

**TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992  
TRANSPORT AND WORKS (INQUIRIES PROCEDURE) RULES 2004  
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990  
BOSTON BARRIER ORDER**

**DOCUMENT BBC/1/1  
PROOF OF EVIDENCE  
OF  
PETER BEDFORD  
BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**MARCH 2017**





# B O S T O N

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE21 8QR

### TRANSPORT AND WORKS ACT 1992 (TWA):

### BOSTON BARRIER WITNESS EVIDENCE

### PETER BEDFORD: LEADER, BOSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

1. I was first elected to serve as a Borough Councillor in 1991. I was proud to be elected as Leader by my fellow Councillors in May 2011, a position I still hold within the Council.
2. At the invitation of the Secretary of State, on behalf of the Borough Council I endorsed a formal statement of case to this Barrier Inquiry expressing the full support of Boston Borough Council.
3. I am a Boston Borough Council appointed representative on both Black Sluice and Witham Fourth Internal Drainage Boards. I am a member of the Executive Board at Black Sluice and attend Lincolnshire Association of Drainage Authorities Committee meetings.
4. I sit on the Lincolnshire Flood and Water Strategy Group, the group's role is to take a strategic overview of the entirety of flood risk and drainage management across Lincolnshire, including from all inland flooding sources and from the coast. I also sit on the South Forty Foot Steering Group.
5. Improved flood defence, particularly from tidal flooding has been a long standing documented priority for the Borough Council. The Council's Community Plan in place back in 2000 recognised the threat of rising sea levels to the Borough. The plan included a priority action to "upgrade flood defences to protect people and property". Further revisions of the plan since that time have sought to work with partners to reduce the risks of flooding in support of revitalising the town. Late in 2016 the Council again reflected on the challenges and opportunities faced by the area and unanimously adopted the current Council Plan "Boston –Open for Business 2016/17 – 2019/20". This plan features the support and aspirations to work in partnership to deliver the Boston Barrier. This matter is not one of party politics, it is clear that the Council has overwhelmingly and repeatedly expressed a desire for the project over a sustained lengthy period of time.
6. The tragic events of December 5<sup>th</sup> 2013 have strengthened the community resolve further.



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7. Mr Drury the Council's Chief Executive is to provide further evidence to this Inquiry on the impacts then and ongoing from that fateful night. However, in my role leading the Council and the whole community its members are elected to represent, I wish to confirm again this commitment to ensure soonest delivery of a barrier to avoid a repeat of December 2013, safeguard as best we can the homes and businesses so crucial to the Borough and its community, its continued economic development and growth.
8. Boston partners with South Holland District Council and Lincolnshire County Council and together by parliamentary order have established the South Lincolnshire Planning Authority. The plan development work is nearing completion and a date for the formal examination in public is awaited at some point later in 2017. Housing delivery and growth are fundamental with an anticipated 300 homes per annum in the borough area over the 25 year life of the plan. Building in Boston is expensive; currently there are consents for many hundreds of homes in Boston awaiting commencement. Flood mitigation costs for developers present unique challenges to ensure effective developer delivery and return.
9. Since 2014 the public sector has had to intervene to financially support affordable housing delivery. Government and EU funding via the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership and use of the Council's own capital reserves has necessitated £3,830,000 of investment to mitigate against flood risk to four hundred new homes. Flood mitigation is a hugely expensive task.
10. Flooding imposes significant costs on businesses too, in terms of damage to assets, disruption of activity and staff displacement. Climate change is expected to lead to a rise in flood risk, increasing the number of businesses and employees in areas of 'likelihood of flooding'.
11. The main conurbation of Boston is as a key centre for the borough's economic activity. The industrial estates of Riverside and Marsh Lane run adjacent to the River Haven and are the main employment areas which account for more than half of the boroughs' employment profile. These large employment areas are also identified within the emerging South East Lincolnshire Local Plan as major areas to support new employment growth.



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12. The borough of Boston has shown dynamic growth over recent times with a 19% rise in small and medium enterprise VAT registered businesses and a 50% rise in larger businesses in the last 6 years. Although this is mostly organic growth, the borough and especially Boston is starting to become attractive to inward investment in Agri-food growth. Yet, from the more recent events in December 2013, it is now fully understood by the business community and potential investors that another similar major flood event, could result in enormous disruption of their facilities, infrastructure, distribution of goods and the loss of productivity which in-turn influences their investment, implementation and location decision making process. Investors also need to factor in at considerable cost, resilience and protection measures for new developments in areas of 'likelihood of flooding'. Over 350 retail business within the town centre and over 200 commercial businesses and properties are located in areas within 'high likelihood of flooding' if the current defences are breached.
13. If a similar event happened again, the level of disruption would greatly affect the Agri-food supply chain and grade 1 agricultural land that contributes significantly towards the UK food output.
14. However, the Barrier will stimulate and be the catalyst for wider economic benefits including:-
  - Local, regional and national economy through investment, protection and job creation and tax revenues.
  - Potential new marina developments/waterfront accommodation.
  - Greater town centre vibrancy and vitality.
  - Increased offer in restaurants, cafes, leisure and hospitality encouraging greater spend and longer stays.
  - Increased catchment area promoting Boston as a value added destination.
  - Increased waterway tourism and improving the visitor economy will encourage local business growth and diversification to support and align with waterway growth.
  - Business expansion along the industrial corridors due to increased confidence and a better understanding of the level of flood risk through improved business continuity plans.
  - The unlocking of further development land.
15. Soonest delivery of the barrier and the consequent positive improvement in flood risk is fundamental to investor and developer confidence in the area. Our economic development aspirations supporting the Government's stated priority for growth and new house building are dependent on reputational improvement. Currently entering "Boston" into a well known search engine will throw up results showing flood risk and most recently December 2013. The barrier delivery is fundamental to the future wellbeing, sustainability and growth of this historic market town and borough.



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## STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I hereby declare that the contents of this proof of evidence are true.

.....  
Peter Bedford, Leader Boston Borough Council

Date .....14 March 2017.....



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