

BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP

MINUTES OF THE BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP'S MEETING AT THE SIWARD JAMES CENTRE AT 7.30PM ON TUESDAY, 28 JANUARY 2014

ITEM	ACTION
<u>ITEM 1 - WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION BY THE CHAIRMAN</u>	
<p>1. The Chairman welcomed everyone to the first Meeting of 2014 and summarised what had happened since the last Meeting on 26 November 2013:</p> <p>a. Despite all the rain over the past two months, we have been extremely lucky compared with the South of England, and especially the Somerset Levels. At no time has there been any major cause for concern, although there was flooding in Chapel Lane on New Year's Day and Mr Stephens and Mr Pritchard had had to take action to prevent it affecting Orchard Close.</p> <p>b. Flash Flooding. The telemetry system sent 0.5m alarms on 10 occasions, but none of these incidents went on to trigger the 0.9m alarm. The Chairman handed out copies of the telemetry system graph for the period since 15 December and noted that this showed that the highest the water had reached was just over 0.8m.</p> <p>c. River Flooding.</p> <p>(1) The Chairman reminded the Meeting that the River Lugg's level had risen on several occasions, as happens during most Winters. Smeadals Lane, Ketch Lane, and the Millcroft Road/ Ketch Lane junction were under water over Christmas Day (24-26 December) and again at the beginning of this month (2-4 and 9-11 January).</p> <p>(2) As usual, the 'Flood' warning signs had been put out on Millcroft Road; as usual, they had been largely ignored; as usual, a lot of drivers had then had to practise their reversing; and as usual, several had chosen not to do so and had come to grief. The Chairman remarked that he had no idea what the full tally was, but to his knowledge it had included, in no particular order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Several cars and vans.▪ One lady who had to be rescued from her car by Saffron's Garage.▪ One lady whose misfortune had resulted in an article in <i>The Hereford Times</i> condemning local residents as callous and uncaring.▪ One donkey. <p>d. Balfour Beatty.</p> <p>(1) The Chairman noted that Balfour Beatty would appear to have got off to a good start after taking over from Amey Herefordshire. They had</p>	

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<p>done an excellent job of clearing the Ketch Lane ditch and in jetting the drains on The Moor. They had also put out ‘Road Closed’ and ‘Flood’ signs on Millcroft Road, together with bollards, to supplement the signs that he had put out.</p> <p>(2) However, there were still two tasks outstanding:</p> <p>(a) Through the Parish Clerk, he had asked Balfour Beatty to take away the debris removed from the Ketch Lane culverts which is piled up on the verge at the junction.</p> <p>(b) The Parish Council and the Group are still waiting for the 200 empty sandbags which were ordered several months ago.</p> <p>2. <u>Apologies.</u> There were 30 members present and apologies were received from Mr Broomhead, Mr Mullenger, Mr Sebbage, Mr Stephens, Mrs Parker and Miss Easson.</p>	
<p><u>ITEM 2 – MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</u></p> <p>3. The Chairman asked members to approve the Minutes of the November Meeting which had been circulated earlier with the Agenda and which were also available in hard copy on the tables for those members without computers. Approval of the Minutes was proposed by Mr Dowler, seconded by Mrs Bowden, and agreed.</p>	
<p><u>ITEM 3 – MATTERS ARISING</u></p> <p>4. <u>Fallen Tree on the River Lugg.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman reminded members that in November Mr Minchin had reported that a large tree had fallen partially across the River Lugg. Miss Gibson had also confirmed that it covered very nearly the entire width of the river, that debris had already started to build up against it, and that there was the potential for a serious blockage to be created.</p> <p>b. The Secretary had reported this to the Navigation Officer and Mr Minchin had provided a map reference to help the Environment Agency to locate the tree. Mr Paul Senior, the Navigation Officer, had been very pleased with the efficiency of members and had asked that any similar obstacles be reported to the Agency’s free Hotline number 0800-807060. The Chairman urged those who see any potential or actual blockages on the River Lugg to report them on the Hotline number direct, rather than through himself or the Secretary. Obviously, where possible, members should include the relevant map reference in any such report. (Afternote. If it appears that no action has been taken after a report has been submitted, members are asked to notify the Secretary and she will contact Mr Senior direct).</p> <p>5. <u>Sandbags at the Parish Hall.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman recalled that at the last Meeting there had been a report that the tarpaulins covering the sandbags behind the Parish Hall had been removed and the bags were exposed to sunlight. He and the Secretary had replaced the tarpaulins on 28 November. However, a similar report had been</p>	<p>All</p>

