**OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY - CORPORATE & COMMUNITY COMMITTEE** **21 April 2016**

Present: Councillor Paul Gleeson (Chairman), Councillor Mike Cooper (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Alison Austin, Colin Brotherton, David Brown, Maureen Dennis, James Edwards, Jonathan Noble and Judith Skinner

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Peter Bedford
Observers: Councillors Richard Austin and Yvonne Stevens

Officers – Chief Executive, Head of Built Environment and Development and Senior Democratic Services Officer

Guest speakers:
Adam Robinson, Boston Barrier Manager, Environment Agency (EA) and Andy Jee, Flood Risk & Special Projects Officer, Flood Risk and Development Management, Lincolnshire County Council (LCC).
Mr Franklin, Boston and District Fishermen's Association (BDFA)
Gren Mesham, Inland Waterways Association (IWA)
Rodney Bowles, River Users – Commercial
Roger Ackroyd, River Users – Leisure
Susan Brown, Fishermen's Mission in Boston
Eddy Poll, Chair of the Anglia (Northern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC)

In attendance: County Councillor Richard Fairman

## 45 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Alison Austin declared that her membership of Lincolnshire County Council's Flood and Drainage Management Scrutiny Committee.

The Chairman declared he had received correspondence about the Barrier Project, but had no prejudicial interest.

## 46 BOSTON TIDAL BARRIER - WATER LEVEL MANAGEMENT - UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

The meeting began with a PowerPoint presentation by Adam Robinson, Boston Barrier Manager at the Environment Agency (EA), summarised as follows. The Boston tidal barrier and associated works hasd a completion date of December 2019. The barrier is designed to be multi-functioning, though its primary function will be as a tidal defence barrier. The preferred location for the barrier is just downstream of the South Forty Foot outfall. Other locations had been considered, but they would either remove the possibility of a non-tidal link between the Grand Sluice and the Black Sluice Lock or detrimentally impact on the operation of the Port of Boston, the quay frontage, the Wash and businesses.

The barrier and associated works would be put in to a higher level than the existing on the downstream Haven banks. Modelling had confirmed that there would be no change in the downstream water levels as a result of building or operating the barrier. If there

was a tidal surge, the barrier would not detrimentally increase the local water levels in the Haven. The barrier would stop the tide at that location when deployed for a tidal surge event, similar to the way the Grand Sluice worked.
The barrier would be built to full height straight away to avoid a double impact on the port and river users. It would be complex to return to increase the height of 'hard defences', concrete walls and a steel gate, in the future; it was easier and more efficient to do the extra work now, rather than in 30-40 years.

Since the floods of 5 December 2013, the priority is to protect Boston from tidal flooding as soon as possible. There was still a lot of detail to be resolved around water level management; therefore, a partnership decision had been taken to adopt a phased approach to it in the future to avoid delaying the flood defence. A *Common Vision for Water Management in Boston and the surrounding areas* had been agreed between all parties and issued to the public. All partners are still committed to providing water level management as part of the Fens Waterways Link. The current scheme makes allowances for how water level management can be implemented in the future and a lock or other structure constructed as part of that.

The Fishing Fleet does not need to be relocated permanently because the tidal regime in the Haven will not change. There will be no impact on coastal navigation to and from The Wash; the barrier will normally be flat on the riverbed and only properly raised to stop a tidal surge.

A Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) is currently being finalised to be submitted in the summer to obtain all the required permissions to build the barrier. Time had been allowed for the possibility that the Secretary of State might decide to call a public inquiry.

Raising the Haven banks further would be phase 5 of the Boston Combined Strategy, dependant on climate change. Existing low spots had been surveyed in 2015 and the programme had just been finalised for construction to take place in 2017/18 with the low spot works also to be completed by the time the barrier was in place.

Flow conditions had been assessed with modelling and the results benchmarked against historical data to ensure it was accurate. EA has modelled additional scenarios raised by stakeholders with respect to the impact on navigation and traversing the Haven to demonstrate the flow conditions with and without the barrier in place. The EA could benchmark flow conditions at known key locations: around the Swing Bridge, the barrier site, near the fishing quay, downstream at the pinch point and at the Port of Boston. It had been shown that they had comparable flow rates and so were confident that there would be no detrimental impact on flow conditions and that there was marginal difference with or without the barrier in place.

