

**MINUTES OF 147th MEETING OF THE DRAINAGE COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND HELD AT 10.30am ON THURSDAY, 11 JUNE 2009
AT THE ARMAGH CITY HOTEL, ARMAGH**

Present:

Mr G Crawford (Chairman)
Alderman H Nicholl
Alderman R Beggs
Councillor O Hughes
Councillor W King
Councillor M Gillespie
Councillor G McHugh
Mr J Clarke
Mr T Clarke
Dr H Johnston
Mr R Cummings

In Attendance:

Mr J Glass (Secretary)
Mr P Mehaffey
Mr P Aldridge
Mr D Nixon
Mr A McIlroy

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the 147th meeting of the Drainage Council.

The Chairman also welcomed Mr Alastair McIlroy who was attending to assist with administration and IT.

The Chairman then invited the Secretary to offer any apologies that had been received.

2. APOLOGIES

The Secretary advised that apologies had been received from Councillor McBriar and Mr Boyd. The Secretary also advised the Council that the 147th meeting would have been Mr Boyd's final meeting as he had decided to decline the offer to continue to serve for the two year extension.

The Secretary put on record the thanks of the Council to Mr Boyd for his attendance and contributions during his time as a member.

3. MINUTES OF 146th MEETING

The Chairman asked if members agreed that the minutes of the last meeting were an accurate record.

On the proposal of Alderman Nicholl, seconded by Councillor King, the minutes were agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman asked Councillor King if he was content that he had received an update from Mr Aldridge regarding the Tar Burn Flood Alleviation Scheme. Councillor King confirmed that he had received the update and was content. – Action Point at the bottom of Page 5 of the previous minutes refers.

The Chairman then asked if Alderman Nicholl was content that he had received an update from Mr Aldridge on the position regarding the flooding experienced at the Toome Road and Queen Street in Ballymena. Alderman Nicholl confirmed that he had and stated that he had a further query relating to the Four Mile Burn and the Holybank Road. Mr Aldridge advised that these would be covered under the Capital Works update

Alderman Nicholl then referred to Item 5.8 on page 7 of the previous minutes, which detailed future possible feasibility studies being considered by Rivers Agency. He enquired if it would be possible to have an update on this given the severity of the August 2008 flooding event.

The Chairman confirmed that Mr Aldridge would provide this update when advising the Council of the Major works under Item 3 of the Agenda.

The Chairman enquired about progress regarding the Sullatober Water, Carrickfergus scheme.

Mr Aldridge advised that this would also be considered as part of the Major Works update at Item 5 on the Agenda.

The Chairman asked members to confirm that they had received notification from the Secretary to confirm which Rivers Agency publications they wished to receive in hard copy.

The Members confirmed that they had received notification and that returns had been made.

The Chairman then ensured that members had no other matters they wished to raise before he invited Mr Aldridge to address members.

5. UPDATE ON MAJOR WORKS PROGRAMME

Mr Aldridge presented the details of the Major Works Programme being undertaken by the Rivers Agency, using PowerPoint to indicate the geographical location of completed, current and proposed works and also including photographs to illustrate some of the works being undertaken.

5.1 Culvert Renovation Works completed since the last meeting

Newry – Armagh Road;
Dromore – Dromore Stream;
Moneymore – Moneymore Stream;
Belfast – Loop River post flooding culvert cleaning.

A short summary of each of the works listed was provided by Mr Aldridge, including the reasons for the works, outline of the works with photographs and maps for illustration, and the costs and benefits.

5.2 Current Schemes (under construction)

Portrush -Tar Burn;
Carrickfergus – Sullatoverwater Phase 1;
Belfast – Blackstaff River at Whiterock and the Glen Road.

A recap of these current schemes including illustrative photographs was provided, and then Mr Aldridge moved on to consider:

5.3 Culvert Renovation Works currently ongoing

Belfast – Strathmore Park Stream;
Coalisland – Mousetown Drain.

5.4 Proposed Schemes

Coleraine – Lodge Burn;
Culvert Renovation Programme 2009/10 - Rochester Avenue Stream, and Mount Vernon Stream Belfast, and Ferndene Stream Dundonald.

5.5 Schemes Undergoing Design

Belfast – Loop River and Knock River;
Limavady – River Roe;
Carrickfergus – Sullatover Water Phase II.

