Wyre Flood Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 8 December 2016 at the Civic Centre, Poulton

Present:
Carl Green (Chairman)  Wyre Council
Cllr Roger Berry  Wyre Councillor (Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder)
Cllr Tom Balmain  Wyre Councillor (Garstang Ward)
Cllr Philip Orme  Wyre Councillor (Preesall Ward)
Cllr Sue Pimbley  Wyre Councillor (Great Eccleston Ward)
Paul Long  Wyre Council
John Blundell  Wyre Council
Roy Saunders  Wyre Council
Elizabeth Lowe  Lancashire County Council
Joe Gilmour  Garstang Town Council & Gartang FAG
Diane Andrews  Out Rawcliffe Parish Council
Neil Cookson  Pilling Parish Council
Paul Bond  Environment Agency
Pippa Hodgkins  Environment Agency
Julia Mulloy  Environment Agency
Kevan Williams  United Utilities
Dan Blacow  United Utilities
Louise Ashworth  United Utilities
Richard Rhodes  Natural Enland
Irene Homer  Thornton Flood Action Group
Howard Philips  Thornton Flood Action Group
Phil Jenkins  Thornton Flood Action Group
Peter Gore  Thornton Flood Action Group
Eddie Waring  Thornton Flood Action Group
Robert Hogg  Churchtown Flood Action Group
Siriol Hogg  Churchtown
Pamela Charnley-Nickols  St. Michaels Flood Action Group
John Nickols  St. Michaels Flood Action Group
Paul Flintoff  Tarnacre resident
Barbara Mackie  Out Rawcliffe Parish Council
Neil Cookson  Pilling Parish Council
Edward Greenwood  Fleetwood Resident
Garry Allen  Rosleyn Avenue resident, Preesall
Alf Clempson  Office of Ben Wallace MP

Apologies:
Cllr Lady Dulcie Atkins  Wyre Councillor (Garstang Ward)
Cllr Alice Collinson  Wyre Councillor (Garstang Ward)
Ray Hesketh  Garstang Town Council
Roger Weatherall  Churchtown Flood Action Group
1. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 15 September 2016 were noted and confirmed as a correct record.

2. **Bathing Water Quality**

Carl Green (Wyre Council) introduced a presentation provided by the Environment Agency reviewing bathing water quality during the 2016 season, identifying trends and looking forward. He said that copies of the slides would be circulated with the minutes of the meeting. He said that the overall position was good and work was continuing, particularly with local farmers on catchment management, to bring about further improvements.

The latest position was noted.

3. **Flooding in December 2015 and August 2016: Update reports**

   (a) **Resilience Grants**

   A note compiled by Andrew Robinson, Compliance Manager at Wyre Council, setting out the position as at 25 November 2016 on Resilience Grants applications and payments was circulated with the agenda.

   Carl Green emphasised that the deadline for receipt of Resilience Grants relating to the flooding events in December 2015 was 19 December 2016. He urged the Flood Action Group representatives present to encourage eligible residents to submit applications prior to the deadline.

   Paul Flintoff (Tarnacre Resident) said that he was aware of an application submitted on 9 November which had not yet been responded to by Wyre Council. He also suggested that there was confusion about the eligibility for grants for flooding of business premises, rather than residential premises. He said that he would provide details to Carl Green of the particular grant application he had been referring to after the meeting.

   Carl Green said that, so far, only three Flood Resilience Grants had been signed over to Wyre Council for community resilience projects. He asked the Flood Action Group representatives to encourage residents from their areas to support community resilience projects. He confirmed that any resilience grant funding signed over by local residents to Wyre for community scale projects would be spent in that particular area. So, Churchtown residents could be reassured that any such allocations would be spent on community measures to protect Churchtown.
An updated note produced by Andrew Robinson headed Residential Property Flood Funding Fact Sheet as at 7 December 2016 is attached as an Appendix 1 to these minutes.

(b) **Section 19 Report: Update**

A note submitted by Lancashire County Council setting out the latest position on the Section 19 report was circulated with the agenda.

Elizabeth Lowe (Lancashire County Council) confirmed that the District Flood reports referred to in the note had been published and could be viewed on the County Council’s website. She said that they would be updated on a quarterly basis.

Ms Lowe agreed to send a copy of the report to the Chairman of the Churctown Flood Action Group (Roger Wetherall). She said that the County Council was not currently intending to contact each of the 230 flood action groups in Lancashire. She agreed, in response to a question, to check why there was no reference under the community infrastructure section of the report to the flooding of the school and the village hall in St Michaels.

