

## **BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP**



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

### **REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** **(9 MAY 2016)**

#### **FLOOD RISK**

Although there was extensive flooding in the North of England and in Scotland over the winter, we have, once again, been very fortunate in having had relatively mild weather over the past few months. Nevertheless, there have been a number of storms, the Ketch Lane junction was flooded from 3 - 8 January 2016 and again on 8-9 February 2016. In addition, between 26 December and 28 March the early warning telemetry system in the Millcroft Brook issued 0.5m alerts on no less than seven occasions and on five of these the level rose high enough to trigger the 0.9m alarm. Despite this, there have never been any major concerns about flooding in the Parish. Indeed, observation of the actual water level in the Brook at the Brockington Road Bridge and in the relief channel at Millcroft showed that the telemetry system was over-estimating the water level by up to 0.3m: it needed re-calibration and this has now been done.

#### **GROUP ORGANISATION**

At the AGM on 25 August 2015 the members of the Committee and all the Area Representatives loyally and generously agreed to remain in post, thus ensuring continued stability for another year. The list of committee members and area representatives is attached at Annex A.

#### **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

As always, the Group's Meetings on the last Tuesday of each month have been very well supported, with an average attendance of 27 members.

#### **FLOOD PRECAUTIONS**

**Working Parties.** Although we have been helped by relatively favourable weather, one of the reasons why the risk of flooding has been low is that members of the Group have once again made sure that drains and watercourses, especially those in and around Bodenham Moor, have been properly maintained. For the eighth year in succession a full 'season' of working party sessions was conducted in 2015, with an average of 14 members attending every alternate Friday evening from April to October to clear away silt and cut back vegetation. Indeed, working parties have already started again for the 2016 season.

**River Lugg Internal Drainage Board (IDB).** As always, the Group has been greatly helped by outside agencies, the longest standing of which has been the IDB. The desilting work carried out by the Board in March 2015 on the relief channel played dividends over the past 12 months when the channel came into operation on two occasions. The Board has also again generously provided the BFPG with some of the herbicide which the Group needs to suppress growth alongside watercourses. This applies especially to the Orchard Close drainage system where the ditches can all too rapidly become choked with vegetation and where careful use of herbicide at the right time can save hours of hard work. The Group is accordingly extremely grateful to the IDB for its continued support.

**Balfour Beatty.** The Group's liaison with Balfour Beatty and, in particular, with their Locality Steward, Mrs Donna Tregenza has remained close. She has been very supportive and once again we would like to express our thanks for her efforts to get repairs carried out on drains and flap valves and to ensure that proper signage is in place when the Ketch Lane junction is flooded. We have always seen this latter task as one in which Group members can play a positive role by alerting Balfour Beatty when warning signs should be put out in Ketch Lane, the C1121 and Smeadal Lane and when they can be taken down again. After several years of offering to help in this way, this was the first in which that offer was accepted and several group members assisted by putting out, taking down and storing signs provided by, and (for legal reasons) as directed by, Balfour Beatty. The fact that some drivers remained under the impression that the signs did not apply to them, and that this winter four came to grief as a result, is perhaps beside the point.

**Sandbags.** As usual, during last summer the stocks of sandbags, both those held in cages and those on private premises, were checked and repaired or replaced as necessary. This resulted in the central reserve of both empty bags and filled sandbags being depleted and Balfour Beatty were asked to provide 200 empty and 100 filled bags to make good this deficiency. This they did and we are most grateful. (Balfour Beatty also supplied the Parish with two pallets of salt for use on local roads and pavements in cold weather and, since the salt is stored close to the sandbags, the Group has been assisting the Parish Clerk by looking after it).

### **PROPOSED HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS.**

Proposals for housing developments in Bodenham Moor and the effect these might have in increasing the already substantial risk to parts of the Village, such as Orchard Close, caused great concern to the Group over the past 12 months. As mentioned in the last Annual Report, members had generally accepted the requirement in Hereford Council's Local Plan (Core Strategy) for Bodenham to accommodate additional houses in the period up to 2031. They had also been supportive of the draft Bodenham Neighbourhood Plan's preference for the majority of these houses to be located in the field opposite England's Gate Inn, a preference partly based on an assessment that this would not increase the flood risk to other nearby properties. The same was not true of Shuker's Field where Bovis Homes were proposing to construct 49 houses and where there was real concern that such a development would increase the already significant flood risk to neighbouring properties in Chapel Lane and Orchard Close, worsen the risk to Brook House and Eastfields/ Gravel Farm, and make it even more likely that the adjacent pumping station would be flooded and that raw sewage would be released into the surrounding area and, *via* the Moor Brook, into the River Lugg.

