

KENDAL ORAL HISTORY GROUP INTERVIEW 304F

Chris Hogg, male born 1970
Interviewed April 2016

Summary Sheet 304F, page one

Track 1, p.1

Respondent was the Mayor of Kendal at the time of the flood. He talks about how he came to Cumbria to work at the Wordsworth Trust. He later became a town and district councillor, moving to Kendal in 2014. There was little flooding in his ward.

Track 2, pp. 1-3

On Friday 4 December he was at an award ceremony at IBIS club. It was raining heavily. On Saturday 5th he was at a schools competition in the Westmorland Shopping Centre. Passed some flooding on Castle Estate on his way. Some schools unable to get into Kendal due to flooded roads and the event was called off. Detailed description of his journey home over Castle Hill – a foolish thing to do. It was dangerous.

Talks of the 'non flood' event in November when people were evacuated.

The flood alert was activated in the afternoon of 5th December. He stayed at home and followed events using radio and social media.

Track 3, pp.3-4

The advice put out by the police at this time was to stay at home.

Two reception centres were set up at the Town Hall (TH) and Leisure Centre (LC). He went to the LC as not able to cross river to the TH.

Description of the situation at the LC and how it was working. Very well organised.

Details of people stranded there – mostly visitors not locals.

200 people in the TH that night and 100 in the LC.

Went home and came back next day.

Track 4, pp.5-8

Returned to LC on Sunday morning. All OK there. Met up with other councillors to walk around the town to assess the scale of the problem. Heard amazing stories from people as to what had happened.

Loss of personal possessions was the thing that upset people the most.

Kendal councillors met on the Sunday evening in the TH. On the Monday an Emergency Centre was set up at the TH to log in people offering help and asking for help. At first staffed by volunteer councillors, and later other volunteers.

Donations from individuals and local supermarkets/ shops. Difficult to control social media requests for donations of bedding, etc.

Several lady volunteers spent days sorting out the various donations in different rooms at the TH. This was invaluable.

There were offers of other help such as transport.

(See next page)

Summary Sheet 304F, page two

Track 5, pp.8-10

On the Tuesday people started coming in asking for help.

They created a database to match offers with requests for help.

An efficient system created – a one-stop shop (Flood Relief Centre).

Problem in his ward (Willow Drive) with pumping/ flooding.

Describes the problem with social media and people bringing in bedding that was not needed. Details of how this became very hard to deal with. Tempers frayed.

Had to move out of the TH as this was needed for other events. They also needed to get someone to run the Flood Relief Centre.

The King's Food Bank agreed to take this on and premises were found in the Westmorland Shopping Centre. All the goods in the TH were moved there.

He notes the amount of voluntary work done by councillors during that first week.

He notes also that everything seemed to be working well.

Track 6, pp.10-12

Discusses in more details the positives and negatives of the wide range of social media activity through the first week after the flood.

He notes that many other places in Cumbria were affected and that additional materials were passed on as needed.

Delivery of donated items was very important.

For many people help was not needed immediately, but was needed more as time went on.

There was not always a match between donations and what was needed. This was a problem – and he talks about how this was dealt with.

Track 7, pp.12-14

He reflects on the events of the months since 5 December and the flood.

It was an extraordinary time. He had to draw back from it as he had an upcoming operation.

The Christmas event in the TH did take place. And after that the initial 'emergency' was over. However, longer-term problems have emerged since then, and this is still the case in April.

Many people just needed to talk – he thinks mental health issues will be important.

The community of Kendal pulled together in an impressive way. It is a great place to live.

Several community centres were set up by churches to provide food and other assistance to people.

The first week was the most intense in terms of activity.

The press soon moved on.