

# Sandwich Area Neighbourhood Forum

## Agenda

**Tuesday 22 June 2010 – 7.00pm start**  
**Sandwich Guildhall, Cattle Market, Sandwich, Kent CT13 9AH**

## Notes

### Present:

Cllr Ian Martin	Chair
Cllr Leyland Ridings	Vice Chair
Cllr Sue Chandler	District Council representative

Other councillors and officers and 63 members of public were present.

### 1. Chairman's welcome

Cllr Ian Martin welcomed those attending.

#### 1.1 Notes of previous meeting

Were approved as a correct record and there were no matters arising.

#### 1.2 Declarations of interest

None.

### 2. The Environment Agency. Paul Marshall, Incident Response Team Leader

Paul manages the local Incident Response Team which is responsible for maintenance of the rivers and the coastal defences in the Sandwich area. His team work 365 days a year and are a very responsive, professional body.

While the Environment Agency (EA) cannot stop floods it can manage the risk of them happening. The EA's Southern Region stretches from Worth to the Swale Estuary within which sits over 8500 flood defence assets. Less than 1% of the impact of flooding results from a failure of these assets and the EA intends spending £180m in the future to maintain and improve these.

There is still a serious lack of recognition of how serious a problem flooding can be. The average cost to a householder suffering the effects of flooding is £25,000 and it is estimated that 1 in 10 businesses sited in a flood plain are not insured. Flooding is 30 times more likely to occur than fire. However climate change is a reality and the effects of this need to be managed and, combined with the serious economic backdrop means that there is less resource available for local issues as the EA's priority must be to keep pumps running and waterways clear.

Flood defence assets that serve the Sandwich area include seven main pump stations within 6 miles of Sandwich that pump water out to sea. In addition the East Kent Road Access scheme has paid for a major set of sluice gates in Ramsgate Road. There are also 180 metres of temporary barriers along Sandwich Quay as a stop gap measure before Broadsalts comes alive.

Paul gave a recent instance on 11 June when his monitoring teams were alerted that there would be 2" of rainfall 2 hours; the team responded quickly by dropping the river levels the night before and, when the rain did start at 3am in the morning, it happened without serious incident.

The Environment Agency works very closely with partners and stakeholders in the area to minimise flooding and these include: Natural England, RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust, Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust, Dover District Council, English Heritage, Sandwich Town Council, Deal Town Council and Kent County Council. The EA will continue to actively involve and consult its stakeholders throughout the development of the new schemes planned for the area, eg. Broadsalts.

### **3. Flooding and wetlands - is your home at risk?**

The rest of the panel introduced themselves:

- Mark Macey, County Sewerage Engineer and Simon Noden, District Manager (Weatherlees) from Southern Water
- Marie Lambkin is KCC's Technical Support Officer in its Environment, Highways and Waste Directorate and covers the whole of Kent, working with parishes on drainage in a communication and liaison role.
- Roger Walton, Head of Property, Leisure and Waste Management, DDC: responsible for coastal defences southwards from Sandown Castle including erosion, encouraging various agencies to carry out works, liaising with agencies and the public
- Mark Underhill is RSPB's Regional Reserves Manager. He is based in Brighton and manages 26 nature reserves stretching between Hampshire and East Kent.
- Bob Gomes is RSPB's Area Manager. He is responsible for three active projects in the Sandwich area: (i) a small area in Pegwell Bay, (ii) working in an informal advisory role for the EA and (iii) Lydden Valley Wetland Nature Reserve.
- Andrew Crates is the EA's Asset Systems Management Team Leader and is responsible for the area from Reculver – Sandwich –Romney Marsh – Rye Harbour.
- Phil Williams, a Conservation Officer from Natural England covers the Site of Special Scientific Interest from Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes offering environmental stewardship schemes to landowners.

### **4. Question and Answer Session**

- Q.** Halcrow were the consultants who put together the Broadsalts scheme. How much work has the EA done on the capital work required for sea defences and how likely is it to go ahead?
- A.** The EA has put together a project appraisal of the scheme for Defra. Sandwich has a good outcome measure as the cost/benefit is high. It is in the hands of Defra whether it will be funded but with these results it is likely to go ahead. Sandwich Town

Council, the EA and Halcrow have had meetings and the outline scheme is looking very positive.

