

## QUESTIONS FOR PANEL AT PUBLIC FLOOD MEETING ON THURSDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> APRIL

### EA Questions:

1. Why was there a delay in closing the sluice gate at the Flood Scheme Reservoir?

- Why did operatives have to drive from "Pocklington"?

**Response:**

The operatives had come from Boston, not Pocklington.

- Why when closed did flood waters subside so quickly? How does the EA explain flood water subsiding so rapidly if as they claim the failure of the flood defence had nothing to do with it? Why did the beck by Stanhope Road instantly drop, the minute the relief gate was opened?

**Response :**

The River Waring falling quickly along Back Road and at Stanhope Road had nothing to do with the reservoir or Swimming Baths sluice. The rapid fall is the normal response for this river and was also seen in previous floods, like in 2019 and 2007. This is normal for a river which does not have upstream storage and represents the natural catchment response to the rain.

Although the flooding went within 24 hours the water level in the Bain took much longer to return to normal, due to the emptying of the reservoir.

- Why when told at 2-3am in the morning that there was an issue with the flood diversion scheme did the environment agency take 12 hours to act? What proof have they that the town would have still flooded on the scale that it did even if they had activated the flood diversion scheme? How reliable/accurate is the radar rainfall data?

**Response :**

1. As outlined in the Asset Report, the investigation looked at the reasons for the delayed closure of the sluice gate. The initial telemetry message from site was not prioritised by duty staff as it was marked 'for information' and not 'for action'. Given the scale of the incident it was natural that messages for action were prioritised. The wording of the message has been changed so it is now 'for action'.
2. As outlined in the Impact Report, the investigation included modelling of the observed flooding and then what would have happened if the sluice gate had closed automatically. This demonstrated the observed flooding would still have occurred.
3. The radar data is from the Met Office and is the best available.

- EA says that closing the gates on the Hemingby scheme would have made no difference, would opening the gates at the swimming pool earlier have made a difference? They surely must make it better. Getting the water away faster has to be the answer.

**Response :**

No. We know from a number of previous studies the water level at the confluence of the Bain and Waring and the operation of Swimming baths Sluice has limited impact on water levels further upstream, such as along Banks Road and Stanhope Road. Given the scale of the incident the earlier opening of the sluice would not made a noticeable difference.

- Did the power cut on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> affect the FSR?

**Response :**

No.

2. Why is swimming pool sluice gate not left open?

- If excess water is allowed to flow freely through Horncastle, then there is a reduced risk of water backing up leading to a flooding situation.

**Response :**

The sluice gate is left partially open all the time and is fully opened when river levels rise. This has been done manually in the past but the gate has been automated and so will not require Environment Agency operatives to visit it.

We will investigate whether it can be left fully open all the time and use the automation to close it when rivers levels are very low. However we need to ensure having the gate open all the time does not create problems for those downstream on the Old River Bain.

3. Was the Horncastle lock tilt gate lowered at around 14:00hrs on the day of the flood and why is the Bain currently being maintained so high upstream from that lock?

**Response :**

The lock tilting gate operates on a float system and so is regulating. It would only lower when the upstream levels begin to rise. The level it maintains upstream has not been adjusted for decades, since the gate was installed.

4. Why were some properties subject to flooding at 7pm on the evening of 20th October 2023?

**Response :**

We would need to understand exactly which properties this refers to before we can comment on a likely flooding cause.

5. What measures have/will the EA put in place to improve crisis management and resilience?

- The previous 2 occasions that the Flood Alleviation scheme had been needed it had not worked correctly. Why had this not been rectified?

**Response :**

Our investigation into the asset failure has identified that poor performance of the sluice gate had not been fully investigated and addressed.

To address this, we are in the process of training an additional duty officers. This extra resource will allow more time to investigate poor performance issues and request support for the issues to be rectified.

We will also instigate a regular review of underperforming assets to ensure that the issues are resolved in a timely manner.

7. If the catchment area of the River Bain north of Hemingby Dam is 100% What are the approx.. catchment areas of the River Waring and Thunker Drain in % terms.

**Response :**

The sizes of the various sub-catchments are below, together with how they compare with the whole catchment to the downstream edge of the town [Baths Sluice] plus how they compare with the catchment above the reservoir.

The reservoir regulates flow from 61% of the total area draining through the town.

| Catchment                                            | Approx area in Km <sup>2</sup> | % comparison with Bain upstream of reservoir | % comparison with Bain upstream of reservoir |
|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Bain catchment upstream of the reservoir             | 90                             | 100%                                         | 61%                                          |
| Bain from reservoir to Victoria Mill                 | 25                             | 28%                                          | 17%                                          |
| River Waring to Bains Road [excluding Thunker Drain] | 22                             | 24%                                          | 15%                                          |
| Thunker Drain                                        | 8                              | 9%                                           | 5%                                           |
| Total Catchment to Baths Sluice [Bain and Waring]    | 148                            | -                                            | -                                            |

8. Why is the river Waring not cleaned out along Banks Road to make it deeper and less likely to flood?

**Response :**

The Waring next to Banks Road is a concrete lined channel, so deepening it is not a viable option. We do monitor silt levels here and the channel is cleaned out when silt begins to build up. It was last cleaned in 2021.

9. The EA stated that (All banks where breeches on farm land will be repaired) Is the EA going to help repair my bank as they use my land as flood plain?

**Response :**

We are unable to repair private defences.

Whilst many areas in Horncastle are floodplain, other than the reservoir at Hemingby, no land is deliberately flooded. Land is shown on published maps as floodplain as it is the natural floodplain which is at risk of flooding if defences were not present.

10. Should HTC pay for the maintenance this year of £15,917.29 when the flood alleviation scheme did not work?

**Response :**

We do not see any reason why the maintenance payment should be withheld.

Whilst the observed flooding would still have occurred if the sluice gate at the reservoir had closed automatically, we are confident that would have been more flooding had the reservoir not been present at all.

11. Can you explain the Build Back Better scheme? One resident has been recommended by the EA to use this scheme, they've followed this advice been assessed but no contractors seem to want to take their home on.

**Response :**

This is part of the Flood Re scheme - a joint initiative between government and the insurance industry [www.floodre.co.uk](http://www.floodre.co.uk) It offers householders the chance to install property flood resilience measures up to the value of £10,000 when repairing their properties after a flood.

We cannot comment as to why contractors do not wish to take on the work.