

Appendix 1

Public Meetings

The Inquiry Panel held a number of public meetings where we met with residents and business owners in York. We have tried to capture an overview of the opinions and ideas that were shared with us.

Huntingdon Road

We spoke with many residents on Huntingdon Road many of whom who were actually signed up to the EA's flood warning scheme.

One resident report being signed up for the EA Flood Warnings for the last 10 years because it "*is foolish not to be*".

Another resident told us that from 26 December 2015 from about 7am in the morning they had warnings on their phone from the EA automated service. They said that about 11am there was another call which indicated the situation was getting worse. Sometime between 1pm – 4pm a call was received telling people to leave their homes. Then the resident remembers a final call saying get out your life is in danger at about 7pm. By this time the water was coming up rapidly and had reached about a foot it was already above wellington height and rising fast.

In contrast another resident told us that "*We have had texts warnings about it [the flood] I take them with a pinch of salt. It is such a blunt instrument.*"

Did get quite good warnings if paying attention but previous experience if anything did would be an inconvenience if walking in wellies.

No warnings other than a knock on the door there was no incident of any flooding. We are uninsured we had not fall back to sort it out we had no contact from the council with any advice and contamination or decontamination. Simon got a reduction in rates for a period which included the two months you get for free.

We heard from residents that they felt their property was lost. On 27 December one resident saw that their property was surrounded and under 4 feet of water and inside it reached a meter. We were told that there was nothing that could been done as the road was a "*disaster area*".

Overwhelming we heard lot of praise for the voluntary services.

However, one resident told us that they were visited by lots of volunteers who wanted to help but they weren't properly equipped clothing wise, the flooded property was a contaminated area, but the volunteers wanted to clean without protective clothing. This aspect of health and safety was a concern that was expressed to the Inquiry by a number of residents.

Was dismayed to hear the council was saying do not come to York which killed the business.

One resident remembered that in 2000 CYC employed megaphones to warn people of the flooding. It was commented upon that there was none of that this time. The residents felt that all warnings were done by automated text. Due to the fact that the internet and mobile network went down there was little information available. It was suggested that people would have been better served to have had the emergency responders with megaphones evacuating people.

Residents were dismayed that there was no specific call to say evacuate now. Often people learned information from their neighbours. One resident was told by their neighbour that the barrier had been lifted but they did not realise that this meant that water was going to reach their property. Certainly from what we have heard residents had difficulties finding out what had happened.

One complaint that we heard from a number of people was that CYC's 24 hour response phone was unmanned or unanswered. We didn't see any people from any agencies. The fire brigade came out about 3-4pm to distribute sandbags and some of the council workers. Some residents reported that sand bags were being given to properties that had already flooded.

One resident commented that they had moved out to repair the property and they had to change the parking permit, etc rang them up and were fantastic cancel then moved to the new property free of charge then moved them back.

Another said they were "made to feel like a criminal evading the council tax".

"No leadership not treated empathetically."

Somebody else commented that "They [CYC] did give me the rebate straight away they did not verify I had been flooded".

One resident commented that they were watching the EA flood levels for the Foss and the Ouse and saw that the barrier failed at some point. They suggested that it would have been a better see a page on the EA for the barrier not just showing the level but the position of the barrier and how many pumps were running.

A common complaint was that standards weren't as they should have been in maintaining the barrier and the equipment. There were lots of questions around the decision to raise the barrier.

Tower Place/Esplanade/Clifford's Tower

After the 2012 flood the residents formed a flood action group and about 30 people joined in the meeting and there were meetings with councillors EA and Yorkshire Water. This has stopped which may be because people consider it a lost cause because there is nothing that can be done to protect the properties from flooding.

Residents felt that they were a forgotten area of York. Whilst residents thought it was wonderful the EA will be spending millions on the Foss Barrier they were concerned that it would make it worse for their properties. The more water that is pumped into the Ouse there is a risk that the water will back up.

As soon as the water gets in tower gardens then when it is raining the water comes in the back of our houses. A point that has been raised with Yorkshire Water is that a non-return valve is put into the area.

Residents noticed that their insurance was very expensive with a huge excess but had now benefitted from the Flood Re scheme.