5.6 Schemes Undergoing Feasibility Studies

Belfast - East Belfast Drainage Study;
Carrickfergus – Carrickfergus feasibility study;
Whiteabbey - Concrete Row, Threemile Water & Greenisland Stream;
Mallusk – Ballymartin and Blackwater;
Ballygawley - St Ciaran’s School;
Magherafelt – Moneymore Road and Highfield Road;
Clady - Flood Defences;
Gleann River;
Omagh - Johnston Park Stream, Dromore Rd Stream, and Hunter Crescent Floodwall;
Antrim – Sixmilewater and Muckamore Post Benefit Evaluation;

5.7 Schemes Undergoing Feasibility Study from August 2008

Sixmilewater – Hydraulic Model of the River catchment, Meadowside, and Muchamore post Scheme Benefit Evaluation.
Newcastle – Burren/Shimna Rivers post Scheme Benefit Evaluation.
Beragh – Cloughfin River
Annaclone – Cappagh Mill Burn
Doagh – Doagh River
Parkgate – Fourmile Burn
Broughshane
Lurgan – Halfpenny River and Tirsogue Drain

Ahoghill – Village Stream
Kildrum – Kellswater
Annesborough
Maghera Co. Down
Newtownabbey - Collinbridge

5.8 Culvert Renovation Programme

Mr Aldridge then provided more details to the Council on the Culvert Renovation Programme currently being undertaken by the Rivers Agency. He explained that the Northern Ireland Audit Office had reported in 2005 that the Rivers Agency must address the issue of culverts across Northern Ireland that had fallen into a state of disrepair and were at risk of collapse. These culverts were considered to be assets to the Agency that were not up to a sufficient standard to be considered as “steady state” for accounting and valuation purposes.

Mr Aldridge continued to explain that as a result of this the Agency had carried out a number of initial investigations, and following the findings and recommendations of these had in May 2008 introduced a framework contract for culvert renovation.

Mr Aldridge provided the Council with details of the contract for culvert renovation including the works that had been successfully completed in the first year (2008-2009) and the proposals for the second year (2009-2010) along with the capital expenditure involved.

The Chairman thanked Mr Aldridge for his presentation and invited comments or questions from members.

Councillor Gillespie asked Mr Aldridge about the works being considered for Ballygawley that would affect St Kiernans School. He expressed some concern that any works could cause disruption for the school. Mr Aldridge accepted Councillor Gillespie's concerns and assured him that factors such as potential for disruption to the school were being incorporated into the feasibility study.

Alderman Beggs enquired about the total value of flood compensation payments made following the August 2008 flooding event. Mr Aldridge informed the Council that he believed that it was approximately £1.6 million but that he would confirm this for Alderman Beggs.

The Chairman raised some concerns about the capital funds necessary to complete the works resulting from the extreme flooding event of August 2008. He stated that, given the current financial climate, it could be difficult to secure the funds required. The Chairman asked Mr Aldridge to advise the Council of the situation regarding this.

Mr Aldridge explained to the Council that the Rivers Agency had made a very strong case for the additional funding necessary. Furthermore he stated that the case had the full support of the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, and that whilst it seemed a large amount the Rivers Agency was hopeful of a positive outcome.

Mr J Clarke added that whilst the financial constraints were somewhat severe he believed that given the increase in public interest in the issue of flooding and the severity of the consequences of not properly addressing flood risk the timing was such that a bid for additional funding to alleviate the risk of flooding should receive a sympathetic hearing.

Alderman Nicholl stressed that whilst it was possible to see investigations and feasibility studies being undertaken members of the public affected by flooding remained anxious and needed to see works on the ground being undertaken. Alderman Nicholl gave the examples of Holybank Road and Meadowside to illustrate the devastation caused. He stated that these residents were very fearful of the reoccurrence of flooding and needed reassurance that something would be done.

Mr Aldridge stated that the Rivers Agency understood the concerns of those affected by flooding and assured Alderman Nicholl that they were doing everything possible. He explained that whilst the frustration and anxiety being felt by those affected was totally understandable the procedures that had to be followed by the Rivers Agency when considering works took time and had to be adhered to. He advised Alderman Nicholl that the Rivers Agency were considering options for improving communications with affected parties to keep them as up to date and reassured as possible.

Mr Mehaffey pointed out that District Councils would also have an important role to play in communicating with affected parties. Mr Aldridge suggested that he would provide a more detailed timetable to members of the Drainage Council to highlight the timeframe for the completion of feasibility studies and investigations into flooding incidents.

