

Cotswolds Annual Flood Forum
Cotswold District Council Chamber, Trinity Road, Cirencester GL7 1PX
21 October 2022, 10:30-12:30

Attendees:

Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP (GCB)
James Blockley – Gloucestershire County Council, chairman, Strategic Flood Risk Group
Cllr Andrew Doherty – Cotswold District Council, cabinet member for Environment
Cllr Nikki Ind – Cotswold District Council
Karen Nelson – Thames Water
Denise Kinsella – Thames Water
Richard Gray - Local Highway Manager at GCC
Evie Kingsmill – Environment Agency, flood risk team leader
Shaun Shackleford – Environment Agency
Joe Cuthbertson – Environment Agency
Laurence King – Cotswold District Council
Andrew Tubb – Cirencester Town Council
Cllr Juliet Layton – Cotswold District Council
Cllr Stephen Andrews – Cotswold District Council

1. Welcome from Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP

Good morning, everybody, welcome. We've got a great deal to get through. I'm delighted to see so many people here. This is a massive undertaking and it's impossible to deal with every single issue. I'll try and get through as much as I can. I've already had representations which I readily accede to. We used to have six-monthly meetings. Then things, for a year or so, calmed down and we moved to yearly meetings. But I'll readily accede to the fact that there is so much going on that we should have six-monthly meetings, so we'll do that, so we are here now and we'll try and get another in the spring, hopefully having had a flood free winter.

So may I again of course start with thanking Andrew, Cllr Andrew Docherty, who's sitting there keeping Laurence company, very much. Thank you, Andrew for allowing us to be here in this committee room and the Council, it's greatly appreciated and it's very convenient for us to be able to use.

So, the only other thing in terms of good housekeeping is that Luke, who works for me, at the back there, has hopefully circulated or is in the process of circulating attendance sheets. If you wish to be circulated with the minutes, please write down your email address on the sheet.

Liz, my note taker, my splendid note taker who does a wonderful job, will do her best. I check of course the minutes, but others need to check them as well when they're sent round, for any errors.

We have a good attendance here today from the agencies and for that I'd like to thank everybody for coming. You're all busy people. So I think, without any further ado, without introductions.

2. To receive apologies

GCB:

Are there any particular apologies? Anybody wanting to formally note any apologies? No? That's good news.

3. To note the Minutes of the Meeting of 22 October 2021

GCB:

We've got the prodigious notes of 21st October. Can we take those as read. I think there will be lots of matters arising from them. But if we can take those as read, that will be helpful and I don't know if everybody here has any items not covered by the agenda. So, without any further ado I am going to go to James from the County Council flood forum. James, wherever you are, James, over there, and let you report on what you have been doing. I think you've got some good news for us.

4. Report from County Council

James Blockley, GCC:

Thank you, Sir Geoffrey. Yes, James Blockley from Gloucestershire County Council. Just a quick note on a couple of things that we've achieved since the last meeting.

We did talk about Daglingworth Brook upstream from Cirencester, with regard to natural flood management, a project we're trying to get...

Excuse me. Do you mind using the microphone?

James Blockley, GCC:

Is that better? I've been told not to move the microphone, otherwise you won't be able to see me on the screen.

Daglingworth.

Sir Geoffrey, you need to turn your microphone off.

GCB:

Okay, otherwise you'll get feedback. So Andrew, when you're speaking, sorry James, I'll just stop you, when you're speaking just press the button so you get the red light, and when you're not speaking switch it off otherwise you're getting feedback. Okay, carry on please, sorry.

James Blockley, GCC:

Thank you. I was just mentioning Daglingworth. It's been quite a long road trying to get something going down there. We've had some success with the Duchy Estate. We're working with one of their consultants to design meaningful interventions. We do have the budget for this. I don't have a timescale. But is a big step forward to be able to engage with the landowners there. There will be some meaningful interventions there that could well have meaningful benefit for Cirencester.

As well as Daglingworth we've been working well at Siddington. As Laurence said earlier on, many thanks to Jan Bayley and the local community for the work that's gone into trying to identify what the problems are and the potential solutions. So we've brought quite a wide range of agencies together, principally looking at where the water comes in to the northern field, what can be done to increase the conveyance through the northern field, under the road, reinstate some historic swales to allow the water into the watercourse and avoid it going down into the village itself. What I will say about Siddington is there's lots of people looking around and thinking, well who's going to do this, who's going to do that. It's a collective effort, and I think it speaks volumes about the value of partnership working. Highways, Environment Agency, Cotswold District Council, Gloucestershire County Council, all coming together, nobody shirking responsibility, collective effort. And I think it's important to note that with national funding for some of these agencies, especially with revenue funding being in decline, the only way we're going to get meaningful benefit is to join forces and pool our resources and work together to make something happen.

Something else I was going to mention, at the last meeting there was quite a lot of discussion about

natural flood management, and the fact that a lot of natural flood management seems to be concentrated on capital not revenue, and the fact that we needed people to make things happen, not money to buy things. Natural flood management is revenue rich, capital light. The funding didn't seem to match. I was tasked by Sir Geoffrey to bring agencies together to submit a bid to Highways England environmental designated fund to try and get some money to recruit somebody to fill that void. We did that, but it wasn't successful. Not to be daunted, I worked closely with the Environment Agency, and we have secured 60K a year from Gloucestershire County Council, revenue funding, to employ a fulltime permanent, not temporary, a permanent, natural flood management project development officer. Working with the EA, we're submitting a business case which we hope will match that figure. So the advert for this post will be going out either today or early next week, and we hope to recruit somebody before Christmas. This post will be very much a partnership post. Even though it will be hosted by Gloucestershire County Council, it will very much be a shared resource across all of the agencies. We're not seeking to overwrite what's already being done. There's some excellent natural flood management work taking place around the country but as we know from the last meeting there isn't sufficient coordination. So this post will come in, it will speak to the people that are already active, like FWAG, like EA, like Cotswold District Council, and identify the gaps, identify the priorities, and concentrate resources there. So that's a big step forward, and I'm quite proud that collectively we've been able to make this happen. At the last meeting I must admit I didn't feel that optimistic, so it's a big step forward and I've got big plans for that.

GCB:

Well James, many congratulations for that, and as you say, you can't do this work without people. And I think you told us earlier that you're recruiting this week and hopefully will have somebody in post by Christmas?

James Blockley, GCC:

Absolutely, yeah, all of us, all of these agencies, this is not just a job, it's a vocation Sir Geoffrey. We don't do what we do for any kind of personal glory, we do what we do because we're passionate about communities and we're passionate about building resilience to the climate emergency. And we can't do this on our own but we can do it by working together, so where credit is due, credit is due to the communities themselves for taking ownership of their own local flood risk and being proactive, and working with us not against us, so I'd like to record my thanks.

GCB:

I too would like to add to your thanks, to Jan Bayley who has worked so tirelessly to get a solution, to try and find out what happened when and where. Thank you very much. As you say, really good example of communities working together. Could you just tell us, there might be people here from north Cirencester who think this is all very good but it doesn't actually affect us. But it does, doesn't it, the whole of this water, flooding thing really fits together, just tell us why it's so important that we get Siddington and indeed South Cerney and other downstream areas sorted out.

James Blockley, GCC:

Well it's all part of the bigger picture, as we've said before, you can look at putting in some kind of a solution in places as close to where people flood. But that's only a sticking plaster on a bigger problem. You have to take a catchment-wide overview of flood risk. You can't keep looking at individual bits of work. You have to take a more global overview of the flood risk here. So everything that we're doing upstream and downstream is part of the bigger picture. And natural flood management is not a woody debris dam above the catchment or a beaver release project, it's a continuum. It's everything from land use change in the upper catchment right down to well designed flood relief measures, so it's all part of the bigger picture.

GCB:

So I suppose, summing it up in simple terms, if we can get a natural flood management scheme above Cirencester, it'll hold the water in extreme storm weather, and at the same time get rid of it

quicker at the bottom end through Siddington and South Cerney and downwards, then the big bit in the middle, Cirencester, will be less likely to flood.

James Blockley, GCC:
Yes.

GCB:
That's very helpful. Thank you very much. Well done with that.

a) Comment/Report from District Council

GCB:
So I've got, now, Comment/Report from District Council. Anything from Laurence, Andrew, that you'd like to report on?

Andrew Docherty, CDC:
I've just got a couple of things, and Laurence can pick up on the specific other activity that's been going on. Picking up exactly from what James has been talking about, the main focus for us has been looking at the local partnership work exercises. So there have been lots of meetings in the last 12 months, mainly for those here, bringing everyone together. That's been going well. That's helped to deepen the relationship with the flood authority in terms of getting stuff done. And in particular we've been able to more clearly divide off what is best done by whom. So in terms of the District Council, the particular push for us has been in terms of engagement with people at the local level since we're nearly the lowest tier of local government, we're the lowest large tier of local government as it were. So that's particularly things like the flood scheme, the flood warden scheme that we've been doing and continuing to push through and hoping to expand that to other locations, and that ties in very well with the kind of work we try and do with town and parish councils in particular.

The other thing we're looking at doing is the two big things we do are obviously town planning and flood relief advice. On the planning side is making better use of the funding we might be able to give advice for things like natural flood management, so in particular the work James is doing now with the new natural flood management officer, it's incredibly valuable across the District and County, in terms of bringing through money from, for example, the Community Infrastructure Levy, which we've made policy changes now to support at District Council level, so we can now provide funding, be that revenue funding or capital funding for new flood management schemes, which may be would have been useful for the smaller kind of things that the EA and the local flood authority would already have been doing, because the belief is in aggregate the more that we do the more we can have some assurance that we're knocking off the potential flooding that actually happens. So that's a big policy focus for us, is to support, both in terms of expertise and in terms of bringing additional funds to get that work done. And that again we'll be working with sorts of agencies, with FWAG, with the flood authority, with the Environment Agency, all sorts of agencies. And that has been going really well over the last 12 months in terms of those tie ups.

