

INTRODUCTION

The following provides an overview of the Community Flood Information meeting that was held on 3rd September 2024 and should be read in conjunction with the attached presentation. It is not a verbatim account but provides a summary of what was discussed, questions raised, and any actions agreed.

The meeting was set up by District Cllr Chris Dorn and sponsored by the Parish Council in direct response to continued issues with flooding in the village, particularly the northern end of Pankridge Street and the ongoing reliance on tankers to pump excess water during heavy rainfall.

The public meeting took place at the Crondall Village Hall, from 18.05 to 20.20 and was well attended by 50+ parishioners. The four major bodies represented were the Environment Agency (EA), Thames Water (TW), Hampshire County Council (HCC) and Hart District Council (HDC):

Chairman Cllr Chris Dorn (HDC)

Attendees Tanya Jorgii, Brian Roberts and Tina Leishman (EA)
Carley Mason, Daniel Varndell, Kirsty Pulsakowska and Jamie Essery (TW)
Sarah Reghif (HCC)
Alex Jones (HDC)

In attendance: Cllr J Glen (HCC)
Astrid Angove – Clerk, Crondall Parish Council (CPC)

Following verbal introductions by all attendees, the meeting took the structure of presentations by the three main bodies, ie EA, HCC and TW, with each providing an overview of the role and responsibilities of their specific organisation, an update on the current situation including, where applicable, improvements to the infrastructure and service and outlining plans. At the end of each presentation allocation was made for attendees to raise questions with a final Q&A session at the end.

CHAIRMAN'S OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING (previously communicated via Facebook)

"Many thanks to everyone who attended the Flood Meeting last night. I'm sorry it went on longer than planned, but lots of great questions and discussion.

A great early question from Jack W on who has responsibility to coordinate the 5 organisations present (HDC, HCC-Flood, HCC-Highways, EA, TW). I'm hopeful HCC will look at this more deeply. But it was helpful for those organisations to see the deep frustration of residents (in enough numbers to make it clear that there is a real problem here). It also allowed residents to see the rather silo'ed approaches and lack of common project or task definitions within these organisation. Some residents commented on how they now understood how complex the various interactions between the water

systems (surface, sewage, ground and rivers) are, and how that was overlayed with mixed responsibilities and various (and limited) enforcement powers.

Some myths around the pumping station were dispelled (eg. the pump that sits on the surface is there as an in-situ replacement and is not "awaiting installation" - unless another fails). But the condition and performance monitoring of the pumps is very, very limited and they really need to join the 20th or even 21st century in terms of system monitoring and failure prediction.

EA apologised (deeply) for the late warnings back in February, but that exposed a reluctance to use local folks to confirm conditions, while the concept of a webcam to check the situation with the depth monitor had not been considered.

The EA plans to manage the surface water flows have recently been transferred to a new person "Brian". He was still catching up with his brief, but was rooted in a set of ideas that I commented on (extensively) back in March of this year. Brian and I have an action to set a date for one of my conducted tours of the Crondall flood issues - so if you see me wondering around the village with a strange chap in the next few weeks, it's probably our Brian!

TW's strategy is to reduce the infiltration into the system. They confirmed is adequately sized to deal with "normal" flows, and their options for improving capacity at the treatment plant (behind Handcroft Close) are limited. It was deeply concerning that the under "storm" conditions, the excess is pumped up the hill, through a Storm Tank and allowed to flow back down with the treated water through the outfall. TW have some additional work to do at the Withies where they have an excessive infiltration, they are confident that this will reduce the in-flows to the level that the pumping station can usually cope. However, there was little discussion about other ingress routes (eg. flow from household drains and rainwater guttering) and associated preventative and reduction measures. I'll chase them about these

New planter protects sewers from flooding | Newsroom | Thames Water
We noted that the confusion about pipe ownership under the road for that outfall (and under Rose Cottage garden) is now being managed by HCC-Highways.

I think the constant references to "call this number to report an issue" worn a little thin, given the waiting times and many people would much prefer a quick web-service. But it also became apparent that the various organisations didn't pool or share data to improve their understanding of a situation or its causes. GDPR was quoted, but there are very simple ways to remove specific personal information.

I do think we, as a community, will just need to get on and do more ourselves in many areas."

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q With risk management identified as vital, who exactly co-ordinates it on an overall basis and ensures delivery?

