

## **BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP**



**The Queen's Award  
for Voluntary Service**

### **REPORT TO THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** **(MAY 2020)**

This Report covers the period May 2019 to May 2020 when the Annual Parish Meeting would have been held, had it not been cancelled because of the restrictions imposed to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **GROUP ORGANISATION**

The AGM was held on Tuesday, 27 August 2019. Mr Simon Dowler, one of the Group's longest standing and most active members, reluctantly decided to stand down as an Area Representative for health reasons, but Mrs Sue Pearman kindly agreed to take his place. Apart from this the members of the Committee and all the other Area Representatives generously agreed to remain in post, thus ensuring continued stability for another year. Unfortunately, Mr Alec Avery has subsequently had to resign because of an impending house move. Mrs Gwen Bowden has also had to stand down because of her husband's ill health, but Mr Adrian House has kindly agreed to step into her place. The current (May 2020) list of Committee Members and Area Representatives is attached at Annex A.

#### **MONTHLY MEETINGS**

The Group's Meetings on the last Tuesday of each month (except December) took place as planned, with the exception of the March 2020 and April 2020 Meetings which had to be cancelled because of the Covid-19 restrictions. The nine Meetings which did take place were well supported, with an average attendance of 18 members.

The only exception to the normal pattern of meetings took place on Tuesday, 25 February when, in the aftermath of the storms, we welcomed eleven local residents, who were not members of the Group, and two visitors from Wellington, which had been particularly badly hit by Storm Dennis with 49 houses flooded. With Mrs Sue Maxwell and others very generously providing cakes and biscuits, refreshments helped a general discussion of the action which needed to be taken in the wake of the flooding.

#### **FLOOD RISK**

2019 was yet another year with very little rainfall – that is until we arrived at 26-28 October when everything changed. Storm St Jude caused the water level in the Millcroft Brook to rise far enough to trigger an early warning telemetry system alarm for the first time in over 19 months (that is, since 16 March 2018) and suddenly the risk of flooding, which had for so long been low, became very real and very serious. This was a wake up call for what was to follow and, until the end of February four months later, we were hit by a succession of storms, almost all of which brought with them flooding on a scale which we had not experienced since July 2007. Then, just as suddenly, from the beginning of March onwards, the weather gradually improved until we found ourselves enjoying the sunshine of Spring and the flood risk reduced accordingly.

## **FLOODING**

What follows here is a summary of events. Fuller descriptions of the floods which occurred between 26 October 2019 and 29 February 2020 can be found in the [Minutes of the Group's Meetings](#) at the time and in the BFGP's Reports to the Parish Council which are annexed to the [Council's Minutes](#) over the same period.

### **Flooding 26-28 October 2019**

Following a period of rain the telemetry system in the Millcroft Brook issued its first (0.5m) warning at 4.00am on Saturday morning (26 October) and this was followed by the second, more general (0.9m) warning at 10.50am. With the relief channel at Millcroft Farm in full operation for the next five hours, the water level peaked at 1.019m at 12.40pm and was back to its normal level by 6.00pm. Over the same period the Brook flooded Millcroft Road and the Ketch Lane junction, with the latter remaining flooded overnight and passable by cars only with care. Having successfully got most of the water in the Brook away into the River Lugg, we then had to contend with the rain from the Welsh hills.

The river level at Butts Bridge just South of Leominster peaked at 7.45pm on the Saturday and remained at 3.31m until 1.15pm on Sunday. (This compares with the highest recorded level of 3.6m on 21 July 2007). We began to feel the effects of this from about 7.00am on Sunday when flood water from the river spread up Millcroft Road to much the same point as in 2007, making the C1113 (Ketch Lane), the C1121 (Millcroft Road) and Smeadals Lane (C1120) impassable, except to 4x4s and tractors, until well into Monday (28 October). In fact, at its highest point on the Sunday evening the water on the road at the Ketch Lane junction was flowing fast and 31 inches (0.79m) deep, compared with 21 inches (0.52m) in previous years. The usual 'Flood' and 'Road Closed' signs were in place from about 9.00am on the Saturday morning onwards, but despite this there was the usual crop of four or five drivers who ignored the signs, came to grief and had to be rescued.

Elsewhere in Bodenham Moor, by midday on Saturday, 26 October the front garden at Brook Cottage was under water, at some places over 12 inches (0.53m) deep, and water had reached the front door of the house. This water had come from the Brook Cottage relief channel, not from the main Moor Brook, and by 7.00am the following day (27 October) all the water had gone apart from a few puddles. Meanwhile, in Bodenham just West of the River several houses escaped flooding only by the extensive use of sandbags and the intensive use of pumps. Sadly, the Church was not so fortunate and was flooded for the first time for some years.

