

# Notice of Meeting

---



## Special Overview & Scrutiny Commission

Tuesday, 23 October 2007 at 6.30pm

in the Council Chamber,  
Council Offices, Market Street, Newbury

Date of Despatch of Agenda: Wednesday 17 October 2007

For further information about this Agenda, or to inspect any background documents referred to in Part I reports, please contact Vicky Wheatley, Policy & Research Officer on (01635) 519241  
e-mail: [vwheatley@westberks.gov.uk](mailto:vwheatley@westberks.gov.uk)

Further information and Minutes are also available on the Council's website at [www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

# Executive Report

---

## 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 At a Special meeting on 3 September 2007 the Commission drafted and agreed the terms of reference and scope for a review into the flooding in West Berkshire that occurred from 20 July 2007.
- 1.2 On 24 September 2007 the Commission considered the experience of West Berkshire Council and on 15 October a District Parish Conference was held to receive information from Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.3 The terms of reference for the Flooding Review (Appendix A) have been updated to reflect changes requested by the Commission on 3 September 2007.
- 1.4 In addition, an extra session will be held on Tuesday 20 November 2007 to receive information from the Civil Contingencies Team on the work of the Emergency Operations Centre and the Council's actions during the flooding and recovery. West Berkshire Council Members will also be invited to address the Commission or supply written statements, giving their experience of the flooding and recovery operation.

## Appendix

---

### Appendix A – Overview & Scrutiny Commission Flooding Review Terms of Reference

## Agenda – Special Overview & Scrutiny Commission to be held on 23 October 2007 *(continued)*

- To:** Councillors: Peter Argyle, Brian Bedwell (*Chairman*), David Betts, Jeff Brooks (*Vice Chairman*), Paul Bryant, Hilary Cole, Carol Jackson-Doerge, Owen Jeffery, Mike Johnston, Keith Lock, Irene Neill and David Rendel.
- Substitutes:** Councillors: Jeff Beck, David Goff, David Holtby, Tony Linden, Royce Longton, Julian Swift-Hook, Terry Port and Keith Woodhams.
- Members and Officers Invited:** Representatives from Thatcham Town Council, Aldermaston Parish Council, Purley on Thames Parish Council, Pangbourne Parish Council, Bucklebury Parish Council, Great Shefford Parish Council, Lambourn Parish Council, Newbury Town Council, Midgham Parish Council and Woolhampton Parish Council.

## Agenda Items for Decision or Review

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Page No. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| 1. <b>Apologies for Absence.</b><br>To receive apologies for inability to attend the meeting (if any).                                                                                                                                           |          |
| 2. <b>Declarations of Interest.</b><br>To receive any declarations of interest from Members.                                                                                                                                                     | Verbal   |
| 3. <b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Commission Flooding Review.</b><br><i>Purpose: To receive the updated terms of reference for the Review and future meeting dates.</i>                                                                              | 1 - 5    |
| 4. <b>Flooding Review - Experience of Parish and Town Councils in West Berkshire.</b><br><i>Purpose: To receive information on the experience of Town and Parish Councils following the flooding that occurred in the District from 20 July.</i> | 6 - 28   |

Andy Day  
Interim Head of Policy & Communication

|                             |                                                                |               |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Title of Report:            | <b>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Commission<br/>Flooding Review.</b> | <b>Item 3</b> |
| Report to be considered by: | Overview and Scrutiny Commission.                              |               |
| Forward Plan Ref:           | N/A                                                            |               |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Corporate Plan Priority:                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>CP07 - Safer and Stronger Communities</b> |
| The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Corporate Plan priority by:<br>Improving the preparedness of all within the West Berkshire community to respond to a major incident. |                                              |

|                                  |                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Purpose of Report:</u>        | To receive the updated terms of reference for the Review and future meeting dates. |
| <u>Recommended Action:</u>       | To note the future meeting dates.                                                  |
| Reason for decision to be taken: | To progress the Overview and Scrutiny Commission's Flooding Review.                |
| Key background documentation:    |                                                                                    |

|                 |                                                                          |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| OSC Chairman:   | Councillor Brian Bedwell                                                 |
| Tel. No.:       | 0118 942 0196                                                            |
| E-mail Address: | <a href="mailto:bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk">bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk</a> |

| Contact Officer Details |                                                                    |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Name:                   | David Lowe                                                         |
| Job Title:              | Information Manager                                                |
| Tel. No.:               | 01635 519817                                                       |
| E-mail Address:         | <a href="mailto:dlowe@westberks.gov.uk">dlowe@westberks.gov.uk</a> |

# Executive Report

---

## 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 At a Special meeting on 3 September 2007 the Commission drafted and agreed the terms of reference and scope for a review into the flooding in West Berkshire that occurred from 20 July 2007.
- 1.2 On 24 September 2007 the Commission considered the experience of West Berkshire Council and on 15 October a District Parish Conference was held to receive information from Town and Parish Councils.
- 1.3 The terms of reference for the Flooding Review (Appendix A) have been updated to reflect changes requested by the Commission on 3 September 2007.
- 1.4 In addition, an extra session will be held on Tuesday 20 November 2007 to receive information from the Civil Contingencies Team on the work of the Emergency Operations Centre and the Council's actions during the flooding and recovery. West Berkshire Council Members will also be invited to address the Commission or supply written statements, giving their experience of the flooding and recovery operation.

## Appendix

---

### Appendix A – Overview & Scrutiny Commission Flooding Review Terms of Reference

## **Overview and Scrutiny Commission Flooding Review**

**Review Topic: Flooding in West Berkshire (July 2007)**

**Timescale:**

**Start:** 3 September 2007

**Finish:** 8 January 2008

### **Review Rationale:**

To ascertain the cause of the flooding of West Berkshire that began on 20<sup>th</sup> of July 2007; understand its effects on the District; and analyse the response and recovery operations by West Berkshire Council and other agencies in order that actions can be identified to improve the response to future incidents, thereby minimising the adverse affect on the District, its residents and businesses.

### **Terms of Reference:**

1. Understand what happened and why.
2. Determine whether the practices and plans in place prior to and post the flooding were adequate and effective.
3. Gather evidence from the Parishes and members of the public on the effect of the flooding.
4. Identify what went well during the response to the flooding and what can be improved for future preparedness.
5. Identify what went well during the recovery from the flooding and what can be improved for future preparedness.
6. Identify future flood risks to the District.

### **Review Membership:**

All Overview & Scrutiny Commission Members

**Chairman:** Councillor Brian Bedwell

**Vice-Chairman:** Councillor Jeff Brooks

**Scrutiny Lead:** David Lowe, Information Manager

### **Desired Outcome:**

1. To ensure that the extent of any future flooding and its effect on the District is minimised as far as is practicable.
2. To make appropriate modifications to the Council's Major Incident and Recovery plans.
3. To make any other appropriate recommendations to the Council or other organisations.

