

**Arun Flood Forum Meeting – 5 August 2024
Littlehampton Civic Centre 18:00 – 20:00**

Forum Member Attendees:

Arun District Councillor

Cllr Sue Wallsgrave - District Councillor seat
Cllr Gill Yeates - District Councillor seat
Cllr Simon McDougall - District Councillor seat

Parish Councillor representative

Jonathan Spencer – Chairman Bersted Parish representative seat
David Allsopp – Chairman Middleton on Sea Parish representative seat

Southern Water

John Penicud (JP) - Director of Wastewater Operations
Philip Richey –(PR) County Sewerage Engineer – Sussex
Catherine Marriot (CM) – Regional Operations Manager
Mike Russell – (MR) Stakeholder Manager - Sussex

Environment Agency

Michael Carleysmith (MC)– Partnership and Strategic Overview Team Leader
John Parsonage JP) - Asset Performance Team Leader

West Sussex County Council

Kevin Macknay (KeM) - Drainage and Flooding Lead Professional

Arun District Council Officers

Philippa Dart (PD) - Director of Environment and Communities / Interim CEO
Joe Russell-Wells (JRW) – Group Head of Environment and Climate Change
Karl McLaughlin (KaM) - Flooding and Coastal Engineering Manager
Paul Cann (PC) – Principal Drainage Engineer
Michael Rowland (MR) – Emergency Planning Officer
Claire Pritchard (CP) – Communications Manager
Miriam Nicholls (MN) – Business Manager
Emma Strudwick (ES) PA to Director of Environment and Communities and Group Head of Environment and Climate Change

FACT

Melinda Mattews
Emma McLaren
Rob Wise NFU

Chair

Simon Wilson(SWi) – Director, Wilson Sherriff

Observing Cllr Attendees

Cllr Stephen McAuliffe
Cllr Martin Lury
Cllr David Huntley

1	Welcome and Apologies
1.1	Apologies received from:

	Dominic Henley WSCC Dave Bonner – EA Claire Francis – EA Cllr Keir Greenway	
1.2	<p>SWi welcomed everyone to the third meeting of the Arun Flood Forum and started the meeting by reminding everyone where we are in the process and why the Flood Forum was formed. Four meetings have been set for the year, the first two meetings have been extremely helpful in ensuring that the members of the Forum have an understanding and handle on the main issues. There is also a better understanding amongst everyone on the different roles and responsibilities of the agencies</p> <p>Everyone in the room introduced themselves due a few changes in attendees.</p> <p>SWi explained how the meeting would run. After reviewing the actions from the last meeting a joint presentation would follow from the four agencies; EA, ADC, WSCC and Southern Water which brings together a number of points of analysis along with strategic and operational issues to allow the Forum to collectively engage with the range of issues that we have.</p> <p>The second part of the meeting will provide our guests invited to the meeting from the Flood Avoidance Community Task Force (FACT) to introduce themselves and provide an update.</p> <p>There will also be an update on the Communications plan for resilience as we approach the winter months.</p>	
2	Update on actions from the meeting held on the 20 May 2024	
	The actions from the meeting held on the 20 May were reviewed, updates on these are in blue bold text.	
2.1	c/f	<p>WSCC have commissioned WSP to undertake the Section 19 report and will provide an update and the timetable for completion at the next meeting in August. If information is available before, this will be shared and feedback to the group.</p> <p>Update from WSCC: This is being completed by WSP with an expected completion date of the middle of October 2024.</p>
	c/f	<p>ADC to liaise with WSCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority and discuss the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.</p> <p>KeM confirmed that a review of the current Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is underway, this work is being carried out by WSP.</p> <p>Update from WSCC: WSP are undertaking this work on our behalf. We held a workshop last week which included all key stakeholders (including ADC, EA etc.). This workshop was successful and focussed on objective setting, with a further workshop planned for later in the year looking at “actions”. The expected completion date for the Strategy is Autumn 2025.</p>
	c/f	<p>Operational joint agency meetings between the agencies to be held regularly to help service the forum work and outcomes.</p> <p>Update: These are underway with all agencies being fully committed to working collaboratively</p>

