

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

16 May 2012

Report of the Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEMES AT AYLESFORD AND LITTLE MILL

Summary

This report explains how funding rules for flood risk management projects have changed and provides updates on these two Environment Agency schemes.

1.1 The new funding policy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) projects

1.1.1 The way that FCERM projects such as Aylesford and Little Mill, are funded has changed. Since April 2012, projects are being assessed on the new Government policy of *Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding*.

1.1.2 Previously, projects were funded on an 'all or nothing' system where the projects delivering the best value were 100% funded from Flood Defence Grant in Aid (FDGiA) and the less economically attractive schemes received nothing.

1.1.3 The new system 'payment for outcomes' still provides 100% funding for the schemes with the high benefit /cost ratios but also offers part funds for the other schemes on a sliding scale related to the outcomes or benefits that they deliver. This means that the less economically attractive schemes can still go ahead but only if 'partnership' funding can be found to supplement the level of grant available.

1.1.4 Unfortunately both of the FCERM projects within our Borough will only receive part funding from FDGiA if they are pursued as full area protection schemes and would therefore require substantial external funding to proceed.

1.2 Aylesford Flood Defence Scheme

1.2.1 The Environment Agency's preferred option for this scheme involves the diversion of flood water away from the Aylesford Stream into the Cemex Quarry. Whilst Cemex has always supported the scheme, they would require insurance to offset the risk of mineral pollution from the flood water. The insurance is a significant

cost element of the scheme and the news that the quarry may have another 20 years productive use has further increased this cost.

- 1.2.2 The current 'whole life' cost of the preferred option is £1.8 million. Under the new rules, it is estimated that grant aid of only £375,000 would be available which leaves an immense funding gap circa £1.4 million. It goes without saying that the current recession is not the best time to be seeking partnership funding of that magnitude from either public or private sectors.
- 1.2.3 The practical options in the circumstances would appear to be either to find a less expensive scheme to protect the vulnerable area of the village or to pursue 'property level protection'. Property level protection (PLP) is a series of measures to prevent flood water entering properties and includes flood doors/gates, air brick covers, non return valves etc. The average cost of PLP is about £5500 per property and it is likely that the full cost would be funded from FDGiA.
- 1.2.4 A recent meeting of the Aylesford Flood Partnership Steering Group concluded therefore that a bid for PLP should be made for the 2013/14 programme but that alternative scheme options should continue to be investigated. The Environment Agency has committed to re-engage with the community to inform residents and businesses of the recent developments and to gauge support for the various ways forward.

1.3 Little Mill, East Peckham Flood Defence Scheme

- 1.3.1 When I last reported this scheme to this board at the meeting of 21 February, it was apparent that the funding situation was very similar to that of the Aylesford scheme. Members asked me to write to the Environment Agency expressing concern at the loss of the Little Mill Flood Alleviation Scheme and urging them to keep this as a high priority should sufficient funding become available. My letter to the Environment Agency's Area Manager is produced at Annex 1 and his reply at Annex 2.
- 1.3.2 Since the meeting, the Environment Agency has consulted the residents at significant flood risk and I understand that, broadly speaking, they would prefer to hold out for a full area protection scheme at this stage rather than opt for PLP and they do not want to contribute towards it.
- 1.3.3 Although the potential scheme costs and economics are not currently available to me, largely because there is not a preferred option for the scheme, it is again clear that external 'partnership' funding would be needed to proceed with a full scheme. The next step for the Environment Agency is to investigate further how many properties could be effectively protected with PLP and to what standard.

1.4 Legal Implications

- 1.4.1 None arising from this report.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 N/A

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 N/A

1.7 Equality Impact Assessment

1.7.1 See 'Screening for equality impacts' table at end of report

Background papers:

contact: Steve Medlock

Nil

Steve Humphrey

Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

Screening for equality impacts:		
Question	Answer	Explanation of impacts
a. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper have potential to cause adverse impact or discriminate against different groups in the community?	No	No decision is being made.
b. Does the decision being made or recommended through this paper make a positive contribution to promoting equality?	No	No decision is being made.
c. What steps are you taking to mitigate, reduce, avoid or minimise the impacts identified above?		N/A

In submitting this report, the Chief Officer doing so is confirming that they have given due regard to the equality impacts of the decision being considered, as noted in the table above.