

Bodenham Flood Protection Group

“PROJECT BODENHAM”

RECORD OF THE PROPERTY- LEVEL FLOOD PROTECTION GRANT

MEETING HELD AT THE SIWARD JAMES CENTRE

ON THURSDAY 9TH JUNE 2011 AT 6.00PM

Action

1. In the absence of the Chairman, Mr Tony Mitcheson opened the meeting by asking all those present to ensure that they confirmed their contact details on the sheets being circulated and, in particular, provided their e-mail details since this would greatly help the Secretary in the weeks ahead. A list of those present and represented is at Annex A.

2. He then welcomed Mr Steve Hodges from Herefordshire Council who, in turn, introduced his colleagues:

Ms Beth Jones	JBA Consulting (Surveyors)
Mr Ziad Malik	Amey Consulting – Project Manager
Mr Peter May	JBA Consulting (Surveyors)
Mr Andrew Palmer	Amey Consulting
Mr Dan Trewin	Environment Agency

3. At Mr. Hodges' request Mr Palmer then described the work that has been done at strategic level in Herefordshire to deal with flooding issues. He noted that several studies have been conducted since 2007. Immediately after the floods in July of that year Herefordshire Council issued a questionnaire to those affected and the returns from these had provided a picture of what had happened across the County. This, in turn, had allowed the production of a flood register of some 132 sites at risk of flooding, which then enabled the Council's land drainage team to set its priorities more effectively. From this work it emerged that certain sites demanded more urgent action than others and Mr. Brian Faulkner, an independent consultant hydrologist, had been commissioned to carry out a study of 23 of these more significant sites and to make recommendations. At the same time the Council has been required by the Environment Agency to produce a Preliminary Flood Assessment Report; this has now been completed and is ready to be submitted and will inform Herefordshire Council's future strategy for dealing with flooding.

4. Mr. Hodges next introduced Mr. Trewin who explained that the

Environment Agency were administering the Property-Level Flood Protection Grants on behalf of the Government. In the present round of funding DEFRA have allowed £2M to be set aside for these and he had worked with Mr. Hodges on the application for Bodenham to receive a share of this money. To give an idea of the pressure on this funding, applications totalling some £10M had been made for the £2M available; indeed, there had been some 50 applications in the West Midlands area alone. Last year Withington/Cross Keys had been successful in obtaining a grant and the implementation of their scheme had resulted in a number of lessons which would now be useful in Bodenham's own project.

5. Mr Trewin remarked that the key question was: do these property-level schemes actually work? And in answer he quoted the case of Appleby in Cumbria where, following flooding in 2005, a property-level scheme had been completed and in 2009, during some of the worst floods in living memory, almost all of the properties at risk had been successfully protected. Returning to this year, he noted that across the whole country there were 31 schemes to be completed and all of the grant money for them must be spent before 31 March, 2012, so time was strictly limited.

6. Mr May then took over and said that he would be carrying out the surveys for the project in Bodenham and seeing the whole scheme through. He had worked on the Cross Keys project last year and this and other experience had shown how the availability of measures capable of protecting individual properties now provided viable alternatives for mitigating the risk of flooding where none had existed before. He went on to outline the scheme implementation process:

a. **Questionnaires.** The timescale for completing the project was very tight. He had produced a questionnaire, copies of which could be collected at the end of the meeting, and he asked all those affected by flooding to complete and return one as soon as possible. (**Afternotes:**

(1) The questionnaire has been sent by e-mail to all those who have provided the Secretary with e-mail addresses and she has delivered hard copies by hand to all other residents who have expressed an interest in the scheme. Anyone else who has not received a copy and would like one should contact her as soon as possible on 01568-797170.

All

(2) Completed questionnaires should be returned to the Secretary at Millcroft Farm as soon as possible, or may be sent direct to Mr May. In the latter case please let the Secretary know that the questionnaire has been sent to avoid her wasting your time and hers!

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b. Surveys.

(1) Mr May went on to say that the initial surveys would be carried out by two JBA teams on 21, 22 and 23 June. (Afternote: This was subsequently extended to 20 - 24 June inclusive. (See Paragraph 7.a below)).