4.7	<p>EA to review the 2017 Aldingbourne Rife FRM study and will review the model and test the assumptions based on what happened over the winter.</p> <p>Update: contained in the presentation</p>
5.1	<p>All agencies were asked to identify the short-term tactical issues they will undertake ahead of the winter and bring this information to the next meeting.</p> <p>Update: contained in the presentation</p>
5.2	<p>Strategic conversations to be held regarding the Local Plan and tightening up of some processes</p> <p>Update: this action is ongoing and is being picked up with colleagues in planning policy as part of local plan review.</p>
5.3	<p>Linked to action 4.7 – once the EA have undertaken the analysis on the 2017 study collaborative approach needed to develop things further.</p> <p>Update – contained in the presentation</p>
5.4	<p>More awareness with communities and engagement with riparian owners needed in the short term, collaborative effort required with more comms..</p> <p>Update: agenda item</p>
5.5	<p>All agencies to revisit previous studies undertaken and check that any actions/recommendations are being covered.</p> <p>Update – this is ongoing and picked up in part in presentation</p>
<p>No further questions or comments were raised following the update.</p>	
3	Joint agency presentation
3.1	<p>The joint presentation from the EA, Southern Water, ADC and WSCC is attached. This covered the following areas: -</p> <p><u>EA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environment Agency recap with topographical illustration • 2017 Aldingbourne Rife Study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Upstream storage ➤ Improvement of embankments ➤ Pumping changes, installation of new gauges to monitor networks. ➤ Desiltation of lower catchment ➤ Reconnection of Ryebank Rife with River Arun. ➤ Outcomes of preliminary review ➤ Summary <p>All of the potential solutions identified require significant funding and would receive very little from the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Grant in Aid (FCERM GiA) funding stream due to the economic calculations. The EA cannot deliver such complex change alone,</p>

new partnership funding arrangements will be required to take forward any of these schemes and the EA will be looking to work with local partners and residents. The EA are committed to undertaking further engagement with local communities and stakeholders to help determine next steps.

WSCC

- Section 19 reports for Bognor and Rope Walk underway and due to be completed October 2024
- Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – workshops with key stakeholders held and more planned.
- WSCC Highways – significant jetting and cleansing systems of highway infrastructure in Shripney area.

ADC

- Works split into strategic and tactical actions. Appendices A & B contain details of where work is being undertaken across the district, this covers sites which ADC are responsible for, and others where ADC are providing assistance on third party assets.
- Planning system – Updates have been made to make things easier for the public to understand when cross examining drainage reviews. We have also updated online mapping making information and data easier to access..
- Illustrative pictures of drainage improvements
- Updated the Riparian Rights and Responsibilities

Southern Water

- Roles and responsibilities
- Programme of works covering Shripney, Lidsey/Ford, Barnham and Westergate by the Rife – sewer lining and manhole sealing, upgrades with new pumps and full health checks with new pumps/impellers installed where necessary.
- Business Plan 2025-2030
- Wastewater services enhancement investment for 2025-2030 in the Arun District, focus on reducing the discharges from storm overflows. Enhanced wastewater treatment at Clapham, Lidsey and Pagham
- Overflows in West Sussex illustrating where work/investment is required to achieve Government targets before 2050, and those being worked on between 2025-2030.
- Rivers and Seas Watch – launch of new website which links with apps like Surfers against Sewage – more transparency, better usability and features. All Storm overflows included. Co-created with customers and stakeholders.

Not all the areas where works are taking place are fully defined in the presentation, Southern Water can provide further details if there are any questions.

