

Kings Sutton Parish Council

Flood Alleviation Group Report for the year 2017-18

1. The Flood Alleviation Group is a working group composed of parish councillors and local residents. It meets as and when required. As the result of the changes described below, the Parish Council will be reviewing the terms of reference for any successor group during the next year.
2. This year has again been one of mixed fortunes in terms of our aspirations. While the completed Windsor Close & Barton Terrace FAS continues generally to work satisfactorily, it has not been tested with heavy rainfall similar to that of March 2016. On the other hand the Wales Street FAS has been cancelled as the result of the withdrawal of South Northamptonshire Council.

3. Barwood Homes – Little Rushes estate:

Barwood have continued with the development of their estate during the year with some minor changes and work on the construction of the last house is now well under way.

There remain two unresolved matters on which we continue to try to get satisfaction: the tie in from Mr Harper's field ditch to the Barwood flood alleviation channel is not satisfactory since a 'temporary' footway placed by Barwood across the flood channel could now act as a barrier in flood conditions and water could be diverted across the estate road and flow downhill through gardens in the general direction of Windsor Close. This has been raised several times with the company without response, and we are now escalating our concerns. The other matter is the winding-up of the legal agreement made between Harper, SNC and KSPC when the original FAS was constructed. With the completion of the Barwood alternative flood channel the Agreement became redundant and needs to be formally wound up. However action from Barwood's legal advisors seems to be barely moving. This has been followed up with Mr J Gibbins of Barwood but he has not responded in any satisfactory way.

4. Wales Street: As those attending the Annual Meeting will probably know, the Wales Street Flood Alleviation Scheme based on a protective bund has been cancelled. This is the result of changes to the scheme as the result of a re-appraisal by WSP Consultants and the withdrawal of funding by South Northamptonshire Council. The WSP study resulted in a significant increase in estimated scheme cost which meant that the scheme failed the Environment Agency's criteria of value-for-money.

The Parish Council is deeply disappointed that after some twenty years work the hope of achieving a comprehensive protection measure for lower Wales Street has gone.

The principal reasons for this cost escalation are:

- a) The reduction in predicted flood risk as a result of the Environment Agency's revised modelling means King's Sutton has a lower probability, and therefore risk, of internal flooding of properties than previously thought. This reduction in risk also means

that there is less damage to be avoided. This unfortunately results in lower economic benefits for the proposed scheme

b) The impact of lower predicted water levels, resulting in part from the measures upstream from Banbury, and the effect on the economics - i.e. the capitalised value of the risk - being substantially reduced, resulted in the cost-benefit ratio falling. At the same time the numbers of properties at risk is no longer as great as the estimate given by WSP in Spring 2017.

c) As a result of the Reservoir Panel Engineer's advice to WSP in relation to the design of the proposed bund (cross-section) and the need for the provision of additional (deeper) ground protection nearby there was a very considerable increase in the construction cost for the scheme.

Thus, a combination of lower economic benefit from flood risk and much higher construction costs has meant that the proposed scheme of a bund to protect King's Sutton no longer achieves the minimum standards of the Cost-Benefit ratio applied by the Environment Agency.

However the unspent funding from the Environment Agency has been made available for a Property Level Resilience scheme which will be managed by Northampton County Council. This will provide advice and funding on a property by property basis for each of the 16 houses that have been flooded in previous years. South Northamptonshire Council are no longer involved.

5. Thames Water and Sewer Flooding: This has not been a problem in the last year, but we have a hot line to Thames Water in the event of any problems recurring.

T.M. Forde
Chairman
Flood Alleviation Group, April 2018