### **Witnesses:**

1. To understand the extent of damage caused by the flooding; the response to it and recovery from it.

Councillors of Wards affected  
Environment Agency  
Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service  
Thames Valley Police  
Thames Water  
Town and Parish Councils severely affected by the flooding  
WBC Officers  
GOSE (written submission)  
Highways Agency (written submission)

Network Rail (written submission)  
South Central Ambulance Service (written submission)  
Sovereign Housing (written submission)  
AWE (Written submission)

**2. To understand the cause of the flooding.**

Environment Agency  
Thames Water  
West Berkshire Council Officers

**3. To understand what can be undertaken to mitigate the impact of flooding in the future.**

Environment Agency  
Thames Water  
West Berkshire Council Officers

## **PHASE 1 – INFORMATION GATHERING**

### **Session 1 – Setting the Terms of Reference (6.30pm, 3 September 2007)**

To agree the Terms of Reference and timescale for the review.  
The Commission will receive a presentation from the Principle Civil Contingency Officer.

### **Session 2 – The West Berkshire Council experience (1.30pm, Monday 24 September 2007)**

To receive information on the direct and indirect (business continuity) impact on West Berkshire Council services of the flooding and their response to it.

Representatives of all WBC services, including the EOC, to give short briefings/presentations.

### **Session 3 – District / Parish Conference**

To receive information about the impact that the flooding had on all parishes.

District/Parish conference - round table discussion.

#### **Session 4 – The Experience of Parish Councils (6.30pm, Tuesday 23 October)**

To receive detailed information on the experience of those parishes on which the flooding had the most severe impact.

Representatives from Thatcham Town Council, Newbury Town Council, Aldermaston Parish Council, Purley on Thames Parish Council, Pangbourne Parish Council, Bucklebury Parish Council, Great Shefford Parish Council, Lambourn Parish Council and Woolhampton Parish Council to be invited.

#### **Session 5 – The Experience of the Public (3.30pm, Tuesday 6 November 2007)**

1. To receive information about the impact that the flooding had on members of the public.
2. To identify the questions to which the public wants answers.

Invitations to selected members of the public who have made written submissions.

#### **Session 6 – Experience of the Civil Contingencies Team and West Berkshire Council Members (12noon and 5.30pm, Tuesday 20 November 2007)**

To receive information from the Civil Contingencies team on the work of the Emergency Operations Centre and actions during the flooding and recovery operation.

To receive information from West Berkshire Council Members on their experience of the flooding and recovery operation.

### **PHASE 2 – ANALYSIS**

#### **Session 7 – Learning the lessons (9.30am, Monday 26 November 2007)**

1. To receive information about the impact that the flooding had on partner organisations.
2. To understand the emergency response to the incident.
3. To identify the causes of the flooding and the lessons that should be learnt.

Representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency, Thames Valley Police and Officers from West Berkshire Council.

#### **Session 8 – Drawing conclusions (6.30pm, Tuesday 8 January 2008)**

To consider and agree the report to Executive with appropriate recommendations.

No witnesses required.



|                                    |                                                                                    |               |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Title of Report:</b>            | <b>Flooding Review – Experience of Town and Parish Councils in West Berkshire.</b> | <b>Item 4</b> |
| <b>Report to be considered by:</b> | Overview and Scrutiny Commission.                                                  |               |
| <b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>           | N/A                                                                                |               |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                              |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| <b>Corporate Plan Priority:</b>                                                                                                                                                                            | <b>CP07 - Safer and Stronger Communities</b> |
| The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Corporate Plan priority by:<br>Improving the preparedness of all within the West Berkshire community to respond to a major incident. |                                              |

**Purpose of Report:** To receive information on the experience of Town and Parish Councils following the flooding that occurred in the District from 20 July 2007.

**Recommended Action:** To consider the information provided by Town and Parish Councils.

**Reason for decision to be taken:** To progress the Overview and Scrutiny Commission’s Flooding Review.

**Key background documentation:**

|                        |                                                                          |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>OSC Chairman:</b>   | Councillor Brian Bedwell                                                 |
| <b>Tel. No.:</b>       | 0118 942 0196                                                            |
| <b>E-mail Address:</b> | <a href="mailto:bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk">bbedwell@westberks.gov.uk</a> |

| <b>Contact Officer Details</b> |                                                                    |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Name:</b>                   | David Lowe                                                         |
| <b>Job Title:</b>              | Information Manager                                                |
| <b>Tel. No.:</b>               | 01635 519817                                                       |
| <b>E-mail Address:</b>         | <a href="mailto:dlowe@westberks.gov.uk">dlowe@westberks.gov.uk</a> |

# Executive Report

## 1. Introduction.

- 1.1 At a Special meeting on 3 September 2007 the Commission drafted and agreed the terms of reference and scope for a review into the flooding in West Berkshire that occurred from 20 July 2007.
- 1.2 It was agreed that a session be held to receive information from Town and Parish Councils on their experience of flooding and the recovery operation. Those Parishes or Towns that had been most severely affected would be invited to address the Commission and provide detailed information.
- 1.3 In addition, Members were asked to note that a District/Parish Conference to discuss the flooding, to which all Town and Parish Councils would be invited, would be held. Evidence received at the District Parish Conference would be considered as part of the Flooding Review.

## 2. Town and Parish Council Flooding Questionnaire.

- 2.1 In September 2007 all Town and Parish Councils were invited to complete a questionnaire in answer to the following questions:
  1. Please give a summary of the impact of the flooding on your parish or town,
  2. Please summarise the response that your Council gave to any flooding that you encountered,
  3. Please outline any activities that your Council undertook as recovery from the effects of the flooding,
  4. Please give details of any preparations that your Council is making for future flooding events.
- 2.2 The results of the Councils that returned questionnaires can be found in appendices A – C.

## 3. Session 4 – The Experience of Town and Parish Councils.

- 3.1 Representatives from Town and Parish Councils severely affected by the flooding have been invited to address the Commission on 23 October 2007 to provide information on:
  - The immediate and long term effect of the flooding on your town / parish,
  - Interaction during and / or following the flooding with West Berkshire Council and other agencies,
  - Actions taken by the Parish / Town Council during and / or following the flooding,
  - The recovery operation,
  - Any lessons learnt and any planned preparation for potential future flooding events.

