

# **Sustainability Committee**

SC(3)-13-09 (p1): 1 July 2009

## **Sustainability Committee Inquiry into Flooding**

### **Purpose**

1. This paper invites Members to consider the evidence gathered at the public meetings held by the Committee as part of their inquiry into Flooding.

### **Background**

2. At its meeting on 29 January 2009, the Committee agreed to undertake an inquiry into flooding. This inquiry was formally launched on 29 April 2009.

3. During the course of the inquiry, Committee Members undertook a series of meetings across Wales to take evidence from the public on how flooding affected them. A copy of the schedule of meetings is attached at annex A.

4. The reports from these meetings have been attached as annex B to G.

5. In addition to the public meetings, a number of videos were recorded which allowed people to share their experiences; these will be shown as a dvd during the meeting.

### **Recommendation**

6. Members are invited to note the reports of the meetings attached as annexes B to G to this paper and the video evidence and discuss the emerging issues.

## Annex A

**Sustainability Committee - Schedule for Flooding Inquiry visit**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Date/Time</b>	<b>Town/Venue</b>
Leanne Wood	5 June 12.30pm – 1.30pm	Trehafod Rhondda Heritage Park Museum
Lesley Griffiths	5 June 5pm – 6pm	Rossett Church Hall, Rossett
Lorraine Barrett	6 June 10.30am – 11.30am	Penarth Penarth Youth Project
Brynle Williams	8 June 12.30pm – 1.30pm	Llanrwst Eagles Hotel
Mick Bates	12 June 6pm – 7pm (bus 4.30 – 7.00)  12 June 12.00 – 4pm  13 June 10am – 1pm	Tregynon Tregynon Community Centre  Betws Cedewain (bus only)  Pool Quay (bus only)
Rhodri Glyn Thomas	19 June 5pm – 6pm	Ammanford Town Hall
Angela Burns	22 June 3pm – 4pm  5pm – 6pm	Whitland Town Hall St Clears Leisure Centre
Alun Davies	26 June 2pm – 3pm	Llanelli Leisure Centre
Darren Millar	22 June 12.30pm -1.30pm	Towyn Youth Centre

## Annex B

### **Public Meeting in Rossett with Lesley Griffiths 5 June 2009**

Lesley Griffiths started the meeting by inviting everybody to share their experiences of flooding:

#### ***Environment Agency***

- Reduced or stopped the amount of maintenance work
- Take a long time looking at and reviewing applications
- Community council carried out a public meeting but the EA do not carry out the work they promised
- Challenge to get money spent in Rossett – money directed to Bangor on Dee instead
- The EA had carried out two surveys and in 2000 had meeting with all the key players but still waiting for them to make contact – surveys got lost in the post
- EA shouldn't run rivers should be the drainage board
- The EA model survey did not match up, and there is no accounting for what local people say in the modelling process. Rely on computer modelling but don't talk to people – flood maps have insurance implications so very important to get it right.

#### **Maintenance**

- 7 trees currently blocking the river – there are no inspections of the river, it falls on the Community Council to undertake these, which they do every 12 months and then report to the Environment Agency. Seems to be a reluctance on the side of the Environment Agency to remove the restrictions in the river as it seems to put nature before humans – although there was confusion at the meeting as to whether this was the responsibility of EA or CCW. The silt in the river is 42" deep. Timescales for clearing river range from 3 to 9 months
- Annual maintenance not kept up like when it was the drainage board
- Wrexham Borough Council – do not maintain drainage on road
- Not just trees blocking the rivers – flood banks are also not maintained, it is unclear though about whether this is the responsibility of the farmer or the EA they get trodden down

#### **Communication**

- Very difficult to get in touch with anybody at the environment agency, when you do get through is usually to Cardiff and not the local office who deal with the flooding.
- There is no joined up thinking or communication between the different bodies
- Emergency procedures from the flood committee are out of date and do not take account of the new scheme
- Where should we get information from? Flood warning scheme often too late and often do not work

- Don't know who the flood wardens are or what their responsibilities are – different triggers at different levels - through phone system based on the major emergencies from the county council
- In 2000 the EA didn't know about all the floods – didn't even realise it was happening.

### **Insurance**

- Difficult to change insurers, but not complaints about the handling of claims etc
- Even though not flooded household insurance premiums had gone up by £200 as considered to be in a flood plane – struggle to make insurance companies understand, and they are not that quick to react.