Andy Jee, Flood Risk & Special Projects Officer, Flood Risk and Development Management at Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) then gave more detail of some of the key decisions made over the last two years. As the Barrier Project had developed, both the level and duration at which water could be impounded within the timescales and cost limits available was significantly less than originally envisaged. There were many things to consider, for example, how to manage the changes in terms of the Port and the Fishing Fleet, environmental impacts, costs and engineering challenges, and the potential impact on other water courses. It was realised that most of the programme's

risks, and its delivery on time and on budget, related to the Combined Strategy elements and water level management in particular.

It was decided that outputs needed to be tested. A report was commissioned from Richard Glen Associates to look at the actual level of water level management deliverable as part of the project and its value for money at this time. The report was clear that it would not deliver. Investing £11m at this point in time would be a risk; if the money was used in a different way, it was possible that Fuller and wider benefis could be realised.

It was clear that the risks around delaying the project, particularly after the December 2013 floods, had become unacceptable and most of them arose out of water level management; therefore, water level management has been removed from the project, to be delivered later and separately in a phased way.

It was also clear that the Fens Waterways Link had been taken forward in a rather piece-meal way as opportunities arose; there was no a cohesive plan and it needed a more structured and focused way to take it forward and meet both opportunities and challenges.

A wide range of factors could impact on decisions in the future. In terms of water level management these were around the level, the duration and the seasonality of the levels impounded. There were the associated environmental impacts, infrastructure requirements, as well as stakeholder impacts and many other factors. It was simply not possible for them all to be resolved in the Timescales now needed to deliver the flood defence project.

There was limited time to consider the TWAO and taking any of the other matters forward now it might confuse the process. It was not known what the outcomes of a public inquiry would be; if the Inspector decided other work had to be done, that might delay the installation of the flood risk barrier, which had to be avoided. Therefore, the partnership had agreed to let the TWAO go ahead to its conclusion.

Working with the Inland Waterways Association (IWA), a more visible and certain way forward for the Fens Waterways Link would be found and once the partnership was formed they could start to work in more detail on actual delivery of the link with the funding put aside to do so.

Mr Jee concluded by saying that the over-arching strategy for major projects driven by the EA was to look at s wide range of factors, but ensure that in delivering the primary project they did not prejudice elements that would come along behind, and that was the work they had done.

Brian Franklin then spoke on behalf of the Boston and District Fishermen's Association and referred to the possibility, assessed previously, of a marine lock that could have been open for up to 6-8 hours each tide. During the floods of December 2013, the tide level had been within 4 cm of flooding in many places. Had the previous marine lock plan been put into effect that would not have happened due to the height of the banks; it would have reduced maintenance considerably and provided better protection. The predicted cost of the scheme had been far less than the currently projected cost of the

barrier. The finances could have been put in place and there would not have been such a high number of properties at risk of flooding.

Mr Franklin refuted the claim in the Glen report that the barrier could not be built at the end of the river. The Port of Boston was to build a lock with three chambers, a diversion would be made for shipping, and when a ship was in water would be held to the dock and then released, which would have brought benefits to the area. A modelling company had been identified that was prepared to put a model through for the area in those circumstances at a reasonable cost.

Mr Franklin asserted that the Fishing Fleet could be severely restricted by the barrier, as boats could miss the tide and have to remain outside in the river or they could miss the catch for that tide. A two-way system at the gate would be hazardous and would have to be controlled. The tide could be stemmed, but if water was running from the river too, boats would have difficulty getting through and might not be able to discharge their cargo. There would be many problems with separation in the river that could have been avoided with the scheme proposed ten years previously. The boat trip operator could also be severely affected; on its return trip the boat might be stranded.

Gren Messham, chairman of the Inland Waterways Association (IWA), gave a PowerPoint presentation, explaining that the IWA was not opposed to the Barrier; it agreed it was needed and was important to avoid flooding such as that in December 2013. However, the IWA wanted to mitigate the impact on navigation; it expected the EA to minimise disruption and the IWA would highlight this in the TWAO process.

