

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

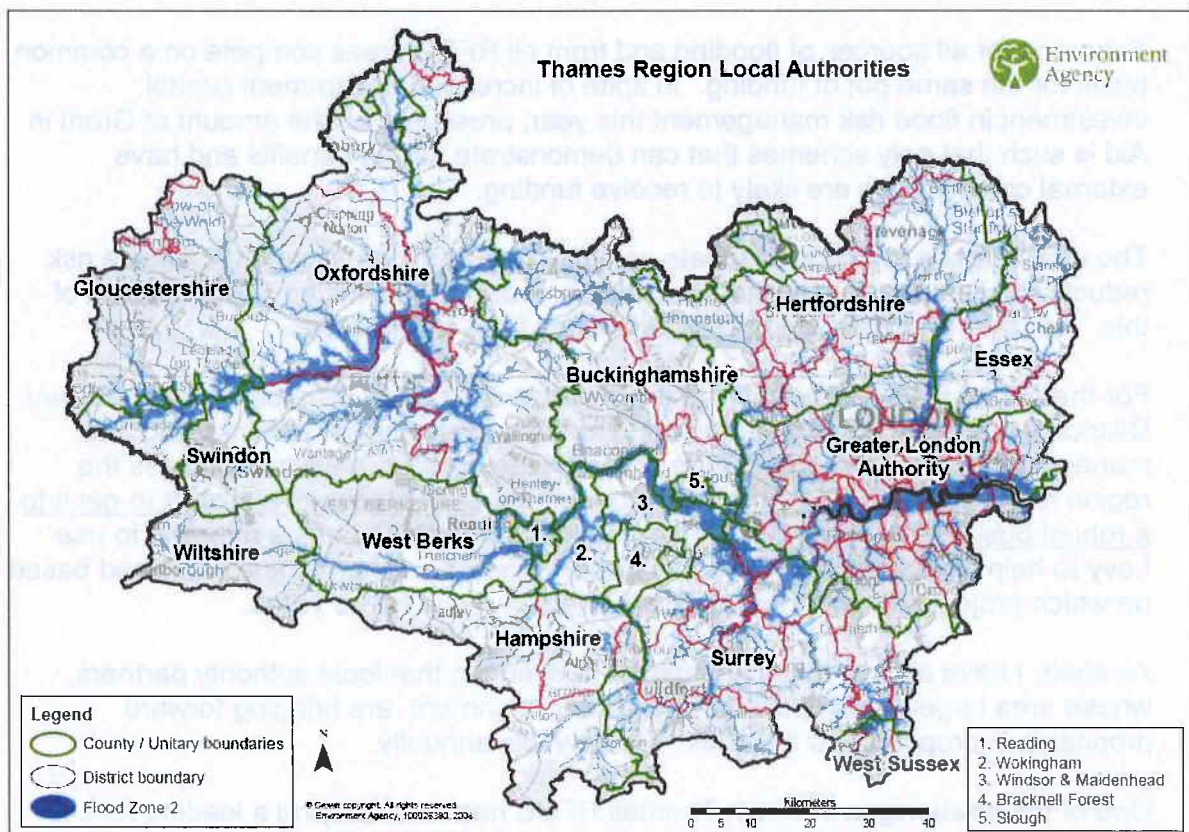
Name of Organisation Responding: Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Amanda Nobbs (Chair) - amanda@pajm.co.uk; 01483 573934

Emma Formoy, Environment Agency – emma.formoy@environment-agency.gov.uk; 0118 953 5464

The Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee approves and oversees a programme of work by the authorities responsible for managing flood risk in the Thames catchment, also known as Risk Management Authorities. This programme is managed and funding distributed by the Environment Agency on behalf of Defra.

Parts of Hampshire covered by the Thames RFCC are subject to flood risk from rivers, surface water and groundwater. The Environment Agency has lead responsibility for managing risk from main rivers, Hampshire County Council, in its role as a Lead Local Flood Authority, has lead responsibility for managing surface and groundwater risk.



The principal flood risks in the Thames catchment part of Hampshire are:

- Around 6300 properties at risk of river flooding of which 900 are at significant risk
- Over 13,000 properties at risk of surface water flooding – estimated from initial surface water mapping for Rushmoor, Basingstoke and Hart districts.

A key flood defence asset is the Cove Brook Flood Storage Area in Farnborough.

Funding

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

In common with many services, revenue investment in flood risk management has reduced significantly and the pressure increases. This will affect maintenance and present **challenges** for the capacity of the Environment Agency to be able to deliver.

Capital funding - for both new schemes and renewal of assets - is allocated using the Defra "Partnership Funding" approach. This involves projects attracting Grant in Aid from central government based on the public benefit they provide, such as reducing flood risk to homes or creating habitat for wildlife.

Some schemes will be fully funded, others only partly funded by Grant in Aid. Contributions from local Levy, local businesses, local communities, local authorities or other parties who will benefit from the scheme are often required to enable a project to secure a place in the programme.

