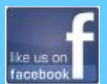


## News and updates

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## A Focus on Rochdale

### Littleborough Flood Resilience Group

The Boxing day floods in Littleborough village had both a devastating and a galvanising effect on the community. Storm Eva caused flooding to over 300 homes and businesses in the Rochdale area. A further 20,000 properties in the immediate and surrounding areas were also affected by the resulting power cut caused by a local electric sub-station being flooded. The local Community rallied round and together they helped those in real need both in terms of practical help and donations.

The Littleborough Civic Trust is a well-respected and known community group that meets at one of the most well-known buildings in the area, Hare Hill House. This was once the home of the prominent Newall family and now is being lovingly renovated after many uses over the years. It is utilised by many local groups and as a corner stone of the local landscape, it was also a focal point during the days after the flooding as services, local Council, Environment Agency and others.

Although there was already links with the local Council and The National Flood Forum's Project Officer had been working in the area, the anti was raised after the flooding to see if the Civic Trust would dedicate some members to form an arm called the Littleborough Flood Resilience Group (LFRG). The group was successfully formed with the backing and support of the larger Littleborough Civic Trust, although none members were also encouraged to join, (including myself!) to see how best they could support the community moving forward.



Luckily none of our group's properties are at risk of serious flooding but since then the small but dedicated team have collected resources to be ready to help set up and run Hare Hill House again as a community hub if any flooding was to occur again, including forging links with the Environment Agency and Rochdale Borough Council and attending various emergency planning events. We also help promote flood resilience through helping deliver leaflets/campaigns and chasing up concerns from our community with the flood risk agencies at multi-agency meetings.

We have also started interacting with other various Irwell Catchment groups including Radcliffe and Salford through the local Irwell Catchment Group. Members have also previously attended the National Flood Forum conference in London which proved enlightening to know the range of issues other groups face too.



The Littleborough FRG have also been asked to help with trials of the Environment Agency's flood warning service and the river levels warning system to see how helpful these are as an early warning to local people. We are also being consulted and anticipate being very active in the recently announced proposed multi-million-pound project to improve flood defence in Greater Manchester, especially in the Littleborough area.

Recently a partnership with Manchester Metropolitan University has just been established too, this is to help better understand what can be done in the future, and proposed activities are currently being discussed.

***Peter – Littleborough Flood Resilience Group***

## Littleborough Flood Resilience Group (A Sub Committee of Littleborough Civic Trust) A Request for Information

Calderdale flood action group have a system/set-up which seems (from the outside looking in) to be rather organised.

I'm not sure if, at the time of setting it up, Calderdale had any assistance from the Environment Agency, especially with early warning systems such as the sirens located at strategic points throughout the valley. I am aware that the emergency services periodically hold exercises to test responses.

An ideal location for a siren for Littleborough would be on the rooftop of Hare Hill House which is situated in Hare Hill Park. It is located almost geographically in the centre of the village and in the past a siren did exist there; initially as a WWII air raid siren, so it is a proven location for a siren. After WWII, it became the call out system for local firemen; again, proving the ideal location.

It could be argued that it would be heard by residents who would never be affected by floods, but Boxing Day 2015 brought with it, not only flooding, but landslides which necessitated the residents of some terrace rows (properties nowhere near a water course) to evacuate their homes. Particularly affected were also the gas supplies to those properties.

Within the cellar of Hare Hill House (owned by Rochdale BC) the infrastructure still exists, albeit now probably way outdated; and the rooftop siren is long gone.

Indeed, just one of the advantages would be that it would immediately alert those directly affected by flooding, i.e., those properties which have already suffered, to bring into action any implementation of property flood boards people may have. It would also possibly spring into action other local volunteer groups to prepare for the worst, namely, those groups who have offered assistance to Littleborough Civic Trust in the event of flooding.

We know that there might be some issues about if people are not home and the need for example the Environment Agency's flood warning service notifications are still very useful for a variety of reasons but if anyone from the local Calderdale groups (or any group that has a different flood warning style system to the Environment Agency's) would like to get in touch please, to advise how their local siren system works, we would be very interested to know more and hopefully work with you to gain more of an understanding of how your local groups work too. Please contact the National Flood Forum office if you would like to be put into contact.

Thanks, in anticipation.

