

Managing the risk of flooding: Black Sluice Catchment

Black Sluice Pumping Station update

October 2018

This briefing note will update you on the outcome of work to transfer Black Sluice Pumping Station to Black Sluice IDB. It also provides an update on the wider catchment, and continued partnership working to manage flood risk in the South Forty Foot area.

The formal consultation in 2015

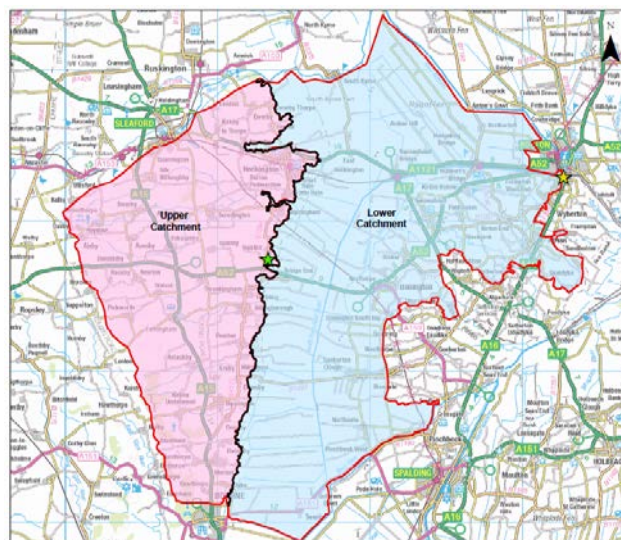
The Black Sluice Catchment Works study reviewed how flood risk is managed in the area, and the feasibility of a significant refurbishment of Black Sluice Pumping Station (BSPS). The study showed that the pump station does not reduce flood risk to people and their homes, although it does slightly reduce the amount of agricultural land flooded.

The formal consultation sought views on emerging options for additional activity, on top of current maintenance, that could help manage flood risk in the future and different ways forward for the pump station.

We received 71 responses from councils, organisations and the local community. Most people supported transfer of the pump station to Black Sluice Internal Drainage Board (IDB) as a first option, followed by replacing the two pumps. For the wider catchment, people supported protecting low points along the raised embankments, increased channel maintenance and 'slowing the flow' upstream to hold back water.

The consultation response document is available here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/manage-flood-risk-in-the-black-sluice-catchment>



What have we done since then?

Our first action following the consultation was to form the South Forty Foot Steering Group. This group, with an independent Chair, consists of key partners in the area including the EA, Black Sluice IDB, Lincolnshire County Council, Anglian Water and the National Farmers Union. It has overseen the strategy for the catchment, guiding a range of projects, including:



- **South Forty Foot Drain Cutter Section de-silting works:** Black Sluice IDB, on behalf of the EA, have completed the first phase of works to increase flow and capacity in the SFF Drain through a de-silting regime. We are currently finalising Phase 2 of these works.
- **South Forty Foot Catchment bank armouring works:** we are armouring low spots along the SFF Drain and its tributaries to reduce the risk of a breach during high flows and are currently modelling Phase 2.
- **Swaton Natural Flood Management:** One of the national pilot projects working with farmers to trial NFM measures to reduce flood risk to 3 small villages that are regularly flooded.
- **Rationalising the Main River Network (RMRN) Pilot:** a national pilot project looking at how we manage low consequence watercourses, de-maining and transferring maintenance responsibility to Black Sluice IDB.

Construction has also begun on the Boston Barrier, a multi-million pound scheme that once finished will provide better protection to over 14,000 properties against tidal flooding. In addition to the above, the South Forty Foot Catchment has become the focus for a number of national pilots and regional strategies:

- Lincolnshire Flood Risk and Water Management Partnership
- Water Resources East
- South Lincolnshire Water Partnership
- South Forty Foot Initial Priority Catchment
- SFF Upper Catchment NFM and control analysis

What about the transfer of the pump station to the IDB?

The preferred option from the consultation was to transfer the pump station to Black Sluice IDB. Since that time, we have worked closely with the IDB to facilitate this, continuing to maintain the asset to allow time for them to investigate options. To make the asset viable for the long term, this included replacing two of the diesel pumps with electric pumps.

However, a thorough review by Black Sluice IDB has found that the substantial cost to refurbish and maintain it does not offer a significant benefit for the wider area. Instead, funding and resource is better invested across the catchment where it will be more effective at reducing flood risk for agricultural land.

As described during the consultation, and in line with the conclusions of Black Sluice IDB, the EA are not able to fund refurbishment works on the pump station. The gravity sluice and navigation lock (when in flood relief mode) are able to manage high flows in the SFF Drain significantly better than the pumps. This was tested in spring 2018 during a high rainfall event, after which the recovery time for levels in the drain reduced from 3 weeks to only 1 week.



What are the next steps?

The partnership including the EA, Black Sluice IDB, Lincolnshire County Council, Boston Borough Council, Anglian Northern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, the Association of Drainage Authorities and the National Farmers Union have now formally come to the conclusion that Black Sluice Pumping Station, which has rarely been used in the past 70 years, will be decommissioned.

This will not increase flood risk to people and their homes, and the partnership is working together to investigate ways to further manage flood risk across the catchment, including that to agricultural land.

We will continue to manage the gravity sluice and navigation lock which acts now to provide navigation to the waterway and as a flood risk asset.

Over the next few months, the partnership will work with Heritage Lincolnshire to consider the future of the pumping station building – and it could even become a heritage hub or a community educational resource. We will also be investigating what decommission looks like, and will continue to keep communities and organisations updated with further newsletters.

I have a question...

We will be utilising the Boston Community Hub on Marsh Lane, Boston over the coming months as a public drop-in centre. The Hub will be open from 12 until 7pm every Wednesday should you have any questions.

Alternatively, please contact the Project Team by email BlackSluiceCatchment@environment-agency.gov.uk or call 02030 255877.