3.2 The meeting on 23 October 2007 will take the following form:

| <b>Towns and Parishes mainly affected by flash flooding on 20 July 2007</b> |                                                               |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|
| Thatcham Town Council                                                       | Councillor Rodney Arnold                                      |
| Newbury Town Council                                                        | Councillor Bernard Eggleton and Graham Hunt (Chief Executive) |
| Aldermaston Parish Council                                                  | Councillor David Shirt (Chairman) and Councillor David Moore  |
| Midgham Parish Council                                                      | Councillor Disson (Chairman)                                  |
| Woolhampton Parish Council                                                  | Councillor Tony Renouf (Chairman)                             |
| Great Shefford Parish Council                                               | Councillor Andrew Sleigh (Chairman)                           |

| <b>Towns and Parishes mainly affected by river swelling following 20 July 2007</b> |                                                                                                     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Purley on Thames Parish Council                                                    | Councillor Rick Jones (Chairman)                                                                    |
| Pangbourne Parish Council                                                          | Councillor Tom Knott (Chairman) and Chairman of Parish Flood Control Group                          |
| Lambourn Parish Council                                                            | Councillor Peter Iveson (Chairman) and Councillor Tony Jones (Eastbury Councillor and Flood Warden) |
| Bucklebury Parish Council                                                          | Councillor Wynne Frankum (Chairman), Councillor Lindy Clarke and Piers Allison (Resident)           |

## **Appendix**

---

Appendix A – Parish and Town Council Questionnaire – Summary of responses

Appendix B – Newbury Town Council Response

Appendix C – Thatcham Town Council Questionnaire Response

Experience of Parish and Town Councils – Overview & Scrutiny Commission Flooding Review

| 1. Please give a summary of the impact of the flooding on your parish or town. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ashampstead                                                                    | <p>Ashampstead Parish situated mainly on high ground was fortunate in having little flooding damage to property. Only two cottages were affected, situated in what we call the lower road (the Ashampstead to Bradfield Road). This road is subject to the accumulation of more rainfall anyway during the normal course of time being below two hills (Pykes Hill and Palmers Hill) and water from the high ground of Quicks Green.</p> <p>As we are a very rural parish there is only one road (Flowers Piece Road) which has a gutter drainage facility to the sewer system. Other roads rely on ditch soakaways which silt up frequently and have to be cleared from time to time.</p> <p>All that can be done to help ease any future flooding is to ensure that all drainage ditches are kept in a good condition and clear of obstruction. This we do anyway during the normal timescale by asking Streetcare to carry out the work when it seems necessary.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Boxford                                                                        | <p>River Lambourn flows through the centre of Boxford. Banks were breached upstream during the afternoon leading to flooding at River Cottage, Brook Cottage, Elm Cottage and Primrose Cottages. WestBrook Channel was blocked and did not clear water from the water meadows which were flooded.</p> <p>Volume of rain flooded the road in the centre of the village, Valley road near the Bell, the Leckhampstead Road near the M4 bridge and the Winterbourne Road and B4000 at Wickham Heath. Recently ploughed fields were washed off downland fields into properties at Bradleywood and onto the road nearby and nearer to the village. The tarmac was also lifted in places on the Leckhampstead Road. The flooding on the Leckhampstead Road together with debris from fields made it impassable. The Winterbourne Road became impossible due to the volume of water. The river surged in Boxford around 7.30pm and properties flooded earlier were overwhelmed and the Mill House seriously threatened. M4 closure meant hundreds of vehicles tried to find routes north through Boxford which added to increased flooding, chaos and vehicles stuck in floods. Villagers worked until 3am to prevent serious flooding at the Mill House, having lost the battle at other cottages.</p> |
| Brimpton                                                                       | No serious flooding was experience in Brimpton – a few isolated cases caused by the sheer volume of rain. One property in Wasing Road was flooded because the gulleys were blocked in the road.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Bucklebury                                                                     | <p>27 residential properties were flooded and are uninhabitable.</p> <p>Of these, 24 were in Bucklebury village and 2 are in the Pang Valley.</p> <p>In addition, 2 public buildings were flooded (1 an ancient church) and 5 listed buildings.</p> <p>Cost to insurers - £2.7 million.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Burghfield                                                                     | The impact was upon the households flooded, not the Parish.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Catmore                                                                        | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Cold Ash                                                                       | A significant number of properties were flooded in various parts of the parish. The volume of water caused roads to be impassable. In Cold Ash Ward these were Cold Ash Hill (lower end), Hermitage Road, Fishers Lane, Bucklebury Alley, Ashmore Green Road, Gladstone Lane, Maynard Close and Billington Way, Bowling Green Road and Waller Drive.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

## Newbury Town Council

This document is Newbury Town Council's feedback in response to information requests from West Berkshire Council in relation to the flooding over the weekend of 20-23 July 007.

**Main points following a discussion of flooding following the Newbury Town Council meeting on 23 July 2007 and subsequent information provided by Town Councillors:**

- Residents were affected throughout Newbury, and in particular
  - Craven Road
  - Charlton Place
  - Cromwell Road / Wellington Close
  - Hambridge Road / A4 junction and Hambridge Lane Junction
  - A4 London Road
  - Shaw Road
  - Cresswell Road
  - Fleetwood Close
  - Mill Lane
  - Mountbatten Close
  - Park Lane
  - Turnpike Road
  - Walton Way.
- Business Premises affected at the following locations: Newbury Business Park, A4 London Road, Quantel Ltd, Turnpike Road, Turnpike Road Industrial Estate and Turnpike Road,
- In the early stages it seemed to be roads bordering the River Kennet, then there was run-off water from north of the town impacting on Clay Hill,
- Residents were shocked and surprised as many were not in a defined area of risk,
- Along London Road there was an increase in camaraderie, such as residents directing traffic as required,
- Some residents evacuated from Craven Road / Russell Road,
- The simple weight of the water meant that little could be done to divert it,
- Support was requested and residents and Councillors helped out,
- A number of people in 4x4s and rally cars making life a misery for those trying to get about during the floods,
- Town Council unsure of what they could do or were responsible for. Queries were forwarded to the appropriate agencies, using information as supplied by West Berkshire Council,
- At the time of the worst rain, we were concentrating on protecting the Town Hall which itself had issues with leaks, causing power outages and fire alarm failure. We considered offering the Town Hall as a refuge in response to WBC appeal, but with a suspect fire alarm decided we could not. The Town Hall cellar was flooded to a maximum depth of around a foot.

Concerns

- There was a perception of little support from West Berkshire Council at first,
- There appears now to be reduced direct labour in emergency call out teams from what there used to be,
- Emergency services were good, but there could have been more police presence,
- Suspicion that Wellington Close / Cromwell Road impact – not in a flood plain, was caused by a local farmer,
- Concerns have been raised at planning meetings about drainage infrastructure and tarmacing of drive ways has increased run-off,

- We need to ensure that there are clear Newbury-wide Emergency plans in place with clear responsibilities for each of the relevant parties.
- It is often water bubbling up through drains that is the issue,
- Concerns that insurance companies were trying to avoid responsibilities to their insured, to reduce their costs,
- The input of Government money will need to be targeted very carefully,
- Newbury Town Council could store sandbags in the drier rooms in the Town Hall cellar – though the room we would use is a bit air damp and vehicular access is limited (10am-6pm pedestrianisation).

#### Positives

- Congratulations to the Officers of the Council and the other public bodies who did a very sound job in very unusual circumstances to create calm where there was confusion and order where there was understandable chaos,
- Community Furniture Project – good quality furniture for sale at very low prices, particularly for those on benefit,
- Sovereign had given all affected tenants 3 'white good' items - cooker, fridge and a freezer. These had in turn been supplied to them by a major domestic electrical supplier.

