

Severe Flooding Risk Reduction in Billingborough Proposals – Billingborough Flood Group

Introduction

This proposal has been prepared by the five members of the Billingborough Flood Group (BFG) following detailed reviews of the two reports from the Environmental Agency (EA) that investigated the causes of the severe flooding event on 6th January 2025.

The Case for Action

Both reports conclude that the floods in Billingborough were not influenced by events in Boston. The evidence indicates that any issues with either the Boston decommissioned pumping station or the restrictions from the lock gates had minimal to no impact on events upstream. However, the Ousemere Lode (OML) was unable to discharge water into the South Forty Foot Drain (SFFD) at a sufficient rate to prevent overflowing along sections of the watercourse between Folkingham and the SFFD, including Billingborough, despite the topography of the area naturally directing water flow towards the SFFD.

Given this situation, why was the OML unable to discharge all the water on January 6th, resulting in overflow into the surrounding areas of Folkingham and Billingborough, causing severe flooding experienced by many residents?

Whilst the Billingborough report includes numerous comments on the frequency of such extreme events and computer modelling predictions, it is evident that the severity of weather events has increased over the past 20-30 years. This trend is unlikely to change in the foreseeable future despite government policies aimed at decarbonisation. It is recognised that the decarbonisation process will have minimal impact on the climate within the next 20-30 years unless there is a global consensus on reducing fossil fuel use.

Consequently, it is probable that more residents in Billingborough and nearby communities will continue to experience flooding in the coming years unless proactive measures are taken promptly.

The Billingborough Flood Group intend to pursue our case on behalf of our residents, however long it takes.

The Proposal

Based on the reports, our strategy necessitates that:

- 1) 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.
- 2) 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. To that end, a flood alleviation scheme is required between Billingborough and Folkingham to manage the flow through the OML catchment/floodplain during extreme conditions.

Agreed Actions to Points 1) and 2) From the 7th July Meeting

- a) LCC is working with external consultants to undertake a detailed analysis of the topography of the catchment will help determine the most appropriate locations for holding pools. The report is due to be issued by the end of September.
 - b) SKDC will be liaising with Crown Estates/tenant farmers re developing a holding pool(s) upstream of Mareham Lane to enable water to be held back and reduce the risk of Ousemere Lode overtopping further down stream.
 - c) There was an alleviation scheme started in recent years by SKDC to construct a dam off Mareham Lane where the Ousemere Lode crosses to also hold water back, but was suspended due to lack of funding. The details of the scheme are being investigated by SKDC and EA and will report back to the BFG as soon as possible.
- 3) 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.
- 4) 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

Agreed Actions to Points 3) and 4) From the 7th July Meeting

- a) SKDC is currently completing the Billingborough drainage maps that will provide a detailed digital map of all the drains and whose responsibility they are as well as the Ousemere included and any connection points.
 - b) SKDC is also going to work with Crown Estates/tenant farmers looking at how we can connect up to existing drains to allow a water to drain out of the village more effectively and ideally quicker.
 - c) Once the LCC consultants report is completed, the possibility of enabling excess water from Vine St to be pumped into drains to the east of the village, rather than accumulating on Vine Street and Low Street. Currently there is a disused drain at the east end of Vine Street which could be reopened to enable water into Cowgate and potentially connected to a large drain running along the Black Mile.
 - d) Anglian Water have surveyed all the sewerage, and their surface water drains throughout the village and have identified damaged/collapsed drains along Vine Street and off the High Street and West Road. They are reporting back as to which drains have been repaired and if not, when the work will be completed.
 - e) Black Sluice IDB will be commencing their 2025 open watercourse and piped water course maintenance programme from Aug 1st in the systems they are responsible for in the Billingborough catchment.
- 5) An early warning system is required for residents when OML floods at Folkingham and surface water flows towards Billingborough.

Agreed Actions to Point 5) From the 7th July Meeting

- a) LF&R have had funding approved for Billingborough to have 3 additional gauges to provide additional flood warning telemetry. The LF&R will work with the Billingborough Emergency Response Group/Parish Council to identify the most appropriate locations up stream towards Folkingham to provide warnings with a longer lead time rather than solely relying on the Victoria Bridge gauge. We are waiting for more details from LF&R currently.

Our proposal is that the BFG liaise closely with EA, IDB, LCC, SKDC, and Crown Estates over the coming months/years to monitor progress on the above actions

We acknowledge that funding is likely to be required, and we expect that every effort is made by fundholders to play their part in supporting the plans.

The BFG will meet at regular intervals to review and monitor progress and communicate progress to residents and interested parties.

BFG 11.06.25