



Dauntsey Parish Council Drainage Board

The Good & The Bad (but not necessarily The Ugly)

Many thanks to those of you who have been doing further ditching and drainage work since my last article. Every bit helps and restored field ditches hold large quantities of water which are slowly released into Dauntsey Brook rather than immediately running off in a couple of hours and overtopping the Brook.

I'm still chasing Wiltshire Council about further clearance where they are the riparian owner, and for help with pressure to get the Brook cleared in The Green. We've had one site meeting but everything with Wiltshire Council at the moment seems to progress slowly.

I attended a meeting with several householders south of the motorway together with a flooding engineer being employed by their insurance companies. The engineer is also looking at modelling the flooding just south of the motorway with specific emphasis on the Highways Agency's provable (or not) negligence in lack of maintenance and the impact of the hay bale blocking the culvert. It is interesting to see that the insurance company is investing serious money to see if there is enough evidence to get compensation from the Highways Agency. If the insurer is considering tackling an organisation with the strength of the HA, what will they do with a farmer or householder who negligently causes flooding?

Ray Stockall (Chairman, Christian Malford Parish Council) and I had a meeting with Wessex Water about their new Swallett Gate Flood Alleviation Scheme. Work is due to start in January 2010 and will replace the sewer downstream of St James with a new pipe across the fields south of the B4069. There will be an additional flood overflow north into a widened ditch to discharge into The Bourne, but only working in extreme conditions. Once finished, this upgrade should stop the sewer surcharging around Rose Cottage and remove the need for the existing overflow by St James. If you look to the right when driving towards Christian Malford you will see the newt fencing near where the pipe will exit into the northern ditch. If you stop and have a look you will even see the newt traps (buckets) along the fence.

Ray Stockall and I also had an interesting meeting with Brinkworth PC when we joined them for an update on what they've done to reduce flooding in the last year. The answer was quite simple – NOTHING. We re-stressed the importance of clearing sections of Brinkworth Brook to stop it overtopping and flooding Dauntsey. They've agreed to write formally to all the farmers with land adjoining Brinkworth Brook (the riparian owners) and ask them to work together to clear the problem lengths.

I'm still in discussions with the Environment Agency about clearing Dauntsey Brook (which is classed as a 'main river') but not much progress so far. However the EA's staff have been out weed cutting in the Brook. Unfortunately, despite telling us what we should or should not do in such situations, they have left cuttings in the watercourse and not cleared the most critical areas.

In the past, I've written about the successful North Wiltshire District Council Flood Working Group and how Wiltshire Council was forming their equivalent. Months have passed and eventually the first meeting was held but, in their wisdom, Wiltshire Council has changed the format: parish and town councils may attend only if specifically invited (and none were) and only previously submitted written questions will be accepted. Of the 10 invited representatives from other bodies (Highways Agency, Environment Agency, Wessex Water etc), only three turned

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up. They obviously share the views of the non-invited parish councillors that it is a waste of time.

Planning Policy Strategy 25 (PPS25) is a government policy to reduce flood risk through the planning process. It was introduced in December 2006 and applies to local planning authorities (Wiltshire Council and NWDC before it), the Environment Agency and anyone applying for planning permission.

Before PPS25 there was its forerunner (PPG25) as part of NWDC's Local Plan from 2001 onwards. PPS25 is a key part of Wiltshire Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (flooding problem and what they are doing about it). The Environment Agency is required to be consulted on all planning applications and, among other issues, consider the implications under PPS25. If the site is at any risk of flooding (greater than once in 1000 years) from any source, or is larger than one hectare, a PPS25 Flood Risk Assessment **MUST** be carried out. If a satisfactory one has not been provided, the Environment Agency **MUST** refuse the application. Historically, we haven't seen a single reference to PPS25 in any planning application or Environment Agency response until last month. We have been pushing the Environment Agency for over a year about the poor quality of their advice to Planning, so it is nice to see them starting to catch up with government guidelines.

PPS25 makes it clear that the Flood Risk Assessment should take into account information from other bodies that have indicated there may be drainage problems. This would clearly seem to include sites such as the Great Middle Green Farm development (over one hectare in size and also including high risk areas) – the Parish Council has regularly objected on the grounds of drainage problems but has generally been ignored. We can only hope that the recent Environment Agency change of heart continues and is also taken up by Wiltshire Council: eight years since 2001 and still waiting... now if we could only delay our tax payments by as long!

Andrew Chapman

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