

**MINUTES OF 146th MEETING OF THE DRAINAGE COUNCIL FOR NORTHERN
IRELAND HELD AT 10.30am ON THURSDAY, 16 FEBRUARY 2009
AT THE TULLYLAGAN HOUSE HOTEL, COOKSTOWN**

Present:

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

In Attendance:

Mr J Glass (Secretary)
Mr P Mehaffey
Mr P Aldridge
Mr D Nixon
Mr P Loughlin
Mr H Thompson

1. INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the 146th meeting of the Drainage Council.

The Chairman also welcomed Mr Henry Thompson who was attending to present details of the Strategic Flood Map (NI) Rivers & the Sea, and finally Mr Paul Loughlin 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 Alderman Beggs.

3. MINUTES OF 145th 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 for an update on the progress of the Northern Ireland Strategic Flood Maps – Action Point at the top of Page 16 of the previous minutes refers.

The Secretary advised that in accordance with the action point on Page 16 of the previous minutes a full presentation of the Northern Ireland Strategic Flood Maps would be included as item 11 under the current Agenda.

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 then asked 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 3 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 gave a presentation detailing the Major Works Programme, 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 Schemes completed since the last meeting

Money more – Moneyhaw River Flood Defences

Enniskillen – Portora Sluice Gates

Bellaghy – Old Town Drain (DL)

Lower Bann River – Motorisation of Sluice Gates

Remedial Works I – Small scale culvert repairs and replacements at Plantation Road Lisburn, Hillsborough, Green Road Ballyclare, and Ballytromery Crumlin.

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

5.2 Current schemes (under construction)

Portrush -Tar Burn;

Culvert Renovation Programme 2008/09 – Armagh Road Newry, Dromore Co. Tyrone, and
Moneymore Stream Moneymore,

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

5.3 Proposed Schemes

Carrickfergus – Sullatober Water Phase I;

Culvert Renovation Programme 2009/10 - Blackstaff River at Glen Road and Whiterock Road,
Strathmore Park Stream, Rochester Avenue Stream,
and Mount Vernon Stream Belfast, Mousetown
Drain Coalisland, Ferndene Stream Dundonald, and
Crescent Stream Comber.

5.4 Schemes Undergoing Design

Coleraine – Lodge Burn;

Belfast – Loop River and Knock River;

Limavady – River Roe;

Carrickfergus – Sullatober Water Phase II.

5.5 Schemes undergoing feasibility study

Belfast - East Belfast Drainage Study;

Carrickfergus - Carnraway Burn and Oakland;

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;

Newtownabbey – Collinbridge;

Gleanna River;

Omagh - Johnston Park Stream, Dromore Rd Stream, and Hunter Crescent Floodwall;

Antrim – Sixmilewater and Muckamore Post Benefit Evaluation;

Newcastle – Burren/Shimna Post Benefit Evaluation;

Beragh;

Annaclone;

Doagh;

Parkgate;

Broughshane;

Lurgan;

Ahoghill;

Kildrum; and

Paint Condition at The Cutts and Portna Sluice Gates.

5.6 Future Possible Feasibility Studies

Ballymena;
Glengormley;
Belfast – Finaghy;
Banbridge;
Rostrevor;
Randalstown;
Magheralin;
Ballinderry;
Laurelvale;
Portadown;
Markethill;
Coalisland;
Glenavy;
Culcavy;
Drumaness;
Dromora;
Kilkeel.

5.7 Implications of August 2008 Flooding

Mr Aldridge explained to the Council that the flooding event experienced in August 2008 was the largest river event in decades. He continued that as with the extreme weather conditions the extremity of the event and the extent of the effects varied across the country. He explained that overall 1600 properties were affected, and that initial investigations had revealed that of those 1600 approximately 50% were affected by river related flooding and 50% from other sources such as out of sewer and surface water runoff. Mr Aldridge went on to detail the initial investigations that were being carried out by members of Rivers Agency staff and explained that there was a significant increase in potential capital works resulting from this.

Mr Aldridge then informed the Council that the estimated cost of these additional capital works could be in the region of 15 – 20 million pounds. He explained that as a large number of these potential works were as a result of the unforeseen extreme flooding event the finance required would have to be bid for above and beyond the agreed budget for Rivers Agency. Mr Aldridge then invited questions.

Mr Boyd asked if Mr Aldridge was able to provide figures for the amount of damage caused to property by the flooding of August 2008, and if it was possible to ascertain if more damage was caused by river related flooding or by flooding from other sources.