GCB:
So I'm really pleased about this, because what I'm hearing, and I think on behalf of the ordinary members of the public who are very welcome at this meeting, is that until a few years we used to find that everybody used to do a lot of excellent work, but all on their own, and I think Andrew you've embodied that spirit, James has embodied that spirit, that actually if you work constructively together actually you can get a much better result.

Laurence.

Laurence King, CDC:

I agree with what's been said is that it's quite obvious now that working together is the way forward, and we are actually and actively doing it now in a way that people can have reassurance that that's actually happening, because the accusations were before that, as you say we were all doing good stuff but we weren't actually talking together except at these meetings. Well we are actually talking together quite a lot now and that's clearly making a difference.

Regarding CDC operational activities, we are still the agents for the County Council regarding consenting and enforcement on water courses, so we are giving consent to people who come to us if they want to alter a watercourse or put a culvert in. We're not seeing as much of those as we like but we are seeing an uplift on those. We also carry out enforcement activities where people are not maintaining watercourses or they've put a culvert in without telling us as well, which is a bit awkward. The downside of that is we aren't carrying out a proactive service. It's very reactive. So that is an improvement that could be made. We've also commented from a flood risk point of view on over 200 planning applications in the last 12 months just for the Cotswolds. We comment on minor applications up to 9 new dwellings, so from 1 new dwelling up to 9, and also for extensions, for all those areas prone to surface water flooding. So that tells you, if you go back a few years, that number would have been half of that, so we're really getting into informing people that they need to put SuDS in place, not just on major developments but on minor developments. They also need to tell us how those SuDS are going to be maintained going forward. Because it's quite critical that if we achieve betterment, well that betterment needs to be sustained, and the only way to do that is to do regular maintenance. So operationally, that's really what we're doing, we're coordinating, going out there, trying to get local issues resolved. As James said, clearly ideally we put into an operating agreement.

GCB:

Brilliant. Now just, I'm sure everyone is aware what SuDS are, just tell us what SuDS are, and tell us, I mean that's really important that not only are you as the planning authority have to approve that they're actually going to work, but actually the ongoing maintenance, and how does that normally work. Does it normally a planning condition or is that the responsibility passed over to the residential properties or the residents themselves?

Laurence King, CDC:

Yeah. Usually normally once a site has been completed, which, it's very similar to a major development, it's handed over to a management company, and that management company can be employed by the residents or it may be retained by the developer itself. But the bottom line is we have to know, at the point of full occupation of the development, who the landowner will be where running the communal service will be sited. Because if the SuDS aren't maintained, we can only take enforcement action on the land owner, not the management company. So that's quite important information that we can get now, because going back a few years ago, that information wasn't obtainable so it was difficult for drainage enforcement.

b) Comment/Report from Town/Parish Council

GCB:

Right, that's really helpful.

Okay. Now I'm very conscious that, have I got Andrew with me, Andrew Tubb? I'm always very conscious Andrew, thank you for coming, that we rather talk in abstract without involving you, and you are a critical party in Cirencester. So do you want to tell us what you have been up to in terms of flooding.

Andrew Tubb, Cirencester Town Council:

Yes. Thank you, Sir Geoffrey. I hope, and I'm sitting very close to representatives of the Friends of

Dunstall Brook and also the Churn Catchment Flood Prevention Group, that our communication and engagement have improved over the last 12 months. I have got eye contact from those representatives. And obviously as the Town Council we've got, we're responsible for 45+ ha of land in Cirencester as well as two of the four sluice gates. We've been reviewing the operation of the sluice gates over the past 12 months alongside colleagues at Cotswold District Council and the EA. But what is really important is that we listen to local residents because they know the town best, and often they know how the water changes under certain conditions. So we've sought to adapt to that, to be flexible, to listen, and incorporate their knowledge into the operation of the sluice gates in the future. And so that work is ongoing. There's a further meeting over the next few months and we hope to have a revised Memorandum of Understanding in place in the new year. That doesn't mean to say that we won't be flexible and respond as and when we need to in changing weather conditions over the next few months. Thank you, Sir Geoffrey.

GCB:

Well, that's very helpful Andrew. I think just, turning perhaps to what you didn't say there or what you hinted there. Two out of four sluice gates. In a sense it doesn't really matter who operates them as long as there is this MOU so that everybody knows what everybody else is doing. And that worries me a little bit. If we were to get, God forbid, some serious flood in the next few months. It has to be a possibility. Are you confident now that everybody will be doing the right thing at the right time?

Andrew Tubb, Cirencester Town Council:

Yes, yes, we are. Again we have improved our communication, you know, like the County Council, we've been able to increase our staffing, so we have a new project officer in post, we have a new land and property management officer, who's Mark Oliver, who's with me today, who's doing a lot of work to build those local relationships and those contacts with particularly those two sluice gates that are in private ownership, to yes to make sure that we're fully coordinated in an emergency.

GCB:

Very good. Thank you.

Now I come on to Thames Water. Whoever is leading please, would you introduce yourself and give us your report?

5. **Report from Thames Water**

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Good morning everybody. Karen Nelson, the regional network manager, Thames Valley region, responsibility for pipes and taking wastewater from customers' properties via our pumping stations that my colleagues are responsible for, through to treatment works to ensure treatment and discharge. Over course of the last year, there's been a lot of change at Thames. Just to give you that background, back in 2015 after the first storms etc, we did a reorganisation, and my network team certainly work much more closely with our pump station teams to make sure that we're joined up and working together. We can do it without being one team but it's certainly helped. Over this past, since April, we've had a massive reorganisation with Sarah Bentley coming in as the CEO. She's got a big turnaround plan, raising commitments to not discharge, to improve the basics right, etc. Some of that going back to the basics is really around making sure we've really really structured in a way that gets us working the best we can, both as a business but also for communities, customers and the environment that we are part of.

One of the big changes is now the moving, restructuring to, we're going to have a London part of the business and then Thames Valley, as we are, will join up with Home Counties, which is around London, which is very similar to the main, whole of Thames Valley, which gives us the opportunity when do our plans going forward, we can look and seek funding that we need for the priorities we have in our region, because out here, dealing with some of the infiltration challenges that we've had over recent years is very different from the challenges that our London colleagues have with

discharges to the Thames, because the reasons are very very different. So that's really really positive. But on top of that we've changed to, rather than just having boundaries which kind of evolved over time, we've gone back to the basics and really looked at those boundaries, and we are now going to be structuring it as of 1st November we've got all the people, everyone knows where they're moving to, we're moving to boundaries based on river basins, which can only add more emphasis, more weight and better response in forums like this and the environment that works within them. So any treatment works that discharge to a certain river basin, and everything that goes with it, whether it's pipes, pumps, etc, are all part of it. So going forward from 1st November, my team will have responsibility for those basins, and can see the whole part of what we do through those, through reducing impact that we have the potential to do in those areas.

Despite not having that structure now, or the benefits that that structure will bring, over the last year we've continued our work with infiltration. We made promises last year, I was here last year telling everyone all the extra additional equipment we're going to have, and how we're structured, looking at infiltration. The infiltration we found we have lined. We lined 650m over last year, which is adding to the 4 km we've already done across numerous areas in these parts. It's a phenomenal achievement to be doing on top of our everyday business as well, keeping the system running. That 650, sorry, it should say, it's in Cirencester. And on top of that we've lined 310 in South Cerney, which also helps presumably keeping water out of our network. We've sealed manholes and, both the chambers where the water can come in through the groundwater, the sidewalls, and also we've sealed the manhole covers to stop where water congregates in puddles and fields, where rivers can burst their banks, ditches get choked and they can spill, to make sure that water does not get in our system. So our system just carries what it's designed to carry. We've been doing a lot of that work improving everything we can. In Hereward Road specifically, we've had a penstock there for many years which we close to control the flows, to plan our tankering, our foul water mitigation in place when we know that things are on the rise. Historically we realised that each year that fails due to the sheer pressure of that water in that system pushing against the back there. We have replaced that again. But on top of that we've also been in communication with Historic England and have got another penstock in place to give us an improved isolation, which we feel will give us the confidence that we can keep that section of our network isolated and put those mitigations in place. But we have done lining in that area as well. We've got further work to do in the rest of the catchment before we can start not operating that penstock.

In addition to that we have, going back to South Cerney, we've got a pump station that's being installed to help with the additional flows, etc. We want to keep the water out of our system but, where we believe that's either going to take too long or we may not get the success that we want, we actually put a pump station in to be able to take that water away from the area, which, as we've already said, provides relief for some of the rest of the network.

In City Bank Road, we had, when I came here last year I think, the plan of what mitigation could look like, we are in discussion with Historic England, but it's taking us longer than we had hoped to be able to understand what we can do. We cannot do some of the work that we'd like to do until we go through that process and identify if there are any archaeological pieces of significance in that area. Our engineering team are also looking at that area to see, is there a bigger, wider piece of work that we can do that prevents us having to put that mitigation in for the winter period. There's lots of focus still going on in that area.

One other area I'd like to cover is also on Beeches Road, there's a nursery there that has historically suffered with flooding from where a manhole, it gets overloaded and is discharged. It's not nice. It's outside a nursery, people dropping children off, you just don't want that to happen. So we've had our engineering teams looking for a solution. Over the course of this year they've planned it and are installing it and it's imminently due for completion.

GCB:

Sorry. Installing what?

