between water companies, local authorities and land owners regarding drainage. This would help identify responsible organisations.
- Planning (Development control) – Water storage, sustainable drainage, development control. The group felt that planning advice provided by the Environment Agency is not always taken. Suggestion that LPAs should have to take Environment Agency advice as this would benefit planning and flood risk issues.
- Developer contribution – Idea that developers should be accountable for flood risk issues and provide the necessary solutions as part of their proposals.
- Working with landowners to find opportunities for managed wetlands for flood storage.

Group 2

- Improve awareness of maintenance responsibilities among landowner groups– e.g. maintenance of ditches
- Development of green field sites– this decreases storage for rain water. Minor issues like these are important, the high-level approach may not always be appropriate.
- Opportunity to look at schemes and ensure they are appropriate and working properly e.g. flap attached wrongly?
- Water storage – possibly between Etchingam and Robertsbridge. A more natural river system could be encouraged with abstraction to manage high flows, and managed flooding of agricultural land. Noted that this would be more difficult to adopt further upstream due to the increase in gradient.
- Confusion of responsibility – stakeholders unclear on drainage responsibilities between water companies, the Environment Agency and landowners. There is also confusion over enforcement and policing.
- Dungeness needs to be protected.

- The link with the Shoreline Management Plan is important for tidal and river interaction. Concern about why the SMP and CFMP address these two issues separately.
- Education – general education and awareness of flood risk issues to the public, developers, farmers etc.
- Improved planning of development e.g. Ashford expansion
- Better co-operation between English Nature, SEEDA, the Environment Agency and water companies.
- Possibility that water abstraction by water companies could alleviate flood problems in times of high flows. Historically this has proved difficult.

Group 3

- The main concern was the speed of the run off from steeper gradient areas, which slows down at lower gradient areas causing flooding. One area was in Robertsbridge where flow is restricted between the 1960s embankments from Robertsbridge to Bodiam.
- Concern that ground water levels are being artificially reduced and water is being pumped to the sea and the aquifer under the Romney Marsh is not being refilled and saline water is ingressing from the sea.
- Concern that by implementing piecemeal, local flood defence schemes, the flooding problem is simply being pushed further downstream.
- Flash flooding is a concern in the steeper gradient areas.
- Knowledge holders not on the stakeholder list: The Rother and Romney IDB & the Highways Authority.
- Documents not included on the consultation list: South East Plan, High Weald AONB Management Plan, 2004, Draft South East Regional Economy Strategy.

Opportunities

- Breach the embankments from Robertsbridge to Bodiam to make use of the natural flood plain storage there?
- Historically there was a flood storage area with a sluice gate into a canal at Snargate - can this be reconstructed?
- Historically Shirley Moor used to be a flood storage area?
- Are the screw pumps at Newenden being replaced as this could provide flood storage?

Constraints

- A21 and A28 culvert - can these be enlarged to increase capacity?
- Development Control - no clear policies on where development should be allowed and what the rules are.

Summary of Break out Session:

RD summarises. The discussion groups raise three common, high level issues.

1. Storage/reservoirs
2. Management and maintenance
3. Development Control