

UPLYME PARISH COUNCIL

Report of Flooding Working Party August 2012

The WP was set up by the PC meeting on 11th July 2012 “to collect information and co-ordinate with local residents, KG V, Village Hall and public bodies over getting an effective flood relief scheme”.

The WP has written to all local authorities concerned, such as The Environment Agency, DCC Highways, and EDDC, asking them to take notice of the formation of the WP and to co-operate with it. It has separately written to Highways, informing them (again) of the under capacity pipes and culverts that are considered the prime problems causes of the flooding.

DCC Highways and The Environment Agency set up a series of surgeries across Devon to discuss the problems with residents, although UPC were not directly informed of them, Cllrs Whiting and Garland went to the meeting in The Guildhall, Axminster, and verbally discussed the problems with staff of both Environment Agency and DCC Highways. Unfortunately EA was only represented by the Exeter based staff, whereas Uplyme now comes under the Blandford office in Dorset, as part of the Lyme Valley. (The tributaries of the Lym are managed by EDDC, contact Mr Keith Steel). The EA were mainly discussing their flood warning systems, and there did not appear to be such a scheme for short and steep valleys such as the Lym, but rather flood plains such as the Axe. They did say that the Agency was likely to do a survey of the extent of flooding, and would welcome photographs and information. DCC Highways took note of all the areas in Uplyme that had either flooded or been in grave danger of flooding e.g. the Village Hall).

There was a visit to the Parish by our local MP, Neil Parish, who offered whatever help he could give. Cllr Knight offered a further £500 from his local fund to pay for the emergency clearance of the stream at Venlake.

The WP had an offer from Mrs Ostler at the last meeting to join the WP as a co-opted member from the public, which the WP has decided to take up. It also has requests for KG V and the Village Hall for their members to be on the WP, but it is considered that at this stage, the WP would consult them as and when necessary as some of the many third parties affected. WP felt that it might be better served by co-opting specialists to talk to the government agencies, such as a geologist, a planner experienced in flood works or someone experienced with dealing with local government.

The WP appealed for information at the last UPC meeting and in the Parish News. It has some photos but would welcome more of the extent and ferocity of the flooding. It has also taken photos for the on-going planning of flood prevention measures. It has visited the major areas of flooding. It is gathering information of local plans of physical problems and of landowners and properties affected. It is hoped to be able to discuss with EA a more accurate floodplan for Uplyme, as some areas within the current boundaries did not flood (such as the proposed school site) or were not likely to flood (although having to pay high insurance costs or being in danger of not getting insurance).

Insurers have been dealing with the problems, and have moved some residents out of their properties for 3 or 6 months. No cases are known of insurers refusing to face up to their responsibilities. However, the WP cannot take direct part in any riparian or insurance disputes, but can try to direct anyone so affected towards sources of help. Neither does it have the funding to carry out the flood prevention works that are necessary, but will try to get the parties concerned to come to some agreement. It does not appear that DCC have applied for emergency help under the Bellwin Rules, but our MP did think the Environment Secretary, Caroline Spellman, might have to find additional funds.

However, such funding would only apply to schemes agreed as necessary, such as additional culverts across the B3165 or Venlake, or emergency drainage channels along KG V land. The WP will therefore try to get some agreement as to what measures are necessary with the EA and DCC Highways. This will not be instantaneous.

DCC Highways have already been informed that ditch clearance works are already necessary, and drainage pipes blocked, but without any action to date. By contrast, DCC footpaths have already done a lot of work on FP 10 at Venlake, although the WP has expressed concern over certain aspects of these works.

The WP will continue its work, and again asks the public for any information they may have, that might be useful to the WP.

Cllr Peter Whiting.