

Minutes of the meeting of the Essex Flood Partnership Board (Private Meeting), held Online on Thursday, 09 July 2020 at 10.00am

Present:

Members of the Board:

Cllr Simon Walsh (Chairman)	Essex County Council
Jonathan Glerum	Anglian Water
Cllr Andrew Sheldon	Castle Point Borough Council
John Meehan	Essex County Council
Rachel Keen	Environment Agency
James Mason	Environment Agency
Cllr Danny Purton	Harlow District Council
Cllr Sue White	Maldon District Council
Cllr Nick Turner	Tendring District Council
Cllr Gary Collins	Thurrock Council
Cllr Arthur Williams	Rochford District Council
Cllr Neil Reeve	Uttlesford District Council

Other persons present

Trudie Bragg	Castle Point Borough Council
Philip Bylo	Basildon Council
Damien Ghela	Maldon District Council
Stephanie Kober	Suffolk County Council
James Mason	Environment Agency
Jo Matthews	Southend Borough Council
Gavin Montella	Southend Borough Council
David Prudence	Essex Highways
Lee Sencier	Essex County Council
Dave Chapman	Essex County Council
Tim Simpson	Essex County Council
Lisa Siggins	Essex County Council – Democratic Services
Mandy Thompson	Epping Forest District Council
Navtes Tung	Thurrock Council
Rob Wise	NFU

Tim Simpson explained the online meeting protocol and software functionality.

2 Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations of Interest

The report of the Membership, Apologies, Substitutions and Declarations was received, and It was noted that

1. Cllr Andrew Sheldon is the new Castle Point representative
Mark Eaglestone is the new Uttlesford representative
Carl Smith is the new Thames Water representative.

2. Apologies had been received from:

Councillor Wendy Schmitt – Braintree District Council
Peta Denham- Environment Agency
Paul Hayden -RFCC

3 Minutes 30.01.20

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2020 were approved as a correct record.

4 ECC Flood Team Covid 19 operational update

The Board received an update from Tim Simpson, Lead Local Flood Authority Manager on the impact that Covid -19 is having on the Delivery of ECC floods services.

The update included:

Staffing

All staff are currently working at home. Staffing numbers have generally been unaffected by the virus. And whilst there has been some general upheaval as the team has adjusted to working from home this only had a short-term impact on work.

Property Flood resilience (PFR)

There are 4 key workstreams which were affected:
Preinstallations surveys (RAB)
Product surveys (Lakeside)
Installation (Lakeside)
Post installation surveys (RAB)

These services are delivered by two companies RAB and Lakeside. All workstreams were put on hold in March and with both companies based outside of Essex work was not able to recommence until travel restrictions were lifted. Now that restrictions are being lifted on overnight stays that work will also be able to recommence.

Whilst both companies have put strategies in place to deal with social distancing, while on site, some members of the public may still be nervous about having work carried out on their properties which may also affect delivery timescales.

ECC are working with the Environment Agency to deliver PFR in Nazeing, public engagement works are due to start this month which will now be carried out electronically instead of face to face meetings.

Section 19 reports

There were a number of pre-report visits carried out just before lockdown following on from a prolonged period of rain. None of these developed into a full S19 report however there was a visit scheduled in North Weald which is expected to feed into a formal report, which was rescheduled for the 10th July.

Watercourse Regulation

All site visits were put on hold at the start of March. The team had already carried out visits to most sites that experienced flooding over the winter, but enquiries and watercourse consent applications continued to be received during lockdown, resulting in a build up of site that needed to be visited. The nature of these visits means that they are often in areas that can be visited without the needed for face to face interactions so once restrictions on travel were lifted the watercourse engineer has been able to continue with this work without a significant delay to the determination of applications.

Asset Inspection

ECC has a duty to maintain an asset register with part of the maintenance thereof involving carrying out yearly asset check visits on ECC assets. It was not considered essential to carry out this work during lockdown, so it was put on hold. The team has now rescheduled all the visits that were missed so that all sites are still checked within the course of the year. The visits are normally carried out as part of a team so appropriate lone working practices have been put in place with a few sites needing to be added to the end of the schedule as they were not considered appropriate for lone site visits.

Strategic Documents

Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRAs) – work on 2 new SFRAs (Clacton and Sawbridgeworth) has been continuing as has work on updates to the Braintree and Loughton SFRAs. Work has also been continuing updated action plans for the rest of the SWMPS to account for updated Critical Drainage Areas (CDAs). The bulk of the initial work was being carried out by consultants so there were only small delays while everyone was settling into new ways of working. It is expected that a summary document pulling together all the update work will be available at the end of the summer and it is suggested that an update is given at the October Board meeting.

Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) – FRMPs are a joint piece of work between the EA, ECC and other RMAs which looks at flood risk from all sources. Essex is within the Anglian River Basin district. The first FRMP cycle covered the period from 2015 to 2021. A review of progress made against the agreed objectives and measures is due next year. There is also ongoing work to agree a new set of measures to cover the second cycle period, with the original deadline for measures in May this year. Because of pressures placed on the EA by the pandemic this was extended to July and has been further extended until the 15th of January 2021. ECC are working with colleagues from 3 EA operational regions to pull these together. Depending on progress with these it is hoped to bring these before members for discussion either at the October or in January meeting. The final FRMP document is due for public consultation in June 2021.

Councillor Collins raised the issue the breach of a sea wall in his Division and the disrepair thereof. John Meehan gave some clarification on this issue and confirmed that he would ask the Thames 2100 team to provide a response. Cllr Turner gave some information having experienced a similar issue with details passed onto Cllr Collins following the meeting.

