

**Minutes from the Debenham Flood Risk Management Project & River Deben
Holistic Water Management upstream storage meeting**

Monday 9th June 2014. 11am

Venue: Hill House Farm, Aspall, IP14 6NU.

Present:

Will Todd (WT), Paul Hunt (PH) & Tim Long (TL) (Environment Agency)

Jane Burch (JB) (Suffolk County Council)

Barry Chevallier Guild (BCG), Ben Whitehall (BW) & James Faulds (JF) (Aspall Cyder)

Mr & Mrs Freeman (PF) (Hill House Farm)

1. Introductions
2. Background. WT provided some background to the Debenham Flood Risk Management Project being run by the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership. The aim of the project is to initially understand the existing flood risk before looking at ways of reducing the risk in Debenham. Feedback was received at the November 2013 public drop in event in the village. At this stage we have a “blank canvas” in relation of options and we are keen to obtain thoughts on the concept of upstream storage. JF commented that Aspalls were not aware of this meeting.

PF noted that there were notable floods in 1912, 1953 & 1993 (Post meeting comment. Having looked through the flood history & photographs, should this be 1956 rather than 1953?) Flood levels in the village fell very rapidly.

WT noted that the flood outlines from the latest modelling suggest that the flood extents in the Gull through Aspall appear to be smaller than shown on the current flood map on our website.

JB provided an overview of the Deben Holistic Water Management Project – covering water resources, environmental considerations and flood risk. If there is the potential to store flood water and release at times of lower flow this could be investigated, however it is acknowledged that there may not be enough water to do this at certain times of the year.

3. General discussion over upstream flood storage.

PF raised concerns over the potential impact that the storage of flood water could have on the flood risk to existing properties in Aspall. WT provided

reassurance that the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership would not look to increase flood risk to existing people and property. To this end additional hydraulic (river) modelling is being carried out to understand the risk upstream of New Road both at the present day, and also if there were to be water stored upstream of "Winding Hill" (where the Gulls meets the B1077). This modelling will extend to just beyond Red House Farm in the west, and Aspoll House in the east).

BCG raised the importance of maintenance of the river channel to assist in reducing the impacts of flooding. WT confirmed that currently maintenance is carried out twice a year in the main urban area of the village to assist in the conveyance of flood flows.

WT asked if there were wider benefits from the storage of water in Aspoll. BCG confirmed that mains water is currently used for irrigation of orchards.

WT explained that the creation of a "two stage" channel (widen existing banks to maintain current channel for normal flows, with the adjacent areas providing space for flood flows) downstream of the village does lower flood levels in the Low Road area of the village, but has no benefit to the northern parts of the village.

PF raised the need for storage of water upstream before entering the main channel. He suggested that the storage of water on other tributaries would be beneficial. Mr Munter is the landowner for some of the land upstream of New Road.

JF mentioned the potential impacts of climate change and the increased uncertainty over water supplies. JB confirmed that working in partnership with farmers to achieve wider benefits is something we would be looking to achieve.

PF was supportive of the construction of ponds to store flood water. If they were constructed to retain water in normal conditions that could be used for fishing/irrigation etc, with space provided to store flood water when required.

WT explained that at this early stage in the project there is no guarantee that enough funding will be available to progress proposals. It is likely that for all the options that reduce the flood risk in the village funding will be required from other sources to supplement Government funding. We will therefore want to work with communities and partners to develop schemes that include funding from local sources. At this stage there is no guarantee of when any possibilities that are progressed can be delivered. However, the more contributions obtained, the greater the chances of Government funding.

BW confirmed that there is currently a discharge of 60-70 cubic metres/day discharging into the Gulls, however in low flow conditions this is unlikely to actually reach the village of Debenham.

BW advised that the apple trees on the left (eastern) bank of the Gulls upstream of "Winding Hill" are the older trees and therefore an important part of the heritage of Aspall Cyder. They also provide a wildlife habitat.

BCG highlighted the importance of the channel capacity and the avoidance of upstream impacts.

PF confirmed that the area around Hill House Cottages is not known to have flooded historically, but the land downstream of Valley Cottage adjacent to New Road, and the culvert where these two tributaries meet is known to have flooded.

WT confirmed that once we have outputs from the additional modelling work upstream of New Road this will be shared with the group to ensure that it fits with historical observed flooding. This can then be used to test any flood storage area and ensure it doesn't have any adverse impacts on people and property. **ACTION WT**

PF reiterated the importance of flood storage in other tributaries.

General discussion over where drainage rates are spent JB to investigate and feedback. **ACTION JB**

Concerns were raised over the silt and vegetation in the Gulls to the north of Debenham between the school and the old railway embankment.

TL provided a summary of the compensation arrangements that are likely to apply. **Under the Water Resources Act 1991, the Agency is obliged to pay compensation to landowners for loss or damage to land and property that is directly caused by Agency works. The amount of compensation would be a matter for negotiation and would depend on the type of scheme involved.**

PH confirmed that we would look to accommodate the aspirations of landowners when investigating flood risk management options. The amount of money available to spend on a project will be limited by the benefits that it provides.

WT apologised that the adverts for the November 2013 public drop in event were not shared with Aspall P.C. WT to ensure that future discussions over the Debenham Flood Risk Management Project are shared with Aspall P.C.

