



Watton Town Council

WATTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN DRAINAGE WORKING GROUP

Report for the Town Meeting on 16 April 2019 Work from May 2018 to the present

Introduction

We hope that you have had a chance to look at the posters and see what the Group has been doing on your behalf since we reported to the Town Meeting last year. The posters give a summary of the work.

Achievements

We would like to highlight some achievements:

1. Meeting with the County Council Flood Risk team in July 2018. They have to apply for grants for any works to mitigate the effects of flooding. He told us they had applied for a grant from the Environment Agency to undertake flood mitigation measures in the area but had had no word yet. They clearly did not get the funds last financial year.
2. They have just commissioned the Highways Authority to do a feasibility study of what might help. The result of that is that funds will be sought to do a number of things.
3. First, the cleaning and recording of existing NCC apparatus (gullies, chambers and grips) within the highway. The sites in question will be prioritised based on the feedback the Group gave. It is hoped this work will be carried out by the end of this summer.
4. Second, the Highways engineer will liaise with NCC's Flood team with regard to contacting land owners about the ditches identified that need cleaning. The Group have found out who these landowners are and welcome the initiative from the County Council.
5. Working with Anglian Water on the problems with the foul sewers. Getting their Keep It Clear Campaign to Watton to educate us all on the fact that the main problem with the foul sewers is people putting unflushables down the toilet and fat down the sink. Last summer they visited more than 60 properties that regularly reported blockages to discourage unflushables entering the system. They had a stall at the Carnival in September with a storyteller using a story to tell the children that only pee poo and paper should go down the toilet. Their education team are looking for an opportunity to visit the schools to do more about the science of it all.
6. The surcharging foul sewer in Thetford Road that started the whole investigation was discovered to be due to a piece of bar in the sewer which

had to be removed. It had been allowing unflushables to build up around it and 2 tons were removed before the sewer was flushed all the way to the treatment plant.

7. We continue to make representations on planning applications and to speak in objection when the development is in an area of high flood risk in the town.
8. We are now affiliated to the National Flood Forum, a national charity supporting flooded communities. They have given useful information which we pass on to residents as needed. They also keep us in touch through a bulletin with what is happening elsewhere in the country.

Future Work

1. We need to continue investigating as there is always something new being found out about the systems that serve the town, things often not known to the authorities. Long term residents are a great source of such information.
2. We also need to keep monitoring when work is done by any of the agencies and ask people to report any even minor flooding as this is all evidence.
3. We are fortunate to have access to daily weather records of a weather buff in Watton and can link flooding to actual rainfall which also is good evidence. We can state confidently when flooding occurs in even moderate rainfall and not just in storms like the one in 2016.

Liz Whitcher (Chairman), Resident of Watton since 2010

Nick Creek (Saham Toney Parish Councillor)

Town and District Councillor Keith Gilbert

Alan Nichols, lifelong resident of Saham Toney and Watton

DRAINAGE WORKING GROUP

2017

- Formed on 20/7/17 at the first public meeting for the Neighbourhood Plan when residents raised concerns about a surcharging foul sewer on Thetford Road
- July – November: Surface water flooding also a focus because of June 2016 storm. Planning and research into which agencies are responsible for what
- November: Report to Watton Town Council
- November: Report sent to Breckland Council, County Council and Anglian Water
- December: Town Council received Flood Investigation Report into June 2016 storm from County Council

2018

- January-February: Questionnaire about flooding hand delivered to most of the streets affected by flooding
- 14 February: Met with area manager for Watton from Anglian Water re Thetford Road sewer
- 24 February: Met with weather buff in Watton so we now have access to his rainfall records for any date
- 26 March: Met with Director of Planning at Breckland Council and presented preliminary results from 108 responses to the questionnaire
- 5 April: Met with Area Manager, Flood Risk Manager and Planning Manager at Anglian Water in Norwich and presented the preliminary results from 108 responses to the questionnaire

Problem with unflushables explained

Actions taken by Anglian Water April- December:

- ✓ 2 tons of unflushables taken out of foul sewer between Thetford Road and Watton Waste Water Treatment Works at Threxton. Sewer then flushed out as was the one on Brandon Road
- ✓ Agreed to the Keep It Clear Campaign taking place in Watton
- ✓ July – AW visited more than 60 properties in Watton that regularly complained of blocked drains to explain that unflushables are the reason
- ✓ September – AW had a stall at the Carnival with a storyteller for the children explaining the problems of unflushables. The children loved the three p's that only pee poo and paper go down the toilet.
- ✓ Plans for staff to visit the schools when the school staff say it fits the curriculum

- 9 April: Made a representation re flood risk in relation to Abel's Hares Green development
- 17 April: Report to Annual Town Meeting
- 6 June: Met with officers from the Environment Agency re Watton Brook where all the surface water ends up. They agreed to clear the banks of excess vegetation and this was done in December.
- July: Began walking the ditch system that drains the surface water for much of the town to see whether the ditches were fit for purpose. This is still continuing.
- 9 July: Update meeting with the Area Manager from Anglian Water
- 26 July: Meeting with the Flood Risk team at the County Council
- 30 August: Meeting with Highways Engineer re their surface water system
- 16 September: Anglian Water have a stall at the Carnival
- September – December: Walking the ditches continues
- September: affiliated to the National Flood Forum, a national charity working with flooded communities
- December: Keep It Clear Campaign leaflets delivered with Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaires

2019

- January: Final summary of information from flood questionnaires. 168 residents responded. On 23 June 2016, a total of at least 59 residential properties internally flooded and 112 externally flooded in their garden and/or garage. In addition Cranswick and Exheat on the Thrextan Road Industrial Estate were internally flooded as were 11 businesses on the High Street and one on the New Green Business Park.
- February/March: A letter thanking residents for their responses and an update on progress to date hand delivered.
- January-March: Three more walkabouts with the Highways Engineer preparing a feasibility report on what might be done with their surface water system to mitigate flood risk. Report expected at end of March.
- 27 February: Met with officer from Environment Agency to see if any natural flood defences might help with mitigation of surface flood water flooding

As a result, the Group is focussing on the Bridle Way and working with the County Council officer responsible for the bridge at the top to see if a different type of bridge might stop so much water running down the Bridle Way.