Agenda item 0125.144.

Alconbury Brook Flood Group – December 2024

This is a quick update of work done since our last bulletin.

Firstly we would like to wish all of our readers a very Happy New Year. May you and your carpets stay dry.

Grant Success for start of 2025

We were delighted to hear just before Christmas that we have been awarded over £120,000 from the Water Environment Improvement Fund. This is spread over a three year programme with roughly £30,000 for projects between now and April 2025. A very special thank you to Mike and others at the EA who helped us access this funding. The grant is for:

- Additional storage ponds including the Tanglewood Field pond at Alconbury Weston, renovation of other ponds and planning permission preparation for a pond at Hamerton.
- Work on measuring baseline sediment levels in parts of the catchment and some sediment capture experiments around Mile Brook.
- Equipment for soil science experiments to measure yields and soil DNA, and for extra satellite imagery.

Nuns Bridge Progress

A brief spell of drier weather has made the bank near Nuns Bridge accessible so that working with Silver Fern, we have been able to make measurements and take photos for the permit application. In addition we have found easy access points for a digger which will not require the removal of any trees. It was also possible to see how during good weather it would be possible to do the work without silt being lost downstream.

New national schemes to fund flood mitigation.

A wide range of quite generous new funding schemes have been announced this month through Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship. Some of the schemes are similar to work we have done in the catchment thanks to generous funders and landowners. One feature which is useful is that some schemes have built-in longevity. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/countryside-stewardship-higher-tier-get-ready-to-apply

Alconbury Brook Flood Group on the Radio

This month we have been featured in two local radio interviews. On Black Cat Radio we encouraged people to participate in the consultation about Land Availability (now closed). Later in the month, we chatted to interviewer Bill Hensley for nearly an hour about flooding and the work of the Flood Group.

Alconbury Brook Flood Group mentioned in Parliament: We were very pleased that our MP Ben Obese-Jecty raised a question about funding for our work before the Christmas recess and that Flood Minister Emma Hardy described our work as 'brilliant'.

Dedicated Volunteers: A big thank you to our wonderful volunteers who have continued to keep the brook clear of trees and branches blocking the flow.

Microplastics monitoring back on track

Drier weather over Christmas has allowed us to re-fit the microplastics collection net. This time we have attached it to the culvert with stainless steel cable-ties! We will sample water in the School Lane ditch for the next year.

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The Alconbury Brook Flood Group

A little of what we have been up to during January 2025

Great progress with new ponds: We are renovating a pond at **Hamerton Zoo** which is used by Syrian bear cubs. The pond happens to intercept a significant overland flow from the hill above the bear enclosure. The renovation will greatly improve the volume and reduce flood risk from surface water for properties below the Zoo. The bears are an endangered species with possibly only 30 left. We have an outline design for the renovation which is likely to take place at the end of March.

Another of the **eleven** ponds we are currently working on with funding from the **Water Environment Improvement Fund** is south-east of Great Gidding. The existing pond will be improved and the bund at the far end restored. It will collect and slow the flow from over 40ha of sloping land.

At the new **Kings Wood** at Great Gidding on land that slopes down to Alconbury Brook we will be installing a small pond which will intercept significant surface water before it runs into the brook. This will also improve the survivability of the trees while they become established. The geology there is unusual so we are digging test pits in the next week or two.

Farm engagement: We are about to send out a questionnaire to farmers in the Alconbury Brook catchment . This is a collaborative effort with several farmer colleagues and the Flood Group. The questionnaire asks about cropping, cultivation and drainage. We hope to present the results to our next 'farm walk' in early March.

In addition in the last 2 weeks we have visited 3 farms who are soil mentor partners and collected data on worms, soil structure, soil carbon and microbial measurements. We are in the process of providing feedback.

Sediment monitoring. The latest addition to our telemetry system allows us to remotely measure the amount of sediment in the brook under different conditions. The first two sensors are being added to our system this week. Sediment drops to the bottom when the brook runs slowly and reduces the size of the channel. (photo of sediment sensor)

Neighbourhood Plan: We have had several meetings with Rachel Hogger who is the consultant helping the Parish Council develop the Alconbury Neighbourhood Plan. Although the Plan and any policies are constrained by National Planning Policy, thanks to Rachel we have been able to make a small number of suggestions for addition to the plan.

Our lived experience of flooding: Researchers currently admit that their work on the consequences of flooding is rather limited. It takes a general view tending to concentrate on short term PTSD and fails to look at all of the other practical hassles and health problems that can last for many years. Nor the effects on older and less well people or the unique circumstances in each area.. We are looking at working with researchers to develop an Alconbury Brook catchment case study.