Mr Aldridge stated that at the present time it was not possible to put a definite figure on the number of properties that suffered damage as a result of the flooding as the investigations were still ongoing, with responsibility for carrying them out spread across Rivers Agency, Roads Service and NI Water. Therefore, it would take some time to complete the investigatory work and co-ordinate findings with the other Agencies involved.

Mr Aldridge went on to suggest that, as river related flooding had the potential to reach a greater depth of flooding, in theory it could be possible that more damage was caused by river related flooding but that it would be difficult to put a precise figure on this.

Councillor McHugh asked if there were any policy and planning implications arising out of the fact that 50% of the property affected by the flooding was river related, and asked if there were any lessons to be learnt.

Mr Aldridge explained that Planning Service already had in place Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 15 that laid out the policy in relation to development and flood plains. Mr Aldridge also stated that Rivers Agency and the Planning Service worked closely when considering the drainage implications of development, and that the launch of the Strategic Flood Map for Northern Ireland would allow Planning Service and other Government authorities to identify flood plains and take them into consideration.

Mr Aldridge stated that the recent policy review carried out by Rivers Agency had identified the issue of surface water run off as an area that was currently not properly covered and lacked accountability. He stated that it was anticipated that this issue would be more fully considered whilst preparing the preliminary flood risk assessments required under the European Floods Directive and would hopefully lead to the production of a surface water run off map in conjunction with NI Water.

Councillor McHugh commented on the flooding that was experienced at the M1 underpass and the high levels of media coverage that were afforded to it. He concluded by asking if procedures were being examined to ensure that an incident like this would not be repeated.

Mr Mehaffey answered by providing an update on the investigations at the site of the M1 underpass. He began by confirming that the contractor engaged on the construction of the underpass had responsibility for maintenance of the grille at the time of the flooding and that this responsibility had now been taken on by Rivers Agency. Mr Mehaffey assured the Council that maintenance of this grille was being given a high priority by the Agency, but stated he could not guarantee that blockage would not occur in the future.

Mr Mehaffey then informed the Council that Roads Service had commissioned a detailed modelling exercise of the watercourses affecting the Broadway underpass. This was being jointly funded by Rivers Agency and DRD Roads Service. Mr Mehaffey added that the study had been extended to provide Rivers Agency with information across a wider area of Belfast.

Councillor King asked if it was possible to confirm the completion date for the Tar Burn flood alleviation scheme in Portrush.

Mr Aldridge responded that at the present time it was not possible to provide a specific date for completion but did state that the scheme was at an advanced stage and was programmed for completion within 6 months.

Councillor King followed up by asking if this would run into the summer period.

Mr Aldridge advised Councillor King that due consideration had been given to the potential impact on tourism and that every effort would be made to ensure that the scheme would be completed as soon as possible. Mr Aldridge also confirmed that he would contact Councillor King after the meeting with more details of a definite completion date.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to provide details of a completion date to Councillor King

Councillor King enquired about consultation between Rivers Agency and NI Water with respect to drainage works being carried out at Bushmills and Portballintrae.

Mr Aldridge explained that NI Water would consult with Rivers Agency as normal practice on works that would impact upon a watercourse, but that he had no record of works being carried out at either of the locations cited. Mr Aldridge stated that he would look into this matter and inform Councillor King of any findings.

Councillor Graham enquired about “blacklisting” of properties and areas affected by flooding by insurance companies and others. He asked if there was any evidence to suggest that this practice was happening in Northern Ireland, and indeed if there was a risk of the extensive investigations being carried out encouraging it as more areas at risk to flooding would be identified.

Mr Aldridge stated that the investigations were vital to both Rivers Agency and Planning Service when carrying out their work. He highlighted that the most effective way to protect property from the risk of flooding was to ensure that proper planning procedures were in place to discourage development in flood plains, and stated that the flood plain areas first had to be identified to make this possible.

Mr Aldridge went on to explain that the investigations were indicating that the risk of flooding from surface water run off was increasing as more development occurred. He advised the Council that Rivers Agency were in consultation with the Association of British Insurers (ABI) regarding these issues with a view to reaching a satisfactory agreement regarding areas at risk of flooding. Mr Aldridge concluded by reinforcing the importance of informed action and preliminary studies when managing flood risk.

Councillor Graham queried the value of theoretical studies based on the extremity of the August 2008 event, which may never happen again. Mr Aldridge advised that these studies would inform a wider understanding of the risk of flooding across Northern Ireland, and would play a key role in the identification of areas of significant risk of flooding as required under the European Floods Directive.