### **Cross Border Issue**

- Difficulty is that problem is caused in part by weir in Chester where the Sleuss gates are not opened even when there is a high tide

### **Other Points**

- Badly affects lives –a series of bundings had been placed higher up the river in Almere but not for all the houses– their house is now trapped in the boundaries
- Got sandbags but didn't get any sand – have made modifications to their home everything can be picked up and put on breeze blocks – have got a family flood plan.
- Local flood defence committee – used to represent relatively small areas, was easier to challenge the EA in this forum, 2005 these were replaced by regional committees – everything is very Cardiff centric now Committee doesn't come up north, there is no local representative with just one representing North East (used to be one from each council 8 LA representatives)
- Examples of good practice - New Zealand and Dutch authorities
- Water framework directive – local liaison committees, one for the Dee, more emphasis on EA to ensure the quality of the river

## Annex C

### **Flooding Inquiry (Public Meeting) Eagles Hotel, Llanrwst, 08.06.09**

Present: Brynle Williams AM, +10 people (including Gareth Jones AM, representatives from Environment Agency, representatives from NFU+FUW, representative from a Rhyl Residents Association)

Comments:

#### **Discussion topics:**

##### Environment Agency (EA)

- ◆ 4 years ago- scheme proposed- EA asked local people/ farmers for ideas. Problem just below Trefriw- EA did not listen. All the local people felt was needed was to widen embankment to let the water run out.
- ◆ EA won't listen to the local people
- ◆ GJ- had guarantee that the EA will re-visit if need be in the future. EA will not walk away from this scheme. (This was further confirmed by the representatives in the audience).
- ◆ Computer models done by EA- how floods will develop. Show land and how much water – farmers know water level when it floods, and time scale better than the computer model- farmers felt EA model was very inaccurate.
- ◆ Farmers offered to move back the banks, and to give some of their land, but financial issues stopped this at the time in terms of EA paying out.
- ◆ EA- believe the only way to protect Trefriw is to use a pump- in talks with Conwy Valley (Local Authority/ Local council??)
- ◆ Farmers-pumps will not work if river is full as not built to deal with that capacity of water.
- ◆ Brynle-encouraged that farmers were willing to sell land-shows willingness to try to improve the situation.
- ◆ Flooding previously there for 2/3 days- hope is with new scheme- water will be out by 2/3 hours.
- ◆ Dredging of river- farmers all in unison-is the best way to stop water from flowing- help to alleviate- need to clear water. Traditionally there is room for the water to flow but silt is stopping it at the moment.
- ◆ EA- goes with computer model every time which angers the local farmers.
- ◆ EA- guided towards protecting people and businesses not infrastructure.
- ◆ Compensation- public money- can't pay- EA. Issues such as e.g. losses of value of land were not considered- EA were just willing to accommodate animals elsewhere. Land is same asset as with many other businesses in Conwy Valley.
- ◆ Mechanisms to sort out should be regardless of finance issues- unfair for EA to enter negotiations with this at the back of their minds.
- ◆ Need to get rid of these issues- structure/ whole process needs to be simplified once a deal is done.
- ◆ Have to accept that work is done in phases by EA.
- ◆ EA under pressure from WAG- they need to come clean on this according to local farmers. Need to know exactly where they stand.

- ◆ Once deal is done- should be finished. Scheme- will alleviate problems from infrastructure. Sacrifice 1 road in the scheme but will release water back into river a lot quicker.

### Consultation

- ◆ Insufficient consultation in the beginning from the EA.
- ◆ Local Authority+EA + Welsh Water do not communicate well with each other. Floodline needs to work with these as well.
- ◆ Individual group representation (people and EA)- somebody has to take line of all the community. Llanrwst/ Trefriw- this approach has been taken to some extent- GJ.
- ◆ Tendency to lack coordination- somebody needs to take an overview. So many voices involved- tendency to gain momentum in different directions. Community involvement- connecting the community.
- ◆ Everybody can only do so much- EA, farmers, NFU but worth nothing unless working together- but can create tension.
- ◆ EA/owners of land- transparency needed, but fixed budget put's pressure on this.
- ◆ Meant to be compensated in full before it started- 30% in solicitors account, but won't release until signing of documents by EA done. Legalities/ Administration issues need to be addressed. EA holding back- initial reason because scheme wasn't definite- but it is definite now. So really should be sorted out.
- ◆ Reason money not given- money not given until affecting their land. Farmers did not agree that this was what was agreed at the beginning.
- ◆ EA says- public money can't be given work not completed.

