

# **BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP**

## **MINUTES OF THE GROUP'S MEETING HELD AT THE SIWARD JAMES CENTRE, AT 8.00 PM ON TUESDAY, 23 FEBRUARY 2010**

### **Action**

#### **ITEM 1 – WELCOME BY THE CHAIRMAN**

1. The Chairman welcomed everyone and thanked Cllr Mitcheson for standing in as Secretary for the Meeting in the absence of his wife.
2. There were 25 members present and apologies were received from Mr David Ashford Sanford, Mrs Gwen Bowden, Mr Bob Bowden, Cllr Keith Grumbley, Mrs Babs Mitcheson, Mr Simon Nickols, Mrs Ronnie Parker, Mr Derek Sebbage and Mr Peter Watson.

#### **ITEM 2 – MATTERS ARISING**

##### **3. Fund Raising Coffee Morning and Table Top Sale.**

a. Cllr Clark thanked everyone who had helped to set up the Parish Hall the evening before the event and all those who had contributed to the actual running of the Coffee Morning or to tidying up after it.

b. He reported that the following amounts had been raised:

- Raffle - £102
- Cake Stall - £ 71
- Tombola - £103
- Coffee Stall - £ 60
- Tables - £ 80

c. Including £7 given in donations, the total raised had been £423. He added that there were no costs to be deducted from this figure because he, his wife and Tony Troia had, between them, paid for the hire of the Parish Hall for the occasion. The Members present warmly expressed their thanks to them for this.

##### **4. Herefordshire Council's Flood Study.**

a. Cllr Mitcheson reported that he and his wife had received two recent telephone calls from Mr Brian Faulkner, the consultant hydrologist who had been commissioned by Herefordshire Council to carry out a study of flooding in Bodenham and elsewhere in the County. Mr Faulkner had initially been disturbed at the poor response from Bodenham residents to his request for Flood Incident Report Proformas to be completed and returned to him with details of the flooding that had occurred in 1998 and 2007.

However, he had now received a total of nearly 20 such proformas, together with a spreadsheet prepared by the Secretary listing all the properties known to have been flooded in the Parish and giving estimates of the cost of the damage they had sustained.

b. Cllr Mitcheson stressed that it was difficult to put an accurate figure on the total damage caused by flooding, first, because in many cases householders did not know the exact cost since repairs had been paid for by their insurers and, second, because a number of householders had declined, for personal reasons, to provide any information - or even to admit that their houses had been flooded at all. However, the total estimated cost of the damage as shown on the Secretary's spreadsheet was in the region of £500,000.

c. Mr Faulkner had been very grateful for the responses he had received and for the information which the Secretary had gathered. He had not divulged what recommendations he would be making in his Study Report, but had indicated that he might be proposing a two phase approach to the mitigation of the risk of flooding in the Village, with an immediate project and a possible second, longer term scheme depending on what could be afforded. In this context he had pointed out that Bodenham was not the only village in the County which had suffered flooding and it was possible that other places might be accorded higher priority for the limited funding likely to be available.

d. Mr Faulkner had said that he would be presenting his Report to Mr Martin Jackson at Herefordshire Council in March. The Secretary had therefore invited Mr Jackson to attend the BFPG's Meeting on 27 April to talk about his reactions to the Study's recommendations. Unfortunately Mr Jackson was not available on that date, but it was hoped that he would be able to attend a subsequent Meeting.

**Secretary**

e. In response to questions from Members:

(1) Cllr Mitcheson explained that the reason why a copy of the Secretary's spreadsheet was not available for Members to see was that much of the information it contained had only been provided in return for a guarantee that it would remain confidential and only be used for the purposes of the Study. He was happy therefore to receive additional information, but could not disclose any.

(2) If any Member had any further information to provide, this would need to reach the Secretary as soon as possible because, as already mentioned, Mr Faulkner had indicated that he would be finalising his Report very shortly.

**All**

(3) Finally, Cllr Mitcheson confirmed that the Secretary had done everything possible to try and persuade individual householders to contribute to the Study. In particular, she had pointed out to them that a reluctance to divulge information for insurance reasons was misplaced - insurance companies would assess any flood risk to their

properties against the Environment Agency's floodplain mapping, regardless of whether a householder admitted to having been flooded or not. However, the Environment Agency's data referred solely to fluvial flooding from the River Lugg and were irrelevant to the present Study. In both 1998 and 2007 the damage had been caused by flash flooding from the surrounding terrain, compounded by lack of maintenance to drains, culverts and watercourses. It was ways of mitigating this risk - not that of fluvial flooding - that the present Study was primarily investigating.

