

RIVERS & COASTS

Newsletter of CIWEM's Rivers and Coastal Group No. 41 – March 2008



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

This is my last newsletter as Chairman of the group. It doesn't seem that long since I was writing the first of these columns, sitting on holiday in Scotland with the early summer's floods being reported on the TV news. Who would have believed then that there would continue to be so much devastation over the summer followed by the threat of coastal flooding in the autumn and recently?

These are challenging times for all of us in the profession of river and coastal work with public, media and government expectations so high. It's certainly been a busy year but despite this the voluntary members of the Rivers and Coastal Group's committee, with the support of their various employers, have managed to stage successful visits and conferences and also help CIWEM influence international and government policy.

From the feedback we receive I know that many of you have enjoyed our events, making the planning and organisation well worthwhile. I have been very fortunate to lead such enthusiastic and hard working committee members during my year as Chairman. We have several events this year and have already started to plan for events in 2009, including investigating several possible destinations for an overseas visit - so watch this space for news.

There are significant changes proposed for streamlining and modernising the governance of CIWEM and our committee continues to work closely with CIWEM HQ in taking the Institution forward. One of my priorities for the year was for the group to work more closely with the branches. Each committee member is now linked with a branch, encouraging more people to join us and helping to ensure a healthy future for the Group. I hand over the reins to Andrew Gilham at our AGM and spring meeting at Austin Court, Birmingham on 15 May, so I know that the group will be in good hands and hopefully will go from strength to strength. I hope to see many of you there because it's well worth taking a day out of a busy working schedule to network with fellow professionals and to learn from each other.

As I write this the sun is shining on a beautiful early spring day. I hope that the weather continues to be kind and I wish you all the best for the future.

Jackie Banks

CIWEM RCG WINTER MEETING

Our winter meeting took place on 17th January 2008 at the School of African and Asian Studies (SOAS) in London. This year's event was organised by Andrew Gilham, Liam Foster and Marc Pinnell with the theme - Delivering Effective Flood Risk Management - "Life at the Sharp End."

The meeting explored some of the challenges currently being faced by those managing river and coastal flood risk. It emphasised the need for effective flood risk management when meeting the demand for development and the importance of public participation when developing long term management plans. The impact and lessons learnt from the summer 2007 floods were discussed through a series of first hand accounts provided by a business man, the Environment Agency, a city council and a water company.

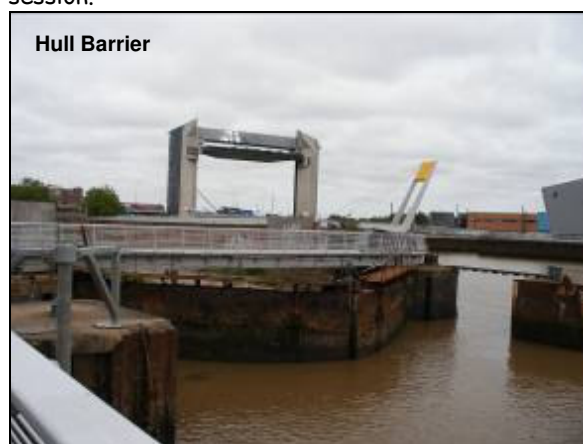


The Keynote speech was given by Brian Reeve, a business owner in Tewksbury who was affected by the summer 2007 floods. Brian provided an interesting and visually impacting account of his experience before, during and after the flooding. This was followed by 8 papers presenting field and research experience on the management of flood risk in urban and coastal areas and examples of good practice and lessons learnt at the sharp end.

Talks were varied and informative covering a wide range of topics under the days theme. Kevin Reid (Greater London Authority) gave a talk on Regional Flood Risk Appraisal and Development Pressure in London; David Lowsley (Chichester District Council) shared his experience on the Pagham to East Head Coastal Defence Strategy and the hard decisions that need to be made, which provided an interesting account of the need to meet both technical guidance and the expectation of the general public; Charles Pickles (ESG Herefordshire Ltd) looked at how an integrated approach had been taken to address development and flood risk management demands in the regeneration of Hereford City Centre; Marcia King (Pitt

Review Team) provided an update on the interim findings of the Pitt Review project.

The afternoon session began with a presentation by Dawn Roberts (Hull City Council) on Emergency Planning - In the Eye of the Storm, which detailed the practicality of implementing Silver Control and lessons learnt from the summer 2007 floods. Anthony Perry (Environment Agency) provided an account of the summer 2007 floods from the perspective of an Area Flood Risk Manager. This was followed by a talk from Martin Kane (Severn Trent Water) about the Gloucestershire floods of July 2007 and the operation to maintain critical water supply infrastructure when the Mythe WTW flooded. Tony Camilleri (Mackley Construction) gave a talk on sustainable restoration of Dartford Creek Frontages from a contractor's perspective. The day concluded with a summary, question and answer session.



The Rivers and Coastal Group would like to thank the speakers and organisers for a very interesting day. Thanks are also due to all the attendees who supported the event.