Dr Johnston commented on the amount of work being outsourced by Government, and asked if a significant portion of the work in the major works programme would be kept “in house” by Rivers Agency to sustain existing expertise and development. Mr Aldridge confirmed that a percentage of the work would be carried out by Rivers Agency staff for those reasons.

Dr Johnston asked what, if any, implications there were for the ability of Rivers Agency to effectively carry out their routine work and asset management following the flooding of August 2008. Mr Aldridge advised that the Rivers Agency did have a programme of work, including asset management responsibilities, that they were committed to and additional resource would be required for work outside of this programme.

The Chairman voiced the Drainage Council’s full support for any bid that the Rivers Agency would be making for additional resources in light of the August 2008 flooding.

Councillor McHugh enquired about work to culvert an open watercourse that had taken place in the Dromore area. He asked if this work had been requested or supported by local community groups. Mr Aldridge advised that he was uncertain of the specific detail of this work but suggested that it was a culvert replacement scheme. Mr Aldridge stated that the Rivers Agency

was considering the issue of over culverting of open watercourses and accepted that the current policy relating to this issue required re-examination in light of environmental considerations.

Mr Mehaffey clarified that the works taking place in Dromore were located in close proximity to the local bus station and were being carried out in response to a recurring flooding problem.

Alderman Nicholl raised a number of concerns relating to the impact of the August 2008 flooding on specific areas of Antrim and Ballymena. He explained that estimates suggested that repairs and clean up operations could cost up to sixty thousand pounds and as a consequence local home owners were having difficulties renewing home insurance. Alderman Nicholl asked what plans the Rivers Agency had regarding the Meadowside area of Antrim and the Queen Street/Toome Road area of Ballymena, and if flood walls were being considered.

Mr Aldridge stated that, whilst no measures were possible to completely eliminate the risk of flooding, flood walls would be considered as part of ongoing studies for both of the areas in question. Mr Aldridge assured Alderman Nicholl that updates of progress with these would be provided as soon as they became available.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to provide updates to Alderman Nicholl.

Alderman Nicholl asked how long the feasibility studies quoted would take to complete. Mr Aldridge replied that it was anticipated that the feasibility studies would be completed by the summer 2009.

Councillor Gillespie enquired about the expected completion date for the Beragh feasibility study in light of the concerns of residents following the flooding that occurred there. Mr Aldridge stated that it was also hoped that the Beragh feasibility study would be completed by summer 2009.

Councillor Gillespie congratulated the Rivers Agency staff on the work they had carried out at Beragh to reduce the impact of the flooding of August 2008.

Mr Cummings asked about funding for infrastructure projects and what was being done to encourage developers to contribute towards the cost of works being carried out to facilitate development.

The Secretary explained that, with respect to Drainage Infrastructure Charging, it was anticipated that the Department of Environment (DOE) would be issuing a paper to the Executive in February 2009 on the issue. Furthermore, The Secretary also stated that it was expected that this paper would propose that developers should contribute towards infrastructure costs and that following public consultation the process would be expedited as much as possible.

Mr Cummings commented that it was his belief that achieving payment from developers towards infrastructure costs would not be easy to achieve.

Councillor King asked for a more detailed explanation of what was meant by a paint survey on the lower River Bann.

Mr Aldridge clarified that this meant that the sluice gates on the lower River Bann were in the process of being repainted.

Mr J Clarke assured The Chairman and the Council that they would be kept fully up to date of progress being made on the works included in the update. Mr J Clarke then went on to advise the Council of the current Rivers Agency position regarding the implementation of the European Floods Directive. He explained that an update and current status report was being prepared with respect to the various projects being taken forward as part of the implementation.

Mr J Clarke confirmed that this report was due for completion by June 2009, and that the Agricultural and Rural Development Committee along with a number of MLAs had already expressed an interest in having sight of it. The Chairman stated that members of the Drainage Council would also request a copy of the report.

Mr J Clarke continued by explaining that as part of the implementation process Rivers Agency was investigating the requirements for a stakeholder group. Alderman Nicholl asked who would be included in the stakeholder group. Mr J Clarke advised that the Drainage Council was an excellent example of what would be required as it represented a variety of interests across Northern Ireland. Mr J Clarke offered to report the progress of the implementation to the Council and seek their opinion on the issues if the legislation could be established to allow this. He concluded by stating that the process of establishing the stakeholder groups was progressing and it was hoped that it would be concluded in the near future.

