

BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP



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

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING (8 MAY 2017)

FLOOD RISK

Despite Storms Angus, Doris and Ewan we have, once again, been very fortunate in having had relatively little rainfall over the past year; so little, indeed, that there have been only four occasions on which the early warning telemetry system has signalled a rise of the water level in the Millcroft Brook above 0.5m. There have therefore been no major concerns about flooding in the Parish over the last twelve months.

GROUP ORGANISATION

At the AGM on 30 August 2016 the members of the Committee and all the Area Representatives 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

Throughout the year the Group's Meetings on the last Tuesday of each month have been very well supported, with an average attendance of 24 members.

FLOOD PRECAUTIONS

Working Parties. As always, we have not relied on there being good weather and have taken active measures to ensure that the key drains and watercourses in Bodenham Moor and elsewhere have been properly maintained. For the ninth year in succession a full 'season' of working parties was conducted in 2016, with an average of 15 members attending a total of 12 evening sessions from April to October to clear away silt and cut back vegetation. Indeed, working parties have already started for the 2017 season.

River Lugg Internal Drainage Board (IDB). Once more, the Group has been greatly helped by outside agencies, especially the IDB. The Board has again generously provided the BFPG with some of the herbicide needed to suppress growth alongside watercourses and thus greatly reduce the time and physical effort which members have to spend on maintenance work. The Board has also carried out its usual mowing and spraying of those sections of local watercourses which its contractors can reach. The Group is extremely grateful to the IDB for this continued support, the true value of which was clearly demonstrated in the autumn when the Group came to tackle the section of the Millcroft Brook between the Ketch Lane culverts and the River Lugg. Owing to

circumstances beyond their control the IDB had been unable to spray this stretch and as a result the vegetation there had become a veritable jungle. This meant that, instead of being a fairly minor task, the clearance of this last 150m of the Brook before the River proved to be a real challenge and one which we must hope to avoid having to face in future.

Sandbags.

- a. As usual, with one exception, the stocks of sandbags, both those held in cages and those on private premises, were checked and repaired or replaced as necessary. The exception was the cage on the school carpark which members were unable to inspect because the Group had run out of empty replacement bags.
- b. Herefordshire Council had announced a change in its policy for providing sandbags to take effect from 1 April 2017. Thereafter, as a cost cutting measure, the Council will no longer be providing either filled or empty sandbags and parishes were allowed one last free issue of 150 empty bags before that date. These had been ordered, but unfortunately had not yet been delivered when the working party season ended. Two-thirds of the allocation have now been received and the check of the school carpark cage was completed on 27 April.
- c. The change in Herefordshire Council's policy has meant that, with parishes having to purchase their own sandbags and perhaps choosing to pass the cost on to their residents, sandbags are likely to become attractive items - even now, when they are still nominally 'free', they have been known to 'disappear' from the BFPG's reserve stock of sandbags at the Parish Hall. The Parish Council therefore agreed at its 7 November 2016 Meeting to procure a second hand 8 x 10ft metal container in which the stock at the Parish Hall could be secured. The container was installed at the Hall on 6 December and 216 sandbags were moved into it on 20 December. It now remains for the container to be painted to protect it from rust and to allow it to blend better into its surroundings, a task which members will carry out when the weather improves.

The Early Warning Telemetry System. On 9 May 2012 Hydro-Logic Ltd (now Hydro International) installed the early warning telemetry system next to the Brockington Road bridge to monitor water levels in the Millcroft Brook and to alert members of the Group to any potential emergencies caused by flash flooding. The system was generously donated to the Parish by the firm's Managing Director, Mr Rod Hawnt, together with free maintenance of it for five years. That period has just come to an end, and throughout it the system has proved invaluable in ensuring that those members most at risk have had adequate warning to prepare for any possible flooding incident. Happily, thanks in large part to the watercourse clearance work which the Group has carried out each year, no such incident has occurred, but the risk remains. For that reason the Parish Council agreed at its 5 December 2016 Meeting to fund an annual contract with Isodaq Technology, part of Hydro International, to cover the maintenance of the system from May 2017 onwards.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS.

The Group's last two annual reports have highlighted the proposals for major housing developments in Bodenham Moor which might have the effect of increasing the already substantial flood risk to parts of the Village. One of these developments – that by Bell Homes on the field opposite England's Gate Inn – is now rapidly approaching completion, with some of the 40 houses already occupied. This field was the Parish's preferred site for new housing, as expressed in the emerging Bodenham Neighbourhood Development Plan, a preference partly based on an assessment that its development was not likely to increase the flood risk to other nearby properties. As noted in the last annual Report there were concerns about the SuDS planned for the control of surface water run-off

from the site into the Millcroft Brook, as well as about the arrangements for sewage disposal into the already overloaded local sewerage system. It therefore remains to be seen whether or not that assessment was well founded.

