

# Beckford (with Grafton)Village Flood Group Newsletter

Issue 1 November 2008

## Who is the Newsletter for ?

Hopefully – **everybody!** If you are unlucky enough to flood, you might be reassured that something is being done to improve things & to try to make sure it doesn't happen again. If you haven't been in touch with the Group we still **NEED** you to tell us how you were affected so that we can try to seek solutions for your problems.

If you're lucky & not at risk, you can help reduce the threat to the village by making sure that the Agencies know where the problems are & by supporting the Flood Warden scheme. A list of contact details & Agency responsibilities is on the back page.

If you think that if you live in a house at risk of flooding, then flooding is a likely outcome, perhaps an insight into some of the reasons why the flooding is now so widespread & regular will encourage you to support our efforts to improve the village infrastructure.

## Group Strategy

- To investigate & establish the root cause of the flooding within the Parish of Beckford & identify the key measures & solutions that are required to mitigate against further risk.
- To work in partnership with The Parish Council to achieve our objectives doing everything possible to alleviate the situation.
- To draw attention to our plight & vigorously lobby the various Agencies concerned as well as National & Local Government for support in obtaining a comprehensive flood alleviation programme for the Parish.

## **The Groups objectives for Autumn / Winter 2008**

- To make the watercourses & ditches fit for purpose so the water stays **in** them.
- To make sure the road drains & gullies are clean & serviceable so that the roads don't flood.
- To establish whether the culverts beneath the A46 are adequate for the volume of water they are expected to carry.
- To establish why the Ashton Road at Grafton floods so badly & reduce the problem.
- To ensure the sewers are fit for purpose.
- To restore the bund which protected the Manor House for several decades.
- To aid the completion of the Parish Emergency Strategy.
- To communicate what we are doing to the community.
- To continue to work nationally & locally to provide effective solutions.



Grafton – Ashton Road under water

## The Group

The Beckford Village Flood Group (BVFG) formed in January 2008 when National, County, District & Local Agencies called a Public Meeting at Beckford Village Hall to discuss the flooding which affected the village in July 2007. Wychavon District Council led the call, needing local insight into the flooding to develop & complete the Flood Plan as directed by the Government.

There are currently 8 members representing the views & aspirations of the Parish including the 50 village homes which either flooded or were at risk of flooding.

### What needed to be done?

Wychavon District Council(WDC) have no responsibility & no budget to deal with flooding or alleviation. WDC developed a flood alleviation scheme as a result of 1998 floods for Little Beckford but the scheme never went ahead because of a lack of local support. In 2007 they needed the experiences of everyone who was affected by flooding to create Flood Action Plans. The Severn Trent sewers had backed up & caused flooding in some homes. Numerous watercourses & ditches were silted up & congested & had burst their banks causing flooding which had travelled across fields into homes & over roads. Many of these watercourses had not been maintained for decades, & in some cases ownership wasn't known or was disputed. Some culverts carrying the flood water beneath carriageways appeared to be of inadequate size. Protective bunds had eroded. Roads had been built up to a level where kerbs had become sunken allowing water to flow over them. Road drains had become silted up & blocked. Drains had collapsed beneath the ground. Hillside properties had flooded as a result of 'run off' from higher ground. Lanes with adverse cambers which failed to direct the water to the drain side verges.

### What have we done ?

We canvassed on behalf of WDC to ensure that the Flood Plan was as meaningful & accurate as possible, particularly in respect of the most vulnerable communities. Steve Jordan, Head of Environmental Services thanks the Group & the respondents for the "helpful comments which have been taken on board". As a result of Group intervention Severn Trent have carried out a major survey & modelling project on the sewers in the vicinity of Main Street & The Manor, identifying a number of issues. The Group has now collated data to have a similar survey carried out at Little Beckford. The Group has worked with Wychavon District Council to identify & communicate with Riparian owners to have the watercourses & ditches cleared & made fit for purpose. The majority of watercourses & ditches have now been 'improved' thanks to the cooperation & efforts of the Landowners & Riparian owners. We have campaigned for joined up action from District & County Councils & encouraged the Highways Agency to carry out a study of the culverts at Little Beckford. Many of the residents feel that they create the backlog of water which causes up to 16 homes to be at risk of flooding. In September, thanks to the support of Sir Michael Spicer & Harriett Baldwin, the Highways Agency commissioned a Hydrologic Survey to establish the cause of the flooding. The Group hope that the outcome will be a strategic solution to protect the whole community. The residents of the Manor House properties working with local landowners hope to re-establish the 'bund' which protected the properties from the 1950's to the late 1990's. The County Highways have raised kerbs at the entrance to properties in Back Lane & engaged in a campaign to clear silted up road drains.

### What still needs to be done ?

The improvements in the Flood Defence Plan need to be identified & supported. There is work to do to encourage Severn Trent to continue their Survey to include Little Beckford & the isolated properties who feed into the Little Beckford system. There are still ditches to be 'owned' & cleared, & a buttress in the Washbourne to be removed. We need to find active, able people in the wider community who are able to focus on the risk to others in an emergency and support the flood warden. Wychavon District Council needs support in their annual programme of the fitness of watercourses & ditches. When the outcome of the Highways Agency survey is known, the Group needs to be in a position to effectively promote the views of the community in any multi-agency strategy at Little Beckford. Once a solution is put forward, if appropriate, we will canvass for it to happen **before** the next flood threat – not after it. There is a lot to be done - & we need more people to become involved to make sure that it is.

