SMAF (SOUTH MILFORD AGAINST FLOODING) REVIEW 2014/2015

This is a record of the actions and outcomes of the past year and our thanks to all of the residents who have freely given their time and energy towards our goals, also to the multi-agency partners and politicians who have been involved in moving these aims forward.

**HISTORIC**

In June 2014 South Milford flooded with water flowing down the High Street from Whin Dyke. This happened again on August 8th, 2014 causing significant damage with 40 properties being directly affected with floodwater in houses, gardens and outbuildings. The total cost to residents was £1.75 million (estimate). Prior to these floods the village flooded in 2000 and 2007 and despite numerous reports being written, little, other than palliative action, occurred. National Grants for Property Level Protection ceased in April 2014 and was not available for residents after the 2014 floods. SMAF was formed after the August 2014 flooding with the aim to ensure that such flooding did not happen again.

Causes of the 2014 flooding:

* The location of the village in a valley with two water courses meeting in the middle of the village
* Run off from the A1M motorway and the debatable insufficiency of the two holding ponds
* Decades of a lack of maintenance and repair of the underground culvert running the length of the High Street with outlets in Mill Lane and the Playing Field
* A build-up of silt and debris in the two rivers (Whin and Mill Dyke)
* The partial collapse of Steeton Hall causeway
* Drains not cleaned out routinely
* Road surfaces and pavements resurfaced resulting in air bricks in some properties being covered and pavements not acting as a barrier in keeping the water in the road
* Some farming practices that facilitate excessive run-off
* The building of new houses with a considerable increase in the area of hard standing without any upgrading of the Victorian drainage system.

**Since August 2014**

5 Multi Agency Meetings and 80+SMAF meetings have taken place to discuss the way forward. SMAF have recently been joined by the National Flood Forum.

Attendance and discussions have taken place with the following bodies: Yorkshire Water; North Yorkshire County Council; Selby District Council; Parish councillors; Highways Agency, Environment Agency, The Selby Drainage Board, Nigel Adams MP and his PA Howard Ferguson, local councillors, Enterprise Inns (The Swan Public House), local land owners.

**Where We Are Now**

Yorkshire Water

* YW has been proactive in agreeing to carry out work on the culvert to clear and repair it.
* It was confirmed by the first operatives that 75/80% of the culvert s capacity was blocked.
* Subsequently, 250 + tons of material have been removed after the 3 visits by YW and a partial collapse of the structure subsequently repaired.

Despite the provision of an additional manhole, the existing configuration of access points to the culvert has restricted the excavation of debris and rubble. Therefore, the current capacity of the culvert remains largely unchanged. We understand that further works are planned but there is no schedule of works currently available.

The Environment Agency

* The EA agreed (before Christmas 2014) to de-silt parts of Mill Dyke (along the Playing Field) and to cut back foliage and vegetation. This was done.
* It was further agreed that if tests showed that dredging would be beneficial, not cause downstream problems and cost less than £100000, then Mill Dyke would be dredged. Tests have shown that dredging is necessary with the conditions met.
* Unfortunately, over the last 9 months the river has silted up again.
* The current inverse is higher than the inverse of the culvert entering it at Bondbridge Court and the Playing Field.
* The area of Mill Dyke downstream of the Doctor’s surgery needs attention. If this were widened and deepened a little it would radically reduce the risk of those houses in the vicinity being flooded

Highways

* Low Street bridge has been hosed through by the Fire Brigade recently; removing the build-up of bank silt but not lowering the depth of the river. So it has done little to reduce the potential risk of flooding.
* Should there be a rise in the water level flowing under the bridge then again there will be a flood (this area and The Swan car park flooded again this August 2015).
* A cattle grid/half pipe has been inserted into Whitecoat Lane beyond Wain Gap to prevent surface water flowing into the High Street and should prevent /reduce the water flowing down the High Street as it did recently.

Enterprise Inns

* Enterprise Inns, owners of The Swan public house intend to extend and repair the existing stone wall running alongside the pub’s car park. It is intended that such works will prevent the pub being flooded again.

Steeton Hall Causeway

* The causeway had previously acted as online storage for Whin Dyke until its partial collapse during the flood last year.
* There was no legal owner and it reverted to The Crown Treasury. Ownership of the Causeway is still an outstanding issue and inhibiting progress. A local resident has repaired the causeway but this repair work has not been subject to planning permission and the work so far is in danger of destabilising. The insertion of two large pipes underneath the causeway now means that it no longer acts as an online storage to slow download of any build-up of flood water.
* Further work has been halted as English Heritage, who protect Steeton Ancient Monument at the end of the causeway, have intervened. Meanwhile, the bridge continues to be a village ‘eyesore’.
* NYCC did mention at a meeting with SMAF members that as a last resort they would have contingency plans to prevent the condition of the causeway being a threat to the flooding of the village.
* The current status quo needs action to be taken by the authorities to re-establish direction of the situation

Local Farmers And Riparian Owners

* Local farmers are now complying with EA guidelines for farming practices e.g. using buffer strips and planting crops such as potatoes in the way advised so as to minimise runoff.
* Local land owners and farmers are very positive and are supporting plans that are being prepared to construct a number of bunds on their land to hold/slow the passage of any water flowing towards the village from the A1M and fields adjacent to Whitecoat Lane. However, funding has yet to be sourced.
* SMAF have cleared vegetation, felled dead roadside trees and cleared litter from the culvert entrance at Whin Dyke to improve the flow and ensure debris build up at the culvert grid at Wain Gap is minimal. They have also worked in cooperation with the Riverside Trust clearing debris and vegetation from Mill Dyke.

**Conclusions/Recommendations**

Conclusions

Significant efforts have been maintained to date, but a more integrated, cooperative effort by the agencies and all involved would lead to more effective results.

Short term plans and actions have not led to the most efficient use of scarce budgetary resources. After a year of discussions, meetings and negotiations, the residents of South Milford, particularly in the High Street, are in no measurable way, further forward to being confident that they will not be flooded again.

Recommendations

That an actionable timescale and budgets be drawn up to address the major problems facing the problems of future flooding in the village. Integrated and coordinated sub groups are formed within the multi-agency umbrella to address the following individual recommended actions:

1. That the remainder of the culvert is cleared and repaired where necessary to reinstall its full capacity.
2. Dredge Mill Dyke to match lowered invert of the culvert and to smooth the gradient for the full length of the village, including Low Street Bridge.
3. Online storage capacity (holding ponds, bunds etc) need to be increased with Steeton Causeway being a major part of that capacity.
4. That Steeton Hall Causeway is rebuilt to an aesthetically satisfactory standard which will ensure that the flow of water from Whin Dyke will not exceed the capacity of the culvert in a flash flood situation.