As again reported previously, the other major proposed development was that by Bovis Homes for 49 houses on Shuker's Field. This caused – and continues to cause - 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, Eastfields/ Gravel Farm and the C1125, and make it even more likely that the adjacent pumping station would again be flooded and that raw sewage would once more be released into the surrounding area and, *via* the Moor Brook, into the River Lugg. Although Herefordshire Council's Planning Committee refused consent to Bovis Homes' application on 28 October 2015, Bovis Homes have made it clear that they continue to be interested in developing the site.

FLOOD RISK INSURANCE

The Flood Re Scheme, which was introduced last year, allows insurance companies to insure themselves against having to pay out large sums of money in the event of widespread flooding incidents, such as we have seen in Somerset, the Thames Valley, the North of England and in Scotland in recent years. By being able to underwrite their risk against an insurance industry central fund, insurance companies should be able to offer lower flood risk premiums and excesses to householders in high flood risk areas.

On 11 August the Secretary received a telephone call and also an e-mail from Mr Cameron Penny, Head of Financial Services at Hanover Communications International Ltd, who was looking for case studies of people who have benefitted from Flood Re backed insurance. The Secretary spoke of her own dealings with property insurance companies and also circulated his details to members so that they could respond directly to him, if they wished.

Unfortunately, not all insurance companies are participating in the Scheme, not all house owners are eligible for it, and, because insurance companies take many different factors apart from flooding into account when assessing premiums, it is still important for householders to shop around for the cover best suited to their needs. In short, although the Scheme has not been operating long enough for much experience of it to be gained, it does not appear to be the once hoped for panacea for flood insurance.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

The Ketch Lane Culverts and the Orchard Close Drainage System.

- a. On Friday, 5 August 2016 Mr Bill Wiggin, the MP for North Herefordshire, visited the BFPG's working party session that evening. There were also two visitors from the Environment Agency, Mr Jason Walker from the Flood Resilience Team at Tewkesbury, and Mr Mark Bowers, the Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for the West Midlands Area based in Shrewsbury. The opportunity was taken to show all of them the Ketch Lane culverts and to brief them on the continuing problems which these cause the Group. The Chairman also briefed them and Cllr Baker, who was also present during the visit, on the long-standing issue of the Orchard Close culvert. It was agreed that these were multi-agency issues which Herefordshire Council did not have the resources to tackle alone and the Chairman was asked to provide a full brief on each issue as the first step in an initiative to resolve them. This he did.

b. The next step was to hold a meeting with Herefordshire Council and Balfour Beatty Living Places (BBLP) which Cllr Baker kindly arranged. This took place at the Council's offices in Plough Lane on Wednesday, 24 August and resulted in a very positive outcome in that Herefordshire Council agreed to commission BBLP to investigate possible options and costs for making improvements both at Ketch Lane and Orchard Close. Herefordshire Council undertook to call a second meeting when the outcome of BBLP's investigation was known.

c. Although it was originally hoped that the study reports would be completed by Christmas, they have still not been issued. However, some progress has been made in that Mr Joel Hockenhill, BBLP's Senior Drainage Engineer, called an on-site meeting on Wednesday, 8 February to discuss the Orchard Close culvert. Drawings of a possible replacement culvert were discussed, but no decisions were made. Our present understanding is that the scheme has been agreed in principle, but that the landowners, Mr and Mrs Pugh, have requested another on site meeting to agree the details. The question of cost has not yet been raised, but no doubt the Parish Council will be asked for a contribution in due course.

d. We are still awaiting news of the study into the possible replacement of the Ketch Lane culverts.

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

Herefordshire Council.

a. In December 2016 Herefordshire Council began a six week Consultation on its draft Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, ending on 30 January. The draft Strategy, which provides an overview of flood risk in the County, sets out five key objectives for managing local flood risk:

- Understand flood risks throughout Herefordshire
- Manage the likelihood and impacts of flooding
- Help the community to help themselves
- Manage flood warnings, response and recovery
- Promote sustainable and appropriate development

b. On 26 January the BFPG and the Parish Council separately submitted extensive comments on the draft.

The Patron's Lunch. At very short notice the Lord Lieutenant received an invitation to nominate up to eight people from the membership of groups in Herefordshire which had received HM The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service (QAVS) to receive complimentary tickets to attend The Patron's Lunch. This was a street party to celebrate Her Majesty's 90th Birthday being held in the Mall on Sunday, 12 June for 10,000 members of the over 600 charities and organisations of which she is patron. It was the culmination of a weekend of celebrations starting with a Service of Thanksgiving in St Paul's Cathedral on Friday, 10 June and followed by The Trooping of the Colour on Horseguards on Saturday, 11 June. BFPG members were asked whether any of them wished to apply for the event, but disappointingly there were no volunteers. The Chairman and Secretary therefore represented the Group at it.

Environment Agency. As already mentioned, Mr Jason Walker from the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team at Tewkesbury, and Mr Mark Bowers, the Flood & Coastal Risk Manager for the West Midlands Area, visited the Group's working party session on Friday, 5 August. After the working party had finished, Mr Jason Walker presented the BFPG with nine high visibility vests kindly donated by the Agency.

