

Secretary:
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Dear Sheffield City Council,

Thank you for enabling the Friends of the Porter Valley (FoPV) to respond to your Flood Prevention proposals. This letter summarises the considered FoPV position and reflects views of members who have commented so far. It is also copied to our Councillors, individuals who have kindly given us expert opinion, other environment groups, and officers whose jobs would be affected by the proposals for the Porter and Mayfield Valleys.

General Overview

The Friends of the Porter Valley completely recognise the need to stop flood damage in the town centre as experienced in 2007. Sheffield's topography lends itself to sudden rises on the western rivers and overflowing urban drainage systems, however before final choices are made, we request more information and consultation so that we can make a more informed response. We understand that the proposals are necessarily very broad brush at this stage and may not all be feasible or necessary. The question is: what would be the best mix and would it address the problem of city centre flooding? We look forward to contributing to development of the technical detail.

Our primary interest is the effect on the Porter Valley parklands in relation to public access, quality of this unique mosaic of habitats, and the industrial and social heritage. We have two primary concerns. Firstly the effect of these heavily engineered and permanent structures, and secondly, the question of their maintenance and the effect of occasional flood events.

We have many questions and comments to share with the Flood team and these are set out below as appropriate under the headings used in your consultation.

One comment we would like to add at this stage is that many people have not picked up the news about the proposals and are approaching us after seeing information we put up in the valley. Many were unable to attend the drop-in workshops, especially after date and location changes were made late in the day. You may experience a backlash from individuals about these weaknesses in the consultation process.

Responses to your questions

Q1. We broadly endorse *the community, economic, waterway improvement principles* as set out in the consultation papers.

Q2. *Value of Sheffield rivers.*

We endorse the value of habitat quality, opportunities for walking and cycling, heritage and history, and improving the quality of the areas near the rivers.

Add to this the holistic health and social benefits of access to our parkland, and the exceptional range of activities currently available and which must not be lost. For example:

- Playgrounds.
- Opportunities for sport and outdoor activities such as Parkour in Endcliffe Park, the only free running facility in South Yorkshire.
- Fishing.
- Riding.
- Education and learning for school and youth groups such as Scouts, Guides; and research opportunities for university staff and students.
- Conservation work through volunteers.
- Opportunities for refreshments at two Cafes and in picnic areas.
- Business opportunities: Cafés, farms and riding schools, circus and other large events in Endcliffe Park.
- Community events such as the annual Easter Duck race in Endcliffe Park and fairs at Forge Dam.

Half a million people visit this destination parkland each year, of whom at least a third come from areas which are considerably outside the adjacent “leafy suburbs”. Many from “hard to reach” populations as demonstrated by records from participation in events here.

Q3 and Q4. Experience of flooding.

The 2007 and earlier floods were evident at Endcliffe Park, and Forge Dam has occasionally risked overtopping. We paid for a flood risk study in 2013 to support a case to the Council to raise and strengthen the embankment at Forge Dam. This was not accepted. Individually we all experienced road disruption and urban runoff in high rainfall. Regular maintenance of waterways and drains has been inadequate or absent.

Q5 and Q6 The options for reducing flood risk.

We accept that all the proposed options for storage and lower stream containment must be considered. Especially upland management programs of tree planting, restoring sphagnum and peatlands, changes in farming practices, and elimination of features that facilitate run off such as bare slopes at Clough Woodlands. We make additional suggestions at Q14.

Q7 and Q8 Flood Storage options.

Whiteley Woods

We are strongly opposed to the proposal to build a barrage at Whiteley Woods. The effect on the ecology and public uses of the valley would be overwhelming here:

- A high and wide barrage would be hugely obtrusive. This is a very beautiful and heavily used area.
- Constructing such a substantial structure would be very disruptive in the construction phase.
- Public access would appear to be seriously affected. The Round Walk passes through this section of the valley and there are 3 parallel routes for horse riders, bikers, runners and walkers.
- The archaeological, architectural, and historical heritage appear likely to be affected by the proposals. (The Thomas Boulsover monument is here along with the 18th Century cottages which housed his workshop, Wire Mill Dam, and the Wire Mill goit.)
- Should a flood arise, the impounding of water for an incalculable time would be detrimental to the environment and damage the woodland and its flora and fauna. There are white clawed crayfish (a protected species) in this section of the valley.
- The structure would be very difficult to maintain as there is always much tree debris washed down at this point.

