

Report on Flooding Matters for the 2017 Annual Meeting of South Hinksey Parish Council, 8th May 2017

Flooding remains a topic of interest and concern to the South Hinksey Parish. The past year has seen two long talked about schemes make significant progress towards realisation: the temporary local barrier; and the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Local barrier

During the year, the Environment Agency (EA) undertook work to allow a barrier to be created around the village in the event of flood threat. They undertook ground works in some areas, laying a dense clay base under the soil and preparing a raised surface: some of these will be supplemented with temporary barriers on top, others will not need those. Temporary barriers will also be used in other places, where the ground has not been raised. The barrier will encroach on a number of properties at the edge of the village, and we are extremely grateful to those villagers who allowed ground works to be undertaken on their land, enabling a continuous barrier to proceed through gardens, walls, ditches, and out-buildings.

There is approximately 40km of barrier available nationally – South Hinksey requires about 400m. The barriers sections are stored at Eddie Stobart sites across the country and Stobart has been contracted to deliver barrier to wherever it is called for within 24 hours. The EA has trained teams ready to erect the barriers on location. South Hinksey has a group of about 15 ready volunteers to help and assist as required.

Since completion of ground works, the EA has visited the village twice to demonstrate and test the barriers, witnessed by Dave Bedlington of the EA and Nicola Blackwood, our local MP.

During the year, EA fitted non-return valves on various drain outflows throughout the village to prevent back flow of flood water into the drains. Some of these will require annual maintenance through the year to ensure that they are kept clear.

The Oxford Flood Alliance is currently pushing for a Memorandum of Understanding between Thames Water and the EA such that when the temporary barrier is in operation, any sewage overflow is appropriately managed.

We await the first use of the barrier with hope and some trepidation.

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

The 2.6km Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme is proceeding through its detailed planning phase, following initial approval from Treasury. A number of routes initially proposed have been narrowed down to a preferred course, subject to ongoing landowner discussions. This week and next there are public events showing the design in more detail; public feedback on these has been delayed till after the General Election – it will now be in June and July. Ground investigations are ongoing.

Major works are expected to start in 2018 with the proposed site depot situated in the field to the north of the old Manor Farm. The scheme is anticipated to cost £120m, and whilst not yet fully funded, looks to be in a good position for a scheme of this scale.

As part of the scheme, a permanent bund will eventually be built around the village obviating the need for the temporary barriers.

Network Rail

During the year, Network Rail successfully raised the track around Redbridge and installed mitigating culverts, including one that could be used as part of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. This should benefit the village enabling a net positive transfer of water from the west side of the railway to the east side. Oxford Flood Alliance is keeping a close eye on water levels in the culverts to check they are working as planned.