

## **CMBC FLOOD COMMISSION 2016**

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## **1. CONTEXT: Information about the HB Partnership.**

Hebden Bridge Partnership ([www.hbpartnership.org.uk](http://www.hbpartnership.org.uk)) is the 'town team', concerned with initiatives to improve the economic and community life of Hebden Bridge. It was established in 2001 to bring together representatives of community and voluntary organisations in Hebden Bridge (including environmental, sport, artistic and young people's organisations and the disabled community), of the business community and of Calderdale Council, Hebden Royd Town Council and the four rural parish councils. It was instrumental in a number of recent successful initiatives, including the pedestrianisation of central areas of the town and the development of Hebden Bridge Town Hall under community ownership as a community hub for the town.

Its Action Plan: 2020 Vision, establishing a number of priorities for our future work, was presented in draft form in May 2013, revised, following public consultation and responses, and launched in its final form in October 2013. The plan embodies a number of priorities including

- Improving the town centre
- Making the town accessible for all
- Developing the Market
- Strengthening the Visitor Economy
- Redeveloping the Valley Road (fire station) site
- Enabling the building of affordable homes
- Improving public transport
- Improving Calder Holmes Park
- Moving towards a low-carbon town

The Partnership is managed by a Board elected at its AGM attended by its 40 plus constituent groups. The Board meets monthly and it holds regular quarterly meetings, open to all members of the public. The latest Public Meeting was held on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2016 on Flood Recovery. <http://www.hebdenbridge.co.uk/news/2016/005.html> . It was attended by over 200 people. The next is April 4<sup>th</sup> on The Floods Three Months On: Progress with Flood Recovery and Flood Alleviation.

THE HBP submission to the Commission focuses on:

- a) The impact of the Floods on Hebden Bridge, in particular its town centre economy.
- b) The impact of the Floods and any planned flood prevention engineering on Hebden Water as an amenity for residents and visitors.
- c) The process, responsibility, transparency and funding of the agents charged with designing the proposed October 2016 Calderdale Catchment area flood alleviation plan.

It therefore primarily talks to topics listed for discussion at four of the five public meetings:

SESSION: The economy.

Wednesday 24 February 2016 - 7-9pm - Christ Church School, Sowerby Bridge

SESSION: Infrastructure (physical)

Wednesday 2 March 2016 - 7-9pm - Canon Winter Centre, Elland

SESSION: Upland and countryside management

Monday 14 March 2016 - 7-9pm - Hebden Bridge Town Hall

SESSION: National and Regional Agenda

To be arranged (see web site)

It will not address the issue of “Emergency preparedness and response”. (Wednesday 17 February 2016 - 1.30-3.30pm - Halifax Town Hall). The Hebden Bridge Community Association which managed the Town Hall emergency Hub is better placed to do this.

It addresses only briefly (below) the issue in the

SESSION: A place where people want to live”.

Tuesday 16 February 2016 - 7-9pm - Calder High School, Mytholmroyd.

### **3. ‘A PLACE WHERE PEOPLE WANT TO LIVE’**

By way of introduction we would make one comment in relation to the Commission’s question: ‘How do we get back to normal, and what is “normal” now?’, relating to the scale of the threat now confronting Hebden Bridge. For the last 50 years the town has been reviving but there must be a risk that, with this increased vulnerability to flooding, that revival might now falter or even go into reverse. There is no wish to exaggerate but - now looking forward into the future, rather than backwards - it could be said that the flooding problem now poses almost an existential threat to the towns of the Upper Calder Valley. This needs to be considered not to create a sense of despondency but just the opposite: so that the necessary scale of response and action should be organised and resourced in order to prevent that threat becoming a future reality.

The fact that it is agreed that the flood plan that the Environment Agency has now been tasked to prepare should be catchment-wide is therefore welcomed, but other plans also need to be taking the broader view. In particular Calderdale’s Local Plan, now approaching its final stages, will have to respond to the potential for valley bottom abandonment - by reviewing its approach to the brownfield versus greenfield location of development sites (where the former tend to be in the valley bottoms and the latter up on the tops), and by proposing innovative flood mitigation policies to be applied to development sites and proposals - so that it proactively counteracts market responses to flooding risk.

### **4. THE ECONOMY: THE IMPACT OF THE FLOODS ON the Hebden Bridge Town Centre Economy.**

The list of issues suggested by the Flood Commission for this session includes:

*Impacts on business supply and demand chains. Business support – needs and capacity. Financial assistance to businesses. Resilience. Insurance. Marketing. Tourism. Business rates. How do we attract new business to Calderdale. How do we retain existing businesses.*

This section of the submission touches on the topics in italics.

This section is a summary of and it based upon the fuller report (attached) produced initially on January 6<sup>th</sup>. The data has been updated as of February 8<sup>th</sup>. A final Impact report will be submitted to the Flood Commission at the end of March.