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                   | <p>The pressure of water blew manhole covers off and one such incident in Cold Ash Hill caused a traffic accident. Traffic diverted onto minor roads, such as Ashmore Green Road and water already lying was displaced into residential driveways.</p> <p>There were considerable problems experienced in the Manor Park/Manor Fields Ward and a written report has been compiled by our Councillors for that Ward and is attached.</p> <p>Families are only now being moved out into temporary accommodation, several weeks after the event, having lived upstairs in their flooded properties.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Compton           | <p>The High Street in Compton was flooded in several places through the village. Some properties were damaged and the shops trade suffered because it had to close due to water coming in off the road. Some of this could have been minimised if there had been sand bags available.</p> <p>Although the roads were badly flooded, the water drained away quite quickly because the channel of the Pang had been kept clear. Horn Street was badly affected and the old wall surrounding the pond went down. This was partly due to pressure of water from the road and partly due to a large delivery van coming through at speed. It is questionable as to whether the drains on Horn Street were regularly cleaned as during the summer they were quite badly silted up. This may have contributed to the flooding in that area.</p> <p>Some of the properties in Burrell Road had tarmac coming up through their systems where it had fallen into the drains when Burrell Road was resurfaced. Contractors should be extra vigilant in potential flood areas to ensure that the drains are not blocked. It is more important that drains are cleared regularly so that water can drain away. The area of the High Street at the base of Churn Road suffered particularly badly due to water and silt running off Churn Road into the lay-by on the High Street.</p> |
| East Ilsley       | <p>Minimal.</p> <p>The pond burst its banks and flooded the area surrounding up to about 6 inches.*</p> <p>A couple of properties suffered from flash flooding.</p> <p>The water cleared away within 45 minutes of the rain ceasing.</p> <p>This would have been significantly worse had the EIPC not ensured that WBC had carried out the cleaning of the drains, gullies etc. in the village.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Hampstead Norreys | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Lambourn          | <p>Eastbury houses affected by damage from River Lambourn, flow blocked by excess weed, causing river to change course. At least 20 houses affected, a number of local businesses and roads (Crowle Road, Baydon Road, Newbury Street, Eastbury Front and Back Street).</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Leckhampstead     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Three houses flooded – 2 very badly,</li> <li>• Showed up the need for more soak-a-ways,</li> <li>• Washed away good top soil on farmland,</li> <li>• Washed pebble driveway surfaces into and onto roads,</li> <li>• Flooded many areas of roads in the Parish and in nearby parishes (e.g. on B4494) such as to make the roads impassable</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Midgham           | <p>The worst affect area was Midgham Marsh, where 6 houses were so seriously flooded that they are still uninhabitable. The cause was the fact that the sluices were opened in Thatcham. This caused the canal bank to breach and the water flooded</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <p>Midgham Marsh and the houses in the vicinity.<br/>The A4 was flooded throughout Midgham, causing water to flow into the low-lying properties alongside. Other isolated incidents were Midgham Green, School Hill and Cox's Lane.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Pangbourne            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 130 houses flooded</li> <li>• Main road through Pangbourne had to be closed for most of Saturday</li> <li>• Businesses in centre of village unable to function</li> <li>• Loss of electricity in centre of village</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Peasmore              | <p>Extensive damage to roads, especially Hailey Lane.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Purley                | <p>Very heavy rainfall was widespread from 10:00 on Thursday 19th July, and throughout Friday 20th, causing many flash floods in the district. Purley did not suffer from these, but was a target for predictions of serious flooding, which came from the Environment Agency(EA), over the following weekend. The flooding which did occur was, in the end, not serious, and came from a slow build-up, unlike 2003. The inundation was limited to a few footpaths, and some gardens and garages which are particularly vulnerable. Some residents were evacuated as a precaution, but no houses suffered serious water entry. The Friday flash floods did more damage elsewhere – Purley was fortunate.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Stanford Dingley      | <p>It appears that it was the water coming off the fields that caused most of the damage.<br/>It was important to bear in mind that it had been an extreme event, compounded by the fact that the fields were already waterlogged by the heavy summer's rainfall. Some people felt that if there had been more sandbags in the village there could have been a lot less internal damage.<br/>It was reported that the Environment Agency had worked down the river in July. It was felt that silt was a major problem, but it was reported that the silt up river had been completely washed away in the floods.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Tidmarsh / Sulham     | <p>No great impact, but considerable inconvenience and discomfort for those involved.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Wasing Parish Meeting | <p>Two residential properties on Wasing Lane in Aldermaston were affected by the flooding.<br/>The worst affected was a commercial site on the Wasing Estate at Lower Farm Pavilion. This building suffered considerable flooding and employees are still unable to occupy the building while work is underway. It could be another couple of months yet before staff can return.<br/>The flooding occurred at the weekend of the Glade Festival taking place on the Wasing Estate and caused considerable problems accessing the site (and leaving on the Monday when tractors had to be employed to putt out cars). Several cars were abandoned. Emergency measures also had to be put in place with the Church and surrounding village halls to provide shelter if necessary for festival goers affected by the severe weather conditions.<br/>A great deal of farm land was also affected.</p> |
| Welford               | <p>9 residential properties were flooded.<br/>Lambourn Road, Westen was impassable and vehicles were abandoned.<br/>The following roads were only passable with 4x4: Lambourn Road at Easton Hill Junction, B4000 in Wickham at Welford Road junction and Pound Lane at Halfway.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Winterbourne          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water was 2 feet deep in centre of village,</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |



|           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 12 properties were flooded,</li> <li>• Damage was such that the residents of the majority of these have had to move into temporary accommodation whilst the are dried out and repairs done,</li> <li>• The house with the worst impact has an estimated £100,000.00 of damage.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Wokefield | <p>The main areas of serious flooding were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• along Goring Lane,</li> <li>• The junction of Goring Lane and James Lane,</li> <li>• The bottom low-lying section of Lockram Lane.</li> </ul> <p>These roads were impassable and traffic diverted throughout the day. A small number of gardens and houses on the north side of Goring Lane through Grazeley Green were flooded (6 inches to 2 feet). 1 property is inhabitable following the flooding. Other isolated properties were affected in smaller ways, mainly from the sheer volume of surface water coming off the sloping fields. The occupants of these were mainly philosophical about it as 'one-off conditions', which were unavoidable.</p> |
| Yattendon | <p>4 residential houses had their ground floor flooded.</p> <p>There is no river close by – the water came down from higher ground in the woods.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## 2. Please summarise the response that your Council gave to any flooding that you encountered.

