



Chelmsford & Breda Partner Meeting



25th and 26th April 2012



Participants and place

Chelmsford Council, England

Participants: Andy Bestwick, Stuart Graham, Matthew Perry, Roger Estop, Jenny Robinson

Gemeente Breda, Netherlands

Participant: Wouter Schuitema

Dienst Landelijk Gebied, Netherlands

Participant: Hans van Engen

Environment Agency, England

Participants: Jim Anderson

Royal Haskoning, England

Jaap Flikweert

Meeting held at Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford, England



L-R: Jim Anderson, Wouter Schuitema, Stuart Graham, Jaap Flikweert, Andy Bestwick, Hans van Engen

Objective of the meeting

Dutch experts from the city of Breda visited Chelmsford on Wednesday 25th and Thursday 26th April 2012.

The event was organised to share ideas and concepts, to help Chelmsford and Breda learn from each other's experiences and to spread these ideas throughout the European community.

The event included presentations, an informal walk of the city centre riversides, a visit to the site of the Chelmsford Flood Alleviation Scheme (FAS) at Margaretting, and a hands-on workshop/discussion to generate ideas.

The visit was organised as part of the Floodcom project - an EU funded scheme to develop partnership working with low lying countries in Europe affected by flood risk and climate change.



Itinerary

Wednesday 25th April

Presentations:

The Chelmsford experience
- background to Chelmsford
- the problem and solution

The Environment Agency Perspective

The UK approach to flood defence and civil engineering projects

The Breda experience
- hydrology
- ecology
- history
- communications

Walk: Evening walk around Chelmsford's riversides



Key points

Water from all three of Chelmsford's rivers – Chelmer, Can and Wid – passes through one site on the eastern side of the city centre.

The proposed solution is an 'online' defence of the River Wid at Margaretting. This involves an embankment to prevent water entering the city centre, and two properties would also need defending. Water would only be held here for a couple of days every 10 years.

Discussions on how costs could be shared led to Chelmsford being selected as one of 4 case studies for a partnership scheme, where Chelmsford will pay in the region of 70% of the costs.

There are fundamental differences between the Dutch and English approach to flood defence works. Both are rational approaches.

Flood defences to the north of Breda provide 1:100 year protection, which is too low. Peak water could be 1.6 metres above sea level. Dykes are necessary, along with a new storage area which is able to fill quickly.

The Spinoia fort to the north of the city has a dry moat which, if deepened and with controlled inlets/outlets, could provide some of this extra storage.

Itinerary

Thursday 26th April

Site visit:

Visit and walk around location for proposed flood alleviation scheme at Margaretting

Workshop:

Hands-on discussion to develop habitat and legacy solutions at Margaretting



Key points

The valley is very attractive, and away from the proposed embankment, little environmental enhancement is seen as necessary. However, unattractive footbridges would benefit from improvement.

Some of the extra flood storage needed could be planned elsewhere, for example by creating small pools around the feeder brooks and other small interventions such as reeds and use of natural materials to slow the water flow.

Design is key – the proposed walls and embankments are an engineering solution but could look better in the landscape – varying the gradients for example. The problem should not only be viewed from the city centre perspective, but from the valley too. Therefore designs should be explored which can be enjoyed over the next 100 years by the people of Margaretting.

Public access should be created and encouraged, with links to the footpaths to the north and south of the area.

Wildlife habitats can be created within the banks, sluice walls and waterway.

The embankment top could incorporate a viewpoint, with interpretation to explain the scheme's function. Water flow could be used creatively e.g. to generate electricity.

Conclusion

This was a successful meeting, and gave an overview of the Chelmsford Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Breda Spinola Scheme, and the role and function of the Environment Agency and its consultants Royal Haskoning.

The site visit and workshop raised some interesting questions and useful ideas which will be investigated by Chelmsford Council to ensure it has the right approach to the Chelmsford scheme.