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

So it's installing, sorry, a flood device. So they will have an isolated waste system, and when it gets to a certain point there's a pump that pumps it out into the network. So the problem they were experiencing is they never got relief because there was so much water in the main sewer that runs outside along the road, along Beeches Road. So it could never get that relief, and the problem there is it surcharges in their property. That's now going to push out. We know and they are very aware that it's going to push out the next manhole. And there will still be some flooding. Everyone's gone in with their eyes wide open, that this will happen, but it's taking it away from where parents, teachers, children, are going to be. And it's something that we can clean up, keep on top of, and we are still trying if we can to take more of the water out of the system. We have delivered on all of the lining we're aware of. We've done a lot of CCTV cameraing. This year has been very very dry, as everyone is aware. We don't get opportunities during dry weather to look for infiltration. We need that ground water table to rise. I wouldn't wish that on anyone but that's the only way unfortunately that me and my team can learn what we need to do next. So the team, we monitor the ground water levels. They are very low at the moment. I'm hopeful this winter we won't have any impact, touch lots of wood. But as it rises, if it rises to a position we can get some, there's a window as it rises when it starts to come in, if we get to that position we will certainly be out in the region looking with our CCTV for the next points. The other thing around the weather is, because it has been so dry, now we're getting a bit more wet weather, ground movement is likely to happen. That is going to open up more cracks, cause more issues to the pipes. So we've done any we are aware of. There are some we may not have found last time, because the great gushes coming in may have hidden other bits. Also there will be some new parts that open up due to the weather we've had this year. I'm really pleased with what the team have achieved. They have been very much engaging with local residents on specific pockets where we've got problem. But we are still very much working on our plans and our bigger picture. That's all being relined coming up.

On top of that, sorry, last time I said we do do planned maintenance, so our planned maintenance is ramped up year on year. We're currently working on doing 1500 km of planned maintenance. That's cleaning of sewers based on data, performance, and where we believe we can make some tactical improvements. In this local area the guys have done 5.2 km on the plan, which we've done 3.2 so far. Some of those are legacy things. We clean them because we know they get blockages, because of fats, fats, oils or greases, and because of sometimes sewer abuse with wet wipes and things that don't belong in there. We clean those because we know there's a historical issue. There's some that comes from baseline data, and the data comes from numerous places including the massive programme of sewer depth monitors that we're installing which allows spills telemetry back to us and we respond more proactively rather than historically we relied on customers to tell us about blockages, which in this day is not an acceptable or a customer friendly service. So we are clearing a lot of blockages without people knowing there's even been a blockage.

So that's our update I think.

GCB:

Well done Karen. That's a great programme of work. Not to be concerned about any particular road more than any other, but Hereward Road has more problems than most. So you've got, penstocks are installed and will hopefully work when you need them?

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Yes. We've got the original, which we didn't want to move the original, we've made it more robust, and we've chained it to another one to make us more robust. We want to ultimately get to the stage where don't even have to operate that penstock and put out tankers or the filter, and that's the ultimate goal. Cirencester's a big large catchment. There's a lot of places that need to be sorted, and

we all need to work together, like the other gentleman said prior to me. The agencies need to work together and actually everyone's sources of water need to stay in the right place. The rivers need to stay in the rivers, and the ditches need clearing to help move surface water, and then that alleviates us, and removes the water to get into our network which is there for the purpose of taking sewage away from properties.

GCB:

Brilliant. Okay. Did your colleagues want to say anything? Thames Water? (No.) No? That's fine.

Let us go on to the Environment Agency. Who would like to talk to us from the Environment Agency?

6. Report from Environment Agency

Joe Cuthbertson, Environment Agency:

I'll pick this up, thank you. So, yes, hi everybody. My name's Joe Cuthbertson from the Environment Agency. I'm one of the local flood risk managers. Accompanied by colleagues Shaun Shackelford to my left and Evie Kingsmill to my right. Can I just, before I talk about the work we're doing, I just wanted to echo some of the comments about the partnership working. Partnership working isn't always easy but it's absolutely essential, for all the reasons that have been set out, and it's great to see how it's continued to be employed, and particularly as another way to stretch funding sources and resources. It becomes ever more critical to effect with more for communities. As was touched on earlier, the community involvement, ownership issue is also really positive in this area, and I just want to echo the earlier comments we heard on that.

In terms of the areas we've been focused on over the last year or so, the primary focus areas have been on the development of, or supporting the development of the MOU around the sluices. It's great to see that's being development. We've been providing our expert advice into that development, alongside partners, alongside the Town Council. As it is further refined, we're keen to keep that support up, and happy to input into that. We're keen to make sure that technically it's absolutely right, and it's going to do the most that it can do for the community. So the offer is very much we're keen to be involved in that.

The thing we've been doing to probably most substantively reduce the risk in the area is our ongoing maintenance programme which consists of a range of different activities in the area. We've got details if there are questions on it, but fundamentally this helps to reduce risk month in, month out. This year has included some extra measures including clearance of the Siddington, bridge at Siddington, and also looking at some extra tree removal so, one of which is upstream of Cirencester. It hasn't yet been done but we're looking at options for removal of some trees in the flood plain that we hope will help to reconnect that area of flood plain, provide a bit of extra capacity in the river there. So that's close to Baunton on the River Churn. And also we're planning to remove a tree from the New Mills and City Bank area, and we're preparing for that. So that should also be of benefit to that area.

Thirdly, Hereward Road, which has been touched on by a number of people today already, we developed initially a temporary defence plan, involving a sandbag wall there to reduce risk to properties. That was deployed in 2020 by CDC. Every time it's deployed we learn, we improve, so we've now, technically that plan is ready to deploy by our partners. We were part of developing it and we'll always offer resources when they're available during a flood, to help with the operation.

Finally, last but not least, our 24/7 incident response is still in place. So when there's flooding, people call our flood line, we'll come and clear blockages if they're contributing to flood risk in main rivers. We'll respond to issues as they arise. And we have our flood warning service, that of course I always urge people to sign up to so that they're aware when flooding's on the way and can take action to prepare, which can make a really big difference in terms of reducing the impact.

I think those are our key points for today Sir Geoffrey.

GCB:

Thank you very much Joe. That was very helpful. I'd might actually come back to Andrew and others. And you raised a really interesting point. As I say I'm not in any way trying to wish it, but if we do get really bad flooding, and we do have good stocks of sandbags, how does it work? Do people have to come and get them? Or what actually happens, so the residents of Hereward Road, how does it actually work?

Andrew Docherty, CDC:

So we deliver the flood response through the teams at Ubico, who most people know through doing our waste services. They do lots of other things as well. And they will be stocked with bags, and that's one of the things we do a regular review on, after the last incident for example. Generally speaking what we look to do is protect areas where there are numbers of properties that may be worth doing, rather than necessarily individual ones. And one of the things we've looked at and talked to some of the town and parishes, some of them we're more engaged on this than others, is particularly them having access to local stocks at town and parish level. Because then if there's an individual property or a smaller group of properties, in the middle of the night when it's hard to get out to them, then there are some local resources available for that. Now we know of area that the town and parishes have been doing that. So it's trying to push the solution down to the most appropriate point, as local as possible. And for the bigger problems we step in, and for the really big problems the EA steps in. So we all know at which point we get involved in.

GCB:

That's very helpful. Thank you very much. I think that we should probably just ask Richard, because highways are inevitably something that, whilst it might not affect individual properties, it is something that people notice, where there are problems on highways. And you've done some good work I think on Kings Meadow. And probably elsewhere. Do you just want to let us know, Richard, and introduce yourself, what your team have been doing.

Richard Gray, GCC:

Good morning, everybody. My name is Richard Gray. I'm the local highways manager for Cotswold South. Thank you, Sir Geoffrey. One of issues I was raising from the previous meetings was how the drainage channel through Kings Meadow and the Tesco's roundabout functions, and its outfall into the river. We have cleaned out the open watercourse and removed the fallen tree. On the other side at the river, we have emptied the silt trap and shored up the flood valve, the flap works. More locally in Siddington, and it's a very small thing, after my meeting with Jan, we have provided a concrete channel by the small footbridge to allow, since when the water gets onto the road to flood more easily into the stream before. I know it's a small thing but as they say every little helps.

I've been working with Laurence, again this is partnership working, which is good to remove the blinkers we all seem to develop. Working with Laurence on a couple of small things. One is Hereward Road. We've been trying to unpick levels of responsibility for the various drainages round there. The long story short is the developer went bankrupt, the Crown inherited the estate, through default, Gloucestershire County Council inherited the road and the gully. There's a big question mark on who is responsible for the main drain which then enters into the third party land, which is we believe I think, Laurence, is a large chamber, which is again unfortunately situated on an archaeological site, which further complicates how we approach this. We also have when we get flooding, I know we've got the sandbag arrangement, we open up the old Gooseacre Lane as well. So we're all working together. And I've been working with James Blockley as well on the wider scheme and what we can do. From my little part of the world I'm allocating a certain amount of funding out of next year's financial budget towards working for a wider scheme that Thames are developing with the Environmental Agency.

GCB:

Very good. Thank you very much, thank you Richard, and it's very good to see you here at this meeting.

Right. Laurence, you're on the list, I mean obviously you've contributed to various bits of the discussion. Is there anything else, because you've got such an encyclopaedic knowledge of the entire area, is there anything you want to add?

Laurence King, CDC

I think, going back to the Environment Agency, we mustn't forget the culverts running through Cirencester, how critical they are. And although we've taken a small step in investigating their performance, I think what we want is to make everyone aware that we will be collectively talking about how we're going to ensure that the critical culverts are maintained and functioning as defensive assets which is what they are ultimately. And that will involve partnership working, and identifying riparian owners, and inevitably identifying pieces of work that need to be carried out and devising a plan of how that work will be carried out and funded with a timeframe. It's not going to be easy but they have to be addressed, otherwise we're leaving a potential problem unresolved.

GCB:

Thank you. We're all very grateful that you are there and at least on top of these problems so that you can keep pushing them to the front.

Unless I've missed out anybody, Jenny, is Jenny Phelps here? No. Unless I've missed out anybody, I think really we've had the informing part of the meeting, which has been very very helpful. I think we've now got a series of questions which have been submitted, and we've got a series of action points as well from the last meeting. So it's a question of, in the time available, we've done roughly half the meeting on information, which is good. I think that what I'd like to do now is that I'd like to move to the questions that I've got. But please don't repeat, anybody who's asking a question, please only ask it and only do that bit of your question if it hasn't already been covered here, because we, you know, the time's not endless and we've got lots to cover, that we could cover. So please keep your questions to what you feel hasn't already been covered or what action needs to be taken in relation to your question.

7. Questions from Members of the Public

GCB:

So the first question I have was from Mike Taylor in relation to Cherry Tree Drive. Do we have Mike Taylor here? Yes, Mike. Over to you.

