

Appendix 1 – Details on assets and impact of MoU

The following watercourses were redesignated by DEFRA as main rivers on 1 April 2006; The Loughton Brook at Loughton, Thornwood Common Brook and associated tributaries at Thornwood, North Weald Brook and associated tributaries at North Weald, Hillmans Cottages Brooks at Abridge, Queens Road North Weald, Lichen Brook Nazeing and Crispey Brook at Ongar.

As a result of this decision a total of 8.5km of watercourse which were previously in the control of the Council, became main rivers and for which the EA has overall control, in as much as any powers to carry out works if it so wishes but more importantly enforce riparian/adjacent land owners to carry out repair and maintenance works.

All of the Council's flood alleviation schemes namely; Church Lane Flood Alleviation Scheme, North Weald, Thornwood Flood Storage Reservoir, Thornwood and Thornhill North and South in North Weald are now on main river watercourses. They are all designated Local Nature Reserves and are in DEFRA funded countryside stewardship grant scheme, now run by Natural England.

The Staples Road Flood Storage Reservoir in Loughton is also a main river asset, and is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located within the Corporation on London (CoL) Forest. The Council has entered into a legally binding agreement with the CoL to carry out all maintenance works and ensure the site retains it's SSSI status and all works conform to the statutes and standards expected.

The EA has permissive powers under the Water Resources Act 1991 to carry out flood defence works themselves and/or demand that works be done by riparian owners. The Council has in the past been required to carry out remediation works to sections of the main river for which it is a riparian owner e.g. bank repairs at Rochford Avenue in Waltham Abbey, erosion control works at Longfields in Ongar and Roding Valley Park bank repair works in Loughton.

Under the present MOU all staff time charges, emergency response standby payments and approved works on the flood defence assets are recharged to the EA. In the first year of operation of the MOU (1 April 2006 to 31 March 2007) the Council has recharged a sum of £103,964 to the EA, which consists of the following:

- Officer time: £10,272
- Standby and emergency response: £6,826
- Civil works and maintenance: £86,866

In the financial years 2004-05 and 2005-06, when there was no MOU arrangement, the Council spent £25,191 and £26,652 respectively as a riparian owner on these sites. In the first year of the MOU (2006/07) a sum of £33,781 was recharged to the EA for routine works. In addition a further £18,002 was spent by the Council as a riparian owner responsible for the maintenance of rivers and reservoirs.

Appendix 2 - Benefits of Land Drainage and Countrycare Collaborative Approach

Church lane flood alleviation scheme, North Weald, Thornwood flood storage reservoir, Thornwood and Thornhill North and South in North Weald have all been formally designated as Local Nature Reserves as a result of the Council's efforts and in recognition of their biodiversity. All these sites are in DEFRA funded Countryside Stewardship Grant, which runs until 2010.

Due to the involvement of Countrycare a total of over 5000 volunteer hours have been spent in managing these 4 flood alleviation schemes. This equate to approximately £32,000 (at £6.25 an hour). In addition there have been 85 projects days and a total of 6500 trees have been planted and cared for by volunteers at these sites.

Countrycare has also fostered local community inputs to these projects and all the sites are managed under a strict regime of management plans to maintain and enhance their biodiversity. There is a risk that if the EA takes over management of these sites the Council may not have a direct input into the management of these sites and there could be deterioration in the environmental status of these assets.

Key benefits

- The Council has managed to create 8.85 hectares of herb rich grassland that in Essex has seen a 99% decline in the last 50 years.
- Church Lane flood alleviation scheme was declared a County Wildlife Site in 1998 and a Statutory Local Nature Reserve in May 2002 (Area 3.25 hectares). The site boasts 185 plant species including regional scarce species.
- Community participation in the management of these sites is carried out through local liaison groups.
- Management of the sites is carried out through 5 year management plans that have been prepared with community consultation.
- The sites offer a valuable resource for school and youth groups for educational use.
- Three of the four sites are in Countryside stewardship (8.85 hectares).
- Use of volunteers enables sensitive site management e.g. hand tools as opposed to machine plant.

The current management of these sites, as a combination of Engineers and Conservation officers is in line with best practice. It demonstrates value for money by use of a skilled volunteer force, supervised by trained and qualified in house staff. Given the EA's known resource difficulties and its regional responsibilities there are concerns about its ability to respond quickly to any local flooding emergency and to manage the assets as conservation sites.