The BFPG therefore supported Bell Homes' application to build 40 houses on the field opposite England's Gate Inn, as did many group members individually. This support was, however, caveated by requests that Bell Homes should make proper arrangements for the disposal of sewage and should ensure that their development did not increase the flood risk elsewhere in Bodenham Moor.

Although Herefordshire Council gave planning consent, it became clear that Bell Homes' arrangements for sewage disposal amounted to no more than connection to the already overloaded local sewerage system and that their proposals for controlling surface water run-off were not properly thought through and needed to be questioned. Some BFPG members were involved in this process, which was largely conducted by consultants acting for the IDB. Although changes resulted from this, it remains to be seen whether the finally approved system will prove adequate to prevent water levels from being raised in the Millcroft Brook above those currently experienced.

Of much greater concern to the Group was Bovis Homes' proposed construction of 49 houses on Shuker's Field. As reported to the last Annual Parish Meeting, the BFPG submitted a letter strongly objecting to the planning application, as did a large number of the Group's members individually. Herefordshire Council's Planning Committee eventually considered the application on 28 October 2015 at a meeting attended by some 50 Bodenham residents. The Committee refused the application, but it remains to be seen whether Bovis Homes or, indeed, another developer will make a second attempt despite this and despite the emerging Bodenham Neighbourhood Plan's clear rejection of Shuker's Field as a development site.

### **FLOOD RISK INSURANCE**

Occasional requests for help and advice on house insurance continue to be received, mainly from new residents arriving in the Parish. The long-promised Flood Re scheme has just come into operation and, in theory, this should resolve the difficulties which a small proportion of householders experience. However, it is still too early to say how effective the scheme will prove to be in practice, especially given that participation in it by insurance companies is voluntary.

### **OUTSTANDING ISSUES**

**Inadequate Culverts.** As mentioned in previous reports, the poor design and inadequate capacity of the Ketch Lane culverts and the partial blockage of the 'Pugh's Field' culvert remain the Group's main concerns. These have been raised with Herefordshire Council on a number of occasions and, indeed, Mr Mark Watkins of Balfour Beatty visited the Chairman and Secretary on 30 October 2015 and was fully briefed on both issues. However, yet again we have received no response.

### **EXTERNAL CONTACTS**

**Proposed Visit by the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change.** Early in the New Year we received a request for the BFPG to host a visit by The Rt Hon Amber Rudd MP, the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change. This was to be on Friday, 8 January 2016 and preparations for this were completed. However, in the event the visit was cancelled at short notice.

**Herefordshire Council.** A year ago we reported with regret that one of our greatest supporters, Cllr Jeremy Millar, had decided to move away from Herefordshire. However, it is pleasing to say that his place as our Ward Councillor has been taken by Cllr Bruce Baker, who has proved equally interested in the Group and its activities, to the extent even of attending some of its monthly meetings. We warmly welcome his support.

**Environment Agency and Natural England.** The Group does not include the River Lugg in its self-imposed list of responsibilities, but, given that the BFPG is an organisation with a flood prevention remit, it is perhaps inevitable that the Secretary should receive reports from local

residents about issues relating to the River. Most of these concern fallen trees which are causing actual or potential blockages in the River and these are referred to the Environment Agency. However, others concern activities which potentially contravene environmental legislation, such as the construction of hard standing on banks or the felling of trees, and these are passed to Natural England.

