

**FLASH FLOODING, HARBOROUGH DISTRICT**  
**TUESDAY, 30<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2002**

**Initial Debrief**  
**Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2002**

To put the matters into context yesterday was the wettest July day since 1968 and the wettest day on record since June 1982. Approximately 60mm of rain fell across Leicestershire. Locally Market Harborough town suffered 30mm of rainfall within an hour between 4.00pm and 5.00pm on Tuesday with a further 20mm falling overnight, up until 7.00am this morning.

In accordance with previous arrangement sixteen high risk properties around the Square already had sandbags in place. Very quickly we had requests for sandbags to go to twelve additional properties in the town and requests for help were received from four private properties in the Headlands, Clarence Street and Douglas Drive areas.

We also had a request for sandbags for Foxton, Great Glen, Billesdon and Lutterworth town which stretched our resources to the limit. The flash flooding in Market Harborough town was very severe. In my fourteen years with the Council this is the worst event ever witnessed with water quickly rising to almost two feet deep in places. It is my professional view that this flooding was caused almost entirely by the insufficient capacity of the storm water and sewerage drainage systems in the town.

Matters were made much worse by the irresponsible attitude of many motorists and regrettably professional HGV drivers who should certainly know better, who attempted to speed through the water causing large bow waves, raising water levels another foot or so. There is no doubt that many shops and premises suffered flooding because of this bow wave effect. In the circumstances Clive Howe, representing the Highway Authority, and myself decided to implement road closure at the bottom of the High Street. It was also necessary to close off Northampton Road to allow the emergency services to undertake pumping out of premises. At one time we had three fire tenders in the town and support of one police unit. At about 5.00pm I put Serviceteam on standby for clean-up and requested support from Environmental Health Officers as it was obvious that contaminated water was entering food and drink premises. I also had concerns regarding electrical safety with electrical switchgear under threat from flooding. Very quickly we had a whole range of Emergency services working in the town, the Police, the Fire Brigade, officers from the Harborough Highways Partnership, Environmental Health officers, my secretary and two of my engineers worked on and Brendan Coleman returned from Easingwold where he was on an Emergency Planning Course to take over when we were exhausted. Private contractors, Serviceteam, P & R Construction and Harborough Drainage all played an important role.

Work continued up until about 11.00pm both on pumping out and clean-up and advice to food and drink premises. Most pubs in the town were closed. At around 9.00pm I received a call out from the Leisure Centre where the Sports Hall and Creche were

under threat from surface water run-off. Our Quick Response Team were able to provide bunding to dam the water flow and we avoided any flooding.

Throughout this flash flooding the River Welland remained at a safe level and did not restrict storm water discharge. However Folly Pond at the top of the town quickly went to capacity and was still full at 8.00am this morning. Other localised problems reported today include Lindsay Gardens and Rainsborough Gardens and we are currently investigating the situation there.

On the run up to this flash flooding on Monday, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2002, we had very heavy rain in the north of the district with localised flooding in Newton Harcourt, Kibworth, Great Glen, Burton Overy, Billesdon and Thurnby.

Throughout today the clean up has continued and damage assessments are underway. We have damage to the carriageway in three locations in High Street and the Anglian Water Company have agreed to pay for reinstatements. Stocks of sandbags have been replenished at Foxton depot and the Anglian Water Company have agreed to appoint a Loss Adjustor to work with local traders affected.

It is our professional view that there is a serious capacity problem in the town. Members will be aware that the Anglian Water Company are remodelling the town centre drainage systems. We met them three weeks ago to have a look at their initial findings and we suggested that they undertake accurate on-site flow modelling before coming to a final conclusion. This morning I have spoken to the Operations Director at Anglian Water who has stated that it will be necessary to increase the capacity of the storm water drains from the lower part of the town into the river and that it will be necessary to increase the capacity of Folly Pond. We would agree that this is the minimum that must be done. It will involve some disruption to the town centre. Anglian Water have to go through a bidding process to OFWAT to secure significant capital funds. This will be a major capital project. The OFWAT bids have to be in by September 2002. Anglian Water have assured me that this will be done and will be prioritised to the highest level by them. Ultimately it is up to OFWAT to provide the capital funds. We need to consider how we can move things forward.

We are still receiving live information and it will not be possible to do a full technical de-brief until the end of the week. We will also need to assemble the full costs of this emergency in terms of our work and to seek reimbursement from the Anglian Water Company in most cases. We will update Members on a regular basis and if anyone has any more information about the flooding that has occurred over the last two days please let me know because all information is valuable to build up the accurate picture.

Peter James  
31<sup>st</sup> July 2002