**Everybody who flooded, was at risk, or has an interest in, or cares about someone who did has a stake in our success.**



\*\*\*\*\***WANTED**\*\*\*\*\*

**Required in all areas of Beckford, Little Beckford & Grafton,  
willing & able  
Assistant Flood Wardens.**

**To assist the Flood Warden in the case of immanent threat of flooding in accordance with the  
Parish Council Emergency Strategy.**

**Active, enthusiastic, available, fresh air loving people, own Wellies an advantage.**

**Duties 'may' include delivery of small numbers of 'filled' sandbags, helping to convey the  
vulnerable to safety & providing support & reassurance in the event of flooding.**

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### ***Little Beckford & the culverts***

One of the biggest issues the Group has tackled is that of the culverts at Little Beckford. Some 16 properties are at risk from flood water which is held back at the culverts by the A46 & the old A435.

These culverts which are separated by only a few yards belong to two different Agencies, the one under the 'old' road being County Council owned, the one under the A46, belonging to the Highways Agency. Councillor Adrian Hardman has repeatedly voiced the opinion that something needs to be done to alleviate the threat of flooding at Little Beckford.

The Highways Agency (HA) proved more difficult. On 13<sup>th</sup> July 2008, having been unable to open up a line of communication with them, Harriet Baldwin PPC for South Worcestershire intervened & on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2008, was able to report that the H. A. had commissioned a Hydrological Survey & that **"the modelling will address the flooding risk, taking into account the hydraulic capacity of the ditch and the Local Authority culvert, and assess whether the existing Highways Agency culvert is of sufficient size and suitable cross section to deal with expected flows"**.

The Survey commenced during the second week in September & is expected to be completed, with recommendations during December 2008. Steve Jordan, Head of Environmental Services at Wychavon District Council recently said in response to the survey, **"Wychavon DC is and will continue to do all it can to support and protect it's residents from future flooding and in doing so will look at all options. The process we are following has been clearly stated to both the Parish Council and the Beckford Flood Working Group, and where possible, subject to funding and technicalities we will try to bring about improvements."**

The watercourse has now been cleared thanks to cooperation between the various landowners responsible for the ditch & the land it borders, so the culverts are now the prime objective. The group does not presume to know what the outcome will be, but we remain confident there **will** be a strategic solution – an option to protect all of the threatened properties, so that individual families don't feel the need to cope on their own. The Group will fight to ensure that the delivery of solutions takes place in a timely manner to reduce the impact on people's wellbeing.



**Little Beckford culvert in spate – 03/08  
condition**



**Normal winter**

## Who's who? & what do they do?

The **Highways Agency** – via **Amey Mouchel** are responsible for the A46T locally, between Teddington Hands & Evesham. Amey Mouchel, who's local base is at Tewkesbury are the contractors responsible for works & maintenance & they can be contacted on 01684 614000 to report blocked carriageway drains debris or flooding. Out of hours 0121 254 1300.

Other roads in the Parish, ie. the lanes in the villages & around the hill are the responsibility of **Worcestershire County Council - Highways Department**. This includes the whole of the carriageway inclusive of the verges between the hedgerows/field boundaries. To report blocked drains, & flooding they can be contacted via the Worcestershire Hub on 01386 565000 or via email at [evesham.shop@wychavon.gov.uk](mailto:evesham.shop@wychavon.gov.uk) contact with the Hub is audited & will illicit a response.

**Wychavon District Council** are committed to trying to make things better for the community, but they have no statutory responsibility, although they do have the power to ensure landowners keep their ditches & watercourses clear. At this time they have no budget to carry out new flood alleviation works. Their focus is on working with Parishes to develop Flood Action Plans which will identify what can be done and who should do it. They are currently working up a scheme to provide limited funding to Parish Councils to help with schemes that provide protection for multiple properties. Also contactable via the Hub, as above.

**Severn Trent Water** – concerned with foul water & sewage & the infrastructure which conveys it, which is all too often compromised during flooding, causing sewage to back up into gardens & homes. The Severn Trent emergency number is 0800 783 4444.

The **Parish Council** are the best way to introduce Flood issues to the District & County Councils via their interaction with the locally elected representatives at their regular Meetings. Locally accountable, they all commit their time voluntarily to making our community a better place to live.

The **Lengthsman** is a new post, employed by the County Council & managed locally via the Parish Clerk. Their role is to support the maintenance of the County Council Highways – but not the Highways Agency roads, so not the A46. This includes clearing gullies & grates, digging out blocked gullies, advising landowners of blockages on their frontages, removing vegetation, tidying footways & other works as directed.

The **Flood Warden**, is a volunteer, currently, Bill Brooks from the BVFG, who co-ordinates Wychavon District Councils Flood Strategy, as it applies to Beckford/Grafton. Given the nature of the task, particularly as it applies to Beckford & Little Beckford, where parts of the village are quickly isolated from each other, it requires the support of a number of Assistant Wardens to deliver the emergency action required at times of highest risk. The role includes offering practical assistance including the distribution of sand-bags etc, & provision of the Emergency Strategy – assisting with providing support to the vulnerable & potential hostelling of evacuees etc. The Flood Warden can be contacted on 01386 881312 / 07785 905556

The **Environment Agency**, who most people think have a big say.....are only really concerned with Main Rivers & whilst they provide expert advice to the other Agencies, they're not really very interested in Beckford as things currently stand.

The **Beckford Village Flood Group** – here to help if we can. Chair, Bill Brooks, Jubilee Cottage, Back Lane, Beckford, 01386 881312, 07785 905556 contact us over any flood related issues & to ensure that you are on the Emergency Contact list if **YOU** are at risk.

The **Village Web Site**, which, it is hoped, in the event of flooding will be an integral part of the Emergency Strategy - <http://www.beckford-village.org/floodcommittee/index.php>

**National Flood Forum** –<http://www.floodforum.org.uk/> - “does what it says on the tin”