### **The Wye Catchment Partnership.**

a. The River Wye and Usk Foundation and National Resources Wales are jointly hosting The Wye Catchment Partnership which “was established in 2014 with support from Defra and the Welsh government to bring the farmers, foresters, planners, charities, statutory bodies and people who have an interest in the Wye together to secure better outcomes for the Wye catchment and the environment”. In particular, the Partnership has been tasked with delivering the River Wye Nutrient Management Plan aimed at reducing the level of phosphates in the Wye and Lugg to meet EU standards.

b. On Monday, 15 June 2015 the Chairman and the Secretary attended a Wye Catchment Partnership seminar at Grange Court in Leominster on the subject of “Delivering the Nutrient Management Plan”. This lasted all day and comprised a series of presentations on the work of the various organisations within the Partnership, notably the Foundation itself, Natural Resources Wales, the Environment Agency and Welsh Water. These covered current work on the catchment, current phosphate levels in the Wye and the Lugg, the effect of proposed developments, and so on. It provided a useful occasion on which both to meet other individuals and agencies who might provide the Group with assistance and also to raise with Welsh Water and with those present generally the BFPG’s concerns about the impact of proposed housing developments in Bodenham and elsewhere on the environment.

## **RESEARCH**

### **Flood Resilience at a Community Level in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.**

a. As mentioned in the last Annual Report, the Group was approached by Mr Steven Forrest, a PhD Researcher on Flood Resilience at the University of Groningen, in which he invited the Group to take part in an on-line survey. This was part of a four year research project being conducted by an international team based at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands and Westminster University in England. The research is funded by the University of Groningen and is focussing on ways of increasing flood resilience at a community level in both countries. The survey was aimed at obtaining a better understanding of the status of flood groups across the UK and their roles in local flood risk management and in community resilience to flooding. It was completed by the Chairman.

b. Defra suggested to Mr Forrest that he should follow up the survey by interviewing the BFPG direct and the Chairman and Secretary had a two hour meeting with Mr Forrest at Imperial College in London on Tuesday, 19 May. He subsequently sent the Group a progress report on the project, which compared the recent increase in the number of flood action groups in the UK with the situation in the Netherlands where none at all exist. Mr Forrest suggested some possible reasons for this. For example, in the Netherlands flood action groups were set up by monks and farmers as long ago as the 13<sup>th</sup> Century and over time these have become institutionalized as government water boards with the power to levy taxes. In the Netherlands the constitution places a responsibility on the Government to “keep its citizens’ feet dry”, whereas in the UK the Government has no such formal obligation. As

a result, while in the UK recent floods have attracted great media interest and public concern, in the Netherlands there is currently high public trust in the government water boards, matched by a low level of flood risk awareness.

## **EXTERNAL PUBLICITY**

**BBC Hereford & Worcester.** On 2 June 2015 the Chairman was contacted by Andrew Easton of BBC Hereford & Worcester and recorded a short interview on the Group's receipt of HM The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) (see below) and what the BFPG had achieved over the past seven years. This was broadcast that afternoon.

### **The Hereford Times.**

- a. There was a brief mention of the Group's QAVS Award in *The Hereford Times*' edition of Thursday, 4 June 2015.
  
- b. Mr Bill Wiggins, MP for North Herefordshire, mentioned the BFPG in his 'View from Westminster' column in the Thursday, 7 January 2016 edition of the paper. He did so at the time of severe flooding in the North of England and in Scotland and the need for flood defences to be properly maintained, commenting that "Groups like the Bodenham Flood Prevention Group do sterling work in ensuring that no part is neglected".

## **SOCIAL EVENTS**

**Annual Barbecue.** The Annual Barbecue was held on Saturday, 27 June 2015 at Willow Cottage, Maund Bryan by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Schwartz. In most unusual weather for a BFPG occasion – it was dry and sunny throughout the event – some 35 members and guests enjoyed a most successful evening in pleasant surroundings with the usual barbecue fare enlivened with Canadian style spare ribs.

**Annual Bonfire Party.** The Annual Bonfire Party was to have been held at Millcroft Farm on Saturday, 3 October 2015. However, it was cancelled as a mark of respect for Mr Leslie 'Nick' Nicolson, one of the Group's most stalwart members, who, sadly, had died two days before. His funeral on 16 October 2015 was attended by the Chairman, Secretary and a number of other BFPG members.