	<p><u>Multi agency Flood plan</u></p> <p>MR discussed the multi-agency flood plan which is currently under review ahead of Winter 2024 this plan is for use in response to flooding not prevention of. The plan is being reviewed by ADC, EA, West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service and WSCC and will check the latest available data on properties at risk of flooding, evacuation routes and assembly points, expanding the warning and informing section and appropriate sites for multi-agency rendezvous points.</p>
3.2	<p>Following the presentation SWi requested that if there any general questions about the schemes or presentation these are raised outside of the meeting via the Arun Flood Forum email address and to keep discussions to a strategic nature.</p> <p>The following matters were raised.</p>
3.3	<p>Concerns raised with the Pink Pub pumping station which takes a lot of the water away from Bersted Park which flooded last year and the strategic importance of site improvements here before Winter. SW confirmed that this is one of the sites that have been carrying out a full health check, checking water flows and will be undertaken any upgrades needed at this site.</p> <p>It was also queried if there is the capability of reducing the water flow at the Saltbox if the water flow is coming out too quick. SW confirmed that they are monitoring this and can go back to the developer if they are in breach of their permit and need to reduce the water flows.</p>
3.4	<p>Concerns raised that when the SW sewers are sealed the water will have to go elsewhere in the environment, the question was asked what the implication of sealing the pipes will be, and where the water will go. The EA advised that the additional gauging works to review and monitor the water levels in the catchment would include the drainage network so this should help identify any changes in the network, but highlighted this is a longer-term piece of work.</p> <p>It was then queried that when this information is available would this make more of a case for further interventions and make any changes to the current calculations for funding. It was confirmed that there would need to be a lot of extra properties at risk to change this, equally the review could provide reassurance that sealing the sewers to stop the infiltration of water has limited impact.</p> <p>Action: SW were asked if they had looked at the potential impact of sealing the sewers, they advised that where this has been done in other areas there was negligible impact but would take this as an action with the EA and will update further at the next meeting.</p>
3.5	<p>Concerns were expressed with the increase of traffic coming through Shripney due to the development at Barnham, Eastergate and Westergate, last Winter this road was shut multiple times for long periods, with potentially more water in the environment there will there be greater impact. The impact on the road networks was massive; concern that the community and economic impact will only get worse and be severely impacted. This is not just about the physical flooding of properties. Economic factors need to be taken into account.</p> <p>Action: Economic factors to be discussed further at next meeting</p>
3.6	<p>SW were asked what the timeframe is for the identified Barnham works who have suffered from extensive flooding for years. SW advised they have a project plan for what they are directly responsible for, and meetings are taking place. Action: SW will write to confirm works to be undertaken at Barnham with timeframes</p> <p>Thanks was given to Southern Water for their help and interventions to date to help with the situation in this area which is all very much appreciated.</p>

