

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

IMPROVEMENT AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – PLACES

25 November 2020

RESPONSE TO TODDBROOK RESERVOIR DAM AND NOVEMBER 2019 FLOODING INCIDENTS

1. Purpose of the report

To provide a briefing on the response by Derbyshire County Council services to the Toddbrook Reservoir and November 2019 flooding incidents.

2. Information and Analysis

Toddbrook Reservoir Dam Incident August 2019

On the evening of 31 July 2020 heavy rain fell in Derbyshire and in particular the High Peak area with significant flooding in Buxton. On 1 August 2019 the emergency services were alerted to the threat of a potential dam breach at Toddbrook reservoir, Whaley Bridge which is owned by The Canal and River Trust.

The LRF's Generic Reservoir Off-Site Emergency Plan and Toddbrook Site Specific Reservoir Emergency Plan were implemented and approximately 550 properties were evacuated. A rest centre was set up at Chapel High School where the following agencies were represented:

- Derbyshire County Council Adult Social Care
- Derbyshire County Council Emergency Planning (including Derbyshire Emergency Volunteers)
- High Peak Borough Council Housing
- British Red Cross
- Derbyshire Police

Those people evacuated who were not able to make other arrangements were accommodated in a hotel or University of Derby student accommodation in Buxton.

A helpline was set up and staffed by Call Derbyshire and High Peak Borough Council.

Responding agencies at the site included:

- Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service
- Derbyshire Police
- East Midlands Ambulance Service
- Canal and River Trust

- Environment Agency
- Military

The ETE Highways, Economic and Regeneration and Emergency Planning Teams were heavily involved in the response and recovery elements of the incident.

Residents' meetings were held to ensure that they were kept informed of the latest developments and were a conduit for residents to ask questions and raise concerns. In addition to this a meeting for businesses was similarly held.

In order to prevent the dam from failing the RAF provided Chinooks to drop bags of hard core onto the face of the dam wall to shore it up.

Additionally, the reservoir level was drawn down to a safe level over a period of days and the fish stock moved to another location.

Following the shoring up of the dam wall and the drawing down of the water level, residents and businesses were allowed to return to their homes/premises after 6 days. Following their return, an information hub was established at Whaley Bridge Primary School to provide residents and businesses with advice and support in the ensuing days.

Debriefs of the elements of the response and recovery phases have been carried out and a composite report is being produced which will be signed off by the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). The LRF site specific reservoir emergency plans are being reviewed as a priority to ensure that lessons learnt from this incident are incorporated.

Following the incident the Department for Environment and Rural Affairs (Defra) commissioned an independent review into the cause of the potential dam failure and the outcome of that inquiry was published in February 2020.

November 2019 Floods

On 7 November 2019 severe flooding took place along the Derwent Valley following torrential rain that day and evening. The flooding then proceeded to affect the south of the county particularly along the River Trent in known flooding areas and other parts of Derbyshire, with the incident continuing until 15 November 2019.

Derbyshire experienced significant fluvial and surface water flooding between August and November 2019. LRF Tactical and Strategic Coordination Groups were activated. 2019 was the seventh wettest summer for the UK since 1910 and saw the highest recorded river levels as well, the river gauge at Chatsworth on the Derwent was the highest ever recorded level.

The first Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG) meeting was held at 2100 hours on 7 November 2019 and these continued throughout the period of flooding and concluded on 15 November 2019. Strategic Co-ordinating Groups (SCGs) were similarly held throughout that period. The emergency planning and highways response continued for several further days. The economy and regeneration work with businesses continued for months through the recovery phase.

The main flooding occurred in communities along the rivers Derwent, Wye and Trent with Derbyshire Dales and South Derbyshire districts being the worst hit. There were concerns that the flood defences protecting the community of Ambaston may be compromised and overtopping occur, but thankfully this did not happen.

325 residential properties and 59 businesses were flooded, local authorities worked with these to offer practical and financial assistance as appropriate. Tragically a fatality occurred during the flooding along the River Derwent.

Since the floods in November 2019 there was further flooding in February 2020 which necessitated the holding of TCGs.

A briefing presentation will be delivered to Members of the Places Improvement and Scrutiny Committee on 25 November 2020 which will cover the cross departmental response and recovery phases of both incidents in respect of Highways, Economy and Regeneration, Flood Risk Management and Emergency Planning and on future flood risk management plans.

2. Officer Recommendation

The Committee is requested to:

1. Note the council's response to the two major incidents which took place in 2019 and future flood risk management plans.

Tim Gregory
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Derbyshire County Council