YOUNG MEMBERS COMPETITION

This year the First Paper's Competition is on Raising Resilience to Flood Risk. Entrants were invited to come up with a strategy for raising resilience. There was a great response with entries from the Environment Agency, JBA Consulting, Royal Haskoning, Faber Maunsell and Entec. The entries were all of a very high standard with a good background on flood resilience and some novel and original ideas on how flood resilience measures could be used to manage flood risk. A panel of judges consisting of Jackie Banks (Environment Agency), Phil McLoughlin (Faber Maunsell) and Hannah O'Callaghan (JBA Consulting) had the hard job of choosing 3 of the 10 entries to go forward to the next stage of competition, which involves a presentation of the strategy at the Rivers and Coastal Group Study Weekend at Royal Holloway at the end of March. The finalists they chose are Andrew Twigg and Lee Thornley (Environment Agency), Francesca Hurt (JBA Consulting) and Aneka Lowis (JBA Consulting). We would like to wish them all the best of luck with the final.

INTERIM PITT REVIEW COMMENTS

The independent review of the 2007 Floods by Sir Michael Pitt was published in December 2007.

CIWEM issued a Press Release welcoming Sir Michael Pitt's 'Interim report, which emphasises the need for a robust, long term approach to flood risk management and greater coordination between the many organisations involved. The report itself says "Our emerging conclusions are wide ranging and will require a determined effort on the part of central government and other relevant organisations to see them through".

The Winter 2008 meeting was pleased to have Marcia King, a member of the Pitt Review team, present an overview of the report. CIWEM has provided evidence to the "Pitt Review" and will be responding to the Interim Conclusions in the report by March 2008. A further chapter of the Interim report, "Recovering from the floods" has just been published.

CIWEM firmly believes that identifying the lessons is a useful first step. For real change to occur on the ground, we now need to learn from this and act upon the recommendations. Pitt's review must therefore be translated into a plan with specific time bound actions for accountable organisations. The actions must be realistic, properly resourced and monitored and reviewed at the highest level.

The report reinforces CIWEM's previous calls for action from the Government. These include:

- A clear line between government policy and the delivery of flood risk management, which will require changes in governance and institutional arrangements.
- Infrastructure owners and operators to be accountable for ensuring that new works are designed using a risk based approach, providing resilience against extreme flood events.
- A radical and comprehensive reform of flood risk management legislation, removing any barriers to the delivery of a service fit for the twenty first century.

CIWEM recognises the significant threat currently posed by flood risk, which is set to increase through the impacts of climate change. There is no 'miracle cure' to eliminate flood risk, which can never be totally removed. Flood risk management will only be improved by implementing a coordinated set of small, separate steps which make up a portfolio of measures. Although some authorities have shown improvement in the management of flood risk, in the past, the implementation of some of the more beneficial steps have been hampered by institutional matters. CIWEM now urges all stakeholders to embrace the task with the

same energy. Issues such as the continued inappropriate siting of new developments in areas of high flood risk must be taken more seriously.

CIWEM Executive Director, Nick Reeves, says: "The summer floods caused damage and distress which will be with some people for the rest of their lives. The emergency response during the floods helped manage the short term impact but we must take the opportunity to reduce flood risk where possible. We should be planning for 2100 conditions now.

Although much government policy aspires to this, there is still room for improvement. The Government must ensure that:

- Critical infrastructure is flood resilient
- Strategic Flood Risk Assessments produced by local authorities should feed through to the zoning and delivery of new development
- The management of surface water must be improved, including the removal of dis-incentives in legislation
- The capacity of some sectors will need enhancing, and it is crucial that this is done in a long term and sustained way."

CIWEM calls for a single organisation to have a national overview of all flood risk planning, together with the necessary powers and resources to ensure that planning is transparent, robust and open to public scrutiny.

Please note the Final report is due in Summer 2008.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

For more information on these events is available on the website www.ciwem.org.uk. As well as RCG events we have included other CIWEM events that may be of interest to you.

2008

RCG Study Weekend: Sustainable Flood Risk Management

Date: 28-30th March 2008

Location: Royal Holloway University, Surrey

Contact: Hannah O'Callaghan

(Hannah.ocallaghan@jbaconsulting.com)

Making Space for Water - is there enough room? (East Midlands Branch)

Date: 11th April 2008

Location: Austin Court, Birmingham

Contact: Kate Burn (kate.burn@hydrointernational.co.uk)

Integrated Urban Drainage - Technical Visit

Date: 17/18th April 2008

Location: Wakefield and Leeds

Contact: Kathryn Bell (Kathryn.bell@arup.com)

Climate Change and the Water Sector (CIWEM National Conference)

Date: 7th May 2008

Location: SOAS, London

Contact Bob Earll (bob.earll@coastms.co.uk)

Spring Meeting: Engineering and the Environment - Perfect Partners?

Date: 15 May 2008

Location: Austin Court, Birmingham

Contact: Phil McLoughlin

(phil.mcloughlin@fabermaunsell.com)

Water Framework Directive Update (CIWEM National Conference)

Date: 4th June 2008

Location: London

Contact Bob Earll (bob.earll@coastms.co.uk)

Humber Estuary - Technical Visit

Date: 2nd-3rd October 2008

Contact: Kathryn Bell (Kathryn.bell@arup.com)

Extreme Flooding 2008 - Emergency Planning and Flooding (CIWEM National Conference)

Date: 5th November 2008, London

Contact Bob Earll (bob.earll@coastms.co.uk)

Water Framework Directive (CIWEM National Conference)

Date: November 2008

Location: London

Contact Bob Earll (bob.earll@coastms.co.uk)

2009

European Floods Directive

Date: January 2009

Location: London

Contact: Ronnie Falconer (Ronnie.falconer@jacobs.com)

THANKS TO ALL WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS NEWSLETTER.