

BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING **(13 MAY 2013)**

The past year saw the fifth anniversary of the flooding which affected so much of Bodenham on 20 July 2007 and it is pleasing to be able to report two successes. First, despite weather which has, at times, left the ground saturated and the risk of flooding increased to 2007 levels, there has been no repetition of that kind of event. Second, 2013 also saw the fourth anniversary of the formation of the BFPG on 19 August 2008 and, despite the passage of time and, indeed, the absence of any flooding emergencies, the Group continues to flourish with both its meetings and its working parties, as well as its social events, being well supported.

MEETINGS

The Group has held its monthly Meetings as usual throughout the year, with the exception of December. The AGM was on Tuesday, 28 August when all committee and area representative posts were again open for election. All the current incumbents volunteered to serve for another year, with the exception of the Chairman and Secretary. However, there being no other nominees for these two posts, they, too, were voted back into office. A list of committee members and area representatives is attached for the record.

'PROJECT BODENHAM'

Project Bodenham was the provision of flood protection equipment to 35 houses in the Village, funded by a grant of some £160,000 from the Environment Agency. The deadline for its completion had been 31 March 2012, but issues over whether a few houses should, or should not, be included in the Project and, if so, to what extent, had led to delays in decision-making which, in turn, had resulted in it being subject to manufacturing and installation delays which could, and should, have been avoided.

By May last year the Project was therefore still not complete. Barriers still had to be fitted to two houses and this work was not eventually finished until September. By then problems had been reported with some doors provided by Flash Flood Doors Limited which did not appear to be completely watertight. These were finally resolved at an on-site meeting on 6 November 2012 at which point Project Bodenham was finally signed off with Amey Herefordshire and with the main suppliers, UK Flood Barriers Limited. Particular thanks go to the latter who provided a superb service to the Village throughout. None of the delays were of their making, but they worked round them and, despite major other contracts elsewhere in the country, they remained committed to resolving our local problems efficiently and effectively right to the end.

SEVERE WEATHER

Like the rest of the UK Bodenham suffered from unusually heavy rainfall throughout much of the past year, with periodic bouts of heavy rain falling on already saturated ground having the potential to cause flash flooding at almost any time. In this situation the Hydro-Logic flood warning telemetry system, generously donated to the Parish by Mr Rod Hawnt, proved invaluable. It was installed in the Millcroft Brook at the Brockington Road bridge on 9 May 2012, was commissioned two days later, and over the past 12 months has provided a continuous record of the water level in the Brook, sending out alarms when this has risen significantly

Initially it was set to trigger alerts when the water level rose to 0.5m and 1.0m, but experience over several months showed that these could be adjusted, both to avoid alerting residents unnecessarily early during an incident and to save money on messaging costs. As a result of this ‘calibration’ process only a few key members of the Group now receive warnings at the 0.5m point, with the remainder receiving a first warning at 0.8m and a second at 1.2m.

Over the past 12 months the Brook has risen above 0.5m a total of 23 times, but has only exceeded 1.0m on 5 occasions, these being on 18 July, 24 September, 25 November, 27 January and 14 February. During these episodes some householders have taken the sensible precaution of fitting their flood protection equipment, but on no occasion, even on 25 November when the water level peaked at 1.8m, has there been any real danger of flooding. The Millcroft Brook has been properly maintained, the relief channel at Millcroft Farm has operated well when required and, although the Millcroft Road/ Ketch Lane culverts have once again repeatedly proved inadequate, the water has generally been able to get away quickly to the River Lugg. The only exceptions to this have been on 25 November, during the period 21 December to New Year’s Day, and again on 28 January when the River has been up and the Millcroft Road Ketch Lane junction, as well as stretches of Ketch Lane and Smeadal Lane have been flooded.

Although attention tends to focus on the Millcroft Brook, the Group has also kept an eye on other areas at risk, notably Orchard Close and Maund Bryan, where there is a long standing issue over culverts which are badly aligned, causing flooding which is affecting the stability of the road.