Mike Taylor:

Yeah well. We back onto Tesco's. Massive trees all along their boundary which we've spent three years trying to get them to cut. And the big town sewer runs between Cherry Tree Drive and Tesco's. Which is a big sewer. The tree roots are now coming over into our garden, popping up the patio and things. And if that big sewer's there, how do we know that the tree roots are not infiltrating that sewer?

GCB:

That sounds like one at the door of Thames Water.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Yes. That's very true. Tree roots can be a problem to us. And we have previously CCTV cameraed that line and if there had been any problems we would have addressed them. But since the question has more recently been asked, we will revisit that and camera survey that again just to be sure that

there isn't any issues. In the event that there are roots, our approach that we take is that we would cut those roots out and we would line the sewer, so that actually would then prevent a likelihood of water finding its way in. Because we'll be keeping the roots out and we would also be keeping the water out by doing a leak-tight liner from manhole to manhole.

GCB:

Mike, does that satisfy you?

Mike Taylor:

Good luck with getting Tesco to do anything with the tree roots though, because they can't trim the trees at all, so.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

We would cut the tree roots from within the sewer. So if we do a camera survey and we find roots are in there, if we have any concerns over what we're seeing, we have devices that we've got on the front end of our water jets that we use to clear blockages, which then cut around the circumference of the pipe and you can cut those tree roots out from within. And then once that's done, we then line it to prevent them from further coming in.

Mike Taylor:

Okay. Thank you.

GCB:

Right, well at least we've addressed that. What would be really good, Karen, is if you would, when you've done that CCTV, perhaps let my office know, let Luke know and we'll find a way of getting the information to Mike so that he knows whether there is a problem or whether there isn't.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

One thing I did neglect to say is that I have two extra additional colleagues with me. I have Denise Kinsella next to me who is our customer manager, and I also have, hidden in the back row, Shelly Hartnoll, who might like to put her hand up, but there are some people certainly in this room who are very familiar with Shelly, she's the area manager of the region, this part of the region, and she's certainly got teams out there doing stuff every day. She's certainly more than happy to go and see any customers and give updates, so we'll make sure that the two link together.

GCB:

Great. Shelly, let's see who you are. Stand up so people can see you. You've become famous, well done. Excellent. I now go to Tim Charlsley who's got a question about, inevitably, about Hereward Road. Tim, have you been reassured? I mean I don't want to go over old ground. We have covered Hereward Road in quite a lot of detail. Is there still anything remaining that you're unhappy about? Tim Charlsley I think. Do we have Tim here? No. I think that we have done that. I'm just going to read the question out and I only want one of you to answer it if – I think we have.

“Thames Water have carried out a lot of work close to Hereward Road and the surrounding streets in Cirencester in and around December 2021. Please can Thames Water explain exactly what work was carried out including Dugdale Road a flooding hotspot, and please ensure this is passed on to Thames Water before the meeting.”

I think we've covered that Karen?

Karen Nelson:

We haven't. So to give some clarity, Dugdale Road is in the local area that comes into the network through a different route. So everything we do and everything we explain about Hereward Road does not apply to Dugdale. We're not aware of any foul sewer issues in Dugdale. There is surface water

there and some description I think in the question would suggest there's issues of surface water problems in that area. I'm not saying they're not getting into our network. I can certainly give you the heads up that we will investigate to see if we need to do more sealing. But if I do seal any manhole covers to stop it getting into our network that water would need to go somewhere. So I'm not sure whose responsibility it is but the surface water in that area is not our water.

GCB:

Right. We seem to have hit a bit of a blank. Would any of the agencies like to just talk about surface water? Laurence, you're the expert. How do we get rid of it and who's responsible for getting rid of it, how do we deal with it?

Laurence King, CDC:

The surface water in Dugdale, I think it's something that's connected to the investigation that Richard Gray is having with the culverts. Because the highway drains there all mix together and it feeds into one point which ultimately seems to go into a soakaway. And the discussion would be, is that soakaway sufficient, to actually get that water from the river? So I think we can take that on.

GCB:

Take it offline? You and Richard will take it offline. Okay. I think we've covered that.

We then go to a question, long question, from David Iliffe. David, are you here?

David Iliffe:

I'm here, yes.

GCB:

You've got a lot of questions in here. Can we sort of try, you've got three major points, four major points. Let's just deal with each succinctly if we could please.

David Iliffe:

Okay. I live in Cirencester in Corinium Gates, and alongside the house is one of the river courses. It comes from the Abbey Grounds to the path behind Corinium Gates, and then into the park and away. And it's the area in 2020 that we had the problem with the flooding. The water's coming into the Abbey Grounds, overspilled into the Ground itself, on to the footpath, past my house and then back into the river again. So the difficulty as I can see things is that it would be best if at all possible to clear out the river courses, or deepen them, so that more water can flow. Because when you look at the area where I'm talking about, and even in the Abbey Grounds itself, it's a very shallow area on the Grounds side. On the other side it's quite high. It needs some protection there. And I don't know whether any clearance work is generally done throughout the course of the year, but that particular area needs a look at.

I could also mention, another part is of the Abbey Grounds, on the north side, which is along by Grove Lane, which is the main channel of the Churn flowing past Cirencester, there's lots of rubbish in there, never cleared to my knowledge over the last two years. There's Tesco trolleys in there and other rubbish. I'd like to know, from the Environment Agency if they are responsible, are they clearing that rubbish?

GCB:

Well that's a very good question. Shall we go straight to the Environment Agency, and we may have to bring in others like, well let's just start with the Environment Agency. Yes. Joe?

Joe Cuthbertson, EA:

Thanks for the question. So in terms of our maintenance schedule, it does include the structured Churn near the open air swimming pool, and we do carry out regular maintenance there including

clearance of weeds. It was last done in May. It's on the annual maintenance programme so it will be picked up again next year. It's recognised as one of the locations where that maintenance does make a difference to the flood risk. As for the points about, close to Tesco you just mentioned, I'm not sure, Shaun, if you'd know any more about that?

Shaun Shackelford, EA:

Yes, so we do basically all of the main rivers around that area, the main Churn, past Tesco we do, all of that down towards Abbey Grounds on the Churn, we've removed the trees from there. It's spring/summer work that we tend to do it, so we do have to come back pretty much later in the year to do the trees with nesting birds and things like that, so yes, it's all done. Litter and small items of debris which, although unsightly, don't really pose any great deal of flood risk. So our work is primarily to reduce the flood risk, which means large scale blockages, the growth of weed within the channel, and backside vegetation, etc. When it comes to taking litter away, it's not a common practice for the Environment Agency to get involved in that.

David Iliffe:

Is it possible then for the channels where water's not going away, at this time of year to clean them out? Make them deeper? For the stuff, more water allowed to flow in the channel rather than overspill?

Shaun Shackelford, EA:

We call that localised de-silting and things like that, that's has to be considered by the programme. And it needs to be considered on the merits of the that individual watercourse. It's not always the answer. You won't always solve the problem of reducing flood risk if you pull out the bed channels. So it's not always the answer, but I think I'm prepared to come and have a look and make some assessments of that.

David Iliffe:

I understand. From my perspective, I live there and it's a simplistic view, why don't they clear them and whatever. But it's nice to know that you are paying attention, although I will say, look at the other channel alongside Grove Lane. You'll find there's car tyres down there, there's Tesco trolleys in there.

I'd like to come on to, Sir Geoffrey, if I may, you need, again, simplistic, because I'm not au fait with everything that's going on, but we need a proper flood control plan to regulate the flow of the River Churn before it reaches Cirencester. Now Cirencester's in the bottom of a bowl if you like. Everywhere if you go into Cirencester you're coming downhill. So water flows down. And all I'm thinking of is, the River Churn from Seven Springs all the way through the A435 into Cirencester is twisty and it's not very big in places. But when you get, when there are flooding situations, particularly north of the Abbey Way filling station, you can see that field is filled with water, it's that area and beyond that into Baunton, the place that's called The Lynches, where you have the dual carriageway going over the valley, that is an area where surely something could be done to prevent water coming down in great amounts in flood times. Develop it there where it could flow into the fields. I know it's simplistic but it's just an idea that we need to look at because water's coming down the Churn into Cirencester and then that's where we have the problem, in Cirencester, because we're low lying.

GCB:

Mr Iliffe, I think you raise a really good point. We've discussed already, and I'm looking at James here, because we've discussed attenuation schemes for the Daglingworth Brook. But of course the other major source coming into Cirencester is the Churn. And I wonder if there's any thought or work, James or the Environment Agency, about any sort of attenuation schemes further above the Churn which is about 25 miles long to at least hold some of this water in flooding conditions.

James Blockley, CDC:

Okay. Just going back to what I said earlier on about partnership working, far be it from me to shirk responsibility but it's not what I'm doing. The Churn is main river so that would fall to the Environment Agency. But what I will say is that whilst a number of years ago, collectively, we looked a significant flood alleviation scheme in Cirencester, the cost benefit analysis didn't stack up, which is why we then went back to the drawing board to see what else can be done to slow the flow on the Churn before it reaches Cirencester. I mentioned earlier on about priority catchments. One of the priority catchments we've looked at for natural flood management is the Churn, and that will be one of the areas we will be looking. And the key to natural flood management is many small, not few and large, so that means many small interventions, anything from infiltration, attenuation, revegetation, but also making sure we optimise the positive biodiversity improvement with what we do as well. So, yeah, there's lots that can be done, but it will be an aggregate effect of lots of small interventions as opposed to one big bund. I don't know if the Environment Agency want to add to that?

GCB:

Joe? (If I may.) That would be very helpful.

Joe Cuthbertson, EA:

James has effectively said the majority of what I was planning to say. (Sorry). No. I wanted to explain that, yes, there has been an in-depth look at upstream on the River Churn. In late 2017 when we established that the cost-benefit ratio for an upstream flood storage area was not sufficient to justify a scheme there unfortunately. And so effectively that's where we've now evolved to this point where we've got a range of partners looking at all the different constituent parts that add to flood risk in Cirencester and the surrounding area. There are many things that can be done in aggregate, as James described, and so that's why we're keen to progress these things like natural flood management work. As well there's always the sort of day to day operational work that we heard about from colleagues here today. Evie, would like to say anything?