The Chairman confirmed that everyone was satisfied before thanking Mr Aldridge for his presentation of the major works update. The Chairman also stated that it was clear to see that following on from the flooding of August 2008 there was a lot of interest in the resulting work being carried out by the Rivers Agency.

The Chairman then invited Mr Mehaffey to present the Flooding Report.

6. FLOODING REPORT

Referring to a Powerpoint presentation, Mr Mehaffey detailed a flooding incident that occurred on 30/31 January 2009.

He explained that minor flooding reported across counties Antrim, Down and Armagh during this event had resulted in the flooding of 1 property in the Greystone area, while properties were also threatened in Beragh, Ballygawley, Portadown and Laurelvale. Mr Mehaffey stated that the Rivers Agency had received 52 calls from members of the public and had deployed 110 members of staff. Mr Mehaffey maintained that, whilst it was regrettable that any property had suffered flooding, he was pleased with the response provided by Rivers Agency to this event.

Mr Mehaffey went on to provide the Council with details regarding the newly launched Flooding Incident Line. He explained that, following the announcement of Mr Peter Robinson MP MLA, the Rivers Agency had worked closely with the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP) to deliver a single telephone number for all Government Agencies in relation to reporting flooding events. Mr Mehaffey detailed the various advantages of such a system and advised the Council that whilst some initial difficulties had been faced these were being dealt with and that improvements in the service would be realized in due course.

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

Councillor McHugh expressed his concern about the use of Agency and call centre staff for the flooding incident line. He stated that experience had shown that this had not proven successful for this type of line. Mr Mehaffey assured Councillor McHugh that this had been considered when the incident line was being developed. Mr Mehaffey reiterated that as a result of previous systems being overrun with calls during a major flooding event it had been agreed that a dedicated flooding incident line was necessary.

Alderman Nicholl raised a query regarding the provision of approximately 1800 sandbags during the flooding event of 30/31 January 2009. He asked if the provision of flood guards for individual properties had been considered.

Mr Mehaffey answered that it was felt that there was potential for the use of flood guards and that this was being considered by Rivers Agency and other Government Agencies involved in flood defence. He stated that it was within the capability of individual property owners to purchase such systems for themselves.

Alderman Nicholl asked if the use of flood guards would reduce insurance costs for property owners. Mr Aldridge explained that this would be a matter for the Association of British Insurers to consider.

Alderman Nicholl stated that a joint approach from all Government Agencies involved in flood defence was required and that provision of these flood guard systems should be considered.

Mr J Clarke agreed that a joint approach to flood defence was essential but warned that the risk of liability could factor heavily against the use of flood guard products. He explained that any failure on the part of the product to protect property from flooding could result in legal action taken against any public authority responsible for provision. Mr J Clarke stated that in the light of these concerns much more detailed investigation would be required before any decision on the way forward could be reached.

The Chairman then directed members to designations proposed on pages 18-19 of their business books and invited Mr Mehaffey to provide details to the Council.

7. PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF WATERCOURSES

U4302Ext – Gortnaskea Stream Extension, Kettle Lane, Coalisland

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 provide a suitable outlet for storm drainage from a recent development and to alleviate any risk of flooding.

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

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

8. SCHEMES RECOMMENDED FOR ACCEPTANCE

8.1 U5307 & U5307A – Granshagh Drain and Granshagh Branch Drain, Arney, Co. Fermanagh

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

Councillor Graham enquired about the reason for carrying out the scheme. He detailed his concern about schemes being carried out to facilitate development. Councillor Graham expressed his concern at the Rivers Agency being forced to carry out drainage schemes as a result of Planning Service approving development in unsuitable areas.

Councillor McHugh informed the Council that he had personally visited the site in question and was aware that this area was already prone to flooding problems prior to any development. He stated that both he and residents of the area would welcome any drainage scheme.

Mr Mehaffey explained that Rivers Agency was consulted by Planning Service on Area Plans for Northern Ireland and zonings for development. He stated that the viability of carrying out drainage schemes for infrastructure development works was considered.

Mr T Clarke commented that the normal procedures for planning applications could include consultation with Rivers Agency, and that in some cases drainage infrastructure works could be required for development to proceed. Mr T Clarke stated that Planning Service was carrying out a public consultation on the principle of charging developers for such infrastructure works.

Councillor McHugh reiterated the fact that a drainage problem was evident at the location of this scheme and local residents and representatives greatly welcomed the scheme.