(2) There would be a topographical survey to establish levels and this would be followed by surveys of individual properties, during which the teams would be talking to householders to understand where and how water had entered their properties in the past, the consequences of this, and possible solutions. This work would serve to identify a list of properties which could be helped within the funding available. He stressed that, although Herefordshire Council had issued a preliminary version of such a list, this was not, at present, set in stone. There was flexibility to change it, but, nevertheless, the inclusion of properties on it did depend on their meeting certain criteria set down by the Environment Agency.

c. Reports. Once the surveys had been completed, he would be producing reports in mid- to late July recommending the sort of property-level measures which might be helpful for each property. (This would be the types of product, rather than recommendations for particular products made by specific firms). Owners of properties recommended for the agreed list would each receive the report relating to their property and copies of all the reports would go to Herefordshire Council.

d. Decisions. Householders with properties on the list would then have about 4 - 6 weeks to consider their report's recommendations before a meeting in early September at which they would be asked to decide on which, if any, specific products should be fitted to their houses. No firms would be involved in this and there would be no 'hard selling', but it was critical that decisions were made quickly so that the timely completion of the project was not jeopardised.

e. Installation. After this, he hoped that it would be possible to start the installation of the chosen measures well before Christmas and to continue on through January and February. He emphasised that all across the country the 30 other schemes mentioned by Mr. Trewin would be working to the same timescale as Bodenham and putting pressure on the same firms to manufacture the flood protection items required. It was therefore very important for us in Bodenham to get

ahead of the pack.

f. **Testing and Practice.** Installation of flood protection measures was not the end of the story. They still had to be maintained properly and fitted correctly when flooding was imminent. It would therefore be important to have a 'dry run' to ensure that everyone was able to deploy their equipment in an emergency and he suggested that perhaps July 2012, the fifth anniversary of the 2007 floods, might be an appropriate time for an exercise when all the products could be fitted and any problems ironed out.

7. Mr Hodges then chaired a question and answer session which covered the following points:

a. **Timing of the Surveys.** A number of those present said that holidays or other commitments meant that they would not be available on the survey dates initially given by Mr May. These dates were therefore extended to the whole week of 20 - 24 June. Mr May emphasised the importance of completing the surveys and reports before the main holiday period and asked those who would be away during that week to negotiate earlier alternative dates with him at the end of the meeting.

b. **Possible Visit to UK Flood Barriers Ltd.**

(1) Mr May said that he was aware that 11 BFPG members had already visited UK Flood Barriers Ltd at Droitwich and seen a demonstration of property-level flood protection products there. He recommended that others should also do so in order to see what equipments were available. Although the facility was owned by the firm, it was an approved British Standards Institution (BSI) site where flood protection products from a range of manufacturers were independently tested and certified. (Afternote. There is an Open Day at UK Flood Barriers Ltd on 5 July and the Secretary has arranged for BFPG members to visit it that morning, starting at 10.15am. Anyone who wishes to do so should contact her as soon as possible by telephone on 01568-797 or by e-mail at BabsMitcheson@aol.com).

(2) Mr May confirmed that only those flood protection products which were kite-marked would be acceptable under the scheme unless exceptional circumstances resulted in a more cost effective and efficient solution to be provided. A wide range of flood protection products are available from a number of different firms. In the first instance however, check that the

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product has an approved and tested BSI Kitemark label to verify the product performance. A list of manufacturers specialising in this area can be found in the National Flood Forum's Blue Pages Directory on its website at: <http://www.bluepages.org.uk/Directory/tabid/1628/Default.aspx>.

(Afternote. The Secretary has circulated the Blue Pages Directory to all those on the e-mail address list).

c. **Extent of Permissible Works.** In reply to a question about whether such works as landscaping or the creation of bunds could be funded under the scheme, Mr Trewin said that works had normally to be within 2 metres of the house and involve only minor structural modifications, such as adjustments to door frames to allow flood barriers to be fitted unobtrusively.

d. **Scheme Completion Date.** Asked whether there was any possibility of the 31 March 2012 deadline being extended in view of the fact that the installation phase of the project would fall in the worst months of the year for bad weather, Mr Trewin replied that an extension would, if necessary, be considered if there were genuine extenuating circumstances such as severe weather.

e. **Effect of Measures on Neighbouring Properties.**

(1) Concern was expressed that some property-level measures, while protecting one property, might increase the flood risk to others nearby. Mr May assured those present that the kinds of protective measure funded under the scheme would produce no measurable effect on neighbouring properties; they should be regarded as the equivalent of sandbags, but equivalents that, unlike sandbags, were actually effective.