Ms Lowe said that the County Council had been under pressure to get the report out quickly and that this was a first step in a longer process. She said in response to comments from Sirol Hogg that Cumbria County Council had been able to issue its Section 19 report in May because it had received a huge amount of support from central government which had not been available in the Wyre area.

(c) **Mid and Upper Wyre Review**

Paul Bond (Environment Agency) made a presentation. He said that copies of the slides would be circulated after the meeting.

He responded to numerous comments and questions from members of the Forum. Issues discussed included the following.

Mr Bond said that the Environment Agency’s full report was scheduled to be completed by March 2017. He said that when priorities had been established for works required following the recent flooding events, funding options could be identified.

Pippa Hodgkins (Environment Agency) said that she would chase up responses to enquiries about offers to help with tree planting to ensure that people offering their services were provided with updated information and were informed
of projects where they might be able to help.

Ms Hodgkins also said, in response to comments from Churchtown residents, that the Environment Agency was looking for upstream water storage opportunities, but it was her understanding that new flood basins would not be constructed.

Carl Green stressed that the relevant agencies were working together to understand the flooding events more fully and to reduce future risk. He explained the modelling work being undertaken, which he said was focussed on the main river system because that was where the biggest impact could be made. However, other aspects, such as working with the farming community to keep water on the land and so keep water away from the main river system, were also being considered. He outlined, in response to further questions, some of the work being done by the individual agencies. He said that issues identified by individual Flood Action Groups could be raised at the Flood Forum. They would then be considered by all relevant agencies at the Making Space for Water Group and possible solutions would be then fed into the proposals for the whole catchment area, which were being led by the Environment Agency. In response to criticism that improvement plans were taking too long, Carl Green and Paul Bond assured representatives of the residents groups that plans for future works were being drawn up as quickly as possible, and reassured them that their concerns were being listened to.

Councillor Berry said that he understood the sense of frustration amongst local residents. He said that the flooding episodes in this area over the last two years were clearly part of a wider national problem and that a National Flood Agency was needed. He said that it was imperative that a report was produced by the Environment Agency on the improvement work needed in the Garstang area and, that it was made public, so that Wyre Council could lobby to obtain funds. Alf Clempson said that Ben Wallace MP had already expressed support for the need for future investment and agreed that a list of key projects was needed as quickly as possible.

Paul Bond said that an internal document had already been drawn up and he understood that a public version was to be produced soon.

Carl Green said that lessons clearly needed to be learned from what had happened previously, that a clear list of possible options needed to be identified and, a transparent mechanism established for deciding what was affordable. The modelling work currently being undertaken would help to identify possible solutions.

4. **Local Flood Action Group report**
Reports and question received from the following Flood Action Groups together with responses from relevant agencies where available, were circulated with the agenda:

- Churchtown Flood Action Group;
- Garstang Flood Action Group;
- St Michaels Flood Action group (plus a list of questions received from Charlie Nichols from Tarnacre).

The following additional documents were circulated at the meeting:

- Minutes of a Churchtown Flood Action Group meeting held on 1 November 2016;
- A list of questions submitted by St Michaels Flood Action Group and responses received.

A draft communications plan, prepared by the Environment Agency, setting out arrangements for flood action groups to communicate with risk management authorities was also circulated.

Carl Green said that the communications plan had been drawn up as a proposed way of making Flood Action Groups more relevant and to enable them to get information in a more timely way.

Paul Bond endorsed the comments made by Carl Green and said that it was a good opportunity to promote the work of the flood action groups. He said he would provide a list of frequently asked questions for inclusion on Wyre Council's website and to encourage members of the public to raise issues. Representatives of the Flood Action Groups were asked to provide any feedback on the draft action plan to Paul Long.

Elizabeth Lowe agreed to act as the co-ordinator for the preparation of responses to questions on behalf of Lancashire County Council.

Carl Green said that he hoped the new arrangements would represent a step-change in improved communications between local residents and the relevant public agencies. He asked the representatives of the Flood Action Groups present to inform their members of the new arrangements. He said that the intention was to bring the new arrangements into operation in the New Year and that information would be sent out to the relevant contact addresses by email.

The new communication arrangements were welcomed by the Forum.

5. **Dredging of Farmers Watercourses**

Adam Briggs, County Advisor for the National Farmers Union in Lancashire, made a presentation to the Forum. He said that copies of
the presentation would be made available after the meeting.

