

**To: Stewart Mounsey, Flood Risk Manager for Cumbria, Environment Agency (EA)**

**From: Councillor Jon Owen, Chair of Kendal Town Council’s Environment & Highways Committee**

**Subject: Phase 1 flood defence plans for Kendal**

**18th January 2019**

Dear Stewart,

I write as Chair of Kendal Town Council’s Environment & Highways (E&H) Committee. The Committee discussed the planning application for the Phase 1 flood defence works at our most recent meeting, and agreed a number of points we want to express. These are:

1. An endorsement of the Town Council Planning Committee’s submission. E&H Committee members want to underline in particular the opening paragraph of the Planning Committee’s submission, the spirit of which is that we recognise the importance and urgent need to improve Kendal’s protection against floods, and would not wish to impede or imperil the commencement and/or completion of flood defence works. The E&H Committee have some comments and requests which members assert will mitigate some of the less desirable impacts of the plans as submitted and will leave a better legacy.
2. The importance of Phases 2 and 3. Members of the committee are very alive to the fact that the initial phase of flood defences, in and of itself, protects a relatively modest number of residential homes. We appreciate that this first phase has a strong focus on protecting businesses: understandably, given the success criteria for the time-bound ERDF funding package which the EA have secured. Our understanding is that the upstream attenuation works which feature in phases 2 and 3, operating in concert with the ‘through town’ works of phase 1 is where we will see significantly greater number of businesses but especially homes protected. So our support for Phase 1 presumes that further associated works are an almost certainty, insofar as these things can be guaranteed. Put another way, to paraphrase one of our members: “We’re on board with what they’re up to, and why, and when, but we’d be asking a lot more questions of them if there’s a chance that Phase 1 is all we’re going to get”.
3. We want to stress our desire for the existing flood plain to be incorporated, near Mintsfeet. One of the committee’s members, Jonathon Cornthwaite, has submitted comments directly to you about an important point of detail on this issue. Cllr Cornthwaite briefed the E&H meeting about his suggested changes, and the rationale for them. The committee unanimously felt that they make sense, and wish to endorse his comments. Cllr Cornthwaite has also done some great work considering how the flood defence scheme might leave a great physical activity and active travel legacy, as per point 6 below.
4. Trees: we would like to see as few as is practically possible cut down, and have some comments and requests about replacement. Within the context of being fully on-board with the need to improve our town’s flood defences, and – like our fellow councillors on the Town Council’s Planning Committee – without wishing to delay these important works, we would welcome the EA making even more progress on this front. It is not lost on us that the publicised ratio of trees replaced vs those removed has already increased for the better – from 4:1 to 5:1 – and we view that as a good thing. We know that Tim Farron has been pressing you not only on this issue, but also the number cut down, and we hear and see that you are responding positively to this. However, E&H committee members would also like to see a public commitment to a greater proportion and specific number of the replacement trees being more mature than as detailed in the submitted plans. You will be aware that Kendal has an Air Quality Management Plan in place because of air pollution levels on quite a number of our streets. Our feeling is that, if the EA plant a greater number of semi-mature trees than the submitted plans, site those trees where we experience the highest motor vehicle traffic flows, and maintain them to establishment, these works have real scope to help us in our desire for Kendal’s residents to breathe clean air in a town that features beautiful street trees and offers a habitat in which nature can thrive.
5. Many of our residents have expressed concerns that the flood defences will be ugly, and that Kendal, or parts of it, will be not such a great place in which to live, work and explore. At this early stage, it is hard to tell whether such concerns are well-founded. Given that townscape falls within the remit of the E&H Committee, we would therefore appreciate direct engagement with the EA on matters to do with public realm / visual aesthetic.
6. We want you to understand that we are positive about the scope for these works and the associated restoration to leave our town not only better protected from flooding, but also benefiting from the end results of your commitment to leave works sites better than before your plant arrived. Specifically, the committee was pleased to see in the minutes of the KTC Planning Committee meeting of 17/12/2018 that you have committed to “amenity, including footpaths, cycleways and parkways.” This aligns very well with our ambitions for residents to have great options within the town for physical activity, to enable modal shift and everyday active travel through the provision of safe walking and cycling routes to work and school, and to reduce congestion and air pollution on Kendal’s streets. We would therefore be extremely keen to have early, close and continued involvement in shaping any such plans so that they can leave the greatest possible positive legacy.

Thank you for taking the time to read our comments. We look forward to hearing back from you, and to working with you for the best outcomes for our town’s residents, businesses and visitors.

**Kendal Town Council’s Environment & Highways Committee**