Mayfield Barage

We are less concerned about the Mayfield barrage proposed for the fields above Carr Bridge/Quiet Lane and below the confluence of the May and Porter Brooks. However, we would suggest the following about this proposal/option;

- A habitat and environment study would be prudent given the diverse ecology here.
- An engineering geologist should be consulted about the stability of the shales just below the confluence of the Porter and May brooks where they are inclined.
- There is a rare exposure of a thin bed of shale containing marine fossils in what is known as the 'gastrioceras cancellatum marine band' at SK 2970 8466. It would be lost to science if it were covered by a barrage.
- Public access on the Round Walk could be compromised.
- There is Graves Trust heritage here - a 1930s marker stone. Has the Trust been consulted?
- The construction phase would be disruptive on a narrow and heavily used lane. (Quiet Lane)
- Have the Council's tenant farmers and the Hangram Lane private farmer been consulted?
- How would the structure be maintained?

Endcliffe Park

We have mixed views on the Endcliffe Park horse-shoe shaped barrage. Comments from regular users and neighbours are more critical than occasional users.

The pictures of an improved green space look alluring, and we know the field is prone to flood anyway. However this is easily the most heavily used part of the Porter Valley and loss of public access to amenities is the most frequent concern raised.

Before we can make an informed response we need to know the height, width, and precise location of this horse-shoe shaped embankment at different points. Other concerns to note:

- It is unclear how the river porter would be diverted to flow into and then out of the flood plain when needed. Any such facilitating structure is potentially huge because the river bed lies well below the green plain. This technical question makes this perhaps the most challenging of the three proposals.
- Existing storm sewage storage structures under a substantial part of Endcliffe Park seem not to have been mapped by the Flood team.
- Any high barrier formed by the horse-shoe embankment will isolate the path through the park from the field, and reduce the open aspect of the park environment.
- The Victorian gardenesque heritage (Goldring) would be largely lost.
- The structures seem likely to affect the Playground, Endcliffe Park Café, Pullin's amusements, the South Yorkshire free running Parkour facility, and Adult Gym facilities. Many would have to be moved somewhere else but where? How will access be guaranteed? How will people access the Café seating for refreshments, and the green space for play and sport, walking and running, and big events? What access would be available to event organisers' large vehicles (circus, fairs etc.)
- It would be difficult to maintain the structures free of detritus brought down stream. How would the grass plain be made usable again after a flood? The maintenance of the grass covered horse-shoe embankment would have to be guaranteed although it is not clear that there is revenue available for such ongoing care.
- In the short term the disruption to traffic would be huge. In the long term this congested area would need road improvements.

Q9 and Q10 Flood Defense wall height options.

We have not received any informed views on this, however:

- Raised walls along Sharrow Vale to Ecclesall Road is probably sensible.
- The 18th Century heritage private millpond and machinery at the Snuff Mill below Berkeley Precinct must be protected. It is privately owned and still a functioning business. Has the owner been consulted?

Q11 Rural Land management.

All points agreed. See Q5 and Q6 suggestions.

Q12 Flood corridors.

We have no comments.

Q13 Resilience.

We agree to all these suggestions. Active voluntary groups such as The Friends of the Porter Valley and Rivelin Conservation Group already exist. Flood action groups should co-ordinate where common interests apply.

Q14 Alternative suggestions.

We would strongly support more work on the following individual measures which could have a cumulative beneficial effect:

- Underground storage tanks upstream of Fulwood Lane.
- Use of the 5 dams remaining in the valley (not Shepherd Wheel now restored with a butyl liner), and reconstruction of some millponds that have “disappeared”. We include this suggestion as it has been raised by a considerable number of members, however we recognise the contribution would be modest.
- Regular maintenance of the urban drainage systems to reduce blockages and stop water pouring down roads and into the valley brooks. Stop hard surfacing of driveways without consideration of SuDS legislation.
- Underground storage tanks further down in the city e.g. at brown field sites such as Napier Street, or under carparks such as Waitrose.
- Deculverting downstream of Sharrow Vale and along Ecclesall Road with more small inner city open spaces with flowing water plus storm flow controls below Hunters Bar.
- Temporary riverside barriers along the Don as used at Bewdley and some continental cities.

Q15 and Q16 About us.

The Friends of the Porter Valley, set up in 1994, is an active environment parks group with over 640 paid up members with an interest in the Porter and Mayfield Valleys. Our conservation work takes place in Endcliffe Park, Bingham Park, Trippet Woods, Whiteley Wood, Common Lane Urban Nature Park, Forge Dam area, and upstream through the countryside to Porter Clough. Parts of our area lie within the flood risk area with postcodes S10 and S11.

Ann le Sage

Chair

Friends of the Porter Valley Charity No. 1069865

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