|                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boxford           | <p>The clerk contacted WBC to ask for sandbags – on several occasion – but they never arrived. When asking for help she was advised to ring the Environment Agency who said they could send leaflets'. An offer of an airlift from WBC was made in relation to an elderly lady who has been flooded, she however wished to remain.</p> <p>Practical help was given by Councillors and other villagers to move furniture where possible to upper floors and try and divert flood water. (This would have been possible with sand bags.) Improvised sand bags were made from plastic bags and gravel from driveways.</p> <p>It was necessary to try to stop traffic diverted off the M4 from going through the village because of closed roads and the fact that traffic going through floods exacerbated flooding in adjacent properties. A road block was manned from 2pm – 7pm and wheelie bins placed in the roads to slow traffic insistent on passing (all returned). Councillors provided practical help until 2 – 3am Saturday morning, but felt helpless.</p> |
| Brimpton          | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Bucklebury        | Met the parishioners that had been flooded. Assess the extent of the problems. Called a public meeting for the 27 September 2007 and invited Richard Benyon MP, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, 4 local District Councillors, Pang Valley Countryside Project and local land owners.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Burghfield        | Meeting with residents to ascertain the nature of the problem.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Catmore           | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Cold Ash          | Included in the comments for Question 3.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Compton           | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| East Ilsley       | Ensured that WBC carried out the promised clearing of three blocked drains and the building of a new silt trap.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Hampstead Norreys | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Lambourn          | <p>The Council held some supplied of sandbags, which were all distributed to residents.</p> <p>WBC Highways department was phoned and asked to close some roads. This did not happen as the contractors were unable to get out to Lambourn.</p> <p>Suggestion: Consider storage of 'Road Closed' signs, to be deployed only on the instruction of WBC Highways.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Leckhampstead     | None – members of the community all pulled together to help neighbours, clear roads of gravel, dig trenches to get flooding away from houses. Farmers were particularly helpful.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Midgham           | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pangbourne        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respite centre initially set up in Village Hall but lack of electricity meant it had to be moved to Adventure Dolphin</li> <li>• Helped households along with other services to evacuate and move goods</li> <li>• Assisted with re-directing of traffic as complete absence of police presence for most of the day</li> <li>• Liaised with WBC representatives to ensure as much information as possible was available and provided local knowledge.</li> </ul> <p>This continued right through the waiting period for the Thames surge, with Parish Council reporting regularly on the status of the river</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As flooding of the Thames was expected in the following days, the Parish Council contacted all vulnerable households and provided numbers to contact if help needed. Pangbourne Flood Control Group had already been set up and a list of vulnerable dwellings and people was already collated and available</li> <li>• Mobilised volunteers to visit houses and distribute sand bags</li> <li>• Opened Parish Office as contact centre for all residents</li> <li>• On Monday when few sandbags were initially available in Pangbourne, the PC arranged for extra sandbags as flooding appeared to be imminent</li> <li>• Ensured that stranded boats were safe and the people on board had adequate supplies</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                     |
| Peasemore             | Private assistance given to those in need. No Parish Council assistance, save for the distributions of notices re grants etc                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Purley                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flood Plan was already in place, following serious flooding in 2003. This plan was jointly agreed with WBC and EA.</li> <li>• Parish Office set up as Emergency Contact Centre</li> <li>• Cascade communications through established Flood Wardens in the Village.</li> <li>• Office manned continuously throughout emergency, and support given to WBC team</li> <li>• Purley Barn cleared of activity and given over to WBC relief centre.</li> <li>• Sandbag points established in village.</li> <li>• Councillors patrolled regularly to assess, communicate status and requirements, and reassure residents.</li> <li>• Reports given to local radio stations for communication to residents.</li> <li>• Detailed log maintained throughout, for reference and input to improved flood plan</li> <li>• WBC and EA information distributed from Parish Office.</li> </ul> |
| Stanford Dingley      | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Tidmarsh / Sulham     | The accumulation of water on the A340 reported to West Berkshire Council.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Wasing Parish Meeting | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Welford               | None. No established emergency plan in place.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Winterbourne          | I am not aware of any response being provided by the council with respect to the flooding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Wokefield             | Some Members of the Parish Council were on holiday or working away from the Parish on 20 July 2007. However, with the exception of one letter of complaint about the ditches on the Grazeley Green area received a few weeks later, none of the residents make contact with the Clerk or Members of the Parish Council who were available.<br>In most places flooding had drained away by the morning of 21 July 2007. Obviously, everyone was caught 'on the hop' and engaged with their own problems.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Yattendon             | Displayed West Berkshire Council notice informing people affected that they could apply for a form and where to claim a grant for aid. This received from West Berkshire Council and displayed on the Parish Council notice board.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

| 3. Please outline any activities that your Council undertook as recovery from the effects of the flooding. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boxford                                                                                                    | WBC were notified of damage to properties and roads.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Brimpton                                                                                                   | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Bucklebury                                                                                                 | <p>The people of Bucklebury Village have been acting on behalf of the Parish Councils. They need to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract water engineering consultancy,</li> <li>• Work closely with the Environment Agency, Thames Water and West Berkshire Council,</li> </ul> <p>They have identified the causes of the flooding in the Pang Valley and seek to find ways to alleviate future flooding and the funding this will require.</p> <p>Bucklebury Parish Council, through West Berkshire Council, seek to have a survey of drains at Chapel Row carried out. Drains in the other parts of the parish also need attention.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Burghfield                                                                                                 | No direct action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Catmore                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Cold Ash                                                                                                   | <p>We liaised with the District Councillor, the local newspaper and displayed notices in our notice boards, encouraging those affected to report their problems to the District Council. We also reported areas where maintenance was required as a result of water damage.</p> <p>We are working with WBC's Highways &amp; Transport dept. to identify, on a map provided for the purpose, areas where roads and individual properties were affected.</p> <p>We have listened carefully to parishioners' feedback and have as a result identified specific properties where flooding regularly occurs, not just under exceptional circumstances such as the event in July. In particular, a property in Ashmore Green has suffered flooding four times in the last eight years due to blocked drains and culverts in the vicinity and we shall be writing separately to the Highways &amp; Transport on the owner's behalf.</p> |
| Compton                                                                                                    | N/A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| East Ilsley                                                                                                | No action required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Hampstead Norreys                                                                                          | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Lambourn                                                                                                   | <p>Many individual Councillors worked voluntarily to assist those who suffered flooding.</p> <p>More sandbags have been ordered.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Leckhampstead                                                                                              | Checked on damage to houses, checked damage to local roads, informed householders by e-mail of the facility to claim compensation of initial £200 from West Berkshire Council by e-mailing them the claim form, completed map of flooding and damage (for WBC Highways)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Midgham                                                                                                    | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Pangbourne                                                                                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up helpline for local victims</li> <li>• Assisted with set up of Pangbourne Flood Fund collecting both money and furniture etc.</li> <li>• Liaised with Community Furniture Project to ensure collection and storage of donated furniture and goods</li> <li>• Visited all affected households delivering PC and WBC leaflets. In fact, many households were visited several times to</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <p>ensure all needs were catered for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acted as liaison between flood victims and WBC, Sovereign Housing and various other charities</li> <li>• Helped arrange assistance for those who needed help in clearing furniture, carpets etc.</li> </ul>                                                   |
| Peasemore             | See 2.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| Purley                | None needed, as the flooding did not affect properties greatly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Stanford Dingley      | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Tidmarsh / Sulham     | The Parish Council was not involved in any recovery action.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Wasing Parish Meeting | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Welford               | None. No established emergency plan in place.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Winterbourne          | I am not aware of any activities being undertaken by the council as recovery from the effects of the flooding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Wokefield             | As soon as possible on return from holidays, the Chairman and Flood Warden contacted all known houses in flooded areas to ascertain the extent of domestic flooding and flood patterns, to build up information which could be used to lessen any flood impact in the future. The results were annotated on Parish maps issued by WBC Highways. |
| Yattendon             | N/A. Tenants presumably claimed on their house insurances.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