The focus of the report is on the Town Centre Economy because much of the livelihood and prosperity of Hebden Bridge depends on its visitor economy. Hebden Bridge does have one major employer in the productive economy, Calrec which was untouched by the floods and another WireForm which was devastated by the Floods and is considering either closing or moving. For Hebden Bridge therefore damage, which was extensive (below) to the Town Centre not only impacts directly on those businesses but on the prospects for visitor numbers and therefore on businesses serving the public that were not directly affected. At the same time among the flood alleviation measures under discussion are those which, although aimed at reducing the risk of flooding, might impact negatively on Hebden Water in particular as an amenity for visitors to the town.

Within the area encompassing Market Street, Central Street, West End, New Street, Old Gate, Albert Street, Crown Street, Bridge Gate, St Georges Square, Valley Road and the Canal Side and Park there are approximately 180 premises providing a direct service to the community. Of these 156 were seriously affected by the flood to the extent that they had to close for business, a very few only briefly.

**In other words 80% of all town centre businesses were directly impacted by the flood. All the others were in terms of a precipitate fall in business which is a very long way from returning.**

**Immediately after the floods 11 out of the town's 15 public houses, bars or social clubs, 10 out of 17 of the town's cafes and 9 out of the 14 restaurants or fast food establishments were closed. All Banks and the Post Office were shut. The town had no cash point.**

**Currently (Feb 8<sup>th</sup>) of the estimated 156 initially directly affected businesses 69 are now open, leaving 87 still closed with an 18 estimated to open by April, leaving about a further 69 about which opening or permanent closing are unknown. The figure of 87 still closed on Feb 8<sup>th</sup> compares with the 110 that were closed on January 6<sup>th</sup>. In effect only 23 have opened within the subsequent month.**

Additional to the impact on commercial business is the impact on the cultural and community life of the town upon which its attractiveness to visitors also depends. Directly affected, with often severe financial implications were:

- The Picture House. It is now reopened using the flood free balcony only.
- The Little Theatre.
- The Trades Club, now reopened fully
- The Holme Street Art Centre closed until June (including its users: Brass Band, Soup Kitchen, Bric a Brac market)
- The Hope Street Chapel (and performance venue) currently closed.
- The Salem Centre and Ground Floor Project

It was fortunate that the Town Hall escaped the floods apart from its basement thus enabling the huge volunteer effort to have a focus in the immediate aftermath of the floods. (See <http://www.hebdenbridge.co.uk/news/2016/004.html> )

### **Financial losses and insurance.**

It is not easy to quantify the financial loss to each business and community organisation and to work out how the refurbishment costs are going to be met. In the case of the few chain stores in town; Boots, Coop, Fat Face, etc it is likely that the costs will simply be absorbed. This might apply to a pub chain as far as the building is concerned. In other case the situation is complicated as to the costs falling to the owners of premises and to the businesses when they operate within them on a rental basis. Some Hebden Bridge property owners are able to absorb the refurbishment costs, others not.

**The key issue to be addressed is that of insurance.** Many of the businesses in the town will have to spend their own money (or money donated from crowd funding and just giving schemes) to re establish their business either because:

- They have no insurance cover because of refusal by insurance companies
- They have very large excess payments linked to their cover
- Where insured the insurance covers like for like and does not cover the additional costs in ensuring the premises are refurbished in flood resistant ways (stone floors, waterproof plaster, high electrics etc)

Of the businesses in Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd surveyed by the UCVR team and the Hebden Bridge Business Forum 67% had been refused insurance, 29% had inadequate insurance and 13% were effectively covered at least for this flood. Some of these businesses are run by owners with no more financial resources than many employed HB residents.

***The HBP recommends that the Flood Commission make as a key national demand here that the innovative national government Flood Re scheme<sup>1</sup> designed to reduce the costs of insurance of householders in flood prone areas due to be implemented in April 2016 is extended to small businesses.***

### **Tourism Expenditure**

The Hebden Bridge Partnership took the initiative in 2014 to produce and distribute widely a Welcome to Hebden Bridge Visitors Brochure. It has also commissioned a group to work on a visitor economy strategy which will report soon. The Welcome to HB visitor leaflet was revised for 2015 and one is in production now for 2016. With the exception of a small grant of £500 from the HRTC in 2014 and possible one in 2016 this has been undertaken on a shoe string with little support from Calderdale Tourist Department except in the Tour de France Year. A request for funding this year was rejected.

When the government announced in February that £1million was to be added to Visit England budget to encourage tourists back to the North the HBP wrongly assumed that some of these funds would be cascaded down to local councils. Not so. Big glossy visit the North posters and TV adds might result from this but these ignore the

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.floodre.co.uk/>

fact that for Calderdale the emphasis of marketing efforts must be to encourage those visitors and locals already up north (drawn by the Dales or the Lakes or York) to actually make it to Calderdale and the South Pennines which are not so well known.

