

Minutes of the Floodplain Management Committee Meeting held Friday 1 September 2017

Venue:

Mt Warning Room

Time:

9.00am

Present:

Cr James Owen, David Oxenham (left meeting at 10.00am), Danny Rose, Leon McLean, Stuart Russell, Doreen Harwood (from 9.35am) and Brenda Hannigan (Tweed Shire Council), Martin Rose (Office of Environment and Heritage), Peter Mair (NSW State Emergency Service), Felicia Cecil, Robert Quirk, Max Boyd, Samuel Dawson, Dion Andrews, Mike Allen

Guest for Agenda Item 1: David Tetley (Catchment Simulation Solutions)

Apologies: Nil

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Max Boyd

Seconded: Samuel Dawson

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Floodplain Management Committee meeting held Friday 28 April 2017 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Business Arising from Meeting held Friday 24 June 2016:

2. ABC Coverage

The following recommendation was made at the Meeting held Friday 24 June 2016:

"RECOMMENDATION that Council formally invites management of ABC North Coast radio to receive a briefing on the flood situation in Tweed Shire, with the aim of improving coverage of flood events by the station. This briefing should include the SES Regional Controller."

Current Status: Initial contact has been made with ABC North Coast management through post flood debriefs. Meeting to be scheduled.

Ex-Council Communications Officer has also recently commenced working for ABC Gold Coast.

Max Boyd noted the favourable coverage of Murwillumbah's post-flood housing issues on ABC TV, and urged a closer relationship with the emergency broadcaster.

Welcome to New Committee Members

Dion Andrews was welcomed to the Committee, being an apology for the previous meeting.

Leon McLean attended the meeting as Council's Acting Flooding and Stormwater Engineer, following the resignation of Steve Twohill in August.

Agenda Items:

1. Murwillumbah CBD Flood Study - presentation by David Tetley from Catchment Simulation Solutions

David Tetley from Catchment Simulation Solutions, Council's appointed consultant for the Murwillumbah CBD Flood Study, made a PowerPoint presentation (Attachment 1) to the Committee.

The presentation detailed the scope of the study, flood model calibration, including extensive data from the March 17 flood, design flood simulation including climate change scenarios, flood hazard classification, and emergency response classification.

A range of flood maps and a simulation video was shown. It highlighted the dramatic effect that a levee overtopping event would have on the CBD of Murwillumbah, such as in a 1:500 ARI event.

The Committee noted the difference in levee overtopping seen in the March flood and confirmed by this study, compared to the previous Tweed Valley studies (2005, 2009) which predicted overtopping near the bridge, rather than at the upstream end of the earth levee. Based on observations of the March flood, the previous modelling over-estimated the volume of water in the main river channel and underestimated the volume that broke out through South Murwillumbah, which likely changed the flood gradient through town.

A number of flood mitigation options have been identified for modelling to quantify costs and benefits to the leveed areas of Murwillumbah. The Committee was invited to contribute to options development. The Committee suggested options such as installation of flood cams, cleaning out the "duck pond" at Knox Park, alternate designs for the levee gates to reduce the time of inundation behind the levee, and use of subsoil drainage. These will be considered by the consultants in the next phase of the study.

The draft study report will be tabled for the Committee for endorsement to go to Council and public exhibition.

2. Community Engagement and Flood Education Workshop

Danny Rose tabled a preliminary list of community engagement / education ideas, which were developed by Council officers and Janet Petit from SES prior to the Committee Meeting (refer Attachment 2).

Key to building future flood resilience in the Tweed and Coastal Creek valleys is the idea of Community Action Teams (CATs). Cats would be modelled on successful pilot groups in Tumbulgum and Uki, where local champions and people of influence in their local communities would provide a two-way conduit for flood intelligence during and after events, as well as a way of disseminating message of preparedness and warnings. The SES are holding the next round of Post-Flood briefings and will use these forums to begin the CATs process. Any interested Committee members are welcome to attend these forums. Attachment 3 was provided to the Committee to explain the aims and expected outcomes of the CATs program.

The Committee suggested that Chillingham, Tyalgum, Piggabeen, Bilambil and Banora Point should be added to the CATs list.