The IWA had the following issues with the EA's Environmental Statement:
1. The loss of water level management, as detailed in the joint EA/LCC study
2. The lack of comprehensive evaluation of flow velocities and directions over the whole range of tides, which was important for navigation.
3. One-way traffic, which would have a major impact on commercial and recreational users.
4. Closure due to construction; this would be part of the contract discussions, but the contractor should be told that there would be no alternative to ensuring minimal closure and disruption.

The IWA's main issue was the significant alteration of the view of the Haven in the vicinity, closing it in visually and navigationally, which would be significant in terms of getting safely through that part of the barrier. There would be a 25-metre gap to get through and boats would not see a great deal going around the corner, whether navigating up or down, and it could be congested with up to 20 boats trying to get out on the tide.

Using the EA's modelling, slides were shown demonstrating increased flows that would be experienced based on the modelling past the Cofferdam, which would be used to protect the site when the barrier was being built. Based on average flows, the flow increase of 1.5-2 knots would mean some boats would be close to losing steerage or have great difficulty controlling it. Higher river flow showed increases equating to 4-6 knots; there were boats that could not pass this coming upstream and would lose steerage going downstream past the Cofferdam. The IWA wanted the EA to manage these risks through the TWAO process and improve explanation.

In terms of flow increases around the finished barrier, for a relatively average scenario the increase equated to 1-1.5 knots, which was probably manageable, but an extreme scenario equated to an increase of 2-4 knots. The IWA had met with Mr Robinson and asked for more models to be conducted, as improved data was needed for the TWAO process to demonstrate their case. They were pleased this had been done and the models validated and the IWA looked forward to seeing the numbers and what impact there would be on boats, particularly of low power.

To summarise, the EA had to prepare a navigation risk assessment for the TWAO application, the IWA was a statutory consultee on issues affecting navigation and also the Port of Boston had to be satisfied as the harbour authority that they were signing off a safe proposal. The IWA and the PoB would challenge hard to ensure this was what the EA provided. The inspector would either accept or reject the proposal or require a change of design. It was good that the EA had allowed time for a public inquiry; the IWA considered it likely that the matter would go to a hearing, even if it was not in public.

Rodney Bowles spoke on behalf of commercial river users, having navigated the Haven and Witham into the Wash for 40 years, the last 22 as a commercial trip operator. He did not want to lose navigational safety passing through the barrier or for his business to be adversely affected.

Mr Bowles had attended meetings for years to advise on the Fens Waterway Link (FWL) and recognised that the tidal flood barrier and the lock were vital for it. This would achieve safe navigation between the South Forty Foot, the River Witham and the River Haven to the sea. £20m had already been invested for infrastructure for the FWL. Mr Bowles was disappointed that years of discussions had not convinced the EA of the logic of installing a lock at the same time as the barrier. Water level management could come later along with all the other opportunities for regeneration. But without the lock, he believed it would be a significant risk to narrowing the Haven from 50m to 25m on a bend and where the excess fluvial waters to the South Forty Foot joined forces with the River Witham fluvial waters. If the lock did not go in, over £100m would have been spent on a barrier that would only be used once or twice in the next 100 years.

Mr Bowles was concerned about the reliance on modelling to determine the water flow rates and the safety of the 25m-wide barrier gap rather than practical experience and local knowledge. A paper by John Doherty regarding the role of modelling in environmental decision-making described where mistakes had been made, asserting that environmental modelling was not an “exact science” and would always be subjective and approximate, which was not satisfactory. They should take into consideration the fears and knowledge of those that knew the river rather than only relying on model data before there was an injury or death.

An EA factsheet had said, in addition to the risk of flooding from tidal surges, that Boston was also at risk from flooding from the river, drains and surface water. Mr Bowles believed there was more of a possibility of a fluvial freshwater flood than of a tidal surge; he had seen 3 near-toppings of the bank in-land and one tidal surge. They were trying to prove that all this water would go through the 25m barrier gap and flow through past the Swing Bridge, which was 32m. Also, the pumping station at Black Sluice in flood conditions would be putting extra water through the barrier; it could gradually build up and only needed three days’ rain to result in in-land flooding. A flood relief lock in times of high rainfall was vital and would become even more so due to climate change. Also,

future widespread urban development upstream of Boston could have a material effect on the fluvial flood risk to the borough.

