

Minutes for BFG Multiagency meeting on 07.07.25 6.00 pm

Present: EA – Chris Walker (Co-Chair), Ian Cappitt, Rachael McMahon, Sam McAllister

LCC – Matt Harrison, Andrew Baptie, Brett Rycroft-Jones.

IDB – Paul Nicholson

Anglian Water – Julia Watson

SKDC – Tom Amblin-Lightowler

County Cllrs Danny Brookes, and Martin Hill

District Cllr Murray Turner (also BFG).

BFG Members – Philip Hodson, Peter White, Helen Middlebrook, Krys Szokalo (Chair).

Mike Rudkin (Meteorologist).

Hayley Beaver – Minutes. (Clerk to Billingborough PC)

1) **Apologies**

01. Apologies had been sent by Steve Eason-Harris, (Lincs Resilience Forum).

2) **Welcome and Introductions – attendees to introduce themselves**

02. The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their time. He gave a resume of the events and aftermath of the flooding of Jan 6th 2025, and the actions taken so far. He thanked the EA for the swift production of the three recently received reports and noted that the section 19 report was yet to be received. All attendees introduced themselves. The Chairman informed the meeting of how the BFG was formed and explained that the main objective of this group was not how to respond to flooding, but more in the strategic development of solutions that will prevent flood water getting into Billingborough and the surrounding area in the first place.

3) **Updates from partners – what has been done so far?**

03. **On behalf of the EA**, Chris Walker explained that since the flooding on 6/1/25 it had produced a report detailing that unusually heavy rain had fallen on to already saturated and frozen ground which created record levels in the Ousemere Lode. The report's aim was to inform residents, other agencies and assist with the Section 19 reports. An aim was also to promote a more collective response and involve all partner agencies and the EA had worked with LCC, SKDC and AW in the background on this report. Rachel McMahon explained that the aim was to give a minimum of 2hrs notice of flooding, and prior to the flooding in Jan 2025 only 15% of the properties in the flood risk area of the Parish had been signed up to receive warnings, however since then, this had increased to 29%. It was hoped that this could be promoted via both the Parish Council and Flood Aid Group Facebook pages.

On behalf of SKDC, Tom Amblin- Lightowler reported that the District Council had been working with The Crown Estate on updating the mapping to more clearly identify responsibility for the dykes and ditches in the area with a view to improving maintenance. Tom advised he had produced draft drainage maps with a “tracker” system which is spreadsheet based where all actions from RMA are recorded. He agreed to send the first issue of this to BFG in the next 3 weeks.

On behalf of LCC, Matt Harrison replying to the earlier statement that the Section 19 report was yet to be received explained that this report would look at a wider area than the reports received by the EA, taking into account highways and other water courses as well as the Ousemere Lode, and that the County Council was dealing with an unprecedented work load with the aftermath of 3 storms that had affected the whole County. However, all Section 19 reports had now been completed and would be added to LCC's website imminently, this would show the causes and recommendations, but not the full report, a copy of the full report would be sent to the BFG. The Chairman asked for clarity about communication in general, as BFG were keen to ensure that residents were kept informed. It was suggested that SKDC act as the main point of contact for all organisations and its

representative act as the conduit to liaise with Parish Councils to ensure all reports are filed. The BFG asked that it be the point of contact rather than the Parish Council.

Andrew Baptie **for LCC** then explained that in mid-January an external consultancy, Stantec, was engaged by LCC to study the whole catchment area and to undertake 1D and 2D modelling taking into consideration all the watercourses and LCC assets. Results of this are due in Sept/Oct. Once recommendations are known, costings to carry out recommendations can be looked at. SKDC are aware of this but stressed that all the mapping work would continue, so that improvements could be made. C Cllr Hill asked if any camera work had been done, looking into pipes and culverts and if the outcomes of any works completed would be made known. He was advised that LCC Highways had already completed some investigative works and more were scheduled.

On behalf of Anglian Water, Julia Watson reported that AW had carried out camera work of the whole of its' network for surface water. The sewage system was monitored much more closely so it was thought that any problems would automatically show up. Both LCC and AW stated that it was not practice sharing the results publicly, although they could be shared between organisations. It was suggested that a comprehensive map of the whole drainage system annotated with the organisation that was responsible for each area was urgently required. SKDC agreed to facilitate this. Julia Watson agreed to check the AW culvert which flows from the corner of Vine Street and Vine Court into the OML as this is a significant source of water back flowing from the OML and flooding Vine Street. AW were advised that there is no flapper valve currently fitted to the outlet where it enters the OML.

The Chairman asked if there was sufficient capacity in the drainage system to cope with the effects of climate change with events like the one in January potentially happening more frequently. Mike Rudkin, a former meteorologist, questioned if this was due to climate change or rather due to a change in the number of concrete infill, extensions, maintenance neglect, and other logistical changes over the last 25 years. He asked if the decision about the number of houses planned for some of the low-lying areas particularly, could be challenged. It was stated that whatever the reason, expectations needed to be managed as to what could realistically be expected of the current drainage system and, how an upgrade could practically be achieved that could cope with these events without major financial input from the Government. The question was then raised as to how could any volume of water be moved more quickly through the village. It was acknowledged that this was something that could be looked at and was on the radar, depending on the outcome of the Consultants' report.

On behalf of LCC Brett Rycroft - Jones reported that a new Alert System had been developed in Conjunction with the LRF that would use telemetry data. Funding had been secured to run this for the next 10 years and would be rolled out to Billingborough and other villages in the area, this would help identify if a problem in one village was likely to cause an issue in another as happened in January. This would support, and work in conjunction with the EA alerts.