In summary, the Group’s system for monitoring and maintaining watercourses and for alerting neighbours when necessary has been working well and this, coupled with the flood protection equipment provided by the Environment Agency, means that residents now generally feel much less concerned about the risk of flooding than before. The aim must now be to guard against concern being replaced by complacency!

WORKING PARTY SESSIONS

Fortnightly working party sessions continued over what passed for the summer months last year and were always well attended, with around a dozen members taking part on average. On a couple of occasions bad weather caused sessions to be cancelled, but fortunately the maintenance work carried out in earlier years meant that the effects of such cancellations were not too serious. Work concentrated on the drainage system in Mr Pugh’s field, which takes water from Orchard Close to the Moor Brook, on the Ketch Lane ditches, on the Millcroft Brook immediately above and below the Brockington Road bridge, on checking and replacing sandbags in the stockpiles around the Village, and – inevitably – around the Ketch Lane culverts. Here we discovered that the old (East) culvert was unexpectedly clear of silt and were actually able to cancel the final working party session of 2012 for lack of work to do.

We are now, however, already into the 2013 ‘season’ and have carried out two training sessions to teach members how to operate our pumps, as well as a working party for the clearance of flap valves along the Brook downstream of the Brockington Road bridge.

OUTSTANDING ISSUES

On Monday, 18 June 2012 Mr Chris Bull, the then CEO of Herefordshire Council, was taken round the Hampton Court Ward by Cllr Jeremy Millar. They visited Millcroft Farm for tea, accompanied by another official, Ms Anne Brooks, and by Mr Philip Brown, the Clerk of Humber, Ford and Stoke Prior Parish Council. This gave us the opportunity to brief the CEO on the BFPG and, more

importantly, to raise two issues with him. The first was the need for the Millcroft Road/ Ketch Lane culverts to be replaced, and the second was for Amey Herefordshire to clear the culvert in Mr Pugh's Field. Mr Bull agreed to investigate and to respond to us on both matters. However, despite prompting, he never did so.

On Tuesday, 26 March this year Cllr Millar arranged for the new CEO of Herefordshire Council, Mr Alistair Neill, to visit us to discuss BFPG matters, accompanied by Mr Paul Nicholas, the Locality Manager for Leominster. Not surprisingly, we raised the same two issues with Mr Neill and added a third – the bad design of the culverts taking the Moor Brook across the road South of Maund Bryan. Mr Neill expressed great interest in what the Group has been doing and was especially concerned to understand how Herefordshire Council could connect better with local communities. We await developments.

EXTERNAL CONTACTS

Hope-under-Dinmore. The Chairman and Secretary were invited to talk to Hope-under-Dinmore Parish Council about the BFPG on 29 November. We spent a stimulating hour or two there and did what we could to explain our approach to flooding matters. We also issued invitations to residents of Hope-under-Dinmore to attend our monthly meetings and, indeed, we were pleased to welcome two members of the Parish Council and one local resident to our January Meeting, as well as one Councillor and a resident to our Coffee Morning.

Mordiford. The Chairman was invited to give a presentation on the BFPG to the Annual Parish Meeting at Mordiford on Tuesday, 2 April. He and the Secretary attended and, in addition to the talk, provided a display of photographs illustrating the Group's work, as well as a range of pamphlets relating to flood protection and insurance, all of which seemed to be well received.

Brimfield & Little Hereford. We have heard from Brimfield & Little Hereford, which we visited in 2011, that the flood group which they subsequently established is going well, is now fully constituted with its own finances, has held some fund-raising events and, apart from some general on-going clearance work, have been investigating the replacement of a farm bridge, all of which is very good news.

Other Contacts. In addition to providing what advice and help we can to Bodenham residents, we have been in touch with individuals living in several other parishes, notably Marden, Cradley and West Hide.

