

LAMBOURN VALLEY FLOOD FORUM MINUTES

15th January 2024

On-Line Conference

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| • | <p>Attendees</p> <p>Karen Nelson – Thames Water David Bird – Thames Water Howard Woollaston – WBC / Boxford / Lambourn Clive Hooker - WBC / Downlands Carolyn Richardson – WBC Emergency Panning Rachel Carden – Upper Lambourn - Paula Saunderson – Newbury Chris – Lambourn Jonah Maddocks - WBC Martyn Wright - East Garston Nick Voysey - Great Shefford Richard Hancock – Environment Agency James Potter - Eastbury Andrew Gorton - Eastbury Jon Winstanley WBC Vicky Rieunier – Lambourn Emily Merritt – WBC Emergency Panning Paul Bacchus WBC flood and drainage Jonathan Atkinson Sue Tulloch Linda Bowden – Great Shefford David Blundell - Great Shefford Jill Hoblin – Winterbourne Mark Hayes-Newington - Boxford</p> <p>Apologies</p> <p>Oliver Steed - Lambourn</p> | |
| • | <p>Minutes from Previous meeting</p> <p>Not discussed</p> | |

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>Matters Arising From Last Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not discussed | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>The Current Situation in the Valley following recent exceptional rainfall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martyn Wright: Problems with going through the correct TW channels, an engineer someone comes out and then says nothing can be done, but then it shows on the system as solved. Customer process of TW is wrong. • David Bird: We can't fix waste water problems overnight. Our new system installed last year, is not working in the unique problems in your area. We don't have solutions right now, and need to look at a different solution and changing the system. We can give a commitment that we will be looking at it and come back to you. It will take a while to find a way forward. • Paula Saunderson: I Have personally been involved in setting up call systems. We need to know what the escalation system is, particularly when health risks are involved. • Clive Hooker: Why are we here? Only a month ago we had a meeting with Richard (TW) and Karen Nelson at East Garston. • David: It is a failure of how we completed the system, you have my commitment that we do incident planning. It has not been happening fast enough. I accept I should have been more aware of it and will find out why it has not been escalated. • Rachel Carden: Have called customer services on multiple occasions, and have tried to be polite. Have stopped reporting since nothing happens, which makes it look like there is no problem, when in fact it is worse than it was before. • James Potter: The menu systems on TW systems are for single problems, not wide scale issues. People in your vans are avoiding answering questions. • Karen Nelson: We have had a lot of engineers being abused. Will relay back that they need to be supportive. We know you are our eyes and ears. The system works for most scenarios, but not with these long term issues. There is a bulletin board that we will look at it. We want to make sure there are no blockages. | <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • James: Your engineers need to talk to flood wardens, rather than anyone. • Howard: Climate change is an issue • David: We need to look at what are the strategic solutions. Don't want to over commit. We will discuss internally over the next couple of days as to what we can do and how quickly. • Howard: We need a quick fix and a long term solution. <p>Parish Issues</p> <p>Upper Lambourn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vicky Rieunier - Sewers gushing, have they been lined? • Karen: Everyone's waste goes to East Shefford. Whole catchment split into two, top is to Bockhampton, where joined with pipe from Membury. We have done a lot of work over the last few years. Have deployed the ATAC, and in previous years, when it turned out not to be needed. Eastbury is in the other half of network, It is gravity fed, with pumping stations at East Garston and Great Shefford. 1.5 KM of lining has been done in Shefford, but there is still some to do. We got caught out by high groundwater, have a big package of work to do when the groundwater falls • Vicky: If you do more lining in upper Lambourn will it help downstream? • Karen: There will be water coming in from everywhere. Water on the road will let water into manholes, plus infiltration from residential properties. We need to know where there is water on the surface. The groundwater is higher than previously, so we can't do any surveys at the moment, but looking at new technology for use in this type of situation. • Chris: Drain lane in Upper Lambourn is where your pumping station is. You have put a pump in the ditch before. Upper Lambourn sewage is getting into the river. If do something in upper Lambourn, you might help Lambourn perhaps? • Karen: The ditch is not a TW problem to solve, can WBC help? • Jon Winstanley: Will talk off line. • Rachel: Your new pumping station in Upper Lambourn is too low, and you are pumping water from the ditch into | <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>TW</p> <p>WBC</p> |
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your sewers. The water was always there, but why is it now a problem?