	<p>Further discussion held regarding the impact of more surface water lying about. The catchment is very flat and below sea level which means when the tide is in the water cannot get out unless it is pumped out . Currently there is not enough storage in the catchment or upstream to deal with the water.</p> <p>To fund any of the major schemes Risk Management Authorities are bound by the cost benefit rationale and the matrix in which we are governed. Further investment from Government will not follow if there is no demonstratable return/benefit on investment. The historic scheme detailed in the EA presentation identified a cost benefit ratio of 0.16 which, in layman's terms, means that if the scheme were to progress, for every million-pound invested from the taxpayer we only see 160k of benefit.</p>
4	Communications Plan – Resilience ahead of winter
4.1	<p>CP provided an update on the communications plan which is attached. This is a working live document and CP welcomed any further input from the agencies, this plan will ensure that there is collaborative comms across the organisations to inform our residents and business.</p> <p>It was asked if the new ADC mobile app can include links to flooding alerts issued from the various agencies for warning and informing. Action: CP will look into the feasibility of their being links to flooding alerts within the ADC mobile app.</p>
5	Flood Avoidance of Community Taskforce (FACT) update
5.1	<p>An update and discussion was held with Melinda Matthews co-founder from FACT, Emma McLaren and Rob Wise from NFU.</p> <p>Background was given on the issues regarding the battle with flooding on the farmlands and impact on the businesses. Meetings have been held with the various agencies and the former MP Nick Gibb.</p> <p>The flooding in Bognor last year caused significant financial losses to the businesses in the area, many were closed for weeks last year.</p> <p>Financial statistics were collected from FACT, from 21 responses received from the smaller businesses, there was approximately £2million of losses.</p> <p>FACT have support from the larger businesses, but the data collected does not include the losses incurred by Tesco who had to shut for over a month. As this is market sensitive information the full details cannot be shared but FACT understand that the losses, excluding Tesco's, runs into millions. B&Q could not access their warehouse or distribution for over 2 weeks who also lost significant sums.</p> <p>The situation is getting worse and businesses who have been trading in Bognor for years are seriously considering leaving as its becoming financially unviable.</p> <p>Until IDBs (Internal Drainage Boards) were disbanded many years ago the farmers were responsible for the maintenance and up keep of the Rife, whilst it was appreciated that we did not have as many flooding events as we do now with global warming, the Rife ran well and stored more water than it does today, the farmers kept on top of the maintenance, desilted the Rife and kept it free of weeds. The Rife should be a tool to take the water away at low tide and pump as much water as it can as quickly as it can out at sea. The Rife is not doing this now. It was stressed that this is not accusatory and that everyone needs to work together to come to a solution.</p> <p>If the businesses can see, we can improve the performance of the Rife and improve flooding around Bognor its possible they may be willing to provide some funding. Emma advised that</p>

she considered setting up an independent body and did have contractors out to try and quote but this is complicated as not all of the Rife has problems and currently there is not a full report on the condition of the whole of the Rife. There was a silt survey undertaken by the EA which has been shared with FACT, but the extent of the survey did not go as far back North of the catchment as would be needed.

A flight over the Rife shows a large blockage between the north and south catchments south of the airfield, the EA are aware of this, and it is included in their maintenance plan. The EA have an extensive maintenance plan in place for the whole catchment on the Rife this year.

A visit was made to the pumping station, which showed that there wasn't any water to pump out, the water was stuck in the catchment flowing into Tesco car park and infiltrating into the sewers.

Rather than setting up another independent agency need the best approach is to work with the EA, their infrastructure and teams to apply for the relevant licenses to undertake works if the funds can be raised.

There is still a need to understand who is responsible for what, some parts of the Rife are ordinary watercourses which the EA would not get involved in, this would be the riparian owner. There are real problems at Durban Rd, but the EA are not responsible here as it is an ordinary watercourse. The hope is that the Section 19 report will provide the information so it can be established who is responsible, and where any enforcement action can be taken if needed.

Rob Wise from NFU who is the environment and land use adviser for the east of England who has extensive background and experience on sitting on the lead local flood authority risk management forums and writing flood risk management strategies.

Rob requested that the NFU are put on stakeholder list for involvement at a County Council level.

RFCC's (Regional Flood and Coastal Committes) is another area Rob has had a lot of involvement, they operate at a large catchment scale. Rob was surprised that to date there had not been any involvement with this committee and the issues faced. The RFCC look at the cost benefit analysis of options, the funding gaps and possible sources of funding. Local levy looks at funds raised by the RFCC from the Council Tax base to fund specific local projects as an add on to the Flood Defence Grant in Aid funding so there is a need to look into where funding gaps can be filled from other Local Government sources that exist.

Rob's view is that there is a need to look at the ways in which we are doing things, third party contractors are often cheaper than using the authorities' framework contractors. This may then change the cost benefit analysis figures and open up the door to more grant in aid funding, or mean less funding from other partners.

Rob is pleased that the EA are going to undertake further detailed analysis on the 2017 study and asked if the 2017 modelling considered the level of flooding we saw over the last winter. The EA confirmed that they did look at this and for most of the catchment it agreed well, there was an area on the east branch where it didn't do so well, and this is a key area the EA are looking at for any remodeling. Rob made the point that this may then affect the cost benefit analysis and the amount of funding available.

