

**Notes from the Public Meeting held on Saturday 28th October 2023
at 10.30am in The Village Hall, Lingwood Lane, Woodborough,
Nottingham to discuss the flood of Friday 20th October 2023**

PRESENT:

70 residents, including members of Woodborough FLAG (Woodborough Flood Action Group)

Members of Woodborough Parish Council (Cllr Richard Pannell in chair, Cllr Phil Hallam, Cllr John Newsome, Cllr Linda Taylor, Cllr Colin Starke, Cllr Charles Wardle, Cllr Richard Whincup);

From Gedling Borough Council (GBC): Cllr Helen Greensmith, Fran Whyley (Interim Corporate Director), John Evens (Parks and Street Care), Nic Bond (Customer Services)

From Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC): Cllr Boyd Elliott

Notes produced by Averil Marczak (Clerk to Woodborough Parish Council)

INTRODUCTION

Cllr Pannell introduced himself and explained how he would manage the meeting.

FLOOD WARDENS

As a flood warden himself, Cllr Pannell gave some detail of how flood wardens operated, and recounted some of his personal experiences managing the closure of Bank Hill on 20/10/23. Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) authorise the flood wardens to close the village to traffic when the water is across the road. However on 20/10/23, no text came amid water coming rapidly from all directions. Flood wardens allowed ambulances etc to get through and are sympathetic to carers but are also confronted by abusive drivers who move the cones and drive through. Cllr Pannell thanked the people who store the “road closed” signage at various points in the village, and thanked John Charles-Jones for his work to mitigate flooding on Woodborough Park Farm.

Cllr Wardle had acted as flood warden on Lingwood Lane and reported that there had been a specific problem with traffic coming from Lambley. Better communication was needed with Lambley to ensure the road was closed at the Lambley end (Cllr Greensmith to discuss with Lambley PC).

WOODBOROUGH FLAG

AM thanked the flood wardens and spoke briefly about Woodborough FLAG. GBC had provided a form (the “green form”) on which details of how the flood waters had affected individual properties could be recorded and Woodborough FLAG asked everyone to complete the form so that the scale of the damage could be understood. Funding for flood resilience schemes was allocated by government according to how many people would be helped and under-reporting would damage the case for investment in Woodborough.

NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Natural flood management works had recently been installed at Woodborough Park, as part of a project funded by NCC and Trent Rivers Trust. John Charles-Jones, the owner of Woodborough Park Farm, stated that rainfall on 20/10/23 had not been so exceptional. 55mm of rain had fallen in a day. (50mm of rain had fallen in a day in 2007 and 2012). Such rainfall could no longer credibly be called a 1 in 100 year event. What made 20/10/23 unusual was the distribution of rain on the day, with 10mm falling between 11am and 12 midday.

Four bunds, capable of holding 210,000 L of water, had been installed and a number of leaky dams. Mr Charles-Jones said that in his opinion modelling work had been inadequate and that all 4 bunds had overflowed. The biggest bund had breached, causing damage to the field with likely some 150 tonnes of soil now missing. NCC Cllr Neil Clarke, who had responsibility for flood management, had visited and seen the damage to the farm and the natural flood management works. Creating more temporary water storage via holes or dams was the only solution and while Woodborough Park Farm was the largest catchment area it was not the only one.

During the meeting, a resident said there was talk that the bund failure had contributed to a surge of flood water around 11am. Mr Charles-Jones countered that the breach was not responsible, having occurred by 9am, and he put the surge down to the very heavy rain between 11am and 12 midday. 4 mm of rain per hour fell across the day, but 10 mm fell between 11am and 12 midday.

Mr Charles-Jones encouraged all in attendance to go and see Mark Spencer MP or write to him, as only money would make a material difference to flooding in Woodborough. He urged anybody affected by flooding to fill out the green form. He concluded by saying that if no warning of an impending flood had come from the EA, then that was unforgiveable.

COMMENTS & QUESTIONS FROM RESIDENTS

Cllr Pannell invited residents in attendance to comment and ask questions, which would be noted down. Cllr Greensmith and Cllr Elliott would be asked for comment at the end of the session.

Comments & observations:

- the agencies do not seem to know when the roads are closed. The EA, NCC and Trent Rivers Trust did not seem to know that Woodborough was flooding.
- flood wardens communicate with each other, but this information would be useful for the whole village , e.g. the depth of water and locations, so that people know to move their cars to higher ground. Cllr Pannell responded to say the information varies from minute to minute and it would be difficult for flood wardens to provide this because things are frenetic and it would be hard to use phones in the pouring rain.
- insurance: a householder affected by flooding should pick a Flood RE insurer as the government bears the flood risk under this scheme.
- Woodborough is short of flood wardens and could do with extra volunteers. Volunteers would also be welcome to help others clear up, clear the drives etc post flood.
- the road height near the Nags Head could be reduced to help water flow out.
- if the road was lowered, the bridge under Old Manor Close must be widened to shift the water, otherwise Lowdham Lane properties will flood.