The Inquiry was told that in this area the main defence EA want to implement an arrangement where CYC put sandbags in they put them in to protect Tower Place. However, it was noted that the sandbags had been put in place and removed a number of times and it was suggested that the area might be better served by a moveable flood barrier.

There were concerns that although a pump was placed in Tower Street by CYC during the flood nobody could be contacted to come and turn the pump on. Although the having the pump turned on would not protect the properties it was felt that it would have slowed the rate of the flood. It pumps back into the park. Keeps the level down it works well when it is running. Therefore the residents are trying to get a non return valve fitted.

The residents said:

"We are realistic we live on a flood plain the houses are flooded."

"I think the council responded well the skips were there the roads were swept the gas was checked"

We felt "powerless hoping for it to peak and to drop again"

We heard from a business in the area that occupies a Grade 2 listed building and has suffered basement flooding on a number of occasions. They had already taken action to have a submersible pump installed which normally worked well. However the pump was overwhelmed on 26 December causing a significant amount of damage. CYC assisted in providing a contribution to the repairs however, we learnt there were business continuity issues which are difficult to navigate.

Some residents asked whether there is a way of recording now the lessons of the event so that the instructions what to do next time are there and ready to distribute if the internet was off. Then it is possible to archive something that will read every 10 years.

Strensall

The Chair of Strensall with Towthorpe Parish Council and a Councillor submitted evidence to the Inquiry in relation to the impact of the December Floods on Strensall. The Inquiry heard that the main difficulties caused were flooding at the junction of Sherriff Hutton Road and The Village which started at about lunch time on 26 December 2015. The Councillors took action themselves to attempt to warn and slow traffic so to ensure the safety of drivers. In fact sewage had been coming out of the manhole installed to connect the Tannery to the sewerage system. One property in the village of Strensall flooded due to the inability of water in Bone Dyke to flow into the River Foss. The flooding and flow in the Foss was the worst that the residents of Strensall have ever seen. A planning issue was raised with the Inquiry in relation to and plan to reinforce the North Bank of the River Foss.

Clementhorpe

Concerns were raised to the Inquiry about the flood defences in Lower Ebor Street. Although the defence walls did their job and protected Lower Ebor Street in December 2015, the flood water rose to within a few inches of the top of the flood walls. In December 2015 sand bags were put on top of the walls by volunteers and the Army to protect Lower Ebor Street should the flood levels rise higher. The point was made to the Inquiry that the risk of flooding itself has a major psychological effect on residents and particularly there is tremendous fear that the existing flood defences might fail should flood events get worse.

The Inquiry was provided with a very professional presentation relating to a proposal for demountable flood protection for Clementhorpe, River Street and Lower Darnborough Street by Councillor Hayes and Mr Burnard. As some residents will recall a trial demountable flood barrier has previously been installed at the bottom of Clementhorpe in 2006 and the barrier was employed for

the first time in 2008 when it was able to hold back 0.6m of water. The difficulty was that water under the pressure created by the head of water in front of the barrier permeated the ground beneath and rose to the surface on the "dry side". An assessment concluded that the increased ground pressure could cause a catastrophic failure of the road surface. The evidence we heard included a proposal to inject the ground with resin to create an anti seepage curtain and potentially alleviate the previously identified problems. Since 2006 technology has advanced in relation to demountable barriers and the new proposal was an Aquafence Unit which is available in heights of up to 2.4m and can be folded flat on site when not in use. The height of the 2006 barrier was 1.5m which meant that the maximum flood that could be withstood was 10.23 AOD. The proposal we saw suggested a 1.8m barrier to provide protection of 10.55 AOD.

The Inquiry was shown a fully costed estimate for the proposed barrier which amounted to approximately £67,500 which included the groundwork to prevent seepage. This would provide protection for approximately 30 houses at a cost of £2,400.

The Inquiry have raised this with the EA who will consider the proposal.

Rawcliffe

Surface water for Rawcliffe was a disaster waiting to happen the capacity of the pumping was short of what it should be. The pumps should have been gravity fed because there was fat build up in the pipes. The capacity of 100 or 200 pumps which were replaced on stand by with the outlets on the blue beck which compromised the sewage works. It was a bit of a disaster when something happens and the sewage pumped into the surface water. It has been improved and is now ok. Pity they did not spend more money on the holding water plan. In terms of the water reservoir at Rawcliffe the surface water when it was first built hit sand so could not hit full capacity. In 2000 was a shambles telemetry link was compromised as it was not a failed system, the bouncing tank was full of silt so no response so the level of the lake should have had a summer and winter level.