On behalf of the Internal Drainage Board, Paul Nicholson stated that the theory of getting excess water away as quickly as possible is good but when the system is already full, it may be very difficult to achieve. He agreed that improved maintenance and planning was productive but advised caution when trying to displace large amounts of water. He also felt that expectations of what could be achieved to mitigate the outcomes of these extreme events needed managing.

C Cllr Hill asked if the two landslips on the Ousemere Lode that were near housing could be fixed and the EA replied that funding had been denied. Cllr Middlebrook asked if this work could be done privately and the EA stated that as long as the EA agreed the works and any permitting rules were adhered to this could be possible. The EA also advised that funding had been applied for and denied for OML works east of Victoria Road Bridge. EA (Sam McAllister) was asked if EA could supply details of the works that EA had requested funding & cost estimates – SM agreed EA could supply full details to BFG. It was explained that no funding was available for these assets, again, Cllr Middlebrook urged the Organisation to share this information as if residents were made aware there

may be a desire for the village to work collaboratively to move some projects forward.
There is currently a DEFRA consultation running and The Chairman urged all to respond if possible.

4) **BFG Strategic Flood Proposal – Review of BFG responses to EA Flood Reports**

- a. **Higher volumes of water are discharged through the OML minimising uncontrolled breaching into surrounding fields to the West of Billingborough and within the village itself.**
04. This would be revisited once the report from the consultants has been received.
- b. **When OML is full, and prior to properties being at risk of flooding, allow overflow of OML into agricultural land/ditches/drains to the East of Billingborough.**
05. This proposal was being considered and awaited the outcome of the Consultant's report before it could be taken further.
- c. **A flood alleviation scheme is required between Billingborough and Folkingham to manage the flow through the OML catchment/floodplain during extreme conditions.**
06. Again, once the report from the Consultants has been received this will be revisited.
- d. **A complete review is undertaken of the drainage system around and within Billingborough, including ditches, drains (including sewage and surface water) and culverts, to maximise removal of both surface water and excess flood water to drain through and out of the village into underutilised ditches and drains**
07. This work was already well underway and had been reported on in the notes above. There was still more work to do and further updates would be made available via the agreed communication system via 8 weekly Teams meetings between the BFG and SKDC as described in 10 below.
- e. **In the light of the above, LCC and SKDC proactively identify watercourses and ownership responsibility under the Riparian Rights regulations and advise owners of their responsibilities as detailed in the leaflet: Your Watercourse: Rights and Responsibilities**
08. As in 07 above, this is already underway, continuity and progress to be reported in aforementioned Teams meetings. (see 10 below).
- f. **An early warning system is required for residents when OML floods at Folkingham and surface water flows towards Billingborough.**
09. As reported in 03 above, the new telemetry led alert system should address this.

5) **BFG/Multiagency Working Groups Proposal – Our proposal is to form three project teams to develop solutions to:**

- a. **Flood/watercourse issues to the west of Billingborough as far as Folkingham and possibly beyond - Project Lead - EA**
- b. **The entire Billingborough drainage system - Project Lead – SKDC**
 - i. **Consistent repair and maintenance of the sewerage and surface water drains**
 - ii. **Determine if the existing system has the capacity to manage future extreme flood events**
- c. **Flood/watercourse issues to East of Billingborough as far as South Forty Foot Drain - Project Lead - EA**
- d. **Team Structure - Three project teams would be formed with members consisting of relevant agency and local authority representatives and village representatives (BFG members).**
- e. **The objectives of each project team are to determine:**

- i. **What short term mitigating actions can be taken before Winter 2025 - particularly maintenance of existing assets in the village**
- ii. **What medium term actions can be taken within the next 12 months - particularly for upgrading assets and introducing natural flood management solutions**
- iii. **What longer term investments would significantly reduce future flood risk in our area. > 12 months**
- iv. **Approach to accessing suitable funding for all projects**

10. As it was stated that the individual agencies did not have the capacity to focus and lead individual projects, an open discussion followed and it was agreed to use Tom from SKDC as a conduit who would liaise with all organisations who were still keen to maintain support, and feedback to the BFG via an 8 weekly Teams meeting. BFG would in turn feedback to the local community. Any questions from the BFG could be submitted via SKDC. All Organisations were keen to stress that expectations needed to be managed, and it was generally thought that communication from all involved needed to be improved, by working together to identify the problems and suggesting solutions, rather than focussing on the funding.

6) **Next Steps:**

a. **Future Meetings,**

11. It was agreed that the next meeting should take place once the conclusions of the Consultants' report had been received which was anticipated to be in Sept/Oct.

b. **Key contacts, and involvement** - not required.

c. **Roles and responsibilities** – not required.

d. **Feedback process to Billingborough residents** - outlined in 10 above

7) **AOB –**

12. The subject of grant money for those affected by the flooding was raised and the meeting was advised that the first round of Government funding was strictly for those affected by the storms Babet and Henk. As there was no further government money made available for victims of the flooding in January 2025, LCC has contacted anyone who had previously registered as having been flooded in January 2025 to inform them how to apply for the property flooding grant provided by LCC. The flooding needs to be internal (housing), but excludes garages and conservatories, and is for flood prevention protection equipment, (NOT repair works). If anyone has not been contacted and thinks they should have been they are encouraged to contact the County Council. If all the monies available are not claimed by victims of the Jan 25 flooding, the scheme will be opened out to others who have been affected at other times by flooding for help with flood resilience.

8) **Date of next meeting – TBC**

The meeting was closed at 19.39