| 4. Please give details of any preparations that your Council is making for future flooding events. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Boxford                                                                                            | Parish Council are seeking a meeting with the Environment Agency. The Agency had been warned of the danger of flooding in June! There were several possible actions which, if they had been taken before, would have mitigated the damage to property. Parish Council will be seeking advice from WBC about keeping a store of sand bags in the village in the future and 'Road Closed' signs.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Brimpton                                                                                           | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| Bucklebury                                                                                         | We hope to alleviate, as far as possible, the causes of the flooding.<br>We will inform parishioners of the help lines they may call upon.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
| Burghfield                                                                                         | Working with West Berkshire Council to try to lesson the possibility of future flooding in a part of the Hatch area.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Catmore                                                                                            | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Cold Ash                                                                                           | The Council firmly believes that the responsibility for dealing with the effects of events of this nature lies with the District Council and that it is not within the remit of parish councils to incorporate such measures into their budgets. However, we will continue to maintain pressure on the District Council's Highways Dept to keep ditches and drains clear. It is clear that this lack of maintenance, particularly, where the land is highest, exacerbates the problem at the lower end of our parish, i.e., Southend, Manor Park and Manor Fields.<br>We will also continue to bring pressure to bear on the Planning Department to accept that the numerous housing developments within the Parish are eroding the natural ability of water to drain away through areas of gardens, paddocks and other open spaces. We shall also be seeking assurances that the drainage system as it exists has sufficient capacity to cope with the continuing high level of development being experienced in the parish. It is worth mentioning that there is no evidence of action being taken at the completion of developments to ensure roadside verges are reinstated following damage caused by contractor vehicles and that drains are cleared of builder's debris, i.e., sand and cement. |
| Compton                                                                                            | Provision of sand bags – to ensure the village has a supply for the future; we need to find out how to source and store them.<br>Continuing to be vigilant over the state of the Pang and ensure it is kept clear.<br>To ensure that the culverts and bed of the Pang are maintained regularly so that any future flooding can clear quickly.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| East Ilsley                                                                                        | Looking into the cost of a stock of sandbags (or modern substitutes).<br>Ensuring WBC keep the drains, gullies and silt traps clear.<br>Ensuring that the land owners understand their responsibility as regards to keeping ditches, streams or any other part of the drainage system that is their responsibility clear.<br>Keeping up to date with ground water level measurements by the Environment Agency.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Hampstead Norreys                                                                                  | None                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Lambourn                                                                                           | Ordering replacement sandbags.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Leckhampstead                                                                                      | Write to West Berkshire Council where / if necessary to ensure soak-a-ways are kept cleared.<br>Write to West Berkshire Council to request new soak-a-ways / larger soak-a-ways are installed as soon as possible.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Midgham                                                                                            | None – after the flooding of the houses in Brimpton Road in 2004, the Parish Council urged West Berkshire Council to take                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                  | <p>action. This they did in 2005 by spending £30,000 on improving the drainage in the area. This worked and so I think that the houses would have escaped serious flooding if the canal bank had not broken.</p> <p>In 2004 the Parish Council issued 10 empty Hessian sandbags to each resident of Brimpton Road and the houses on the A4 around the Midgham / Brimpton crossroads.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pangbourne       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have securely stored 150 polypropylene sandbags in case of winter flooding</li> <li>• Pangbourne Flood Control Group has already met to discuss response to the flooding and recommend improvements for any future events. The discussion included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Information letters to be delivered to all residents in the 'at risk' category, as shown on the EA Flood Map,</li> <li>○ The EA had produced a report on their view of what occurred based on their findings to date. This had been available at the Flood Surgery for residents to review and add their own comments and send back to EA,</li> <li>○ It was agreed that the group needed a dedicated line for reporting problems on Pang and Sul together with a list of important other contact numbers and emails,</li> <li>○ It was agreed by all that if responsibility of riparian owner it must be made clear and enforced,</li> <li>○ Need for improved communication channels during flooding,</li> <li>○ The importance of getting out around the affected areas as much and as soon as possible was emphasised so that problems on the ground could be addressed quickly. Communication with the Control Centre was also vital. Generally this had worked well,</li> <li>○ Security of sandbag distribution needs improvement,</li> <li>○ Further information required on Rest Centre policies,</li> <li>○ There were problems with traffic management,</li> <li>○ Suggestion that fluorescent jackets be available at Village Hall for future events,</li> <li>○ It was agreed that would compile a list of ditches and tributaries that required monitoring for blockages/restrictions to flow in order to avoid future flooding problems. Riparian owner/EA could be alerted to problem in advance.</li> <li>○ Damage Limitation – readily available lists of contact numbers of residents would have helped with communication re flood warning. Need to look at system of residents notifying each other of risk of danger</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| Peasemore        | None.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Purley           | <p>We will update our flood plan with some additional details about sandbag distribution, communication facility at the Barn, co-location of all agencies together next time.</p> <p>However, although the emergency was less serious than expected, enough happened to judge that the plan in place worked well, and only needs minor improvement.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Stanford Dingley | <p>The Clerk will compile a report from all the individual reports submitted, giving timelines as to how the flooding occurred which might help them in the future.</p> <p>In one area, it had been noted that the stream which normally came down the hill had been unable to cope with the amount of water where it went under the road. It was recognised that if the stream had previously been enlarged, it would simply have caused greater flooding further down in the village. The suggestion was made that an expert was called in to look at how the</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                       | <p>water had come off the fields and to advise on what could be done to help in the future.<br/> It was therefore suggested to formally request the Environment Agency to send an expert out to see what remedial work could be done, both in the short term and the long term.<br/> Suggested that a meeting of all the riparian owners be held to discuss how to manage their part of the river. There are concerns that riparian owners may not be allowed to undertake any work in the river without consulting the Environment Agency - this issue needs clear resolution with the agency if practical preventative measures were to be taken.</p> <p>Some initial conclusions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drainage ditches around the village and in the fields need to be dredged and kept clear,</li> <li>• An investigation is needed into the topography and farming practice including re ditching etc. surrounding the village by the Council Surveyor,</li> <li>• Would it help if the fields to the south of Bushnell Green Road (Bucklebury Road from Stanford Dingley to Chapel Row) were ploughed and seeded from North to South? Drainage from all the fields along this road need to be inspected as a matter of urgency,</li> <li>• There should be no development of any kind allowed on the water meadows,</li> <li>• Could Thames Water establish a warning system, with an emergency contact list for vulnerable properties,</li> <li>• Council "gully men" need to be more responsible when clearing out the drains,</li> <li>• Additional drainage ditches and gulleys needed at the North end of the village,</li> <li>• There used to be a ditch or embankment along the south edge of the field to the north of the Wisteria Cottage and Stanford Farm Cottage. That would cause run off water to be diverted to the road and in turn into the pit across the road. The pit would then need a controlled egress to allow water to drain away. If this is not done, the pit will pose a further hazard to the village,</li> <li>• An investigation to be conducted into farming practice/ditches/crop rotation to the north of the village,</li> <li>• Provision of sandbags to be made available to vulnerable properties in the village.</li> </ul> <p>The following Action Plan was proposed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Immediate Action Plan – through the Environment Agency</li> <li>2. Long-term Action Plan – through the West Berkshire Council</li> <li>3. Remedial work on a local level.</li> <li>4. Major contribution to the District Parish Conference</li> </ol> |
| Tidmarsh / Sulham     | A Parish Councillor received information from the environment agency. Not sure how effective this is.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Wasing Parish Meeting | None. As we are a Parish Meeting not a Parish Council, we do not have a precept, so unfortunately cannot afford to make any preparations for future flooding events.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Welford               | Emergency Plan to be established as a matter of priority.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |



|              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Winterbourne | I am not aware of any preparation be made by the council for future flooding events                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Wokefield    | <p>The Parish Council has contacted the Environment Agency on 3 occasions in the past 6 weeks for more copies of their guidelines for householders – for local distribution. We have not yet received any of these publications.</p> <p>We are a small Parish with no facilities and therefore are unable to store or provide sandbags. However, most households are now aware that sandbags can be obtained from the builders merchants in Spencers Wood.</p> <p>There is very little else the Parish can do about flooding of the magnitude of 20 July 2007, apart from the above – with personal guidance added. Any work required to reduce future flooding is not within Parish Council capability.</p> <p>Domestic flooding was occasioned by water flooding down the Lockram Brook valley, across Lockram Lane via the brook itself and through the hedges on either side – through the lake in Oakfield and down to Waterfall Cottage and also from the fields to the west. The Lockram Brook tunnel under Goring Lane could not take the volume – but was then met in its confluence with the Burghfield Brook – hence flooding more in James Lane and Goring Lane – extended to Grazeley Green, where additional water was added coming off the fields around Chandlers Farms and down from Goodboys Lane.</p> <p>Suggested actions would be to clear out the ditches and gullies in Lockram Lane (and deepening them) from Lockram House downwards to beyond the bridge over the Lockram Brook and upwards to the road extension to Goring Lane.</p> <p>Similarly, all ditches through Grazeley Green, particularly on the south side, could be cleared out. These are marked on the Parish Flood maps already presented, but further details can be provided on site if necessary.</p> |
| Yattendon    | Not possible as no river near and this has never happened before. Only due to exceptional rain fall.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |

## Thatcham Town Council

**1 Please give a summary of the impact of the flooding on your parish**

The force and speed of the flash-flooding took everyone by surprise.

The raging torrents came down from the north of Thatcham from the higher to lower ground, causing extensive devastation and damage to vehicles, gardens and property. Fortunately, no human life was lost although reports were received that pets had been killed

The impact of the flooding will still be felt on the town and its residents for many months to come. The ongoing issues include the emotional strain and stress of:

- living in temporary accommodation, caravans and away from area with family and friends (some families were split up)
- dealing with the smells and pollution in their flooded properties
- the physical upheaval of taking furnishings and fittings out of properties and the delays in having these removed from the premises
- the difficulties and delays with loss adjusters and insurance companies for those who were insured
- issues for those who were not insured
- financial loss
- the loss of personal items that cannot be replaced
- dealing with unhelpful landlords and developers
- insecurities and uncertainties for the future (when will the next flood come?)
- the general disruption to families and their lives
- adverse effect on residents' health, e.g. stress related issues, infections, stomach upsets (Anecdotal evidence could be substantiated by the Health Authority)

Businesses, particularly in Pipers Way, were also affected, but the Town Council does not have any details of how they are coping with damage and loss of stock.

The flooding brought out the worst in some people e.g. reports of theft from skips, bogus callers, 4 x 4s driven fast causing waves and flooding of properties that might otherwise have escaped, and the best in people, e.g. neighbours helping each other, community working together.

Articles written by Peter Allen (published in the Newbury Weekly News) and Sue Everett (attached) underline what is seen to be the cause of the flooding.

- 2 Please summarise the response that your council gave to any flooding that you encountered.
- 3 Please outline any activities that your council undertook as recovery from the effects of the flooding

#### On the day

- Just after 11 am, when it became apparent that there was an emergency situation developing, TTC staff made contact with the Emergency Planning Officer at West Berkshire Council to obtain confirmation that the Emergency Operations Centre was operating and to see if they required any action from the Town Council. TTC staff were informed to advise residents seeking help that they should telephone the District Council Emergency Centre on 42400 unless life was in immediate danger then 999 should be dialled.
- Initially local Radio Stations were telling people to contact their Local Authority (not specifically West Berkshire Council) and therefore the Town Council received many calls. Three Town Council staff manned the telephones during the afternoon to deal with the enquiries and point the enquirers in the direction of the EOC.
- TTC staff manned phones until 6.20 pm on Friday. Arrangements were put in place for WBC to use Frank Hutchings Community Hall and Burdwood Centre as Rest Centres.

#### During the Weekend

- TTC staff manned phones from 9.00 am – 6 pm on Saturday. On Sunday, TTC office was manned from 10 am until 1.15 pm. The reason for this was that it was thought better to hear a “real” voice, rather than an answerphone message telling people to ring WBC.
- Members from Thatcham Rotary Club offered Rotarian help and were referred to WBC EOC.

#### During the following Week

- Assistance was sought from WBC to hand out information leaflets to residents affected by floods. On Monday and Tuesday, this was done by Councillors/staff and other volunteers in the Broadway. On Tuesday and Wednesday Councillors, staff and wardens delivered more information leaflets to houses affected.
- TTC paid for extra hours for Neighbourhood Wardens in order that help could be given to flood victims.
- During delivery to houses on the Kennet Heath Estate, it became clear that residents were angry and concerned that not enough was being done by the authorities; residents stated that they felt isolated and abandoned. As a result of residents’ comments TTC organised a Flood Victim Support Drop-in to take place on Friday, 27th July at Moorside Community Centre.
- The Town Council did not wish to raise unrealistic expectations but wished to offer support and a listening ear.
- Attendees included:
  - West Berkshire Council Officers
  - West Berkshire District Councillors
  - Thatcham Town Councillors
  - Thatcham Town Council Officers
  - Sovereign Housing Association
  - Community Furniture Project
  - Thatcham Rotary Club
  - Neighbourhood Wardens

- Churches Together in Thatcham – refreshments
- Feed The Children provided a selection of toiletries
- *Barratt Homes, Redrow Developers, CAB and A2 Housing Association invited but could not attend*
- **Estimated 150 to 200 people attended the evening**

*The issues raised could be broken down into nine categories:*

- Communication
- Layout and drainage at Kennet Heath
- Drainage in other areas
- Sandbags
- Alternative Accommodation
- Security
- Clear up (e.g. removal of flood damaged items)
- Support (mainly financial)
- Miscellaneous

*Action from the Drop in and subsequent formal meetings of this Council and its Committees:*

- The issues were passed to the appropriate agencies for action
- A full investigation into the condition and maintenance of the existing drainage has been called for by the Town Council
- The responsible agencies were asked that short, medium and long term strategies be put in place to prevent the recurrence of such devastation
- The Town Council plans to hold a public meeting in due course and ask that the relevant Authorities report on the findings of their investigations at that meeting

*Thatcham Relief in Need Charity*

- The Town Mayor made an appeal for financial support for the Victims.
- TTC Officer met Trustees of Thatcham Relief in Need Charity and it was agreed that this charity could be used as the vehicle for funds and Trustees would consider and process applications in conjunction with Thatcham Town Councillors.
- Since the launch, Town Councillors have visited 107 flood victims seeking financial support from the charity (and applications are still being received).
- Over £19000 has been paid out to flood victims.