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<p>made to the Parish Council at its Meeting on 6 January and so he had re-visited the Hall. This time it was apparent that, even though some sandbags had been removed, the tarpaulin was in place.</p> <p>b. He remarked that two points emerged from this:</p> <p>(1) In addition to the sandbags behind the Parish Hall, there are packs of salt. It is important to be sure which is which. While the sandbags need to be covered to delay their biodegradation, the salt bags do not.</p> <p>(2) It would be extremely helpful if, rather than reporting that the tarpaulin is no longer in place, members could simply replace it themselves, if they possibly can.</p> <p>6. The Chairman asked if members had any other points which they would like to raise from the previous Meeting, but there were none.</p>	All
<u>ITEM 4 - TREASURER'S REPORT</u>	
<p>7. The Chairman reported on behalf of the Treasurer that as at 28 January the balance in the Group's account stood at £2,385.07. There had been no income over the past month and the only expenditure had been £27.00 to the Seward James Trust for the hire of the meeting room.</p>	
<u>ITEM 5 – EXTERNAL CONTACTS</u>	
<p>8. <u>Environment Agency Study of Volunteering.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman reminded members that at the last Meeting the Group had been visited by Dr Bianca Ambrose-Oji. She was from Forest Research, the Social and Economic Research Group, which is part of the Forestry Commission. They had been tasked by the Environment Agency (EA) to look into the working relationship between the EA and voluntary workers and groups who were working with, or for, the Agency. She had wanted to find out why, some 5 years since the 2007 floods, the Group was still functioning, why members had volunteered in the first place, and what they each got from being a volunteer.</p> <p>b. She had now drafted her report and sent a copy to the Chairman for checking which he had done. He said that the report is five pages long, much of it taken up with explaining the background to the BFPG and how it works. However, it goes on to discuss:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The kind of people who get involved in the BFPG and why; • How the Group makes decisions; • The nature of our relationship with the Environment Agency and how it might be improved; • The future prospects for the Group. <p>c. The Chairman remarked that nothing in the draft report would come as much of a surprise to members, but, if anyone would like to see a copy, it could be sent to them electronically.</p>	

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<p>9. <u>Defra Evidence Base on Flooding Insurance.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman went on to report that early in January he had been contacted by Mr Gareth Williams, a researcher working for Brook Lyndhurst, a research consultancy based in Cambridge. They are involved in a project called Flooding Social Science Evidence Synthesis, which is bringing together a range of evidence on flooding for Defra and trying to identify gaps in the evidence that could inform further research.</p> <p>b. Part of this work is a case study and Mr Williams had said that he had looked at a number of options, including locations where research has already been carried out. However, he had settled on Bodenham, partly because no "official" research had been conducted there as yet.</p> <p>c. The 'theme' that he has been working on is flood insurance, in terms of people's attitudes and behaviours to it, and to property level protection in the light of flood insurance. For example, he had wanted to know of anyone in the BFPG or the wider community who had had any sort of dialogue with their flood insurance company, or had been refused flood insurance.</p> <p>d. He had conducted two telephone interviews, one with the Chairman and a second with the Secretary, each lasting well over half an hour. Amongst other things they had explained that the Environment Agency had recently issued a new flood risk map, showing new computer-generated mapping of both river and surface flooding, and since then there would appear to have been a sudden increase in property insurance premiums, regardless of the property's past history. The Chairman said that he and the Secretary had given Mr Williams as much information as they could and had also suggested that he should contact Mrs Mary Dhonau, whom he has subsequently also interviewed.</p> <p>e. The Chairman commented that, if there is any feedback on this study, he would obviously let members know. Meanwhile, he asked members that, if they had any insurance issues, either an additional excess on flooding or just a general premium increase of more than 10%, they should let the Secretary know. In addition to Mr Williams, Mrs Mary Dhonau is also very interested in such cases. He emphasised that the more information the Group are able to give to them, the more ammunition they and Defra will have when talking to the insurance industry.</p> <p>10. <u>Environment Agency Meeting.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman next reported that the Environment Agency is holding a meeting in Birmingham on 5 March 2014. This is described as the "first step on a 6 year journey [to] help shape the direction of new research to meet the future needs of local flood risk management. The Environment Agency, in partnership with Risk Management Authorities, is updating its research 'roadmap' to identify a five year programme of projects addressing science, knowledge, best practice and capacity building needs. The purpose is to coordinate research commissioning so that it genuinely meets user needs and is delivered more effectively and efficiently".</p>	<p>All</p>

