

FLOODING OF ROADS AND PROPERTIES IN HEREFORDSHIRE – VARIOUS ASPECTS

Report By: The Director of Environment and Culture

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

1. To provide information to the Committee on recent flooding events as requested in the meeting of 24th November 2008 and resultant actions.

Financial Implications

2. None as a result of this report. However the implementation of resultant actions identified will need to be considered when determining future programmes.

Background

3. At their meeting of the 24th November 2008, the Environment Scrutiny Committee requested that a report be made to Committee outlining the impact of recent flooding events throughout the County and information on resultant actions.

Impact of recent flooding on Herefordshire

4. In June and July 2007 several periods of extreme rainfall gave rise to widespread flooding, not just in Herefordshire, but also across England and parts of Wales. The period of May to July 2007 was the wettest on record for this period, with a total of 415.1mm falling across this area, more than twice the 1971-2000 average figure of 186.3mm. Widespread disruption was caused. These events were unusual both in their intensity, causing flash flooding as opposed to the frequently occurring fluvial events that occur in Herefordshire, and also in their timing, during what is classed as British summertime. The flooding of July 2007 is by far the most notable weather event to affect Herefordshire within the last ten years. Torrential rain in the period on and around the 20th of July (over 100mm in some places) combined with the wet weather in the preceding months to cause widespread chaos across the county.
5. The key point about both the June and July 2007 flooding events was the widespread flash nature of the flooding. Usual flooding events in the county tend to occur when the main river of the county, the Wye, bursts its banks following several days or possibly even weeks of consistent rainfall. However due to the more intense nature of the rainfall during these events it was not the Wye that flooded but smaller streams and brooks as well as the majority of the Wye's

tributaries. There was also a much larger amount of runoff from fields and urban surfaces as infiltration capacities were exceeded and drains failed to cope with the sheer volume of water that was created.

6. During 2008 two further flooding events occurred in September and November. The first event occurred during the weekend 1 – 3 September 2008 and the second on the weekend of the 8th and 9th November 2008. During both of these events Herefordshire was hit by extensive heavy rainfall but neither event was as severe as the July 2007 flooding events. During each event, roads were closed, several properties were flooded and damage was caused to the highways network and to highway drainage systems.

Herefordshire Council Response to flooding events

7. During each event, the Council response was to open the Emergency Information Line, the local media was kept informed of road closures and advisory notices were issued for the public to 'only travel if necessary'. The Environment Agency, the Police and the Health Protection Agency (HPA) also provided supplementary advice. Many departments of the council as well as external organisations worked together in order to meet the demands that the flooding brought in accordance with Herefordshire County Flood Plan, Major Emergency Response Plan and Emergency Response Procedures.
8. The Bellwin Scheme was also implemented in response to each of these events. This allows Local Government Ministers to make additional revenue available to support local authorities in order to assist with the immediate and unforeseen costs in dealing with the immediate response to the event and repair costs in the short term aftermath of emergency incidents.
9. The flooding events of 2007 cost the Authority in the region of £2 million. Although the majority of immediate costs were recovered through the Bellwin Scheme, such events are not accommodated for in the annual budget of the Highways section.
10. The subsequent flooding events in 2008 cost the Authority approximately £1.2 million. As with the 2007 flood costs the majority of these immediate costs was recovered through the Bellwin Scheme.
11. It is worth noting that the programme of repair works associated with each years flood events could have impacted on the Councils ability to deliver it's Joined Up Programme of highways maintenance and improvement schemes. Through good partnership working with Amey this impact has been minimised across these financial years with the Council's normal programme of works also being delivered.
12. Herefordshire Council secured £130,000 from the Government's Flood Recovery Grant Scheme to support householders most affected by the July 2007 floods. Affected householders were encouraged to register their details with Info By Phone or Environment Services. This information was supplemented by Parish Councils and Elected Members. More than 400 application forms were

distributed. In total, 207 households applied for the grants, 198 of which were successful. The amounts varied depending on the levels of hardship suffered.