Given the devastating impact of the floods on Hebden Bridge and the negative publicity of media coverage of the Calder Valley Floods there is a real possibility that visitor numbers in 2016 will be half the 2015 figures. As one business seeing no footfall said: “it’s a ticking time bomb”.

***The HBP recommends the Flood Commission ask that some of the central government funds to encourage tourism in the North must be cascaded down to CMBC (and its constituent towns) who are best placed to know their markets and target them with advertising.***

## **5. INFRASTRUCTURE (physical):**

The list of issues suggested by the Flood Commission for this session includes:

*Planned alleviation works – are they still relevant? Future alleviation works – their role and management in a holistic, systems based approach. Funding. Repair and renewal of transport links and other infrastructure.*

This section of the submission touches on the topics in italics

### **The impact of Flood Alleviation engineering on Hebden Bridge as a Tourist Centre.**

The partnership is concerned about the extent of the information and communications gap, which first finds particular expression in the absence of public information and confidence about what happened to develop flood alleviation proposals following the last of flooding event in 2012. The conclusion must be that, in 2016, the public engagement, communications and information processes this time have to be significantly different and improved. They will therefore also need to be properly resourced. The resultant lack of public knowledge leads to frustration and potential arguments about suitable responses, whereas the 2016 response must be positive and consensus building.

Finally on February 13<sup>th</sup> at the Flood Road Show some chinks of light and some possibilities of communication with the EA emerged. (Until then it had been difficult even for the chair of the Partnership to establish how the existing Calderdale/Environment Agency mechanisms worked, and to what effect.) As an example a diligent search of CMBC papers did generate the document (appended) dated 5/1/2014 which is a job specification for a consultant to begin scoping a possible plan to reduce the possibility of flooding in Hebden Bridge. The document envisaged a range of interventions including water storage in reservoirs, physical containment of the rivers and river direction/flow management. A large focus was on the confluence of the Calder and the Hebden Water and the need to reengineer that. But it is also noted that the brief for these works did not include upper moorland management or tree planting or explicitly flood plain creation, which will now need to

be included within a catchment scale plan. *It remains unsatisfactory that any modelling undertaken since 2012 has not been made public.*

In answer to the Commission question: “*Planned alleviation works – are they still relevant?*” we have to say that we still need to see them but that if they followed the scope of work indicated in the appended document they may go some way towards what is needed but their continued relevance can only be understood in the context of the catchment reassessment that must now be undertaken.

A significant element in the tender document was the acknowledgement that simple walling of the Hebden Water along Bridge Gate/Old Gate would be controversial as the amenity value of the river and the wavy steps was important for locals and visitors. It is proposed that the consultant would arrange an architectural competition for professionals and public to devise a flood protection scheme which also retained the amenity value of the river.

The HBP would support such an approach and could help facilitate the public consultation. There are no doubt a number of more sensitive options that can be considered, as well as straightforward technical improvements: a) use of glass barriers, b) use of small movable flood barriers, c) insertion of one way draining valves on the Old Gate walls to prevent water flowing through the wall drain holes out of the river. Some raising by a foot or so of the wall on Old Gate might prove acceptable if the historic iron work was simply raised and a new layer or two of stone walling inserted below.

*The HBP strongly urges that the first priority for the environment agency Hebden Bridge flood alleviation team should be to both revise its analysis and modelling of the river channel channels and then to commission similar assessments of the catchments above the town in order that the two analyses can be connected together in order to properly understand the interaction between uplands, slopes and valley bottom. This needs to be undertaken as a matter of great urgency, and then the results shared and discussed with all the communities.*

*Following that it may then be appropriate for the Hebden plan to give early consideration to establishing the architectural and public competition for options for Bridge Gate/Old Gate flood protection that preserves the Hebden Water as an amenity. It also recommends that the Team give early consideration to designing defence works on the Calder near the Methodist Church/Coop area and behind Riverside and Central Street school and possibly further up the Valley at Stubbings Wharf etc. These interventions need not wait upon a post October 2016 total plan being finalised.*

Residents will feel reassured that something is being done now. These suggestions are made within the understanding that the longer term reservoir management, upland management and tree planting will **reduce** the size of future floods so that only **small** defensive measures within the town would still be needed.

Turning to the new information gleaned at the Feb 13<sup>th</sup> Flood Road Show it would appear that the Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation scheme team have now been funded to draw up a business plan to take the earlier work forward. Money is only available for the scoping study, not yet for the delivery of any recommendations. In initial conversation the team members seemed open to the importance of early consultation with the public about their work. We are aware that Hebden Royd Town Council has requested that it joins a more formal partnership between Calderdale Council and the Environment Agency in order to continuously review adequate progress is being maintained. We welcome the fact that the [www.caldervalleyfloods.org.uk](http://www.caldervalleyfloods.org.uk) website has been established to provide the opportunity for local knowledge, opinions and observations around flooding causes and solutions to be collated; and there is similar evidence online elsewhere on the Calder Valley Floods Support and Calder Valley Floods Next Steps face-book pages.

