

Ogbourne St Andrew, Ogbourne Maizey and Rockley Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting

Minutes

**Tuesday 23rd January 2024 at 7pm at Silks on the Downs, Main Road,
Ogbourne St Andrew**

Present: Nick Parsons (NP) (Chair)
Jan Whitehead (JW) (Clerk)
Alan Brown (AB)
John Edmunds (JE)
Rupert Kelton, ARK
Charlotte Hitchmough, ARK
Parishioners:

Peter Mack	Pam Mack	Carolyn Edmunds	Cathy Fuller
Alex Rowlands	Dave Hughes	Angela Hughes	Sue Parry
Julie Holborow	Rachel Inglefield	Jane Fox	Bruce Fox
Lisa Benn	Jeff Mason	Suzanne Mason	Jo Parkinson-Hill
Oliver Iliffe	Colin Parkinson-Hill	Sarah Marriott	Jerry Brown
Mark Whitehead			

Apologies: John Hetherington
Nicky Place

1) Welcome

NP welcomed everyone to the meeting. NP outlined the of the purpose of the meeting and advised that parishioners were welcome to ask questions and share concerns and ideas following the recent flooding. There were also a number of questions submitted by email in advance of the meeting which would also be covered.

2) Recent Flooding

Rockley – email. There was significant flooding at Old Eagle Corner. There is grant funding for “leaky dams” and for making “Bunds” to slow flood water, which could be put in the field on the left (going to Marlborough) to slow the flow of water before it reaches the Og . The flooding at this location was both deeper and more prolonged than in previous years. Road drains need to be kept clear by the council before there is a serious accident at this location. The drains along the Rockley Hackpen road also need clearing out. Again these are only flooding due to lack of maintenance. Flood water also caused an issue when it froze over and could have resulted in a serious accident.

Action: NP to check map of the area to identify the specific areas of concern

Maisey – blocked culverts under the Rockley Road bridge could cause backing up of water and cause risk of flooding to 4 adjacent properties in Ogbourne Maisey and the properties in Box Drive. The pipes are currently partially blocked and need to be cleared. The depth under the

bridge also needs to be increased by ensuring the responsible authority annually dredge out the bed under the arches to deepen the channels to ensure that the bridge does not suffer damage or cause a bottleneck for the flood waters of the Og.

Bridges across the river to the field upstream were washed away causing an additional issue with debris.

There was an issue with flooding in 1 property in Ogbourne Maizey.

There is now rubbish accumulated at Rockley Road bridge and this needs to be cleared.

Action: NP to investigate who is responsible for clearing this.

St Andrew – the area from the war memorial, past Sheepridge to The Forge.

There was significant flooding in this area, including inside 2 properties, 3 cars written off, parishioners in Sheepridge and in 4 properties along this section of road unable to access their properties using a vehicle or on foot. The flood water also contained human waste as the sewers were inundated thereby causing an issue for public health and the environment. This entrance to the village was inaccessible for a number of days causing issues for elderly and vulnerable residents and families and a risk to residents should an emergency have arisen.

Several points were raised resulting from all the above issues:

The first is the need to sort the earth bank/trench from the bridge to the gate opposite Sheepridge T-junction that helped to reduce the existing flooding, but, if left, will inevitably act as barrier to water escaping and raise the level of water even higher than recently experienced. Clarity is required on who is legally responsible for the different aspects: highways, council, Thames Water, particularly who is responsible for providing an effective drainage system.

Clarity is required on who owns the land from the curb to the fence line of Marion's Field and can we keep an effective drainage pipe working? This would need to be built to withstand the weight of tractors, combine harvesters, farm produce lorries and horse vehicles that often have no choice but to go onto the grass verge due to the narrow road and parked cars.

the regular parking of horse trailers on the road opposite the gate entrance to the large field, narrow the road considerably for these larger farm and horse lorries to get by. It is suggested that these park a little further along Sheepridge between the first 2 lampposts on the right. This is a quiet and safer road, with minimal traffic compared to the main village road where vehicles are often driving at speed.

The following should be considered for the Parish Critical Incident plan:

- Providing a road closed sign to prevent unsuspecting drivers stalling their cars in the deep water as well as providing a deterrent to drivers that attempt it for fun and create waves going into the houses most vulnerable to flooding.
- Having an early warning WhatsApp message sent out asap when water levels rise. A fluorescent water height stick could be placed against a fence post.
- Providing adequate numbers of aqua bags for residents who are likely to be flooded
- Provide clarity to all residents as to which authority is responsible for the drainage of water from the road

In addition, other mitigations to be considered to support more vulnerable properties:

- What upstream mitigations can we consider to slow or hold the water to prevent fast run off into the lower part of the village?
- Can we support flood door barriers for properties potentially most impacted?