- Q.** Last year the EA were clearing reeds from the river. This work has now stopped and the waterway is becoming choked up. Do you have any plans to continue with this work?
- A.** For ecological reasons, work cannot begin until 15 July because of nesting birds. The EA has 200kms of rivers to clear, but work will start in July and continue throughout the summer.
- Q.** There are 70 acres of land under 40 inches of water caused by sluices clogged with mud and weed where Sandwich Bay goes into the River Stour. The EA say that this has been caused by rain. The North Stream is 18 inches higher than it was 10 years ago.
- A.** The EA has been out with the River Stour Internal Drainage Board and some remedial work has been done. It has subsequently been proven that a structure is leaking on private land and going into the Lydden Valley. Recutting again tomorrow and the EA is working with Natural England also to try and get the water levels down.
- Q.** What plans do the EA have for cleaning the Great Stour at Minster Forge, now and for the future?
- A.** Assess on merits. The Great Stour is of specific interest and is being monitored with de-silting surveys being carried out. However it is important for the EA to determine why this silt has built up and how best to deal with it before any work is carried out. Monitoring closely.
- Q.** I have a farm in Hacklinge and two years ago there was a flooding problem. De-silting was needed but the EA did not listen to local people and said high rainfall was the cause. This has been de-silted and the problem has been solved. The EA leaves 25% of weeds for environmental reasons, but this causes a problem for villages around Sandwich and no doubt will cause problems where the RSPB have bought land.
- A.** Natural England would not want to prevent remedial work being undertaken if this damaged local people's livelihoods. Balance needed to protect wildlife. The North and South Streams are being cleared out in batches to protect wildlife and alleviate the problems. There is a backlog of work to be done.
- Q.** What are the RSPB's intentions in the wetlands? There is concern about what's happened to the Worth marshes.
- A.** The RSPB will consult with local people and is only undertaking routine maintenance until this has happened. Any planning application will include a flood risk assessment. Will hold public meetings and work with the town and parish councils. The process will take about 6-12 months and RSPB is buying land from farmers in Hacklinge in stages over 5 years. The RSPB does aspire to have a large wetland area and will try to reinstate arable land back to grassland. There is much evidence to show that a well managed wetland can alleviate flooding and RSPB will go through a rigorous statutory process. But obviously we cannot guarantee there will never be any flooding.
- Q.** What about tidal flooding? Hacklinge Marshes is already a large body of water. There has been an incident in France which caused a loss of life. What happens if there is a similar sequence of events i.e. heavy rain filling ditches, severe low pressure raising sea-level, coinciding with high tides and high winds of 100mph creating 25 foot waves?

- A. A flood assessment does consider tidal water as well as rainfall. The EA are aware of the incident in France and there are some instances where nature defies everything. However the EA to object strongly to building on flood plains and are aware of the damage an event like this can cause.
- Q. What is the linkage between the two agencies that look after the sea wall?
- A. Following the Pitt Report on Tewkesbury, the EA take the lead and work with the local authority (DDC) to build schemes that ensure the existing defences are strong.
- Q. Over the past 18 months local residents have been asked to make comments on flooding, on the River Stour and coastal defences. They are being treated as two separate projects. Are they working together now?
- A. Yes, there is now an integrated study.
- Q. Who made the decision to alter the flow of the Stour River? It is now flowing more slowly and silting up.
- A. At the beginning of the century the rivers were heavily navigated and boats pushed out the silt to sea. This was detrimental to the ecology of the river.
- Q. Are you talking about a conscious decision to reduce the flow of the river? Was this an ecological decision?
- A. Decision making models are used and there are funding issues, but any compromise would have to include protecting livelihoods. A risk analysis is also undertaken from High – Low. If an area is rated high (high population) then it will be completely defended. There is a need to target resources effectively.
- Q. So this is a conscious decision not to maintain the river?
- A. Surely if there is no maintenance then this is the natural river flow? The EA's main consideration is to protect the people of Sandwich from flooding. The EA tries to get as much flow through the loop as possible. Land has been created through drainage over the past 100 years.
- Q. Relating to River Stonar and cutting of reeds: the river at the Quay is half the width that it was and is badly silted. DDC will not dredge the river and work needs to be done further upstream. Water is pushed up onto his farm land and would like to see flow going through Sandwich.
- A. The EA decides when Stonar cut is opened and delays as long as it can. The treatment of rivers has changed due to ecological concerns over the past 30 – 50 years and also European Directives. There is a balance between ecology and flood risk. It is not all about money – but working with nature, not against it, and returning rivers to natural state.
- Q. Why have the sluice gates near the Council depot (Delph Stream / Strand Street) been blocked for the past 20 years? This would offer a flow through the town. PM will investigate.
- Q. The Guildhall Car Park suffers from localised flooding. Is this a gullies problem?
- A. Cllr Paul Carter made a note and will investigate.
- Q. Has the flood plain map been revised recently in light of the events in France?
- A. The EA takes into consideration any event that happens in the UK or Europe – all maps are revised every five years (to feedback when this was last carried out).
- Q. The culvert at Gazen Salts is continuously silting up and cannot work to its full potential.
- A. This no longer serves a purpose and will be removed.

## **5. Information on funding opportunities for local groups 2010-11**

Anne Charman introduced herself as the KCC Community Engagement Manager who would be covering Emma Carey's maternity leave until January 2011. Anne will be managing the three funding streams available to the Dover Town Neighbourhood Forum; namely Member Community Grant, Local Schemes Grant and Small Community Capital Projects. There have been some changes to the way grants will be allocated funding this year. In particular the KCC/DDC Small Community Capital Projects funding will be allocated at a 'You Decide' community event. Please contact Anne for further information, tel: 01622 696389 or email: [anne.charman@kent.gov.uk](mailto:anne.charman@kent.gov.uk).

#### **6. Changes to the Dover District Neighbourhood Forums from July 2010**

Anne Charman said that the Dover Neighbourhood Forums would be piloting some changes this year. Instead of four meetings per year per forum, there would now be two fixed meetings, one a Participatory Budgeting or 'You Decide' community event in the autumn, the other a meeting where all the service agencies would be present to provide updates and answer questions. In addition to the two set meetings, there will be the opportunity for each of the Neighbourhood Forums to hold a further two additional 'flexible' meetings a year in response to pressing local issues.

#### **7. Any other business**

Cllr Ian Martin told the meeting that the Dover Big Screen would be closed down for the impending England/Germany World Cup Football match on police advice. There was a need to manage public access and recent road closures had been very disruptive for local businesses.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.