

Questions for Thames Water about the July flooding in RBKC

1. Engagement with residents

Could quarterly meetings with residents be organised again? Senior officers should be at the meetings.

No response. To follow up with Thames Water.

2. FLIPS

How many people were contacted on how many occasions to install the (Flooding Local Improvement Process or a holding tank) FLIPs in their properties.

From 2008 to January 2018 every six months update meetings were held in town halls of LBHF and RBKC. Letters of invitation were sent to all those who had suffered from flooding, registered an interest or attended previous meetings. The mailing list for these events had 3000 recipients. There was a pause in meetings in 2017 while solutions were being investigated.

Letter drops and two phases of property surveys including customer questionnaires and obtaining basement levels and key dimensions. Phase 1 was conducted from December 2010 to March 2011, Phase 2 between October 2011 to December 2011.

Two public consultations and two interim engagement events were held between 2014 and 2016 and ten drop-in events took place in early 2018 – attendees were asked to report any flooding they might have experienced at all events.

From December 2017 to October 2018 letter drops, door knocking, and property surveys were undertaken to sweep up any remaining properties; surveys went on until February 2019. We wrote a letter to everyone in the catchment with a basement and also held a number of local events. We also targeted 1144 properties which might have suffered from flooding based on our records. We wrote to these 1144 properties and door knocked on several occasions in order to establish contact. Out of this campaign 504 properties came forward. These were all surveyed. 246 properties were judged to have flooded due to hydraulic causes and were therefore offered protection; the causes of flooding for the other properties which came forward were assessed to have been not hydraulic for example due to blockages of their own drains. 18 refused protection. This resulted in 228 properties being protected by a FLIP.

Is formal permission by the owner required to install the FLIPs?

Yes

Is there a list of FLIPS locations that can be shared?

As this is information at a single property level it cannot be publicly shared due to GDPR restrictions.

Could FLIPS make flooding worse for neighbouring homes which do not have them?

We assessed any cases where FLIPs were installed to ascertain if this could be the case – where it was, further FLIPs were proposed and with the resident's permission, installed.

3. Sewer system maintenance

Could you please share maintenance information to understand how the sewers have been maintained before the 12 July event? This is relevant for all areas affected by the flooding including: Arundel Gardens, Holland Park Avenue, Norland Square, Royal Crescent, Arundel Gardens, Elgin Crescent, Blenheim Crescent, Holland Road, Holland Villas Road, Lorne Gardens, Stoneleigh Place, Stoneleigh Street, Lower Clarendon Walk, Colville Road, St, Ann's Road, Ansleigh Place, Lancaster Road, Clarendon Road.

Here are our records of sewer maintenance in the RBKC area for 2020 and 2021. (available on request from info@stqw.org. Too large a file to upload to the StQW website.

5. Storm returns addressed by Thames Water infrastructure - Counters Creek Project

Why Thames Water do not address flooding beyond 1-in-10 year because the 1-in-20 and beyond would have much greater impact to all. Rationale: if a flood is at the level of a 1-in-50 event, 1-in-30 or even 1-in-20, it would be great enough to affect the 1-in-10 as well?

Thames design our assets for a 1:30 event. It is correct that a 1:50 year flood would adversely affect a network designed to cope with a 1:30 year event.

Why did Thames Water not inform/advertised other properties that could have been flooded, especially basement flats of the options open to them to counter floods from blowback through drains?

Thames does not assess every property for flooding risks this is not part of our responsibilities, we are responsible for addressing sewer flooding and offer advice to householders on this issue, available here <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/media-library/home/help/emergencies/flooding/sewer-flooding-guide.pdf>

How were Thames Water and Ofwat and the investment against flooding in RBKC influenced by the purchase of Thames Water by Kemble Water Holdings Limited, the private equity consortium, that was completed in 2008?

There was no influence, Thames Water act according to flood risk data to protect customers to the best of our ability. Flood alleviation is driven from our regulatory contract with Ofwat irrespective of ownership.

6. Specific questions on the event of the 12 July

What was the status of the sluice gate and the pumps at the Lots Road Pumping station between 1600 and 1800 on 12 July 2021? Were the gates closed? Was the pump operating?

On the 12th of July the pumps ran as below. 10

Why did some properties reported a 'vacuum effect' where flooded water disappeared very quickly, almost as if vacuumed through the road gullies and drains?

There are a number of factors that could have affected the flows in this way, because the network is complex, and these effects are time dependant it is impossible to say which factors were at play in this case. For example, it could have been due to rainfall further down the system decreasing allowing more flow from upstream, a temporary blockage could have cleared, in some areas outfalls that were tidally locked opened once the tide went down, or flow from another part of the system may have suddenly reduced giving more capacity at this point. Due to the variability of rainfall and therefore flows it is not likely we will be able to ascertain the specific reason or reasons with any certainty.

Initial figures on extent of flooding and number of reports to you from residents in RBKC

These figures are not yet in our sewer flooding database, but initial figures are given by postcode and number in brackets.

SW1 (2), SW5 (1), SW7 (1), W2 (2), W8 (7), W10 (10), W11 (36), W14 (19)

Did the FLIPS and sewer improvements part of the Counters Creek work, so the properties which were assumed to be protected by them did not flood?

This is currently being assessed we cannot give an answer and due to the complexity of the incident it may be some time before we can draw conclusions on this following a study on the events on the 12th July.

Do you have information on the return event within the Counters Creek catchment area?

Note from the Council: the figure below shows high intensity storm areas as pink and low as blue. We have requested a clearer figure but this basically shows that the intensity of the storm varied greatly within small areas. 11

Response: your response during the flooding: did you deploy any teams to the area? If so, how many teams and how many properties did they could look at?

Can you clarify which area you mean in this case? Thames Water deployed many teams to a wide area, working all through the incident and after to help customers.

(NB this is an edited version of the TW response, as the full version is too large a file to upload to the StQW website. Please contact info@stqw.org if you need the full version.)