*Ongoing*

- Issues raised by residents at Kennet Heath Monitoring Group are being pursued
- Public meeting to be arranged for flood victims (Probable date: 6th November 2007)

#### 4. Please give details of any preparations that your council is making for future flooding events.

TTC's own emergency planning procedures will need to be reviewed in conjunction with WBC Emergency procedures. Particular issues to be looked at by various agencies including TTC:

##### Sandbags

- Revised procedure for distributing sandbags with consideration being given to the possibility of a store being set up in Thatcham and the sandbags being distributed from there to residents/businesses in the town.
- Review criteria for issuing sandbags and suggesting alternative means for protecting property

##### Dissemination of Emergency Information

- That the information which is given to the radio stations while the emergency is in train be more specific i.e. that the telephone number which residents/businesses living in West Berkshire should be announced rather than just an instruction for residents to contact their local/district council. The general public does not usually differentiate between one council and another and this council received a very high volume of calls which they had to refer to the EOC
- That more personnel be made available to man the emergency lines at WBC while the problems are at the height
- That the out of hours message on 01635 42400 be updated every night with specific instructions for victims
- That more ways of disseminating information regarding the siting of the rest centres be identified. A lot of residences lost electricity and telephone lines
- That information be made available more quickly regarding the removal of flood damaged goods
- That Thatcham Town Council's limited resources be used earlier in the emergency/recovery process to disseminate hard copy information to residents, collect data, and in any other areas where this would be practicable.

##### Role of Police

- That the role of the Police during the recent emergency be reviewed with particular reference to traffic management issues. A number of reports were received to the effect that Police presence would have assisted where roads should have been closed as the water levels rose to a dangerous level.
- It is alleged that assistance with traffic management on the A4 outside the Doctors' and Dentists' Surgeries was refused by the Highways Department and the Police, each body referring callers to the other authority. Vehicles were travelling far too fast increasing the thrust of the flood waters into the buildings on either side of the road.
- That the Neighbourhood Wardens be advised earlier in the Recovery Operation of specific ways in which they might assist. They increased their patrols in Thatcham as soon as they were advised by this Council of areas where theft from skips, ASB were occurring and general assistance was required by residents. They have also been patrolling areas where homes are uninhabitable and where residents are concerned about the security of the properties.

##### Planning

Awareness of any susceptibility to flooding to be taken into consideration in planning applications when they are considered by the Town Council, i.e. is development on a natural watercourse? What materials are used for driveways to assist drainage?

This is an article written by Sue Everett, Chairman of Thatcham Vision, resident of Thatcham and an ecologist. The article will feature in the next issue of British Wildlife magazine, for which Sue writes the Conservation News Section

## Monsoon season

On Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> July, Berkshire saw the most humungous rainstorm in living memory with the equivalent of three months' rain falling within the space of around 12 hours. Over the whole day, rainfall gauges recorded between 70-80 mm and more within 24 hours, with 24mm – 50mm recorded from a single hour (10mm per hour would normally be considered heavy rain). *Chez* Thatcham, stream-beds culverted and concreted over, some 30-40 years ago, became raging torrents that swept through houses and along roads until eventually finding the River Kennet.

Venturing out at 4pm, once the rain had stopped, the results of this extreme weather event could be seen just 100m away where two of the old streams ("The Bourne" and "Cold Ash Stream") had formed a river across the road, flooding some houses up to their door knockers. Following the line of the culverts north, houses all the way along them were under water. To the east of the town another torrent had swept down off the hill, fed by storm water rushing off a 1990s housing estate built on the valley slope that had been permanent grassland, previously full of springs. Those unfortunate enough to have parked cars along the road past the local secondary school saw their vehicles swept down the road by such a quantity of water that people described seeing 'rapids'. Cars were abandoned everywhere. Hundreds of houses were flooded, with some of the worst flooding among the town's newest housing estate (still under construction) at the very bottom of the valley – an area well known to flood in the past. Engineered drainage systems were overwhelmed. No culvert could have held the sheer quantity of water that needed to find its way into the river at this time.

The old maps show where the old streams used to flow north-south, taking water from the valley sides (slope of 45<sup>o</sup>) down to the River Kennet. A similar flood event occurred after snow-melt in the winter of 1947-8 – but at that time the land was farmland, not suburbia, although even then some of the old farmhouses on the hillside had water flowing through them.

Could damage to property have been avoided? The answer is (with hindsight) – yes; if linear parks had been created along the lines of streams and if houses in the lowest part of the town had been built on concrete pillars (or not built there at all), the number of flooded properties could have been substantially reduced. However, more concrete anywhere near the floodplain will inevitably lead to an increasingly spatey flow for the main river, and increase the likelihood for flooding towns downstream.

It wasn't just Berkshire that suffered flooding. Only several weeks previously Hull and other parts of Yorkshire were seriously flooded, while cities in the Severn floodplain (Worcester, Tewkesbury and Gloucester) were worst hit in the late-July floods. This time, services fundamental to life as we know it, were affected, with safe water supplies for over a quarter of a million people in Gloucestershire lost after flooding of the Mythe water treatment works, while floodwaters were only just prevented from entering a major electricity substation. There were fears also for settlements from rising levels of the Thames – several hundred properties in Oxford were flooded. However, that city, and towns downstream, inevitably benefited from the huge area of floodplain grassland all

around it – into which massive volumes of water were deposited. The internationally important meadows of Pixey, Yarnton and Oxey Mead, and the unimproved grasslands of Port Meadow, Iffley Meadow and Christchurch Meadow – all proved their worth in providing more than just pretty fields full of wildflowers. While Yorkshire's flooding also followed an extreme event of prolonged, intense rainfall, the rising river waters would have also been exacerbated by drains in the uplands pouring water off the hills.

The lessons learned from this event must now be taken on board and acted upon by Government. When developments are constructed, streams, and green swathes along them, should be protected and managed as natural corridors for floodwater. It is not just the low-lying areas of main rivers that are vulnerable to flooding. Secondly, if floodplains must be built on (as the government says they must), then a very different approach to building on them is required. Third, upland drains must be blocked on a large scale, both for flood defence and carbon storage, as quickly as possible.

Nature must be the senior partner, working hand in hand with landowners, ecologists, flood defence engineers and planners, in protecting people and properties from the devastation that floods bring. The fundamental ecosystem services associated with meadows, natural watercourses and sustainably managed uplands must be maintained and, in many places, restored.