Schemes for all sources of flooding and from all RFCC areas compete on a common basis for the same pot of funding. In spite of increased government capital investment in flood risk management this year, pressures on the amount of Grant in Aid is such that only schemes that can demonstrate strong benefits and have external contributions are likely to receive funding.

The **challenge** is to find appropriate contributions from beneficiaries to enable risk reduction measures to proceed. In Thames, local Levy forms an important part of this. It is also important to show contributions from other parties.

For the part of Hampshire that is in the Thames catchment, Hampshire and relevant Districts have been encouraged to bring forward proposals for investigating and managing surface water risks. One of the **challenges** we have seen across the region is the ability of local authorities to fund the early stages of a project to get it to a robust business case for investment. The Thames RFCC has a principle to use Levy to help local authorities to do this where possible. This work is prioritised based on which projects we think might attract Grant in Aid in future years.

As chair, I have always taken an interest in ensuring that local authority partners, whose area largely falls outside the Thames catchment, are bringing forward proposals in proportion to their risk. I review this annually.

One of the **challenges** in which Thames RFCC has been playing a leading role, is moving to a longer term approach to planning flood risk investments. Longer term planning is more appropriate for delivering major capital infrastructure and will help to achieve efficiencies. Last year Thames RFCC resolved to move to a five year rolling programme approach to its levy programme. Defra has secured a six year settlement for FCRM Grant in Aid funding. The Environment Agency has undertaken to prepare a 10 year forward look for major schemes across the country to assist partners in identifying when a window for delivering their major schemes might arise. This should also assist by creating clearer timescales for planning when relevant beneficiary

contributions will be required. Two positive **challenges** flow from this: ensuring we develop a robust 10 year pipeline of schemes and ensuring priority projects are "spade ready".

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

Partnerships can play a crucial part in

- creating the momentum to get a project off the ground,
- encouraging external contributions,
- maximising benefits, and
- reducing costs by enabling more efficient delivery.

Engaging partners from the outset is important.

Partnerships between Risk Management Authorities and local communities are vital. It may be appropriate for the community to be a leading partner. Involving the community and creating a sense of ownership and involvement can be particularly beneficial when it comes to securing contributions and support for longer term maintenance. Thames RFCC wants to investigate the potential for strengthening partnerships with parish councils.

Partnerships can increase funding options and make an otherwise unaffordable scheme viable. For example, it may be possible to link flood risk management benefits to other local redevelopment or enhancement projects that might be planned. Linking up investment with water companies can reduce costs. Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships will be increasingly important. Swift action is needed given the timescale for their investment plans.

Thames RFCC is always keen to know of any proposed development or redevelopment, including highway schemes, which could potentially enable cost effective integration of flood risk management into a partnership approach. Working to longer time horizons should help with planning for such opportunities. We ask members to alert us to possibilities and focus on future options in our forward look each April.

Involvement of elected representatives is an important part of partnership working. RFCC members are charged with "optimising value for money and benefits for local communities". Members are able to bring their experience and community knowledge to the discussion. When they are knowledgeable about schemes within their patch and champion the outcomes to the rest of the RFCC, this maximises the potential for delivery.

Partnerships can also play a significant role in supporting investment in flood warning services and in the development of community flood plans. Such initiatives will be particularly important where no built scheme is available. Interest in this type of partnership may increase given the publication of updated risk information and changes to insurance provisions.

3. What can the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee do to help maximise investment in Hampshire's flood risk management?

All RFCCs have a responsibility to “promote efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that optimises value for money and benefits for local communities”. This guides the advice we give when we approve the Thames programme. It also guides our Levy investment decisions.

The elected members of the Thames RFCC agree a Levy each year that raises funds from local authorities for flood risk management. The Levy is used to support the delivery of the overall programme of work by Authorities and the Agency. Thames RFCC levy investment is based on the following principles:

- Focus on risk, including significant risk, taking account of value for money as measured by Partnership Funding score and by benefit cost ratio;
- Adopt an integrated approach to all types of risk including supporting surface water and ground water risk management;
- Plan ahead to ensure a robust programme in future years and enable efficiencies in delivery;
- Make progress in tackling areas where large numbers are at significant risk;
- Develop a pipeline of projects to approved business case, for programme and over-programme bids;
- Establish a portfolio of “spade ready” investments for potential growth funding opportunities;
- Maximise external contributions;
- Deliver a mix of renewal of assets and new schemes;
- Pursue an integrated approach to outcomes including environmental; and,
- Achieve a good spread of investment across the Thames RFCC area

We work to an investment framework that allows us to ensure we are able to support an appropriate range of very large, medium and smaller community schemes. This helps to sustain a healthy mix of work to benefit rural communities as well as densely populated areas. It also challenges us to support innovation.

This year we are seeking to fund the following types of project:

- All local authority projects to reduce the risks from surface water and groundwater
- Pipeline and project development work within the capacity of the business to deliver
- Detailed design to get projects “spade ready”
- Completing schemes funded by a combination of Grant in Aid and Levy
- Implementation of small/medium scale projects with contributions
- Communities at risk work
- Early stages of project development for major projects and building up our capacity to leverage in further contributions
- Environmental schemes with significant outcomes
- Preparation of economic business cases for appropriate schemes.

