

Editor's Note:

Hello. The meteorologists told us last week that it has officially been the wettest winter on record. From experience or from the media coverage, we have all seen the *devastation* that the storms have brought, both from wind damage and the excessive rainfall. Please remember that we are here for *help & support* in the months ahead, call us on 01299 403055.

Thanks to everyone who has kindly contributed articles. If you're interested in writing a short piece please send it to: hannah.tankard@floodforum.org.uk.

A Brief Flood Re Update

By Paul Cobbing (Chief Executive)

Legislation for the new proposals for flood risk insurance, Flood Re, has been incorporated in the Water Bill, currently going through Parliament. We have been actively engaged with Government and the insurance industry throughout this process to try and ensure that as many people as possible can get *flood risk insurance at affordable prices*.

Following readings in the House of Commons this passed to the House of Lords after Christmas where a number of amendments were proposed. It will now return to the Commons for the report stage prior to, we hope, *Royal Assent*.

The next stage will be the negotiation of secondary regulation, getting *European Commission* clearance on State Aid rules and the setting up of the organisations and systems required to deliver the new scheme, hopefully by *July 2015*.

To find out more about what Flood Re is all about, visit: GOV.UK or read this [Guardian article](#).

Disclaimer: The views expressed in the bulletin are those of the writers and are not necessarily those of the National Flood Forum.

The National Flood Forum conference is on *March 13th*. After all the flooding recently it seems even more pertinent to find solutions to flood risk - from the insurance industry to planning policy to simply *listening to the local voice*. For more information, please visit: www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk.

Best wishes,

Hannah (The Editor)

Dedicated Staff

By Heather Shepherd (Community and Recovery Support)

As many of you are aware, I support communities nationally, working across the UK and Wales. Part of the work that I do involves supporting and advising Councils and the Environment Agency on flood *recovery*. While doing this I have noted drained, exhausted staff that have worked and slept in offices across flooded areas. The pace of issues Councils have had to address has been fast, and in the ever changing process of recovery, more and more decisions will have to be made. Council staff will be continuing with their normal day job, plus taking on extra work to support the recovery process. Environment Agency staff were asked internally to volunteer their time from their normal day duties and extra time to help and support, from updating flood warning information to helping build sandbag defences.

If we *remove* the politics from the situation, I am sure we can all appreciate how committed staff have been over this protracted flooding period, and the need for the National Flood Forum on behalf of all those communities devastated by flooding to formally recognise dedicated staff.

Supporting and representing flood risk communities

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The Voice* of the Flood Risk Community

***Voice** (*noun*): a particular opinion or attitude expressed.



Insurance: A Hot Potato

By *Jacky Huson (Vice-Chair of Southwell Flood Forum)*

Insurance is a hot potato with its renewals and high excesses; will Flood Re help? Also the slow response of some companies and wriggling out of pay-outs by saying that the proximity to a watercourse wasn't declared – even though that watercourse may not be evident – or didn't even contribute to the flooding.

Some people are reluctant to admit they were flooded, but if the insurance companies use the Environment Agency maps, then it will be assumed a house is at risk. We're working hard to help the community understand that the more flooded properties we know about, then the cost-benefit of mitigation measures is improved for the benefit of the whole community.

Your Thoughts...Your Opinions...Your Letters...

Pitcombe Question Money Available to Help

By *Guy Mayers (Chair of Pitcombe Community Flood Action Group)*

It is just over 5 years since the hamlet of Pitcombe, in Somerset, was flooded in December 2008 causing over half a million pounds worth of damage in just a few hours. The Action Group, which set up after that cataclysm, still strives to prevent a recurrence.

Immediately after that inundation we struggled to learn who was responsible for what and what help we might expect from where? Despite the "Pitt Review", the response to the review of serious summer flooding in 2007 by Sir Michael Pitt, I suspect that many of those affected by the winter flooding this year are similarly struggling to learn.

Since then the Defra has had to cut back its grants and so chose to put up a small amount to be bid for by local authorities. Our local authority put in a bid on our behalf but since their chances were low didn't consult the local community; however, their bid won so we received nearly £40k to be spent according to the Defra's very specific strictures. Who were we to look a gift horse in the mouth? We spent the money, but if truth be told we could have done much more to prevent a re-occurrence if we didn't have to abide by those restrictions imposed by Whitehall. It was not a very good way to spend taxpayers' money.