### Lack of understanding

- ◆ Lack of understanding from Agencies
- ◆ Basic difference of opinion in auditing in terms of the agents doing work on behalf of landowners.
- ◆ Changes have issues on livelihoods. What alternatives are provided need to be looked as- 1 farm has no high land to move stock.
- ◆ Local People/ Farmers know areas best.
- ◆ 1 part of problem- communication + taking notice of local knowledge.

### Insurance

- ◆ Zurich Insurance- will not cover.
- ◆ Insurance- ABI(??) visited after 2005. LL26- whole postcode can't get insurance regardless of location. Some houses on hills- historically have never been flooded and will never get flooded. Took time and effort to explain to insurance companies that all properties with the LL26 postcode were not at flood risk. Some have been successful in getting their property taken out of the flood risk areas.
- ◆ Excess had to be £20,000 on flooding for many people. People had the feeling that they weren't interested in insuring them.
- ◆ EA maps need to be more precise for insurance purpose.

- ◆ NFU+FUW do use EA maps- but other insurance (most) don't.
- ◆ Blue areas are the "at risk" areas.
- ◆ If house cannot get insurance then EA have been known to write to insurance companies to say that they are not in flood risk area. Charges should apply but EA have not charged for many-done as a goodwill gesture, of which Llanrwst community were grateful.

#### Local Authority (LA) Issues

- ◆ Drains not adequate for enlargement of estates- infrastructure built for 400 houses not 1200 (current).
- ◆ Sewerage infrastructure not strong enough in Rhyl or Llanrwst.
- ◆ Combined (surface and drainage)-water comes back up- to peoples houses.
- ◆ Rhyl- Dark Blue-worse flooding risk- but DCC are still considering granting planning permission for a care home on it.
- ◆ Pitt Report and TAN15 advised against this- but some local authorities still granting planning permissions on these areas.
- ◆ Local Authority+EA + Welsh Water do not communicate well with each other. Floodline needs to work with these as well.
- ◆ Conwy- not one of these. Might give Business permission but not residential permission
- ◆ Inconsistencies in local authorities.
- ◆ EA might say it's C2, but might not be- so could be refused for no reason.
- ◆ Compensation claims, so LA has to be careful.
- ◆ Shortages of building land- so have to use flooding plains.
- ◆ Sewerage infrastructure-needs investment. All agree.

#### General

- ◆ This inquiry should have been looked at 4 years ago.
- ◆ Need to use this inquiry to stop it happening to other areas (GJ)
- ◆ No flooding recently-due to luck in terms of weather.
- ◆ Frustration- going round in circles in terms of discussions at some point. In the meantime there are properties/ lives/ livestock at risk.
- ◆ Need to learn from mistakes.
- ◆ Whatever happens in Llanrwst in terms of flood defence- will not help Trefriw- in fact will probably make it worse.
- ◆ Farmers were willing to sacrifice land- now whole farm will flood.
- ◆ Farmers read nature's signs-best warning system. But local people are happy with the warning systems in place (Councillor Sian Lloyd Jones).
- ◆ Rhyl Residents Association- people had said that it would happen for years, and it did. Local knowledge- not just farmers that should be listened to in terms of local knowledge.
- ◆ Local people pull together at times like these- help each other to fill sandbags etc.
- ◆ Railway/ Roads- floods- affect businesses. Roads being worked on- need to be given priority. Businesses needed to sustain the town.

- ◆ Sustainability- need infrastructure to gain this. Flooding+ scheme- affects on businesses ongoing-GJ.
- ◆ People at risk because e.g. ambulances cannot reach some areas. Local issue for an isolated property in Llanrwst area- road will flood more frequently.
- ◆ No power problems when flooding.
- ◆ Needs to be fair on both sides- community + business. Very close to achieving in

Llanrwst.

- ◆ Community could have been split apart because of pressure on people. Landowners were also wrongly put under pressure.
- ◆ Lack of trust an issue-in WAG and how it works. Continue in other areas unless change way they work.
- ◆ Change of Ministers in WAG- initially lot of promises made when visited immediately after the flooding. Somebody should have been here consistently to sort things out from WAG.
- ◆ Effected on peoples mental health- difficult to measure.



## Annex D

Tregynon Public Meeting 12.6.09

Held by Mick Bates (AM for Montgomeryshire). Chair Sustainability Committee.

