

Notes: O & S Committee, Wednesday, 18 March 2009

Introduction:

There has been an extensive response and reaction by Local Authorities in Worcestershire, following the July 2007 floods. A leading, co-ordinating role has been developed by Worcestershire County Council (WCC). In addition to previous Local Resilience Forum (LRF), two new groups were formed: -

- Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership (WDLP), and
- A sub-group, Land Drainage Technical Group (LDTG)

These comprised of various officers as well as representatives from other external organisations, including landowners as well as the Environment Agency (EA). The WDLP is normally chaired by WCC and the LDTG by Wychavon District Council (WDC) respectively.

This process later recognised and recommended by Sir Michael Pitt's Review into the July 2007 floods, has clearly been well under way for some time by local authorities in Worcestershire.

Progress to Date:

Regular meetings have taken place of both WDLP and LDTG, the latter now only convened to address any major technical issues that may arise in the future. There has been a significant pooling of knowledge and expertise. This is very much a 'work in progress' exercise, with collation of data so that coherent reports can be prepared by constituent member authorities.

What became clear was that the circumstances, timing and magnitude of flooding problems, varied considerably throughout Worcestershire. It was agreed that it would be necessary to form a 'core' of policies/actions which each would need to consider how these are to be delivered. A secondary list would also need to be prepared in the form of a shopping list, so that those criteria which applied in a particular area could be actioned in an approved, recognised manner.

Many problems that had arisen in the past were believed to have been caused through a lack of consistency of approach between neighbouring authorities in Worcestershire or other neighbouring counties.

At a local level, it is recognised that we need to incorporate as much web-based information as possible and as soon as documents listed below are approved, these will be added. This will enable customers to recognise how we operate/maintain our land drainage assets and in the case of private riparian landowners, they will be able to recognise if their own actions are in accordance with such policies.

One theme which has not yet been fully explored is the introduction of Land Drainage Bye-Laws across the county. These are a very useful tool and can add to the various enforcement strategies to ensure satisfactory levels of maintenance and planning policies are consistently applied throughout Worcestershire. These have a 'model' format and there is a statutory framework which needs to be followed and they are to

be formally ratified, prior to applying. This process currently takes at least 6 months from the published draft stages before they come into effect and may be amended or supplemented by imminent changes in legislation.

Timetable of Critical Events:

Following the Governments response in December 2008 to the Pitt Review, a number of items of legislation have been timetabled and these in conjunction with other suggestions, are tabulated below (note dates are provisional and in some cases actions may hopefully be sooner rather than later): -

- June 2009 Draft "Flood & Water Bill"
- Summer 2009 New building regulations "for flood resilient buildings"
- December 2009 EA to provide LRF's with inundation maps for each reservoir
- December 2009 Met Office and EA to jointly introduce "Extreme Rainfall Alert Service"
- June 2010 National Flood Emergency Framework
- June 2010 new standards for sewers, and
- December 2011 National emergency exercise

Conclusions:

At present, no account has been taken of cross-boundary working or applying catchment focus to future emergencies. Historically, local authorities have worked solely within their own individual areas. Clearly, climatic changes that have apparently recently taken place, prior to and following July 2007 take no account of such boundaries.

There are significant watercourses which pass through Redditch, where the vast majority of their catchments lie outside the Borough Boundary.

Appendices:

Please note that the following documents are for 'reference purposes only' at the present time. Where there are any specific references to locations and/or properties, disclosure is subject to normal Data Protection Act policies. Some of these are currently unavailable and so marked. They are as follows: -

1. Draft "Land Drainage Protocol" – WDLP/LDTG
2. Catchment Analysis – RBC (07/01/09)
3. Balancing Areas – RBC (15/01/09)
4. Landscape & Land Drainage Maintenance Policy – RBC (18/02/09)
5. Ditches – RBC (05/03/09)
6. Dredging Policy – RBC (Not available – in course of preparation)
7. Flood Resilience Analysis – RBC (05/03/09)
8. WDLP/LDTG – (RBC Draft, currently unavailable)

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