

# FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT OF HEREFORDSHIRE'S MAIN RIVERS

Report By: Director of Environment

## Wards Affected

County wide

## Purpose

To consider the Environment Agency's management of flood risk on main rivers in Herefordshire.

## Reasons

1. The Environment Agency is the Land Drainage Authority for Herefordshire and has responsibility for the management of main rivers such as the Wye, Lugg, Teme, Monnow and Arrow. The management regimes of these rivers are of particular interest to local communities because they carry the greatest potential risk of significant flooding to land and property in the County. The Environment Scrutiny Committee requested an opportunity to receive a presentation from the Agency and to seek clarification of the Agency's roles, responsibilities and activities in Herefordshire.

## Considerations

2. Herefordshire lies within the catchment areas of several main rivers, in particular the River Wye which rises in the Welsh mountains to the west and discharges to the Severn Estuary at Chepstow. The Environment Agency has responsibility for the management of the River Wye and the other main rivers, such as the Lugg, Teme, Arrow and Monnow.
3. Flood defence responsibilities for main rivers are discharged by Flood Defence Committees (FDCs) formed from elected and nominated representatives with executive powers to promote flood defence schemes on behalf of the Environment Agency. The Committees have traditionally operated as Local FDCs, normally covering single catchment areas, under the umbrella of Regional FDCs. Until 1 April 2005, the River Wye Local FDC had responsibility for promoting flood defence throughout the River Wye area, including Hereford City.
4. Since April 2005 a series of changes to flood management responsibilities have been taking place. Key to these changes have been:
  - a. The abolition of Local Flood Defence Committees in April 2005. As a result, responsibility for the River Wye catchment passed to a restructured Welsh Regional FDC in April 2005, which included the parts of the River Wye within Herefordshire;
  - b. The establishment of Regional Flood Defence Committees based on the English/Welsh national boundary with effect from 1 April 2006. As a result, responsibility for flood defence on the River Wye in Herefordshire will be

transferred to the Midlands FDC.

- 5 Throughout this period of change, the Environment Agency, on behalf of the Local Flood Defence Committee (and subsequently the Welsh Regional Flood Defence Committee), has been preparing proposals for a flood defence scheme in Hereford. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) recently announced that a sum of approximately £4 million had been made available to the Environment Agency to implement a flood defence scheme in the Belmont roundabout area of Hereford from April 2007, subject to a further £2 million being made available from a Section 106 Agreement entered into as part of the ASDA development adjacent to Belmont roundabout.
- 6 These events highlight some of the complexities of flood risk management in the County and form a background to requests from Members of the Environment Scrutiny Committee to meet representatives of the Environment Agency to discuss the way in which the Agency discharges its responsibilities for drainage and flood risk management.
- 7 Members should be aware that the Council is one of the key Land Drainage bodies for watercourses other than main rivers and has powers (but not necessarily duties) to implement flood alleviation schemes. These schemes can range from relatively minor measures, such as provision of overspill channels, to substantial schemes such as the flood tunnel proposed for Ross-on-Wye in 2006.
- 8 In certain areas of the county, traditionally areas where significant drainage and irrigation schemes have been necessary to promote local agriculture, the responsible Drainage Body is an Internal Drainage Board (IDB). The most significant of these in Herefordshire is the River Lugg IDB, which covers areas around the River Lugg from the Leominster area to Hampton Bishop and Mordiford.
- 9 Representatives of the Environment Agency will outline the functions of the Agency in a presentation to the Scrutiny Committee and have agreed to be questioned by the Committee to promote a better understanding of the work of the Agency in the County.

## Risks

- 10 The risk of serious flooding affecting properties in the Hereford and Lower Bullingham areas remains significant but can be partially alleviated by the implementation of a flood defence scheme in the Belmont roundabout area. Elsewhere in the county, flooding continues to be a risk in several areas around main rivers, in particular from the Rivers Wye and Lugg, including Leominster and Ross-on-Wye. Flood defence schemes can reduce but will not eliminate these risks.

## Recommendations

**THAT Members seek to clarify the Environment Agency's priorities for drainage and flood risk management in Herefordshire.**

## Background Papers

- None