***Ian - Chair, Littleborough Civic Trust***

## Boxing Day Memories – 2015

My name is Adam and when I was 10 years old, I woke up and found out that the river water was really high. Our house backs on to the smaller river called Hey Brook that then flows into the River Roch, which is also at the bottom of our street.

It was the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 2015 and the rain was thumping down. My mum was in Manchester at the Boxing Day sales with my auntie who also lives only a few doors away and my dad was looking really worried because he could see water coming into the garden. My dad rang my mum to tell her what was happening. They were shocked as they hadn't received any flood warnings from the Environment Agency – but then shortly afterwards did.

My dad started putting furniture on the sofa and my little brother started crying because he couldn't watch TV. I didn't understand what my dad was doing at first. My mum was stuck because the trams had to stop because of the floods. My Uncle had to pick up and bring my mum and auntie home. By the time they had come back, it looked like there was a huge swimming pool in the garden. We started to try and put sandbags near our back doors to try and stop any water getting into the house but everyone was looking worried. We didn't even manage to get any photos of the garden as we were all too busy trying to move things and pack what we needed.

We had to go to my grandparents' house because there was a big chance that the water would get into the house. Our house is a bungalow, so we couldn't put anything upstairs either. We had to stay at our grandparents' house for a few nights. This was because there was also a huge power cut and so our house wouldn't have any power which meant it would be cold and dark in December. When we went back to our house, we had good news. No water had come into our house and the water had gone, but our garden was black and dirty. Our neighbour's house had flooded though, and more houses on our street and some of my friends' streets so my big brother, my mum and my dad helped with the clean-up. In fact, a lot of people came to help and the youth centre became a place people could get water and food from as well as cleaning items too.



*Clean up day involving members of the local Flood Action Group*

The BBC News came to our street and interviewed our neighbour and we saw him on the TV too!

**Adam - Now aged thirteen and a half. Wardleworth Flood Action Group**

## GIVE US AN UPDATE

If you are one of our affiliated Flood Action Groups, have there been any changes in contact details? We would love to get an update from you with any news or activities from your Group.

Drop Jean a line here at the Bewdley Office

[Jean.timmins@floodforum.org.uk](mailto:Jean.timmins@floodforum.org.uk)



# River Irwell Catchment Flood Action Group

## River Irwell Catchment Flood Action Group

They say, “knowledge is power” and whilst residents who have been flooded struggle to find their way through the bureaucratic nightmare of policies, procedures and paperwork relating to flooding, myself and others have found clarity and felt “empowered” after attending the River Irwell Catchment Flood Action Group Workshops.

The workshops funded by the “Big Lottery Awards for All Grant” have been run in partnership between the National Flood Forum and Manchester Metropolitan University. These wonderful and informative workshops have brought together representatives from flood risk communities as well as speakers and other interested parties who all have a mutual interest in flooding affairs.



Each session supported by Manchester University and chaired by the National Flood Forum have been very much participant led with an emphasis on what participants want to know and gain from attending. For example, one of the workshops identified that everyone wanted a better understanding of how planning systems work. As a result, JBA consulting attended the following workshop and gave a fabulous presentation on planning principles relating to flood risk.

We did panic a little at the start of the presentation and had visions of never escaping the building when we noticed the presentation had 110 slides!

Thankfully we only discussed key slides covering topics such as development plans, defences, sustainable drainage systems and roles and responsibilities including Council Planning Department compliance checks.

Such topics may not appeal to everyone. I literally had to beg my husband with the promise of a pint in a Manchester City Centre hostelry to come with me to the first workshop, as missing cricket on a Saturday afternoon and discussing drainage was not his idea of fun. However, despite his groans and moans he found the first workshop so worthwhile that he has attended every single one.

The final workshop will be to develop questions for local authorities in relation to planning and development. Hopefully, more meetings will be held in the future and I would advise everyone to attend. “Empowerment” and especially “community empowerment” connects people. It also helps people especially when they have suffered a natural disaster such as a flood to collectively exercise their rights and views, so they can once again take control over their lives.

*Colette - Chair Irwell Catchment Group*



# FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The National Flood Forum, supported by Flood Re, is launching a nationwide campaign to mobilise and engage with communities on the ground in flood affected areas. Through a series of regional events across the UK guests can come together to share experiences of flooding with each other and to build networks of like-minded people to address the issues of living with flood risk.

