

GRENDON PARISH COUNCIL

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Community Meeting - Minutes

Monday 21st October 2024 at 7.30pm in Grendon Village Hall, Main Road, Grendon, NN7 1JW

28 Members of the public in attendance.

Cllr M Griffiths and Cllr T Partridge Underwood; apologies received from Cllr J P Carr.

Kier Transportation representing NNC Highways.

4 councillors Grendon Parish Council.

1. Welcome

The objectives of the meeting were clarified; the purpose being:

- to have an open dialogue to reduce the risk going forward
- find workable solutions
- to relay experiences
- not to allocate blame
- to improve working and stakeholder partnerships in order to best plan for the future

The above objectives will be formalised by the Working Group for future reference

Present:

Ziggy Westphal - Emergency Planning Officer NNC

Tyler Bennett - Emergency Planning Officer and Line Manager NNC

Ben Thornelly - Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager (Lincs and Northants) Environment Agency

John O'Neill - Partnerships and strategic overview Team Leader Environment Agency

Vice Chair Calum Dow - Grendon Parish Council

Cllr James Lister - Grendon Parish Council

Sylvia Tilaks - Clerk, Grendon Parish Council

2. Flood reports and experiences

The aim of this section of the presentation was to build a full picture of how the floods materialised and the impacts on residents.

Updates from Flood Wardens - Cllr Dow and Tony Knuff

- 2012 Section 19 flood report:
 - recommended some flood defences including the maintenance of Grendon Brook, the clearing of detritus in order for Grendon Brook to manage the flow of water and limit flood risk;
 - the clearing of vegetation from Grendon Brook was recommended to be done up to a prescribed point only as a means of slowing flood waters;
 - property level flood defences were for the front elevations only;
 - pathfinder 1 grant application made by Grendon Parish Council; no road closure signs were able to be provided, only sandbags;
- The 2024 flood came from across the fields between upper and lower Grendon leaving the properties vulnerable to flooding through the rear aspect.
- On 22.09.24 the Grendon Flood Warden met with MAC Ltd (consultants employed to complete the Section 19 assessment). The site visit was to enable the collection of information for the Section 19 flood response report.
- This report is aimed to be published 6-8 weeks after the assessment.
- The site visit assessment of the banks and fields showed evidence of:
 - Blockages along stretches of the bank of Grendon Brook from fallen trees
 - The stream, fields, pathways, hedges and fencing awash with straw stubble
 - Evidence of damming from the stubble being washed into the waterway.
 - The water build up from the dams led to a release of a large wave of water travelling across 2-3 fields running parallel with Grendon Brook, entering Main Road and Blackmile Lane.

- The water continued further down Main Road, hitting a further dam (hedge) causing its return back into Blackmile Lane leading to a double flood.

Reports/investigations from residents

Timetable of events 22.09.24 provided by a Black Mile Lane resident:

- Early evening the water levels of Grendon Brook were seen to be at the lower end of the 'red area' classification;
- 8.15pm levels began rising rapidly;
- 8.45pm the water had risen by 620mm in one half hour interval;
- 8.49pm the water at the bridge road reached 49.570m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum);
- Underside of bridge road bed height measurement limit is 50m AOD;
- 9pm, approximately, 8-10" of water flowed down the road as a bow wave;
- 10pm approximately the water reached over waist height at the entrance to Blackmile Lane;
- Fire and Rescue arrived at approximately 10pm;
- 10.30pm surface water run off from 81 Main Road] into Main Road and Blackmile Lane;
- 2am Monday 23rd September the flooding reached its peak: stream level (riverlevels.uk) 49.950;
- The flood warning came through from EA at approximately 3am;
- The strength and speed of the water flow was such that it was a danger to life;
- The water under the measuring bridge had some capacity (0.43m) which proves that Grendon Brook had scope to keep the water within the water course.
- The flood spanned three days, Sunday 22nd through to Tuesday 24th September.