Not affected by the flood this time. The lake thing so many organisations the main water artery for the whole of Rawcliffe plus light industry plus dwellings fed by blue beck. Just missed by about a flood. EA response for the flow the side of the banks for the top of the banks.

EA pumping problem. Brought mobile pumps to the area week after the flood. Rawcliffe catchment comes via blue beck.

CYC

We heard mixed views about CYC.

One resident told us that the council were very good, *“they were on the ball they wanted to make sure you were alright they took name and put it in data and checked you were ok. This helped when you got your automatic £500 they had visually witnesses you did not have to write in with the details.”*

Initial response by the council on Huntingdon road were we were was extremely good and we could not fault it. I had to stop the waste operatives taking stuff away to photograph it. They would clear the property out for us but I had to take evidence of this. As far as I was concerned the property that was excellent there is some red tap re the flood resilience application.

Insurance

We spoke with residents about their insurance.

One resident report that the Insurance didn't offer any assistance in terms of a project manager. The resident was left to get the quotes. They weren't offered a contractor, there was no specification prepared the resident acted as the project manager.

We heard how somebody who owned a rental property which was flooded experienced difficulty with their insurance. The premium it went from £350 to £1,500 when it was renewed on the 1 March 2016. This extra money came when the person was already under extreme financial distress having to pay for repairs and cover the loss of the rental income.

My insurance claim I had a good company the assessor was out within a day and they were ripping stuff out within a day. We project managed the build so we are back in the property. My neighbours were not so lucky.

What would you change?

We asked residents what they would change and we had the following suggestions:

- The warnings. Need a world war style warning. Cars with loud hailers. A siren would not know what it was. We had seen them in Austria.
- More people on the ground advising and telling us what to expect. Saw no one until were evacuated. The council van had come twice but like a plague of locust getting the sandbags.
- Nice to know why it happened in the first place.
- Sirens may have had more people evacuating.
- Would react to flood wardens more than the siren.
- CYC should have been more awareness about how long it would take to move back into the property. CYC challenged whether we had moved in when we requested a council tax rebate.

Appendix 2 Flood Inquiry Questionnaire

Independent Inquiry – York Flooding December 2015

An independent inquiry has been commissioned to report about the York Flooding in December 2015.

The terms of the inquiry provide an opportunity for those directly affected by the flooding to provide evidence and express their views on the lessons which can be learned from the floods and the response to it.

We want to understand how the flood affected householders and businesses in York.

By completing this questionnaire you will help us to better understand the full picture of the flooding event in York in December 2015 and the impact on you and on your community.

We will include this information in our Inquiry and we may share this information with the local authority or other emergency services and agencies for planning and emergency planning purposes.

1. Is your property?
 - a. Residential
 - b. Commercial
2. How long have you occupied the property? Years Months
3. What is the postcode of your property?

Flooding

4. Was your property affected by the flooding? Yes No
 - a. Did you have flooding inside your property? Yes No
 - b. Did the flooding affect outside areas of your property? Yes No
5. If you were flooded internally did you receive a warning prior to the water entering your property? YES NO
6. Did you have to be evacuated from the property? Yes NO
7. Have you been flooded at this location before? Yes No DATE
8. Did you contact York City Council? Yes No
 - a. Was their response helpful?

Warnings

9. Were you signed up to the environment agency warnings? YES/NO
10. Did you receive any warnings before the flooding? Yes No
11. If you did receive a warning please tell us which warning you received?
 - a. Flood Alert
 - b. Flood Warning

- c. Severe Flood Warning
 - d. Other (please describe)
12. Did you know what to do when you received your warning? Yes No
13. What action did you take?
14. What changes could be made to the warning system that would make it more helpful?

