

Flood Action Group

This document contains important information about our local flood risk. Please take the time to read.

Background

Soberton Parish Council's **Flood Action Group** exists to advise and help land and property owners prepare for, and hopefully prevent, flooding throughout the villages within the Parish.

The **Flood Action Plan** (written by the Flood Action Group) will aim to alert residents, parish volunteers, the Parish and County Council (HCC) and, when required, the emergency services to a flooding event. The group will work collectively with volunteers to direct residents to sand bag locations, identify safe havens and identify and prioritise assistance for vulnerable or elderly residents.

Soberton, Soberton Heath, Newtown and Hoe Gate can be affected by two forms of flooding;

- **Surface Water runoff** which is caused by intense rainfall culminating in overwhelmed drainage systems and surface pooling. This type of flood event is generally caused by either blocked drains or the reduced capacity of local surface water drainage systems.
- **Ground Water flooding** is where the aquifer within the permeable chalk bedrock rises to above the ground surface due to prolonged rainfall. Flood water can emerge in dry riverbeds and exceptionally springs may appear on higher slopes of the Downs. This type of flooding tends to subside more slowly than surface water events.

Surface water runoff is predictable and can be effectively managed. Drains, culverts and open ditches need to be maintained to allow the free flow of water towards receiving watercourses, such as streams or the river. It is an offence for a home or land owner to prevent the natural flow of water across their property. In areas without mains drainage in need of open ditch systems you are termed a 'Riparian Owner'.

A Riparian owners' responsibilities, and the enforcement of which, relates to the Land drainage act 1991 and the Public Health Act 1936. Generally, it is a lack of maintenance, such as blocked drains or ditches, which cause a backup in the drainage flow. This is the cause of most local floods.

Rising levels of ground water (the chalk aquifer) can also be predicted. The Environment Agency has mapped (see their website <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency> and type in your postcode) all areas zoning them as 1, 2 and 3. It is zones 2 and 3 where there is a high risk of flooding as flooding has been seen in the past 30 years. In some cases, ground water springs can be managed and directed like surface water at the point at which they emerge from the ground.

A number of dwellings were listed as flooded in 2003 when the aquifer was very high, a report was produced by the Engineering Consultants Halcrow on that flood period (the Parish Council has a copy if anyone is interested).

To reduce the risk of flooding it is essential that all ditches and water courses are maintained. Culverts connecting ditches (below access to houses or field entrances) must be kept clear of debris and be of sufficient size to receive storm flows.

Drains must be regularly jetted and cleaned. Some drains are the responsibility of Hampshire County Council's highways department and are routinely jetted by HCC and in some instances as an

emergency call out. Many of our highway drains run into soakaways and can back up in times of excessive rainfall.

Who is responsible?

It is the land owner or the Hampshire highways department (under HCC) who have responsibility for water management in an area not serviced by mains drainage. In such an area water flows downhill, historically along natural watercourses and ditches (some which only appear in the winter). Again, it is against the law for land owners downstream to prevent natural flows of water crossing their land.

A simple example:-

- If there is a ditch running in front of your drive or house, and it has blocked or has been filled in, it is your responsibility to clear it out or reinstate it.
- If it is a road drain or culvert HCC (Highways department) will carry out the clearance work.

How can the Parish Council help?

The Parish Council has **no funding or direct labour** to call on to carry out riparian maintenance work. If you need to investigate or improve the state of your ditch then please do this as soon as possible, most importantly before the winter. If you have concerns over a flooding issue and you believe the natural flow of water has been impeded then there are a number of ways in which we, the Flood Action Group can help you.

The Flood Action Group can:-

- Write to your neighbouring properties to ask for corrective measures to be taken to improve the flow of water.
- Assist in these householder's investigations to establish whether the watercourse is functioning (for example the supply of rodding lines).
- Where a number of ditches are in extremely poor repair, liaise with the householders concerned to establish a collective 'working party' or a collective 'contractor hire' to carry out maintenance on a number of properties.
- Engage the support and expertise of the Flood and Water Management Team at HCC who also have powers to enforce the Land drainage act 1991 and Public Health Act 1936.
- In the event of a Highways issue, the Parish Council will speak with HCC and request urgent action on your behalf.

There is a link to the 'Hampshire County Council flood risk and management for landowners leaflet' on the Parish website www.soberton.org and the Parish Magazine website <http://www.sobertonchurch.org.uk/parish-magazine/>

For further information please contact:

Bob Stranks ☎ 01489 878270 or Email robert.stranks@btopenworld.com

Rachel Hicks ☎ 01329 835050 or Email denvi@btinternet.com