

<b>REPORT TO THE MALMESBURY AREA 1 COMMITTEE</b>		Report No.6
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	23 <sup>rd</sup> January 2008	
<b>Title of Report</b>	Flooding in the Malmesbury Area	
Link to Corporate Priorities	Environment	
Public Report	Yes	

### Summary of Report

This Report sets out flooding issues in Area 1 parishes affected by flooding and is based on the Report from the Malmesbury & Villages Community Area Partnership which was received at the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007.

The Parishes named in the Report have been asked to provide an update on the issues outlined in the Report.

An update on findings/actions taken in the affected areas is included.

### Officer Recommendations

That the Report be used as a basis for discussion at the Committee meeting.

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
None	None	None	None	None

<b>Contact Officer</b>	James Whittleton 01249 706610 jwhittleton@northwiltshire.gov.uk	Policy & Democratic Services Assistant
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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This Report sets out flooding issues in Area 1 parishes affected by flooding and reported to the Malmesbury Area Community Partnership.
- 1.2 It is based on the Report from the Malmesbury & Villages Community Area Partnership which was received at the meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007.
- 1.3 The Parishes named in the Report have been asked to provide an update on the issues outlined in the Report.
- 1.4 Further updates on the original Report have been received from Hankerton, Minety and Crudwell Parish Council.
- 1.5 Sections 2-7 contain the updates from the Parishes.
- 1.6 Section 8 provides an update on findings/actions taken in the affected areas. Section 9 relates solely to Crudwell.

## **2. Little Somerford**

- 2.1 Little Somerford experienced two sewage flooding situations this summer, both due to heavy rain affecting the main sewer downstream of the pumping station in The Street. In both cases water and sewage was forced out of the manholes in The Street, which ended up in ditches and drains that eventually feed into the River Avon.
- 2.2 The second of the two occasions, on 20 July, was the most disruptive to the community, with the Street being impassible for about 4 hours except to 4x4s. Sewage also was forced out of manholes by some nearby houses, which in at least one case resulted in sewage penetrating the house.
- 2.3 Rainwater flooding on 20 July also affected the roads to Dauntsey and Great Somerford, which were impassible to non-4x4s for about 6 hours on 20 July.
- 2.4 The pumping station problem is due to the holding tanks no longer being sufficient to cope with the sudden surges resulting from heavy rain. If heavy rain periods in future years occur as currently expected this situation could recur every year. Sewage ending up in natural water-courses is not acceptable. It is likely to cause health problems and damage to wild life.
- 2.5 Wessex Water is responsible for the pumping station. We are not aware of any plans to expand the holding tanks and the Parish Council had not pressed Wessex Water for action as the problem was not significant until this year.

## **3. Brinkworth**

- 3.1 The problems experienced this summer are recurrent and result from the culvert running under the M4 being too small. This results in water backing up and flash floods which this summer resulted in problems being experienced by homeowners, landowners as well as the roads being flooded.
- 3.2 In addition to the culvert being unable to cope with the volume of water (exacerbated by the run off from the additional houses being built in Wootton Bassett), Brinkworth Brook cannot cope. Making it wider and deeper might help the situation.

3.3 A representative from the Environment Agency was visiting the site.

#### **4. Lea & Cleverton / St Paul Malmesbury Without**

4.1 The Parish rarely gets troubled by floods. Widebrook brook (which runs across the northern end of Lea and feeds into the Avon at Cowbridge) does flood across the fields if storm water is excessive, however it doesn't generally have any impact on housing or as Lea & Cleverton Parish Council is aware on any commercial premises within the Parish.

4.2 As a result of the rebuilding of Cowbridge and the closing of the upstream hatches to enable work to be carried out in the river bed all the rain in July/August caused considerable damage at Tanner Bridge due to water backing up. Tanners Bridge which is on the eastern boundary of this Parish with St Paul's is on the road (C67) which leads into Milbourne. This flooding caused considerable problems to at least one householder. There are a total 4 properties either side of this waterway at Tanners Bridge.

4.3 However St Paul's Malmesbury Without Parish in which the old Lucent site lies does have flood problems, due to its close proximity to the River Avon which flows through the area alongside the site.

4.4 It is understood that in the planning consents granted for the rebuilding of the site, including barn conversions on Cowbridge Farm put in place a scheme to prevent the river flooding the site in the future.

#### **5. Hankerton**

5.1 There were ten houses flooded in July 2007, most of which will not be fully habitable until well into next year, a number of these same houses were also flooded in October 2000.

5.2 The main issues for the village the Parish Council believe to be the dredging of the Swill Brook/Braydon Brook watercourse, the Chapel Lane area, the reinstatement of ditches and new grips dug into the verges of the Cloatley Road/Chapel Lane junction to help to alleviate the build up of water in this area.

5.3 The problems in Chapel Lane are twofold, firstly the drainage ditches are permanently partly full of water even after prolonged dry spells - this we believe is because the Swill Brook/Braydon Brook watercourse is blocked and silted downstream of Hankerton, secondly the water run off from Common End farm builds up at the end of Chapel Lane.

