

Editors' Note

Hello Everyone,

Happy May Day! Did you have a good Easter?

In this edition, we are keeping it short and sweet and including: a small BIG thank you for the monetary donations received recently, a note from the Chief Executive on some of our work with Chester University, your voice on issues including dredging and budgets cuts, a welcome to our new staff, and information about the Warwickshire Pathfinder.

This month, the bulletin has been jointly edited as we are trying to keep it fresh and buzzing with life. Grace is "very excited" to be working with Hannah on the bulletin. (She's already quizzed Hannah's grammar!)

Please send in any letters, opinions, questions or tips to hannah.tankard@floodforum.org.uk.

With lots of NFF love,

Han & Gracey-G (The Editors)



Hannah Tankard & Grace Martin of the National Flood Forum just after a flood group meeting in a Lancashire

Working with Universities

Paul Cobbing and Sarah Parkington took part in delivering a one day continuing professional development course: 'Building a flood resilient society' at University of Chester on Saturday 29th March. Led by Serval Miller (Vice Chair of the National Flood Forum), the course focussed on community approaches to flood risk.

To find out more about the course, please follow this link: <http://www.chester.ac.uk/professional-courses/cpd/bfrs>



Sarah Parkington, Serval Miller & Paul Cobbing of the National Flood Forum and participants of the course

THANK YOU!

By National Flood Forum

We would like to say thank you to all generous donations to the National Flood Forum during the Winter storms of 2013-2014. From November to March a total of £3,131.67 was donated. We received contributions from as far afield as Australia.

This money is being used to fund our vital community work across the country.

If you would like to donate to the National Flood Forum, please contact Amanda

on: Amanda.davies@floodforum.org.uk or 01299 403101.

Supporting and representing flood risk communities

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The Voice* of the Flood Risk Community

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

Dredging

Richard Mann (Cuckmere Valley Resident)

I read the article by Christopher Booker in the Sunday Telegraph 26th January 2014, and the article describes what I suspected: the EA suspending dredging and therefore maintenance in the quest for a more NATURAL environment. This policy of 'No Dredging' looks as though it may be nationwide, and will clearly lead to increased flooding where dredging has enabled farmers to use land effectively in the past.

We are lucky here in that The Cuckmere River drains our floodplains quickly, as long as the mouth of the river is cleared regularly. Even so, dredging has not taken place from the same date, ie 1995 as in the article, and threatens to flood more in the future - mainly on roads in our valley.

I do wonder who has made the EA adopt such a destructive policy, and wonder whether The National Flood Forum can raise this question at a high enough level to change this policy back to where it was before the EA took over.

Gill Hesselgrave (Clerk. Cuckmere Flood Forum)

I also found something interesting in the Farmers Guardian regarding the Somerset levels. It said that due to lack of maintenance and dredging the rivers Tone and Parrett were taking only 60% of the water they should be able to manage. The EA has not dredged the rivers for 10 years.

We have been lucky on the Cuckmere that since 2000 maintenance has been undertaken and this has been enough to just prevent properties flooding. The Cuckmere Flood Forum has always seen maintenance as the priority on our river.

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

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

Are We About To Be Pickled?

By Once Bitten

The list of "flood experts" grows even larger. After Paterson, Leinster, Cameron, Smith, Clarke and now Pickles. The most recent words of wisdom from this elite group are quite revealing:

- (1) Lord Smith, Chairman of the Environment Agency - "we don't do dredging, and urban areas should be given priority over rural areas"
- (2) Ken Clarke on Question Time - "its winter so it rains" and with references to lynch mob culture
- (3) Eric Pickles in speech to House of Commons - "the characteristic of Britain is its weather"

Ken Clarke should know better; his constituency in Nottingham on the River Trent has the most expensive flood barriers constructed by the Environment Agency at a cost of £51m. Also, he enjoys the benefit of the Thames Barrier built at a cost of £534m in 1982. At today's pricing this would equate to nearly 3 years of the total flood defence budget.

Eric Pickles, on the other hand, as Community Secretary, has cut local Council budgets resulting in my Borough Council making redundant all flood related staff. This has transferred the responsibility to the County Council in the form of "Flood and Water Management," who have no designated budget for local flood defence work. However, Eric Pickles has promised £130m more money (or is it recycled?) for flood defences and maintenance. Let's hope his "down-to-earth" attitude brings some common-sense to the whole approach to our future flood strategy.

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A big WELCOME to our new staff!

By National Flood Forum

Debbie:

Administrative Assistant, based in Shropshire, supporting Heather and working with groups. Debbie can be contacted on 01743 741725 and debbie.williams@floodforum.org.uk.



Jean: Administrative Assistant, based in the Bewdley office working alongside Amanda and Jayne. Jean can be contacted on 01299 403101 and jean.timmins@floodforum.org.uk.



For a list of National Flood Forum staff, please see the 'Contact Us' and 'About Us-Meet the Staff' pages on our website.

Warwickshire Pathfinder

By Naomi Gibson: National Flood Forum

Within Warwickshire there are **three** main objectives to the pathfinder project. Firstly, to establish **10 sustainable Flood Action Groups** within the 5 Borough/Districts. These will be formed of volunteer residents with an interest in managing their own flood risk by working with the relevant authorities. The communities in which the Flood Action Groups will be formed were selected by working with local councils who have knowledge and experience of previous positive engagement with flood risk residents. Flood Action Groups have currently been established in Kenilworth, Shipston-on-Stour, Bidford-on-Avon, Willoughby and Whitacre Heath. In all of these areas, rolling action plans (which collect ideas and concerns from the community) are being developed and multi-agency meetings are currently being arranged. The groups have all created their own flood email addresses where other residents can submit their individual issues to be added to the plan.

The second branch of the pathfinder project involves county-wide engagement of **raising awareness of resilience** throughout the whole of Warwickshire. When the baseline report was live it was accessible by internet for anyone in Warwickshire at risk of flooding to complete. Warwickshire County Council will then use this information for prioritising and the Local Flood Risk

Management Strategy Plan. For May and June, seven workshops have been organised where members of the public and councillors have been invited to attend in order to learn more about resilience. The workshops cover not only flooding but any emergency. Grab boxes will be available as an incentive to attend the workshops and will include items such as wind up radios, a foil blanket, and a first aid kit. The agenda includes talks about the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (*Warwickshire County Council*), Pathfinder Project (*National Flood Forum*) and Emergency Resilience (*Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Resilience Team*).

The third aspect of the project involves working with **schools**. We have approached six schools within close proximity to the Flood Action Groups. The aim is to install weather stations on the school sites that the pupils can use as part of their school curriculum. Presentations and activities with the pupils will also raise awareness of the issue of flooding in their area and the impact it has on their community. By speaking to pupils it is hoped that they talk to parents about flooding issues and preparedness. By monitoring the weather, rainfall, and other climatic features through a fun activity, the pupils will become more aware of the weather around them.

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