

Hebden Bridge Partnership

Minutes of General Meeting held on Mon April 4th 2016, HB Town Hall

Present: about sixty people were present

Apologies received from Jonathan Timbers, Fiona Pattison

1. Introduction

Bob Deacon (chair) welcomed all to the meeting, which was focused on the theme of the **Boxing Day flood, taking stock three months on**. He explained what the Partnership had been doing. This included: a submission to the Flood Commission, frequent contact with the EA, action over Northern Powergrid's cavalier approach to compensation. He pointed to the slower recovery by businesses in Hebden Bridge compared with other Calderdale towns. He stressed the need to engage the community in flood resilience and alleviation works.

2. Mark Thompson

Mark Thompson, Director of Economy and Environment, gave information on Calderdale's grants programme. Nearly £2m had been paid out to around 800 businesses as business recovery grants. The Repair and Renew resilience grants were also available: 95 applications had been received, and 51 grants awarded. An economic assessment survey suggested that the economic impact in the Calderdale economy of the floods was £170m. This was a bigger hit than the 2012 floods.

As regards households, 1500 households had received the £500 grant and three months' Council Tax exemption. 151 applications for the Repair and Renew Grants had been received, and 41 awarded to date.

Mark also pointed out the problem of damaged infrastructure (eg Scout Rd, the main road). A £19m highway grant had just been received from central government. Mark advised that a 'stop fence' was being put in place in Scout Rd and asbestos removed. This work should be complete by the end of June.

3. Emma Bolger, Community Foundation for Calderdale

Emma advised that the flood appeal (including government matched funding) had raised £3.1m. 1600 emergency grants of £200 had been made to households; 350

displacement grants (£300) had also been made. A further grant fund, for white goods etc, was available, and 350 grants (c £500) had been made.

For businesses, Calderdale Rising crowdfunding had brought in £150,000. Separate appeals had brought in £152,000.

CFFC was also making grants to charities and not-for-profits affected by the floods. £50,000 had been granted to date.

In terms of 'legacy', £20,000 was invested in the Watermark scheme and £500,000 had been pledged for the new Flood Save scheme.

Questions were asked of these speakers on: scenario planning, grants for environmental work, displaced person, accessibility grants

4. Andrew Coen, Environment Agency

Andrew advised that the EA's contractors, who had been working on immediate river-bed and culvert clearances, had nearly completed this work. For the future, 40-50 schemes were planned for the whole valley (cost £7-£10m), and the contractor had been appointed. The contractor would establish an office in Mytholmroyd, and work should hopefully start in May, with the bulk of the work completed by the year end. In Hebden Bridge, the focus was on both the river and on surface water. EA was in discussion with Yorkshire Water regarding containment. Measures such as higher walls would be dealt with sensitively. There was an issue where the Calder and Hebden Water met; one possibility could be to culvert the Hebden under Riverside playground. For surface water, works similar to that undertaken recently at Nutclough could be the answer; the aim was to convey water off the hillsides into the rivers without entering the town. EA was committed to public engagement, and was looking to establish a stakeholder group with, eg, CMBC, EA, community groups, HRTC, business community and the Partnership).

In Mytholmroyd, the scheme had been fast-tracked. The EA is looking to purchase the shop premises beside the river, for demolition. A comprehensive scheme was proposed, including river widening and higher walls. White Lee Clough was also being studied.

Improvements to town drains and to the canal were being considered, and the EA saw the opportunities of working with Calder High and with the Calder & Colne Trust. A catchment plan for the area would involve four stages, and would include

discussion with the Walshaw estate, the possible risk caused by wind farm foundations and others.

Questions were asked on: natural flood defences, misuse of Stewardship grants to farmers, how to access details of EA work, how far ahead EA was looking, had formal scoping report been published, are management regimes for drains/sewage adequate.

5. Steve Barnbrook, Flood Commission

Steve introduced himself as the lead officer providing secretarial back-up to the Commission. The Commission had held five successful public meetings.

He drew attention to the issue of emotional well-being (including fear of future flooding) which had already been identified.

The Commission had already received a great deal of evidence and submissions.

Steve stressed the importance of transparency by the Commission in its work; minutes were made public (via Calderdale website).

Recommendations by the Commission would have to be based on *evidence*. He foresaw the Commission making several recommendations.

Questions were asked on: deadline for submissions (asap!), website (via www.calderdale.gov.uk), stakeholders for emotional well-being deliberations

6. Simon Waring, Ryburne Brokers

Simon briefly explained the Flood re scheme, launched by the industry and government that day. He then explained the outline of the local Flood Save scheme, which would be run by the Community Foundation in conjunction with the Calderdale Credit Union, and which would offer matched funding for businesses and others unable to get Flood Re cover, based on savings made in the Flood Save credit union account.