### **Over 70 people attended the meeting.**

Mick introduced himself as the Chair of the Committee, and the reasons for holding the meeting. He explained that he was not there to give any answers but to gather information on how flooding had affected people in the area and this information would form evidence for the Sustainability Committees inquiry into flooding. Once all of the evidence had been reviewed by the committee then recommendations would be made to Government and other agencies.

All of the evidence gathered would be documented and placed on the Sustainability Website for people to access and read

Mick told the attendees that the Brook had now been classed as a river and this meant that the Environment Agency were now responsible for keeping that river maintained.

Evidence was given as follows

- Environment Agency have been sending workers out to the site to clean up but they will not clean out the water itself. They are keeping anything above the water cleared such as branches etc.
- Fly tipping is going on in the river
- Landowners are not allowed to do anything to the water such as clearing out any branches etc as they are not given permission by the Environment Agency . If they were allowed to do this it would help ease the problems.
- Local people used to be employed to clear out the rivers but this no longer happens.

Mark Quigley

- Presented information regarding the Environment Agencies website which shows maps of the flood plains. These maps clearly show the area in Tregynon where a new housing development has been built as blue and in the flood plain – **why was planning permission granted for these houses – this is a lesson to be learned as permission should not be granted to build on flood plains and LA should consider these maps when allowing planning permission**

Sharon Jones

- Had to live in a caravan for 9 months. No feedback has been given to the residents from either Local Authority or Environment Agency on what is happening. Sharon had spent the day looking at the two

- culverts on her estate. The one at the top of the road is larger than the one at the bottom of the road. There had been two further near misses with regards to flooding which could be prevented had the culverts been built correctly. The top culvert is 70 inches wide and 66 inches deep whilst the one at the bottom (where water flows to) is 60 inches wide and 4? Inches deep.

Fiona Lewis agreed with these comments and wanted to add her thought that they were fighting a losing battle with the developer as he insists that the culverts have been built correctly and the one at the bottom is not smaller

Gwen

- Has lived in Tregynon Village for 30+ years. She wrote to the council objecting to the planning application for the new estate on the grounds of drainage but nothing was done about it. She believes that there is now planning permission granted for two further areas in the village (only two spaces left) but this will create further problems

David Spencer

- There have been no new brooks or dykes put into the fields to ease any flooding. Water is coming into the village from all directions. People have been trying to release it from roads etc by digging trenches. It is vital to maintain the uplands by trying to retain water there. Sometimes though this has to come off the uplands **Funding was given to drain the land which is partly what caused the problems so will funding be given to reverse the drainage and put the land back as it was. Planting of hedges and trees would help. Human error in various sectors has caused this.**

Kerry Williams

- Lives in a house built in the 1840s. There is a culvert outside her property. 30 years ago she was told by the council that they were going to build another culvert. This was never done and now they are saying that it cannot be done as it would cause flooding further down creating problems for the new estate. This doesn't stop the problem of her house being flooded.

Tim Roberts

- Lives in a 370 year old house. He said the question is not just what but when is something going to be done and timescales need to be set. The flood occurred 22.7/2007 and still nothing has been done. Culverts have not been maintained nor the brooks. If they were maintained then (even if floods still occurred) it would be to a much lesser extent and for a shorter period of time. People who have lived in caravans have had a life changing experience and some people still have nightmares two years on. They have been emotionally affected and this is not a trivial matter or experience – who takes account of that? **(during the day I had two people who had wanted to record video message but when they started**

**they were too upset to continue – cheri kelly outreach manager on the day taking evidence)** Culverts are poorly designed instead of being a v shape they have been concreted into a flat bottom which creates silt to sit and not be washed away. The flood swept trees down the river which caused the brook to block which meant the culverts were not working. Environment Agency are not clearing up or encouraging people to move the trees that have been cut down. These are then getting into the river and causing more blockages. One member of the audience said that earlier that week some council workers had been out to clear the culvert and they were seen to dump the debris into the brook. Everybody agreed that they were exasperated by how slow everything is happening.

George Whitworth – Pool Quay

- Jane Davidsons new bill will put more responsibility onto the local council not less. Can they cope with more pressure? Local Authorities do not have the capacity to do this. If landowners and locals were allowed to do things such as clearing the river then this would help the problems

Sam from the Old PO

- she grew up here. Her dad used to take the stones out of the culverts and the brook to ensure free flow of water. This was done yearly. In Llandiloes the EA removed stones from the brook but put them into the river further upstream. This just meant that they were washed back down again. The stream needs to be dredged as used to be done by locals before the EA stepped in to stop them. Builders have built and concreted underneath the culverts which means that they cannot be cleared naturally.

