

Meeting of Colin Hill, Sarah-Jayne Robbins and Susan Miles to Discuss Flood Management in Todmorden - 2 February 2021

Sarah-Jayne explained that the Todmorden Flood Group (TFMG) was set up in 2012 and there is a Flood Management Plan.

AP1 – Sarah-Jayne agreed to share the public version of the plan with TTC

1. Sequence of Events with an Imminent Flood

Sarah-Jayne explained that if a flood event is imminent the 'phone tree' would be start with her call to the Environment Agency and Calderdale MBC. Kirsten Fussing (who lives in the centre of Todmorden) is the lead person with authority to open and use the Town Hall.

The level of response depends on the number of houses and businesses affected. If 2 streets or less is affected, TFMG would knock on the doors of those affected to offer help. If more properties and main roads are affected it is likely a flood hub would be set up.

Where a flood is likely, the TFMG issue warnings on social media advising residents to implement their individual flood plan. Depending on what people have available, this may be sandbags, flood gates and flood doors. Residents are expected to source these themselves.

In February 2020, the flood hub was opened on the first afternoon and the practical organisation was put in place and it was opened to the public the next morning.

TFMG has 3 large containers with resources to deal with floods (each costing £5/6,000 to replenish). TFMG has managed to build up reserves with the aid of grants and donations from Calderdale MBC and Calderdale Commercial Foundation. However, this would be wiped out if there is another major flood incident. In 2020 an appeal with an Amazon wish list was made on TV and radio. This generated donations from people around the world which were delivered to the Town Hall.

Colin suggested that it might be worth approaching Amazon to see if they will offer matched funding.

Colin said that TFMG might approach TTC for funding/grants and explained that a reserve fund of £20,000 had been set aside for flood related issues. This is separate from Calderdale MBC's responsibility.

2. Operation at the Flood Hub

Colin said that TTC had available a laptop, printer and phone for use in the flood hub. He said that perhaps TTC could help residents request help from Calderdale. Sarah-Jayne said that this may be possible although she thought that Calderdale MBC used specific software to do this.

3. Communications

TFMG communicate through their 17 flood wardens (some are linked to the EA and some are volunteers), Facebook/Twitter and by knocking on doors. They don't text people because of the data protection issues and because many houses are rented on a short-term basis. They have a website which is still under development.

Colin suggested that TFMG could have a section on the TTC website and said that this could link to the TFMG website.

AP2- Sarah-Jayne offered to send a link to the TFMG website to Colin and Susan

Sarah-Jayne said that TFMG were planning to produce a leaflet for residents with information on what to do in the case of a flood and how to set up an individual flood plan. She is about to research costs for production and delivery.

Colin suggested that TTC could possibly help with some of the cost as a grant.

4. Wider Flood Issues

Colin explained that he was currently drafting a letter for Robin Tuddenham raising the wider flooding issues, suggesting a wider joined-up collaborative approach incorporating an understanding of the topography of Todmorden, the role of the EA, planning etc.

Sarah-Jayne explained that she is linked into the National Flood Forum and it has been acknowledged that the issues are beyond the capability of local councils to address and that the initiative needs to come from central government.

Colin mentioned that a UK Flood Resilience Fund of £150,000,000 has been set up and that Calderdale is submitting flood management bids (after consulting with local councils including Todmorden) to be part of a West Yorkshire wide bid for this fund.

Sarah-Jayne said that she has researched sustainable drainage systems and is happy to share her knowledge with TTC.

AP3- Susan to invite Sarah-Jayne to the 3 March 2021 meeting of the Development Committee to see the planning consultation that the committee does and to talk more about the TFMG.

5. General Issues

Susan expressed concern that both TTC and TFMG had reported almost 100 blocked drains and although some have been cleared many have not. For example, the drain 38 Kilnhurst Rd has been reported but it is still leaking badly and drains

down Kilnhurst Rd even when its not raining. Sarah-Jayne explained that Calderdale MBC deal with the top of drains but Yorkshire Water deal with the lower parts.

AP4- Susan to let Sarah-Jayne have the details of the drains and she will forward it to her contact at Yorkshire Water.

Location of Flood Hub and Virtual vs Actual Hub

Sarah-Jayne said that in the case of flooding, people need access to real people to offer F2F support and that a virtual hub would not be enough. She believes that the Town Hall (even without Covid19) is not an ideal venue for a flood hub. She suggested that The Methodist Church which has large spaces, a kitchen and a disabled access would be preferable, especially during Covid19 as it would enable a one-way system and would be easier to keep clean. Sarah-Jayne said that she had given a presentation to the Methodist Church in March 2020 to explore the possibility of the Methodist church being used as a flood hub. She intends to get back in touch with the Methodist Church to restart the discussion. She will keep TTC updated about this.

AP5- Susan to set up a further 3 meetings at 2-month intervals to catch up and plan