(2) Mr David Harris said that his property, 15 Ash Grove View, stood at the lowest point in his neighbourhood and that the only solution likely to be effective, that of building a wall, would divert water to his neighbours. Mr May replied that the survey would show what measures were most appropriate in each case. It was possible that there was no economic solution to his problem, but one usually existed.

f. **Flash Flooding.** Mr May confirmed that it was recognised that flash flooding was a particular problem in Bodenham and, indeed, he had data on this issue which have allowed JBA to produce surface water flood maps that help to highlight those parts of the Village most at risk and where speed of reaction to an emergency would be most critical.

g. **Planning and Testing**. In response to a question about the weight of flood protection products, Mr May replied that some items were passive and operated automatically. Others had to be put into position and some of these were, indeed, heavy. It would be essential, therefore, for householders to know when and how they should be deployed and for the community to identify those who might need help in an emergency. Furthermore, he reiterated that the equipment, such as petrol pumps, had to be properly maintained and householders must know how to use them. As he had already suggested, July 2012 might be a good time to practise all this.

h. **Flood Warnings**. It was noted that some local residents already received the Environment Agency's flood warnings. However, Mr May remarked that these related to river levels on the River Lugg and might not be relevant in an area, such as Bodenham, where flash flooding posed another, and probably greater, risk. A number of different warning systems were in place across the country, for example flood wardens and sirens, but he would need to listen to local experiences of flooding in Bodenham and discuss with the Environment Agency what warning system might best be suited to local needs.

i. **Funding**.

(1) It was confirmed that:

(a) If the grant was insufficient to cover all the protective measures recommended for a property, it would be entirely acceptable for the householder to make a personal financial contribution to defray the additional cost.

(b) If the funding available for a property was not all required for it, it might be possible for the uncommitted part of the money to be used elsewhere. As had already been said, the agreed list of properties included in the scheme was flexible and, if grant money was found to be uncommitted within the overall total of £144,500, additional properties might be brought onto the list provided they met the criteria set by the Environment Agency.

(c) It might be possible to achieve economies of scale, and thus make the available funding to go further, if all property owners chose particular items from the same

firm and that firm was prepared to agree discounts for quantity. However, experience had shown that individual householders sometimes have strong preferences over the type of products and these may differ from neighbouring properties, often reflecting differing property types.

(2) Mr May reiterated that anyone whose property did not appear on the initial list issued by Herefordshire Council, but who felt that should have been included, should complete and submit a questionnaire. The list was flexible and open to amendment; indeed, even those already on it might ultimately not qualify to remain on it.

All

8. There being no further questions, Mr Mitcheson thanked Mr Hodges and his colleagues for their contributions to a highly informative meeting, which he then drew to a close at 7.30pm.

Babs Mitcheson

Secretary for

Signed: P Sanford, Chairman

13 June 2011

ATTENDANCE LIST

Members Present

Pauline Arrowsmith
Philip Broomhead
Dennis Brown
Marion & Keith Buck
Rebecca & Tim Burnill
Tony Clark
Tracey Edwards
Iris Evans
Deidre & Mike George
Pamela & Richard Grice
David Harris
Margaret James
Robert Mann
Sarah Marsh
Rodney Minchin
Babs & Tony Mitcheson
Tracy Morris
Graham Price
Dorothy Pugh
Patrick Riggall
Tricia Sanford
Derek Sebbage
Ann Cooper & Mike Stephens

Represented

Patrick Gamble
Barbara Gibson
Frederick Nutt
Albert Chatwin
Chris & Robin Hemming
Raj & Moyra Hoon
Jill & Graham Ling
Vera Ling
Roy Manning
David Wain