

Report from Drainage Group for Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Meeting on 23 April 2019

Since the last Steering Group meeting on 18 March, the Drainage Group have the following to report:

- 1. Report to Town Meeting on 16 April:** Achievements highlighted and future work for action (reports to be filed in NP file please).
- 2. Letters to residents:** These have all now been delivered or posted. I received two responses. One was from a resident in Vicarage Walk who was internally flooded. He was appreciative of our work and thanked us but also mentioned that he doubted Watton suffered from drain blockages due to unflushables going down the toilet!!! I have asked Chris Wray for information. He is asking the disposal company how many tons they take out from Watton every week!!! We need that information to persuade sceptical residents. The other email was from Paul Cooper in Nelson Court who is a former councillor and mayor of Watton and has years of photos and letters about the flooding problems there. I am going to meet up with him after Easter.
- 3. Update on Feasibility Study by Highways Engineer:** He has reported to the Flood Investigation Team at the County. As well as the work to be done on the highways assets (see Town Meeting Report), Nathan Harris from the Flood Team is going to write to the landowners we have identified whose ditches need clearing out to remind them of their riparian responsibilities. He was on site last week and walked parts of the ditch system with the Highways Engineer. The Group are very pleased that this is happening.
- 4. Anglian Water:** We have learned that they have had a reorganisation so there is a new manager for the Watton area as of 1 April. Her name is Victoria Ray and we are meeting with her and Chris Wray on 8 May. Chris has been very helpful and responsive to questions and information from the Group and we hope to build a similar relationship with Victoria.
For Norfolk Day on 27 July, the local WI are having an event in the Christian Community Centre. They will have displays and talks throughout the day and Jane is going to give one about the NP. I will be there with material about the Drainage Group work and I hope one of the Anglian Water Keep It Clear Campaign will come and give a talk about that as well as having a stall. The AW Education Team are waiting for a call from us to go into the schools to continue getting the message across to the children.
- 5. Bridleway bridge:** Keith and I met with a bridge engineer from the County on site on 29 March. Previously, Keith had been to the Bridleway while it was raining to see how the water in the ditches was flowing, where the runoff

comes off the field and how it gets down the Bridleway. The ditches were running well and water was coming off the field and over the bridge. Puddles form in the Bridleway and, if there is enough rain, these join up to make a stream.

The Engineer explained that a grid through which the water would fall into the ditch would not be acceptable as dogs and horses would not walk across it. After much discussion he decided that raising the bridge with a ramp on either side was the best option. Hopefully the water would flow into the ditches on either side of the new bridge. The problem is finding funds for such a bridge. We would also have to monitor how it was working to mitigate flood risk down the Bridleway.

6. Speaking at Planning Committee about flood risk on proposed

developments: Keith and I were ready to speak on the one for 9 dwellings at 121A Brandon Road at the meeting on 8 April. This is in an area at high risk of flooding. On Keith's advice I emailed the usher to say my report contained technical information and it would be helpful if the members had it in front of them as I was speaking. I asked how that could be done. Within 45 minutes of my email being sent, Keith received an email from Breckland saying the application had been withdrawn to go to a subsequent meeting. You may remember that the Town Council made a representation through the Drainage Group in which we requested that the Planning Officer consult the LLFA even though they technically don't comment on developments of less than 10 dwellings. (When the application was for 12 and then 10 dwellings, they had registered many concerns.) That did happen and the submission from the LLFA on the website advised the LPA of lots of things they were concerned about. The Planning Officer's report recommended permission and delegating to the Planning Officer the task of dealing with the LLFA's objections. He had not included in his report anything about those objections. I think we scared them!!!

- 7. Future Work:** As well as the tasks we will continue with (see Town Meeting Report), we will work on policies relating to flooding for the NP. I think it would be helpful to meet with Chris Blows who is the lead on policy making for the Saham Toney NP and Nick Creek is a good bridge to him. Chris has already written those for flooding for Saham and we can ask if we can use some of those.

Liz Whitcher
Chairman
Drainage Working Group
22 April 2019