With the first event taking place in Birmingham - we want you to join the conversation.

This important event will offer opportunities to:

- Talk to others in similar situations
- Share experiences
- Meet and network
- Seek advice and information
- Consider how we can work together for change
- Refreshments will be provided and free parking is available at the venue.

Topics

- Issues and problems experienced from flooding
- How is flooding being tackled?
- Success, issues and concerns
- Developing a shared flooding agenda
- Developing a flood movement
- Support needed from flood affected communities

Refreshments will be provided.



[CLICK HERE TO BOOK YOUR FREE TICKET](#)

SAVE THE DATE ....

THE NEXT WORKSHOP WILL BE FRIDAY 23<sup>RD</sup> NOVEMBER, TONBRIDGE, KENT - KEEP AN EYE ON OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR FURTHER DETAILS OR CONTACT THE OFFICE ON 01299 403055

# FUNDRAISING WALK-A-THON

## National Flood Forum does a Walk-a-thon to raise money to help keep them working in Communities

On the 1<sup>st</sup> September, twelve intrepid explorers (otherwise known as National Flood Forum Officers, Senior Management (and a couple of family members) set off on an exciting mission which led them through the wilds of Shropshire. The challenge was a 30 kilometre walk along the River Severn and the Shropshire Way from Frankwell in Shrewsbury to Pentre & Edgerley on the Welsh border.

The trek saw the group walking through some of the beautiful villages of North Shropshire. They traversed maize and potato fields, climbed stiles and gates, made friends with some chickens and ducks, escaped from a field with a crazy horse in it, and navigated their way through woodlands to reach their destination – The Royal Hill, a fantastic little pub on the banks of the River Severn. The walk took a total of just over 7 hours, with a brief stop off in Montford Bridge for lunch that was kindly delivered by National Flood Forum Trustee, Anne Wheeler.



The group's youngest member, twelve-year-old Ellie-Mae, daughter of Project Officer Debbie Hall, impressed everyone with her determination to finish the walk and provided some entertainment along the way by regaling some embarrassing tales about her poor mother.

At the end of the walk, there were plenty of sore feet, many a blister the best being the partner of Operations Coordinator Amanda Davies, and some aching limbs, but all finished with big smiles having achieved their goal. The aim of the challenge was to raise £1000 for the charity to allow staff to continue working with communities at risk of flooding. The National Flood Forum receives no core funding and relies entirely on project funding or charitable donations to continue supporting those who live with the risk of flooding.

National Flood Forum staff were out with their begging bowls, asking friends, family, work associates, Flood Action Groups and other stakeholders to sponsor them to complete the challenge. The response was fantastic, and the staff managed to exceed their target with a final fundraising total of over £2000.00!

Meanwhile, two other National Flood Forum officers, who unfortunately couldn't make the walk-a-thon, completed their own fundraisers. Nottinghamshire Project Officer, Shani Lambert, completed a 5.7-kilometre run around some of the areas of the town that are most affected by flooding. Shani started her run off from the Town Hall and ran down to the old railway line and along the nature trail. There, she joined Upton Road and followed that through Easthorpe, turning right onto Easthorpe road. Easthorpe has suffered a lot of flooding in the past. From Easthorpe Road, Shani crossed over and ran along the Potwell Dyke to Nottingham Road. She then ran a short distance along Nottingham Road before turning right onto Halloughton Road. The Potwell Dyke caused a severe amount of flooding when it broke its banks in several areas, particularly where it has a flow route under Nottingham Road and on Halloughton Road.





Once at the top of Halloughton Road, Shani turned left onto Westgate and then right onto Allenby Road. At the bottom of Allenby Road, she turned onto Kirkington Road heading back into town where she crossed over the top of the Ropewalk below Lowes Wong School and ran down Queen's Street and up Kings street back to the Town Hall. The 3.4-mile run took a total of 34 mins and raised a further £60.

Project Officer Michelle Steel in Norfolk, came up with a number of ideas for fundraisers in her area, including coffee mornings and cake sales. Unfortunately, she has been somewhat thwarted in her efforts by some typical British weather.

However, she was determined not to be left out of the fundraising spirit so sold off some of her unwanted household items and furniture and donated the proceeds (£50) to the proceeds and plans to continue with her other ideas when the weather improves again.



