

## **Minutes of Meeting with Environment Agency held at Marchington Village Hall on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

**Present:** Cllr Ian Morgan (Chair), Cllr Ian Glover, Cllr Andrew Mann, Cathy Kompfner (EA), Mark Swain (EA), Clare Nash (Parish Clerk)

*Parish Council report on 20<sup>th</sup> October Flood Event was previously circulated.*

### **Meeting opened at 10am**

Cllr Morgan thanked EA representatives for coming to speak with Parish Councillors. He explained that residents would like an open meeting with the EA to discuss the issues. EA are agreeable to a meeting but want to be sure that other agencies would turn up also. Could PC organise this including SCC and ST. and MP. Perhaps PC could ask MP to convene the meeting? **Action: Clerk to ask MP for help to arrange a meeting in the New Year with all parties in attendance. If MP not willing to assist, then PC will try to get commitment from ST & SCC to attend a meeting.**

The EA confirmed that they have contacted the MP about the flooding issue & will respond to resident.

The flood on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct was biggest ever recorded and the recent improvements to the embankments to protect properties were successful. The height of the embankment is 69.13m above sea level and the water reached 68.89m and it protected Church Close from flooding. If embankment work had not been carried out this summer the flooding in the village would have been worse. Brook overflowed for 6-7 hours which was unprecedented. Embankment was built for 1 in 30 year occurrence because if built for a 1 in 100 year event this would have caused other properties to flood.

**Industrial Estate** - Cllr Morgan noted that Hortons work in the field alongside Silver Lane has been done & the contractor has dug out all the ditch here to the culvert under the road. Now provides free flow from Ind Estate. Concern expressed by Cllrs that this may cause more flooding in Church Lane. EA do not share this view.

**Culvert pipes at the back of 44 Church Lane** – Resident believes that these need to be replaced with larger diameter pipes to enable the flood water to get away. The EA noted that the flood on 20<sup>th</sup> October was the most extreme ever and regardless of the size of the pipes the water can't get away fast enough. If no gradient, then the flood water will sit.

Cllr Morgan advised the EA to inform the CCU that flood is an emergency. **Action: EA**

**Severn Trent pumping station** – Requests to ST to switch on the third pump were ignored. Cllrs queried what difference this would make? Thought that it would help to pump sewage away from the village. EA advised that they did not think this would make a lot of difference to the flooding. In an extreme flooding situation combined surface water and foul sewage systems are designed to overflow into watercourses. It is the manholes in Church Lane that had previously leaked sewage into the flood water and brook. The expectation is that it is diluted by the flood water and therefore not dangerous. Clerk noted that ST have not responded to numerous emails about the pumping station capacity report that the Parish Council were promised in April 2022. The EA will follow this up with ST **Action: EA**

**Bagshaws Development**– Cllrs asked if the EA have been consulted? EA responded that they are not aware of it because comes under the cut off limit (10 houses). However, they can ask to have a look at it if it will have serious effect on the village. NDP includes additional 9 houses so these will have to be found sites

somewhere. **Action: EA.** EA noted that development can sometimes actually make the problem better if the drainage plans are implemented properly.

**Tree felling** Cllrs queried if the recent tree Felling on the cliff had an impact on the flooding experienced? EA said that they didn't think it had. Although it is not ideal it would not have made a difference to flood on 20<sup>th</sup> Oct.

**Village Cut Off** - All roads into the village were impassable during the floods. Compounded by problem of cars breaking down in the flood. Cllrs & EA discussed how NHS and support staff could get access to vulnerable people? It was decided that the EA would ask SCC if they could add a strategy for health staff to access patients to their Flood Plan? **Action: EA will provide the information to SCC to alert them to the fact that there are risks to life and the Flood Plan requires amendment.** It was suggested that the Paris Council needs to formulate a disaster plan. EA will send PC examples of flood action plan as a template. **Action: EA**

**Bridge Embankment** - The effect of the height increase of the small embankment by the bridge was discussed and considered. It did give extra time for residents to prepare but flooding was very rapid once it was over-topped. The EA thought that it was volume of water that caused the flooding in Bridge Cottages, which came up through the floor, not the small rise in height of the embankment. (*The level of the flood water was higher than the embankment*) Unfortunately, there is not much PFR that can be implemented to prevent this although the EA will visit the residents to discuss. Cllrs noted that historically it may have flooded here previously.