New Year Honours. The Group's achievements were recognised in the New Year Honours List by the award to the Secretary of the British Empire Medal on behalf of the Group for their community work in flood protection. The Medal will be presented by the Lord Lieutenant at a BFPG garden party at Millcroft Farm on Sunday, 23 July, followed by the BFPG's Annual Barbecue.

RESEARCH

Household Flood Protection Survey. On 10 May 2016 the Secretary received an e-mail from Ms Carly Rose, a PhD Researcher at the University of the West of England in Bristol, regarding an on-line survey looking at how people deal with the risk of flooding. The Survey comprised a series of questions about the respondent's experience of flooding and the measures taken to protect against a recurrence. These were then followed by questions which appeared to be designed to assess the respondent's psychological profile and approach to risks in general. The e-mail was circulated to those BFPG members with internet access to give anyone who wished to respond the opportunity to do so.

The Role of Gender during Natural Disasters in the UK. On 9 August the Secretary received an e-mail from Ms Naomi Harper, a MA student at University College London, who was researching the role of gender during natural disasters in the UK to see whether there are underlying disparities in how women are affected by floods. She had found that in developing countries women are often worse off after a disaster than men and she was wondering whether the same happened in the UK. She therefore wanted to chat to women affected by flooding to identify ways in which they feel more or less affected than men. A telephone interview duly took place on 13 August between her and the Secretary.

Software Application for Flood Data Integration.

- a. On 5 December the Secretary received an e-mail from Stonehaven Technology Limited, a company based at the University of Essex's Colchester Campus. They asked us to try out a software application which they had developed and which they believe would be "effective in giving the right information to the right people in a dynamic flood situation" by integrating together all the up to date flood-related data applicable to the user's location. These data are available from many different sources, such as local river gauges, flood risk maps, Environment Agency flood alerts, local weather forecasts, etc. and we already use them all the time. The potential advantage of the application is that they can all be accessed from one place and related to each other. For example, river flood risk maps and surface water flood risk maps can be combined and/or rain gauge locations can be superimposed on them, and so on.
- b. Given that the request was received just before Christmas, it was not possible to give the application an extensive trial, but the Chairman tried it out and responded to the Company with his comments. There has been no acknowledgement of this response or indication of the Company's plans for the future of the application.

EXTERNAL PUBLICITY

The Hereford Times. As already mentioned, on 5 August 2016 Mr Jason Walker presented the BFPG with nine high visibility vests kindly donated by the Environment Agency. Mr Wiggin MP was also present and a photograph of him with members of the Group, together with a short description of the event, appeared in *The Hereford Times* on Thursday, 25 August 2016.

SOCIAL EVENTS

Annual Barbecue. The Annual Barbecue was held on Saturday, 30 July at Rowberry Lane by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Stephens. A most successful evening was enjoyed by about 40 members and guests.

Annual Bonfire Party. The Group's annual Bonfire Party took place at Millcroft Farm on Saturday, 8 October in pleasant weather with only one very light shower to add an appropriate flavour to the event. Some 30 members and guests enjoyed the traditional mulled wine and sausage rolls, supplemented by a large variety of other food and drink generously contributed for the occasion by those attending.

Annual Quiz Night. The Group's final social occasion in 2016 was the Annual Quiz Night in the Parish Hall on Friday, 25 November. At 36 attendance was slightly down, as was the income to BFPG funds of £277 after the deduction of expenses. Nevertheless, it was, as always, a most enjoyable and successful evening and particular thanks must go to Mrs Anita Griffiths and her team for making all the arrangements and to Mrs Tricia Coney, her daughter Felicity Sanford and husband Steve Coney for once again providing and administering the quiz itself.

Annual Coffee Morning. The BFPG's annual Coffee Morning was held at the Siward James Centre on Saturday, 4 February. It was very well attended and the Group are very grateful for all the support it received. The event raised a total of £370 and special thanks must go to Mrs Liz Davies and her team of helpers for once again organising such an enjoyable and successful occasion.

SUMMARY

In last year's Report I commented that a busy and successful twelve months had been crowned by the achievement of receiving the HM The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service. As I have indicated above, the Group has not rested on its laurels, but has continued to do everything it can to protect the local community from flooding. As always, we have not done this alone and our thanks must once again go to the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board, to Mr Rod Hawnt and the Hydro-Logic Group, and to Balfour Beatty for all their help and support. Special thanks also go to our District Councillor, Cllr Bruce Baker, for his interest in our activities and for the very practical advice and assistance he has given us during the year, most particularly by arranging our meeting with Herefordshire Council to discuss our concerns over the Ketch Lane and Orchard Close culverts. However, I can do no better than to repeat what I said last year, that the key to the continuing 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
2016/17 Committee and Area Representatives' List

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

The Moor:

The Moor Road: Mr Andrew Maxwell
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