5.4 Over the years Common End farm has had, like a lot of farms, hedges and ditches removed and this farm has had a large area of its topsoil removed to supply the turf industry, this causes the rain to run off very quickly to the culvert under the road near the end of Chapel Lane. This culvert (permanently partly full because of the Swillbrook problems) cannot pass the water away quickly enough, the corner of the field fills with water which eventually floods the Cloatley road, this water then travels down Chapel Lane and goes through residents front gardens to get back to the drainage ditch in their rear gardens, in July obviously deep enough to flood most of the houses in the lane.

5.5 The Parish Council suggests that the whole of the SwillBrook/Braydon Brook watercourse requires clearing, both upstream and downstream of Hankerton. This is important because if Crudwell clear their water courses, unless the SwillBrook/Baydon

Brook watercourses are also cleaned, it will make problems in Hankerton worse, because their water will arrive at Hankerton more quickly. The Parish Council has requested that The Environment Agency dredge the Swill Brook.

## **6. Minety**

- 6.1 Several areas of Minety have suffered serious flooding on more than one occasion over the last year. Station Road saw the most houses affected but the Ashton Keynes Road and Lower Moor as well as parts of Upper Minety were also flooded.
- 6.2 The main problem is the inability of the current system to cope with the volume of water from any heavy rainfall. It appears that there is insufficient capacity in the drains and the flow is possibly restricted in some areas, notably the culvert under the railway and possibly at the edge of the gypsy site. The recent sewerage improvements undertaken by Wessex Water appear to have improved the sewerage problems but the surface water flooding does appear to have got worse over the recent months.
- 6.3 Action from NWDC to ensure that all landowners clear their ditches is required as this would help to keep the water courses flowing. However further investigation and action is necessary where the flow is restricted.
- 6.4 Action also required from the Environment Agency on Swillbrook and the Derry Brook.
- 6.5 The increase in housing development in the village has undoubtedly had an effect on the flooding and the Parish Council would like a moratorium on further development until the flooding issues have been resolved.

## **7. Crudwell**

- 7.1 Severe flooding occurred in Crudwell on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2007 when about thirty homes in the village were very seriously flooded. There are still about eight properties unfit for habitation and this situation will not improve until well into 2008. In the intervening six months Crudwell Parish Council has endeavoured to determine the fundamental causes for the flooding.
- 7.2 There has been an intention to establish Multi-Agency Meetings, the Flood Working Group, to identify the reasons for the severe flooding across the District and to make recommendations to alleviate flooding in the future. Attendance at these Meetings is apparently to include representatives from NWDC, WCC, the Environmental Agency and perhaps others. It appears that there has been a considerable delay in establishing such Meetings for North Wiltshire and it is probably the case that no such Meetings have taken place. This is a great disappointment to residents of Crudwell that after almost six months apparently no progress has been made to establish remedial action to alleviate future flooding in the Parish.
- 7.3 To date, there has been no suggestion from NWDC or WCC that Parish Councils in North Wiltshire will even be involved in identifying the causes of the severe flooding on the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2007 and the consequential remedial action required.
- 7.4 However, one statement that has emerged is that the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> July 2007 were statistically a one in two hundred years occurrence. The Parish Council is concerned that such a statement may suggest that there are unlikely to be any forthcoming significant recommendations for improvements to the infrastructure in the District to reduce flooding.

- 7.5 There is no doubt that the excessive rainfall during early July 2007, and specifically the 69mm of rain recorded in Crudwell on the 19/20<sup>th</sup> July, was a major factor for the 20<sup>th</sup> July flooding. However, the problem must be more fundamental given that flooding has occurred in recent years in Crudwell on several previous occasions without excessive rainfall. There is a general consensus that the flooding was caused by the inadequacy and poor maintenance of the three major watercourses to the East of the A429 that drain the outfall of water from Crudwell to the Eastcourt / Hankerton flood plain. In addition, a significant reason for the very severe flooding at Goosey Corner is believed to be the conversion of an open culvert to an enclosed piped drain of inadequate capacity which was approved by NWDC in 2005.
- 7.6 In addition to any budgets NWDC and WCC may have available for land drainage maintenance, it is understood that there is Statutory Legislation also available to encourage Land Owners to maintain watercourses of their concern. It is interesting to note that apparently in the last twenty years for the Parish of Crudwell, this Legislation has never been invoked by NWDC whereas in an adjacent District of North Wiltshire this Legislation has been used with great success.
- 7.7 Crudwell Parish Council is of the opinion that there has now been sufficient time for NWDC and WCC to assess the requirements, review the findings and establish a recovery plan to alleviate future flooding in Crudwell and throughout North Wiltshire. Other Authorities, namely Gloucestershire, Humberside and Others have apparently been able to establish multi-million pound recovery plans and identify the necessary funding from Local, Central Government and EU sources. It is a disappointment that NWDC and WCC have apparently not been able to emulate such initiatives.