We encourage bids from Hampshire and will be receptive to supporting their preparation. We funded the preparation of Community at Risk packs which help to identify clusters of risk.

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 the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and what challenges do these pose to flood risk management in Hampshire?

The significant driver for the arrangements in the Flood and Water Management Act was the realisation that surface, ground, sewer and reservoir flooding all needed to be considered alongside fluvial, tidal and coastal erosion risk.

Appreciating that no single risk management authority could lead on all these types of flood risk, it was a sensible approach to assign lead responsibilities and require risk management authorities to cooperate. Hence:

- water and sewerage companies lead on sewer flooding,
- Lead Local Flood Authorities lead on risk from surface and ground water flooding and from less critical rivers called “ordinary watercourses”
- the Environment Agency is well placed to lead on flood risk from “main rivers”, reservoirs and the sea, and to play a strategic overview role.

Given that sources of flooding interact and overlap, it is essential that all sources of risk are considered in an integrated way taking account of catchments and coastal cells.

There are bound to be times when adopting an integrated approach to managing integrated risk is challenging for partners. However, having established that partnership working is beneficial when managing flood risk, working together on integrated risks is logical.

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?

All risk management authorities need to work together to appreciate each other's roles and responsibilities, understand risk and develop solutions to manage it.

Thames RFCC very much hopes that all partners will strive to find efficient ways of working together and adopt a pragmatic approach to achieving the most effective way forward on a case by case basis where there is any overlap.

Given the complex mix of lead responsibilities, Thames RFCC considers it is important to streamline the way flood risk is communicated to the public and wider partners. For example:

- All types of flood map for all types of risk should be available in one place using the new flood identity that can be used by all lead partners. The public should not need to have to try to work out who leads on what.



- A member of the public should be able to contact one place for help on all types of flood risk and be directed to the right help straight away.
- The Local Flood Strategy should include all flood risk data relevant to Hampshire in one place regardless of who leads on which part.
- The European Floods Directive should be invisible to the public rather than promoted as yet another layer of documents and jargon. Any valuable material required for the Directive should simply be available in existing documents produced by partners, in particular the Hampshire Local Flood Strategy.
- Jargon and acronyms should be stripped away wherever possible. Even though there are many partners involved, managing flood risk is essentially very simple. It is about identifying risk and accommodating water in ways that reduce harm to people and property and that ideally benefit the environment and economy. Much confusion and alienation is caused by overly complex processes. If we are to attract funding contributions, we need to enable people to engage.

Sustainable Drainage

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

The role of the RFCC in relation to this new responsibility is to review and to support in an advisory capacity. We have no operational role.

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?

Sustainable drainage will help to manage flood risk at source in a holistic way. This duty will ensure a wider take up of sustainable drainage techniques and reduce risk to communities.

Sustainable drainage systems have the potential to make a very significant difference over time. Whenever a sustainable drainage solution is designed and adopted, flood risk is lower than it would otherwise have been. Further, the pressure for a flood alleviation scheme to be retrofitted into a community in the future is reduced.

In order to gain the full benefits of this new responsibility, it will be very important to promote what sustainable drainage entails and the exciting possibilities opened up. At present very few people have any idea what the approach involves. Attractive real examples are needed.

8. In what ways, if any, can the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee support the delivery of the sustainable drainage approval body function?

Thames RFCC will have no formal role in the sustainable drainage approval body but will provide a forum for discussion around how this duty progresses following enactment, as the committee does with other duties under the Flood & Water Management Act.

Maintenance

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

The RFCC does not itself undertake any work but maintains an overview of the revenue programme.

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

Revenue streams for maintenance are being reduced by central government meaning that maintenance on lower risk watercourses will be reduced. Empowering landowners and communities to undertake their own maintenance could be a way to overcome this. Various schemes and pilot projects are establishing ways to enable third parties to undertake maintenance.

Other

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

On many flooding issues the Southern RFCC leads to enable efficient working and to avoid duplication. Hence my comments relate to areas of Hampshire in the Thames catchment only.

Overall, the approach of working to a Thames catchment boundary works extremely well. Water does not respect political boundaries. The advantage of a joined up approach to managing flood risk across the Thames catchment, far outweighs the disadvantage that some authorities will inevitably straddle boundaries. This has not

been an issue in Thames because a pragmatic approach is taken tailored to each instance. Involvement tends to be proportionate to the level of risk in the area.

I have strong admiration for the pragmatic way in which straddling three RFCC areas has been managed by Hampshire. We have enjoyed good member and officer representation by Hampshire and we avoid doing things more than once, where unnecessary or avoidable, by deferring to Southern as the priority RFCC relationship for Hampshire.

Please return your responses to:

Marie Mannveille, Scrutiny Officer (Environment & Transportation Select Committee)
Hampshire County Council, Corporate Services, Elizabeth II Court South, The Castle,
Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 8UJ

Email: marie.mannveille@hants.gov.uk

Telephone: 01962 845018

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