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**Pang Valley Flood Forum/Pangbourne Flood Group**

**Flooding Update**

**Storm Henk** – A review

Well - 2024 arrived with a deluge rather than a bang! On the 4th January we had a rude welcome to the New Year. Storm Henk arrived and with it some 34mm of rain recorded at the rain gauge in Yattendon!

Much of West Berkshire was badly affected by flooding following this downpour. Pangbourne, however, has been very lucky in comparison with other areas of the county, with only 4 properties internally flooded - although I would like to think that all the hard work that has been done on improving our flood resilience since the floods of 2007 and 2013/2014, has also contributed to this.

**Sulham Brook**

The Sulham Brook rose dramatically and reached above the level of the bottom girder of the A329 bridge. This is a key point for the Floodwardens as it means the water cannot flow freely under the bridge and starts to back up, getting higher and higher.

Ed and Stephen opened the sluices at Purley Hall canal (with permission of the landowner) and the spillway into the field north of the A329 (see photo) was further cut by Ed, which allowed the water levels to drop somewhat and to flow away safely and keep below the critical level. This meant the eastern end of Pangbourne avoided any property flooding.

Being able to lower the water in the Purley Hall canal gives additional capacity for water coming downstream, and takes some of the pressure off the branch of Sulham Brook alongside Sulham Lane. In effect we are splitting the Sulham Brook in two which is helping to keep the levels in the main stream by Sulham Lane below the top of the bank.

We are very grateful to the owners of Purley Hall for allowing us to operate the sluices in this way to the benefit of local residents.

Ensuring that the Sulham Brook is able to get away freely once it has flowed north of the A329 is also very important and keeping debris/litter and other rubbish out of the channel to the east of Bourne Road is vital.

**River Pang**

The Pang rose to a very high level as well but the works in the Thames Water site at the western end of Pangbourne also helped to prevent flooding of the Moors this time around. The Natural Flood Management projects we (the Pang Valley Flood Forum) have implemented further upstream on the Englefield, Marlston and Bucklebury Estates may have helped to slow the flow of the Pang this time too. See <https://www.floodalleviation.uk/projects/>

The level was high behind Willows Court, with water lapping near to one ground floor property, but no actual internal flooding. Some of the garages did get flooded, but this flooding was due more to the rainfall and surface water that would normally collect in the area in front of the garages and then be discharged into the Pang, being unable to flow away due to the already high level of the Pang.

The road bridge over the Pang, that connects Waterside Court to the main A329 Shooters Hill, was flooded and flowing quite quickly across into the Thames, which caused issues for a few days for the residents of the properties on the eastern side of the bridge. This is where the Pang joins the Thames, but when the Thames gets really high, it backs up here and prevents the Pang from flowing away, causing flooding of the wharf bridge.

**River Thames**

The Thames reached very high levels this time and went on the “Flood Warning” on the 5th Jan which lasted for 4 days.

Unfortunately, the Swan Inn has been flooded internally from groundwater coming up from the Thames, as have two adjacent properties. We extend our sympathies to them all. Adventure Dolphin also had water ingress on the ground floor, seeping past their flood door.

We are now working with West Berkshire Council to see if we can secure the newly announced government Flood Resilience grants for these properties which will go towards their clean up and reparation costs.

So, looking back, I think all the hard work done in terms of trying to reduce our flood risk since the previous floods has definitely helped to make a difference. We understand the flooding mechanisms much better and are, to a degree, able to have a bit of control over the flow of water.

However, every flood is different. You just don’t know if you are going to get something that throws a spanner in the works – like a fallen tree or two in just the wrong place – which causes the waters to flow where there shouldn’t or overtop due to the obstruction. We are also facing the situation where we WILL HAVE MORE INTENSE RAINFALL EVENTS and MORE FLOODING and we need to be prepared.

1. Advance warning is key – Sign up for Flood alerts with the EA’s Floodline 0345 9881188 or <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>
2. Prepare your own Flood Plan <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/personal-flood-plan>
3. Have property Protection measures in place BEFORE it looks like it’s going to flood. <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding/protect-your-property>
4. Check what is happening with the levels on the rivers by looking at the dashboard on the PVFF website <https://www.floodalleviation.uk/dashboard/>

Finally, I would like to thank my other two Flood Wardens - Stephen Billyeald and Ed Penney for their hours of sterling work on your behalf.

Kay Lacey

Pangbourne Flood Warden

Chair- Pang Valley Flood Forum

2nd February 2024