**Annual Quiz Night.** The annual Quiz Night was held on Friday, 27 November 2015 in the Parish Hall. In a very enjoyable and successful evening some £365 was raised for BFPG funds. Particular thanks must go to Mrs Griffiths and her team of Mrs Watson, Mrs Dowler, Mrs Hartfield and Mrs Fryer for making all the arrangements and to Mrs Tricia Sanford, her daughter Felicity Sanford and husband Steve Coney for once again providing and administering the quiz itself.

**Annual Coffee Morning.** The Group's annual Coffee Morning was held on 6 February 2016 in the Siward James Centre and was again very well attended, raising just over £364 towards the Group's work. As always, we are extremely grateful to everyone who supported us so generously and, in particular, to Mrs Liz Davies and her team for making the event such a success.

## **HM THE QUEEN'S AWARD FOR VOLUNTARY SERVICE**

The Group's receipt of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service was announced on 2 June 2015. This was a great honour and a most welcome recognition of all the time, effort and hard work which so many members of the BFPG have contributed entirely voluntarily over the past seven years, not only to keeping local residents safe from flooding, but also to improving the life of the community generally.

The QAVS is the highest award given to local volunteer groups across the UK to recognise outstanding work in their communities. The Awards were created in 2002 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee and winners are announced each year on 2 June – the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. The BFPG was one of 187 charities, social enterprises and voluntary groups to receive this prestigious award this year. The Group was listed on Page 10 to Supplement 61244 of *The London Gazette* dated 2 June with the citation "Protecting the residents of Bodenham Parish from flooding by a range of measures, and providing support to vulnerable individuals."

The presentation of the Award took place on Friday, 23 October in the Parish Hall and was attended by 25 official guests representing agencies and organisations which have supported the Group and 58 members of the Parish Council and of the BFPG with their partners. The Countess of Darnley, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Herefordshire, who was accompanied by Lord Darnley, presented the Chairman, on behalf of the Group, with the Award certificate and a piece of English Crystal engraved with the QAVS logo. (The Group now has permission to use the official logo (at the head of this Report) on its publications and website). Speeches were made by Mr Jeremy Millar, the former Ward Councillor, by Air Vice Marshal Michael Smart DL, who read the citation for the Award, by Lady Darnley, and by the Chairman.

Following the short ceremony all those present were welcomed to a reception with the opportunity to meet the Lord Lieutenant and other guests and to view a display of photographs illustrating the work of the BFPG since its formation.

### **SUMMARY**

It has become customary to end the Annual Report with the words "once again, this has been a busy and most successful year for the Group", but never has this been truer than this year, with receipt of HM The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service as the BFPG's crowning achievement. Although we are a self-help group, we could not have got this far through our own efforts alone and our sincere thanks must go to Balfour Beatty and to the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board for their support, as well as to Mr Rod Hawnt and the Hydro-Logic Group for their continued and generous maintenance of the telemetry system. However, at the risk of repeating what has been said many times before, the key to the continued success of the Group has been the enthusiasm and hard work of its members. Accordingly, the greatest thanks go to all those who have continued to support the Group, whether by taking an active part in working party sessions, by attending and contributing to meetings, by helping to organise social events, or by lending their support in any other way.

K.A.M.

**BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP**  
**2015/16 Committee and Area Representatives' List**

**Chairman/ Operations Manager:** Cllr Tony Mitcheson  
**Treasurer/ Secretary:** Mrs Babs Mitcheson

**The Moor:**

**The Moor Road:** Mr Tony Clark  
**Orchard Close/ Chapel Lane:** Mr Robert Pritchard  
**Brockington Road:** Mr Simon Dowler  
**(2 -31& 35)**  
**Brockington Road:** Mrs Rebecca Burnill  
**(1, 32-34, 36 – 42A)**  
**Brockington Road (43- 54):** Mrs Gwen Bowden  
**Siward James:** Mrs Victoria Paterson  
**Ash Grove Close:** Mrs Jean Fryer  
**Ash Grove View:** Mr David Harris  
**Ash Grove View:** Cllr Alec Avery  
**Millcroft Road:** Miss Barbara Gibson

**Bodenham Village:**

**Bridge to War Memorial:** Mr Mike Mullenger  
**Church and Bodenham Village:** Mr David Ayshford Sanford

**Maund Bryan:**

Mr Philip Broomhead