

Flood Working Group Progress Review 7 April 2025

The Working Group has now held 3 meetings and the 4th is planned for 16th April. The Group consists of 3 representatives of PC, 6 villagers, a representative from Bloxham School and Kieron Mallon assisting with OCC contacts. Several of the villagers on the team played key roles during Storm Bert to help manage the challenges that others faced. Everyone on the team has been very active in helping to progress a wide range of issues.

The number of properties hit by the flood is at least 25 (not everyone impacted has wanted to be identified), and a rough estimate of overall damage caused is around £1.5mi.

Key Activities/Actions

Review the Bloxham Emergency Plan. This broadly confirmed the existing plan, and reviewed the responsibilities and actions in the event of a major event. In particular we are updating information on safe spaces and key holders, and these will be incorporated into an updated version of the plan.

Linked with this, the WG has emphasized that **residents must take responsibility for their own flood protection** particularly with respect to items such as “sandbags”. The WG conducted research into the best type of bag and found that sand is not the best material – and this research and recommendation has now been published. We also found a lot of very useful flood resilience ideas on the “Flood Mary” website – details of which have been circulated.

There has been extensive discussion and investigation into the **water flowing from the Bloxham School playing field onto Courtington Lane**, then onto Workhouse Lane and the High Street. It has now been confirmed that there is a 150mm line running under School car park that discharges into a 225mm line at the High Street. OCC have advised that they are preparing their report (expected “soon”) and that it will have recommendations for improvements in this system.

The review of the **water coming down the Tadmarton Road** highlighted the number of drains blocked in the road and across the village. OCC/CDC actioned our requests to clear these and a team from DrainLine spent 4 days in the village clearing the drains in Tadmarton Road, Courtington Lane, the High Street, Colesbourne Road and Brookside Way. They cleared the drain pits and jetted and checked the flow between the pits. They were reporting any drains they could not access or could not clear to OCC for further action.

To try to understand what was happening in **Bloxham Brook** during the storm we walked the length of the brook with the local rep of the Environmental Agency. He believed that apart from one minor area of silt build up around the Little Bridge Road bridge, the brook was quite clear and he saw nothing of substance that would impede the flow. He saw the issue as being that the sheer amount of water flowing down the brook was too much to go under the bridges – and so we saw significant water backup and pooling.

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We are fortunate that one member of the Working Group took an initiative to look at ways to **“Slow the flow”** of water into the village. The initial concept was based on personal knowledge and understanding of the benefits of the Banbury scheme, but we found a relevant village scheme running over the last decade at Evenlode near Moreton-in-marsh. From these discussions we linked to a number of key people and resources who may be able to help us with a **Natural Flood Management (NFM) Scheme**.

We held a Team’s meeting on 26 March with:-

- **Giles Stother** - Land Adviser, Catchment host – Cherwell & Ray, Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust (BBOWT)
- **Steve Haywood** – Thames 21 (River Trust) - Rural Solutions Programme Manager
- **Tom Hall** – Natural England, NE Cotswolds Farmers’ Cluster
- **Matt Wood** – Environmental Agency, Catchment Co-ordinator

There were four key action points from these discussions:-

- They may be able to help us run a **“Flood Resilience Workshop”** for the village. We can investigate holding an evening session in September probably in the main hall at Jubilee. This could include talks from property flood resilience (PFR) specialists, the parish council, OCC, Natural England, BBOWT and/or Thames21 - rivers trust.
- It was noted that the EA has a **flood resilience engagement advisor** who might be able to offer some help around flood resilience. We can investigate what support he can offer.
- There is a contact at OCC who may be able to see if an **NFM opportunities scoping exercise** could be funded to create a longlist that we could take to the workshop and seek feedback from the community.
- Natural England regularly engage with landowners to see if they will undertake NFM measures, and also help them identify funding opportunities. So we have proposed that they identify and **contact local land owners to start a discussion on NFM** on their land. It will be presented from the perspective of the Cherwell Cluster, Catchment Partnership and Bloxham Flood group. The Parish Council will stay engaged as we represent the community of affected people - the reason for the communication in the first place.