

## **Interim Report by Bleasby Flood Action Group for the meeting of Bleasby Parish Council to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

### **Introduction**

The Group has been in a state of readiness and response for virtually the whole of December having received no less than seven flooding alerts from the Environment Agency requiring appropriate responses for readiness and support; meetings on site; monitoring the affects of pluvial flooding and implementing amelioration strategies and regularly checking the River Trent levels for potential fluvial flooding arising from massively increased rainfall during this month as well as during November. We have had to deal with the consequences and after affects of Storms Babet, Ciaran and Debi in November and then manage the extreme and impactful consequences of Storms Edin, Fergus and Geraint during December.

2023 has been one of the five warmest years on record, three being in the 2020s, and one of ten wettest years on record (since 1836) with the hottest June on record (since 1884)!

### **Consequences**

- Residents of properties in Upper and Lower Goverton and Station Road have been almost constantly on the alert for fear of a threatened or repeat flooding of their homes. Many of the gardens of such properties have been inundated with flood water and outhouses and garden structures flooded.
- Surface water on less well drained roads has been an inconvenience and local parishes have had significant road closures which affected travel routes in and out of Bleasby.
- Specific fluvial problems have occurred in Lower Goverton with water accumulating around properties.
- Upper Goverton properties have had to contend with the “through flow” of surface water from the hillsides.

### **Reassurances**

- Our road drainage system installed along part of Station Road/Main Street is working well.
- The gulleys on the above roads have been emptied by a NCC Via sub- contractor.
- The grips are acting effectively, diverting water off the road and into our ‘eastern drain’.
- The Trent has remained at reasonably low levels.
- Our constant monitoring has ensured that all blockages to drains and gulleys are reported and addressed.
- We have wide-ranging feedback on the state of drainage, river and dyke levels from our roving members.
- FAG engagement with Severn-Trent Water has proved positive and effective.
- Improvements have been made at the SWT Shale Lane pumping station as a result of links established as stated above.
- Exits and entrances to various watercourses have been made visible and accessible, allowing more effective monitoring and understanding of our drainage system.

- Efforts have been made to track the course of a significant Station Road watercourse.
- A significant step has been taken in the understanding and management of pluvial water flooding in Lower Goverton.

### **Complicating factors**

- The ridge of hills above the parish, running from Scar Gap on the parish boundary to Rudsey Farm, are the major source of our pluvial flood waters being, in effect, our 'watershed'. Water running northwards off the tops is collected and channelled into Holme Dyke (our westerly drain) at Scar Gap, whilst that being shed southwards is collected at the foot of the High Cross slope and channelled into our eastern drains, historically known as School Drain. Between these two main drains the water finds its way down through Upper Goverton and down into a myriad of drains and ditches in the flatlands behind Station Road.
- This ridge of hills is composed primarily of arable farmland on impervious clay soils which shed water.
- The fields on these hillsides are large and with few hedges, trees or grassland which would have helped break water flow.
- Currently the fields are virtually uncropped and consequently have no root or leafy material to help resist water flow.
- Current practice is to cultivate down the slope – not across it (ie contour ploughing) - thereby channelling surface rainwater directly down to the village below.
- The recent storms have blown off all leaves, brittle twigs and weak branches, and then washed them into the drains where they block those drains and, when accumulating on roads, divert intended water away from management channels and grips.

### **Action points (Suggested persons owning actions in red)**

#### **Immediate**

- **PC** Consider thanking STW for improving their Shale Lane pumping station facility which will surely have helped during this period.
- **PC** Acknowledging (with NCC Highways) our appreciation of their recent road gully cleaning routine which will have eased our flooding complications.
- **PC** If not already having done so, thank the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board for so effectively having maintained our drainage system – so much to our advantage during this time of pluvial flooding.
- **PC** Thank Ross Marshall of the NCC Flood Risk Management Team for his part in enabling critically needed sandbags to be delivered post-haste and thereby avoiding flooding of property.
- **PC/NSDC** If not already done so, acquire appropriate high-capacity pumps and gel sacs.
- **PC, NCC Flood Risk Management, BFAG, Via** Ask NCC to arrange a joint site meeting between Via and a representative of the Flood Risk Management team, and our Flood Action Group and a Parish Council representative to discuss how critically important road drainage at Goverton can be improved.
- **PC, NCC Flood Risk Management, BFAG, Via** Consider the construction, safety and debris management of the Upper Goverton "sump" behind the signpost at the T junction: and to have a sluice constructed and fitted on the drain by the entrance to the farm buildings at South Hill Farm.

### **Short term**

- **PC, BFAG, Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board** To facilitate engagement of the PC and BFAG with the Trent Valley Internal Drainage Board in considering how we might more effectively improve the drainage within mapping tiles 7049 and 7149 with particular reference to drains identified as 301706 and 301705.
- **PC, Bleasby Community** Encourage all parishioners to act responsibly, avoiding the “3Ps”, resisting the temptation to create more hard surfaces and, when having to pump or redirect flood water which is on their property, ensure that their problem is not shifted to someone else.
- **PC, NCC, Via** Argue strongly to the County Council that, as the highways authority, it is obviously their responsibility to maintain and keep clear their roadside ditches which are clearly there to drain their roads – not neighbouring properties. This is a clear cause of unnecessary flooding of roadside properties.