Emily Pennington – representing the head teacher of the school

- She has lived here for 2 years. She wanted to raise an issue on behalf of the school. There had been damage to the school from the culvert when the river flowed through. Last week there was a torrential downpour and there was fear that the school may be flooded again. The school has intake from all of the outlying villages and should the flood happen quickly again there is a fear that if the school is open that there may be children leaving the school who will be in great dangers. There should be some emergency planning and an area of high ground that the children could be evacuated to should a flood occur

Pete Hedrell

- Concerned about communication issues. Residents need a hotline to ensure that somebody will take their call and advise them of action to take and mobilise emergency services. At the lowest part of the estate there is a Severn and Trent Sewerage pipe above ground. There was structural damage to this in 2007 flood. Severn and Trent have surveyed the pipe but will not give any indication to the residents of when the work will be done. Residents are told that

rivers cannot be cleared due to protecting the fish. There have been no fish in the brook for 6 years to his knowledge.

- He is concerned that if people start to clear the culvert themselves without any coordination this could cause more flooding and problems so can some kind of coordinated plan be made. The Local Authority only has 1 drainage engineer for the whole county how can he cope – villagers should be able to help themselves.

Vicky Griffiths – Bettws Cedewain

- Her home was severely flooded two years ago and again last year. There is no one who can be contacted for advice and to find out what is being done. The villagers need to be given named contacts with email and telephone numbers and somebody who can take responsibility for advising them what to do or what is happening. She is leaving the village because of the flooding. (very upset)

In general discussions there was concern that the flooding happened mid afternoon on a Sunday last time. If it happened at night there would be no lighting to see by, mobile phone communications are non existent and if the landlines went down nothing could be done. Only 10 minutes warning was given in the past, how can this be improved? If villagers were to get together to form a group to deal with clearing culverts etc what would happen to the money that currently goes to the council to do this. Discussion was held about grants available to convert the water to usable energy sources. Mick Bates advised of the grants that are available for that. Questions were asked about rateable values on houses as they had been reduced in value due to the flooding

Mick finished the meeting by asking anybody, who wished, to record a video message for the committee.

## Annex E

### **Public Meeting in Ammanford with Rhodri Glyn Thomas**

*There was an acceptance that in part flooding was caused by Heavier rain, flash floods but there were a number of other problems in Ammanford leading to increased flooding:*

#### **- Infrastructure does not meet the current needs**

- Lack of action to address surface water drainage off the fields – developments have lead to the field drainage being altered and not allowing it to make its normal water course.
- Boundaries for clearing the brook are unclear and the road redesigned with a camber have added to the increased rainfall and resulted in floods

#### **- Maintenance not regular enough**

- 2005 saw a major flood in Ammanford – major problems leading to this was a lack of maintenance on the drains and culverts. People had to move out of their homes for 3 months
- Brook running behind Turbine Lane always flooded, but has gets worse every year. The Japanese Knotweed is 8ft high, despite promises council has not cleared this away. Flood water is washing the foundations away.
- Continuous cycle of raising the road then needing to raise the pavement. The flood washes earth into the drains, big problem as these are predominately clay- blocks the drains. Children have to regularly check the drains for leaves etc –no help from the council

#### **- New developments etc**

- Drainage not included in the roads when the new estate was built – the highways agency was able to put some extra drainage in to help guide the water down
- The first year the development happened – whenever it rains it floods the garden. Local Authorities did not put a sufficient requirement on the developers for drainage

#### **- Lack of prior warning**

- Have sandbags in the back – police and council have come to deliver these but only because the lady knew someone to ask. Hasn't ever received advice or prior warning

#### **- Lack of co-ordination the system/response service doesn't meet the needs, widescale problem**

- The water gushing down the road, as there is no co-ordination to close the road the traffic tears down the road and pushing additional water into the gardens and homes – police tell us that road is flooded, but don't close the road.
- 5 September 2005 Large amount of debris, the road washed away. The council could not or would not come out to deal with this – police were reluctant to put out signs. The drainage is not adequate and not cleaned, when they do come to clean it if there are cars on the drains they don't come back to clean these
- There was no co-ordination between the response agencies