Mr Bowles concluded that to solve all the problems outlined, all that was needed was a lock that could be left open, operating in the same way as when the the barrier is down, it would be another outlet for the water in flood conditions, and two-way navigation to alleviate the possibility of a navigational hazard.

Roger Ackroyd, Witham Yacht Club, spoke on behalf of leisure river users who used the Haven to get from the Witham to the sea, a journey made because there were few safe moorings for yachts on the tidal waters and visitors came to Boston expressly to make sea passages to the Wash or beyond.

Leisure users believed the barrier was a great thing for Boston. However, the original planning for the scheme had been based on incorrect information and resulted in an unsuitable water level management (WLM) regime that would make the link between river and sea unusable and prevent regeneration of the town. Leisure users provided the correct information and joined a working group to investigate WLM solutions that would retain sea navigation.

The EA had commissioned the Glen report, which agreed with leisure users' views about sea navigation, producing a proposal similar to one they had put forward earlier, which the EA rejected. The Glen report was accepted as the way forward, but it was decided to separate the flood works from the waterways project to "avoid objections from river users", though they believed it to be for financial reasons.

Leisure users carried on working with the EA to ensure safe navigation could continue through the barrier during and after construction, but they had no guarantee any of the mitigating features discussed would actually be put in place. They had had discussions with the RYA legal department because of the absence of firm proposals. Particular safety issues related to the restricted channel width with high flow velocities combined with poor visibility of oncoming traffic around the bend. Modelling had not taken into account the flows and large spring tides. Mooring and waiting areas for craft had not been finalised, nor had other mitigation measures, in particular the reinstatement of the slip at Hobhole so small boats would not have to pass the barrier where currents were strong and the walls vertical and dangerous.
In fact, leisure users had not been updated for 4 months. They needed information about future management and who would be responsible for guaranteeing navigation was safe, the modelling correct and dangers not greater than currently predicted. Navigation had to be maintained; the river could not simply be closed.

The right WLM scheme had to be adopted. They were only in favour of the Glen proposal and were keen to ensure its future implementation. All the other proposals reduced or prevented access to sea, which was vital for developing Boston and bringing it significant benefits. The Glen report identified economic benefits; in fact, the project would transform the old centre of Boston. As the Glen proposal was not being progressed the town was losing out.

Leisure users fully supported the view that it would be better to incorporate a lock in the barrier now. It would be more expensive to upgrade the barrier in future than build a

lock and fish pass in the original construction; they were concerned this meant they might never happen.

The river users were keen to work with the Council to help improve the river environment and looked forward to seeing firm proposals and confirmation it really was safe to use.

Susan Brown, of the Fishermen's Mission in Boston, spoke of the years that the mission had spent trying to save fishermen's lives. The fishermen were extremely concerned about the barrier causing problems due to speed and width. Models had been done, but different models came out with different results. Even in the best case scenario, with a tide that was not particularly fast, due to it being on a corner with concrete walls, if something went wrong lives would be put at risk.

It was agreed that something needed to be done to protect Boston and a barrier was needed as soon as possible, but lives could not be put at risk in order to do so; another flood where property was damaged but no lives lost would be preferable to rushing forward to build a barrier that resulted in any loss of life. Ms Brown asked that there be no rush, that officers ensure that the models were correct and compromises put forward to ensure that the problems being foreseen could be solved. Fishermen had offered to take officers out to sea so they could see what would happen with the tides and water movement underneath as well as on the surface.

Mr Robinson addressed the key points raised. It had been said that, had the early designs been implemented in 1994, the level of protection would have meant the floods in Boston in 2013 would not have happened. Although not able to comment on historical proposals, Mr Robinson confirmed the current plans and remits worked to within environmental legislation and framework directives had just discounted the mouth-end location for the barrier. The proposed location had been through individual consultation with all key stakeholders and was the best location.

