

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH THAMES WATER AND RESIDENTS – UPPER STREET FLOOD – MONDAY 13 FEBRUARY 2017 – 6.30P.M. – BUSINESS DESIGN CENTRE

**PRESENT: Thames Water – Nigel Dyer- Chief Executive Thames Infrastructure, Matthew Hackshaw, Chris Davis, James Kingston, Cecilia Larkin
Cunningham Lindsey – Andrew Mishen, Joseph Noel, Jeff Hoskin**

**Councillors – Richard Greening, Rowena Champion, Clare Jeapes and Caroline Russell
London Angel Business Improvement District – Jackie Ambrosini
Businesses affected by the Upper Street flood**

Councillor Richard Greening in the Chair

Matthew Hackshaw opened the meeting describing the structure of the event. Nigel Dyer then made a presentation to the meeting concerning the circumstances around the flooding incident.

Nigel Dyer made a sincere apology on behalf of Thames Water to those affected by the flood. He said that ‘Thames Water were doing everything they possibly can to prevent this situation happening again.’

Nigel Dyer explained that the main which burst had originally been installed in 1854. It was currently out of use while this 800 metre section of pipe is being relined by Thames Water. Sensors had already been put on it.

The following main points were then made -

- 1.Nigel Dyer stated that survey work would be started on 15 February in Upper Street, between the Pentonville Road and Islington Green junctions, Islington Green between the Upper Street and St.Peter’s Street junctions, and St.John’s Street between the junctions of Owen Street and Pentonville Road. This work will take place between the hours of 10pm. and 6.00a.m.**
- 2.Nigel Dyer made a commitment to businesses that it was their intention that no business will be worse off as a result of the flood or to see anyone suffer materially or otherwise and that any losses to businesses that are not met by the loss adjustors would be supplemented met by a payment from Thames Water**
- 3.Concern was expressed that businesses had lost trade over the busy Xmas period and that some of their stock was difficult to value as they were the experts in that field.**

Cunningham Lindsey, the loss adjusters, stated that they would consult on valuations and make an offer. Nigel Dyer stated that Thames would make up the balance with one cheque being payable to businesses and he committed to ensuring to ensure that they were no worse off as a result of the flood. In response to a question it was stated that traders in Camden Passage worked to a profit margin of around 33% and it was reiterated that traders would be recompensed and not be worse off as a result of the flood.

4. Concern was expressed at the attitude shown by some staff at Willis Towers Watson, (WTW) (who were acting for Cunningham Lindsey), to businesses that had contacted them on some of the claims and that this was not acceptable. Businesses expressed the view that WTW should have had a representative present that evening to respond to the criticisms made. Cunningham Lindsey responded that WTW had been invited to attend, but they had stated that they were not able to do so. Cunningham Lindsey stated that they would raise these concerns with WTW, and that whilst this problem has not arisen in the past, if businesses wished to raise these issues with Cunningham Lindsey after the meeting they would take these up and deal with them

5. Concern was also expressed that on the day of the flood conflicting information had been given to businesses about removing items from their premises, which had led to disputes about the cost of items and disposal of items. It was stated that Thames should provide written advice or information, (for example on a laminated sheet) for businesses and residents for any future incidents on how to deal with claims following floods and who to contact in this regard and Thames and Cunningham Lindsey undertook to do this. It was noted that Thames admitted that this was the biggest incident that they had dealt with. They committed to learning from their mistakes to better handle future incidents

6. Reference was made to the fact that some businesses had been informed that they should go through their own insurers, whilst others had been told to contact Thames insurers. Cunningham Lindsey stated that the advice that would have been given to businesses was dependent on the type of policy that they had, and individual questions on any claims and building costs for works could be raised individually following the meeting with them

7. Discussion took place as to the level of compensation businesses would get for loss of trading over the busy Xmas period, how the loss adjusters/Thames would decide on an appropriate sum to be paid, taking into account the fact that many businesses were still not open for trading and the many hours that businesses had to put in

completing forms and arranging work for their premises etc., Businesses enquired how the loss adjustors would calculate the appropriate hourly rate payable that businesses should be entitled to in relation to dealing with such issues regarding the flood. Cunningham Lindsey stated that these discussions would be held with individual businesses and appropriate payments made dependent on circumstances

8. Reference was made to differing levels of compensation paid to businesses and the fact that when this was queried with WTW they had been rude and dismissive. Cunningham Lindsey stated that they would raise this with WTW, however in view of the concerns raised, businesses would now be able to deal with Cunningham Lindsey directly

9. Businesses expressed concern that despite completing information on the day of the flood, detailing contact details etc. for the insurers and Thames, no direct contact had been made by Thames with businesses since the incident. It was added that businesses had been left to deal with WTW, who had been unhelpful in many instances, and often failed to respond in a satisfactory timescale. Cunningham Lindsey reiterated that they would now deal with businesses in the future to resolve individual claims, however this was the first time that problems had arisen with their use of WTW, when they had acted on behalf of Cunningham Lindsey. Cunningham Lindsey stated that they would inform WTW that they needed to respond in a satisfactory timescale to businesses and also make payments, where agreed, within 7 working days

10. Concern was expressed that on the morning of the flood that Thames, when arriving on scene, were not really in control of the situation and that their response had been reactive, rather than proactive, and Thames needed to learn lessons from this for future flooding situations

11. Reference was made to the meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee taking place at the Town Hall at 6.00p.m. on 8 March and that Thames would be reporting back in relation to the circumstances around the flood and an update on the independent review of major bursts that is taking place

12. A business representative queried where the emergency operatives who attended the site had come from and why they had taken so long to arrive on site. In addition, she enquired when they had first been first contacted about the flood, the area that they had had to come from, given the delays in getting to the flood, and whether Thames had known where the valves were located that needed to be turned off. Thames responded that they did know the location of the valves, however it was a lengthy manual operation involving 4 people to turn off each valve. Thames

stated that they did not have available the information as to where the emergency operatives had attended from and residents expressed concern that this information was still not available some weeks after the incident

13.Thames stated that they had been informed at 5.10 a.m. on 5 December that there was a flood in Upper Street and the first Thames operative had been on site at 6.15a.m. However a number of checks had to take place before the valves could be turned off. This had taken some hours as it took 4 men to turn off each valve and each valve had to be turned manually 73 times

14.Discussion took place in relation to the reopening event for businesses in the Angel area that was to be funded by Thames Water and the additional measures that Thames could put in place to encourage trade back into the area following the loss of trade, (especially the loss of trade over the crucial Xmas period) and the damage to reputation, due to the flood. Suggestions included – Festive lights, Entrance lights to Camden Passage, Press releases in local press, Evening Standard and the Metro, contributions towards London in Bloom exhibit, advertising on websites/flyers, information in hotels in the area on Camden Passage traders, and also advertising in the Antiques Trade Gazette. It was agreed that the final list of additional measures should be the subject of discussion between Jackie Ambrosini of the Angel London BID, Pauline Coakley Webb of Pierrepont Passage and Matthew Hackshaw of Thames and a consensus view agreed

15.Businesses also expressed the view that the meeting that had been held that evening should have been held earlier and that this may have helped businesses to raise issues of concern previously

16.The Chair stated that a meeting between businesses and the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee (PPS) would be held later in March and that details would be notified through Jackie Ambrosini at the Angel BID. A meeting would be held with the PPS Committee and Thames Water on 8 March at 6p.m.