GCB:

Please, would you just introduce yourself?

Evie Kingsmill, EA

Yes, I'm Evie Kingsmill from the flood risk department. I was just wanting to add a bit on the 2017 study on flood storage area upstream of Cirencester, and the challenges are obviously the costs and benefits. But there's also challenges in terms of the amount of water stored and the heights of bunds, we're talking about up to 7 metres high. And also studies did identify passing some of the flood risk upstream as well. So actually it wasn't only the cost and benefit ratio. It was quite a complex number of constraints, so I just wanted to add that bit of detail.

GCB:

Yes, James?

James Blockley, CDC:

Sorry. Thank you, Evie. Just one thing I think I should mention, because the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG) aren't here today. They're doing a huge amount of work looking into stream reconnections, so reinstating local flood meadows to provide areas for the water to spread out of the river and to bring it back into the system slowly. So I didn't want FWAG's efforts to be missed from this discussion. Thank you.

GCB:

Yes. I think, yes, Andrew?

Andrew Docherty, CDC:

Just to say, there's been a lot of interaction between us around the Corinium Gate area. Obviously we did a lot pumping work there in winter 2021, winter 2020, sorry, and we have clearance work on behind Corinium Gate for example. And the other thing to be, also there's a second problem we're trying to fix on top of that flooding. So some of the upstream scheme we really could have had a summer 2007 kind of flooding, where lots of water happened suddenly. The 2020 situation with a broader area of saturation was a particularly hard one to fix because everything was saturated. At Corinium Gate, if you dug a hole in the ground, it filled up with water. Because you're on gravel bank there, where the Romans ingeniously decided to build a town on. At that point it's filling up with water between the two banks of the two river streams that you've got there. So some of them are hard to fix in that context. So there are different solutions to different problems, and we're trying to be realistic about which solutions will work for which problems, and which other ones are harder. So things like saturated ground, sewage becomes much more important to prevent any infiltration. For 2007 type things, more capacity upstream helps, to keep it there and let it through more slowly. So there's not one solution that fixes all those problems in one go.

GCB:

I hear what you're saying, but I stood on a culvert by the garage there, I think it's called Corinium Garage, on Christmas Eve 2020, and there was a frightening amount of water coming into Cirencester. I mean, unbelievable. And hitting the lock gate and then going in different directions. We have, with great respect to everybody here, been talking about these sort of flood alleviation schemes for at least 5 years, and I really do, I think everything we discuss here, one thing that would help here, and even little attenuation schemes, as Mr Iliffe has said, it's a long catchment up to Seven Springs, and when the surrounding hills discharge into the Churn, as they did on Christmas Eve 2020, causing flooding, anything that can just reduce that amount of water, I really do think we need to make progress on that. It seems to me we've been talking about an awful lot but not actually made much. So I think we've had great aspiration from this meeting about partnership working, but can we see if we can get that partnership working in trying working out, even more so I would say about the Churn, to be honest, and I live on the Daglingworth Stream, and I know that houses in Daglingworth are being flooded, and clearly that is important, but action in terms of Cirencester, the volume of water coming in to Cirencester from the Churn. So I really would like to think we can make some progress on that. It is, if you'd seen what I've seen, I think I may even have some photographs, on Christmas Eve 2020. It was just a staggering amount of water. If any of you are interested in the subject, and I'm Mr Iliffe knows this backwards, but go and look at the size of that culvert, go and look at the amount of water that's running through it today, and it will be about a quarter full, then imagine the entire culvert with water going up into it. The size of the culvert must be at least 20, 30 feet long going into it, absolutely full on Christmas Eve, and you can understand the amount of water going into it. So please, please, please, can we see if we can make some progress.

Yes.

George Brooks

Sir Geoffrey, George Brooks. I stood with you on that evening. (You did.) Is this not exactly what the new person work across the County Council would be looking at, would be dealing with, is that not their role?

James Blockley, CDC:

Potentially, yes, but not in isolation. This officer will be concentrating on natural flood management. So, as I said before, you know, a collection of small interventions as opposed to one entire remediation scheme. But it's not going to be one person working in isolation. It's going to be that person doing it together with, what we're already doing, with EA, with FWAG as well. So, yes, in some way yes, but not in isolation.

George Brooks:

Because the 2015 Atkins report put forward this hugely expensive solution for stopping the water coming in. They recognised the importance of the water coming into Cirencester. And coming into North Cerney, and coming into Baunton, and Siddington. It affects us all. But if we had a natural flood management scheme, we've got the floodplain, we've got the capacity to keep this water, just to slow it down, to stop this surge of water from coming into Cirencester. It helps with the sewers, it helps with the ground water. It helps with everything. It seems to be, as Sir Geoffrey was saying, the key to it all.

GCB:

Well said George, absolutely right. I see Jan's hand up.

Jan Bayley:

Yes Sir Geoffrey, apologies, I haven't put a question in, and perhaps I could pose a question a bit later, but in relation to what you've been discussing, can I completely endorse what you've been saying, because having now looked at the catchment areas that affect Siddington, which we discussed earlier, of course it's the Churn valley which goes right up to Seven Springs. It is a huge catchment. And if you trace that river course, in fact the river meanders quite a lot. I don't think it actually needs it to the extent of the Atkins scheme. But if you want an example of how to make a water meadow flood, just look at what we're enduring between Preston and Siddington. Blockages in the river that immediately cause the water to flow out into the watermeadow. Historically there would have been sluices all the way down that Churn from Seven Springs, to flood that river valley, you know, as watermeadows. All that's gone. And rather than one big complicated scheme by Atkins, I believe it needs a series of small interventions, to cause small dams and use those meanders to full effect. And I'll ask a question later if I may.

GCB:

Okay. Thank you Jan. And I think there was somebody right at the back with their hand up. Yes sir, tell us your name please.

Colin Mattingley:

Colin Mattingley, and I live in Coxwell Street, where we've been there probably about sort of ten years. Nothing like the residents here. But from what I've heard, there's a lot of immensely encouraging things being done to try and reduce the flooding problem. We live in a, I suppose, 17th century house, as many, several, are in the street. And they have got cellars, which we're told are designed to fill with water, because that's the way they were designed. But of course as life has gone on people have been using the cellars. And they, the chap next door, a very grand house in Coxwell Street, have lined the whole of the cellar to prevent water coming in.

GCB:

He wants to put wine in it!

Colin Mattingley:

So really I think my question is, are the plans, they're very very encouraging plans and efforts in trying to do something about it, I mean, is it going to be successful? Or is this extraordinary pattern of underground channels, some indeed going right through houses like the house next door to ours, contain the water, or is that an impossible problem basically?

GCB:

Do you want to have a go at that Joe?

Joe Cuthbertson, EA

I'm very happy to give a view. I'm certain we all have similar but perhaps slightly different views. It's

really, it's fundamentally the reason why a lot of Environment Agency staff and colleagues here from other organisations do the jobs that they do, is trying to tackle this issue. And there's good and bad news I suppose. I mean we are seeing more extreme weather due to climate change. So in that sense it's not a battle that we can win and then say, job done. It's something that needs to be sustained over a very long period to have any chance of success. There's a place for capital investment, as there is revenue for ongoing staff and maintenance, as well as all the different other interventions that we talked about as well, like natural flood management and sewer maintenance and the like. So it's a complex problem. The climate change situation will make it worse. Can it ever be fully solved? I don't think we'll ever come to a place where it will be fully solved. There'll always be flood risk for some people. We can't, none of us can prevent it or stop it in all cases, and there's always the chance of an extreme event that will overtop even the best of flood defences in places where investment has been high. So that's the sort of, the reality. But that doesn't mean there's not a lot of things that we can and should be doing, and that we are working on, to try to reduce that risk as far as we can, within the resources that we've got. And absolutely, that's where I am with the work that we do in the Environment Agency and I'm sure many others here feel the same. So, can it be fully solved – I don't think so. Can we make a huge difference and improve the quality of life and help people sleep more soundly knowing that the risk has been reduced – yes, I hope so.

GCB:

So time is

Colin Mattingley:

So I think the answer is no, we've got to live with it.

GCB:

Okay. Time is moving on. We've got a lot to cover. Is it to do with this issue? You sir, at the back?

Margaretta Mattingley:

I just want to confirm that this is not a flood, it's an aquifer. It was told me by an environmental officer. It's an aquifer. The houses were built to store water. We pump it out with the permission of Gloucestershire County Council to pour it into the waste. I think an environmental officer told me we were causing the trouble of sewers flooding because they don't like fresh water. We've got a huge estate being built on Bathurst Estate, and the water is going to be brought from Oxford. Why can't we store this water?

GCB:

I'm not quite with you.

Margaretta Mattingley:

Store this pure aquifer water. It is pure clean water. And if it could, should it be stored, you could give the Bathurst Estate fresh water from Cirencester not Oxford.

GCB:

Okay. Right. Yes, gentleman right at the back? Did you want to raise a point? (No.) No, okay.

I want to, Laurence, go to South Cerney. And I don't know whether you asked for it but you're down to answer it. The whole issue of Wayne Homes and the dewatering of the lake, which is a horrendous problem really. Would you just like to describe what's gone on. Because I've seen it with my own eyes. And where we've got to, what the Environment Agency could be doing about it.

Laurence King, CDC:

Well I won't tell the Environment Agency what they should be doing. I think that is for probably a separate meeting. But what I can add is that Thames Water will inevitably be asked to adopt the new system that's been put in place. And I think there's a few mixed messages coming forward, and the

suggestion is that there's just a bit more reassurance required from Thames that adoption will not occur until you're absolutely sure that no groundwater is continuously pumped. I think it's just to get, to put that on record to say that that adoption will not occur.

GCB: So, Laurence, just describe to this whole room please what has gone on. We've got to be careful because we don't, I think, scientifically know, what the causal effect is.

