

Hampshire Flood Risk Management Partnership Event: 9 December 2013
Hampshire County Council Environment & Transportation Select Committee:
Request for Written Evidence

Deadline for receipt of responses: 10 November 2013

The following questions are being addressed to the local flood risk management authorities operating in Hampshire and the relevant regional flood and coastal committees. Your organisation's response to as many of these questions as are relevant will assist the Select Committee in its investigations.

You are welcome to use this document as a basis for your response (please contact the scrutiny officer, see below, for an electronic copy), or submit a separate document if you prefer.

Name of Organisation Responding: Thames Water Utilities Limited

Contact Name and Contact Details: Mark Dickinson (Development Planning Manager), Justin Camis (Specialist Network Manager).
Contact via Hilary Murgatroyd (Local / Regional Government Liaison)
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Funding

1. What is Thames Water's understanding of the key challenges in obtaining funding for flood risk management in Hampshire, and how might these be surmounted?

The water industry operates in a highly regulated environment with funding proposals reviewed and agreed every 5 years with the economic regulator Ofwat. Investment programmes are divided into Asset Management Periods – preparations for Amp 6 (2015 to 2020) are on-going with Thames Water submitting a Business Plan to Ofwat towards the end of 2013 with an anticipated final view on the limits for prices and the level of corresponding investment published in 2014.

Regulation in place for the current Asset Management Period, and the outcome of the next Regulatory Contract, provide a framework within which flooding schemes can be funded.

Mechanisms of flooding can often be difficult to understand and resolve, and where investment cannot be proved to reduce the risk of flooding from all sources, it is difficult to secure funds.

2. What role, if any, can partnership working play in helping to attract funding for flood risk management in Hampshire?

As described above, flood mechanism can be complex and often a number of agencies need to be involved to understand and relieve the risk from their own particular perspective. By working in partnership we can ensure best value through development of synergistic solutions that address root cause rather than just symptom.

3. What can Thames Water do to help maximise investment in Hampshire's flood risk management?

Thames Water is keen to work collaboratively with relevant agencies to better understand complex flooding mechanisms and where appropriate, contribute knowledge, experience and information. Where the regulatory framework permits, we would also consider providing funding to support the delivery of improvement works.

Overlapping Responsibilities

4. The Flood and Water Management Act has made major changes in the division of responsibilities for flood risk management. However, the duties conferred upon the various agencies by the legislation interact and overlap, as do the sources of flooding themselves. What are the key areas of overlap in the opinion of Thames Water and what challenges do these pose to flood risk management in Hampshire?

We welcome the new overarching body with a legal responsibility to draw parties together to work in a co-ordinated way where the root cause of the problem is not clearly defined. To date we have not experienced issues or challenges presented by perceived overlapping responsibilities.

5. How can these challenges be managed, and what are the key actions that must be taken to improve flood risk management partnership working in Hampshire?

It is often difficult when working with large agencies to be able to quickly identify the correct person or department to be talking to. We would welcome the sharing of names and contact details of key teams in relevant agencies. Regular (half yearly) forums would be valuable to share knowledge of new and on-going flood risk cases.

Sustainable Drainage

6. Once the Flood and Water Management Act has been fully enabled, the County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority will be responsible for approving and adopting all sustainable drainage systems on new developments. What impacts will this have upon Thames Water and its operations?

Historically, Thames Water has not adopted any Sustainable Urban Drainage features, therefore we expect no material change.

We welcome the development of SUDs infrastructure since this has the potential to reduce the influence of surface water into our network, consequently reducing the likelihood of flooding. Where brownfield redevelopment is proposed, we anticipate betterment through reduced surface water discharging to the public system.

It is recognised that SUDs solutions are not technically feasible in all locations. Where a piped solution meeting sewers for adoption standards are constructed and offered, along with any legally required easements / discharge deeds, these will continue to be adopted.

7. In what ways can the County Council use this new responsibility to complement the work of other flood risk management authorities – especially, but not exclusively in relation to flood risk management?

In considering applications for the disposal of surface water, the County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority must ensure the disposal hierarchy has been met before allowing a new discharge to the public system.

Opportunities should be maximised that consider the enhancement of proposed sustainable drainage in order to bring about wider community benefits from flood risk management.

The Community Infrastructure Levy could be used for the provision or development of offsite sustainable drainage infrastructure.

8. In what ways, if any, can Thames Water support the delivery of the sustainable drainage approval body function?

Thames Water recognises its responsibility as a new Statutory Consultee for the approval of the discharge of surface water to the public sewerage system and will be responding accordingly.

Maintenance

9. Please provide details of any relevant maintenance programme/s your organisation undertakes which is beneficial to flood risk management?

Thames Water adopts a risk based approach in the management of the public drainage network.

10. What is the biggest issue in terms of effective maintenance of flood risk management infrastructure/water courses, and what would help address this?

Many assets installed in drainage systems lie inactive for lengthy periods and without effective exercising and maintenance cannot be relied upon to fulfil their intended function in the event of an emergency.

Community involvement is key in supporting statutory organisations in the event of a flood risk materialising. Volunteer Flood Wardens are being promoted by Defra & the EA and Lead Local Flood Authorities could provide tools, equipment and training that would empower the community to take steps to reduce the risk of flooding.

Other

Are there any other comments with regard to flood risk management that you would like to make to the Select Committee?

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the Committee's request, your responses will help Members identify areas for improvement in flood risk management. Please note, as evidence to a Select Committee inquiry, your responses will be published unless you specify that the content is not for publication (see guidance notes).

Please return your responses to:

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It will assist the committee's preparations for the event on 9 December if you can submit your written evidence by 10th November 2013.