***The HBP recommends strongly that early conversations take place between the Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation Team and organised interest groups (HRTC, HBP, HBCA, HBBF etc) and/or the public before thinking of the team gets too set. We request the Commission to ensure that it has adequately reviewed all the evidence and observations of where and how the flooding took place submitted online by members of the public. Local observation has an important part to play as well as hydrology modelling.***

The HBP also draws attention for serious consideration to be made of the case that has been put at times of actual flooding for opening New Street flood water into the dry dock and the dry dock into the canal and (with the aid of a very small removable gated section) the canal and flood water be then allowed to flow into the park through a gate-able sluice and directed towards the East end of the Park downstream of the Café.

### **Transport and Canal Infrastructure**

The main infrastructure concern in Hebden Bridge is the highway between the town and Mytholmroyd. If it proves necessary to undertake extensive repairs to the road the timing of the road works and any possible road closures are very important to the visitor economy of the town. The Commission also needs to satisfy itself that the Calder Valley railway line is not vulnerable to landslips caused by flooding. Even temporary closure would cause widespread economic disruption, including commuting into Manchester and Leeds.

***The HBP recommends that the A road repairs are undertaken before the predicted full reopening of HB to visitors in May 2016.***

By the same token the reopening to boat and cycle and pedestrian traffic of the Rochdale Canal is important for the same reason.

***The HBP recommends that urgent attention is given by the Canal and River Trust to the speedy reopening of the Canal and tow path and Cycle Route 66 by May 2016.***

## **6. UPLAND AND COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT**



The list of issues suggested by the Flood Commission for this session includes:

*Moorland management. Reservoir capacity. Hillside management and planting. Water flow attenuation measures. Riparian ownership. Farmland ownership, usage, drainage etc.*

This section of the submission touches briefly on all of these issues by *deferring to other local and national expert opinion*. But we repeat our earlier welcome that flood alleviation will now be addressed at the level of the whole catchment - rather than just locations which consequently suffer from flooding - and secondly note that whilst this section of the Commission's work is entitled 'Upland and countryside management' it must necessarily relate what happens on the uplands (translated by what then happens on hillside slopes) to what then occurs in the valley bottoms and river channels.

For too long policymakers, whether national or local, have regarded what happens in upland areas (in this specific case, above Hebden Bridge) as 'out of sight, out of mind' - so just not a priority for attention or resources. This has created the possibility that profits being obtained, or expenditure saved, in land management 'above' has then resulted in massive costs being incurred 'below', in the urban settlements with much greater economic and social value. This disconnection between profit and loss cannot continue.

The HBP took a decision after the Floods that the HBP would, itself focus on *Flood Recovery* work by convening a meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup> on that topic, by writing a report on the economic impact and following this up. It decided to support the efforts of Calder Future (the river partnership for Calderdale) and Friends of the Earth in its parallel efforts in organising a meeting on the *Floods: Causes and Solutions* on January 21<sup>st</sup> convened by one of its Board Members.

Here the full range of measures that together will be needed to attenuate the impact of future flooding were given consideration, with a recognition that no single approach could be regarded as a 'silver bullet', and that understanding how all these types of measures could contribute to quantified alleviation flood risk, and then actually be implemented across the specific Calder catchment, represented a real challenge that would have to be underpinned by expert modelling:

- Reduced carbon usage in Calderdale to limit climate change impacts
- Moorland Management with reduced burn and no drainage and planting sphagnum moss etc
- Use of Water Board reservoirs to manage amount of water flowing out at high rainfall times. Similar use of the canal for the same purpose.
- Creation of natural water coarse dams
- Some dredging where appropriate
- Some engineered water channelling
- Improvements in flood plains
- Better security of Canal banks to reduce overflow

***Broadly speaking the HBP wishes simply to lend support to this complementary and holistic range of measures and recommends that the Flood Commission a) propose mechanisms whereby landlords and water***

*authorities are required to act in accordance with this holistic approach and b) propose that government funding is available to develop each aspect of this approach and c) that CMBC reinvigorates its low carbon policy.*

## 7. NATIONAL AND REGIONAL AGENDAS

The list of issues suggested by the Flood Commission for this session includes:

*Roles and responsibilities of key national Departments and agencies (Department of Communities and Local Government, DEFRA, Department for Business Innovation & Skills, Department of Transport, Environment Agency, Canals and Rivers Trust etc). Where do they need to respond differently?*

*Regional perspective (Combined Authority, Local Economic Partnership, Yorkshire Water, Northern Powergrid etc) Possible area based approaches. How do we influence or engineer a step-change?*

This submission addresses the question of transparency, responsibility, urgency, funding and equity in relation to this constellation of issues.