Elsewhere

- Martyn: All these problems were identified 10 years ago. This is first time the water has got back close to 2014, but is still lower and TW have spent a huge amount of money and a done a lot of work, this is a big issue.
- Karen: The approach we are taking is having an effect, but not at the speed it is needed.
- Martyn: Maybe a complete new sewer system is needed.
- Karen: We have done whole sections, sealing a lot more, but not addressing private networks. It is not that the network is broken, when the groundwater is not there it is working as it should be. We have put in funding for dealing with that.
- Mark Hayes-Newington - Boxford: Groundwater can not get into the river, due to back pressure, a lot is getting in from wrongly connected downpipes
- Karen: Where the laterals join is an area for study. The liners should not come off at junctions letting water behind the liners
- Jonathan: WBC are responsible for the groundwater, not TW. You will always have a problem. TW are doing their best.
- Jon: WBC have powers under the buildings act to rectify private misconnections, but they are difficult to enforce because there is often no other possibility.
- Chris (Lambourn) : I have not been continuously reporting if sewage comes out of the man holes because there seems to be no point.
- Martyn: There always is a way to tackle groundwater from properties, either by TW negotiation or WBC enforcing it. Asked if TW has been down that route, but so far not done. Propose joint task group with TW / WBC.
- Karen: We have communicated with several customers , it is not the case that we have taken no action.
- Paul Bacchus: We don't permit connections of surface water into water connections. Soak aways not viable in that situation. I have refused many connections into foul sewers, but it does not prevent us trying to solve the problem.

- Martyn: Blocked toilets, groundwater flooding. Groundwater seems to be dropping. Has the ATAC in East Garston reached capacity?.
- Karen: Any extra capacity would not make much difference. However, water seems to be receding in Eastbury.

Clayhill Ward

- Paula Saunderson: We split Clayhill into 4 areas, areas 1 & 2 are OK due to the flood alleviation scheme. In Area 3 132 houses are affected, 32 in area 4. No strategy for this area. Where is all this water coming from, is it coming from the river? Want a flood risk management plan for this area. We want a proper look at 7 people surrounded by sewage. Feels like we don't matter. We want commitment from EA WBC to TW to work together
- Richard Hancock: We have to prioritise,
- Paula is it predicated on property value?
- Richard: We define benefit from risk value without an assessment of property value, we can get extra funding for deprived areas.
- Paula: At 1.66m Lambourn went out of banks, had to wait until before we got a warning, Shaw meter was wrong
- Richard: Gauge calibration has been fixed.
- Paula: Find some money and do some research
- Paul Bacchus: We were about to commission a report, but have delayed to incorporate the learning's from this event.

Eastbury

- Andrew Gorton: Road closure is a new issue, surface issue between Plough and Bockhampton. Have asked for a hard closure, but not getting it. Splashing of sewage laden ponds across the road from passing traffic.
- Jon Winstanley: Problem with hard closure is emergency access and the business continuity of the Plough.
- Howard: Bund working well

Lambourn

- Rachel: A number of properties in Lambourn have been flooded internally, Wantage road closed, Oxford street flooded. Only way out is Hungerford Hill. Seems we just

WBC/EA

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| | <p>have to put up with it. Problems with inconsiderate motorists speeding through floodwater.</p> <p>Great Shefford</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda Bowden: 19 houses can't use their loos, two portaloos, what will TW do? We have had a tanker in the past, but not this time. • Karen: Will get team out, will see what we can do. • Linda: EA pumping working well, but will there be a second pump if we need it?. • Richard: No plans to deploy a second pump, but lined up if need be. Will speak to Shaun and let you know what will be the trigger for installing that. • Linda: Why did it take five days for WBC to put up signage about water on the road? • Jon: It has been done. • Linda: No personal contact for help, when repeated calls for help. • Martyn: Would temporary speed humps slow people down, to prevent splashing? • Jon: Hasty installation can cause accidents, so can't do it. <p>Subsequent to the meeting Rachel Carden requested that the following be documented in relation to Lambourn:</p> <p>'I stated that NO assistance had been given by the main agencies in Lambourn, apart from community members and LPC who visited and helped a number of flooded residents. Even the traffic lights I requested from TW had caused more problems than they resolved. I asked why WBC hadn't provided sandbags and Carolyn said they don't recommend sand bags anymore on account that they were ineffective and also became quickly contaminated. I asked what they could provide and she didn't answer directly. I asked for immediate mitigation, and a short, medium and long term plan from all agencies'</p> | <p>TW</p> <p>EA</p> <p>WBC/TW /EA</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>Great Shefford 'Bypass' Flood Alleviation scheme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No discussion | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>EA Update</p> <p>Subsequent to the meeting Richard Hancock provided the</p> | |

following update:

General situation - all information correct as of 1530hrs Monday 15 January

2x Flood warnings remaining in force -

this is because levels have not fallen below trigger levels and if they were to then rise again, our duty officers would not receive any alarms and we would potentially miss issuing/updating any warning which we do not want to risk.

This is especially the case for the Lambourn warning area, as it may mean the FAS at Eastbury could overtop and causing flooding downstream without any notice.

Shaw - This is due to baseflow levels in the Lambourn and Kennet being held up as a result of the groundwater being exceptionally high.