**Flood barriers** – These have been checked by Flood Tec since the event. A few niggles with the barriers were identified but most of the problem was operational. **Action: EA to send report to PC.** EA team have inspected all the flooded properties. The recently renovated Bridge Cottages had no one living in and had not installed PFR properly. EA is looking at delivering training to people on how to deploy the barriers. It was noted that Marchington shop website has a good video on how to use them.

Cllrs asked if EA could send all the information about the flood levels to the PC and this was agreed. **Action: EA.** EA noted that the impact on properties from Storm Babet was less than from Storm Dennis (Feb 2020) which was a less extreme event. Storm Babet resulted in a 1:30 to 1:50 year event on the Dove and highest ever level in Marchington Brook. This doesn't mean that it won't happen again for another 30 years though.

**Green Lane** – It was noted that it floods here first, and the bridge seems to cause the problem getting blocked very quickly because it turns through 90 degrees. Cllrs asked if there is anything that the EA can do to mitigate noting that it causes a dangerous situation for drivers and walkers because it's impossible to see the edge of the road during the flood. Residents can get access out of the village via a farm track to Sudbury but may need help.

**HMP Dovegate** – Groundsman has said he will clear ditches but maybe understaffed to do this. SCC have the power to do the work but the duty rests with the landowner. SCC could write to the landowner, but they are unlikely to enforce. Drainage powers are with the district. For the authorities to carry out work they would need to evidence that it would prevent flooding to justify the cost. The EA stated that in big flood events the capacity to hold water is in the flood plain not the watercourses. Dredging rarely has any real benefit because it makes minimal difference to overall capacity. In fact, they said that there is an argument to block ditches to hold the water back in the fields.

**Blocked Gullies** – Cllr Morgan noted that the gullies in Church Lane were flowing well during the flood. The EA confirmed that they have contacted SCC regarding gullies and gully crew have been seen in the village in last week.

**Road Closed Sign** – a heavier sign is needed. Marchington Flood Wardens attached the sign provided to a heavier frame. EA found this info useful.

**Section 19 Report** was discussed. The recommendations made in the report for the EA (PFR scheme, the embankments & Natural Flood management scheme) have been carried out. The Parish Council has been supported to implement the Flood Warden Scheme.

**Safety** Flood Wardens were concerned that people were desperate to get home and risking lives wading through the water up to their chests to get home, including children. Could have fallen into an open manhole & drowned. Advice from SCC during the flood as darkness fell was to leave the signs in place and go home because no more that could be done. The Parish council are considering setting up an emergency centre in the village hall for residents affected by the flooding. It was noted that there was a particular problem at the bottom of the village as there is nowhere here for people to go. It was suggested that perhaps Draycott village hall could be an emergency centre? Or Dovegate prison?

Marchington will always flood but mitigations can be done to minimise effect and speed up recovery after.

**Flood Recovery Grants** – it was reported that ESBC are gathering information to send to SCC. EA thought that it requires 50 properties in the ESBC area to have flooded to trigger the government grants. No properties in Burton were flooded. EA will advise SCC that 13 properties in Marchington flooded and will let PC know what the residents need to do. **Action: EA Clerk to let residents know. Action: Clerk**

Cllrs queried if the EA would be reviewing the modelling after the recent flood. They confirmed that they are reviewing the modelling for the Dove, and this may have impact on Marchington Brook at the bottom end.

**Culvert pipes under Church Lane** – These have been identified as requiring repair, but it is up to the SCC to do this work if they think it's necessary.

Clerk to send Cathy copy of the minutes. **Action: Clerk**

Cllr Morgan thanked EA for coming.

Meeting closed at 11.30am