It is the opinion of the Hebden Bridge Partnership that there is broad consensus among the population of the Valley that future flood prevention and alleviation must consist of a holistic mix of measures of the kinds listed in the earlier section of this submission. It is also the view of the population that urgent action upon these complementary measures is fundamentally essential. *It is also the view of the Hebden Bridge Partnership that the welcome intervention of the Secretary of State for the Environment announcing that a Flood Plan for Mytholmroyd would be completed by May 2016 and that a catchment wide plan would be created by October 2016 has created the circumstances within which this now has to happen backed by government funds.*

The fact that the CMBC Flood Commission coincides with the setting up of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Parliamentary Committee of its “inquiry into future flood prevention in England following severe flooding this winter” adds a further impetus to get this done now and done well. (<http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/environment-food-and-rural-affairs-committee/news-parliament-2015/future-flood-prevention-launch-15-16/>). This National Committee of Inquiry invites written evidence by March 15<sup>th</sup> on, among other points;

- *“Protecting communities and infrastructure: How adequately do defences protect communities and agricultural land from floods and do current funding arrangements target spending in the right way?”*
- *How effectively do Defra and the Environment Agency’s policies encourage innovative approaches to managing risk such as slowing the flow of water in urban and rural river catchment areas and promoting water storage?”*

“As part of this inquiry, the Committee will look at flood insurance. With the new Flood Re scheme coming into operation in April, written evidence is also welcome on how accessible and affordable flood insurance will be for businesses as well as householders covered by the scheme”.

It is beyond the expertise and competence of the Hebden Bridge Partnership to offer detailed effective commentary on all of these complexly inter-related matters. The submission has already referred to flood insurance (above) and does, *on the basis of the sustained attempts within the past 6 weeks by the Chair of the Board to engage in post flood policy and practice discussions with the CMBC and the EA*, feel competent to offer the following points for consideration by the CMBC Flood Commission.

### **Transparency of Agencies.**

Whereas in most areas of public policy (schools, health provision, local government etc) there are established mechanisms for interested parties to observe decision making meetings and/or consult with policy and decision makers this seems not to be the case in this important area of environmental and land management and therefore the development of Flood Alleviation policies and practice.

Responsibility locally for Calderdale Flood Alleviation Policy lies with a partnership led by the CMBC together with the EA, Yorkshire Water, Canal and River Trust and other agencies. As far as we can tell there is no public record of these quarterly meetings. The meetings including the most important imminent one on March 11<sup>th</sup> are held in private. Email requests to the lead agency concerning the discussions at these go unanswered. There would appear to be some mechanism for the community to be engaged in some way but a) these are not transparent and b) were described by the EA officer addressing the Hebden Bridge Floods: Causes and Solutions Public Meeting on January 19<sup>th</sup> as “leaving much to be desired”.

***The HBP recommend that beginning on March 11<sup>th</sup> all meetings of the Calderdale Flood Alleviation Partnership Committee are held in public and that a public record is maintained of the meetings. Such meetings should be open to scrutiny.***

A similar point can be made in relation to the emergency post flood clearing up operations that the EA have been undertaking in the catchment area. It has taken numerous interventions by contributors to the Calder Valley Flood Support facebook pages to draw the EA’s attention to the need for clearance of particular blockages on watercourses. At the same time the MP for Calderdale was able to report on the same pages that he had a list of all jobs being attended to by the EA. Greater transparency, more public announcements, better conveyance of this to Parish Councils and other community bodies would go a long way to alleviate the community’s feeling of powerlessness and frustration. Equally we understand that the environment agency must be properly resourced in order to undertake these essential public engagement and communication responsibilities.

***The HBP recommends that a review is undertaken of the channels through which the EA announces its current plan of work, and the resources available for this. It recommends that this is more closely aligned with CMBC Neighbourhood communication systems.***

### **Authority of Agencies**

There seems to be some lack of clarity both at national and local level as to which agencies are charged with the authority to drive Flood Alleviation policy and practice.

The HBP is not competent to contribute to the finer details of this issue. It is however competent to comment on how this appears to translate at the local level. In the post 2012 flood experience it seems to be the case that work, for example, on the Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation Scheme may have been delayed because of lack of funds, but the inability to obtain information about what actually happened, due to the opaqueness of the mechanisms referred to above, has prevented community scrutiny of the critical issue as to whether adequate urgency is being achieved.

More importantly we have been left in a policy delivery vacuum since the clear announcement by the Sec. of State for the Environment of her decision that there will be flood alleviation plans drawn up by October 2016. The announcement has not been conveyed in writing as an instruction to either CMBC or the EA to begin work. The decision is not recorded on the DEFRA web site. There has been no indication of funds (additional to the £40 million for Yorkshire announced by the Prime Minister prior to the Sec of State announcement). The local community does not know whether officers of the EA who would be responsible for working on this scheme have been left waiting with no instructions. Eight weeks after the floods and four weeks after the announcement this is completely unsatisfactory.