### **Long term**

- **PC, Bleasby Community** Collect, analyse and record the concerns of all parishioners and focus on the key issues identified.
- **PC, BFAG, A612 Group** Work cooperatively with all agencies to help moderate/address/resolve identified issues relating to the impact of flooding across this and neighbouring parishes.
- **PC, NCC/Via** Try to establish a coherent policy, understanding and agreement with NCC for the effective management of roadside ditches.

**Since the production of the above report, the parish was seriously affected by Storm Henk – thus the following additions also need consideration by the Council.**

### **Concerns**

- Though BFAG, through their own monitoring and predictions, were not caught off-guard or unawares, the Environment Agency failed to give any specific flood alerts or flood warnings until after extensive flooding had occurred.
- The uncertainty of the situation and effective guidance from Social Services resulted in Hazelford Care Home being evacuated far too late in the process. A recently appointed manager was required to make the decision after consulting BFAG. As a consequence, the Fire and Rescue Services had to evacuate elderly residents in the dark shortly before floodwater completely surrounded the Home.
- The Riverside Country Lodges site, with a number of older residents living there, found itself in more serious evacuation arrangements 24 hours after the Care Home had been evacuated.
- The residents there were without guidance or support other than BFAG updates conveyed to a recruited FAG member who was a resident at the site.
- There is no formal arrangement for any kind of emergency rest care in the parish. BFAG has identified the Village Hall, the Waggon and Horses and the School as potential sites, the first two having been used temporarily in the past and were, fortunately, available this time.
- Communication and support with caravan and boat owners at Hazelford were also problematic, resulting in people within that area who had chosen to stay behind

despite advice, being stranded, necessitating yet another evacuation by Fire and Rescue on the third night. The fact that BFAG was not aware that all residents were not out of danger was an exceedingly dangerous factor.

- The complete isolation of Gibsmere was well-addressed and accepted by the residents themselves but the provision of medication and basic commodities such as milk and bread was highly problematic until a resident undertook critical journeys in a 4x4 capable of managing the very deep water at Nicholl's Bridge. When the water was waste high a large tractor was loaned by a family connection in Hoveringham and was used to transport people and provisions through two lots of dangerously deep water.
- There was no escape route for the residents of Gibsmere other than the Flood Path, designated as such in 1777, which has yet to be made accessible following gravel quarrying.
- Mobile phone reception proved to be poor even in the area around the Church and Glebe Field and especially so for some in Gibsmere, some being dependent on the mainline telephone link.

### **Action Points**

- **PC, NSDC, Care home, Riverside homes, NCC Flood Risk Management** Flooding procedures for the safe, timely and manageable evacuation of the residents/visitors of Hazelford and Gibsmere must be reviewed and redefined.
- **PC, NSDC, Care home, Riverside homes, NCC Flood Risk Management** Responsible individuals – managers and owners of care homes, caravan site, holiday homes, boat moorings etc, must produce an effective and published management plan available to all relevant agencies – Fire and Rescue, Police, Social Services, District and County Councils and perhaps BFAG as well.
- **PC, NSDC, Care home, Riverside homes, NCC Flood Risk Management** Up to date contact numbers for such owners/managers must be made available.
- **PC, NSDC, Care home, Riverside homes, NCC Flood Risk Management** Some kind of register of who is resident in these facilities and properties must be kept and a record made of when they leave the site during periods such as the recent flood conditions.
- **PC, Bleasby Community** The parish needs to have a widely accessible means of effective communication, (especially during times of flooding) across the whole of the community. The Community website requires 24 hours before it can be actively accessed. The Village Facebook is proving effective for those who use this medium.
- **PC, BT, BT** must be urged not to remove landline communications which have proved to be critically necessary.
- **PC, STW, Western Power** Infrastructure in these flood vulnerable areas needs to be effective and well-maintained. The apparent failure of the STW pump was a case in point. An engineer and van arrived to “repair” it during the flood but was unable to reach its site. Electricity supply was cut off on the caravan site, leaving people still there without power or light.
- **PC, NCC Flood Risk Management, BFAG** Areas of land crucial to holding and storing both pluvial and fluvial flood waters accumulating in the parish should be identified, registered and protected as official flood water retention sites.

- **PC, NSDC, NCC Flood Risk Management** All planning applications should have associated flooding risk very closely searched, identified and carefully considered by all planning authorities.
- **PC, NCC Rights of Way** The Flood Path from Gibsmere needs to be reinstated with some immediacy.
- **PC, STW** The STW sewerage system needs to be reviewed by the company and any weaknesses addressed.
- **PC, NCC Via** NCC Highways (Via) needs to review which of the roadside drains are actually its responsibility and then to properly maintain them.

**This is not an exhaustive list – merely identifying crucial elements for the continuation of an ongoing programme for securing the most effective flood amelioration strategies across the parish.**