13. Herefordshire Council also successfully applied to the British Red Cross for its share of their National Funds Appeal. As a result, the Council was allocated £34,290. Some 17 households who had contacted the Authority after funding from Central Government had been distributed were allocated varying amounts from this funding, depending on the levels of hardship suffered. Some 110 households that received funding from either Central Government or the British Red Cross, deemed to have been the worst affected, were allocated a further payment. In addition, Hereford Citizens Advice Bureau and Rural Support Network were allocated money for the purposes of sending a leaflet to all flooded householders offering them counselling, advice and support.
14. Herefordshire Council also successfully applied to the British Red Cross for a further £8,000 which has provided funding for a Herefordshire Voluntary Action project. This project has provided outreach support to communities affected by the July 2007 floods. It also raised the profile and needs of local communities and helped signpost vulnerable people. A report containing a series of recommendations developed by those people directly affected by the floods has been drafted by HVA. Relevant officers are currently considering how these recommendations could be addressed.
15. Herefordshire Council was also allocated £429,412 from Central Government's Restoration Fund. This funding was awarded in recognition of the expenses the Council incurred as a result of the July 2007 floods and was used to offset the significant additional costs sustained by the Environment & Culture Directorate as a result of these events.
16. Herefordshire Council is currently preparing an application for its share of Defra funding for household-level flood protection and resilience measures.

Data Collection and Analysis

17. Following the July 2007 flooding event Herefordshire Council Environment & Culture directorate began to collate data to compile a comprehensive list of properties (both residential and commercial) that suffered flooding during this event. On 5 September 2007 a proforma with covering letter was sent to all parish councils in Herefordshire (example enclosed in Appendix A) requesting details from each parish of properties that had been flooded in July. The purpose of this form was to allow local information about flooded properties to be added to the list already held by the Council. This data will be shared with the Environment Agency as part of a national review of the effects of the heavy rainfall that year and will assist in the planning for and prevention of a response to future similar events.
18. Following the 2008 flooding events Herefordshire Council Environment & Culture directorate undertook a similar data collection exercise. On 5 December 2008 a proforma with covering letter was sent to all parish councils in Herefordshire (example enclosed in Appendix B) requesting details from each parish of properties that had been flooded in either September or November floods.

19. Furthermore a copy of this request was sent to local members on 26 January 2009 and 06 March 2009 to provide Members the opportunity to add their local knowledge of flooded properties to this compiled list.

The following table details the return of information from parish councils and members:

Data Collection Request	No. of letters sent	No. of returns
Parish Councils (05/09/07)	66	57
Parish Councils (05/12/08)	66	58
Local Members (26/01/09 & 06 March 2009)	58	10

20. The data received was collated and is shown in the table attached in Appendix C. In the long term this information will need to be studied further and a prioritisation exercise will be undertaken to identify the sites most at risk and identify which sites would be of most benefit taking account of available funding at this stage. It is likely that the responsibility for the delivery of any solutions may not sit wholly with the Council. In fact it is highly likely that any solutions found will require the co-operation, involvement and resources from a variety of bodies and individuals, to be successful.

Next Steps

Land Drainage – Current Resource / Current Activities

21. The Councils Flood defence policy was developed and considered by Cabinet in 2001. The Land drainage team's primary functions are detailed below:

- Planning / development control: comment on planning applications, setting standards of drainage issues. Liaison with developers to develop suitable applications. Liaison with other bodies (EA, internal departments etc) as part of this process.
- Expert resource for internal departments: expert advice to Area Teams, advice to planners on policy issues. Advise to legal gaining knowledge of catchment response.
- Responsibilities under the Land Drainage Act: respond to enquires from the public (riparian owners) on how they should comply with their responsibilities. Act on enquiries where there are land drainage problems affecting third parties (ie encouraging/instructing riparian owners to undertake work in accordance with their responsibilities).
- Response to Members and Parishes: provision of expert advice.
- Provision of Sandbags: liaise with parishes to determine annual sandbag requirements.
- Watercourse inspections and reactive work: oversee the regular inspections of watercourses, other sites known to flood, grills, and watercourse structures - instruct reactive works accordingly.

