

Village Flooding Report 4th February '24

Further to flooding in the area on 20th October '23 which impacted Sweffling it was decided at a Parish Council meeting on the 9th January '24 to undertake some investigation to understand the reasons for the flooding better and see if the village could be better prepared for further periods of heavy rain. This involved a walk around the village with other homeowners, some of whom had lived in the village 30+ years and joining a Flood Meeting organised by Framlingham Town Council held on Sunday 21st '24.

On Saturday 20th January a group 8 villagers, most of whom had been impacted by the flooding, walked around the village, covering all the roads, lanes, fields and paths that regularly have water flowing through them, known as The Gull. From the village centre we walked past the Sweffling Hut and then along the footpath alongside The Gull before walking across the fields to join the top of Holdans Lane. We then walked down Holdans Lane to the centre of the village before tracing The Gull out of the village to the point where the run off water from 'Dogs Off '. We then completed the tour by walking up 'Dogs Off ' lane.

Below I have listed my observations with comments for potential remedy - this is my opinion only and should be qualified.

Observations:

- The silt build up on the bed of The Gull alongside the Village Hut was very high with minimal difference between the bed level and the adjoining road. There was also minimal run off areas for water running down the road to enter the Gull. The Gull at this point contained much debris from storm damage, but there was also evidence of overgrown vegetation.

SA: Clearing the debris and clearing a channel would have a significant impact.

- On the footpath after the Hut the bank was being severely eroded, threatening to undercut the adjacent owner's drive.

SA: Moving the build-up of sand to the other side of The Gull would divert the water and protect the drive.

- As the path follows the Gull, the sides were quite high and seemed to be working well. There was evidence of a dam being created which would slow water down but this was clearly causing the water level by the first bridge to be very high and flooding the path when heavy rains occur.

SA: The dam appears to be slowing water down but it would be better if this were moved west of the first bridge. The field in this area would provide the capacity to store significant amounts of water should the land owner allow it.

- Walking further west the Gull seems to be coping with water flow and is dry most of the year.
- Walking across the field to Holdans lane there were small streams running off the fields down to the Gull and evidence of ponds in the woods which would hold water.

- Walking down Holdans Lane back to the village centre it was clear that the run off channels from the road into the ditch were inadequate for the job and the ditch was either too shallow or non-existent. The verges off the tarmac showed significant evidence of damage by vehicles, impacted by the soft soil and water runoff. This will clearly become an issue , if it isn't already, for cars damaging tyres as the edge of the road surface becomes exposed.
- Drainage on the road was filled with silt to the road level preventing water run off making it into the ditch and pipework that had been installed . This was repeated for the length of the road and clearly needs substantial work to make it fit for purpose.

SA: This work is beyond the scope of a village working party and needs a substantial engineering effort to resolve.

- The evidence of sand build-up from the flood was still in evidence as we progressed to the centre of the village. The main pipework running the Gull under the road showed evidence of damage, bank erosion and significant quantities of sand build up.
- We didn't follow the Gull through the houses on its bank and picked it up at the junction with Rectory Road. The fields had recently been cleared and the contractor had cleared the bank sides.
- As the Gull progressed to meet 'Dogs Off', the pipework running under the road was clearly very silted up and limiting the amount of water flow.

SA: This area is desperate to be cleaned, including the pipes and culvert.

- Walking up "Dogs Off" the fields have clearly been impacted by the recent flooding with significant patches of sand on the fields. The water run off had eroded the field edges and prohibited the water from reaching the ditches designed for water run off. Further up the water running off the fields on the north side had washed away the path causing significant damage.

SA: this looks to be an issue for the landowner to manage

Summary: It is clear in my opinion that some immediate problems could be resolved by a small working party in the village over a weekend. This would be the regular type of maintenance that we may have to accept is part of a long-term solution. Some work would require the permission and help from relevant landowners.

There is also significant maintenance and system re design that is required which would require a professional contractor and the associated government agencies.

Framlingham Town Council Flood Meeting - Sunday 21st January '24

Mike Smytheson and myself attended this meeting organised by the newly formed Resilience Committee, a working group of the Town Council.

There were approximately 200 members of the public in attendance (the meeting was oversubscribed and transmitted online in parallel) and a panel of local representatives including ;

Lee Parrot - a consultant in flood management recently hired by Framlingham Town Council

Matt Hullace - Manages Flood and Water Management team - County Council

Aeron Dixie - Flood Risk Management - Environmental Agency

Will Todd - Flood Risk Management Environmental Agency - works on projects to ensure resilience

Vynce Langdon Morris

Ben McFarland - Suffolk Wildlife Trust

Owen Gray Ward Councillor Framlingham

Stephen Burroughs

Clive Eastward - Chair of Council

Nick Gawker - Town Council

The meeting lasted over 2 hours with Lee Parrot initially explaining the context of the report she was going to work on before the meeting was opened to cover some pre selected questions. Interesting background on the flood risks and how the October flood fell into the category of a 1 in a 1000-year event , she suspects this will need to be revised.

In summary Framligham is suffering from the same issues as Sweffling, excessive water run off from fields as farmers change their farming methods to plough land much less. This water then runs into a water system that is undermaintained. Increased house building is a contributory factor and one that central government are implementing by running roughshod over local planning teams.

I am waiting on the minutes from the meeting which I will forward in due course along with a promised link to a recording of the meeting.