Mr J Clarke asked if members would have a view about possible avenues for communication. He suggested that the use of the internet could be considered as an effective tool for communication. Alderman Beggs suggested that a more individual approach involving direct contact with those affected would be preferable to use of the internet.

Alderman Nicholl then enquired about the link between the Rivers Agency and District Councils regarding flood response and emergency planning. Mr Mehaffey informed Alderman Nicholl that across the different District Councils different approaches were taking with varying results. He assured Alderman Nicholl that, whilst some Councils were well prepared and others were not, the Rivers Agency was doing everything possible to ensure that the best response possible to flooding was achieved.

Alderman Nicholl reiterated the importance of communication with affected parties and keeping them up to date. He also raised the possibility of those parties affecting being in a position to lobby their MLAs to add their support to bids for additional funding.

Mr J Clarke reminded the Council of the number of studies being undertaken and the fact that works on the ground may not be guaranteed but definitely could not proceed without the proper funding. Alderman Nicholl raised the need for this to be made clear to the public.

Alderman Nicholl then asked if the Ballie Burn was included on the list of studies given the flooding that was experienced in that area. Mr Aldridge stated that it wasn't but that he would look into the matter and inform Alderman Nicholl.

Alderman Beggs stressed the importance of communicating the position relating to the need for additional funds to progress the schemes currently being investigated. He stated that District Councils should be supporting the case for additional funding, and would if advised of the situation. Alderman Beggs then asked if the Rivers Agency would require permission to recruit additional members of staff if the funding was secured.

The Secretary confirmed that the bids for additional funding included the necessary funds for any staffing requirements.

Mr J Clarke explained how the works on the grounds for drainage and flood defence schemes were undertaken by private sector companies and as such securing the funding could provide a welcome boost to the construction industry in the current financial climate.

The Chairman asked if the difficulties that the Rivers Agency had previously faced regarding staff recruitment had eased. Mr Aldridge confirmed that the Rivers Agency now had in place a number of programmes to train technical staff and engineering graduates. He stated that overall staff recruitment had improved.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to confirm total value of flood compensation payments for Alderman Beggs.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to provide timetable for completion of feasibility studies and investigations.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to advise Alderman Nicholl of the position regarding the **Ballie Burn, Ballymena.**

The Chairman thanked Mr Aldridge for his presentation of the Major Works Programme and asked Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

6. FLOODING REPORT

Referring to a Powerpoint presentation, Mr Mehaffey detailed the flooding report for the Council. He began by explaining that thankfully no major flooding incidents had been experienced since the February meeting of the Drainage Council, and then provided details of a minor flooding incident that occurred on 19/20 May 2009.

He explained that minor flooding reported across the greater Belfast area during this event had resulted in the flooding of 1 property in the Greencastle area. Mr Mehaffey stated that the new Flooding Incident Line had received 88 telephone calls; the Rivers Agency had received 18 calls directly; and 17 members of staff had been deployed to 5 incidents to provide assistance. Mr Mehaffey advised that no watercourses had been involved in the flooding and that all the calls received related to road and surface water incidents.

Mr Mehaffey went on to provide the Council with some details of the response provided by the Rivers Agency during this incident. He also detailed the performance of the new Flooding Incident Line and presented to the Council an updated flooding leaflet prepared by the Rivers Agency.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentation of the flooding report and asked if members had any questions or points arising.

Mr J Clarke asked if the new flooding leaflet had been widely distributed to members of the public. Mr Mehaffey explained that an extensive postal distribution of the leaflets had been investigated, but had proven to be too expensive. He stated that the Department of Finance and

Personnel were considering distribution of the leaflet as part of their communication programme for the Flooding Incident Line.

Councillor King asked if the leaflets could be supplied to District Councils as a means of distribution. Mr Mehaffey agreed with Councillor King's suggestion and confirmed that flooding leaflets would be supplied to District Councils.

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to arrange for flooding leaflets to be supplied to District Councils.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentation of the flooding report. He went on to refer members to the designation of watercourses outlined on pages 20 – 23 of the business book, and invited Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

7. PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF WATERCOURSES

U3BEL1C Ext – Clowney River, Springfield Road, Belfast.

Mr Mehaffey gave a background report explaining that this proposal was being made to allow the Rivers Agency to provide maintenance to an open watercourse. He explained that this was to ensure that debris did not build up in the watercourse and block the nearby grille during periods of heavy rainfall.

On the proposal of Dr Johnston, seconded by Alderman Nicholl, the Council determined that the aforementioned section of watercourse should be designated.

