

Flood Advisory Group Report to Bleasby Parish Council meeting on May 13th 2024

Update – There have been three flood warnings since the last report (April). Fortunately, only one of them caused minor flooding on Main Street and at Lower Goverton.

Progress Points

- Four members of the Group have undertaken their warden training – meaning that we now have six wardens with up to date NCC qualification for flood signage erection. These individuals live within the parish and are conveniently placed in all vulnerable sections of the village. In addition, we have eleven support wardens who regularly participate in monitoring, recording, liaising and communicating with agencies as well as participating in ‘strategic’ discussions and exchanges.
- The Flood Resilience Team at County Hall, led by Ross Marshall and Josh Wells, has been active and supportive, providing 8 head torches and 8 upgraded high visibility jackets, organising Flood Warden Training Courses at County Hall, advising FAG attendee members at the Environment Agency held at Thurgarton Village Hall (see following relevant feedback), and meeting with County Council, Parish Council and FAG representatives on site – see also feedback!
- Thanks to the Parish Council, FAG’s request for improved drainage at Lower Goverton and Gypsy Lane, the roadside ditch on the western side of Station Road (leading towards the level crossing) and an equivalent ditch on the southern side of Gypsy Lane, (which connects with our Eastern Drain), have both been cleared of accumulated sediment and plant material.
- The Parish Council is currently in discussions concerning the diversion of excess surface water from the Goverton hills.
- The Inland Drainage Board has removed a fallen horse chestnut tree trunk from the Eastern Drain, (formerly Old School Drain) where it runs behind St Mary’s churchyard. This was deemed to be their responsibility and therefore incurred no costs to the Church or Parish Council. A fallen tree on a further stretch across the same drain, a little further on, was deemed the responsibility of the land owner. The former constituted a serious flooding risk.

- Severn Trent Water have apparently met FAG's request to check its sewerage system on Main Street and were evidently doing something purposeful but possibly not what our FAG 'specialist' had hoped for. The report from the workforce to enquiring FAG members was that the stretch being investigated was clear!
- Our FAG member's request to NCC Via to address the severely blocked roadside drains which caused near "bow-wave" levels of flooding on Main Street has yet to be addressed. Via is going to "assess" the situation first. They clearly do not consider us capable of making a reliable assessment ourselves!

Key Developments

Environment Agency Open Flood Meeting A meeting arranged by the Environment Agency, inviting all local parishes affected by flooding to bring their concerns and queries, was held at Thurgarton Village Hall and at least three "briefed and primed" FAG members were able to attend and represent the parish. Valuable discussions were held with EA, NCC Flood Resilience, Severn Trent Water and our County Councillor. Attendees benefited most from direct and renewed conversations with influential members of the above organisations. It was absolutely confirmed that the EA only deals with fluvial flooding and such matters as pluvial flooding, safety and welfare of care homes, holiday homes and caravan sites are the domain of others but, informally, EA representatives present indicated that they would urge such parties to prepare flood action plans and procedures.

Parish Council Site Meeting with Ross Marshall This meeting sought by the Parish Council in its desire to progress and support FAG in its efforts to help address significant flooding concerns, was held informally between the PC Chair, a FAG representative, our County Councillor Sue Saddington and Ross Marshall himself.

Key matters discussed included: effective and legal measures of dealing with excess surface storm waters off the Goverton hills; significant new drainage works to alleviate flooding on Station Road; the respective roles of County and District Councils in supporting communities at risk of flooding; the limited scope for natural flood alleviation; the political and financial constraints of ensuring effective planning control and national strategies.

Confirmation that the Chair's idea to deal with the overwhelming of drain excesses from the Goverton hills could be dealt with by additional, approved temporary road signage set up by qualified FAG members and built into the official NCC Agreed Flood Signage Strategy! Ross would like to meet again to further discuss such issues in about a month's time, using FAG as the vehicle.

Significant Setbacks Despite three well and argued letters of objection to the building of four five-bedroomed houses (to be built at almost the highest point of the Upper Goverton hillside) by three FAG members, as well as by those unfortunate residents living below the proposed development, the objection of our District Councillor, Keith Melton, and the first-class case presented by Michael Coombs, our Chair of the PC, at the NSDC Planning Committee meeting, the applications were approved, in spite of the NSDC's loudly declared commitment to address the dangerous, disrupting and distressing situation caused in the Trent Valley by storms Babet to Henk over a period of five months! The voting was split 50/50 but tipped into approval by the casting vote of the committee Chair. This was a serious "own goal" on the District Council's part!

Current FAG/Parish Council Priorities 1) Thank, and engage, with the Trent Valley Drainage Board respecting our own improved drainage proposals to reduce the flooding risk – especially on Station Road. NB the TVDB workforce, at least, are unaware of any cooperation – or even communication – with the other major flooding agencies. Discussions with them are important and would be made more so if joint meetings could be arranged – especially if EA could be included.

2) Thank Ross Marshall and Cllr Sue Saddington for their most helpful discussions with the PC and arrange a date for a PC/FAG meeting that would be mutually convenient. Ross would like to ensure rapid and direct exchange between the two parties which he believes could be best achieved via FAG members.

3) Apply to NCC Flood Resilience to modify the approved flood signage scheme to include flood warning and closure signs to address road flooding in Upper Goverton.

4) Continue the clearance of the Lower Goverton to level crossing ditches and the clearance of under-road connections between the east and west roadside ditches that have been identified by a parish councillor.

5) Formalise the request for Railtrack to ensure that their drain under the level crossing is functional.

6) Express the Council's concern that the NSDC Planning Committee is yet to understand the implications of its own Council's declaration of a Determined Focus on Flooding.