

Meeting Between Ryedale District Council And The Environment Agency To Discuss The Pickering Flood Defence Scheme.

Date: 30th April 2008

Location: Ryedale House, Malton

In attendance: Councillor Howard Keal - (Ryedale DC), Councillor Geoff Acomb - (Ryedale DC), Councillor Linda Cowling - (Ryedale DC), Councillor Keith Knaggs - (Ryedale DC), Councillor Robert Wainwright - (Ryedale DC), Steve Wragg - Environment Agency (EA), John Burbidge - (EA), Mark Tinnion - (EA), Paul Cresswell - (Ryedale DC), David Summers - (Ryedale DC)

Councillor Knaggs stated that this is to be an information gathering exercise rather than a decision-making meeting. Keen to know:-

- How does the Environment Agency go about the assessment of priority scores for each flood defence scheme?
- Current plans
- Further information on the Radio 4 programme today (30/04/08) where Pickering was reported to have achieved a priority score of 1.4 on a scale of 1 to 10.
- It would appear that Pickering is unlikely to move forward; is the DEFRA scoring scheme skewed against rural areas?

Ryedale District Council is adamant that something should be done for Pickering and has set aside match funding in order to achieve this. Keen to look at the details of the scheme in order to establish if other measures are available. Also felt that mixed messages have been put out in the past - authority and responsibility should reside in the same box and cannot be separated.

Introductions were made. Steve Wragg informed the meeting that from 1st April he no longer worked as Team Leader, Asset Systems Management at York as he had moved to the Leeds office. He introduced John Burbidge as his successor.

Mark Tinnion is the Regional Flood Defence Manager and provided the presentation.

Central Government, through DEFRA, allocated £650m in 2007 - 2008 for flood defence schemes.

All schemes need to be examined in line with the Government Project Appraisal Guidance. This provides transparency and determines if the scheme is viable / justified and it's relative priority.

Schemes provide protection to communities that are at risk. This risk can be in the form of smaller floods happening more frequently or larger floods happening less frequently.

The more frequent floods result in relatively less damage compared to the larger events.

The frequency is expressed as the return period (i.e. 1 in 75 years).

The examination of past flooding events of varying return periods will provide an average annual damage figure.

The DEFRA mandate requires flood defence schemes to protect existing properties and not to facilitate new businesses, etc.

The forecast process includes an element for climate change.

Higher standards of protection increase the cost of the scheme although each option will reduce the damages.

The process then examines cost against benefit for varying return periods, using standard damages costs that are used nationally.

The Treasury rules require benefits to cost ratio to exceed 1. This allows for the prioritisation of investment, other factors include for: -

- environmental improvement
- social improvement

Pickering: -

Significant flooding to areas of the town occurred in 1930, 1979, 1993, 1999, 2000 and 2007.

Each of the above events was of differing probability (return periods).

From this data it is possible to predict that a 1 in 1000-year event would affect 376 properties and a 1 in 100 event would affect 343 properties. A 1 in 75 year event would affect 64 properties.

The definition of how a property would be affected was explained. This is not access blocked or garden flooded, but is water at a higher level than the threshold.

Following the guidelines produces an optimum return period of 1 in 75 years. This affords protection to 51 residential properties and 13 commercial properties.

Scheme cost was estimated to be £6m in 2003 (£7m adjusted to present values).

The priority score is as follows: -

- benefit/cost ratio 1.6 (out of 20)
- environmental score 1.0 (out of 12)
- social score 1.7 (out of 12)

The total score being 4.3 out of 44.

To put this into perspective, there are over 150 schemes in the national programme with priority scores in excess of 20.

There are new DEFRA outcome measures published that now require a benefit to cost ratio of at least 5. The Agency is also required to provide protection to an additional 145,000 properties. They are expecting funding in the order of £800m.

Despite the spate of recent floods, the cost/benefit for Pickering demonstrates that it cannot be prioritised for new investment. The Agency's National Review Group therefore rejected this scheme on economic and environmental grounds. Unless the model of damages against costs changes, the situation in Pickering regarding investment will remain unchanged.

While the chances of the full scheme being implemented are remote, Steve Wragg indicated that investigations have been continuing on whether other measures could be implemented that could reduce the impact.

These include: -

- Provision of a diversion channel at Mill Lane / Vivers Mill
- Investigations to establish if lifting the bridge deck at Mill Lane would have a significant effect. This needs to be modelled using earlier data.
- Academic Study by Durham University, looking at land management issues - removal of moorland gripping, provision of swales and earth bunds, etc.
- Discussions with National Park and Forestry Commission on land management issues.
- Examination of how upstream measures could have an impact on the prevention of flooding in the town.

A general discussion followed on how to access the Yorkshire Flood Defence Committee unallocated funding (match funded by Yorkshire Forward) along with other sources of funding (NYCC etc). Also, is there any benefit in further investigation of resistance / resilience measures for individual properties.

The issue of technical resources was discussed. These are scarce; with local authority technical departments almost completely run down (as referred to by

Sir Michael Pitt's interim report) and the Environment Agency staff are focussed on delivery of the national capital programme.

Reference was made to how other low scoring schemes were funded and delivered.

- Elvington - funded by local residents and City of York Council. (Consultants employed)
- Rotherham - accessed European funding, Rotherham MBC, Yorkshire Forward, Industry, Yorkshire Flood Defence Committee (£250k) (Delivered by Rotherham MBC Engineering Department)

The question of the sluices at Vivers Mill was raised. The Environment Agency stated that it had been examined as a proposal to improve the flow, but on balance it had been decided not to proceed.

Councillor Knaggs summarised and the following action points were noted.

1. Data from the previous study on the full flood defence scheme would be made available.
2. The proposal for the diversion channel was welcome and also the proposal to carry out further hydraulic modelling in order to establish if any major benefits can be achieved by lifting the deck level of the bridge in order to provide greater capacity.
3. The possible benefits of the modelling exercise referred to above would be communicated to Councillor Knaggs, as would any other information.

Once the above had been carried out then Councillor Knaggs would call a further meeting.

David Summers

Property Services Manager