He referred to the NFU’s flooding manifesto, which was a high level document setting out the organisation’s main objectives with regard to flooding under various broad headings. He said that flooding could be catastrophic for farmers as well as residents of domestic, commercial and community properties. He said that most farmers were aware of their responsibilities and were usually willing to engage positively with public agencies when approached, particularly when mutually benefits could be obtained.

Mr Briggs was thanked for attending and for his interesting and informative presentation.

6. **What’s Going on in the Region**

Reports submitted by United Utilities and the Environment Agency which had been circulated with the Agenda were noted.

Siriol Hogg urged people to attend the free conference being organised by Churchtown Flood Action Group which was to be held at 9.30am on 28 January. Carl Green said that it would be an excellent conference with high quality speakers and he congratulated Churchtown Flood Action Group on managing to arrange such a strong line up.

Dan Blacow (United Utilities) explained, in response to questions, about about urgent action which had been taken to repair a recent sewer fracture between Great Eccleston and Garstang. He said that the sewer pipe was currently being analysed, but the cause of the fracture was not yet known.

7. **Making Space for Water Technical Group**

Carl Green referred to the minutes of the meeting of the Making Space for Water Technical Group held on 22 November 2016, which had been circulated with the agenda.

The Forum reviewed the progress on the incidents listed in the hot spot list attached as Appendix A to the Technical Group minutes.

Carl Green said that any questions on such issues would be discussed by the Technical Group and included in future updates submitted to the Forum.

He said that any updates on questions directed to the technical officers of the various agencies involved would be included in an updated version of the hot spot list which would be circulated to members of the forum in due course.

8. **Emergency Planning and Communications Update: Warnings and Information**

John Blundell (Wyre Council) submitted a report on proposed new
arrangements for communicating warnings and information relating to flooding and a general update on Emergency Planning issues, both of which had been circulated with the agenda. He urged representatives of the Flood Action Groups and Residents Groups present to provide contact details on the form being circulated, so that they could be sent information about flooding by email and text.

He said that a calendar of deadlines for the receipt of questions for future forum meetings would also be circulated.

John Blundell said that he was aiming to finalise and publish the Wyre Flood Plan within the next week. Part 2 of the Plan provided flood risk summary information for specific areas, which he had been talking to Flood Action Groups about. The plan would be a ‘live’ document which would be available for use if needed. The relevant staff were currently being trained to implement the plan, so that the Council could be as prepared as possible. Paul Long would be the single point of contact, which would also help streamline communication. He said that the report would be published on the Council’s website and could be viewed via the following link: http://www.wyre.gov.uk/info/200462/flooding/382/prepare_for_flooding He said, however, that he was happy to send copies of the relevant summary sheets to particular Flood Action Group if requested.

9. **Items for Future meetings**

The following issues were identified as possible items for future meetings of the Forum:-

- A further report on the modelling work currently taking place;
- Information from BT and electricity boards on their plans to improve resilience to flooding events in the Wyre area;
- A presentation on natural water management possibly from a representative of Wyre Rivers Trust or Natural England (Paul Robson);
- An updated on the proposals for a barrage across the Wyre Estuary.

10. **Any Other Business**

John Blundell said, in response to comments made Councillor Orme, that he would speak to the operator of the Fleetwood - Knott End ferry to inform him when the flood boards at the ferry slipway were installed or removed. He would ensure that, in future, the boards were removed as quickly as possible after flood warnings had been rescinded.

11. **Date of Next meeting**

The next meeting of the Forum would be held at 1pm on Thursday 9 March 2017 at Wyre Civic Centre.
The meeting started at 1pm and finished at 4.30pm

(Details of the Flood Forum, including minutes of previous meetings and copies of presentations can be viewed on the Wyre Council’s website)
Appendix 1

Residential Property Flood Funding Factsheet

as @ 07 December 2016

No. of residential properties flooded in Wyre: 98

No. of £500 flood payments issued: 95  Value: £47,500

No. of 100% Council tax flood discount awards issued, including temporary addresses: 105  Value: £68,457

No. of Flood Resilience Grant applications received: 61
No. agreed: 53  Value: £221,267.48
No. refused: 3
No. pending: 5
No. signed over to Wyre council for community resilience projects: 3  Value: £15,000

No. of residents who have confirmed their intention to submit a FRG application before 19 December 2016 but as yet haven’t done so: 11

No. of cases where flood resilience grant work completed and payment made: 25  Value: £107,755

No. of cases where payment of the grant made directly to the contractor by the council i.e. the resident has not had to find the funds to pay for the work then claim it back: 14  Value: £59,857

No. of cases where the grant has been paid directly to the resident: 11  Value: £47,898