U3414 – Stonebridge Meadows Stream, Stoneyford, Co. Antrim.

Mr Mehaffey provided a background note for members explaining that this proposal was being put forward to allow the Rivers Agency to carry out maintenance works on the watercourse culverted as part of the flood alleviation scheme carried out to reduce the risk of flooding to Stonebridge Meadows, Stoneyford.

On the proposal of Councillor Hughes, seconded by Mr Cummings, the Council determined that the highlighted section of the Stonebridge Meadows Stream should be designated.

Mr J Clarke referred to the works carried out at Stonebridge Meadows as an example where local residents could see the works being carried out. Furthermore he advised the Council that as a result of the works Stonebridge Meadows had been unaffected by the flooding of August 2008. He stated that this was excellent and extremely reassuring for the residents.

The Chairman agreed with Mr J Clarke and reiterated the positive impact of the works at Stonebridge Meadows.

The Chairman then referred members to the designation of watercourse and scheme proposed on pages 20-29 of their business books, and invited Mr Mehaffey to address members again.

8. DESIGNATION OF WATERCOURSE AND SCHEME RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

U2703 Ext – Carrowadoon Road Stream Extension, Dunloy.

Mr Mehaffey gave a background report and details of the proposed scheme.

Alderman Beggs enquired about the reason for carrying out this scheme. He asked if the works were being carried out to facilitate future development. Alderman Beggs expressed his concern at the Rivers Agency carrying out drainage infrastructure works at public expense to contribute to the profit of private developers. He asked if there were opportunities for financial contributions from these developers.

Mr Mehaffey explained that whilst the Rivers Agency had investigated the possibility of Drainage Infrastructure Charging, it had proven extremely difficult to progress. Mr Mehaffey advised that Drainage Infrastructure was now being considered as part of the Department of the Environment's Planning reform.

Mr Glass confirmed that Drainage Infrastructure Charging was being considered as part of the Planning reform and the paper on this had been submitted to the Executive for consideration in May 2009.

Mr T Clarke confirmed that this was the case and that the paper was still with the Executive. Mr T Clarke also advised that the paper had yet to go to public consultation.

Alderman Nicholl voiced his support for the Carrowadoon Road Stream Extension Scheme.

On the proposal of Alderman Nicholl, seconded by Alderman Beggs, the Council agreed to the proposed designation and scheme.

Alderman Nicholl enquired as to how long it would take before the scheme was started. Mr Mehaffey answered that commencement was programmed for the 2009/2010 financial year. He stated that he would confirm the expected date for commencement and would advise Alderman Nicholl.

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to advise Alderman Nicholl of the commencement date for the Carrowadoon Road Stream Extension Scheme.

9. SCHEMES RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

The Chairman directed members to pages 28-45 of the business book and invited Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

U3G111 Blenheim Park Stream, Carryduff, Co. Down.

Mr Mehaffey provided a background for the proposed scheme on the Blenheim Park Stream. He explained that the scheme was necessary to repair a culvert that was structurally unsound.

On the proposal of Mr Cummings, seconded by Dr Johnston, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

U3BEL1 Blackstaff River, Andersonstown, Belfast.

Mr Mehaffey explained to the Council that the proposed scheme on the Blackstaff River was required to alleviate ongoing flooding problems in the area.

On the proposal of Alderman Beggs, seconded by Councillor Gillespie, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

Lodge Burn Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase I, Coleraine.

Mr Mehaffey provided a background to the Council explaining that this scheme was necessary to alleviate the risk of flooding to existing properties in the vicinity of the Lodge Burn. He also advised that the completion of the scheme would also provide an adequate outlet capable of supporting future development for the area.

Councillor King welcomed the scheme, and asked when Phase II could be expected. Mr Aldridge explained that at the present time Phase II was not required, but that it would be triggered by future development if required.

On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Alderman Nicholl, the Council approved the proposed scheme.

The Chairman asked if there was an error with the label for the scheme on the map in the business book. He enquired if the scheme was to be carried out on the Lodge Burn or the Lodge Burn Extension. Mr Mehaffey advised The Chairman that he would confirm this.

ACTION – Mr Mehaffey to confirm if scheme is on Lodge Burn or Lodge Burn Extension.

Loop River and Tributaries Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 1 & 2, Belfast.

