

re: Item 4. York 5 Year Flood Plan Update

01 March 2018

Dear Councillor Waller,

Having read the update coming to your decision session on Monday 5 March as well as the Environment Agency's Five Year Plan, I would like to make the following comments, particularly in relation to the Fishergate Flood Cell.

Broadly, I agree with the Environment Agency's plan, and the work already done to increase the pumping capacity of the Foss Barrier, but we must recognise that this has the potential to have a detrimental impact on residents immediately South of the barrier, in Fishergate and in Clementhorpe, if it is required to pump water into the Ouse at full capacity.

I think the residents thereof need to see more details relating to the properties that will be affected, as I was surprised to see some options for defences that would 'protect' streets (like my own) which do not suffer flooding. I think it is also imperative to see more information on "the bigger picture" if the Environment Agency is claiming that it cannot comprehensively protect the Fishergate New Walk residents, except in a piecemeal fashion.

The alternative solution of finding substantial investment required to build a huge retaining wall along The New Walk is likely to be regarded as reprehensible by the majority of residents if it were to impede access and to ruin the ambience of the Georgian "New Walk" which is reckoned to be the first riverside 'promenade' built in England. The Environment Agency appears to be backing away from such a project due to the considerable cost. I'm not convinced that we can build higher and higher walls to solve the problem.

And yet something must be done.... if there isn't going to be an acceptable or affordable solution for the residents of Fishergate's New Walk community, then the focus must be on slowing the rate at which water is coming down the Foss, and creating additional floodplain upstream on the Ouse, as both would contribute to reducing flooding in the city of York.

Climate Change is only going to make the situation worse, or at least more frequent, so we need to see plans for new flood plains upstream, changes to drainage systems, and slowing the flow of water into the rivers at an earlier stage. Undoing some of the drainage schemes which benefit farmers by getting water off their land but which means that water enters the rivers more quickly is going to be necessary. I can imagine that will require some difficult negotiations but it is imperative that The Environment Agency works to create new flood plains upstream, as well as new barriers to hold back drainage into the rivers, and extensions and enhancement of "slow-the-flow" schemes.

I appreciate that there will be a need to seek to co-ordinate the flow of the two rivers - Ouse and Foss - so that the peaks of flooding do not coincide.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Dave Taylor