

**SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**COVELLS DRAIN, SWAVESEY**

**Notes of a public forum held in the Council Chamber, South Cambs. Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge on Wednesday 29 June 2011 at 2.00pm**

In establishing the purpose of the Forum, Councillor Ray Manning stated that speakers should refrain from commenting on what had happened during the past 15 to 20 years in relation to Covells Drain, and instead focus on contributing ideas for resolving the arguments for the future.

The Drainage Manager briefly summarised the report and the factors that had prompted it. The report should be read as a guide, he said, as it made no direct recommendations. Instead, it set out a number of implications should South Cambridgeshire District Council pursue certain options or not pursue others. The report did accept however the need to provide flood defences for Fen Drayton.

Comments made at the Forum are summarised as follows:

**Steve Gatley on behalf of Fen Drayton Parish Council**

- This speaker lives in Fen Drayton High Street and admitted to self-interest as a major motivator.
- Fen Drayton is a beautiful village
- regrets that the Environment Agency appeared to have little concept of land levels unique to the Fens
- refers to the 1947 floods - these should provide the benchmark for moving forward. Preventative measures should be sensitive to the village, which should not be blighted by anything that was not necessary
- the Environment Agency should remove Fen Drayton from its Floor Risk map.
- Steps taken by Swavesey had not been beneficial to Fen Drayton. Indeed, 26 properties in Fen Drayton were now at greater risk of flooding as a result.
- Fen Drayton Parish Council proposed a flood defence scheme four years ago. Such flood defence should be built at the direction of South Cambridgeshire District Council.

**Geoff Beel on behalf of Swavesey Internal Drainage Board**

- welcomed the decision of South Cambridgeshire District Council to consult local communities and seek to protect both Fen Drayton and Swavesey
- Good design would be crucial
- disappointed that the Environment Agency had not sent representatives to this Forum
- Swavesey IDB favoured Scenario 4 set out in the report
- It was essential that Fen Drayton should be protected from the one in 100 years flooding event
- Utilities in Swavesey also needed to be protected
- The banks of the River Ouse and Covells Drain must be raised south of the Guided Bus route.

[Councillor Manning stated that the Environment Agency had been invited to attend the Forum]

### **Tim Parrish on behalf of Swavesey Parish Council**

- Flood defences are only as good as their lowest point
- He explained the impact of flow rates along the River Ouse, and reminded those present that Swavesey was the lowest village along the stretch in question
- He suggested how high the banks should be, given the overall capacity of the flood meadow
- Swavesey Parish Council supported Scenario 4.

### **Geoff Beel on behalf of Mr John Johnson – Swavesey Landowner**

- Work carried out by John Johnson is intended to protect Swavesey against one in 100 year flood risk
- The report is welcome
- Scenario 4 is supported as the work paid for by John Johnson at no cost to South Cambridgeshire District Council would be incorporated into the proposed composite solution
- Establishing the right cost / benefit ratio was important. Insurance payouts relate to one in 75 year flood risk.

The Drainage Manager stated that, in order to a flood bank, South Cambridgeshire District Council would need planning permission and to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment.

### **Councillor Nick Wright – South Cambridgeshire District Councillor for Fen Drayton**

- Councillor Wright welcomed the report
- Evidence of local knowledge and expertise was crucial
- No objection to Swavesey seeking flood protection
- New banks essential
- Key factor is securing the agreement of all landowners concerned
- Supports Scenario 4
- South Cambridgeshire District Council has a moral responsibility
- Report is a positive step forward

### **Richard Johnson – Fen Drayton Landowner**

- Nothing beats local knowledge and understanding
- All waterways should have banks of equal height and strength
- South Cambridgeshire District Council should make sure that no work takes place that would have a detrimental impact on anyone else

With regard to the height of banks, the Drainage Manager said that the Award required the Council to maintain those watercourses for which it was responsible on an “as required” basis.

### **Tim Parrish**

- Keep the Ouse to the Ouse with water storage and flood defences for both Fen Drayton and Swavesey.

### **Keith Wilderspin – Swavesey Internal Drainage Board**

- The composite scheme and Scenario 4 must be pursued.

**Tom Rouse / Charlotte Nunns - Consultants W S Atkins**

- Scenario 4 alone would not be in the best interests of Fen Drayton.

**Mandy Smith – Chairman, Fen Drayton Parish Council**

- Declares interest as local landowner and member of the EA's Central Flood Risk Committee
- States that she is a Cambridgeshire County Councillor
- Asks how progress will be communicated

**Andrew Johnson**

- Does not address the problem in short to medium term
- Would wish to reinstate design levels

**Agreed Actions**

1. Gather evidence to support a request that Fen Drayton be removed from the Environment Agency's flood risk map [PM]
2. Invite EA Reps to the Environmental Services Portfolio Holder meeting on 9 August 2011 [PM]
3. If EA unable to attend on 9 August 2011, consider moving meeting [not preferred option – PM / Dem Services]
4. Recommend Scenario 4 [PM]
5. Discuss with local MPs [Councillor Manning / PM]

The meeting closed at 3.25pm