Laurence King, CDC:

Exactly. So the alleged problem is that new surface water drainage put in on a major development at a depth that they encountered groundwater. To sustain the lower level of groundwater, they've had to pump continuously for, this has been going on for 12 months or so. The alleged consequence of that is that a very localised nature rich lake has dried up, is lost. As you say, scientifically it's not been proven that that pumping caused that, so we can't establish it as such. But what we could do is ask the developers to ensure that ground water wasn't continuing to be pumped, because of their faulty network. And they are just taking a long long time, 1, to address that concern, but also, to carry out repairs to the system to make it sealed. So it should be a sealed surface water drainage system. Unfortunately intermittent pumping is still being witnessed. So without us putting sort of polite pressure on the developers, to say, can you please double check, belt and braces, that this isn't an ongoing pumping situation, because they felt they were pumping surface water, but then nobody can actually understand, well, what surface water? It's been pretty dry. So we feel that they are groundwater pumping. We're happy to be corrected. And we're awaiting them to come back to us to say no, you're right, we've put it to bed now, we've found out whereabouts, it's resolved. But the overriding concern is that it will be virtually forgotten and Thames Water will end up picking up the system, which will mean that ultimately Thames Water will be paying horrendous amounts in electricity bills because it will be pumping continuously. So it's a case of just making sure that they know, carry out the repairs required, and that Thames won't be taking the step forward of adopting the system until everybody's happy it's a sealed system.

GCB:

That's very helpful Laurence. I went to look at it myself, at the request of the residents, and basically it's a group of residents that have houses around this pond, it was a nice natural feature, and now it's completely dried up. And they are not at all happy, and I wouldn't be happy either. And I walked the land down to the river and in the middle of summer there was an enormous volume of water being pumped. Now that would imply that it's being pumped from a subterranean source. So I now turn to Thames Water and the EA, asking what you're doing to investigate this, because it does seem to me to be a pretty unfortunate problem.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

So currently this is not one of our assets, which I think it had been suggested it is our asset.

GCB:

Sounds as though it might be to come.

Well, there are two different assets. So as operational manager I have responsibility for a waste system. And apologies, when I read the question, I read it a bit wrong. I was thinking it was on the waste side. So if we're talking waste side, we have standards we expect builders to stick to. I believe those standards need to be improved because where we are now building appears to be more and more on wet ground and does cause us massive headaches.

GCB:

It's surface water.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

I realise. I will get on to surface water in a second, sorry. But we are building more and more in some wet areas. There's always a clue in some of these place names and street names that involve water.

We have not been able to improve that standard. That's the standard that's worked to. However we have timescales, we have to do our sign-offs, walk-offs and adopt. I have experience of a number of places which that's happened in July in various different years, and it hurts us in the winter. One thing I will reassure everyone is the minute we know there's a problem we've grown some teeth, gone back to the developers and made them make improvements. Because we have seen increased money being spent on power for pump stations. We don't want water coming into systems where we know we've already got problems in some of these areas. So we've had some really good successes. And that's based on the waste side, just to be clear.

On the surface water side there's not always a guarantee that we will adopt those assets. I'm not from the surfaces team, I am the operational manager. I look after what we do adopt, what we do get. I'm not familiar with this site. If we do, then I'm really grateful for the heads up around this issue, and I know we've got interest in our team because some of our teams use some of the local lakes to do their own activities, and we're really passionate about trying to keep that source there. So we will make some enquiries. I'll take that away and, I can't give you an answer here, but we've got your name and we'll look into it.

GCB:

I think what Laurence and I are doing, and I don't know where there are any residents here from that area? (Yes.) Yes, you know all about it. What we're flagging up is that they, the developer has installed some pretty big pipes at quite a deep depth, and one wonders why it was necessary. I mean I'm a chartered land surveyor, I know a thing or two about these. Why it was necessary to install such a big drainage system. I think you need to be very careful and carry out some very rigorous investigation before you adopt that system.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Yes. And there's a chance that they won't because there's a known history of water table etc. But that's not in our arena at the moment, so I'll certainly speak to my colleagues and put it on the radar so that we are very cautious with whatever comes our way. Thank you.

GCB:

Yes.

Joe, I have been in contact with the Environment Agency, and we haven't had a lot of help I have to say. I feel the correspondence with Juliet Layton. She's been intimately involved as the local councillor. I just feel that the Environment Agency could have done more. If there is no causal effect, fine, and there must be some other effect, but if there is a causal effect I just feel the Environment Agency haven't been as proactive in investigating this, because it's quite a dramatic dewatering of this lake. I don't know what you can report to us.

Joe Cuthbertson, EA:

Yes Sir Geoffrey, a couple of things to add. We want to see a resolution to this, as all of us here do. Primarily this is for us. Whilst there's flood risk angles to this, it's a number of other regulations involved. So colleagues in another department, not the flood risk area that I work in, are leading on that. It's they who you will have heard from. I believe they shared our latest position with CDC and with the residents group. I've the name Brian Pauley here. It's been shared recently with Brian. There are some, there are multi agency responsibilities here for resolving this, and I think for us there are a number of things that need to be done in the group, and done by the partnership, before we look into detailed investigations by the EA, because we feel there are some steps that could be undertaken first which we need to discuss and agree Sir Geoffrey as a partnership. But the key point really is we are engaged with this issue, we've got a clear position that we've communicated, and we'll work as a group with the partnership to resolve this.

GCB:

So, Juliet, you've lived with this, you've been more at the sharp end than I've been even. Are you

satisfied by what we've heard or not?

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC:

Well not really. This has been going on

GCB:

Sorry, introduce yourself?

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC:

I'm Cllr Juliet Layton from South Cerney. Residents had the pleasure of the lake, or the lack of the lake now. As you said, Brian Pauley has done an immense amount of work. He's an engineer so he's not talking sort of local rumour/rubbish. He's done an immense amount of work on this. An application that was refused by Council but that sadly went to appeal and went to the government inspector and he said it fine to build on the floodplain, and took absolutely no notice of the way the groundwater moved, despite, as we all know, the massive amount of information that was given to them. We got, right from the very beginning of the entrance road they were trying to lay their surface water drainage, and they had to keep digging deeper and deeper. So we knew they were moving, not surface water but the groundwater. In order to get rid of the surface water, I think you have to put, for surface water drainage pipes 4m down, but they were digging about 6m to get rid of ground water in, and get that water out. So they've been pumping constantly. It's now intermittent. It's like two minutes on, two minutes off. Something like that. And they're running two pumps to do this. The drains they put in are now broken. And so they need to actually redo the road. They've got to get that road up. They don't want to get the road up because they've got people in. So there are huge amounts of problems. As Laurence said, probably not at this meeting, but I want you all to be aware that Wayne Homes, the guy there, thinks everything is fine. Because I don't think they've got any remote understanding of how the building's going and how their contractors are doing it. I think they've got rid of one bunch of contractors and got in others. But at the moment they've got a rising main at the end of the development, it's 8m down, it's on and off, it's pumping with two pumps. It has got a label on it that says "surface water drainage". There is not one pipe going into there that's got anything to do with surface water. It is pumping ground water from 8 metres down. It's got levels that it runs to, which under our conditions it's surface water drainage. But that's got nothing do with groundwater.

The other issue I have is that I've got residents in a line from where the lake is, so along Broadway Lane going into Winchcombe Gardens going downhill, suffering from cracks appearing in their houses and very dry gardens. We've had a drought. They were pumping through a drought as well. But, I can't prove that that's anything to do with that, as you say about the lake. But the wildlife in the lake, the newts, the swans, the coots, everything, they're all dead, they've gone.

GCB:

Thank you. Thank you. I mean, I hope, Joe, you can see this is a pretty serious issue. And I think actually the amount of water they are pumping into the river needs investigating. That could give you a pretty good idea, I mean any hydrologist will soon know whether this is coming from the development itself or whether it's much wider abstraction of groundwater. Maybe even a meter where it goes into the river would soon tell you what sort of quantities of water are going in. But I can tell you it's pretty horrendous. So I've corresponded with you. I've corresponded with the chief executive of the Environment Agency Sir James Bevan. But I have to say, politely, that we are not terribly satisfied with the investigations being carried out by the Environment Agency so far. Please, please, please could you look at this problem. Thank you.

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC:

Sir Geoffrey, could I just add to that, you mentioned the river, the volume of water. This is going in to the Shire Ditch, where you are pumping further along. You know, the outskirts of Shorncote, then there is this you know the reach where you walk. We've had flooding down that Holborn. That

happened before we had the lake situation. It was very dodgy a couple of years ago at Holborn. How that links, I'm not 100% sure but I can see certainly that flooding, that Shire Ditch and all the way down the lane to New Walk, which doesn't usually get flooded, it's usually impassable for most of the winter, since they've been pumping.

GCB:

Very good point. No, thank you for that, it's very helpful. We're okay for time. I want to move to Kempford with Cllr John O'Donnell. And I know that Stephen Andrews who's here probably wants to perhaps come in. But, John, you've got a question.

Cllr John O'Donnell, Kempford Parish Council:

We have a couple of concerns in Kempford. Firstly it's surrounded by the Coln on one side, it has the Thames on the other side, and some huge huge quarries in the middle. And as a recent member of the Parish Council, I would just like some assurance from the EA that the groundwater from these quarries is actually being managed properly. Because in periods of heavy rain, like we've had today, it seems to flood round the area very very easily. Now we know that some of the area is flood plain anyway up on the Thames and the Coln but the effect that that quarrying is having on groundwater. I understand, I'm not an engineer, but I'd just like some assurance from the EA that it is being managed properly. And secondly, just on a really simple point, I've lived in the village about 12 years, and I don't think I've ever seen the surface water drains cleared. And just from my walks, they're solid. So when you have rain like, you won't have noticed, it's behind you, this morning, the roads are just cascading with water. And it just, if the best way to prevent floods is, you know, the best prevention is to prevent the flood happening. So where that excess surface water goes, probably back into the groundwater eventually, further up the floodplain. And it just seems such a simple remedy to clear the drains.

