

Alconbury Brook Flood Group Report September 2023

21st October Flood Event: We had 46mm of rain in Alconbury and 53mm of rain in Great Gidding, more than recorded during the December 2020 flood. As far as we know nobody had flood water indoors, but several people had water 15-20 cm from coming in. Although the Flood Group like to think it has made a small contribution to our not flooding the main reason was that there was space in the soil for some water which reduced the impact of the rainfall. A number of people noticed that the water seemed to be slower to go away. An explanation may be that the rainfall came in three heavy pulses, with one quite late on in the storm. No property flooding, but there was an impact, Quite a number of people were cut off for up to 12 hours.

We value all data and observations, photographs etc, please send them to info@alconburyfloodgroup.uk

EA flood alleviation scheme: The initial report from the modellers was disappointing and seemed that on the basis of modelling alone the large benefit value needed for a scheme would be difficult to show. Further work on the model has led to a slightly more optimistic assessment. The EA is using additional evidence including the photos and videos provided by the community and village visits are likely to try to strengthen the evidence of benefit.

GreenBlue: As soon as the funding for this project arrives work will start on the Memorial Hall scheme. We have had a preliminary conversation with the Sports and Social Club Playing Field Charity regarding installing rainwater gardens on their site. (Many thanks in advance for the funding for this from Anglian Water which we understand is imminent)

Volunteers were busy on 2 Saturdays during October with a good amount of work done downstream of the ford in Alconbury Weston. In addition a team seeded the scrape we constructed earlier in the year with wild flowers for damp places. We were delighted that some people borrowed our tools and did sections of the brook bank themselves. Many thanks to all concerned. There are more volunteer events planned, please contact info@alconburyfloodgroup.uk to help

Alconbury Weston Pond Archaeology: The first step is complete and the brief for the archaeologists has been prepared. We are very grateful to the Parish Councils who together have paid for this stage. We still hope that actual excavation of the pond will take place December/January..



Harts Pond: Volunteers have cleared the site and the excavation will take place during w/c 30/10. (Big thank you) This is a strategically useful pond to restore since Mile Brook tributary contributes a lot to the overall flow in the villages. We are very grateful to the Wildlife Trust for Beds, Cambs and Northants for funding this project. In addition to flood alleviation the restored pond will provide a haven for wildlife.

Charity: A less than subtle reminder that We now have a Just Giving Page: [The Alconbury Brook Flood Group - JustGiving](#).

Nitrate measurement: Volunteers have carried out a third survey during October. Now that the brook is flowing levels are much higher.

Again debris in the brook at **Hinchingsbrooke Country Park** is still there despite our request that it be removed. Nuns Bridge is still badly blocked topped off with a supermarket trolley. The debris may block the bridge and the trolley may get stuck in Garkies Sluice.

Deep Roots Project: Seed drilling on the first trial plots is complete. In November we plan a volunteer soil science day to make a variety of measurements. Special Seed that has been created for us has been sown at Great Gidding and on Alconbury Allotments. These will grow into deep rooted varieties of seed mixes used as part of the Countryside Stewardship scheme.. We have about 40 experimental plots altogether some with just the special seed mix and others with added worms, or special bacteria, or special fungi which encourage root growth. If these trials are successful then the soil with deep rooted plants may be able to soak up an extra 1 or 2 litres of rain water per square meter (or 10-20 tonnes of rain per hectare) We are very grateful to Cowpastures Farm who are hosting the larger trial and Anglian Water who are funding part of the project.

Mill Road Drains Very timely on-site meeting with Councillor Ian Gardener and two CCC colleagues at Mill Rd bend on 20th October. They were able to view the impact of surface flooding at the bend with cars on the wrong side of the road and ultimately with 2 vehicles breaking down and blocking the road for 48hrs. A request was made for road closed signs to be provided. Significant other observation was that water had accumulated at the bend even before the Brook broke the bank at the Village sign. This has now prompted further follow-up by CCC to establish the exact source of the water and to plot and improve the outflow from the culverts around the Village sign into the Brook

Brampton Cross. the developers had a very good insight at the 20th Oct event of the mood and attitude of residents towards any possible flood risk increase, emphasised by having to wade through flood water to even get to the venue!