Mr Mehaffey informed the Council that as a result of flooding problems in the East Belfast area for a number of years this scheme was required. He explained that Phase 1 of the scheme would be carried out in conjunction with the Connswater Community Greenway Project being funded by Belfast City Council and the Big Lottery and project managed by the Department of Social Development and the Department of Finance and Personnel.

Mr J Clarke asked if reinstatement works with Phase 1 would also be incorporated in the Greenway Project. Mr Aldridge advised that he was unsure.

Mr Glass informed the Council that there was also a proposal for a rapid transport system for Belfast that would affect the Greenway Project, but he assured the Council that the transport system had been factored in and would not pose a major problem.

Mr T Clarke confirmed that there would be no conflict between the 2 schemes.

On the proposal of Dr Johnston, seconded by Councillor Hughes, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

10. WATERCOURSE NOT RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION

The Chairman referred members to pages 46-47 of the business books and invited Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

Watercourse in field near Mill Road, Saintfield Road, Carryduff.

Mr Mehaffey gave a background report on this undesignated watercourse, explaining that during late 2008 Rivers Agency were advised of a flooding problem in this area. Mr Mehaffey explained that following investigation by Rivers Agency officials it was established that this flooding was being caused by the collapse of a culvert on the watercourse. Further investigation indicated that this culvert was constructed during the 1950s by the then Belfast City Council to facilitate a land fill operation for waste disposal.

Mr Mehaffey then detailed that the culvert is currently buried to a depth of approximately 8 meters, mainly by domestic refuse. He stated that the landowner has attempted to rectify the existing problem by excavating and removing the defective pipes at two locations. The excavations are currently open and there is a flow through the remainder of the culvert.

Mr Mehaffey explained that, whilst Rivers Agency had some sympathy for the landowner's position, the overriding factor remained the failure of the proposal to meet the cost benefit criteria necessary for designation. Therefore Mr Mehaffey indicated that the Council should not consider it suitable for designation.

The Chairman agreed with Mr Mehaffey's assessment and stated that the Council should not consider the culvert suitable for designation.

Alderman Nicholl asked if the original culvert was constructed with approval of the Drainage Council. Mr Mehaffey confirmed that no, this construction was carried out prior to the Drainage Council by the Belfast City Council.

Alderman Nicholl expressed concern regarding the health and safety risks posed by the open excavation pits 25 feet deep. He stated that surely someone must take action on this. Alderman Nicholl also asked if there was any Government Authority that would be in a position to require the landowner to take action regarding the excavation pits. Mr Mehaffey stated that, whilst he couldn't say for certain, he believed that given the material excavated comprised mainly of domestic refuse the Northern Ireland Environment Agency could be in a position to consider the matter from a pollution aspect.

Mr Mehaffey went on to explain to the Council that given the background to this case it was quite likely that if the decision was taken not to designate an appeal to the Lands Tribunal would be lodged.

Mr Clarke emphasised the sympathy that Rivers Agency felt for the landowner's position, but stated that it could be a dangerous precedent for the Council to set if the decision was taken to designate a watercourse that did not meet the overriding criteria as detailed.

The Chairman agreed that this was a very difficult and complex case, and a very difficult position for the Landowner to be in.

On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Mr Cummings, the Council determined that the watercourse should not be treated as a designated watercourse.

11. RIVERS AGENCY MANAGED RETREAT PROJECT – KILNATIERNEY DYKE SEA DEFENCE

With reference to a powerpoint presentation Mr Mehaffey informed the Council of a managed retreat project being undertaken by the Rivers Agency in conjunction with the National Trust.

He explained that it was planned to carry out works to lower two short sections of the Kilnatieerney sea defence in order to allow high tide inundation of agricultural land between the current defence and the Portaferry Road owned by the National Trust. Furthermore Mr Mehaffey stated that this work was being undertaken to facilitate the creation of a saline pond/salt marsh, a venture that the National trust was extremely supportive of.

Mr Mehaffey advised the Council that by carrying out this work the Rivers Agency would make a saving of approximately £4000 annually and £500,000 in potential capital reconstruction costs.

Mr Cummings asked if any difficulties would be experienced whilst carrying out the works. Mr Mehaffey responded that there were no anticipated difficulties.

Alderman Beggs expressed some concern about the potential to set a dangerous precedent and the possibility of seeing an increase in requests for similar projects. Mr Mehaffey assured Alderman Beggs that this was an unusual case where it made sense both for the Agency and the National Trust to carry out this project.