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<p>b. Most of those present will be individuals with official positions or with technical expertise. However, the Chairman and Secretary have been invited to attend as people who have knowledge and experience of local flood risk management in a community setting and who might be able to offer different insights on flooding problems.</p> <p>c. Mrs Bowden suggested that if the Chairman and Secretary incurred any expenses as a result of this visit, that they should be reimbursed by the Group.</p>	
<p>11. <u>Cabinet Office Website.</u></p> <p>a. Continuing, the Chairman said that Defra had also told the Cabinet Office about the BFPG. As a result we have been contacted by Ms Rebecca Bowers, the Assistant Director, Communities Prepared, in the Civil Contingencies Secretariat at the Cabinet Office. She has been working on a new website which she says is “designed to support Local Resilience Fora (LRFs) and Local Authorities across the country to further develop and inspire community resilience projects and groups in their own areas. The portal will give LRFs and their local partners access to a wide range of resources which will help them share best practice with other LRFs facing similar challenges and also provide them with ‘ready made’ resources which they can use in their own projects and campaigns with local communities as they see fit. A substantial section of the portal is focused on flooding, an important part of which will be to illustrate a range of community based approaches, using examples of projects and flooding groups from across the country”.</p> <p>b. The Cabinet Office would like to “use the excellent example of the Bodenham Flood Protection Group to illustrate how community groups coming together regularly to maintain local drainage systems and water courses can be highly effective in reducing local flooding impacts and raising awareness amongst local residents”. The Chairman reported that Ms Bowers had sent a short paragraph which will provide a link to the BFPG’s own section on the Parish Website. He and the Secretary had checked and agreed this draft. The Cabinet Office website will be ‘live’ in a couple of weeks’ time and he would let members have the website’s address when it is known.</p>	
<p>12. <u>ITN News.</u> With all the recent flooding in the South of England, flood risk insurance is obviously a current news issue and the Chairman reported that on 14 January he had received a call from a researcher from ITN News asking about flood insurance. As with Defra, the researcher had been given information about the experiences local residents have had in their dealings with flood insurance providers.</p>	
<p>13. <u>The Hereford Times.</u></p> <p>a. The Chairman went on to remark that, as he had previously mentioned, Bodenham had featured in a <i>Hereford Times</i> article on 16 January. This had reported that a lady in her 70s, accompanied by her dog, had stalled her car in the flood water at the Millcroft Road/ Ketch Lane junction and had been there for two hours before being rescued. The rescue had apparently involved fire crews from both Bromyard and Leominster, as well as an ambulance and ‘first responders’ from Bromyard equipped with specialist lines and floats. The theme of the article had been that the local community is callous and uncaring because,</p>	