The Flood Group will be making presentations to the HDC Climate Change Conference later this month and separately to the new Chief Executive of the Council

Contact us at: info@alconburyfloodgroup.uk

Agenda item 1023.089

Councillor Gardener report Alconbury Parish Council Meeting – October 2023

I am also pleased to report that our new Local Highways Officer Karen Southwell has started in her new role. Our first meeting was on 18th October, and it has been agreed that we should meet on a regular basis, approx. every six weeks. Karen and Steve Nicolson, the Highways Manager for Hunts met with the Flood Group to discuss the drainage on Mill Road on 20th October and what could be done to prevent flooding.

Dan Wiggs is the new Public Rights of Way Officer for Huntingdonshire and has just started in the role. I have my first meeting with him on the 2nd November.

I have spoken to Cambridgeshire Highways regarding the removal of mud from High Street, under the A1M viaduct.

The Chair and myself are meeting Cambridgeshire Highways on Friday 10th November regarding the submission of an LHI Bid for a Weight Limit on the B1043 between the A1M and the A1307.

I have received a large number, of complaints about weeds along the edges of our roads. Following a lot of complaints from Parishes, residents and members particularly Conservative members. The Joint administration has decided to review its policy of not undertaking weed spraying at either the December/January meeting of the Highways & Transportation Committee. It was also the subject of a motion at the Full Council last week.

The HDC Cabinet member for Street cleansing, Cllr Simone Taylor, who is also a County Councillor and a member of the Joint Administration on the County Council, admitted at HDC's Full Council meeting that the authority was struggling to sweep the roads properly due to the weeds.

With regard, to next year's Local Highways Improvement Bids Parishes will be able to submit applications from Friday 27th October 23 until noon on Friday 12th January 24.

The County Council will undertake feasibility studies between February and May. With the Complex schemes going before members in June/July 24 with confirmation of the successful schemes being announced at the September 24 Highways & Transportation Committee.

The Leader of the Joint Administration on the County Council has said she will be looking for the maximum increase in Council Tax levied by the County Council of 4.99%

As of January 24, Parishes will be able to apply again for a 20mph scheme for their village. I will let the PC know when the application opens.

The County Council will be introducing Low Carbon streetlights across the county. The roll out of the more efficient LED lights is expected to cut energy consumption by

more than a half. 47,500 street lights will be replaced with LED lights, work is expected to start next year and will last for 2 years.

The Fire Authority has started to introduce crews of 3 in Rural Areas. A back up crew of 4/5 will also be sent.

The benefits of the change in rural areas are: -

A Fire Engine arrives at the incident in a quicker time.

A quicker resolution to the incident

First Aid administered quicker, potentially saving life.

Crews from further away being available in their local area again quicker.

This is a crewing enhancement. We will send the same fire engines we would do now as well as the crew of 3. But if the other crews are not needed, they can be sent back quicker.

Our on-call firefighters get to use their skills and training more, which may help with the retention of On Call Firefighters

Suffolk Fire and Rescue have already adopted this policy.

No firefighter will be put at any additional risk because of this strategy.

The Green Bin Tax will come into operation on 01 April 24, if you sign up to continue with the service early, residents will receive a discount.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind Councillors that HDC are offering Development Management Training (Planning) on 6th November, between 6 and 8pm either in person at the Civic Suite, Pathfinder House or online.

The training will cover: -

An introduction to planning, going back to basics.

The Development Management Service – Personnel, Structure and responsibilities

What is a Material Consideration – Case Studies to review.

HDC will be holding a Climate Conversation Event on Saturday 18th November at Hinchbrook Country Park for residents. Which will take place from 9am to 3.30pm and is open to everyone and will be an activity-based day, with space to talk about climate. There will be a range of activities on the day, including ways in which we can all lower our household impact on the environment as well as tips on how we can reduce our waste in the run up to Christmas.

Cllr Ian Gardener

County & District Councillor for Alconbury