EXTERNAL PUBLICITY

ITV's *Tonight* Programme. On Friday, 11 May 2012 we received a visit from Jonathan Maitland and a team from ITV who were preparing a programme on climate change. They spent the afternoon filming the installation of flood protection measures at 40, Brockington Road by UK Flood Barriers Limited, where they met the CEO, Mrs Sarah Vaughan. Also in Brockington Road they met Mr Rod Hawnt of Hydro-Logic Limited, who had just finished commissioning the flood warning telemetry system there. At The Forge they interviewed Mrs Dhonau on flood insurance issues and at Millcroft Farm Mr Maitland interviewed the Secretary at some length on the origins and work of the Group. The team were also introduced to the Chairman of the Parish Council, Cllr Derek Ling, and to our District Councillor, Cllr Jeremy Millar. Finally, they filmed the regular Friday evening work party session at the Ketch Lane culverts where Mr Maitland donned a set of waders and personally contributed to the removal of silt from the brook. The results were shown in ITV's *Tonight* programme about 'Weird Weather' which was broadcast on 17 May 2012.

Hereford Times Article. Mr Keith Grumbley drafted a ‘good news’ story about the flood warning telemetry system donated by Mr Rod Hawnt to the Village and submitted it to *The Hereford Times*. It duly appeared, complete with photograph, in the 5 July 2012 edition.

Local Council Review. Information about the Group on the Bodenham Parish Website prompted the Editor of the National Association of Local Councils’ (NALC) magazine – The Local Council Review – to contact us and in due course an article on flood prevention featuring the BFPG appeared in the magazine.

BBC Hereford & Worcester Website. In July BBC Hereford & Worcester contacted us for information and photographs for an article to mark the fifth anniversary of the 2007 floods. This appeared on the BBC Hereford & Worcester Website (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-18803795>) later that month where it is still available.

BBC Midlands ‘Wild Weather in 2012’. In mid-July we were approached by BBC Midlands who, at very short notice, expressed an interest in filming members carrying out maintenance work to mark the fifth anniversary of the 2007 floods. However, they rather lost interest when told that, because of the high water level, we would be filling sandbags, rather than working in the brook, and also that this would be on a Friday evening. However, on Friday, 23 November we were visited by First Look TV who were producing material for the BBC Midlands *Inside Out* programme. We briefed them extensively on the BFPG and showed them round the Village. They interviewed the Secretary at the Ketch Lane culverts and at home, saw the telemetry system, and interviewed Mr David Harris at his house. The results were eventually transmitted on BBC 1 on Sunday, 30 December in a programme called *Wild Weather in 2012*.

Daily Mail. During November when there were reports of flooding across the country we received a call from a Daily Mail reporter who was keen to interview people who had been flooded more than once. When we said that we did not fall into that category, but could offer her a ‘good news’ story instead, she chose not to pursue this further.

SOCIAL EVENTS

As always, the BFPG has been rather more than just a flood protection group over the past year and, once again, has held its now traditional four social events. The Annual Barbecue was held on Saturday, 28 July at 32, Brockington Road by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Burnill. This was followed by the Annual Bonfire Party at Millcroft Farm on Saturday, 6 October, by the Annual Quiz Night on Saturday, 17 November in the Parish Hall and by the Coffee Morning in the Siward James Centre on Saturday, 2 February 2013. All were very well attended and successful and besides being enjoyable, raised a substantial sum of money towards the Group’s funds.

SUMMARY

This has been another successful year for the Group and sincere thanks must go to the Environment Agency, to Amey Herefordshire and to UK Flood Barriers Limited for their contributions to the successful completion of ‘Project Bodenham’, as well as to Mr Hawnt and Hydro-Logic Limited for the generous donation of the telemetry system. However, as always, particular 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
2012/13 Area Representatives and Committee List

Chairman:	Cllr Tony Mitcheson
Treasurer:	Mr Tony Clark
Operations Manager:	Mr Mike Stephens
Deputy Operations Manager:	Mr Robin George
Secretary:	Mrs Babs Mitcheson

The Moor:

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

Bodenham Village:

Bridge to War Memorial: The Forge Church and Bodenham Village:	Mr Simon Nickols
	Mr David Ayshford Sanford
	Mr Mike Mullenger