

Panel

The Rt Hon Victoria Atkins MP

Anglian Water:

Ms Katie Glynn, Regional Network Manager

Mr Matt Moore, Flooding Partnership Manager

Environment Agency (EA):

Mr Leigh Edlin, Area Director, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire Area

Mr Peter Reilly, Operations Manager

Internal Drainage Boards:

Mr Peter Bateson Witham Fourth District IDB - CEO

Ms Jane Froggatt, Witham & Humber IDB - CEO

Mr Andrew McGill, Lindsey Marsh IDB - CEO

Lincolnshire County Council (LCC)

Cllr Colin Davie, Executive Councillor for Economic Development, Environment and Planning

Mr Matthew Harrison, Flood and Water manager

Ms Nicole Hilton, Assistant Director

Mr Chris Miller, Head of Environment

Regional Flood and Coastal Committee

Mr Eddy Poll, Chair

Opening Statements

Environment Agency: LEIGH EDLIN - Area Director, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire Area

Gave an update on the recently published report into the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The full report can be found at <https://horncastletowncouncil.co.uk/services/flooding/>.

They acknowledge that the winter storms had come during an exceptionally wet period and Lincolnshire faced particular difficulties. They acknowledged the impact that the flooding had for people and businesses, both financially and from the impact on people's mental health.

They went on to say that Storm Babet caused significant damage to a number of flood defences in Lincolnshire, including 13 breaches in riverbanks. They said that they were working with the National Farmers Union, Internal Drainage Boards and Lincolnshire County Council on how to recover sustainably and said that repairing the same way is not always the best way and that they want to reduce risk of flooding in the future.

The recent investigation into the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme was led by the EA's chief engineer, focusing on the delayed closure of the sluice gate. The key findings were that there were issues with how gate controlled, which have now been resolved systemically and they have learnt a lot about this for the future. The report said that this was not the cause of the flooding in Horncastle, as consultants modelled how and where the rain fell, with most in an area that the scheme was not there to manage.

They said that for the EA to be liable for compensation, they would have had to have caused the flooding and as they felt this was not the case, they could not pay compensation to people flooded. They said that they need to implement findings of the report and look at the options to reduce the risk of flooding in Horncastle from the East and South, on Thunker Drain and River Waring.

Lincolnshire County Council: CLLR COLIN DAVIE - Executive Councillor for Economy & Place at Lincolnshire

Their Flooding committee will look at the impact of Storms Babet and Hank, including looking at what the EA have said in their report. They have a number of section 19 investigations ongoing, which look at properties that suffered internal flooding. Local councillors are feeding into this committee's work. County had contributed to the building of the Flood Alleviation Scheme, alongside government and the Town Council.

He said that the report raised a number of questions for the future and spoke about the importance of raising the value of our agricultural land and supporting our local food producers. He said that LCC have put £4m into their budget to look at all s.19 investigations, with an ambitious target to have looked at these all by the end of August and will work at pace to get people the answers they need. LCC have put additional moneys into highways to resolve surface water flooding, more drain jetting will be, and maintenance issues will be dealt with. He said LCC will not let anyone off the hook and said they have a right to criticise partners when something goes wrong.

Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board: ANDREW MCGILL - CEO

The IDB's work with the EA and local councils to try and come to solutions to reduce flood risks. They are reliant on the EA keeping main rivers maintained in order to allow them to keep the lower lying areas they are responsible for working as intended. They are looking to take forward an initiative that would allow them to do more work on EA watercourses.

Witham and Humber Drainage Boards: JANE FROGGATT - CEO

spoke about how they had suffered £1.6m of damage to their assets, with 19 pumping stations inundated by water. It would take several months of recovery work to get these back online. They highlighted the need to build assets back more resilient than before. The Flooding Minister visited the area on 6 January and invited the IDBs, EA and LCC to put forward a submission, signed by Cllr Davie on how to strengthen the local partnership voice, this had a number of asks which are now with Government.

