
MINUTES

SEVERN STOKE BUND

6.30 – 7.30 WEDNESDAY 29/01/2025.

ST DENYS CHURCH, SEVERN STOKE, WR8 9JQ

Invitation sent out to (in no particular order):

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|--|--|
| Dame Harriet Baldwin MP with Mr Edward Davies | - Written representation Appendix 1 |
| Worcestershire County Council - Emma Stokes, John Hobbs, Matt Maginnis and Rachel Hill. | - Present and/or represented at this meeting |
| Environment Agency - Charlie Chandler and Nick Green. | - Present and/or represented at this meeting |
| District Councillors David Harrison and John Michael – MHDC | - Present, both. |
| Severn Stoke Parish Council (Chair Sue Faulkner & fellow Cllrs) | - Present |
| Mr JH – St Denys Church rep | - Present |
| Mr NS – Severn Stoke community point of contact, prev FLAG | - Present |
| Residents - each parish household received a written or emailed invitation to this meeting | - 38 present. |

The meeting commenced at 6.34pm

1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair – County Councillor Martin Allen)

- 1.1 Aim of meeting – to set a timetable for progress with the flood bund spec/costing, decision and commencement of build if applicable.

2. Apologies – duly accepted

Dame Harriet Baldwin MP
Nick Green (Environment Agency)
John Hobbs (Worcestershire County Council)
Matt Maginnis (Worcestershire County Council)
Royston Garrard (Parish Councillor)
Ray Williams (Parish Councillor)
Residents: L&DB, JW, J&SH, MS, LH, ME, SC

3. Environment Agency (EA) Report (Charlie Chandler/Steven Edgar)

- 3.1 Recap: As previously known, the EA has not been able to find an affordable contractor within the EA frameworks for delivery of projects and within the Government procurement rules. However, the EA is committed to investigating all options and is now exploring a contract with Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and their contractor Griffiths.

Continued 3.1. It will be several more weeks before we know if WCC's contractor can offer an affordable price to build the scheme. Clarification given on this point in 3.3 below.

3.2 The EA again gave reassurance that they are not walking away from the project and are willingly engaging in this unique joint working with WCC - which could also deliver significant efficiencies in terms of the highways sections of the project. Reference to a successful prior project: Toronto Close (Teme river).

3.3 Timescales

- Timetable AGREED

No vote taken, but The Chair ensured that all present at the top table indicated agreement.

| | |
|---|---|
| Feb/Early March 2025 | Griffiths finalised design work stage (joint with WCC), 'spec check', liaison with Prossers for final materials import regime, sourcing of high-quality materials for core of embankment and cost estimates. All of which will be provided to WCC/EA. |
| March 2025 | EA costings/affordability ratios, business case and seeking of approvals, economic benefits assessment and confirmation of funding. |
| April 2025 | Definitive answer to community one way or the other about the project proceeding and the bund being built. (Specific point AGREED upon request by The Chair). Residents will be informed of this decision at next meeting on 7 th May – see item 6 below. |
| IF green light given... | IF project cannot proceed... |
| April 2025 – Program/timeable of full works confirmed published | April 2025 – Commence community discussions around flood resilience. |
| Summer 2025 – Construction to commence. | Summer 2025 – Agreed undertaking that all construction materials be removed from site. (Specific point AGREED) |

3. Continued. Further points to note in the EA report:

- 3.4 EA analysis of the economic benefits of this infrastructure project suggest a benefit figure of £5 million upon delivery.
- 3.5 Materials – the stock-piled material on site remains useable (for highways).
- 3.6 Newt fencing needs repair in anticipation of summer construction.
- 3.7 Further ground investigation and archeology works will be undertaken in the coming months.

4. WCC report on progress, future timeline, confirmation that Ham Lane works is ready to go and funds are still in place, plus any other comments (County Councillor Emma Stokes and Rachel Hill WCC)

- 4.1 This project remains an EA project overall, but WCC is committed to the project and confident that, assuming affordability, the bund will proceed.
- 4.2 WCC has demonstrable confidence in Griffiths and gave an illustration of previous projects undertaken jointly between them and WCC.
- 4.3 Autumn 2024 apparent delay in progress was due to behind the scenes work to assure contractors (and for contractors to assure themselves) that the project could be deliverable and affordable.
- 4.4 Discussion of the significant advantage of using local contractors and local knowledge.