*The residents of Ammanford put forward a number of solutions:*

- **Need stricter criteria on developers**

- Need investment in the infrastructure and pressure on developers before they start not once a project has been completed.
- Planning – everything seems to be looked at in isolation, there is no consideration for the further ramifications- no real problems until the development. It is essential consideration is given to developments
- Even when floods are half a mile away – the natural field soaks can't cope with the extra water and can impact on properties further away. The natural soil type is clay – gets water logged etc big problem now it is one day of heavy rain – developments must have release pits and safety valves to manage the water both while they are being built and afterwards

- **Greater maintenance of culverts drains etc**

- Consideration must be given to ensuring room for soak away
- Rivers need to be dredged – culverts must be cleaned regularly. Need to make sure the system is strong enough

- **Make it clearer who to turn to for advice**

- There is no sense of responsibility between the water board and the council

People don't know where to turn to, priority numbers should be given out so clear who to call

## Annex F

### **Notes of the public meeting on flooding – Whitland, 22 June 2009**

Eleven members of the public attended and Angela Burns started the meeting by inviting the attendees to share their experiences of flooding:

#### **Historic Issues**

Whitland town centre and surrounding areas have experienced fluvial flooding (the Rivers Taf, Gronw and Cwm Waungron), from surface water flooding and sewerage flooding. Flood defences at various locations provide protection to a 50 year standard (defences on the River Taf) and 100 year standard (flood bank upstream of Whitland Bridge on the River Gronw) but many residential and commercial properties are at risk in a major flood incident. A large embankment carrying the main A40 Whitland by-pass has an effect on flows in the area. Whitland experienced a major flood in 1979 with many properties on Station Road being flooded. It has also experienced major flooding in March 1981 and August 1986 and localised flooding repeatedly. It experienced a major flood one year because the floodgates of the factory were down which resulted in a damming effect and then water overtopping the gates and causing flash flooding. As well as residential homes the Whitland Primary School, Fire Station Access, Police Station, Railway station and Library have been identified as vulnerable infrastructure.

#### **Communications**

There was unanimous agreement that one body needed to be in charge as no-one is willing to take responsibility and residents concerns are passed from one body to another. One resident has contacted the Environment Agency repeatedly regarding the flooding of his elderly mother-in-law's property but has received no feedback.

Although some residents were signed up to the Environment Agency Floodline others were unaware of the service. From the ones that were signed up they had only received a few warnings over the years for major incidents while for localised flooding they had received no warnings.

#### **Maintenance**

Most of the residents agreed that they had experience localised flooding due to sheer rainfall volume and the drains being unable to cope. The drains are often silted up and are unable to cope and result in flooding people's homes. A Whitland town council representative commented that the council requested every year for the drains to be cleared but that the Local Authority would state that they had already been done. Residents agreed that the drains needed to be cleared more frequently and that a plan of the drainage system needed to be obtained so that the clearing of the drains could be co-ordinated. One resident stated that the locals know exactly which drains block regularly and need clearing and therefore local knowledge should be utilised to make the clearing of drains more effective.

There was agreement that the Environment Agency are not doing enough to maintain the Rivers. Examples were given of rubbish in the rivers just being ignored by the Environment Agency and left in situ causing blockages. The banks of the rivers are not being maintained and trees are overgrowing the rivers, causing an increase in debris and exacerbating the situation.

## **Planning Issues**

Residents commented on the fact that ditches by the side of the road, which were originally designed as soak-aways, were being encroached on or not maintained which has resulted in more surface water being unable to drain away.

In Kenfig residents have experienced surface water flooding which has caused minor landslides of road banks. This water is then entering the river and causing or exacerbating flooding in Whitland. The residents are concerned that a planning application for wind turbines in a nearby field which is currently being considered could, if approved, aggravate the situation further. They are concerned that the increase in roads and other hard standing surfaces will increase the surface water flooding and landslides in their area.

Some residents commented that since the alterations to a car park on Llangan Road they have experienced more localised flooding.

There is too much development taking place without due consideration for the drainage system and increase in hard standing. The main drainage pipe through Whitland is only 8 inches in diameter and it is unable to cope with the increase in people being connected coupled with the increases in monsoon type rainfall.

One resident commented that Whitland has not experienced a major inundation since the construction of the Whitland by-pass in 1996.

## **Other issues**

It was agreed by most residents that they dreaded a period of the monsoon type rainfall (more than 20 minutes) as they know they can expect at least some form of flooding.