It was acknowledged that water was within a few inches of defences in 2013. The level of the surge had been 6.08m. The new defences would bring the level of protection to 6.3m – i.e. 220ml above the level of the surge – which would give a level of defence of 1 in 300 years. This was the same standard as London and Boston would have one of the best levels of protection. It would increase over the 100-year period in line with climate change.

The Navigational impact assessment (NIA) currently stipulated 1-way traffic, but they had listened to the feedback from the consultation and liaised with the current Harbour Master and they were now looking at 2-way traffic instead. There was risk associated with traffic going with or against the tide and they should not have that scenario. They believed 2-way traffic could be managed correctly and appropriately within the harbour's jurisdiction.

Unfortunately, there would have to be navigational closures at key construction times; this was inevitable when putting in place large pieces of infrastructure, but they were not expected to be for long periods

It was accepted there was a lot of modelling data available giving varying results of flow conditions etc. They were listening to people and looking to evolve to a more succinct

model which would allow individual pilots to navigate the Witham, with and without the barrier in place, to allow them to benchmark the impact, appreciate the changes in flow conditions and how navigation was affected. It was a computer-generated model, but was very advanced, being used for super tankers and port and harbour management, and was being produced in-house.

It was agreed that navigation to sea had to be retained. This was partly why the original water level management proposals could not be progressed. There was only limited money available and they had to be careful to deliver a scheme that met expectations. They were exploring other areas around slipways etc. Some locations had to be discounted following discussions with landowners, but another 3 were being explored and a succinct package would be produced to update users.

Mr Jee then stressed the need for trust, which was vital to take matters forward, and urged people to look at the track record of delivery of the Lincolnshire Waterways Partnership and Lincolnshire County Council, e.g. the initiatives and investment at Black Sluice Lock, Hebden Bridge, Boston and Lincoln. Millions were already invested and, even in the current difficult economic climate, £11m had been put aside for this project. It was important to have a vision and a mechanism to make things happen to take forward the Richard Glen and Fens Waterways Link projects and lobby government for more funding to make them finite projects.

The Glen Report had been commissioned because LCC had had concerns about water level management and had listened carefully to river users, with whom they agreed on many counts. He had scoped the report and had deliberately included Boston as a destination for sea-going craft following stakeholders' input. They had not been surprised by the findings; they were well-informed and common sense. It was important to look at what had already been achieved and for all parties to commit to taking the project forward to realise Boston's potential.

The Chairman invited the Committee to ask questions. Concern was expressed about the subsidence of Slippery Gowt bank during the floods of 2013. It had been reported that a 2015 survey identified low spots, which were put in the medium term plan to bring them up to the minimum height in 2017/18, but the plan stated this was "flexible". Mr Robinson explained this referred to delivery; whether it would be done in-house and separate to the barrier or in a package with the barrier to generate cost savings. Either way, it would have the same completion date of December 2019.

Further concern was expressed about the level of the banks; that if Slippery Gowt bank had not given way, Fishtoft would have flooded. Mr Robinson reiterated they were aware of low spots on both banks of the Haven and they were in the programme of works to bring them up to the 6.3m level of defence.

In response to a question, Mr Robinson explained a lock had been considered originally in 2008/9, but taken out of the scheme quickly and, therefore, there were no costings. Comparing with the Black Sluice Lock, it could be estimated at around £10-15m, as it would be wider and larger, but there were no detailed calculations.

The sea-faring experience of those who had undertaken the planning, design and modelling was queried. Mr Robinson confirmed the people working on the project were very experienced, having worked on large container ports, and were from an

internationally-renowned consultancy of civil engineers that had detailed multi-project experience. The company was one of their key suppliers so had had to go through a rigorous approval process.

In response to a suggestion, Mr Robinson reported the original proposal had been for the barrier to be built on the right next to the Port estate. This had gone through the process and been appraised, the result of which was that the flow, bend and silt indicated it was not the most appropriate location.

It was asserted the Fishing Fleet and Leisure Users felt their views had not been listened to and details of consultation were requested. In response, it was explained regular updates were held with all parties, though not recently. The last had been held just before and after Christmas and there were actions from the meetings. The BDFA and leisure users had provided 3 flow scenarios they wanted examining and the output of modelling data was only just coming through. They had programmed meetings with the BDFA. There had not been enough communication two years ago, but was now periodic and Andy Roper was contacted every 4-6 weeks. They had met with the BDFA in February and there were actions to report back to them with. It was similar for the river users. They were looking at more programmed dialogue again.