Recovery

15. Has your property/business had to be repaired? Yes NO
- a. If so how long did the repairs take?
16. Have you applied for/received any of the following in respect of your property/business?
- a. emergency funding
 - b. council tax exemption
 - c. business rate exemption
 - d. community recovery grant
 - e. flood resilience grant
 - f. Other (please describe)
17. Did you need to make a claim on your insurance? YES/ NO
- a. If so did you experience any difficulties? Yes NO (Please describe)
 - b. Have you had any difficulty obtaining future cover? E.g. rise in insurance premiums/refusing cover YES/NO

Future

18. Have you made any changes to your property to protect it against flooding in the future?
19. If so please describe the changes and say when they were made.
20. Space is included below for any other comments you would like to make about your personal experience of the flooding in York in December 2015 and what changes you would like to see in the future.

Appendix 3 Questionnaire Results

Questionnaires were sent to all residents affected by the flooding and their responses in respect of Warnings are summarised below :

- 61% of the responses reported that they were signed up for the EA Warnings.
- 85% of those signed up for the EA warnings confirmed that they received warnings before the flooding.
- The EA warnings were therefore only received in the survey by 52% of those who reported that they had been signed up for the warnings.
- Only 45% of those who received warnings reported that they had received the “Severe” flood warning.
- Of those who confirmed that they had received warnings there was a wide variation in what was being reported.
 - 19% reported receiving the flood alert, then the flood warning and finally the severe flood warning (i.e. All of the warnings issued).
 - 19% reported receiving the Severe Flood Warning only.
 - 18% reported receiving the Flood Alert only.
 - 18% reported receiving the Flood Warning only.
 - 10% reported receiving only the Flood Alert and the Flood Warning.
 - 7% reported receiving the Flood Alert or the Flood Warning before receiving the Severe Flood Warning.
 - 9% did not provide a response to the question.
- Of those receiving warnings 83% reported knowing what to do (i.e. moving possession upstairs etc).
- The wide variation in the type of warning being received is indicative that the system is not being fully understood.
- People were asked what changes could be made the warning system more useful and the most common responses were:
 - “Earlier”
 - “Door-to-Door”
 - “Loudspeaker”
 - “Telephone”
 - “Siren”
 - “Specific/Precise”

Insurance

- 47% of the responses reported that they had to claim on their insurance.
- 18% of those claiming on their insurance reported difficulties with their insurers.
- 31% of those claiming on their insurance reported difficulties in obtaining future cover.
- 28% of all responses reported difficulties in obtaining future cover.
- A significant number of responses were uncertain about future insurance cover arrangements as their renewal dates fell after they had complete the questionnaire.

- No responses mentioned the Flood Re Insurance Scheme.
- Additional comments included concerns about significant increase in premiums and excesses with other reporting that they could not obtain any cover.
- Some responses reported that premiums had doubled, or tripled but one case report a ten-fold increase in the premium.
- There were reports of excesses increasing from £100 to £5,000, from £550 to £5000 and from £250 to £25,000.

Grants/Exemptions

- The questionnaire asked whether people had applied for or received any grants in relation to their property.
 -
 - 75% reported that they had received council tax exemption;
 - Only 28% reported that they had obtained the flood resilience grant.
 - (17% of questionnaires did not answer this question)

Protection

- 42% of the responses reported having made changes to their property to protect against future flooding.
- The reported changes were a mixture of “resistance” measures and “resilience” measures. “Resistance” measures were reported in the majority of cases.
- The most frequently reported “resistance” measures were:
 - Air brick covers;
 - Flood doors;
 - Door flood barriers;
 - Window guards; and,
 - Non-return valves.
- The most frequently report “resilience” measures were:
 - Concrete/solid/tiled floors;
 - Raised electrics;
 - Water resistant render/plaster;
 - Sump pumps;

General

- A total of 212 questionnaires were returned from residential addresses.
- 200 reported flooding of their property and/or outside areas.
- 38% of the responses reported that they had to be evacuated from their property.
- 46% reported that they had contact with CYC.
- 61% of those who contacted CYC reported that the response from CYC had been helpful.
- 68% of responses reported that that they had to have repairs to their properties.

Questionnaire Wordles

The Wordles presented below have been generated using selected text from the responses received to questions included in the questionnaire the Inquiry sent to affected properties.

A "Wordle" is a "word cloud" generated by the computer analysis of selected text. The more frequently a word appears in the selected text, the larger that word appears in the word cloud.

Warnings -What changes could be made to the warning system that would make it more helpful ?



The Future - What changes would you like to see in the future?