## **8. Update on findings/actions taken in the affected areas is included**

- 8.1 Little Somerford. – Problems caused the surface water system being overloaded. Problems were exacerbated by people lifting manhole covers to take away surface water and storm flows overloading the foul system. Little Somerford does not appear to have been affected this month.
- 8.2 Brinkworth – The culvert running under the M4 is the responsibility of the Highways Agency. The Environment Agency were due to examine the situation (with regard to the Brinkworth Brook) in late November 2007. They may be able to provide an update at the meeting.
- 8.3 Hankerton – Issues relate to those at Crudwell and problems with the Swill Brook. The District Council is due to meet with Wessex Water to discuss the relocation of the overflow from the Flisteridge pumping station.
- 8.4 Minety – North Wiltshire District Council have written to specific landowners asking them to clear watercourses. Wiltshire County Council have undertaken a series of letter drops to land owners in the area to remind them of their obligation to clear water courses on their land. The District Council have written to Railtrack requesting that they enlarge the culvert through the railway embankment.

## **9. Crudwell:**

- 9.1 A number of North Wiltshire District Council and Wiltshire County Council officers have visited the Crudwell area including the North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer, the Chief Executive and portfolio holder Councillor Bob Causer and Wiltshire County Council's Area Highway Engineer and Highway Project Manager. Most recently North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer revisited the site on the 10th January 2008. Prior to this a detailed plan of actions was agreed Wiltshire County Council and North

Wiltshire District Council following a meeting organised by North Wiltshire District Council 's Chief Executive in September 2007 and on the 5 October 2007 the Crudwell Parish Council was advised of those actions. These are set out at appendix 1 and the current position is as follows:

#### 9.1.1 **Goosey Corner**

1. North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer has written to the relevant land owner to ask for watercourses to be cleared. The land owner has responded to say that works have been carried out and the courses cleared.
2. Wiltshire County Council's Highway Project Manager is organising a survey of the drainage system from Rommel Lane to beyond the A429 so that appropriate measures can be taken to improve the system. This is due to take place this month.
3. North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer has contacted the Environment Agency and has discovered that the landowner(s) do not have the necessary consents/approvals.
4. Wiltshire County Council's Highway Project Manager has been in contact with the owner of York House regarding drainage through his land. The outlet of the water feature has been altered to ensure water runs off quicker.

#### 9.1.2 **The Butts**

1. North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer has written to the land owner to ask for the proper flow to be restored to the water course to the east of the A429. Clearance work has been carried out subsequently and the water course is running better.
2. Wiltshire County Council's Area Highway Engineer was asked to ensure that all highway culverts are clear. An update on this action can be given at the meeting.

#### 9.1.3 **Swill Brook**

1. North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer has written to the Environment Agency asking for the extension of the main river section back to where the new Wiltshire County Council bridge crosses Tuners Lane and with a view to gaining clearance of the brook beyond the A429 bridge. No response has been received so far from the Environment Agency. In addition, North Wiltshire District Council's Engineer has requested that Swill Brook is widened to increase the ability to quickly drain excess water. No response has yet been received. Wiltshire County Council's Area Highway Engineer understands that the Environment Agency were due to widen the Brook, but due to conservation issues, budget restriction and the fact that the area is low risk, plans have been halted and available monies diverted to more pressing flooding issues.
2. Wiltshire County Council has offered to extend the pipe (on Parish Council land) from the edge of the road into the Swill Brook. An update on this action can be given at the meeting.

9.2 Other developments that have recently taken place include:

- North Wiltshire District Council have met with a land owner at Murcott and have been given permission to install a new pipeline across one of his fields. This will relieve both highway flooding and property flooding. A local contractor has been approached and is in the process of supplying a price for the work. Additional contractors will also supply a price to ensure that the best value is obtained.
- Goosey Corner: The farmer who owns the land north of Rommel Lane and behind Pleasant View has installed a field cut off drain to protect the properties on Goosey Corner. This appears to be working well.
- Wiltshire County Council has cleared five highway gullies which impacted on Crudwell, including Tetbury Lane.
- A multi agency working group has been set up to deal with flooding issues in North Wiltshire. The Flood Working Group which had its inaugural meeting on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> January includes representatives from Wiltshire County Council, North Wiltshire District Council, Wessex Water, Thames Water and the Environment Agency (although the Environment Agency was unable to attend the first meeting). Amongst the issues discussed at the meeting was how the Group would involve and communicate with Parish Councils.

9.3 The next steps proposed are as follows:

1. That the multi-agency forum which met on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008 continues to meet and discusses with Salisbury District Council how its forum deals with serious flooding issues.
2. That all the agencies continue to work together to resolve the issues in North Wiltshire.
3. James Gray MP asked to canvass the EA directly to improve the Swill Brook east of Crudwell.
4. NWDC Engineer to revisit the watercourses that are claimed to have been cleared.
5. Murcott relief pipe work ordered from contractor supplying lowest quotation.
6. CCTV survey of the highway drainage at Goosey Corner.
7. North Wiltshire District Council plan to check the confluence on the 'middle' water course with Swill Brook to check for any obstructions.

<b>Appendices:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Appendix 1 – North Wiltshire District Council / Wiltshire County Council Actions.</b></li> </ul>
<b>Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Report from the Malmesbury &amp; Villages Community Area Partnership - 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007</li> </ul>