***The HBP urges the Flood Commission to ask now (not waiting on its report in April) for clear authority, backed up with initial funds, to be given to, presumably the CMBC/EA/Yorkshire Water Partnership Team to get this work towards the 2016 deadline underway now, and then for this decision to be widely publicised.***

Finally, repeating a point made earlier it is not only that the authority and resources needed to be given clearly to the responsible local flood alleviation team but that they in turn need to have the legal powers to require cooperative action by agencies within whom they work and upon whom they are reliant for holistic flood alleviation measures to be effective. In particular this applies to landlords regarding moorland management and water companies regarding use of reservoirs for both flood prevention and drinking water delivery.

***The HBP urges the Flood Commission to draw on the expertise of its chair - and also locally-based organisations such as Pennine Prospects - to assess whether legal changes to the way moorland land is managed and water companies are regulated may be necessary to give effective authority to the EA and others charged with flood alleviation measures to instruct landowners and water companies to collaborate with required policy and practice changes.***

### **Listening to local knowledge and experience**

While stressing the matters of clarity of agency authority and transparency the HBP want also to restate the fundamental importance of agencies listening to local knowledge and experience. A survey of facebook entries and entries to [www.caldervalleyfloods.org.uk](http://www.caldervalleyfloods.org.uk) since Dec 26<sup>th</sup> will reveal important contributions on, for example:

- *Why this flood was different* (the release of waters by bogs under Stoodley Pike, the breaking of canal banks heaping more water through HB)

- *Where the rivers and canals broke banks and hence where some defensive measures might be needed*
- *What used to be better arranged: lock keepers on canals releasing water when needed, water board employees living by dams attending to flood issues, regular dredging of pinch points.*

***The HBP recommends that at the start of the work by the EA etc on the October 2016 catchment area plan resources are committed to surveying and taking account of this important local knowledge and experience.***

### **Issues of equity and justice**

There are several issues of equity and justice that arise in the context of flood recovery and flood compensation and flood alleviation planning. These include;

- Whether all flooded households and businesses were effectively informed about and treated with equity in relation to need by both the CMBC's grant system and that operated by the Community Foundation For Calderdale.
- Whether flood alleviation funds (e.g. the £40million for Yorkshire) have been appropriately allocated as between flooded areas on the Ouse, Aire, Calder etc. In particular was the exceptional nature of the flooding in Calderdale properly reflected in the allocation by the YORKSHIRE REGIONAL FLOOD AND COASTAL COMMITTEE subsequent to its meeting on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2016. ([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/492640/YRFCC\\_Final\\_Combined\\_Papers\\_and\\_Tec\\_Ap\\_21-01-16.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/492640/YRFCC_Final_Combined_Papers_and_Tec_Ap_21-01-16.pdf))
- Whether future flood alleviation measures do or consciously do not treat all potential victims of flooding equally.
- Whether compensation measures for electricity failure by Northern Powergrid treat consumers equally. With regard to this issue it has been patently inequitable that residents affected by a 12 hour plus outages served by sub stations that could be accessed by Northern Powergrid have been awarded compensation (and in some case £100 being 33% more than required by the Ofgem regulator) and those more seriously affected by 36 or 48 outages served by sub stations that could not be accessed by Northern Powergrid have been provided with no compensation because of the "act of God" exceptional clause within the Ofgem regulations. Compounding the issue some selected residents have had their initial refusal of compensation over-turned with offers of relatively generous compensation.

***The HBP recommend that the Flood Commission propose that a review is undertaken by an independent contractor after all CMBC and CFCC grants have been awarded as to whether any improvements might need to be made in publicity, application process and decision making in future flood compensation systems.***

***The HBP request the Flood Commission to make urgent representations to both Ofgem and Northern Powergrid to a) change Ofgem regulations so that in future consumers are compensated (by central government subsidy) for outages that fall under the exceptional clause where Northern Powergrid are unable to access substations for repair work and b) Northern Powergrid address the current unacceptable inequity of treatment by not using the***

*exceptional clause in the current flood and do compensate equitably all affected consumers in the valley.*

## **8. APPENDIX.**

### **Report of the Impact of the Floods on the Hebden Bridge Economy**

#### **THE IMPACT OF THE 2015 FLOODS ON THE HEBDEN BRIDGE ECONOMY.**

A REPORT BY THE HEBDEN BRIDGE PARTNERSHIP



### **Introduction.**

This short report<sup>2</sup> focuses on the impact of the Boxing Day flood on Businesses in Hebden Bridge.

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<sup>2</sup> This version (January 14<sup>th</sup>) is a slightly corrected version of the report produced on January 6<sup>th</sup> BUT the data about closures in the Appendix is not updated from then. That data remains 90% accurate. The report was considered by the HRTC and Recommendations accepted. It was provided as information to Calderdale Cabinet.

