

Submission of the Environment Agency's application to vary the Scheme within the River Medway (Flood Relief) Act 1976

Leigh Expansion Scheme - Points of Concern

Within the parish of Penshurst there are 4 river crossings: the River Medway at Chafford Bridge, Chafford Lane; the River Medway at Colliers Land Bridge, B2188; the River Eden at Long Bridge, B2188; the river Medway at Rogues Hill, B2176.

Roads generally flood and become impassable in the following order: 1) Chafford Bridge, 2) Colliers Land Bridge, 3) Rogues Hill, 4) Long Bridge.

All of these crossings have been flooded at least twice during the recent heavy rains. The depth of water prevented any access via these routes, leaving around 140 properties in New Road, Saints Hill, Smarts Hill, Coldharbour Road, Nunnery Lane, Grove Road, and Walters Green completely cut off. The Environment Agency claim that an increase in flood catchment area will not lead to an increase in the depth of floodwater but will lead to roads being flooded for a longer period. It must be remembered that this will reduce access also for all form of safety vehicles, emergency services, buses or any other form of public transport.

The River Eden joins the Medway between the B2188 at Long Bridge and the B2176 at Rogues Hill. The Environment Agency do not measure the depth of floodwater at Rogues Hill but instead rely on data from monitoring points upstream on both rivers. This ought to be a crucial area to monitor but it did not appear to be the case that the EA were aware of the extent of the flooding on occasions as no actual measurement had been taken.

In view of the anticipated increase in predicted rainfall of between 20% and 30% in the future, this situation and its subsequent problems will not improve, it will only deteriorate.

Earlier consultation with Kent Highways would have been prudent in view of the flooding impact on all crossing points during the current problems, this issue could have been taken into account and provided a more realistic result of the EA measurements and investigations. It is not good enough for the EA to advise parishioners to contact Highways should the area flood in future, it cannot be the responsibility of Highways to deal with this issue.

It is noted that as the EA did not take the recent problems into account in their measurements, then surely this gives little credence to their accuracy for future reference in decisions relating to the Leigh Expansion Scheme. It must call into question whether due diligence was used in this exercise when investigating the anticipated flood water.

The EA comment that Penshurst lies in a natural flood plain is accurate but, taking into account recent experiences, future use of the barrier will exacerbate the situation and cause flooding of the road to be on a more regular basis and have a more dramatic impact.

It would seem that the EA comment regarding additional monitoring to that currently undertaken should be more than considered, it should be introduced promptly.

We trust the above will be taken into account in any decision-making process when passed to the Minister for consideration.

PENSHURST PARISH COUNCIL
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19 June 2020

Defra Floods Casework Team
Nature and Place Based Solutions Team
Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management
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Dear Sirs

Submission to Defra of the Environment Agency's application to amend the Leigh Flood Storage Area maximum stored water level

With reference to Mr Tim Connell's letter dated 8 June regarding the above please find enclosed the response of Penhurst Parish Council.

I confirm I have also forwarded this response via email to: FloodsCasework@defra.gov.uk as requested.

For and on behalf of
Penhurst Parish Council

E M Divall (Mrs)
Administrative Officer

If you could add the para below to our submission that would be great, from the Parish council of Penhurst and Fordcombe - submitted by Robert Rees

We note that in the maps on page 24 and in Appendix F the area shown is ONLY the Flood Storage Area where there are legal agreements with landowners - it is not the entire area that floods, (hence the miraculous straight-line cut-off before the B2188 at Long Bridge).

We know from experience that when the water level reaches the blue line in Appendix F, the roads are flooded to an impassable depth at Long Bridge (almost to the bottom of Grove Road) and at Colliers Land Bridge. If the operation of the barrier causes flood water to be stored up to the edge of the blue line, it must also cause it to be held beyond that line. Just because the EA do not have an agreement with landowners does not mean that operation of the barrier will not affect any land or roads outside the blue line.

Is this flooding further up the Medway/Eden being taken into account by the EA when examining the potential damage to property and communications around Penhurst?