### **ITEM 3 – TREASURER'S REPORT**

5. The Treasurer reported that the Group's account with the Parish Council currently stood at £1,402.65.

6. He noted that an anonymous donor was paying the room hire charge for the BFPG's January, February and March Meetings and expressed the Group's thanks for this generosity. This was warmly seconded by those present.

### **ITEM 4 – FUTURE OF THE NATIONAL FLOOD FORUM**

7. Cllr Tilford drew Members' attention to BBC and other reports that the National Flood Forum (NFF) was in danger of exhausting its existing funds and had launched a petition for government funding. If it ceased to operate the NFF's Chief Executive, Mary Dhonau, and her two full-time members of staff would lose their employment and the Charity would no longer be available as a source of advice and support on flooding matters.

8. He commented that, although he was not aware that any local residents had actually received any assistance from the NFF, anyone who wished to send the NFF a donation or to add their name to its petition could find the necessary information on how to do so on the Charity's website at [www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk).

### **ITEM 5 – REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF THE WINTER WEATHER AND THE RESPONSE TO IT**

9. Continuing, Cllr Tilford reported that Herefordshire Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee was conducting a review of the impact which the recent severe winter weather had had on local communities and on public services, and of the response of these services to the situation. As part of this exercise all Town and Parish Councils had been invited to submit their views on:

- What had gone well.
- What had not gone well.
- What improvements could be made.

- What action Town and Parish Councils had taken.

10. Cllr Tilford commented that he was only aware of two issues that had arisen - the provision of grit for roadside grit bins and the repair of potholes. His own experience had been that the grit bins on Bowley Lane had been kept reasonably well topped up and that many potholes had been temporarily repaired, although no doubt many more needed to be done.

11. He went on to say that the Parish Council had responded to the Review by suggesting where additional grit bins might usefully be provided and he asked that, if Members had any other contributions they felt the Parish Council should make to the Review, they should let him know well before the deadline of 15 March.

**All**

### **ITEM 6 – FLOODSAX**

12. The Chairman noted that Cllr Grumbley had forwarded information about a flood protection product called 'Floodsax'. This was a kind of artificial sandbag which, when dry, was light and easy to handle, but, when wet, swelled in size and became heavy enough to replace a normal sandbag. A leaflet was available for Members to read after the Meeting and full information on the system was available on the internet at [www.floodsax.co.uk](http://www.floodsax.co.uk).

### **ITEM 7 – FUTURE PLANS**

13. Mr Tony Troia said that he had nothing to add to the plans he had outlined at the last Meeting. As he had commented on that occasion, there was much to be done, including tasks in areas which the BFPG had never tackled before. He therefore considered that it would be essential for Working Party sessions to be held at fortnightly intervals and not just once a month as had been proposed the previous year. All he was waiting for now was for the lighter evenings to come so that Working Party sessions could start again on alternate Fridays.

14. In response to a question about the possibility of bringing forward the start of the Working Party 'season' by working during the day on Saturdays, Mr Troia said that, while other members might wish to do this, his own work commitments would prevent him from taking part.

### **ITEM 8 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

#### 15. **Certificate of Competence in the Use of Herbicides.**

a. Mr Tracy Morris reminded those present of the proposal made at an earlier Meeting that one or more Members might be trained in the use of herbicides. This would allow the Group to undertake the control of vegetation in watercourses by spraying at times when the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board (IDB) were unable to do so, and in areas for which the IDB were not responsible.

b. The Secretary said that he would investigate what training and costs were involved in obtaining the appropriate Certificate of Competence and would also consult Mr Les Harrison for the IDB's likely reaction to BFPG members taking on this role.

Secretary

16. **Refuse in Watercourses Adjacent to Orchard Close.** Cllr Clark reported that the previous Saturday (20 February) he, Cllr Tilford and Cllr Mitcheson had accompanied PC Jill Richardson and Mr Keith Eyles, the Enforcement Officer on Herefordshire Council's Community Protection Team, in a walk around parts of the Village. While visiting Orchard Close they had noticed that rubbish had been dumped in the ditches running along the edge of the field immediately behind the houses at the West end of the Close. As a result the Enforcement Officer would be dropping leaflets at all the houses concerned advising the householders of the regulations against fly tipping of this kind and of the potential penalties.

17. There being no further business, the Meeting was closed at 8.24 pm. The next Meeting will take place on Tuesday, 30 March 2010 at 8.00 pm.

**Signed: P Sanford, Chairman**

**30 March 2010**