

FAG Report to the Hambledon Parish Council 05/12/22

Overview

The predictions for a “wet winter” by the Environment Agency are coming true, so far in the Winter season. The Big Pipe (BP) and its attached collection systems are doing a great job of dealing with surface water run-off and drainage from roofs. The groundwater situation of course, needs time to allow the rain water to percolate down to the aquifer level, but in comparison with last year’s readings there’s a bit of comfort room at this stage.

27/11/22	BHD 45.210 AOD	Whitedale	37.785 AOD
22/11/21	BHD 48.170 AOD	Whitedale	41.799 AOD

We do have an open question with Winchester County Council with regard to street sweeping, which used to be an annual service on West and East streets, along with Green Lane. It is our current understanding this operation has been discontinued due to a lack of resources, and we are awaiting clarification on this matter as there is a large quantity of leaves going into the gullies at this point, which will occur every season.

Headwall, Catchment Basin and Ditch – the catchment basin remains untouched insofar as clearance is concerned, and although the BP is keeping up with the flow of surface water, there remains a level of congestion extending upstream for an unknown distance, reducing the capacity.

The condition of the hedging following the recent trim, remains in a very dangerous state. There are a number of very large gaps closely adjacent to the grass verge, which is in constant use by pedestrians, mothers with children, and some in prams. Hampshire County Council (HCC) denies this is a footpath, even though it is shown as such on the Ordinance Survey Map. The holes (see photographs) are scattered the length of the hedge from the foot bridge up to the Old Forge, and there is no protection from falling into the ditch some 3 M below. These warnings have been brought to the attention of HCC on numerous occasions, but there has not been a written response or any indication of action being planned to date. The sloughing of the ditch bank will carry on rapidly with heavy rain, especially in way of the foot bridge, where gabions were promised in 2019, until positive action is undertaken. It is essential that an immediate demand be placed on HCC to respond in writing with a time-based plan for corrective measures, with a specified due date.

We would also comment on the state of the barbwire fencing on the field side of the ditch keeping stock away, where a large number of fence posts are rotted at ground level making it unstable. There may be an issue with regard to “ownership,” however.

Environment Agency - We have been in contact with Damen Funnell, Team Leader for the Flood Resilience Team, as directed by the Environment Agency, to gather information on the upcoming weather conditions for our planning efforts. We have since been advised there is a new contact person by the name of Woody Wilcock, identified as the Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor for Solent and South Downs, who will be our connection regarding resilience matters as he is working with a number of area FAGs. We haven’t heard anything to date, but will keep trying to confirm how future warnings will be managed.

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Scheduled activities for the FAG – We are currently reviewing our preparations for the Flood Season, with special attention being given to lengthening cover due to possible late changes in the groundwater levels into Spring. This includes a careful examination of our Risk Register and Flood Management Plan. One of our top hazards on the risk list is failures associated with mains drainage. The possibility of occurrence remains very high, and to date nothing has been done by Southern Water to preclude backup of the system in high groundwater conditions, as in 2000 and 2001. Over-pumping is almost a certainty over the Flooding Season, which is a cardinal point for planning. In our regular review of the ditch on the field side, we have noted subsidence of the ground around two of the manholes, in way of the lateral pipes leading over the ditch, requiring inspection and possible remedy.

The FAG will continue to monitor the weather conditions and suitability of our resilience measures, and provide information to Hambledon Parish Council on a regular basis, along with relevant information to the community upon request.

Respectfully Submitted by,
Jan Jarvie
Chairman, Flood Action Group