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<p>with one exception, people had driven past the lady without stopping to see if they could help her.</p> <p>b. The Chairman commented that there seemed to be a number of puzzling aspects to the article, apart from why nobody had stopped to help:</p> <p>(1) It had indicated that the lady's car had been pulled into the flooded area by waves caused by passing cars, which, given the low water level, seemed a little improbable.</p> <p>(2) The lady had apparently been stuck in her car for two hours. However, the photograph accompanying the article indicated that the water round the car was barely ankle deep. Even if the car had been stuck in the centre of the junction, it would only have been in about 12 inches of water, so one question not answered by the article was why, at the expense of getting her feet wet, the lady had not simply got out of her car. She may, of course, have been infirm, but, had she walked a few yards out of the flooded stretch, other drivers might well have stopped to assist, something they would not do when they were actually in the middle of negotiating the flood themselves.</p> <p>(3) Presumably the local emergency services are familiar with the Ketch Lane junction and the likely conditions, especially after a similar incident on 28 January 2013. It is therefore not clear why it was necessary to deploy two fire crews and other resources in this situation.</p> <p>c. Members reported that the article had generated some comment in the following edition of <i>The Hereford Times</i>. However, members agreed that, given how much local residents do to mitigate the effects of flooding in and around the Village, to characterise them as being uncaring had been uncalled for and unfair.</p>	
<p><u>ITEM 6 – FUTURE PLANS</u></p> <p>14. <u>Neighbourhood Plan.</u> The Chairman said that by now most members would be aware of the Neighbourhood Plan and of its importance, not just to the future development of Bodenham, but to the future risk of flooding in the Village. He asked that they keep themselves aware of what is going on and help where possible. There are plans to hold two Open Days at venues in the Parish at which local residents will be able to ask questions and provide feedback on any of the issues raised by the Plan.</p> <p>15. <u>Herbicide.</u> The Chairman reminded members that in June 2010 the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board (RLIDB) had given the Group 5 litres of Round up Bioactive. The Secretary had recently contacted the RLIDB and asked if they would kindly provide another 5 litres and at the Board's Meeting on 16 January, which the Chairman had attended, the request had been approved. Although the Secretary has not yet received the herbicide, there is no immediate requirement for it.</p> <p>16. <u>Fund-Raising Coffee Morning (Saturday, 8 February 2014).</u></p> <p>a. Mrs Davies told the Meeting that, although she had received some wonderful prizes for the Draw, she would be very grateful for more. Also there was still room for more prizes for the Tombola stall.</p>	<p>All</p> <p>All</p>

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<p>b. To keep matters simple, apart from the Cake Stall on which items would be priced individually, the Tombola and Draw tickets would cost £1. She asked for prizes for the Tombola to be given to Mrs Butcher and Draw prizes to herself. Mrs Nicolson (11, Ash Grove View) would appreciate it if any cakes could be delivered to her in advance for pricing.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p><u>ITEM 7 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></p>	
<p>17. <u>Orchard Close.</u></p> <p>a. Mrs Davies said that she had heard on Radio Hereford & Worcester that Cllr Price of Herefordshire Council was calling a meeting between farmers and Balfour Beatty with a view to clearing ditches and culverts in the Allensmore area where there is a flooding problem. She asked if a similar approach could be taken to try and resolve the situation in Mr Pugh’s field at the rear of Orchard Close.</p> <p>b. The Chairman reminded members of the history of the drainage system to which Mrs Davies was referring. After the flooding in April 1998 which had badly affected Orchard Close, Herefordshire Council had installed a ditch around the field West of the Close to take water to the Moor Brook. The actual work had been carried out by the RLIDB on behalf of the Council and the system included a culvert to allow footpath access to the fields to the North-West. Over time this footpath had morphed into a track way and part of the hedge had been removed so that the farmer now has vehicular access to these fields. Unfortunately, the design of the culvert is not fit for purpose and the ditch outside its exit is actually higher than the entrance. As a result the culvert is now almost totally blocked with silt and Orchard Close is placed at increased risk because the system cannot operate effectively.</p> <p>c. The Chairman said that this was far from being a new situation. Given that Herefordshire Council had installed the system, it was incumbent on them to maintain it. He had personally discussed this issue with both the past and current Chief Executive Officers of Herefordshire Council and had been supported in this by both the previous and current Ward Councillors. However, no progress had resulted, perhaps because, whilst Amey have been succeeded by Balfour Beatty, many of the same individuals wh`o had been less than helpful in dealing with the issue in the past were still in post. Since Balfour Beatty had shown such proactive support to the village in clearing ditches and drains, it might now be the right time to approach them again to try and get the matter resolved.</p>	
<p><u>ITEM 8 – DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING</u></p>	
<p>18. The Chairman confirmed that the next Meeting will take place on Tuesday, 25 February at 7.30pm at the Siward James Centre. There being no further business, the Meeting ended at 8.20pm.</p>	