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



or





# Mapping Issues in the South East

Having experienced the trauma of major flooding and some very close calls, we were delighted and relieved that our thirteen-year campaign for defences came to fruition with many thanks to the Environment Agency who completed work in September 2014 of a robust £1.2m Flood Alleviation Scheme designed to provide us 1 in 100-year protection.

The flood defences have proved to work even in extreme conditions and so we have enjoyed peace of mind when it rains heavily rather than “living on the edge”. They even worked when incomplete in January/February 2014 with the missing section blocked by a sandbag wall, with many parts of the country including our own catchment experiencing the highest ever recorded rainfall and river levels. We would have definitely flooded again otherwise!

However, the anomaly that it subsequently went on to leave as an unexpected legacy, was with the Environment Agency’s NaFRA (National Flood Risk Assessment) maps! It took three and half years before the £1.2m investment was recognised on the NaFRA database and as a consequence, residents have been paying high insurance premiums even from Flood Re providers. In March however, we did see changes of risk from “HIGH” to “MEDIUM”.

The story continues; because of NaFRA mapping re-configuring the banding, the MEDIUM status has not helped address the selling of our homes or getting competitive Insurance. This has been borne by a purchaser being lost as a result of this now MEDIUM risk, even though we are the beneficiaries of a now tried and tested 1 in 100... £1.2m flood defence scheme.

It is felt by our community that the crux of the matter is, whilst the HIGH bracket seems fair at up to 1 in 29, the MEDIUM bracket which starts from 1 in 30 up to 1 in 100 is not if you figure at the top end of the scale, as our community does. We feel we are being prejudiced by the lower end of the scale impacting on our overall risk.

There is obviously a significant gulf between 1 in 30 and 1 in 100 and it is felt this is a massive variance. Over 100 is LOW and there is a new bracket for VERY LOW! The typical level of protection to attract funding for most schemes remains 1 in 100 and as such beneficiaries of Flood Defences are therefore likely to also fall into the MEDIUM bracket.

As a consequence, our community strongly feel that the current mapping is fundamentally flawed because if we were 1 in 101 (yes, we know such banding doesn’t exist as we understand the next level is 1 in 125) we would be at LOW risk. It also flies in the face of the cost benefit ratio used to meet the criteria to get flood defences.

We do hope you have found the sharing of our experiences helpful and interesting. We would be keen to hear if any other community has had similar issues, do get in touch with the National Flood Forum if you have.

***Flood Action Group – South East England***



# Consequences of and community responses to devastating surface water flooding Thatcham, 20th July 2007

The rainstorm, which hit many parts of the UK on 20th July 2007, caused a devastating flood in the West Berkshire town of Thatcham. It damaged 1100 homes and made 4000 people temporarily homeless, some for over a year. It closed schools, caused chaos on the road and rail network and disrupted the town's commercial and leisure pursuits.

The deluge, which fell on Thatcham, amplified by the run-off from the hills above the town, overwhelmed its drains. Consequently, a devastating surface water flood developed.

As forecast, the storm stopped quite suddenly around midday, allowing Thatcham's drains to recover and by late afternoon much of the floodwater had receded, but by then, the damage had been done.

Within weeks of the devastation a Thatcham Town Council (TTC) initiative resulted in the creation of **Thatcham Flood Forum (TFF)**, which comprises a group of volunteer residents who have met virtually every two months since.



TTC has been a reliable supporter of TFF throughout. It provides a room in its council offices for the bi-monthly meetings plus a staff member for minute taking, and provides a small annual budget to cover expenses incurred. In addition, the meetings are usually attended by one, sometimes two, local councillors. TFF's remit is to represent the community in all matters relating to flooding. This involves keeping up to date with flood risk/protection legislation, responding to planning applications where there is a perceived flood risk and relevant property insurance issues.



It uses its web site to maintain a high profile of TFF in the community, and attends community events such as Thatcham Fun Day, the Thatcham Festival and Christmas lights switch on. It seeks opportunities to speak to appropriate social and business groups, builds awareness of TFF with the local media – press, radio and TV and, in recent years, has been running a fundraising campaign, launched with the support of our Member of Parliament, Richard Benyon.