Alderman Beggs asked if the National Trust had approached the Rivers Agency to request this project. Mr Mehaffey explained that the Rivers Agency had designed the project and had approached the National Trust with the possibility. He confirmed that the Rivers Agency and the National Trust were working in partnership.

Mr J Clarke asked if the Rivers Agency would maintain responsibility for the sea defence after the completion of the project. Mr Mehaffey advised that once the project was completed, if successful, a proposal would be brought before the Council to de-designate the sea defence.

Councillor King asked if this was similar to works that had been carried out on a sea defence at Ballykelly. Mr Mehaffey answered that these works were different from those carried out in Ballykelly as these are designed to remove the sea defence, whereas at Ballykelly the works were carried out to reinforce the defence.

Mr J Clarke informed the Council that whilst there was much talk of managed retreats in the UK there were not the same opportunities to carry out such works in Northern Ireland. He stated that this was one example where the land being protected by the defence was owned by the National trust who welcomed the removal to create marshland.

Mr J Clarke went on to discuss how this would be highly unlikely elsewhere where the defences protect urban areas or where the landowner required the land as is. Mr J Clarke explained that there could possibly be one other example in Northern Ireland if any.

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his presentation and advised him that the Drainage Council was supportive of the works. He then asked The Secretary to address the Council.

12. CORRESPONDENCE ISSUED BY SECRETARIAT SINCE LAST MEETING

The Secretary drew members' attention to pages 48 – 50 of the business book. He advised the Council that all correspondence received and issued by the Secretariat since the 146th Meeting of the Drainage Council related to the watercourse at Mill Road, Saintfield, Belfast and had already been discussed under Watercourse Not Recommended for Designation.

13. AOB

13.1 Drainage Council Term Extension

The Secretary provided members with an update of the legal position regarding the extension of the current Drainage Council to 2011 until the local Government elections. He advised the Council that the appointment process was ongoing and it was hoped to have successfully appointed new members before the end of December 2009.

13.2 Association of British Insurers Statement of Principles

Mr Aldridge advised the Council that the Rivers Agency was working on behalf of Government to put in place a Statement of Principles for Northern Ireland on insurance provision with the Association of British Insurers. He informed members that Insurance for flooding is now being frequently raised with increased premiums and large excesses.

Mr Aldridge stated that therefore the aim of such a Statement of Principles was to ensure that home insurance for flooding would remain as widely available as possible on the basis that Government would provide assurances regarding flood risk management.

Mr Aldridge explained that such a statement of Principles was already in place for England and Scotland and that a draft Executive paper including the draft Statement of Principles had been prepared for agreement by the Executive.

Alderman Nicholl welcomed this news as he recounted that many people had been adversely affected by the flooding of August 2008 and this would help and bring us into line with England and Scotland. Alderman Nicholl then asked if the insurance would be underwritten.

Mr Aldridge advised that the insurance would not be underwritten, but that assurances would be given to the ABI regarding the provision of flood risk protection.

Alderman Nicholl asked how long it would be before the Statement of Principles would be in place. Mr Aldridge answered that discussions were ongoing and it was hoped that the Statement of Principles would be in place in the next few months.

Alderman Nicholl asked if Local Government could provide some input to move the issue more rapidly. Mr Aldridge explained that at the current time it would be best to wait and see how the issue progressed with the Executive.

Mr J Clarke stated that the local view on the Statement of Principles had been considered as part of the consultation period. He explained that the key issue was the economics of damage and damage control as the ABI are primarily interested in profit making whilst the Rivers Agency is not.

Mr J Clarke went on to explain that the ABI were seeking a large amount of investment in flood defence infrastructure for strategic areas before they would provide flood insurance. Mr J Clarke stated that it was difficult to consider the issue of flood insurance on a property by property basis and that the view of the ABI was understandable.

The Chairman confirmed that it was pleasing to see some progress on this matter and that the Council remained hopeful that the Statement of Principles could be put in place to assist those members of the public adversely affected by flooding.

The Chairman then confirmed that there was no other business before inviting the Secretary to address members.

13.2 Members forms

The Secretary drew members' attention to the travel expenses claim form and enquiry form provided.

13.3 Date & general location for next meeting

The Secretary proposed a number of dates around late September or early October 2009 for the next meeting. After some deliberation it was agreed that the Secretariat would make arrangements for Thursday 29 October 2009 and notify members of the arrangements in due course. The Chairman stated that the Council would be interested in a site visit or a coastal venue for this meeting.

The Chairman then thanked members for attending and declared the meeting closed.

Meeting Closed