Invited to speak, a non-Committee Member felt all parties needed to be in closer co-operation and people's livelihoods had to be protected and that Mr Franklin should be involved in talks, adding that the EA did not always get things right , as some years ago, a fisherman had lost oyster beds due to their advice.

The Chairman then explained his reasons for calling the meeting. When first elected he had heard a presentation, but the river users claimed the scheme would not work and water levels would not be maintained in the way it was said they would. The EA had undertaken modelling. However, in January 2015, the water level management proposal was dropped without explanation. It was not known why the Glen Report was not commissioned much earlier in the process, which would have managed expectations. He did not know whether the proposed location was the right place; whether the proposed scheme was right; whether water level management would ever be possible if it could not be achieved now; and why it was not sensible to build a lock at the same time as the barrier.

In response, Mr Jee explained the project had evolved and changed in line with legislation and many other issues had impacted on the scheme. Original expectations had been high and had been eroded. However, the Glen report was commissioned once they had as much information as possible to enable it to be pulled together at the stage when they needed to make decisions and consider recommendations. With respect to the lock, they were able to demonstrate it was not required, because the times at which boats came through the barrier it would already be down so it would not impede passage.

With respect to flow rates, Mr Robinson explained a number of scenarios had been examined, not only those requested by stakeholders. The worst case scenario was a 1/1000 year storm event, but modelling data showed they could still discharge via the barrier; it could still deal with outgoing flows, which was what they had assessed and designed for. There was an impact upstream at the Grand Sluice, which would be in flood conditions, but it would be anyway. Of course, navigation would have been

stopped before then; trigger mechanisms would have warned it was not safe. The lock was not included in the scheme now and it had been deemed inappropriate in 2008/9. The water level in the Haven was not being changed so the lock was not needed; they could adequately discharge through the barrier system from the lower Witham and the South Forty Foot.

A Member asserted the scheme was not ambitious enough; there could be a lagoon and 4-hour tidal windows, as Mr Franklin suggested, and also queried why it was not possible to start water level management to achieve stable water level in the Haven, adding that the level was -0.5 and not zero in the Witham. In response, Mr Jee explained they would have had to start again with the consents and permissions and, if obtained, there would be initial and ongoing costs. Also, the options had been considered and there would be massive engineering challenges. There were a number of issues that needed to be resolved to understand a water level management scheme that could be implemented.

Mr Bowles was asked why the lock was so important. In response, he explained it would prevent the navigational hazard of 2-way traffic and provide another way of getting water out if there was torrential rain. The lock could cost twice as much if it was left until a later stage.

Members of the public were then invited to speak. One said the Witham had topped 3 times in his lifetime, that the barrier needed to be downstream to improve the vision of the town, boat/sea traffic etc would be manageable, or else Skirbeck would be in great trouble from flooding. The main problem was the lack of information.

Mr Robinson explained that the upstream banks were of a very different level of protection; between 1 in 50 and 1 in 100. 60ml was the worst case scenario in a 1 in 1000 event; therefore, coming down the level of magnitude of events to 1 in 50 or 1 in 100, there was negligible impact on water levels upstream of Grand Sluice. Fluvial and tidal flooding were very different events.

The member of the public said, with the Witham in full flood and the barrier in this location, flow rates would be 6-8 knots going round the bend, putting the lives of fishermen and others in danger because they could not steer against it. He added that he was still waiting for data regarding the upper Witham.

Mr Robinson explained the data showed the flow rates were not of that magnitude in those scenarios. If they had data to evidence of those flow rates, they should provide it and it would be looked at. The member of the public was asked to provide him with succinct questions and they would be answered.

Another member of the public urged officers to undertake serious partnership working to achieve what Boston needed and to take people's views on board.