John Meehan advised the Board of some excellent feedback in respect of the SuDS rain gardens installed at Basildon Hospital as part of the Sponge 2020 Project. The area has been used extensively by hospital staff in order to relax and destress and illustrates the multi benefits of the scheme.

The Chairman thanked Tim Simpson for the update.

5 **SuDS Design Guide Update**

The Board received a presentation from Lee Sencier, Development and Flood Risk Manager, on the progress and key changes to the Essex SuDs Design Guide.

The presentation can be found [here](#)

Following the presentation, members were invited to ask questions and the areas raised included:

- **Engagement with the public and key partners** – It was confirmed that at present this is contained to “key stakeholders” but that there was no reason why this couldn’t be extended to the wider public.
- **Should the LLFA make Statutory Consultee Holding Objections Statistics available to members of the public-** A note was made of Cllr Sheldon’s query relating to availability of statistical data showing how many Statutory Consultations the LLFA issue Holding Objections on. ECC are in agreement that there is no reason in principle why this information could not be made available to the public as it clearly shows that the LLFA do apply scrutiny to development Flood Risk Assessment/ Drainage Strategies and use the powers available to influence these in achieving strategic aims to reduce flood risk and improve the environment. The question would be through what channels this information is communicated and the

new SuDS Design Guide website may be a suitable platform to present this. It was confirmed that Flood team will investigate the options available for this further and provide a follow up to Cllr's Sheldon and Purton when available.

- **Access to Essex Design Guide should be clearer on the Essex Design Guide Planning Website and better integration to ensure there is not confusion-** It was acknowledged that currently the Essex Design Guide Planning webpage may have some differing information, however harmonising this with the SuDS Design Guide (2020) is one of the actions being carried out as part of the general release of the SuDS Design Guide and this will be brought up to date when this goes live.
Reference is made to Key Principles of SuDS on the Essex Design Guide Planning webpage and these do still apply at high level, albeit they are not directly referenced in the new SuDS Design Guide as this focuses more on the approach and detail needed to show that these principles have been properly adhered too. Further clarification will however be provided on this where necessary.
- **Cumulative Impacts of Development on Flood Risk and how the LLFA Manage these -** When invited to consult, the LLFA are only able to comment on the development within the Red Line Boundary of the site, that is defined within the planning application. Whilst as a matter of course the team do consider whether there are any nearby developments that may increase flood risk locally and can bring this to the LPA's attention, this is not necessarily a point that the LLFA are able to raise objection to, unless there was a clear risk to existing residential properties.
It would be expected that if a proposed development were to discharge at Greenfield rates then at a bare minimum there would be no change in the levels of flood risk to existing properties. There are some very good examples where the LLFA have worked with developers on incorporating flood alleviation schemes into their new development to reduce risk of flooding to existing properties and going above and beyond the requirement to mitigate against the development itself. One example being Land North of the Drive, Rochford which is in a Critical Drainage Area (CDA).
The LLFA are only consulted on Major Development (i.e. Over 10 units, 1 Ha, 1000m² etc.) and therefore do not typically get sight of 'Minor Development' applications received by the Local Planning Authorities. It is the cumulative impact of these Minor Planning Applications that are more difficult to trace by the LLFA, however we do work closely with the Local Planning Authorities and have recommended standard flood risk Planning Conditions for Minor Applications, whilst also feeding our strategic flood risk modelling data (Surface Water Management Plans) across to LPA's for reference.
- **Whether the use of Bioretention Areas/ other SuDS and Green Infrastructure features are avoided by developers because these are high maintenance-** On-going maintenance is a key point for consideration by a developer as this influences overall

development viability. Where features could not be adopted directly by a Water Company or Highway Authority this is likely to require a Commuted Sum, which is an up-front payment made by the developer rather than a regular charge to residents collected by the adopting authority. Certain SuDS features may require a higher frequency of maintenance than traditional piped systems and the perception is that this would cost more, however there is a significant cost saving in constructing SuDS over traditional systems that reflects more positively when considering the Whole Life Cycle costing of SuDS Vs Traditional features.

There is a perception that SuDS are more costly to maintain however the reality is that the increased frequency of maintenance to a SuDS feature can typically be covered through a significant reduction in up-front/ capital construction costs in the first instance. In addition, there are additional benefits SuDS provide such as Amenity, Biodiversity, Water Quality etc. There is also a perception that Underground features (i.e. Pipes, tanks etc.) take up less space within a development. To some degree this is true, however a properly designed SuDS scheme should integrate Open SuDS features into the landscape in such a way that makes these spaces accessible and amenable, therefore delivering multiple benefits above and beyond just flood storage.

- **Adoption of sewers** – it was confirmed that reference to this is made in the online guide and that the online version can be easily updated.

Following the meeting a copy of the new design guide and a link to the were circulated to members for comments.

The Chairman thanked Mr Sencier for his presentation

6 **2020-21 Essex Capital Flood Programme update**

The Board received a report (**EFPB/03/20**) and a presentation from Dave Chapman, Project Delivery Manager, on the progress of schemes in the Capital Programme.

The Board were advised that due to Covid-19 there has been a reprioritisation of the whole capital programme which has now been deferred or a year.

A bid to central Government for funding has been unsuccessful, so work is underway to utilise other funding options.

The presentation can be found [here](#)

Mr Chapman gave details of a scheme in Basildon and a fact sheet in respect thereof was circulated to members following the meeting.

The Chairman thanked Mr Chapman for his update.

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Date of next meeting

The Board noted that the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 15th October at 10 am, either online or at County Hall, Chelmsford.

The meeting closed at 11.45 am

Chairman