GCB:

Stephen, you're from the District Council here. Do you want to say something? Stephen Andrews.

Stephen Andrews, CDC:

Thank you. I think to the first point I would add the direction of the catchment area from Moorcott Lakes down to the airfield, there's been little problem recently, but of course it's been very dry recently. And, to the surface water flooding problem, I would add the point that has happened in the past, which is the impact on the sewer tank that is on the bend near the Church. Which causes the backing up of sewage such that those houses in the past have been affected by sewage flooding. So there's, again, not recently, because it's been very dry but this is something that has occurred in the previous winter and we need to be prepared for perhaps a very bad winter coming.

GCB:

Okay. We seem to have a multiplicity of problems here, part Highways, part Thames Water, part Environment Agency maybe. Richard, shall we go first to you? I mean, having had a very dry summer and then suddenly getting a lot of rain, you're bound to get rubbish washed into your culverts. But I'm sure you have a regular programme of cleaning out and can only get round so much at any one time. Maybe you'll speak for yourself.

Richard Gray, GCC:

Yes, thank you Sir Geoffrey. Yeah, we do have a programme of cleaning out every gully that we have on the map. The frequency of that depended on the risk. That was how we worked until about 3 years ago. We recognise now with climate change and the change that's happening there, we're moving now an annual clean. I am not responsible for the Kempford area but I'm more than happy if you want to use me as the postman. I certainly can locate when the last clean happened. So if you can give me the location I can take that one forward. I'll give you my details afterwards.

Cllr John O'Donnell, Kempford Parish Council:

Well the location's hard. I don't go round and pinpoint every one, but on my walks, you can see that all the grids are full to the top, and particularly on Beeny and High Street. And of course, with all the farm users and huge vehicles passing through there, you can imagine the discharge from the wheels when they're passing through.

Richard Gray, GCC:

Yeah. With the best intention we can't prevent that flooding. You know, we just clean them. You can phone us on the 08000 514514 number, and if there's a localised problem we can despatch resources to the small jobs, certainly.

GCB:

So I think maybe Richard we pick that up and perhaps give Cllr O'Donnell an update of when they were last cleaned.

Richard Gray, GCC:

Sir Geoffrey?

GCB:

Sorry, you did have your hand up.

Richard Gray, GCC:

What I would suggest is to make contact with our highway development management team in Gloucester. The contact there is a chap called Nathan Drover. But just to make sure that this one won't slip through the gaps and an adoption error is made, I think you need to touch base and make sure that, I'm aware that the representations, when they first started the site they were hoping the groundwater had to be pumped away so there's clearly a problem beyond what they think it is. I just wanted to close that loop really.

GCB:

Thank you. I think I might drop him a line myself.

So Cllr O'Donnell raised the issue of sewage near the corner by church. (I raised that.) You did, Stephen. Do you want to address that issue? This might be a bit of a googly. If you've got a problem we won't talk about it, but if that's the case perhaps we could -

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

We'll need to catch up after the meeting if that's okay, just for some more details around when, obviously we've got to know when, just to understand it, so if you could give me time to get back to you. I don't have the answers here and now.

GCB:

I appreciate you don't. Thank you for that. Perhaps next we'll do, I'm sure it's been raised, Joe, the issue of the quarry and surface water.

Joe Cuthbertson, EA:

So, well actually, as a general principle, we are consulted on quarrying activity at the planning phase, and we would have carried out you know, we would have reviewed, flood risk assessments, hydrological assessments, that would have come in in the past, but actually until seeing this question this wasn't an issue that flood risk, which sounds complex and from a number of sources, from what you've described, it wasn't really high on our radar. So I think we need to have some follow-up conversations after this meeting, probably as a group, so that we can look at these and get back to you with a fuller view. Apologies that I'm not aware of it, apologies if there have been some questions or correspondence with the EA about this one. So it's come to us as a seemingly new issue but I don't know if you've had any liaison with the EA recently?

Cllr John O'Donnell, Kempford Parish Council:

Just very briefly. It has been raised through conversations, meetings informally with the Quarry who have acted as the interlocutor, because they are proposing a change to the scheme of restoration which involves a change to the drainage after that restoration. So, and as far as I understand, we're told that the Environment Agency are asking questions about the scheme. And of course we are concerned that a change to the consented scheme doesn't add to the problem.

GCB:

Okay. Time's moving on. I think what we ought to do is you two, with EA, maybe Thames Water, need to meet offline after this meeting if possible. Thank you. I've not done very well. I've got a few questions from Cirencester here. So I'm going to sort of act as in loco for the questioners to do them fairly quickly and put them all together. If everybody could sort of make a note if they're particularly responsible. Karen, I think you have talked about sewer lids being sufficiently sealed so that they don't when the floods are on top the water doesn't seep into them. This was Dugdale Road. I think we've probably dealt with that. If not I stand corrected. Michael Chipping-Havers – are works progressing to deal with small cavities underground at the end Estcote Road? Again I think we talked about that, but if not perhaps you could add something to that. We then come to a question from Nicholas Henderson, and of course, what to do is look at John Peacock's case and he's talking about East End and City Bank Road. He's got a long speech so perhaps you could address those issues. And then there's Abbey Grounds. Well that's Nicholas Henderson. I think we talked about Abbey Grounds. And the culvert. The culvert was last inspected in December 1997 and was found to be in good condition. At the time reference was made to 2 yearly inspections. These never happened. In 2001 local residents wrote to CDC reminding them of the need for inspection but there was no response. Today we posted details on our website. This is Dunstall Brook. Nick, do you want to, very very quickly?

Nicholas Henderson:

Your brilliant summation of my question - 168 years ago the culvert was built through Cirencester. Nobody knows quite where it runs now. There is some dispute. The Environment Agency map is incorrect. For example there are discussions about it on our website, the Friends of Dunstall Brook. The point that you've made is, paraphrasing my letter to you, this is now the silver jubilee of last inspection of the culvert running through the town. This culvert, we have some photographic evidence showing utilities with the culvert, we have some indication of riparian owners who have damaged the sides of the walls by putting rainwater outlets in to the culvert. It is frankly an accident waiting to happen and extraordinarily difficult to deal with because there must be dozens of riparian owners who have responsibility. But may I ask essentially a simple question: can it be inspected, and can the result of that be published so that we can all see what's going on there?

GCB:

That's a pretty straightforward question. Culvert being inspected. That sounds like a Thames Water responsibility? No? They're shaking their heads. Whose responsibility is it?

Nicholas Henderson:

It's probably a CDC responsibility. The very last time that was done it was done by the CDC.

GCB:

Right. Who's going to address that? Andrew?

Andrew Docherty, CDC:

Yes. This one was raised last year so it's been on our list because yeah, it's come to be a concern because it's in the potentially low probability except something will go wrong eventually, because it needs maintaining, and it's potentially quite a high impact if there's a problem with it. So it's a

concern from that front. So it has been discussed at length in recent conversations between us, flood authority and the EA in terms of how we get the inspection of such a thing done. I'm afraid I wasn't here in 2001 so I don't know what we said then or in 1997. We know that it is a highly non-trivial exercise, I'll put it like that, to actually get a culvert inspection done on that. At the minute we are working on how such an inspection can be done, but at the minute I have no answer to the when, and who's involved in actually doing that. It's an ongoing exercise.

GCB:

Can we leave that with an action point for you Andrew. It sounds as though it could be an accident waiting to happen.

Yes. You've got your hand up, yes. Tell us who you are.

Cllr Nikki Ind, CDC:

I'm actually Cllr Nikki Ind, but I am here at a personal level because I've been involved in this since the first flood meeting in 2012 when I cried because my dad was dying upstairs whilst the house was flooded in Estcote Road. A few things. Firstly, I'm absolutely ecstatic, it's taken 9 years to work in partnership, but fantastic. At last everyone is talking to everybody which is what we asked for in the first place. The persistence of everybody I'm grateful for.

We talked a lot about Hereward Road. My mother's property is in Estcote Road. And you talked about Dugdale Road. Estcote Road, most definitely there is drains, it is coming from the drains in our garden, there was foul stuff in the water, so I'm just a little bit confused about the Dugdale Road/Estcote Road. There are a few houses in Dugdale Road and two houses in Estcote Road at the end of the system, which in those two events, in 2012 and 2020, get the water inside the house. So I am concerned about that obviously.

And the other this was, one of my action points from last time, was about training. I was calling Thames Water on Christmas Eve and nobody knew what to do. I was reassured last year about some training. I just want some reassurance that if I have to ring on Christmas Eve again this year someone's going to know what to do. Thank you.

GCB:

Thank you Nikki. That's very helpful. So perhaps we could go to Thames Water and cover her questions, and have all the sewer lids been sealed and when the river floods it stops the water that goes into them? Perhaps that issue we didn't consider yet, Karen. And then Mike Chipping also says, how are the works progressing filling the small cavities underground near me on Estcote Road? So that's, a lot of the road gullies, drains, rainwater from the roads in the area. So perhaps if we just address the boundary between Dugdale and Estcote.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Yes. A whole lot going on in there, but to break it down section by section, technically, a question that I was made aware of before we came, and prepared with, which was where my general view of Dugdale in the system were based on quite generic. If there's two specific properties we want to talk about that. We'll link up and get some better details. We want to go back and look at those, and also the Estcote Road that you mentioned as well, just to make sure, for clarity. We are aware that there is some water that's in that area. My approach stands, it's about keeping water out of the system, but as I said earlier if the water's coming out of the system, we need to do work elsewhere to stop it doing that, but I need some more details to do that. I'm not clear with the cavity at the end of the road but, again, if that's something you're familiar with I'm sure we can have a discussion.

GCB:

I see hands up all over the place. Where am I going first. Andrew, I think you were the first.

Andrew Docherty, CDC:

Just to say for clarity, the last time we had all these problems there it was a combination of surface water and of sewage problems. And when they get particularly bad they just merge together. So the parties involved are aware that there are multiple things going on there, rather than being just surface water or just sewage. That is part of the workings and conversation and work that's going on.