Video and CCTV footage, taken from approximately 9pm, was shown detailing the depth and strength of the water flow. Residents discussed the speed of the flood, identifying that "it happened within minutes", coming into the properties at such speed it was too fast for homeowners to move belongings. Photographs were shared showing a clear flattening of vegetation at the bank of one area of Grendon Brook, suggesting that the majority of overtopping occurred within a @50 metre stretch of one field. A map of Grendon Brook and outlying fields was presented showing that the areas with overgrown vegetation and fallen trees were above the areas cleared annually by the Environment Agency. The combination of overgrown vegetation higher along Grendon Brook and congestion from debris, harvest hay and stubble led to dams, leading to water building up causing breakthrough points for the flood water, exacerbating the speed and strength of the flood (see Appendix A).

The Environment Agency responded to the presentation and discussion, advising:

- Flood warnings had not been triggered because the trigger level had not been reached at monitoring stations.
- That surface water (pluvial) flooding may have been a primary cause.
- The flood risk is greater at Lower End due to the large catchment area of water surrounding Grendon (Yardley Hastings, Denton, Bozeat, Easton Maudit).
- That flood levels reached 500mm in properties in September 2024 compared to a 300mm level in 2012.

3. External agency/stakeholder engagement

The Environment Agency (EA)

- Surface and river water in conjunction increased the level of flooding on this occasion.
- Historical analysis of flooding, recorded over several decades, showed that Northants had been affected by floods for many of those years.
- Climate change is having an impact on rainfall.
- Average monthly winter rainfall 100-150mm.
- 10 out of 12 months in 2024 had above average rainfall.
- September 2024 recorded 350mm of rainfall with almost 150mm falling over three days:
 - 57mm 22.09.24
 - 35mm 23.09.24
 - 45mm 24.09.24.
 - Previous record with similar rainfall was in 1867.
- Prolonged periods of intense rainfall have meant that the drainage systems are unable to manage.
- The forecast for winter 2024/5 is average rainfall.

- Flood comparison: 2024 and 2012.
The Yardley Hastings East and North reservoirs didn't fill in 2012 but they did in September 2024 with the emergency spillways needing to be used.
- Section 19 trigger has been met with the September 2024 flood and whilst recommendations are not always provided on the Section 19 report the EA will endeavour to persuade NNC and MAC Ltd (consulting firm to include them).
- This community flooded in 1980's, 1998, 2012, 2020 and now 2024. The EA:
 - Are investigating if the overflow from the reservoirs had an impact on the flooding.
 - Requested copies of the Grendon Parish Council draft flood report and the resident's presentation in order to collate data for analysis.
 - Were in agreement that the direction and source of the flooding ties in with the EA topography of those fields becoming a saturated catchment.
 - Classes the 'breach' of water from Grendon Brook as an 'overtopping of the waterways'.
 - Advised that the draft flood report should be submitted in response to the Solar Farm consultation.

Feedback from the audience included:

- The proposed solar farm may increase the risk of flooding. The EA stated that they will be statutory consultees if the development falls within flood zone boundaries.
- Request for submissions/feedback as a consultee on the Solar Farm development would include the information and data relating to the recent flooding.
- That the EA will table Grendon and Easton Maudit flood risk at the next planning assessment.
- Request for another monitoring station to be installed so that there is a way to ensure adequate time for the residents to prepare.
- Residents stated they would rather have a flood warning that's incorrect than none meaning they have no time to act to save property and belongings.
The EA suggested: additional tolemetry upstream and downstream so that monitoring stations are better equipped to identify flood risk and issue timely warnings; potential for temporary monitoring stations.

Who are the Responsible Agencies:

The answer depends upon the cause of the flooding:

1. Fluvial (waterways) flooding: The Environment Agency
2. Pluvial (ground and surface water) flooding: Local or Unitary Council (North Northants Council for Grendon)
3. Sewerage (drains/baths/toilets) flooding: the water companies (Anglian Water for Grendon)
4. Riparian owners responsibility: the person/people, with watercourses on, next to or under their property, have the responsibility for maintenance of these watercourses. This includes flooding from developments where developers may have to pay flood damages.