The threat of another flash flood rushing down our little valley means that each year we have an annual river clearance day, greatly aided by a local farmer. It has become quite the social occasion of the year - an event not to be missed, any volunteers for Aug 16th 2014?

Original: U n mee know dat the wurstist bit is de am local orthority billdin inspektorate OO kept a blinnd eye to size shape karacta of draining Intoo Rivas. and streams at the rong angul coursing vortiseas. Also of coarse as waz men shunned onto goggal box knot enuff dredging of Rivas including edgin n ditchin. Butt we iz nuttas an don't know wat we is tawkin about.

From I'm near karlyle OO is tryin to teach this komputa to spell proppa Lyke!!!!

Translated: You and I know that the worst bit is the local authority building inspectorate, who keep a blind eye to the size, shape and character of draining into rivers and streams at the wrong angle, causing vortices. Also, of course as was mentioned on the television, there is not enough dredging of rivers, including edging and ditching. But we are nutters and don't know what we are talking about.

From I'm near Carlisle, who is trying to teach this computer to spell properly!

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Oxford's Flooding: The Economic Impacts

By Cllr Bob Price (Leader, Oxford City Council) and Dr Peter Rawcliffe (Chair, Oxford Flood Alliance)

People have had enough. Oxford is flooding about every two years, seriously affecting people, their homes and businesses, and road and rail transport. Oxford is billed as a centre for high-tech and medical enterprises, based on its world-class academic reputation, but flooding is putting this at risk. Investors will think twice about coming here.

The geological floodplain narrows markedly just below Oxford. This natural restriction has been exacerbated over many years by building of property, roads and railway, the issue of flooding being largely ignored. The Environment Agency's Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy (the Strategy) was put out for public consultation in 2009: at its core, and indispensable, is the Western Conveyance, a new, or expanded existing, channel designed to carry water earlier and more efficiently through the west Oxford floodplain. The Strategy is designed to protect Oxford to a 1 in 75 year level.

The Partnership Funding formula is weighted towards flooding of domestic property. While this may be appropriate in smaller scale settings it fails to price in the huge economic impacts and reputational damage which flooding causes in the more complex environment of a city such as Oxford. While a change in the formula could in theory remedy this, this would take a very long time to achieve. The window of opportunity for funding the Western Conveyance closes in a couple of months. Only extra central government funding can allow it to proceed. If this is not forthcoming, now, Oxford will be at the mercy of the floodwaters for six to ten years before the matter can be reconsidered - because of the nature of the funding cycle. That could mean, at the present rate, from three to five further avoidable flooding - or more.

If Oxford is to thrive as a national centre of academic and technological excellence, attracting global investment, flood protection to a 1 in 75 year level isn't an optional extra, it's a fundamental essential. The true costs of inaction will soon outweigh the costs of implementing an already worked out plan - the Western Conveyance.

For Oxford and its people to thrive the floods must be stopped. Soon.



Clifton Country Park, Greater Manchester (Photo: National Flood Forum)

Let the Environment do the Work (not the Agency)

By Peter Wright (Brompton Flood Prevention Group Deputy Chair)

Brompton, near Northallerton, in North Yorkshire is not a newcomer to flooding, with photographic evidence of it occurring, dating back to 1903!

Despite many people and local organisations trying to reduce the effect of flooding over the decades, nothing has happened. There have been many reports, aerial reconnaissance, geophysical and ecological surveys, environmental surveys; in fact the chances are, that had the total spend on the repeated surveys been spent on defences there may well not be an issues of flooding!

The Environment Agency have declared that Brompton will receive no spend, as the cost/benefit ratio is too low. Both the Parish and District Council have previously attempted to safeguard local properties but to no avail; now that responsibility has been adopted by the newly formed Brompton Flood Prevention Group (BFPG) made up of local residents.

It became transparently clear to the Group that the colossal spend required for flood defences as proposed by the EA (£2.8m) was not realistic at this juncture, but that by trying to slow the rate and volume of water flowing through the catchment area of about 10km² was something that could be achieved. The Group has visited the successful Belford project in Northumberland where their measures utilise the natural landscape and firmly believe that a similar approach could be replicated in the Brompton catchment area. The success in this project greatly depends on support from the local farmers as well as from the regulatory bodies. It is hoped that financial support will be sympathetically considered and is likely to be small compared to the EA proposal.

