

Diddlebury Parish Flood Action Group

Annual Report on activities up to mid May 2021

The physical activities of the FAG have been curtailed over the past year by the restrictions in place due to the Covid outbreak. For example, no litter picking has been done for this reason. At the time of writing however, it looks as if we will be able to resume our normal activities later this month.

We have nonetheless made considerable progress on other fronts during the period and this is recorded in the Progress reports issued over the period and copied below.

Progress Report No 16

As our normal working parties were unable to operate this year due to the Covid 19 problem, weed growth in the stream at the bottom of Mill Lane, Diddlebury became excessive with encroachment right across the watercourse.

In addition, the stream bed had a deposition of excess gravel brought down by Storm Dennis in February.

To get all this cleared away in advance of winter storms, a desilting exercise was carried out on Tuesday 8th September under the Ordinary Watercourse Consent (OWC) granted for similar work in 2018 and which was still current. The work had to be completed before 1st October when fish spawning begins.

The scale of the work was such that it could no longer be tackled by normal means and machinery was needed. With the kind assistance of Topher Morgan, Andy Farnell and Patrick Wrigley, a tractor and trailer and a Mini Digger were used – all expertly driven by Andy. At the same time, local volunteers were on site directing traffic and strimming the banks.

A huge difference was made and the stream is now ready for winter flows.

Otherwise, the Group has joined the recently formed Shropshire Flood Action Group Forum (SFAGF) which is intended as both a pressure group to get action from the various Agencies involved in flood prevention and to act as a forum for the exchange of ideas between the member Groups. This has been arranged under the auspices of the National Flood Forum (NFF).

Geoff Neden

09/09/2020

Progress Report No 17 - Drainage work in Lower Corfton

Following a site meeting earlier in the year, the Highways Dept. arrived with a JCB on Friday 18th September.

They carried out useful work as follows:

Cleaned out and extended the pond at the low spot to further its use as an attenuation pond in Slowing the Flow.

Located and checked the size and condition of the pipe/duct beneath the road at the low spot.

Cleared the upstream end of this pipe/duct and provided a temporary concrete cover for the adjacent chamber

Cleaned out and provided temporary concrete covers for chambers found near the pond.

Created new ditches to divert water from the road and the adjacent field into the pipe/duct beneath the road.

Confirmed that it is their intention that new, permanent metal chamber covers will eventually be provided to the newly discovered chambers and also the one at the upstream end of the pipe/duct beneath the road to facilitate future de silting and rodding exercises.

Confirmed that Highways Dept. will approach the farmer who owns the field upstream of the pipe beneath the road and try to gain his permission to carry out improvement works to the watercourse in that field which carries water from the B Road across it to the pipe/duct beneath the road.

Suggested that more de silting work may be necessary in the watercourse downstream of the pipe/duct beneath the road.

Geoff Neden

29/09/2020

Progress Report No 18

A working party cleared the stream at the bottom of Mill Lane on Thursday 22nd October (after a rain delay on the 21st). An hour's work saw it cleaned up and ready for the winter.

Highway's Department have followed up their recent work in Lower Corfton by clearing the ditch running from the B road across the farm land to Lower Corfton.

We are now members of the Shropshire Flood Action Group Forum which, under the auspices of the National Flood Forum is a grouping of all the existing Flood Action Groups in the County. The Group is chaired by Bob Haddon who has done such great work in the Telford area. It is anticipated that the Group will carry more clout than the individual members in getting action from the various Agencies involved in Flood Prevention.

Geoff Neden

26/10/2020

Report prepared for the Catchment Based Approach Meeting held by Zoom on 19th November

The FAG was started by a number of local residents who were motivated to take action by the numerous flood events which occurred in the village during 2012.

Whilst it is all very well to decide in principle to start a FAG, it is something else again to find out how to do this but luckily, the FAG in our neighbouring village of Culmington was already established so we went to their meetings to see what we should do and pick their brains. They were extremely helpful and in particular they introduced us to the NFF.

We soon became involved with Heather and her fellow members and they took us in hand and organised the gaggle of individuals into a formal Group. Following on from this we arranged regular MAM's and produced a FAP. We received much initial encouragement and latterly financial assistance from the DPC and this is still ongoing. They also kindly now send us all Planning Applications for comment. We were also successful in an application for funding from the Ludlow Rotary Club. Shropshire Council have assisted us with our Application for an OWC to allow for stream

clearance works to be carried out from time to time and funded the first of these exercises. Our local MP Mr Philip Dunne has also been supportive of our work.

