

## **Flood Wardens Report**

**Issued to Bibury Parish Council**

**6<sup>th</sup> July 2024**

### **Situation in Bibury**

#### **River Risk**

The main flood risk remains that caused by the trees that fell into the Coln from Ladywood Covert last winter together with further adjacent trees at risk of falling. The river remains at least 50% obstructed by the trees that fell last winter and there are more “hanging trees” whose removal will be a dangerous and expert task. The landowner has been unwilling to take action so far, hopefully this issue can be resolved by discussion. Despite recent rain, access to Ladywood Covert for arborists is now quite good, especially since Awkward Hill reopened.

Work is still planned by Bibury Court to reduce the Bibury Mill weir height further, but we are advised this work is delayed for at least another year due to budget constraints.

With the progress of ash die back we must expect further branches and trees to fall into the Coln which will inevitably cause greater flood risk throughout the Coln valley when branches and trees block the river flow especially at bridges and weirs. From recent conferences there are some grants available for improving woodlands that may indirectly assist financing ash die back situations. Currently there are grants readily available for removal of ash die back trees along roads but currently no grants for cutting down ash die back trees alongside rivers.

#### **Surface Water Problems**

CDC have cleaned up the coach park area in front of the Trout Farm so this seems to now drain more effectively but we can expect the return of problems in Autumn and winter especially. The drainage problem on the road near Quarry Hill Wood remains unresolved and is likely to remain so until probably 2 concrete open channel drains are installed.

The drainage problem at Arlington Row at the base of Awkward Hill is understood to be still under discussion at CDC. We are hoping that they elect to adopt a grated French drain solution rather than the “speed bump” idea.

#### **Ground Water Issues**

The only recent issue has been at the old Post Office/Jenny Wren café where the builders appear to have breached the cap rock over the main Bibury Aquifer and have had enormous issues in stopping the ground water flows. We have no specific details of this situation. It would be helpful to know how this issue was resolved and if ground water is being directed into the village sewerage system.

We are not aware as to the status of the ongoing discussions between the owners of Cobblers, Osbornes and Vine House as to the status of their plans to install a permanent ground water drainage scheme covering all 3 properties.

**From recent conferences, attended on behalf of Bibury Parish Council**

Wendy and Phil Challinor attended a Flood Wardens review on Wednesday July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2024 at Chedworth and an Upper Thames Catchment Partnership meeting on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at Colehill. These meetings are variously attended and supported by Gloucestershire County Council, CDC, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, the National Trust, FWAG, GRCC, the University of Gloucester, Gloucester Wildlife Trust, Wiltshire Wildlife Trust together with major land owners and farmers plus representatives of various parish councils such as Chedworth, Bledington, Morton, Northleach plus local special purpose organisations working specific river, flooding and ecology related projects. Not every organisation is at every meeting, but the senior organisations are usually there. Notably Thames Water have been rather low profile recently, perhaps due to their well reported financial issues.

**Flood Wardens Scheme Meeting**

The Flood Warden, update meetings are useful in explaining best practice and discussing issues at other Cotswold villages and they provide information on new developments and policy initiatives.

At the recent Flood Wardens meeting the Resilience Officer from CDC also advised that they would be starting to push for every major Cotswold village to develop their own general resilience/emergency plan dealing with flooding, major power outages, prolonged road closures etc with a focus on protecting vulnerable people in communities. The CDC Resilience Officer advised that he will be contacting all parish councils with a view to pushing for the development of detailed emergency planning in each community.

There is now a new Flood Warden Scheme coordinator working at GRCC on behalf of the Environment Agency and Gloucester County Council – Ms Rachel Seymour – who seems enthusiastic and engaged. She plans to visit Bibury later this year.

**Upper Thames Catchment Partnership**

These meetings focus on ecological and flood risk projects and access to sources grant funding for land owners and wildlife charities. At the Upper Thames Catchment Partnership meeting we met with an ecologist (Mr Harvey Sherwood) working on a new project – the Upper Coln Restoration Group, which is funded by local landowners and reaches from the Coln headwaters down to Bibury. This project is focused on improving water quality and its associated wildlife habitats. It was reported that whilst run off pollution from farming – due to excessive use of fertilizers, herbicides etc had caused serious issues in the past that farmers had massively reduced their use of such chemicals in the Coln catchment and the main issues were now sewerage outfalls, septic tank discharges, road run off. Mr Sherwood plans to visit Bibury and Ablington in the near future.

A presentation by the former chief geologist of Thames Water, who now advises the Friends of Gumstool Brook in Cirencester, explained the problems of correlating flood risk in Cirencester with ground water levels. The National Trust gave a presentation on their new initiatives in developing rewilding projects both on their own properties and acting as best practice sites to encourage wider adoption of such wildlife and river habitat restoration. The Environment Agency stated that they are highly supportive and rewilding projects especially those that encourage attenuation of high rainfall events via water retention and wet land schemes.

Wendy and Phil Challinor