It is a first draft to be added to by others. It is not focussed upon the direct impact on residents who have had their homes flooded. It does not report the effort of the Hebden Bridge Community Association in mobilising the huge volunteer response<sup>3</sup>. It does not address subsequent flood prevention work in the Valley.

It is written to draw attention to the huge indirect impact on residents of the closure of and disruption to businesses upon which we all depend. It can contribute to the lobbying by the Hebden Bridge Business Forum, the HRTC and others for sufficient funds from the CMBC (and in turn Central Government) and from the Community Foundation for Calderdale and from other crowd funding sources to enable the town to be brought back to life. It is based upon a complete walk around of all the flooded streets and conversations with shop, cafés and other business owners. It can be supplemented later by direct input by the Hebden Bridge Business Forum

### **The local economy.**

Hebden Bridge thrives on its small independent businesses and community organisations that serve both the local population and its visitors. The town is quite dependent upon the visitor economy. In addition there are a few manufacturing enterprises in the town, Calrec being the largest. Of these Wire Form and BeeHive Mill were affected by the flood. The other sector of the local economy is small high tech or creative businesses of the kind that are based in the Town Hall and studios or are home-based. These will have suffered briefly from broad band failures. This report does not address either the manufacturing sector or the high tech/creative businesses. Its focus is the town centre economy.

### **The Town Centre Shops, Cafes, Pubs and Services (hairdressing, financial, estate agents etc).**

Within the area encompassing Market Street, Central Street, West End, New Street, Old Gate, Albert Street, Crown Street, Bridge Gate, St Georges Square, Valley Road and the Canal Side and Park there are approximately 180 premises providing a direct service to the community. Of these approximately 140 were seriously affected by the flood to the extent that they had to close for business, a very few only briefly, about 6 others were reopened by January 5<sup>th</sup>. **Just under 80% of all town centre business were impacted by the flood**

At the time of writing (January 6<sup>th</sup>) 110, or (60%) of such businesses remain closed. **This includes 11 out of the town's 15 public houses, bars or social clubs, 10 out of 17 of the town's cafes and 9 out of the 14 restaurants or fast food establishments. All Banks and the Post Office remain shut<sup>4</sup>. The town has no cash point.**

Of the 110 businesses which remain closed many are estimating that it will be until March or much later that they will remain closed. This is essentially because floors, plasterwork, electrics and much more needs to be attended to after a long drying out period. A few will not reopen.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://hebdenbridge.co.uk/news/2016/004.html>

<sup>4</sup> The post office reopened on 12<sup>th</sup> January and one cash point worked from January 8<sup>th</sup>.

These closures of varying lengths impact on the economy and livelihood of the town in several ways. Goods and services that would have been bought in town, with money circulating locally will be bought elsewhere. Many jobs will be lost temporarily or permanently. If each small closed shop or service or café employs 4 staff that is 400 jobs currently at risk. Set against this is the additional income to trades people.

The negative impact, in the short term on the cultural life of the town is important too. Although the cinema is open in its balcony only, the theatre is closed as is the Holme Street Art Centre and several music and performance venues. Community Organisations such as the Brass Band using these places have been seriously affected.

### **Financial losses and insurance.**

It is not easy to quantify the financial loss to each business and to work out how the refurbishment costs are going to be met. In the case of the few chain stores in town; boots, coop, fat face, etc it is likely that the costs will simply be absorbed. This might apply to a pub chain as far as the building is concerned. In other case the situation is complicated as to the costs falling to the owners of premises and to the businesses when they operate within them on a rental basis. Some Hebden Bridge property owners are able to absorb the refurbishment costs, others not.

The key issue to be addressed is that of insurance. Many of the businesses in the town will have to spend their own money to re establish their business either because:

- They have no insurance cover because of refusal by insurance companies
- They have very large excess payments linked to their cover
- Where insured the insurance covers like for like and does not cover the additional costs in ensuring the premises are refurbished in flood resistant ways (stone floors, waterproof plaster, high electrics etc)

Among the small businesses in the town that are beloved of all of us there are some who are faced with bills in the several thousands and sometimes tens of thousands of pounds. Some of these are run by folk with no more financial resources than most of us.

A key national demand here is that the innovative national government Flood Re scheme<sup>5</sup> designed to reduce the costs of insurance of householders in flood prone areas due to be implemented in April 2016 is a) retrospective to these floods and b) extended to small businesses.

### **Government, council, charitable compensation.**

Can we rest assured that there will be sufficient funds available from government via the CMBC to compensate businesses? Will there be additional funds from the Community Foundation for Calderdale? Will specific crowd funding initiatives rescue a few of the more cherished enterprises in town?