Meadow View was not flooded this time but the property was at risk due to being surrounded by water for a week. It was only possible to leave this property with water over knee height.

Sewage water was an issue in the flood water on the main road into the village. This must be raised via Thames Water and also to the Environment Agency regarding the contamination to the River Og.

Sewage has been reported a number of times to Thames Water over the years and taken up with MPs with no action. Some remedial work was done in the village but the sewers get overwhelmed with groundwater.

We need a collective voice to raise the concerns about sewage

Action: Website to hold evidence of reports to Thames Water /Environment Agency or send to ogbourneparishclerk@yahoo.co.uk and also start a petition.

Action: Investigate inflatable dinghies to assist with getting people in and out. Also need to get additional gel bags

Marlborough Town Council held a meeting last week and sewage issues were raised there too. Danny Kruger should be contacted by as many as possible to add to the pressure.

Thames Water have visited but without any results. Thames Water attempted to line the sewers in the past to prevent the ingress of spring water. This has clearly failed and should be followed up.

Ditches used to be open until Sheepridge was built. One of the ditches has now been closed off. Berry Meadow is an issue where the sewer is running under the flooded field so this needs to be raised with ARK.

ARK re-routing of the river – there is now a lot of water sitting in the area leading to Wet Pits Lane. The old ditch where the river used to flow is now blocked.

Ground water is higher than it has ever been this year. The problems experienced here are similar to villages across the Downs area. Thames Water do have a plan for this catchment area – Ground Water Management Plan. ARK advised Thames Water before the river was rerouted and they raised no objections. There is one issue with a drain cover and this has been raised with Thames Water. The re-routing of the river is not the cause of the issues with the sewers but this issue has not helped.

The re-routing of the Og across Berry Meadow was not raised with the Parish Council in advance of the work.

An article was written for the Parish magazine to invite comments and enquiries.

ARK modelled the flow of the river in the old course and across the meadow. This provides additional capacity to hold the water in the meadow.

It is felt that the slowing down of the river is causing flooding in the area and this is worse than it might have been if the water had flowed faster from this area.

Action: Any direct questions or concerns regarding the re-routing of the Og to be sent to ogbourneparishclerk@yahoo.co.uk

Water is still coming down from the Downs into the track via the field by The Olympia. The spring to the south of Church Lane comes from a natural amphitheatre which collects large volumes of water. There is an old windmill which was to be used to pump water and this is the source of the spring which is causing today's issue.

Wet Pits area – Environment Agency were contacted from early November due to concerns about the amount of water in that area. Flood alerts – we are an amber alert area year round. Additional water caused a query on why the flood alert was not red. Water from the field, from the byway and from the road converged together. Locals cleared drains and ditches in the area to help with water flow. It is suggested that homeowners keep an eye on drains outside their properties, keep them clear if possible and also report to WCC via MyWilts app.

Water on the road is highways, water from byways is byways – 2 separate areas.

Road closures – this will be looked into to see if we can apply for permission to create a bylaw to close a road if there is a threat to life or property.

If the main village road is flooded – the only access is via Wet Pits Lane. Right turns out of this road onto the A346 will be investigated as part of the follow up.

All areas of the parish have been impacted by the recent flooding.

Action: WCC engineer to be invited to visit the village.

Cold tarmac was put down some years ago on the track up past Maisey Manor Farm. This cap has now broken down and has been washed down into the village. The landowner has now created escape routes from the track onto the gallops.

Those who back onto the River Og do have a responsibility to keep their section of the Og clear of weeds and other debris.

We need to find a way to move the water off the road onto a “flood plain” to reduce the level of the waters. Also need to remove the kerbstones and open up the ditches and keep them clear.

3) Review of current flood plan

Current plan will be loaded to the website so that all can take a look at it.

Thanks were expressed to all those who helped with the flooded properties on the 4th January and the subsequent actions to clear the floodwater.

We do need volunteers to come forward to be added to the village flood/emergency plan and a working party to follow up and complete the plan.

Action: Anyone interested in being a volunteer or helping with a working group to review the flood/emergency plan, please contact ogbourneparishclerk@yahoo.co.uk

4) AOB

ARK - Is the river going to be dug out to enable it to flow more freely or leave it to flood? There is a plan to do some work at the Ogbourne St George end. The river still belongs to the land-owner.

More gel bags will be ordered and they will be sited at properties at high risk of flooding in the future.

It was suggested that it might also be useful to write to our MP regarding dredging policy.

Bridge across the channel on the footpath from the St Andrew's Church to Maisey Manor Farm is submerged and the handrail has disappeared.

Action: Rights of Way warden to be contacted regarding the bridge and handrail.

Meeting closed: 20.15