Mr Poll, Chair of the Anglia (Northern) Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, then addressed the meeting and said there was no need for a lock because there would be no change to the water level in the Haven at all. It had been said the lock was needed in order to save money, but they did not know how or if water level management could be implemented; therefore, it would not be wise to proceed with a lock if it might not be

needed. If water level management was achievable in future and a lock was needed, it could be done then and the barrier made wider.

Representatives from the Fishing Fleet then raised various concerns, including:

- The change of officers in charge of the project; they had been working happily with the previous team.
- Previously, the Fishing Fleet was going to be moved and they had been promised the dock wall and a new landing quay.
- They had told officers the water level management would not work for years.
- The proposed location of the barrier would mean the Fishing Fleet would be finished.
- Where the 40-foot vessels would be put whilst the barrier was being built.

Mr Robinson reported they were liaising with Andy Roper, other members of staff and the committee, and had reached an agreement in principle with the Port of Boston to relocate the Fishing Fleet downstream of the barrier during construction.

Representatives from the Fishing Fleet asserted they had not been present at those meetings; they refused to talk with the current project team. The previous team had worked with them. They had thought they were getting a new quay. They would definitely not be able to navigate the barrier; they would bounce off the fenders.

Ms Brown queried whether the Fishing Fleet was being consulted; being 'regularly updated' was not consultation and did not mean their views were being taken on board.

Mr Robinson explained there was current correspondence and there had been formal consultation throughout the project and documents issued and an open and full review with dates and documents listed and he would share these details.

Ms Brown asked, if the barrier went ahead without change, what was the plan and what funding would be available in the event the fleet could not operate safely or at all, because their entire livelihoods depended on them accessing the fishing grounds. Other aspects of the work were being incorporate to allow for other options in the future, but it did not seem that anything was being incorporated now for the fishermen. Officers had decided the proposal would work and there was no back-up plan when there were a lot of risks and livelihoods at stake.

In response, Mr Robinson explained the implications on those upstream of the barrier location only came into realisation when they came to implement water level management; until then, there would be no change in the regime. The information showed there would be no detrimental impact on navigation through the barrier.

The Chairman said the fishermen were asking that if the barrier went in, would it affect their ability to get from where they moored to their fishing grounds without water level management. If the modelling was wrong, was it the EA's responsibility to move the Fishing Fleet and was there provision for it.

In response, Mr Robinson confirmed they would have to consider if there was detriment through third-party work. However, there were other areas substantially narrower upstream that they had to navigate and the flow rates would be the same or less than that.

Ms Brown queried the reliance on computer data rather than actual experience.

Mr Robinson stressed that officers were listening to views, but had to go with the data for the approvals process and liaise with all groups. They were liaising with the Harbour Master on the NIA. Internal staff who were master mariners would navigate the river up to the same point. They were not just basing the scheme on numbers.

The Chairman noted the discord. The Fishing Fleet were very experienced and he asked if the EA would be discussing these issues.

Mr Robinson confirmed that they would and that they were listening. They were liaising with Andy Roper; it was an evolving conversation and included 'protected provisions' through agreement with the BDFA.

A Fishing Fleet representative said the EA was saying that they navigated the Swing Bridge, the narrower part upstream referred to, but the Swing Bridge was on a straight part of the river. When the EA visited, 8 knots were recorded, but the Swing Bridge was not a brick wall; there were 32m to navigate through. Putting the barrier on the bend, the water would force vessels to the side; that was why they proposed to put fenders there. A master mariner had been quoted as saying the Fishing Fleet would be able to navigate the barrier, but this was not the Harbour Master; it was someone who had never been to sea. They could navigate the Swing Bridge now, but would not be able to. The barrier would restrict their movements and they wanted to be on the other side.

Asked directly by a Member if they would be able to continue if they had new moorings and walls south of the barrier, the fishermen emphatically agreed that they would accept this; they had been promised this for three years. They would call for a public inquiry.

In conclusion, the Chairman said the Fishing Fleet was an important part of Boston and the Committee would take these issues forward and ensure they were looked into within their limited power to try to ensure that the Fishing Fleet remained a success and the vibrancy of the town enhanced. The Committee would now adjourn. The Committee would re-convene at a future point to consider all the information received. He thanked everyone for attending and contributing.

The Meeting Closed at 8.20 pm