GCB:

And I went there on Christmas Eve and literally, as you say, sewage. Ah, Juliet, briefly please.

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC:

Briefly, I've got a question for Thames Water.

GCB:

Can we just deal with this problem? (That's fine). I'll bring you in. Are there hands up related to the questions we've had so far? Richard, yes?

Richard Gray, GCC:

Thank you sir. Working with Laurence again on this one, I'm pretty certain that the drainage system on the whole of that estate takes roof water as well. Which may be part of the issue there.

GCB:

Looking at the time, we need to just take that off line. But it's been raised. That's a perennial problem. We need to keep at it really. And it is really, it's probably the most most intractable problem we've got to deal with today. Juliet.

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC:

Yeah, I'd just like to get some reassurance from Thames Water. We are really glad that you've done lining, did you say 310 metres? There are issues but if you go down Clarks Hay, I believe you certainly if it's a school day, but we've had a drought and it's still, we've still had issues which won't be surface water infiltration, around the area where the United Church is, and they have a little gully thing in front of the door, and that comes up and you can see toilet paper and stuff and the smell in there. And this is a church that's used by members of the public. It's a public facility. Used by ladies and their children in there and it's used as a warm space, or it will be, that you know, a lot of people use that. And it's a very unhealthy way to be breathing so often. I'd also ask, obviously we've got, the way Wayne Homes is connected, being used down to Shorncliffe. Shorncliffe has been exceedingly aromatic lately. Beyond belief. And I wonder, can you explain why? And bearing in mind we are building out on the Steadings so all that's going to be there as well. But it is incredible, the smell that's coming from Shorncliffe.

GCB:

Sounds as though we need a good dose of rain.

Cllr Juliet Layton, CDC

The pear drops, they spray that, that's horrible as well.

GCB:

There we are. It's a very unpleasant problem.

Denise Kinsella, Thames Water:

Cherry Tree Drive. We do drop the pear drops in there as well occasionally. As far as the odour at Shorncliffe I will take that away to my colleagues. I know with some of the sewage treatment, because there's been an exceptionally low flow because of the drought this year, it means there's low flow, there's no ground water going in there either, can't find it. So it's it a lot more thicker liquid as it were in there. So we've found with other sewage treatment works there has been an increase in

odours. Specifically for this one, what I can do, I've got your details, I can go and have a word with my colleague and find out specifically about it and we can have a chat afterwards on that side.

As for the Church, I'm aware of that French drain at the front, and I think the reason it gets out is being connected to the foul sewer. But I wasn't aware of them having recent incidents. I know historically we had that groundwater etc, but if it's recently been happening we can have a look at that and we can have a chat again afterwards.

GCB:

I'm so sorry, for my minutes?

Denise Kinsella, Thames Water:

Denise Kinsella. Apologies.

GCB:

Um, yes. I think you're probably going to be the last question sir, because we're fairly stretched for time. Oh and Jan. Right, the last, definitely the last two, and I want to finish by half past. Give me your name sorry.

Nick Bridges:

Nick Bridges. Last year we were promised some surveying work from EA. I just wondered if there's any update on that. And secondly I'd also like to pick up on the fact that Thames Water said that 650 metres had been lined this year. That's exactly the same figure as was quoted last year. And the lining stopped. So I just wondered when you were going to be coming back to us and relining. And you also mentioned a bigger wider piece of work to do with an analysis between City Bank and whether that can be carried out.

GCB:

Right. Which surveying work were you referring to?

Nick Bridges:

The EA said they would be doing some modelling of the town to help with the MOU.

GCB:

Okay. So the question for Thames Water first please.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Lining goes across many areas, so I think we've got the right figures we've been given today. They may have been rounded up, or rounded off I should say. I will double check though. But we are definitely definitely actively still lining out there. And in terms of the piece of work from City Bank, there is a broader piece where they are doing a study, it's literally in that area. I don't have the timescales. I will go away and get some information on that and get back.

GCB:

So the fact that there's 650 metres lined last year and this year is a coincidence?

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

We have programmed work, we work through, it's a combination between our, the contractors delivering on our givens, so our groundwater impacted systems management plans. We have them doing some work, and us as operational, we're also doing some. So there's a combination of what we're delivering up but we certainly try and keep track of what we've delivered.

GCB:

So I go back. It's 650 last year and 650 this year.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

We have done 650 this year. Last year, I don't have the number for last year.

GCB:

Can we, it's very important that we do get accurate information at these meetings. If you wish to correct it Karen, send me a note for the minutes.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

I will, I will do a double check.

Denise Kinsella, Thames Water:

I was going to say, the other thing that helps say how much we've done is the groundwater impacted system management plans which are on our website. We can have a look at the one that's published last, and that will say done in 2020-21. And our new one will be coming out as well, I believe, on 1st November. So that will again say what we've done in the last period as well. This will be out on our website, published, so you can actually have a look.

GCB:

Okay. I'm going to bring in the Environment Agency. We're going to finish in a minute. Luke, have you got all the attendance sheets?

Luke:

Has everyone fill them in? They're at the end. Whilst people are coming out

GCB:

Otherwise you won't get the minutes. Everybody please fill them in. Luke's got plenty of spare copies. Right, we'll only get emails for those who've filled them in. Environment Agency.

Jake Cuthbertson, EA:

Thank you for your questions. So my understanding was that the request for modelling survey information was to support the development or the refinement of the MOU that we discussed earlier around sluices. Our discussions that we've had with the Town Council resulted in clarifying the levels since that discussion, using our existing data and modelling that we have from several years ago, has been sufficient to deliver that refinement of the MOU. So, in the discussion we've had, it doesn't appear that there's any need for that modelling to be conducted now. That's the understanding I have, but from the nature of the question I just wondered, it might be worth us having a conversation after this just to check that we're on the same page around this issue. But from my perspective it's already resolved through the clarification of the levels in the MOU.

GCB:

Okay. We're over time. Yes, Thames Water.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

Sorry, just literally I've just been made aware of something. Actual figures installed in 2022 is 730 metres of leak-tight lining. And in South Cerney, where I quoted 300, that is last year's figure. It is actually 580 metres. And that's through all of these plans and programmes so that is the biggest total.

GCB:

Well there you are. Congratulations.

Karen Nelson, Thames Water:

I'm glad the figure went up anyway.

GCB:

By my pressing you, you've actually given yourselves greater credit so well done. And I think your colleague, did you want to say something? No, right, Jan, luck last.

Jan Bayley:

Thank you. Firstly can I thank you, but also very much Laurence and Shaun Shackleford. Laurence from the flood group, leading, for grasping the problem of Siddington and Siddington Mill bridge and dealing with it. However, we very much welcome the survey which has now been commissioned and undertaken, but how far has the scheme been progressed, in being drawn up, and (b), is funding available for it? And could I just also add that we have a huge problem with maintenance. We have a huge area to maintain. The river is actually blocked again. The Siddington Mill bridge is overgrown again. The ditches and the grates in the road are overgrown again. We just physically cannot do it. Whatever scheme comes forward must be maintenance free, either by grazing or whatever. But certainly we need ongoing maintenance now for the, you know, we can't keep doing it ourselves. We're you know, whatever. But most importantly, has there been any progress on the scheme that has been drawn up, and (b), will funding be available to implement it?

GCB:

Laurence, Andrew, it sounds like one for you.

Laurence King, CDC:

Well, literally we've just received the survey. So we will analyse the survey over the next couple of weeks. I say "we". It's myself, Mr Sirrett of the FA, Karen Spicer of the EA. That will then drive the design of the alleviation scheme. We can't put funding together until we know what the scheme will be. So until we analyse the survey, full design of the scheme, and then go out and get funding. The amount of that funding will determine whether we submit a bid through EA funding or partnership funding from CDC. So I'm afraid we're at an early stage at the moment. We've literally just received the survey.

GCB:

Well that's a good part of the answer if you've got the survey. Can you keep us up to date. If, I've got your email. As I get further updates we could keep you updated. Not necessarily today with your question, but it might be, but, Luke, are we sure we've got those sheets?

Luke:

Yes. I've got two of them here but there was another one which should be somewhere because I don't think I've got the one for the people down here.

[Multiple speakers]

Ah, there it is there.

GCB:

Right. Sounds a bit like a flooding response, everybody's shifting it on to everybody else.

8. **Close Meeting by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP**

This has been a big undertaking. I hope we've covered your problems. It's not the end of the process by any means. We will now do the minutes, and again there's been a plea for us to get them out a little bit quicker. Liz is always very good at doing them quickly but I'm less quick at approving them

because that's usually quite a big task, but we'll get the minutes out as quick as we can.

I'm more than happy, for those that are on this, what we'll do is we'll create a little email group I think, and as we get answers, if we get answers from any of the agencies, we'll just simply send out a group email and if your concern is raised or otherwise you might be interested.

We will fix I think the date of the next meeting. Probably April time, if that's approving of everybody, and let's hope for everybody's sake that we get a relatively benign winter. Although from what I'm hearing outside it doesn't sound particularly benign, but I hope we do.

Can I thank particularly on your behalf the agencies. We tend to give them a bit of stick but they actually do do a lot of work in between these meetings. So thank you all very very much, we much appreciate you coming. You're busy people, and thank you all very much for taking an interest in these problems, and I do think some of the progress that we've heard today, the meetings do actually ginger people into taking action they might not otherwise take. So thank you all very much, and at half past twelve, I declare the meeting closed. Thank you very much.

Response to enquiry from John O'Donnell regarding the cleaning of highway gullies in Kempsford

Daniel Tiffney, Deputy Area Highway Manager, Area Highways – Cotswolds:

I have looked at our mapping system that records the cleaning history of these gullies and can inform you that they were last cleaned on the morning of 30th May 2022. These gullies are part of our annual cyclical cleaning programme and so their next routine clean would be in May time 2023. The planned exception to this are the gullies near The Parsonage that are not part of piped system, but connect into a soakaway in the verge and I fund a twice yearly clean of these as an exceptional bit of drainage maintenance. I plan to do one of these cleans very soon, ahead of winter.

Please let me know if you have any further queries.