We were introduced to the concept of Slow the Flow by the use of NFM techniques and were very pleased to discover that the Corvedale was in the forefront of all this under the Shropshire Slow the Flow Steering Group funded by DEFRA and with the fieldwork being carried out by the SWT. We thus became part of a CaBA Partnership in the Corvedale. We are also members of the newly formed SFAGF.

Since that time, we have grown to encompass the whole of Diddlebury Parish and now extend from the Brown Clee to Wenlock Edge. We also increased our membership to include members of the local farming community as their actions can have such a bearing on flooding. Our scope of work now includes regular working parties to keep the stream through the lower parts of the village clear of weed growth and excess gravel and an annual Litter Pick along the Diddle Brook. We also report back to the local Highways Depot on local flooding hot spots, blocked gullies and pipes and so on.

In the future we intend to take part in discussions over the flooding aspects of proposed new legislation and we hope that more leaky dams can be erected on the Brown Clee to slow the flow in the Pye Brook once further funding becomes available. We are also finding that flood warnings from the EA are too frequent leading to a cry wolf mentality. Some editing of these would help.

We are enthusiastic about NFM measures. We find that members of the local community are appreciative of our work and there is now, after an initial period of scepticism over leaky dams, a general perception that local flooding has been reduced by our efforts. Although there is already some anecdotal and empirical evidence for this view, we look forward to the Report from Cardiff University which will hopefully prove and quantify the efficacy of NFM principles.

The inclusion of local communities into such projects is in our view vital to their success. Whilst small groups such as ours do not have the technical expertise to devise solutions to our local flooding problems, we do have intimate information on the causes, location and effects of flooding in our areas and this data is essential to a holistic catchment based approach to solving these problems.

Geoff Neden

19/11/2020

Report on Flooding on B4368 at Corfton by the Sun Inn

The flooding was first noticed on the afternoon of Thursday 17th December.

It was difficult to see exactly where the water was coming from but it was emerging on the north side of the road and was ponding in front of Warwick Cottage where the owner had laid sand bags to protect his house. The water then ran across the road to pond in the Bus layby opposite the Sun Inn. A gully on the north side of the road was spewing water up which indicated a blockage downstream.

Images were taken and then sent by email to Highways Dept on the morning of Friday 18th with a request for action.

On Tuesday 22nd, a team from Highways Dept was on site and the cause of the problem was identified as a blocked pipe beneath the B4368. This pipe transmits water running down Corfton Bache beneath the B4368 to the south side of the road and hence into Lower Corfton. The pipe was cleared after some difficulty and the flooding subsided that evening.

An inspection on Wednesday 23rd December showed that the pipe in question started just inside the road reserve where the stream running down the Bache runs – just to the west of Warwick Cottage.

The start of the pipe is unprotected. Water from the Bache stream passes through a grating in the hedge line into a depression where it should enter the pipe and get away. With the pipe being blocked, water had built up until it flooded across the road and into Warwick Cottage's driveway.

On the south side of the road, the pipe seems to discharge into a chamber near a road and then the water presumably makes its way down the ditch at the side of the road to Lower Corfton. However, the plan of a proposed development in an adjacent field south of the B4368, shows the indicative route of another drain, starting near the Bus layby and then crossing the field before ending at a track in Lower Corfton. We are unsure which of these routes, the water from the Bache follows.

The quick response from Highways Dept was much appreciated but it seems clear that the pipe beneath the B4368 will quickly block again unless a proper inlet arrangement is built. We hope that Highways Dept can arrange for this to be carried out before more flooding occurs.

Geoff Neden

23/12/2020

Progress Report No 19

As part of the Shropshire Flood Action Group Forum, we have attended Zoom Meetings with several senior members of the Shropshire Council including Professor Mark Barrow (Director of Place), Steve Smith (Assistant Director of Infrastructure) and John Bellis (Flood Risk Manager) and also senior members of the Severn Trent Water Services Company. These face to face meetings are useful in that they give us a direct link to individuals who are near the top of the relevant decision making processes in the Council and to who we can appeal if our contacts lower down the hierarchy are being stymied by bureaucracy.

The Shropshire Council have indicated that they are willing and able to provide funding to Flood Action Groups for the provision of things such as sand bags (or their modern equivalent – Flood Sax), Road signs for use during flooding and so on. The Forum has carried out a survey of all its member Groups to quantify what is needed and the results of this will be passed to the Council for action. As part of this process we have been updating our Flood Response Plan (FRP) so as to ascertain what is needed locally. Our FRP is predicated on triggers which in Diddlebury are the flow levels in the Diddle Brook as shown on the level gauge by the road bridge. As there are no equivalent gauges in the Pye Brook, we are pushing for the provision of a new flow level gauge in the Pye Brook above Bouldon so that settlements downstream have some early warning of flooding. The one in Diddlebury has proved to be very useful.