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Cllr Gardener report Alconbury Parish Council Meeting – January 2025

Good Evening

The Ting Demand Responsive Bus service has been replaced by the Tiger On demand Service which started to operate from 30th November. The Combined Authority (Mayor) did not inform your County Councillor of this change, I only knew when I started to hear about problems. The service covers the same area as the Ting Service.

More details of the New Tiger Service can be found on:

https://transport.cambridgeshirepeterborough-ca.gov.uk/buses/tiger-on-demand/

The Key changes to the new service are –

Virtual Bus Stops – Travel between designated virtual bus stops found on the Tiger On Demand Interactive Map

To make a Booking call the New Call Centre Number – 01480 595 440

Bookings can be made up to 48hrs in advance of travelling.

The service operates Monday to Saturday from 6.30am to 7pm

The cost of the Service is Adults £2 per journey, Under 5s travel free, Children 5-16 £1 per journey, Concessionary Bus Pass Holders travel for free

If the PC is looking at a 20mph scheme for the village, then the PC can apply from Monday 27th January to Friday 25th March at 5pm. Feasibility Studies will be undertaken between April and July 25

The decision for next year's LHI Bid's & 20 MPH schemes will be confirmed at the October meeting of the Highways & Transportation Committee.

With regard to the County Councils LED Street Lighting replacement scheme the lights will be changed between Jan and April 25

The Lib Dem, Labour and Independent led administration are looking to increase Council Tax again by the maximum which is 4.99% which is equivalent to a £80.82 per annum increase on a Band D property for the County Council portion of your Council Tax Bill

The District Council is holding its Budget meetings in February and I would expect the Joint administration of Lib Dem, Independent, Labour and Green Councillors to put forward a proposal to raise the Council Tax by the maximum 4.99%

HDC's Community Chest Grant Scheme is now open. The scheme welcomes applications from Community Groups and organisations. Applications need to achieve the following priorities as set out within HDC's Corporate Plan –

Improving the quality of life and well-being for everyone i.e. encouraging physical activity, supporting social connections across communities.

Keeping People out of Crisis

Helping people in Crisis

Lowering Carbon Emissions

The maximum amount of funding that can be applied for is –

£500 for Community Spaces

£1,000 for Community Events

£2,500 for Longer Term Projects

For further details go on the HDC website and view Community Chest Eligibility Criteria and or Apply

The Government are consulting on enabling members to obtain a dispensation to attend meetings remotely and for Proxy Voting.

The Government published its White Paper on December 16th regarding reorganisation of Local Government in areas which have two tier authority areas i.e. County & District Councils and replacing them with Unitary Authorities.

The reorganisation of Local Government in Cambridgeshire will include Peterborough City. The Existing Authorities will need to have a plan as to how the County will be divided up, if it is to be more than one unitary. The proposals need to be with the Government by the Autumn. The reorganisation will include Police, Fire & Health. Additional powers to be given to the Mayor such as Strategic Planning

Currently, no proposals as to how the new authorities may look have been put forward. County Councillors have their first briefing.

The County Council and Mayoral Elections will take place this year, its anticipated that next year's District Elections will be cancelled, with elections to the new Shadow authorities in May 27 with the new authorities coming into being on 01 April 28

As you can see all existing Authorities have a lot of work to undertake, to meet the deadline set by the Government.

Cllr Ian Gardener

County & District Councillor for Alconbury

Alconbury Parish Council

Prepared by: Alison Brown (Clerk & RFO) Date: 6th January 2025

Name and Role (Clerk/RFO etc)

Approved by: Cllr Tracy Gilbert (Chair) Date: 28th January 2025

Name and Role (RFO/Chair of Finance etc)

	Bank Reconciliation at 31/12/2024			
	Cash in Hand 01/04/2024			70,565.60
	ADD			
	Receipts 01/04/2024 - 31/12/2024			53,814.94
				124,380.54
	SUBTRACT			
	Payments 01/04/2024 - 31/12/2024			42,851.22
A	**Cash in Hand 31/12/2024** (per Cash Book)			**81,529.32**
	Cash in hand per Bank Statements			
	Petty Cash	31/12/2024	0.00	
	Unity Trust Bank Current T1	31/12/2024	44,617.82	
	Unity Trust Bank Instant Access	31/12/2024	36,946.78	
				81,564.60
	Less unpresented payments			35.28
				81,529.32
	Plus unpresented receipts			
B	**Adjusted Bank Balance**			**81,529.32**
	A = B Checks out OK			

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