Our endeavours have only just started!

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Devastated Communities

By Heather Shepherd (Community and Recovery Support)

With the wet weather subsiding a little, and an opportunity for the water levels to slowly start to drain away, people are now having to face the devastation that the flooding has left in its path. It is all too distressing to even begin to describe the *emotions* that people will be feeling right now. It is a confusing time and knowing where to start, and what you can and can't do just adds to the stress. Our heads feel so full and fuzzy with information, worry and problems it is hard to see much beyond the day we are facing. Because days are so full of things that need to be dealt with, it is easy to skip meals, not have time to sit with a cup of tea, spend time with the children, or have a conversation that doesn't involve the word 'flood'.

Try to stop in your tracks now and again and think 'me' and 'them' and give yourselves a break of some sort, even if it is a short one.



Our Trailer used in Recovery (Photo: NFF)

The National Flood Forum is here to support and help you through the whole process of recovery, as a *charity* our work is dedicated to helping *you*. Any problems, any information, any help – that's what we are here for, just give us a call.

We will be supporting *recovery work* in many areas in the South, South East, South West and Wales. Our recovery trailer will be in areas of Surrey in the next week or two. Keep an eye on our website where we will post information.

...Readers' Tips...

Nigel Edmondson, a professional potter, would like to pass on a tip that he has used successfully to prevent flooding caused by water leaking in through a door.

“Earlier last year we had a very heavy downpour that resulted in standing water threatening to come through a door. The solution that I found worked very well was to make a thick coil of softish clay (about 2” / 5 cm thick) and used this to seal around the join between the door and the door frame. It is my understanding that clay was used to line and water-proof the bottom of canals. It works well as a seal, is cheap, more effective than sand bags and very inexpensive. It clearly has a limited application but where the problem is limited to water coming in through a door I can think of no better solution. Additionally, the clay can be re-used many times.” Thanks Nigel!

Have a tip you would like to share?

Please send it to

hannah.tankard@floodforum.org.uk

Thanks to Kevan Fowler who has also shared his tip:

“I was watching the other evening a report on the people who have had their homes flooded, when I had an idea. When people try to protect their homes, they place sandbags at the bottom of the doors. I wondered if a better way would be to use an item called Duct Tape.

I have used it in my garden to repair my cold frame, which is made of plastic, and it has never come off, even though it has been open to rain and sunshine.

I wondered if it could be placed over the door between the door and the frame, and between the window and the frame, covering the whole door and window, effectively sealing the units.

Another tape that might be of use is the tape that is used to seal water pipes.

This may be no use at all, but I thought it was worth mentioning.”

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Flooding: The Political Response

Flooding and our response to extreme events has clearly moved up the political agenda since the winter storms 2013/2014. **Dan Rogerson** (the Government Minister leading on flooding) and **Barry Gardiner** (Labour's front bench spokesman) will give their positions on the flood management agenda.

This meeting will cover a host of topical issues that have been raised by the floods:

- **Funding** – What is needed to pay for flood defence and maintenance in the long term
- **Insurance** – Will Flood Re work? With enabling legislation currently in Parliament the conference will highlight the what is being done
- **Resilience payments** for flooded homes – Government are promising £5,000/home. Is this the way forward to build resilience?
- **Empowering communities** to take ownership and work with partners on beneficial interventions on flood risk management

The conference offers outstanding opportunities to build your understanding and to learn from respected practitioners through networking.

Key themes will include:

- To promote and focus on **the benefits of community based approaches** to flood risk management
- To be able to demonstrate how community approaches help **to deliver services efficiently**, at less cost and through a range of external partnership arrangements that protect staffing and budget lines
- To learn from **best practice in community engagement** processes and take early lessons from the Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder programme
- To understand **the positions of the political parties** in relation to insurance, flood risk and communities

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**The
National Flood
Forum**

Conference

March 13th 2014

Book Now!

You can book for this conference online by visiting the [conference webpage](#) and pay by credit card.

If you wish to pay by BACS or cheque please complete the booking form in the programme and email to bob.earll@coastms.co.uk, or fax to 01531 890415 or post to CMS (address on booking form).

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