

Annual Report of Much Wenlock Flood Group 2021-22

This has been an exciting year for the Flood Group with so many issues to deal with, considering that we have for much of the time been under constraints with Covid 19 restrictions.

The Drain Watch, with our volunteer Wardens, has worked extremely well, with drains cleaned out in short order once blockages were identified. We have also had debris removed which has often led to flooding and drains opened which have not functioned for a long time. It has become apparent that drains outside our town pubs have large amounts of fag ends deposited in them and it would be better if the perpetrators would use bins that the pubs should provide, and then some of these drains would run better. This is a particular problem on the High Street. Shropshire Council now uses Fix My Street as its main reporting hub for all drainage problems. This system relies on algorithms to get the quickest response so we would encourage anyone who has a problem to notify the Flood Group and we will keep 'flooding' the system until we get a resolution. Having said that, we have an excellent relationship with the officers and staff operating within the Council on our behalf and we shall continue to use this as our first port of call.

The Flood Action Plan which was started after the Boscastle incident has been updated for Wenlock this year with all up to date phone numbers of the Emergency Services, that would be involved in a civil emergency within the town. This Flood Action Plan was the first in the country, instigated by Philip Dunne MP and designed by Bert Harper and Associates. It is now used by many authorities as a National Template to help with the prevention and consequences of flooding where there may be a risk to life and property. We have asked our Town Council to review the document on several occasions and action anything they are asked to do.

Thirdly, the Flood Group has been concerned about the pollution of the river behind the Priory that eventually goes into Farley Brook and onto the Severn. This discharge, although legal, occurs when the sewer is surcharged during heavy rain and probably 25% excess goes straight into the river. It is extremely poor practice and with the help again of our MP, who heads the parliamentary Environment Committee, we have managed to persuade Severn Trent (ST) to install a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) screen which will contain about 98% of the excess sewage and discharge to the sewage works once the peak has passed.

This has been a major success for the Flood Group as we have secured the first project for ST to deliver to small towns and this work in the ST areas they hope to complete by 2030. Our new generation CSO should be up and fully functional by the end of this year, with preliminary work already completed.

We have also worked with Shropshire Council who have been successful in gaining a Dept. for Transport grant to stop flooding on main roads within the town. We have liaised with landowners to find suitable sites using our drone technology and Laser Radar which has been useful and has saved much time in working up the project. If this project is completed it will help slow water entering the town systems from Bridgnorth Road, Bourton Road and Oakfield Park, the Cemetery and Callaughton Ash. It relies on a series of swales and attenuation ponds which will hold water and soil back at critical times.

One of the most important jobs we have undertaken this year has been to actively look for a solution to the Hunters Gate flooding which has been a problem for several years including damage to properties on both Hunters Gate and Walton Hills. Three very active members of the Flood Group have spent much time investigating and have come up with potentially a medium term solution to rectify poor modifications to the drainage system that was carried out by developers. This is now with the County Council and hopefully can be carried out shortly under the flood resilience scheme.

We also continue to monitor the increasing water levels within Shadwell Quarry using drone technology etc. - it would not surprise many people to know that we believe it is over 240 ft. deep in places, which could eventually become a problem for the people of Farley, the Dump and also our own town sewage works if we were to get serious leakage from there. We have asked the Environment Agency to consider our thoughts.

I would like to thank three groups of people, all with different skill sets: the very active members who know all the systems in Wenlock and are out regularly looking at problems and trying to come up with solutions, the Drain Wardens, and other members of our Group who, although not so active, come up with good counsel and balanced views that enable us to function with independent thought and deed. We are not answerable to anyone but we hope that we can carry on the work of the original Flood Group for the benefit of everyone in Wenlock.

Arthur Hill, Chair of Much Wenlock Flood Group

April 2022