Residents were in agreement that there should be a store of sandbags in the vicinity instead of arriving after the flood of which they are of little use. It was also agreed that people should come to help with the lifting of sandbags as some of the elderly residents are unable to cope. There was also a request for help clearing up the sandbags after the flood. Once the sandbags have become saturated they are very heavy and dirty and residents are unsure of what to do with them so they are normally disposed of inappropriately. No-one comes to help the residents clear up after the floods.

One resident stated that although they have the flood bank he was unsure it was maintained and adequate for the areas needs.

There was agreement that information on the available grants for flood resilience alterations/equipment should be made readily available to the locals. It was also



commented that other areas, such as Gloucester, are given flood alleviation devices and this should be employed in their area.

## **Notes of the public meeting on flooding – St Clears, 22 June 2009**

Fifteen members of the public attended and Angela Burns started the meeting by inviting the attendees to share their experiences of flooding:

### **Historic Issues**

St Clears experienced major flooding events in 1979, 1985, 1986, 1987 and 1991 resulting in extensive flooding to up to 25 properties adjacent to the river, including both residential and commercial properties, a police station, a medical centre and waste water treatment works. They have also experienced flooding associated with overland flow paths, minor watercourses, surface water run-off and surcharge sewers.

### **Communications**

There was unanimous agreement that one body needed to be in charge as no-one is willing to take responsibility and residents concerns are passed from one body to another.

Some people have received flood warnings from the Environment Agency's Floodline but residents are often unsure of what they can then do to protect themselves and their properties. No information or guidance is offered to residents.

Until a flood occurred residents were unaware where sandbags were kept and were offered no help in their distribution or laying. The residents believe there needs to be better communication and co-ordination.

A meeting occurred between the residents and the Environment Agency in which it was agreed the river would be dredged and the waste water pumping station improved. A 50 yard section of the river was dredged but nothing has been done since. One resident commented that Dwr Cymru has admitted that the waste water pipe is porous and sewerage is slowly seeping out, however, nothing has been done about it.

### **Maintenance**

Most residents were in agreement that the rivers and banks are not adequately maintained and no-one is willing to take responsibility. Residents had contacted the Environment Agency and been told it was not their responsibility. However, the Environment Agency had then become interested when some clean-up work was taking place and they were concerned about fauna and flora interference.

Residents believe that the pumping station is inadequate and is not equipped to cope with the volume and pressure of the water. One resident has a waste water pump in his garden. It regularly can not cope with the sheer volume so it floods his garden, garage and home. This has been happening annually since 1986. They also experience flooding if the pump breaks down or they experience an electrical

powercut. The resident and his wife have now abandoned their lower floor as it is inhabitable. They have lost many possessions to flooding, some of which are irreplaceable. They have tried selling their house but have been unsuccessful.

## **Planning Issues**

Since the building of the LNG Pipeline residents believe that the issue of standing water has become worse.

There has been extensive building on the flood plains which has exacerbated the flooding situation with surface water and the overloading of the waste water treatment works. Residents are worried that if further development is approved without increasing the drainage and sewer capacity the flooding frequency and severity is going to increase.

Structural work was carried out on the bridge to reinforce the pillars but this has caused an increase in flooding as it restricts the flow during high water levels.

It is believed that the sewerage system might be upgraded in the near future. Residents welcomed this but were worried that, due to the fact the pipe runs through the main street, the building work required could affect businesses during their busy tourism season.

## **Other issues**

Residents were worried that when floods occur the access roads become blocked and therefore there is no way emergency services would be able to offer assistance during an event.

When floods occur people still try and travel through and cause waves with their passage which then floods into people's homes.

Residents have experienced difficulty in obtaining insurance and their premiums are high as it is a designated flood area. Their insurance companies seem to take little account of the elevation of their homes or its proneness to flooding when calculating their insurance policies – it only goes on postcode.

Many residents have experienced problems selling their properties.

One resident expressed his distress at losing his expensive tropical fish – there was no warning for the flooding and the fish were lost.

Residents believed that the Environment Agency should take the lead on responsibility and that Dwr Cymru should become a statutory consultee.

## **Annex G**

### **Notes of the meeting on flooding – Towyn – 22 June 2009**

Darren Millar introduced the meeting by inviting the attendees to share their experiences.

#### **Flood risk awareness**

There was a general agreement that people buying properties in the area were not aware of any flood risk. There was no requirement for solicitors to search for previous flooding events. Emlyn Jones from Prestatyn said that he knew of a house that had been flooded that was now on the market but the seller was not required to say that it had been flooded.