- Parish Council should publicise the dangers of driving through floodwater – bow waves, risk to cars etc.
- standing water on the playing field: drainage needs to be addressed to get water back in the dyke.
- no one from the EA came out to check what was happening.
- there must be no more building.
- ditches on the field running down from Sunningdale need improving by the landowner.
- we need more flood wardens, especially living away from Main Street.
- communication across the village is needed during an event. Flood alerts are available.
- the lack of a coordinator on the day was a problem. More than one coordinator was needed so that both operational matters and communication could be handled. Cllr Pannell provided more information about the role, saying it was home-based/indoors. The coordinator keeps a record, talks to the EA and is the interface with schools for communications and transport.
- water comes down Doverbeck onto Shelt Hill.
- sandbags were not made available. Cllr Wardle commented that sandbags needed to be prepared in advance and might rot in 2-3 weeks, so they were not ideal. In the past residents have been advised to look at self resilience measures. He recommended FloodSax which were flat pack gel filled bags, that could be easily stored in a box under a bed or in the loft.
- location of road closures should be reviewed. A resident said he had dragged the signs to different locations.
- higher authorities eg police were needed to stop cars breaching the road closures.
- a flood siren might be useful.
- GBC let Woodborough down. Lowdham did receive sandbags from Newark and Sherwood DC and dirty sandbags were collected. Lowdham set up a refuge centre at their Village Hall.
- communication requirements were reiterated. Information was needed so parents could decide whether to send their children to school on the bus. The Minster School had put children on the bus to return to the flooded village. Better communication was needed with secondary schools. Cllr Wardle confirmed that both Frank Seeley and the Minster School had been contacted regarding the flood, but at the Minster the message had failed to be passed through.
- any initiatives need to be coordinated to avoid knock-on problems.
- closer monitoring of levels at Lowdham Lane were needed, perhaps through technology or cameras. Cllr Pannell commented that technology had not been effective on 20/10/23 and monitoring stations were needed.
- Old Manor Close was flooded by water off the fields formerly known as Elkington's fields. Nobody is clearing the ditches here.
- drainage capacity hasn't increased in line with the amount of new tarmac and building in the village.
- ditches need clearing out - water needs to get out through proper culverts.
- Shelt Hill gets missed out of the debate about flooding. The EA have said that field water isn't their problem. The camber on the roads and pavement (created by repeated resurfacing to the road without scraping the surface back) pushes water into properties and holds it there.

- residents' flood barriers on Main Street had held water back at the front but properties flooded both from the rear and from the force of water coming up through drains and sewers. Highways department need to look at drains. The dyke needs to be stronger to hold the water.

Questions raised:

- what are the EA accountable for and will they be held responsible for the lack of communication?
- are there any plans that can help water get out of the village faster?
- how is data on floods collected?
- if money was unlimited, what would the projects be?
- why did new areas flood this time and what will prevent it? Projects should engage with these areas as well as known ones.
- what could be used as a refuge when centres like the Nags Head, Four Bells, Church and Village Hall are inaccessible or flooded? Suggest the Baptist Church could be bought, currently on sale for £40,000.
- do we have a coordinator for the care of vulnerable people after flooding? We need to consider the human consequences.
- the water levels dropped very suddenly on Lowdham Lane as if a plug had been pulled – why?
- are there any flood barriers that can be opened to save Woodborough?
- can the dyke be drained before a flood?

COMMENTS FROM CLLR HELEN GREENSMITH (GBC), CLLR BOYD ELLIOTT (NCC), FRANCESCA WHYLEY (INTERIM CORPORATE DIRECTOR, GBC)

GBC Cllr Helen Greensmith said she was sorry to hear of the events of 20/10/23 and thanked the flood wardens and volunteers. She had worked hard to liaise with agencies on the day of the flood and had visited the village the day after. She had liaised with the Parish Clerk regarding the organisation of this public meeting. Cllr Greensmith thanked the GBC officers in attendance.

Cllr Greensmith acknowledged the perceived lack of help from GBC. She told the meeting that they had tried to get to the village but resources were stretched and the focus had fallen on Colwick where a risk of dangerous floods persisted for 2 days. A collection of flood damaged goods had been agreed for the 1st and 2nd November. If collection needed to be deferred until after visits by insurance loss adjusters, residents should contact GBC customer service for later removal. Insurance policies might include disposal of damaged items.

NCC Cllr Boyd Elliott gave details of funding for flood victims. Grants of £120 were available now from NCC. The UK Government had indicated that £5000 per household would be available for flood-hit properties. Details were yet to be released. Drainage issues and riparian issues had contributed to the flood and he would work with landowners to resolve.

Cllr Elliott reported that Lambley wished to work with Woodborough on flood measures. He encouraged residents to write to Mark Spencer MP, and also to Tom Randall, who would be the Conservative party candidate at the next election for Woodborough.

Francesca Whyley commented that GBC wanted to support flood resilience via provision of supplies and by supporting the warden scheme. They could also be involved in communication schemes so GBC could respond directly. The green forms provided at the meeting would provide data for EA, NCC and would help GBC access funding. The criteria for the £5000 funding was not yet agreed and there may be a threshold of flooded properties to access any funding.