

FAG Report to the Hambledon Parish Council 03/10/22

Overview

We are now well into the planning phases of the 2022/23 Flood Season, as it is starting to unfold with a number of issues to stay on top of, giving the Flood Action Group (FAG) some action items to address. We have placed an article in the Hambledonian to make villagers aware of the upcoming preparations for Autumn and Winter weather. We continue to maintain a watch on the aquifer levels from Broadhalfpenny Down and Whitedale Farm, which remain low for this time of the season. We have also renewed our yearly correspondence with Charlotte Creswell of the Environment Agency (EA), to gain her views on the rain forecast for the season, and status of the aquifers near term. She explains, “despite the current rainfall, it is going to take a lot to make up the deficit, we will need several consecutive months of above average rainfall before we need to begin to plan/worry.” Looking at the 3 month outlook produced by the Met Office, the level at Whitedale is 5 m lower than this time last year, but prolonged showers, e.g. 300 mm/month, could lead to a rapid change. The EA is currently indicating it could be wetter than average, but that was the projection as of the end of August – next update due end of September,” which we will continue to monitor.

Big Pipe & Outflow

The torrential downpour, which we experienced on Monday 5th September 22, saw the very first time the Big Pipe (BP) has been fully pressed-up full with water. The pipe itself appeared to have performed well getting the surface water quickly through the village. This was an “unofficial test” however, and the results have to be viewed as good data, but the conditions were not those envisaged in the original specification. The design requirements for the pipe, i.e. heavy rains and all cellar pumps in full operation, is currently compromised by the amount of debris in the system that lowers its capacity, and the amount of resistance at the point of discharge. There is a significant head pressure over the length of the BP, as there is a fall of 10 M. Thus far, the evidence shows with the recent heavy flow, there were no reported signs or evidence of pipe covers lifting, gullies overflowing, or other indications of possible structural of distress.

Further monitoring of the BP – Since the deluge on 5th September, we have been conducting our normal inspections of the BP and have seen a continual build-up of soil/aggregate extending upstream (North) of the deposits at the very end. It is very difficult to view, but from what can be sighted from the guardrail (20/09/22), the angle of the build-up is getting steeper. We believe this is an indication of material being dropped out of the flow ahead of the heap previously accumulated. Under the current light rain conditions, and the lack of head pressure of the stream, this requires more immediate attention, and also it makes “jetting” a bigger chore.

There is a level of blockage in the catchment basin, with mud and other aggregates, along with obstructive shrubs growing in the bottom between the headwall and the catchment dam. From the plimsol line left on the walls of the basin, it too was full for a time, and on a parallel with the top of the 1.2 M pipe. Although there is a dense amount of growth on both sides of the outflow ditch beyond the dam, the huge pressure of water brushed aside most of the impediments for approximately 100 M

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downstream. There are few things in the way below the foot bridge, and we note the two culverts opposite Hook Vinney further downstream, remained unobstructed.

Communication with Hampshire Highways

An email was sent to Paula Edwards, Richard Bastow, et al, following the torrential downpours, again pointing-out the obstructions, heavy growth issues, and the return of the Himalayan Balsam, etc. A response was received on 13/09.22, indicating the following:

“Apologies for the delay in my response.

Our contractor is looking to get the Himalayan Balsam pulled before the cutting and raking of the ditch is undertaken, orders for which have already been placed. The apron and catchment basin area is also due to be cleared and an order is in the system for this work.

I'm sorry if I haven't communicated this before, but in terms of cleansing schedules it is intended that work to clean the catchment basin area and to cut back and clear vegetation from the ditch will take place annually in the autumn.

I hope this explains the current situation.”

Unfortunately, this does not answer our continual requests for a Full plan and schedule – there are no dates or other information as to the timeframe. This is most frustrating, and in the midst of the heavy and changing weather conditions, we remain concerned. A copy of our request for specific feedback was also sent to Cllr Hugh Lumby, which will be followed-up with a meeting.

Risks and Concerns

As part of the Flood Action Plan (FAP), we also maintain a Risk Management Plan (RMP) to capture and track possible risks, action items, and other matters of concern. As a part of our preparations for the flooding season, we review the experiences of the previous years, along with lessons learnt. Currently, our attention is mainly directed at three significant items; 1) Condition of the “hidden” parts of the BP, the catchment basin and outflow ditch; 2) Status of the East ditch bank, hedge and grass verge on the B 2150; and 3) Dangers associated with the foul drainage system in the village, which could lead to major problems and block main highways. This latter issue has remained an outstanding risk without a solution from Southern Water, since the 2000/01 flooding catastrophe. These items will remain a part of our regular reports to the HPC, and are continually monitored as matters of priority.

Respectfully Submitted,
Jan Jarvie, Chairman
Flood Action Group