The EA said that they're flood risk maps were as up to date as possible but they only showed flood risk areas from flooding from the sea or rivers. They could only advise on surface water flood areas if there has already been a flood.

There was also general agreement that there had been little or no prior warning of flooding in the area. Many people were not registered with Floodwatch and even those who had been flooded before would not know what to do when flooding happened.

The EA agreed that they needed to get information out to more people.

#### **Communications**

There was unanimous agreement that lines of communication and finding out exactly who was responsible for flooding were very confusing.

Several participants described having problems contacting the relevant agency when flooding happened. Mike Harris from Rhyl described being passed from the County Council to Welsh Water, back to the County Council, on to the Environment Agency and finally back to the County Council before he was able to get any response to flooding in his road. It took about 3 hours before any organisation admitted responsibility and arrived to tackle the problem.

There was frustration expressed that the agencies involved in flooding hadn't learnt from previous experiences and that communications were still a problem.

There was also a strong feeling amongst the group that all the agencies involved in flood weren't working together enough.

Both the Environment Agency and Conwy County Council admitted that there had been problems with joint working in the past but that things were now improving with the establishment of organisations such as the Pan Conwy drainage group and local flood action groups.

#### **Historic issues**

There were several examples of historic and/or local knowledge not being used prior to flooding.

Mr Ingram from Kimnel Bay attributed the problems of not being able to lower the flood levels in the 1990 flood to the harbour, which had historically been dredged for the fishing industry, containing high levels of silt.

Ray Beckinsale from Rhyl told the meeting about flooding on a local road for three years in a row before a major flooding event in the same area. No notice had been taken about the road flooding although it could have been an indication of the problems which caused the larger flooding event.

Cllr Gunning from Rhyl raised the issue of the sewerage and rainwater infrastructure being up to its limit. He said that Welsh Water had told him several years ago that existing drainage systems were up to capacity and yet new estates were still being built and connected to the same drainage system.

A 1995 report for Prestatyn stated that the sewerage and rain water drainage (which both fed into the same system) were operating to capacity and that the Rhyl and Prestatyn Gutter couldn't take any increased load. New developments are still being built and feeding into the same drainage system.

## **Flood defences**

The major flooding event in Towyn in 1990 had been caused by a breach in poorly maintained sea defences. Whilst Conwy County Council were responsible for inspecting the defences and reporting any defects, the owners of the defences (in this case the appropriate railway authority) are responsible for their maintenance.

There was general consensus that lessons had been learnt from the 1990 breach and that this no longer posed the biggest threat to the area (although it was still a concern). The biggest threat to the area was now from the tidal River Clwyd.

Ricky Profit and Derek Hill outlined their concerns about the existing defences and their ability to cope with forecast rising sea levels and more extreme weather events. They considered that the current embankment is well below standard and that development on one bank of the river could seriously affect flooding on the opposite bank.

There was a call for action on the river defences.

The Environment Agency is aware of the issue and should be in a position to improve the defences soon.

## **Planning issues**

Several people raised concerns that planning permission was still being granted on the flood plain and in areas marked as being at risk by the Environment Agency.

Phil Worly from Rhyl showed the Environment Agency's flood risk map for the area which showed where planning permission had been applied for by developers even though it was within the risk area and had flooded recently.

Although the Environment Agency are statutory consultees for planning applications, they can only comment on coastal and river flooding and surface water flooding where they are aware of it. The water company

Concern was expressed about the lack of consultation between local authorities on planning applications that could affect flooding in another local authority area. The example was given of development on one side of the Clwyd River which was covered by Denbighshire County Council which could result in the flood defences being raised on that side of the river. The opposite bank, in Conwy County Council area could then be at higher risk of flooding.

## **Other issues**

The Environment Agency said that there would come a point when there had to be a discussion about how sustainable and viable it would be to keep protecting the coast in 100 years time. Surprisingly, there was agreement from many at the meeting that this was an issue that needed to be addressed.

The EA also told the meeting that they are preparing an overview of flood risk in the area, which is the highest in Wales for coastal flooding.

There were many comments about the difficulty and expense of getting insurance for properties in the area and concern that not all members of the Association of British Insurers were adhering to the concordat agreed with the UK government.

There was a general feeling at the meeting that the issues discussed had been discussed for many years in many different places and that they still hadn't been listened to.