In line with the above, we are trying to recruit a volunteer in each of the settlements we cover to act on our behalf at times of flooding – first preference being the Core Group Member in that location. In particular, we are looking for anyone who has useful skills (first aid etc) or useful equipment (4x4 etc). We also could do with sites for storage of sand bags etc in most settlements. The NFF offer training to Volunteers and have also set up Insurance products to cover the actions of all such volunteers (including those involved in regular stream clearances, litter picking etc). We are currently investigating these to see which we need as a Group.

There is a good chance of ongoing funding for the Slow the Flow project in the Corvedale after the end of the current one which has now been completed. The Report of this Project which will include the Report from Cardiff University on the effectiveness of leaky dams, will be published in the next month or so.

Otherwise we continue with the usual grind of trying to get Highways to clear blocked gulleys (like the perennially blocked one in Mill Lane, Diddlebury) and more urgently, the undermined wall in Bouldon.

We have applied to the Shropshire Council for a new Ordinary Watercourse Consent (OWC) which we need in order to carry out any work in the Diddle Brook. Our current one expires in May.

We continue to monitor all incoming Planning Applications thanks to the assistance of the DPC.

We have requested £50 from the DPC for the FAG to top up the amount already allocated.

Although we have not been able to hold any Meetings for what seems like years, the work of the FAG goes on.

Geoff Neden

7/3/2021

Notes from Site inspection at Peaton Strand

Background

The Inspection was requested by Mr Cronin to investigate flooding in the area and in particular the condition and capacity of an existing culvert running beneath the road nearby. This flooding has affected Peaton Cottage.

Mr Cronin also wished to discuss remedial works to the stream banks below the decking he inherited when he purchased the house and this involves work which may require an OWC.

After an inspection of the area, the following matters were agreed:

- 1 Highways are to arrange for an investigation/jetting of the pipework in the road adjacent to Peaton Cottage. This should take place within the next 2 weeks. Once the existing situation becomes clear, any necessary remedial works will be designed. The timing of any subsequent construction work is not yet settled. This may include clearing the small stream leading from the road and into which storm water is discharged, down to its confluence with the Pye Brook. This work may need consent from the Boyne Estate. More regular maintenance of items such as road gullies should become possible following changes at the Highways Dept.
- 2 Discussions were held between Mr Howard, Mr Povall and Luke Neal in regard to possible measures to slow down/reduce the run off from the fields to the south of the site.
- 3 The banks of the Pye Brook along the north boundary of Chapel House garden were inspected and advice was given as to how best to retain these. Rhian is to confirm whether or not an OWC is required for this work – probably not for the type of work put forward by Luke.

Geoff Neden

15/04/2021

Public Liability Insurance Report to DPC

Background

At the DPC Meeting held on March 24th, the Diddlebury Parish Flood Action Group (FAG) asked the DPC to consider funding Public Liability Insurance for its members and volunteers. The request was motivated by discussions with the Shropshire Flood Action Group Forum (SFAGF) – an organization which represents all the Flood Action Groups in the County and who were in turn recommended to investigate this provision by the National Flood Forum (NFF).

At the moment, when our members and volunteers carry out their regular work on the Diddle Brook – keeping the watercourse clear of obstructions where it passes through the village, litter picking and so on – they are not covered by any Insurance if they have an accident.

We established that suitable Cover was available and in fact the NFF had been instrumental in writing a tailor - made Policy for Flood Action Groups with a Brokerage Company which was subsequently bought by Zurich Insurance and is now included in their Charities Division.

We obtained a ball park figure from Zurich for the cost of such a Policy which came in between £100 and £150 depending on final details.

This was the range which we presented to the Meeting.

Members at the Meeting discussed various possibilities including:

- 1 Widening the scope of any such Insurance to include other loosely environmental groups operating in the Parish
- 2 Holding fund raising events – possibly in the DVH
- 3 Was such cover already included in the DPC's Policy?
- 4 Would such volunteers be covered by their own household Insurance Policies?

Results of subsequent Investigations

Since the Meeting the FAG have investigated all of the above suggestions and their findings are set out below using the same numbering.