On the proposal of Councillor McHugh, seconded by Alderman Nicholl, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

8.2 U5708 & U5708A Tattymacall Drain and Tattymacall Branch Drain, Lisbellaw, Co. Fermanagh

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

Mr J Clarke pointed out to members that whilst scheme benefit was shown in the business books using the development yardstick to produce figures it should not be assumed that this indicated that schemes were carried out purely to facilitate development. He stressed that benefit from schemes also accrued from the alleviating of the risk of flooding.

Mr J Clarke continued by explaining that the benefit was easily calculated using the development yardstick whereas that through flood alleviation is much more complex and incurred a significant cost to calculate as a result this was avoided if practicable to do so.

Mr Mehaffey concurred with Mr J Clarke and reiterated that schemes were not solely driven by development, and that flooding events had occurred at these locations.

On the proposal of Councillor McHugh, seconded by Councillor McBriar, the Council agreed to the proposed scheme.

9. EMERGENCY WORKS

The Chairman directed members to pages 30-34 of the business book and invited Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

Gortnaskea Stream, Coalisland

Mr Mehaffey explained that following flooding events of December 2007 and January 2008 a scheme to alleviate the flooding problem at this location was in the process of preparation for presentation to the Council. However, due to the extreme flooding event of August 2008 emergency works to divert water from the Gortnaskea Stream into the Coalisland Canal during high flow conditions was carried out in recognition of the plight of the residents and the very real risk of recurrence.

Mr Cummings asked if the mechanism used to divert the flow was automatically operated. Mr Mehaffey confirmed that the mechanism did not require any manual operation and would automatically activate during periods of high flow.

Councillor Gillespie complemented the members of Rivers Agency staff who had carried out the work, he stated that it had been carried out very well and was impressed that the costs had been kept low.

Mr Mehaffey thanked Councillor Gillespie for his support and stated that the new diversion system had averted a flooding incident in January 2009 during extreme weather conditions in the area.

Moyola River, Tobermore

Mr Mehaffey gave a background report detailing the emergency works to repair extensive floodbank breaches at a number of locations on the Moyola River from Lisnamuck Bridge to Curran Bridge caused by the extreme flooding event of August 2008.

Councillor Graham asked how quickly the repair work had been completed. Mr Mehaffey answered that the work had taken 10 weeks.

Alderman Nicholl asked where the material from the original floodbank had gone during the flooding event. Mr Mehaffey explained that the majority of the material had been washed into the land behind the floodbanks and had to be removed as part of the repair works.

Mr Boyd asked if the cost of the works had included the clay used during the repair works. Mr Mehaffey confirmed that the cost of the clay was included, and stated that the clay used had been sourced locally enabling the costs to be kept to a minimum.

Mr J Clarke explained that when works were carried out by the Rivers Agency Direct Labour Organisation costs could be kept to a minimum and could be completed much quicker.

Councillor Gillespie stated that the amount of work carried out at Coalisland was excellent for the low costs.

The Chairman paid tribute to the Rivers Agency Direct Labour Organisation and acknowledged the good work they had done on behalf of the Council.

10. WATERCOURSE NOT RECOMMENDED FOR DESIGNATION

The Chairman referred members to pages 35-36 of the business books and invited Mr Mehaffey to address the Council.

Inlet Grille on un-named watercourse beside Brownlow Road at Lismore Manor, Craigavon

Mr Mehaffey gave a background report on this undesignated grille, the construction of which remains incomplete, explaining that maintenance is the responsibility of the developer. Mr Mehaffey indicated that until such time as construction is completed the Council should not consider it suitable for designation.

The Chairman agreed with Mr Mehaffey's assessment and stated that the Council should expect developers to complete works of this nature before designation would be considered.

On the proposal of Councillor McBriar, seconded by Dr Johnston, the Council determined that the watercourse should not be treated as a designated watercourse.

11. STRATEGIC FLOOD MAP (NI) – RIVERS & THE SEA

The Chairman thanked Mr Mehaffey for his contribution and invited Mr Thompson to address the Council.

Mr Thompson began by explaining that the main purpose of this short presentation would be to showcase Rivers Agency's recently released Strategic Flood Map for Northern Ireland. Furthermore he detailed what information could be found within the map, how this information could be used, and its limitations.

Mr Thompson went on to inform the Council that the Strategic Flood Map was launched on 4 November 2008, and had been well reported in a fairly balanced manner by all the local newspapers as well as the main radio and television stations.

Mr Thompson explained that Rivers Agency had been pleased by this coverage, and that feedback had shown that, whilst members of the public had shown an interest in the flood map on the Rivers Agency website, the information on floodplains was not causing alarm.