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- A The EA confirmed that they have strategic overview and after incidents hold multi-agency investigations to fully debrief all parties and understand the issues.

Note: There appears to be no central coordinating organisation with each dealing with different aspects of flooding, eg stormwater, rivers etc.

- Q EA, in outlining the next steps and natural flood management, mentioned that the use of culverts is no longer seen as an option, but the culvert on Parkridge Street is demonstrably working?

- A Brian Roberts from the EA confirmed while as a rule the use of culverts is seen as outmoded and not particularly successful, it is not their policy to automatically remove existing ones, particularly as they can be beneficial. This particular one will continue to be reviewed but currently there is no plan to remove it.

- Q Has there been engagement with the golf course owners, particularly in relation to their proposed development of the course as it would seem that the water management plans are inadequate?

- A Brian Roberts confirmed that part of the reason that the proposals were rejected was because the EA had confirmed as much. The EA forms a vital part of the planning application process, with where applicable the applications being considered in line with how they will affect the flood risk and to cope with wetter weather conditions moving forward.

- Q Do the EA have the power to compel landowners to fix problems that are on private land?

- A Confirmed that they do have some powers to enforce but need to use them carefully. In some situations, there is power to purchase land but on smaller scale schemes, the EA look to work with the landowner.

- Q How do you move things forward if the landowner is not interested in liaising with the EA?

- A It is a case of balance. As outlined the EA does have some powers but their use needs to be justified. HCC confirmed that they also have some powers to deal with blocked ditches etc and ensure they are cleared.

- Q What needs to be done for the natural flood project outlined by the EA to be adopted? Eight months further on and nothing has so far been put in place.

- A More work is required on the cost/benefit analysis. There are currently many more “urgent” cases which meet the criteria above Crondall. To move matters forward it was suggest that with the community’s help, this could be progressed earlier.. It has been done before – in Oxford created wetland areas devised by catchment groups such as the Wildlife Trust.

Note: frustration was raised about lack of communication with parishioners on what needs to be done and how this can be achieved. With the level of flooding experienced by a number of properties, were shocked that the works are still not deemed necessary/urgent.

- Q Based on the overview of the current pump station provided in the presentation, it is not clear whether the pumping station is adequate.

A TW confirmed that according to the model it is but cannot size it for extraordinary situations and this creates issues down the line.

Q In theory, the work that has been undertaken by TW sealing the pipes and covers should prevent issues reoccurring?

A TW confirmed that in theory yes but in order to understand if there are any remaining issues will need to run another year to see where the rain goes and whether the sealing work carried out to date (to be finalised over the next month outside The Withies) has been successful.

Q If the pumping stations turns out not to be adequate?

A The issues would be passed to the Asset Management Team, although the knock-on effect of a more powerful pump would need to be considered.

Q Have TW requested an alert when pumps are overloaded?

A Confirmed that this is not possible. Just receive a failed alarm which instigates emergency procedures. EA confirmed that they have launched new warning system in November 2023 which covers groundwater and rivers. There are three levels – Flood Alert, Flood Warning and Severe Flood Warning, the latter of which is very rare and involves significant danger to life.

Q When issues arise, is it possible for the members of the public to contact the teams directly?

A During these incidents, the individual agencies are very busy. If experiencing flooding homeowners should call the 24-hour Flooding Hotline.

Note: it was observed that it would be a significant improvement if information was all available on one site rather than having to access various services. Equally, when alerting the agencies to issues, one single access point which would then disseminate the information as required would be a major improvement for members of the public.

HCC commented that they can provide support for the village creating an Emergency Plan, which would detail key vulnerable people and activities to support them but there is scope for the village to create their own action response plan.

Q Is there anything that can be done about the groundwater levels?

A Nothing can be done to influence it; only where to funnel it when it surfaces.

Q With respect to preventative maintenance, why is water coming of the golf course and not funnelling into their ponds?

A This issue has been identified by the EA in their plan and HCC are actively liaising with the golf course owners on the matter.

Note: it was observed by attendees that currently there does not appear to be any maintenance of Redlands Lane ditches, which is exacerbating the issue.

ACTIONS

1. Cllr Dorn and Brian Roberts (EA) to agree a mutually convenient date and time for a physical walk around the village to view the various features feeding into the overall problem of flooding in the village.
2. Cllr Glen and Sarah Reghif (HCC) to agree a date for her to present the HCC approach to the Corporate Services and Resources Select Committee.