

# minutes



Meeting CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE SELECT COMMITTEE

Date Monday, 24 November 2008 (commencing at 10.00 am)

## Membership

Persons absent are marked with 'A'

## COUNCILLORS

Yvonne Davidson (Chair)  
Andy Stewart (Vice-Chair)

Reg Adair  
John Carter  
John Clarke  
Stan Heptinstall

A Dave Shaw  
Mark Spencer  
Yvonne Woodhead

## MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 October 2008 were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

## APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Shaw.

## DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

There were no declarations of interest by members or officers.

## CENTRAL NETWORKS

Russell Brown, Lee Wallace and Carl Henshaw from Central Networks attended to give their company's perspective on the resilience of critical infrastructure. Mr Brown explained that Central Networks was the second largest electricity distributor in the country, serving some 10 million people through 100,000 sub-stations. He drew attention to the separate roles of the generating companies and the transmission network operated by National Grid.

Mr Brown stated that security of the electricity supply was the cornerstone of the company's business, and that the company took seriously its role as a Category 2 organisation under the Civil Contingencies Act. If a fault developed, supplies could usually be switched. However a major fault could mean disruption for customers until equipment was repaired. Extreme weather caused one or two incidents each year, with flooding being a less frequent risk. He pointed out that distribution equipment was located close to customers, meaning that if developments were on

flood plains, so also would be the sub-station. There were locations where the sub-station was built on stilts. There was a Network Emergency Plan.

He referred to the Energy Networks Association (ENA), which brought together the distribution companies, was a link with the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), and addressed resilience issues. The association had encouraged a review of resilience to flooding across the industry. Central Networks had mapped its region to identify one-in-one-thousand flood risks, and used predictive modelling to anticipate the impact of climate change.

Members asked questions in the light of the presentation. In reply to Councillor Heptinstall, Mr Brown stated that because the network was interconnected, it would be difficult to identify particular points of weakness to terrorism. Mr Wallace added that DECC worked with the security services and the industry to protect key sites. Councillor Spencer assumed that key locations, such as hospitals, would have back-up generators. He asked whether there were any plans to put the overhead network underground. Mr Brown replied that the benefits of overhead cables were that faults were easy to identify and repair. He referred also to the cost of putting power lines underground, at around £1 million per mile. Mr Wallace pointed out that critical infrastructure was formally identified, so that a hospital's supply would receive additional support, while other organisations would be expected to devise their own business continuity plans. He also referred to the resilient Airwave network used by the emergency services.

Councillor Adair asked about accountability and relationships with the emergency services. Mr Brown explained that responsibilities were clearly defined; that ENA worked with the government and emergency planners to develop an agreed position across the industry; and there was regular contact with the gas and water industries. In reply to a further question, he indicated that there were two or three system failures each year, with generic plans which could be applied to different circumstances.

In reply to Councillor Stewart, Mr Brown said that all customers received the same service from Central Networks, regardless of whom they bought their electricity from. If there was a risk of insufficient supply, the first response would be to cut the overall voltage, with a rota of disconnections as the next level of response, in order to share out the supply as fairly as possible. Given warning of disruptions, Central Network would operate to a code which protected key customers. Mr Wallace explained that the government became involved with a serious event, for example the threats to supply by the floods in Gloucestershire in 2007, when Gold Command and Cobra had been activated.

Councillor Heptinstall referred to the comments at the previous meeting that Emergency Planning had some difficulty in engaging with Category 2 organisations. Mr Brown stated that the company took its Civil Contingencies Act responsibilities seriously. His team had to be selective about which resilience meetings they could attend, but did ask to be invited to any meeting where they could add something. In reply to Councillor Clarke, he said that Central Networks had a communication strategy in place in the event of disruption.

## **SEVERN TRENT WATER**

Jim Smith and Andrew Marsh attended from Severn Trent Water. Mr Smith explained that the company supplied water to three-quarters of Nottinghamshire, and sewerage services to almost the whole county. Their region stretched much further, and included parts of Gloucestershire affected by the 2007 floods. While there was no water grid covering the whole region, in some instances it was possible to re-route supplies. This was the case in Nottinghamshire, where water came from the Derwent Valley reservoirs or from groundwater. If one treatment works was out of action, supply could be switched to another. This had recently occurred with a problem at Church Wilne treatment works.

Mr Smith explained Severn Trent's arrangements for the emergency supply of water, which included tankers, bowzers and bottled water. They were obliged to provide 10 litres per household per day in areas without their regular supply, but aimed to provide 20 litres. This task was a major logistical exercise. Examples of their plans included tankers with a bar of taps at the rear, lists and layout plans of bowser locations and distribution centres for bottled water.

Mr Marsh explained how the company responded to contamination of the water supply. The main risk arose from cryptosporidium, a single cell parasite. Incidents occurred nationally once or twice per year, with the young, elderly and sick people most at risk of illness. The untreated water would be stopped at source, and customers advised to boil water. Disruption might continue for a few weeks or months. He went on to explain that the company was seeking to improve the resilience of its critical assets, provided that the regulator, Ofwat, allowed increased investment as part of Severn Trent's business plan.

In reply to Councillor Spencer, Mr Marsh stated Severn Trent had a 25 year water resource management plan. It would be an extreme drought if the Derwent Valley reservoirs were to dry up. He indicated that Nottinghamshire would continue to be supplied in such circumstances, through arrangements with adjoining water companies. Mr Smith explained that panic filling from bowzers in 2007 had been caused by people not knowing what to expect. The company had learned from 2007, and was introducing smaller tankers which could reach and refill bowzers more easily.

In reply to further questions from members, Mr Marsh said that Severn Trent was meeting its targets in relation to leakages, and had a long term renewal programme. Mr Smith stated that the chlorine was currently used for treating water at the Church Wilne works, but any hazard from fumes would diminish as treatment methods changed. Severn Trent's resilience plans relied on using the road network as much as possible. If the road network was unavailable, then a multi-agency response would be called for. There were no specific plans for such an eventuality. Mr March indicated that customers were generally satisfied with Severn Trent services (apart from billing) and feedback after the Gloucestershire incident had been positive.

In relation to engagement with resilience forums, Mr Smith explained that Severn Trent covered nine forums, and bordered another ten. They tried to engage at the point when they could have the most effective input. He believed either one-to-one or regional contact was most effective. He admitted that there was scope to improve.

Councillor Adair asked about the sewerage network's ability to cope with flooding. Mr Marsh replied that drainage responsibilities were very complex. Severn Trent was responsible for public sewers and for draining new developments, and could insist that sewers were of an adoptable standard. He added that the Pitt Review had recommended tidying up responsibilities for drainage.

### **WORK PROGRAMME**

It was noted that the emergency services and military liaison had been invited to give evidence on 15 December, and Lincolnshire County Council on 26 January.

The meeting closed at 11.50 am.

### **CHAIR**