- Programmed work: develop and monitor the annual works programme.
- Emergency response: being within the team at times of emergencies - issue of sand bags, advice, site visits to flooded properties etc, on going response in the clear up period (can be extensive).

Land Drainage – Challenges

22. During the 2007 and 2008 floods a significant number of locations flooded for the first time in many years affecting both individual properties and small communities - flooding came from both watercourses and highways. This is result of climate change, urbanisation, changes to land use and inadequate maintenance of drainage systems (water courses and highway ditches and drainage networks). There is a need to review the flooding sites, consider the action response and then implement any action. A close study of the sites may show that no action or limited action is most appropriate. However where significant works are deemed the correct response then this could generate a sustained period of detailed investigation and capital works. This is a significant challenge for the Council given the current level of resources currently available. The approach to be taken in future will need to reflect any changes required by the Government Bill.

The Pitt Report and Government's response

23. A comprehensive review of the lessons to be learned from the summer floods of 2007 was undertaken by Sir Michael Pitt and his report which was published in June 2008 contained a series of recommendations regarding Flood Risk Management. There are over 90 recommendations within the report –some of the key ones are:

- R14 Local authorities should lead on the management of local flood risk, with the support of the relevant organisations.
- R15 Local authorities should positively tackle local problems of flooding by working with all relevant parties, establishing ownership and legal responsibility.
- R16. Local authorities should collate and map the main flood risk management and drainage assets (over and underground), including a record of their ownership land condition.
- R17 All relevant organisations should have a duty to share information and cooperate with local authorities and the Environment Agency to facilitate the management of flood risk.
- R18: Local Surface Water Management Plans, as set out under PPS25 and coordinated by local authorities, should provide the basis for managing all local flood risk.
- R19 Local authorities should assess and, if appropriate, enhance their technical capabilities to deliver a wide range of responsibilities in relation to local flood risk management.
- R20 The Government should resolve the issue of which organisations should be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems.
- R90 All upper tier local authorities should establish Oversight and Scrutiny Committees to review work by public sector bodies and essential service

providers in order to manage flood risk, underpinned by a legal requirement to cooperate and share information.

R91 Each Oversight and Scrutiny Committee should prepare an annual summary of actions taken locally to manage flood risk and implement this Review, and these reports should be public and reviewed by Government Offices and the Environment Agency.

24. The Government response to the Pitt Review was published on 17 December 2008 and the future role of Local Authorities in the management of local flood risk is to be set out in the draft Floods and Water Bill which will be published Spring 2009 for consultation. This will be key consultation that the Council will need to respond to.

25. In anticipation of this legislation Herefordshire Council has formed a Recovery Group chaired by the Director of Regeneration and a framework put in place. Consequently all relevant departments, organisations and agencies are engaged in the recovery process at the early stages and this should enable better recovery from all emergencies within Herefordshire.

26. Government funding within the current spending review period (2010/11) is being increased to enable local authorities to take action in accordance with their future roles and responsibilities as set out in the detailed response to the Pitt review

27. This action is expected to include:

- assessing and building technical capacity (in line with Recommendation 19);
- starting to build partnerships with all relevant local bodies;
- ensuring that effective Strategic Flood Risk Assessments are in place as required by PPS25;
- setting in place arrangements for understanding and managing local flood risk from all sources; and
- developing Surface Water Management Plans in high priority areas where funding is available

28. In April 2009 Central Government will be asking Local Authorities about the approach they intend to take; what progress has been made with partners; whether there are any barriers to progress that requires help in overcoming and if the necessary support has been provided by partners in advance of the proposed powers and duties that will be introduced through the Flood and Water Bill.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee consider the content of this report.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – 2007 Flooding Data Request
Appendix B – 2008 Flooding Data Request
Appendix C – Flood Data

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Herefordshire Council Local Climate Impacts Profile (LCLIP) – December 2008
- Herefordshire Council County Flood Plan
- Herefordshire Council Major Emergency Response Plan and Emergency Response Procedures.
- Hereford Flood Defence Policy
- The Pitt Report Learning Lessons from the 2007 floods – June 2008
- The Government's Response to Sir Michael Pitt's Review of the Summer 2007 Floods – December 2008.