North Northamptonshire Council - Emergency Planning

- North Northants Emergency Planning are responsible for preparing for and responding to floods and disasters.
- As a result of climate change the forecast is that the wettest days will get up to 50% wetter in the decades to come. Last month showed record rainfall with 3 September's worth of rain in 3 days.
- They try to mitigate issues when they come and offer services to build back resilience locally afterwards.
- They believe in a joined-up approach when responding to flooding.
- They work with flood wardens, would like to see more flood wardens, and help groups to develop community emergency plans.
- They support households by offering emergency plans encouraging neighbourhood help within the community because evacuations are often not the most suitable form of community help.
- They work with other external agencies to formulate flood plans for the county.
- The team offered support with the above to Grendon Parish Council and the wider community.

Feedback from the audience included:

- The flood led to the need for road closures.
- Residents experienced verbal and physical abuse from passing drivers ignoring the road closure.
- Drivers fording the floodwater led to tidal waves of floodwater being pushed back into the surrounding houses.
- Requests being made for the road closures to be manned by police in an emergency.
- A request for the police to return to check on neighbourhoods, especially given the number of empty properties.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The EA suggested supplying road closure signs which could be done with a pathfinder grant. ● The EA suggested that residents refer to the Blue Pages: https://bluepages.org.uk/ ● The Ward Councillors advised that they would follow up with the police and crime units encouraging them to become involved in protecting the community. ● Flood Re Scheme www.floodre.co.uk - If your home is more likely to flood, then insurers may need to charge higher insurance premiums; Flood Re is there to help.
<p>4.</p>	<p>Plans and proposals</p> <p>1. Flood defence proposals: Would a berm on the lower field be possible so the water floods the field rather than flooding the road, lane and houses? Suggestion - the digging of a trench, materials from which create a berm approximately 3-4' high with a built-in valve to release flood water at a controlled rate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. The EA would need to read the section 19 report to decide on this project's viability. b. Government grant funding to support large scale developments like this would be unlikely given that only 12 properties were flooded. c. Extensive research would need to be undertaken to assess any potential increase in risk. d. The normal response to flood damage of this volume is to improve property flood resilience. e. They can investigate expanding the existing reservoir facilities which would also help combat any increases due to climate change. f. Look at building reservoirs closer to the flood areas. g. Additional measures could include: increased maintenance of the water course; a different maintenance regime within the entire catchment; working with NNC and landowners. <p>2. Agreed actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ward councillors will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. endeavour to push for recommendations to come out of the Section 19 report with additional mitigation measures to be implemented as a result and ii. encourage more joined up working. b. GPC will continue to <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. push for mitigation measures to be forthcoming. ii. increase engagement with stakeholders regarding emergency plans. iii. establish a clear understanding of the outcomes from the Section 19 report. iv. set up a dedicated page on the Grendon Parish Council website with all documents published including the draft report, links to the blue pages and other reports and information. v. Share the above on the Grendon Parish Council database. vi. Encourage villagers throughout the village to provide evidence of flooding outside lower end. vii. The council will send out working party meeting dates to NNC and EA in addition to other stakeholders where necessary. c. NNC to provide: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. support with community emergency plans and ii. property resilience presentations/measures. d. The EA will: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. share their presentation with the council including the range of links to access support. ii. arrange for the Asset Performance maintenance colleagues to visit the council in order to discuss reporting of fallen and overgrown trees that are not being cleared in Grendon Brook.
<p>5.</p>	<p>Areas of investigation Discuss options to improve flood response in the event of future events e.g. more effective closure of Main Road. Establish available and necessary flood defence measures and funding available.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Any other business Cllr Lister asked for residents to continue to feed back to the council with any further issues or ideas because continued community engagement will be vital improving outcomes from this work and to limit future flooding.</p>

7. The date of next meeting

Public information evening

Presentation from NNC Emergency Planning on household flood resilience and measures available to improve flood defences. 7.30pm, Grendon Village Hall, 06.11.24.

Appendix A:



Figure SEQ Figure * ARABIC 6: Map showing location of obstructions, overtopping points and flow path of floodwater. Map produced with the kind assistance of P. Goffey. © C. Dow