VICTORIA ATKINS MP

Thanked the NFU, farmers, EA, IDBs for the work they are doing together following a meeting she organised last year, shortly after Storm Babet. She said that there was a lot of potential for local work to get this done. Victoria then turned to questions, some given in advance and some on the day.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Horncastle

Q. It was suggested that the EA had been marking their own homework with regards to the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme report, which had been prepared by themselves.

A. As the asset management organisation, the EA said it was right for them to investigate this. Their Chief Engineer nationally had looked at what happened. They did have consultants who had looked at Met Office data and modelled how and where the rain had fallen. They are also speaking to local people about their concerns and are willing to listen to local expertise. LCC will also be looking at this through the section 19 process.

Q. Why did it take so long for the EA to understand what was happening and why did a local farmer have to alert them to the issue?

A. The EA were clear that the sluice gate did not work as intended as the system was on manual rather than automatic mode. They have done work to change how the controls work now. The report did look at the time it took for the system to work and the impact of this. They have trained duty officers in how they respond in the future. The trigger warning for an EA alert at the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme allows sufficient time to get to reservoir, roughly 10/11 hours from the alarm.

Q. If the EA were aware the storm was coming, why were assets not checked beforehand, allowing them to locate this issue?

A. The EA acknowledged this point and said they agreed they should have known before. It was inspected as part of their regular system of checks, however.

Q. Why did waters drop in Horncastle after the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme started working?

A. The EA said the report was not conclusive as to if/why this happened, however the flood storage system is 6km away from the town and so would they not expect it to have that much of an affect so quickly.

Q. Was the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme fit for purpose?

A. The EA said that the Horncastle scheme did work, it was just not designed to prevent flooding from a rainstorm that fell where it did and the volume of water that fell was still too much for the scheme. The scheme was built to reduce risk from an annual 1 in 100-year chance flooding event. They pointed out that the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme had operated on 33 previous occasions to protect Horncastle. They said that the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme has stopped properties from flooding and said more would have flooded if it was not there during Babet.

Q. Why did the report focus on the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme if flooding was caused by events downstream?

A. The report was designed to see whether the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme sluice gate issue had caused the flooding. As part of this, if closed as designed, the level of flooding would have been the same according to the modelling. They said that the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme is there to alleviate flows from River Bain and that the volume of water exceeded the design of the scheme and they said at the time of commissioning that the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme would not protect from flooding in all circumstances.

Q. Why was the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme not designed for 1 in 1,000 year flooding events such as Storm Babet?

A. This was down to cost and the importance of getting the scheme in place to protect Horncastle.

Q. How full did the reservoir get?

A. The reservoir was just under halfway full.

Q. Did an operative have to come from Pocklington to operate the Horncastle Flood Alleviation Scheme?

A. No. An operative came from Boston and had been diverted from going to Kirkby on Bain, which had flooded, also.

Q. In the 1980's two flood alleviation schemes were looked at, one on the Bain and another on the Waring. Given the building work that has happened since that time in Horncastle, could there now be a greater economic argument for a new flood scheme on the Waring?

A. It was acknowledged that there had been a lot of development in Horncastle and that agencies would need to look holistically at what is needed to protect the town from flooding going forwards.

Q. More houses are being constructed in Horncastle how are the agencies going to reassure the community that the drainage/sewers system that are not coping now, will be able to cope in the future?

A. As part of any new proposed development application of 10 or more houses, the Development Management team within Lincolnshire County Council will review the drainage proposed strategies and flood risk assessments as part of the application by the developer and make any necessary recommendations and feed this information back to ELDC in its role as LPA who will ultimately make a decision regarding the development site. Current guidance for any new development site as stated is to attenuate water within the site via means such as swales, basins and the like, and overall not to exceed the greenfield run off rate of the site i.e. not to increase water run-off from levels that were likely to be encountered prior to the development being constructed.

Minting

Q. The Beck in Minting runs into Horncastle and flooded during Storm Babet, causing devastation to the village. They are concerned about maintenance and have contacted the Drainage Board. Are they able to clear the beck themselves?