Mr Thompson went on to detail that the Rivers Agency hoped to focus on the areas where the risks of flooding have been identified as greatest, carry out more detailed studies in these areas, and then produce long-term flood risk management plans for them in line with the EU Floods Directive. He stated that the launch of the Strategic Flood Map was an important first step in this strategic flood risk management strategy.

Mr Thompson concluded by providing more details about the content of the Strategic Flood Map and the access to it via the Rivers Agency website. He then invited questions and comment from the Council.

Councillor Graham enquired about the risk of flooding from sources other than rivers and the sea. He asked if these areas were known and could be shown on the Strategic Flood Map. Mr Thompson answered that at the current time the Strategic Flood Map would only show the risk from rivers and the sea, but that more detailed modelling to include out of sewer and surface water run off was being pressed for.

Councillor Graham asked if it would be possible to identify areas that would be at risk from both river or the sea and other sources of flooding. Mr Thompson stated that this would be possible with the additional modelling.

The Chairman thanked Mr Thompson for his presentation to the Council and asked if a series of handouts could be prepared for members.

Mr Aldridge suggested that it would be more beneficial to members to view the live map via the Rivers Agency website as they could then make use of the interactive functions available.

The Chairman agreed that this would be suitable; however he asked if a copy of the relevant map could be provided for Councillor Gillespie. Mr Aldridge agreed to provide this.

ACTION – Mr Aldridge to provide Flood Map for Councillor Gillespie

12. CORRESPONDENCE ISSUED BY SECRETARIAT SINCE LAST MEETING

The Secretary drew members' attention to the following correspondence issued by the Secretariat since the last meeting:

12.1 Pages 37 & 38 - Letter sent on 06 November 2008 to North Down Borough Council in response to a request for a grille to be placed on the Ballyholme River. He explained that the request had been denied as the request was based on the risk of pollution, which the Rivers Agency has no remit for.

Councillor Graham accepted the explanation given on behalf of North Down Borough Council and thanked Rivers Agency for taking the time to consider it.

12.2 Page 39 – Letter sent on 11 November 2008 to W Cornett of Cornett Design Associates regarding a request for designation of a watercourse at Lismore Manor, Brownlow Road, Craigavon. He referred members to pages 35 and 36 of their business books.

12.3 Pages 40 & 41 - Letter sent on 9 December 2008 to Mr Anthony Swan regarding flooding affecting Vaddegan Road in Newtownabbey. The letter advised Mr Swan to contact the relevant Rivers Agency engineer to take his query further.

12.4 Pages 42 & 43 – Letter sent on 27 October 2008 to TD Gibson & Co Solicitors regarding flooding at Lambert Avenue, Dundonald and a request for the designation of a grille and section(s) of watercourse. The Secretary advised that the letter informed TD Gibson & Co Solicitors of the Council's determination at the October 2008 meeting not to treat the grille and watercourse as designated and of the appeal procedures.

12.5 Pages 44 & 45 – Letter sent on 27 October 2008 to J.A. McLaughlin CE regarding flooding of the Oaklea Road Area of Magherafelt and requesting designation of a watercourse known as the Drumenagh River. He confirmed that the letter informed J.A. McLaughlin CE of the Council’s determination at the October 2008 meeting not to treat the watercourse known as the Drumenagh River as designation and of the appeal procedures.

12.6 Page 46 – Letter sent on 5 November 2008 to D. Quinn, secretary of the Parkgate Masonic Hall regarding damage to the banks of the Four Mile Burn and flooding of the Hollybank Road area of Ballyclare. He stated that the letter advised Mr Quinn that the Rivers Agency was assessing the damage and repairing the defences whilst also further investigating the existing defences with a view to reducing flood risk.

Alderman Nicholl advised the Council that he had visited the site referred to in the letter and commended the Rivers Agency for the work carried out in the immediate aftermath of the August 2008 flooding event and the investigatory work ongoing.

12.7 Page 47 – Letter sent on 27 October 2008 to Councillor McCambridge acknowledging her resignation from the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland.

The Chairman confirmed that there were no further questions or comments before thanking the Secretary and asking Members if they had any further business they wished to raise.

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 confirmed that the extension had been granted and that appointments would be carried out to fill vacancies.

The Chairman 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 May or early June 2009 for the next meeting. After some deliberation it was agreed that the Secretariat would make arrangements for Thursday 11 June 2009 and notify members of the arrangements in due course.

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

Meeting Closed