

## FAG Report to the Hambledon Parish Council 10/01/22

(V 1.2)

We are now in the second month of the Flood Season and the risks ahead look quite different from our expectations in December, because of the lack of rainfall so far, an important element of our planning. When comparing the 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2022 with the 3<sup>rd</sup> January in 2021, the level at Broadhalfpenny Down is lower by 6 m, and the reading at Whitedale is 9.65 m lower. Currently, the trend shows a slow rise in line with the soakaway of recent rains down to the aquifers. This is good news for those of us with cellars, possible overflowing wells, or ground floor levels below the road. However, with the rapid shifts in the weather and climate change, we cannot be complacent. As they say, hope for the best, but plan for the worst, and watch this apace!

|          |                |           |            |
|----------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| 03/01/22 | BHD 49.760 AOD | Whitedale | 40.908 AOD |
| 03/01/21 | BHD 55.830 AOD | Whitedale | 50.561 AOD |

Currently, there are no flood warnings in effect, and the we continue to receive updates on the forecast from the relevant agencies. The FAG will continue to monitor the situation and provide our own regular updates as the weather dictates.

**1) In put from the Environment Agency** - In Hambledon, the groundwater level is currently below average for the time of year. However, the level at Whitedale will continue to increase over the next 12 days or so in response to the rain which fell towards the end of December. So I would suspect that the level here could become much closer to average in the next week or so.

The Met Office monthly outlook suggests that January will remain unsettled, with wet and windy weather, interspersed with some drier colder spells. Overall, perhaps staying slightly drier in the south and south east.

With average rainfall in January, the groundwater level will not be problematic. We probably need to see 1.5 – 2 times monthly average rainfall before we may experience or come close to experiencing some cellar flooding.

I think the message for now is currently good news, and we aren't expecting impacts over the next few weeks. However, there are still a few months left of the winter season, and with long range weather forecasting capability somewhat poor, we can't rule anything out. It's important that we monitor and remain prepared.

Charlotte Creswell

**2) Headwall, Catchment Basin and Ditch** – The silt collected in the catchment basin and stretching upstream into the Big Pipe remains, and has yet to be sucked-out, lowering its capacity with heavy rainfall. Our concerns with respect to the sides of the ditch remain an issue, and we have been expecting a format report on the condition, especially on the East bank, as requested in the Spring. On 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021, we received a response from Hampshire County Council with the following paragraph:

*“A review and comparison of photographs taken during previous visits to the site between December 2019 and October 2021 show no change in the condition of the cut faces. Further, the area of ditch supporting the footbridge, whilst exposed and unvegetated, did not exhibit any signs of major erosion or instability. The ditch has existed in its current form since 2016 and there has been no evidence of erosion or spalling of the faces to date, however*

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*precautionary inspections will be undertaken after sustained periods of high rainfall or high groundwater events.”*

For the record, the Flood Action Group considers this response unacceptable given the number of observations and comments raised by the FAG since early 2019. It does not align with our findings over the past three years scrutinising the ditch and its surrounds on a weekly basis. To date, we have received no appropriate evidence in the form of photographs, output from inspections, formal engineering reports, or measurements of any description that would give us confidence in their assessment. Due to the paucity of verifiable proof to the contrary, I stand firmly behind my reports to the HPC on these issues, which is accurately backed-up with a large number of recorded observations, dated photographs, measurements and other relevant information. One of the more well-aged and overdue undertakings put forward by HCC in January 2019, was the need for a gabion (or similar) retainer to be fitted in way of the damage caused by a HCC Highways vehicle when it plunged into the ditch. No action has been forthcoming to date, save putting reflector posts in way of the severely reduced verge on the B 2150, which is clear for all to see.

**3) Clearance of Grips by Lengthsman** – in preparation for the upcoming visit by the Lengthsman scheduled for 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022, a survey was conducted on Back Lane and the intersection of Brook Lane and the turning for Chidden. A set of instructions were emailed to Jo Tester who requested input for work requirements. On the 5<sup>th</sup> the Brook Lane intersection was sighted, and a discussion took place with the Lengthsman who was just finishing up with activities on the grips. The extant grip had been cleared to the stopping point at the hedge, and three additional grips had been dug further up Brook Lane on the South side extending to the hedge. Each grip terminates even with the North face of the vegetation, and is from 40 to 50 Cm deep. In heavy highway surface water flooding, the grips are a “dead end,” and do not continue through the hedge itself which is blocked with earth and vegetation. This is unfortunate, but cannot be cleared in accordance with regulations, and will fill-up as there is no place to go. The great pond will still form at the intersection, and will have to drain away by percolating down through the turf.

Respectfully Submitted by,  
Jan Jarvie  
Chairman, Flood Action Group