5. Questions (30 minutes)

Main points arising:

- 5.1 Griffiths are undertaking their own due diligence, although they have received all previous assessments and surveys.
- 5.2 Devolution (Gov White Paper¹ Published 16 December 2024) is an unknown at this time. Unable to say if/how devolution might affect any aspect of this plan, although 90% of the funding for the project is sourced from the EA and so would be unaffected.
- 5.3 Clarification of the figure of £5million... (nb. £2.5 million was the previous estimate of economic benefits)... WCC/EA have worked on the scheme and now value it at £5million – affecting the budget accordingly and covering all aspects of the scheme, not just construction. £5million is the benefit of the scheme rather than the cost. **The EA considers this project viable if the benefit/cost ratio is above 1. Residents asked that this be noted**

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

Local government devolution/reorganisation is the process in which the structure and responsibilities of local authorities are reconfigured. In the context of the English Devolution White Paper, the Government have set out plans to move away from the current two-tier system of district and county councils.

5. Questions continued

- 5.4 Issues of drainage and damage to residential property, which have been ongoing for the past 3 years. The Chair obtained a verbal agreement from the EA that these outstanding issues will be sorted within 3 months.

- ACTION AGREED - EA

The EA was unable to comment on individual cases at a public meeting. The Parish Clerk took contact details from one resident.

- 5.5 Discussions relating to scenarios, material on site/quality of material – as covered by the timetable given in 3.3 above.

- 5.6 Discussions concerning the multiple reasons that the A38 floods (nb. source of water is not just the river, but also surface run off from Knights Hill/Madge Hill and Severn Bank). It was agreed that this matter is not just a flood bund issue, but also a wider issue for the county – the A38 being a major trunk road and a diversion route for the M5. It was agreed that WCC will look into this issue of the A38 flooding within 30 days and provide a report.

- ACTION AGREED - WCC

- 5.7 Letter from Dame Harriet Baldwin MP read out to the community and attached in Appendix 1.

- 6 Date of the next meeting

7th May 2025, 6.30pm at St Denys Church, Severn Stoke.

Nb. This date was chosen as being a date that most could attend AND would allow an update to the community either way after the April 2025 final decision by EA.

Thanks to all, thanks to the venue, close of this meeting and commencement of parish council meeting.

-end-

Lisa Stevens, Parish Clerk for Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot
07950256363

DAME HARRIETT BALDWIN MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Lisa Stevens
Severn Stoke & Croome D'Abitot Parish Council
9 The Limes
Kempsey
WR5 3LG

January 27, 2025

Dear Lisa

As you and the parish council will know, I have long campaigned for the permanent flood defence scheme in Severn Stoke and have held regular meetings with local stakeholders and partners to try and find ways to unblock this important scheme. You may know that, following the news, last year, that the Environment Agency had failed to find a contractor to carry out the work, I asked Worcestershire County Council to use its own framework contractor, Griffiths, to carry out the work building the bund, as well as carrying out the pre-agreed road-raising project.

I have held meetings with the chief executive of the Environment Agency in February, September and last week to discuss the Severn Stoke project and he has assured me throughout that there is both their commitment and budget to enable this scheme to move forward.

I have written to the Leader of Worcestershire County Council to increase his oversight on this project to speed up its planning and delivery, and have raised my concerns, and those of local people, in meetings with the Leader and the chief executive of the council. Provided that the bid comes in under or on budget, I am told by both the council and the Environment Agency that a scheme will commence construction this summer.

Although Parliamentary commitments require me to be in Westminster for the village meeting on Wednesday, I would be grateful if you could ensure that this update is shared with attendees.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'H. Baldwin'.

Dame Harriett Baldwin DBE MP
Member of Parliament for West Worcestershire