Danny gave a demonstration on the availability of forecast weather, warnings, rainfall and flood data on the Bureau of Meteorology website. It was important that individuals knew how to find and interpret that data, and understand what it means for their own property. Local knowledge and advice from long term residents helps to interpret and apply this data.

The Committee discussed issues with the emergency text messages that were issued in the March 17 flood, and the confusion they caused many community members. It is understood that these are under review, including recommendations from the Independent Review of the SES (refer Agenda Item 3).

Other suggestions from the Committee included provision of free magnets with important information, and colour coding of rates notices to coincide with flood risk “zones”, that could then be communicated to residents.

Council’s first initiative will be a special edition of the Tweed Link.

3. Post Flood Reviews: Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response; North Coast Flood Summary

The subject reports were provided to the Committee for their information.

The SES report attracted a great deal of discussion, due to concerns about the lack of resources provided by levels of government to the SES, when they do such important work during extreme events.

Issues of accommodation, equipment storage, communication and the SES role in the assessment of development were discussed.

Minutes

Moved: Max Boyd

Seconded: Robert Quirk

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council supports Recommendation 36 of the Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response Northern Rivers Floods March 2017.

Recommendation 36 states:

Land Use Planning

It is recommended that the NSW SES has greater involvement in floodplain development with Local Councils and that their input is mandatory before any consent by council is given in flood planning areas.

This would ensure that there is management of the risk to life in rarer events along with more robust evacuation controls. Consideration should be given to examining the role that the NSW RFS in regard to Land Use and Building Consent in bush fire prone areas for development of a similar process by the NSW SES.

Recommendation 36

That the NSW SES becomes a recognised authority for land use planning purposes, having greater involvement in floodplain development with Local Councils and that their input is mandatory before any consent by council is given in flood planning areas.

Moved: James Owen

Seconded: Mike Allen

AMENDMENT 1:

That Council officers prepare a report to the Floodplain Management Committee and Council with responses to the recommendations of the Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response Northern Rivers Floods March 2017 as they pertain to Tweed Shire.

FOR VOTE - 5

AGAINST VOTE - 2

AMENDMENT 1 *became the Motion.*

Moved: James Owen

Seconded: Mike Allen

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council officers prepare a report to the Floodplain Management Committee and Council with responses to the recommendations of the Independent Review of the NSW State Emergency Service Operational Response Northern Rivers Floods March 2017 as they pertain to Tweed Shire.

FOR VOTE - 6

AGAINST VOTE - 1

General Business:

4. Request for Floodplain Committee Membership – Tumbulgum Community Association

A report has been prepared for the September 17 Council meeting, recommending that Council accepts a late nomination for representation from the Tumbulgum Community Association on the Committee. The Committee supported an additional community representative.

5. Condong Creek Floodgate

Robert Quirk expressed concern that the large set of floodgates on Condong Creek has cracked under the recent flood. Council officers will arrange a meeting with Robert to inspect the structure.

6. SES Headquarters

James Owen explained to the Committee that options for alternate accommodation for the Murwillumbah SES were still in process.

7. Dredging

Dion Andrews asked what programs were in place for dredging of the Tweed River. Danny Rose explained that there was no scheduled dredging for flood mitigation purposes, other than minor works around drainage outlets as required. The river channel makes up a very small proportion of the floodplain volume, so dredging has little or no impact in most cases, is costly, and any benefits are only temporary. Commercial operations still occur in the Lower Tweed, while the State Government is becoming less involved in dredging of navigation channels.

8. Debrief and Discussion on March 2017 Flood

Felicia Cecil congratulated Council on the rapid response to repairing Chinderah Road following the flood.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Floodplain Management Committee will be held prior to the end of 2017.

Minutes

The meeting closed at 12.10pm.

Attachments:

1. Murwillumbah CBD Levee and Drainage Study PowerPoint presentation (Catchment Simulation Solutions)
2. Community Engagement and Flood Education Workshop handout (Tweed Shire Council)
3. Richmond Tweed Region Post Flood Community Resilience Building Program handout (NSW SES)