- 1 Widening of scope

An email was sent out to all the groups in the Parish (see Appendix A below). To date, two responses have been received. These were from the Footpath Maintenance Group and Cath Burley. Both felt that they were already covered by other Insurance.

- 2 Fund Raising Events

We have received a kind invitation from the DVH to use it without charge but of course this would not be possible under present Covid arrangements and our need is, we feel, such that we should not wait for an indefinite period before arranging cover. Our seasonal work in the stream will soon start.

- 3 Use of existing DPC Policies

We were advised by the Clerk to the Council that our work would not be covered by the DPC Policy

- 4 Use of Householders Policies

We have been advised that householders policies are unlikely to cover our sort of work.

As you will know, following the Meeting a local resident kindly offered to fund the cost of the Policy and subsequently sent £150 to the DPC for use by the FAG in purchasing Public Liability Cover.

We followed the matter up with Zurich and received a Quotation for Public Liability Cover in the sum of £99.31.

After discussions with our members, it was suggested that perhaps the Cover should be extended to include Legal Expenses and a further Quotation for this was secured in the sum of £73.43 bringing the total annual Premium to £172.74.

As this additional cover was not included in the original discussion, we asked the donor if they would prefer to put their funds towards the Public Liability Cover only and be refunded the balance of £50.69. They declined and kindly confirmed that the £150 could be used to offset the cost of the new total premium of £172.74.

Cover for both Public Liability and Legal Expenses has been arranged with a commencement date of Saturday 1st May.

Conclusion

There remains a shortfall of £22.74 which we ask the DPC to consider meeting.

In subsequent years the annual premium will require to be met and we confirm to the DPC that we will in the meantime search for other sources of income.

The FAG would like to thank the DPC for all its support over the full 8 years of our existence.

Geoff Neden

19/04/2021

APPENDIX A – email to other Groups – sent on 7th April

I chair the Diddlebury Parish Flood Action Group and we have recently joined the Shropshire Flood Action Group Forum under the auspices of the National Flood Forum (NFF).

Prompted by the NFF we have been looking into the purchase of a Third Party/Public Liability Insurance Policy to cover volunteers and members engaged on work for us. Presently we have none and it is a concern that if someone had an accident whilst working in a stream say, there is no cover.

I raised this at the recent meeting of the Diddlebury Parish Council who have provided us with financial support over the past 7 or 8 years and they agreed to look at it but wanted first to see if any such Policy could be extended to cover other similar Groups in the overall Environmental field within the Parish and who operate with the assistance of volunteers.

I am writing therefore to see if your Group would be interested in joining with us in such a Policy. I have sent this message to a wide variety of Groups (Listed below) and I realise that some of you may well have already arranged Cover elsewhere. If so, please ignore it. Alternatively, if you are aware of any Groups not in the List but who you think might be interested, do please pass this message on.

When I have heard back from you all, I will in return report back to the DPC and see if we can move it along. For your information, I am told that the annual premium for the Flood Group alone would be around £150.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Kind Regards

Geoff Neden

Groups contacted

Corvedale Community Environmental Group

Corvedale and District Autumn Show

Corvedale Garden Group

Corvedale Footpath Maintenance Group

Summary

From the above it will be seen that considerable progress has been made over the past year. The Report of the Slow the Flow Steering Committee on which I sat, will be published shortly and this will include data from the University of Cardiff on the efficacy of leaky dams. I am optimistic that further funding for Slow the Flow activities in the Parish will be found so that more can be done – particularly in the Pye Brook catchment. I am also told that a flow recorder will shortly be fitted in the Pye Brook above Bouldon. I have also been told that a Contract has been let to repair “The Bouldon Hole”.

The Flood Response Plan is kept up to date as new data emerges and the presence of a level gauge above Bouldon will make it possible to rationalize this Plan for the settlements in the Pye Brook valley. We hope to get this Plan approved by the Emergency Services soon so that it can form an Appendix to the Shropshire Council’s Emergency Plan.

We have received an up to date OWC from the Council which is valid for 3 years.

We are currently trying to find suitable places to store items such as sand bags (or Flood Sax) in each settlement and also to recruit an individual in each settlement who would be the designated “go to” person in the event of flooding plus other volunteers who could help with the supply of say equipment such as 4x4 transport, First Aid etc.

We plan to re start Multi Agency Meetings and our own internal Meetings as soon as possible.

We continue to receive much appreciated support from the DPC – most recently in the part payment of the Premium for our Insurance Policy which covers members and volunteers in the fields of Public Liability and Legal Expenses.

Geoff Neden

04/05/2021