In response to the devastation suffered by Thatcham, and other parts of the country similarly affected, the Environment Agency (EA) invited these communities to apply for grants to fund the creation of a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP).

Six pilot schemes were selected of which Thatcham was one, with West Berkshire Council (WBC) as the project lead. The SWMP that emerged for Thatcham had six major 'hard engineering' components, four of which were sizeable flood retention basins to intercept and hold back flood waters from the hillside run-off above Thatcham, whilst the other two were to safely route flows through the town itself.

Once the SWMP had been adopted by WBC and approved by the EA, WBC applied for funding of approximately £6 million to execute the plan. Unfortunately, and unexpectedly, the cost/benefit analysis of this first application was considered inadequate and it was rejected. The Thatcham community was staggered when news came through that the formally adopted and approved SWMP could have had funding refused.

With this disturbing news, immediate action was called for, and TFF requested a top-level meeting to discuss and agree the most effective next step to ensure that this project did not die. The subsequent meeting was chaired by the Chief Executive of WBC, our local MP, Richard Benyon accepted an invitation to attend. Other attendees included, representatives from all three local councils, the EA, Thames Water (TW) and TFF.

The outcome from these discussions, which proved successful, was that instead of seeking a grant for all six schemes simultaneously, WBC would apply for an EA grant one phase at a time. It has proved to be a laborious process to handle scheme funding in this way; however, we have now reached the position where Grant in Aid and/or Local Levy funding from the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (TRFCC) has been obtained for all four of the largest sub schemes in the SWMP.

The first of the four sizeable basins, with a storage capacity of 25,000 cubic metres was completed in 2014. The second features a 50,000 cubic metres capacity, which will come on stream later this year and the third with a 37,000 capacity is due to be commissioned in 2019. The fourth phase, which comprises a series of bunds, swales and water storage basins with a combined storage capacity 14,200 cubic metres is expected to complete construction in late Autumn 2019.



In 2014 a requirement in the grant application process was introduced demanding evidence of local community support in the form of locally raised financial contributions towards the cost of the project. In response, TFF launched a fundraising project.

To date, it has achieved a total £101K. As well as contributions from Thatcham residents and businesses, major grant givers include: Greenham Trust, a charity which supports local community projects and, which has match funded the first £50K raised, the Scottish and Southern Electricity Power Distribution grant was £20K and the donation from Berkshire Community Foundation was £10K.

Thatcham Town Council also donated £20K and when TFF calls on a firm pledge of £20K from West Berkshire Members Community Bid Panel the total will rise to £121K

This sum has proved sufficient to persuade the EA, working with the TRFCC to allocate funds for the construction of the two remaining major schemes. These are now fully designed and funded and site work will commence in this financial year with commissioning expected in the Spring and Autumn of 2019.

As the SWMP has developed further, smaller infill schemes have been identified, which we expect to be built in 2021 and 2022. If all goes to plan, the residents and businesses of Thatcham will have their town substantially secured from the risk of a high magnitude surface water flood event some 15 years after that disastrous day in July 2007.

As anticipated, the design and building of Thatcham's SWMP has been, and is, a long-term commitment and throughout, WBC has been unstinting in its support, attending virtually every bi-monthly meeting to keep TFF informed of progress. We feel that the partnership we have formed together, has been fulfilling for all concerned and vital to the achievement of our common goal.

# How you can help the National Flood Forum

Our purpose is to give support and help to grassroots communities at risk of flooding, we are committed to giving our time, energy and focus to these communities. Unfortunately, because we are not supported by any core funding we are always struggling to survive as a Charity. We really appreciate any support that can be given, maybe in the form of a fundraising event, or donations or any other ideas that you may have. We do have in place some ideas already as follows:

1. We now have a fundraising pack with lots of ideas on how people can raise funds.
2. The Give-as-you-live facility allows you to make a donation to the National Flood Forum every time you shop online, at no cost to you. What is more, we can use the funds to match against some of the other projects we are working on and double up the value. To sign up, please click on the link in the graphic below ...
3. You can also text **RAIN07 £5\* to 70070** to donate via your mobile directly or through our website at [www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk](http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk) Suggested donation. Your chosen amount comes from your pre-paid credit or is added to your bill and the National Flood Forum receives 100% of the donation.

## Buying for Halloween?



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