It was acknowledged in the EA presentation that the modelling looked at the lower part of the catchment and that there are pinch points mid-point, further silt depth surveys will be needed in this area, the gauge work will provide information on flows but this will not necessarily correlate to the extent of the silt depths.

Rob also made reference to the notable fast flow of water out to sea by Butlins versus the lack of water flow further up the Rife which is evidence that there are pinch points.

	<p>Rob acknowledged that has been progress of works in terms of grass cutting and reed removal but what is missing is the desiltation and is hoping there will be more formalised works in this regard this side of the winter.</p> <p>SWi asked if the EA had any comments or thoughts on what has been discussed.</p> <p>The EA put together a schedule of works from the money they receive from Government and there is a balance to be had between vegetation works and level of desiltation that can be undertaken. If can we work together and look at where the financial gaps are we can come up with a plan</p> <p>KaM acknowledged that the RFCC are another possible source of funding, but he believes they are bound by the same funding rules as DEFRA i.e. same business case matrix scoring system. KaM's understanding is that they do not fund maintenance works only capital works but took an action to pick this up with the RFCC Action: KaM to discuss potential funding sources available with the RFCC.</p> <p>Rob also discussed the benefit of catchment wide permissions for works to be undertaken over a period of time to save time and money.</p> <p>Everyone acknowledged there needs to be more creative ways of thinking when looking at the works, how they are undertaken and the funding available.</p>
5.2	<p>SWi summarised three important points from the meeting,</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The importance of the economic and commercial losses to businesses, 2. The importance of encouraging agencies working in partnership with the private sector 3. The challenge of funds and to look for any funding opportunities that might have been missed and doing things differently.
5.3	<p>SWi asked if the any of the Cllrs observing the meeting if they had any matters they would like to raise or add on what they have heard.</p> <p>A request was made that the figures used to calculate the needs for infrastructure for land drainage and sewage are based on up-to-date figures, believe this is being calculated on 2014/15 data. SW will write further on this.</p> <p>Riparian ownership was discussed, whilst there are plans for communication, how we encourage proactively the owners to undertake works required if they do not have the money. It was confirmed there is the enforcement route can be taken, but acknowledge it is a problem.</p> <p>It was stated that collaborative working is the only solution and there is a need to think outside the box to get areas sorted.</p>
5.4	<p>SWi thanked the Forum for a positive meeting and working effectively together, it is appreciated that there are many financial challenges and there is a need to unlock opportunities.</p>
5.5	<p>The next meeting will be held in November – date to be set.</p>

Next meeting – to be set November

Action list

ITEM	ACTION	OWNER
c/f	<p>WSCC have commissioned WSP to undertake the Section 19 report and will provide an update and the timetable for completion at the next meeting in August. If information is available before, this will be shared and feedback to the group.</p> <p>Update from WSCC: This is being completed by WSP with an expected completion date of the middle of October 2024.</p>	WSCC
c/f	<p>ADC to liaise with WSCC as the Lead Local Flood Authority and discuss the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy.</p> <p>KeM confirmed that a review of the current Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is underway, this work is being carried out by WSP.</p> <p>Update from WSCC: WSP are undertaking this work on our behalf. We held a workshop last week which included all key stakeholders (including ADC, EA etc.). This workshop was successful and focussed on objective setting, with a further workshop planned for later in the year looking at "actions". The expected completion date for the Strategy is Autumn 2025.</p>	WSCC
c/f	<p>Strategic conversations to be held regarding the Local Plan and tightening up of some processes</p> <p>Update: this action is ongoing and is being picked up with colleagues in planning policy as part of local plan review.</p>	All
4.1	CP will look into the feasibility of their being links to the agency flood alerts within the ADC mobile app.	CP
5.1	KaM to discuss potential funding sources available with the RFCC.	KaM