A. The County Council met with Witham 3rd Drainage Board on site in December then with residents in February. The s.19 investigation is ongoing and they continue to discuss this with agencies. The Parish Council have made representations which they will follow up on and will engage with the to get to the bottom of this.

It was also pointed out that Minting gets a lot of water from fast-responding water system, as it comes down from the Wolds. The IDB took over an additional water channel in the 1990s and do annual maintenance on this, but said the investigations will look at if any more can be done here.

Q. The dyke on Mill Lane also suffers from being overgrown, meaning there is nowhere for water to escape to. What can be done to alleviate this?

A. The IDB and LCC are working together to find out what happened and what needs to be done.

Wood Enderby

Q. They were flooded by an overflowing reservoir on the Revesby Estate. Could some work be done to identify who is responsible for that?

A. The Environment Agency have a fisheries reservoir there and will try and get to the bottom of what might have happened there.

Halton Fenside/Halton Hologate

Q. What is being done about the Fen Catchwater Drains, as there seems a lack of maintenance with high water levels.

A. The EA agreed to go and meet with them to look at these issues. LCC said that the Parish Council had provided an excellent report into the flooding and they will look into this and what can be done.

Q. What is EA, LCC and Planning Authority going to do to protect this area going forwards, as they also have issues with water run-off from Spilsby, which has a large number of houses planned?

A. A meeting had been held in Wainfleet regarding development and their development team will assess any flood and drainage strategies prior to responding to any housing applications.

Q. Halton Fenside area of our Parish was flooded from two main water sources during Storm Babet in October 2023. The first from overflowing of a local watercourse which had become overloaded by Unattenuated Run-Off from developments carried out to the south and east of Spilsby Town centre during the last two decades.

In relation to the first cause the Council are keen to know what the joint FRM Authorities of the area (ie Environment Agency (EA), Lincolnshire County Council as Lead Local Flood Authority and especially the Planning Authority (ELDC) are able to do to redress this serious breakdown in Development Controls. It should be noted that flooding from this source also occurred on two occasions in 2007.

A. This matter has recently been brought to the attention of the Floods and Water Team. The team manager has spoken with a number of residents on this issue at a recent event in Wainfleet. Additionally, following Storm Babet Halton Halgate Parish Council have provided us with a very detailed and informative report with invaluable local knowledge which will feed into the wider Section 19 Investigation that Lincolnshire County Council will be undertaking in its role as LLFA. A number of options and proposals have already been suggested which will be explored further. More information is to be sought on the developments in question and is something we will be investigating further.

Kirkby on Bain

Q. In the village there is an issue where for half of the village there are no defined high banks. What can be done about that?

A. The EA was unsure about this but have previously met with the Parish Council and will meet again with them, along with the County Council to look at what can be done to prevent overland flooding in the village.

Woodhall Spa

Q. Roughton Woods was underwater and a number of dams had been installed in the area, who were responsible for these?

A. The IDB said that the area has a lot of natural springs, meaning they believe that this is groundwater. There are no maintained drains in the immediate vicinity. If it was groundwater that would be difficult to stop as this is a natural occurrence, though they would look at if they can maybe try cutting a channel which may take away some of this, but it is unlikely to solve the issue.

Drain Jetting

Q. What can be done to ensure drains are kept clear and not missed when jetting takes place?

A. The County Council took details of the areas this was mentioned for and will look into those specifically.

Flood Resilience Grants

Q. When will these grants progress and work be done?

A. The grant has had a lot of uptakes on the programme and LCC are doing what they can to support as many people as possible within the grant guidance. Contractors are about to start with surveys and work on the installations will start later in the year. The Council also took questions from those who attended about their individual applications.

Road Closures

Q. On the day and evening of the floods, vehicles were still driving through the flood water forcing the torrent of water to enter people's properties why were roads not closed? This caused unnecessary damage to properties and stress to persons.

A. This has unfortunately been a widespread issue which has been encountered across the county following the storms and subsequent flooding. As a result of the flooding to roads over 60 roads closures were put in place during Storm Babet, however as this was a countywide issue resources were stretched and unfortunately not all areas could be reached in time. A change in driver behaviour is needed during flood conditions.