I know people can become complacent to warnings if left in force for extended lengths of time but unfortunately under the circumstances this is the system we have.

Current forecast

Dry to the weekend, some unsettled weather over the weekend and early next week but the Met Office was not forecasting significant precipitation that we would anticipate watercourses reacting to.

Groundwater - the rate of rise is declining at both Longacre and Northfield farm. Some levels declining but we are observing Groundwater levels are very reactive.

Groundwater briefing notes are updated every Tuesday for GW flood alert areas.

Thames: groundwater situation - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Thames: groundwater situation

The latest update on monitored groundwater levels and whether there are any groundwater alerts or warnings in force.

www.gov.uk

If you are signed up to the GW Flood alerts, you should have these pushed to you by whichever communication method you have signed up.

Shaw USGS (gauge)

The thresholds have been changed following your feedback. These are in effect on the systems EA duty officers use but will not be changed on Gov.uk until 22/2/2024 - this is due to the way our website updates periodically and not something we (in the area teams) are in control of sadly.

We know the system is not always perfect, but we always welcome feedback because like this it does make a difference.

Great Shefford

We are aware of rumours circulating that we will not be constructing the FAS until 2025/26. This is not true, irrespective of where/whom people heard it from. Planning and our other regulatory permissions are well underway and we expect the planning approval any day. We still plan to construct this year (2024/25) and have already been looking at comparisons from previous high GW years to see when we may be able to physically start work. I will keep the group updated through the LVFF meetings and we will continue to engage with the community.

Contacts

I fully appreciate the topic of conversation we had regarding Thames Water customer contacts, but if you have any urgent immediate concerns, especially out of hours, please report them to the EA's Incident Communication Service on 0800 80 70 60 and ask for it to be logged as an incident and passed to the Thames Area Flood Incident Duty Officer.

This is because our staff do not all work shifts, and not all of them work as duty officers so their phones may not even be switched on, however ICS is a 24hr call centre, they are able to record and log your information, give you a reference number and they may even be able to put your call through to the appropriate duty officer if they are not busy.

You can always ask for that duty officer to call you back if you

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| | <p>need feedback on a report.</p> <p>Finally</p> <p>Apologies to Vicky Rieunier - events have overtaken me, I realise I have missed the boat this year but I will get you words for the parish website for future use.</p> <p>Thank you to all of you for your information, Paula especially, I am happy to receive this as it is relevant to my team and what we do, my apologies I am not able to respond to everything though, especially during incidents.</p> <p>While I haven't been replying, please know I am not ignoring your information, I have been feeding into our incident room briefings and EA staff have also been sent out accordingly. This does depend on the availability of our staff and which areas across the Thames Valley we are able to prioritise at any one time.</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>Thames Water Update</p> <p>Subsequent to the meeting David Bird of Thames Water provided the following update:</p> <p>I promised to provide a further update on what we could do to ensure our systems provided the right response to local residents given the relatively unique circumstances around the Lambourn area.</p> <p>As I explained when we met last week we implemented a new computer system last year which has some automatic responses following call-outs.</p> <p>Given the feedback from yourselves and local residents we have been looking at what we can do to ensure we respond appropriately.</p> <p><i>Immediate actions:</i></p> <p>We have agreed the following actions which should reduce the immediate issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where customers are raising issues in relation to Lambourn Valley or Little Shefford via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Report a Blockage Online: Our schedulers will change the customer contact system preference to 'do not contact' to prevent unhelpful messages about your issue being resolved being sent; | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In our Operational Contact Centre: Contact centre agents will also change the customer contact system preference to ‘do not contact’; • From a system perspective this should initially prevent unnecessary and unhelpful messages being automatically sent from within the syste <p>This is obviously a manual work around but should stop some of the frustrating responses that have been received and which have caused a view locally that we are trying to close down issues without recognising the specific circumstances within the area.</p> <p><i>Medium-term actions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are Working with our Salesforce Product Ownership team to understand the timescales to either turn off comms on these ‘Attended not cleared’ journeys or fix the existing issue where the default message is sent to all different types of ‘attended not cleared’ outcome. • Our operational support team are also commencing a review to look at tailoring communications for this type of hydraulic situation. It is being assessed as being included within our Turnaround plan as a specific initiatives, although this hasn’t yet been confirmed <p>More generally, the ops support team are working with the front-line operational teams to ensure we are providing them with the support they need and are as joined up as possible on the challenges faced by residents in the Lambourn Valley.</p> <p>Finally, once again, let me re-iterate my apologies for the issues that you have all been facing and confirm that we are doing everything we can to ensure that we resolve wherever possible the operational issues but also ensure that when residents are reporting issues, which we want you to do, that we are responding appropriately.</p> | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | <p>Date, Time and location of next meeting.</p> <p>TBD</p> <p><u>By teleconference</u></p> | <p>All</p> |