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.floodre.co.uk/>



Consequent upon the allocation to Yorkshire of additional funds to compensate household and businesses the CMBC is providing a grant of up to £2,500 per business to help them open up and start trading again. The funding covers costs such as clean up equipment (generators, dehumidifiers, lighting, brushes etc), building and stock security, IT and electricity, temporary accommodation, specialist advice and marketing to keep customers informed. This will go some way to meet some of the costs of some of the affected businesses but does not address major building refurbishment costs. Owners of commercial premises (or tenants if they are responsible for the building repairs i.e. the FABRIC of the building -not just internals) can now also claim **£5k** for flood resilience repair work. Later medium term grants for the hardest-hit will be available on a 'needs basis' via the Council from LeedsCityRegionLEP Growth Hub. Exact details not yet ironed out & forms not yet available but likely to be in the **tens of thousands of pounds**, with a max cap. More details expected in a few weeks.

Clearly we need to support CMBC in its efforts to attract more central government money.

The Community Foundation for Calderdale appeared to be precluded from allocating their funds, matched £ for £ by government directly to business but have now agreed an approach which may release funds through a partnership with the Business for Calderdale organisation, linked in turn to local business associations throughout the Valley. How the scheme will work is now clear. Essentially the Business for Calderdale organisation is launching on January 15<sup>th</sup> this crowd funding scheme. ([www.crowdfunder.co.uk/calderdalerising](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/calderdalerising) ) They have received the full backing of the Upper Calder Valley Renaissance Business Recovery Team (UCVR), the Hebden Bridge Business Forum (HBBF) the Community Foundation for Calderdale and the Council. Registered businesses will be promoted and will promote the scheme and benefit equally from funds raised. **The direct involvement of affected HB business in this work is essential because all funds raised will be paid out equally to all business involved regardless of size<sup>6</sup>.**

In some cases within Hebden Bridge appeals have been established for specific businesses. This might be useful but will not, I believe attract the £ for £ government matching

Processes seem to be in place to start rescuing Hebden Bridge business. **The problem would still seem to be the scale of the costs for some uninsured businesses are nowhere near being met by the funds currently available.**

### **A note on Mytholmroyd**

For the purposes of the Hebden Royd Town Council this report needs to be extended to include Mytholmroyd. Clearly, without doing a detailed study, it can be said that the *central* business area of Mytholmroyd has been as badly if not more badly

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/calderdale-rising-information-event-for-businesses-tickets-20480388393> NOTE ; Application deadline for the first tranche of businesses to be involved has passed but other businesses can still register to be involved by Jan 21<sup>st</sup> 5.00 p.m. Email to [Kisrty@thecfn.org.uk](mailto:Kisrty@thecfn.org.uk). This second tranche of businesses will benefit at 50% of the rate of earlier subscribers. This extension was brokered by the HBP.

affected than Hebden Bridge. With the exception of Russell Dean its wider economy based on the business park may have suffered proportionally less. In terms of the impact on households the impact has been much greater. **It would appear that of the 40 or so customer facing business and services in the centre about 80-90% were seriously affected by the flood including all its pubs, all its cafes and all its shops.**

### Summary and Conclusions

- The flood has badly affected about 80% of all town centre small businesses in Hebden Bridge and probably 90% in Mytholmroyd
- On 6<sup>th</sup> January 2016 60% of those affected Hebden Bridge businesses remain closed
- A large number will not reopen until March 2016
- A significant loss will have been suffered by the local economy
- The absence of effective insurance is a priority to be addressed by opening the Insurance Re scheme to small businesses
- The current level of support from CMBC and from the CFC and the new BFC Crown Funding scheme while welcome does not yet match the recovery needs of local business
- Government needs to be pressed to increase its flood relief allocation to Yorkshire and the Leeds region needs to be pressed to increase its allocation to Calderdale.

### Implications for Hebden Royd Town Council

It is the council to decide what it might usefully do within its powers. It might consider:

- Proactively allocating some of its financial support to community organisations who have been affected.
- Cooperating on a more formal basis regularly with the other agencies in town contributing to the flood relief effort (HBCA, HBP, HB Business Forum etc). An example of this is the joint sponsorship of the HBP, HRTC and HBBF Public Meeting on January 16<sup>th</sup>. The suggestion by CMBC to establish a Town Board might be a way forward if it could be made to work transparently.
- Ensure all HB business are aware of the CMBC grants and the new Business for Calderdale “Calderdale Rising” crowdfunding campaign.
- Making a big shout both to CMBC and Yorkshire and Government for more funds. **The fact that almost the whole of the town centre (both Hebden Bridge and Mytholmroyd) has been affected badly is unique to the Calder Valley, and unique to Yorkshire.**

Bob Deacon, Chair Hebden Bridge Partnership with input from Stephen Curry.  
January 6<sup>th</sup> 2016 (Amended slightly January 14<sup>th</sup>)

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**Scope of work for Hebden Bridge Flood Alleviation Scheme (2014 document)**

DOCUMENT ATTACHED SEPARATELY.