### **Flooding 14-18 November 2019**

The River Lugg next flooded the Ketch Lane junction again on 4-5 November. There was then a respite until the morning of Thursday, 14 November when the telemetry system issued a first (0.5m) warning at 5.00am, followed by the second, more general (0.9m) warning at 6.30am. By this time the relief channel at Millcroft Farm was in spate and water from the Brook was beginning to spill onto Millcroft Road. As a result by 9.30am water at the Ketch Lane junction was about 6 inches (0.15m) deep. The Brook returned to its normal level by 8.50pm that evening and it was then the turn of the River Lugg to take over. With its water level at Leominster (Butts Bridge) remaining at 3.20m for some time, the downstream effect at Ketch Lane was that the junction remained flooded from 14 – 18 November, reaching a maximum depth on 15 November of 24 inches (0.61m) on Millcroft Road (C1121) and 28 inches (0.71m) at the South end of Ketch Lane (C1113) and the North end of Smeadals Lane (C1120).

Turning to other parts of the Parish, the garden of Brook Cottage was again flooded by its relief channel. There was also significant surface water for a time on the C1125 outside Eastfields Farm and between Berrington Drive and England's Field, as well as in front of the Chapel in Chapel Lane (C1114). There the problem was the usual one of leaves blocking the drain unless the drain was

constantly kept clear. Fortunately, on this occasion the flow was not sufficient to spill across the C1125 into Orchard Close, so the Close was not affected. At Maund Bryan the A417 was closed for a short period and, although the orchard, garage and stables of one property were flooded, no water entered the house.

### **Flooding 19 - 23 December 2019**

The third major flood of the year was preceded by a minor episode lasting from early on Monday, 16 December through to the morning of Wednesday, 18 December. During this period the flooding at the Ketch Lane junction reached 11 inches (0.28m) for a time. This was mainly contributed by the River Lugg, with the Millcroft Brook playing only a supporting role.

After a respite of about 24 hours, during which the Ketch Lane junction was more or less clear, the main event began on Thursday, 19 December. By that evening, with continuing rain both locally and in the Welsh hills, flooding at the junction was already 10 inches (0.25m) deep and by 5.00pm a day later (Friday, 20 December), the junction was up to 26 inches (0.66m) under water. Once more, the Millcroft Brook played its part. It had been running high for some time and finally peaked at 1.093m at 2.40pm, the highest level for a number of years, but was down below 0.5m by 5.00pm. Three hours later that evening (20 December) the River Lugg at Butts Bridge peaked at 3.35m, only 10 inches (0.25m) short of its then highest recorded level of some 3.6m in July 2007.

Over the next three days the Lugg gradually fell, reaching the top of its 'normal' level (2.6m) at about 11.00pm on Monday, 23 December. The flooding at Ketch Lane followed about 5 hours behind this slow decline and it was not until the early hours of Christmas Eve that the Ketch Lane junction was finally back to normal.

Elsewhere in the Parish, the pattern of recent floods was repeated. The Church was flooded yet again, forcing the Carol Service to be held in the Parish Hall and the other Christmas services in the School. Once more, there was surface water for a time on the C1125 outside Eastfields Farm and between Berrington Drive and England's Field, as well as in front of the Chapel in Chapel Lane (C1114), with some water spilling across the C1125 into Orchard Close. As always, the issue was leaves blocking the drains unless these were constantly kept clear. Flooding was also reported from Maund Bryan where the A417 was closed for a time and the grounds and outhouses of some properties were again affected.

### **Flooding 15-17 February 2020**

After Christmas, several storms brought high winds and a lot of rain and this fell on already saturated ground. However, the intervals between the storms was sufficient to allow water, both in the River Lugg and in local watercourses, to get away. As a result there was no significant flooding during January and the first half of February. This partial lull ended with the arrival of Storm Dennis on 15 February 2020, when events did not follow the usual, hoped for, pattern where our local watercourses receive surface water from the Village and from the surrounding hills and get it away quickly into the River Lugg well before the River brings water from the Welsh hills to us. Neither the local area, nor the Welsh hills had fully recovered from previous rainfall events, the most recent being Storm Ciara on 9 February. Water levels had not fallen fully and the ground everywhere was saturated.

As a result, when just after midnight on 16 February Storm Dennis caused the Millcroft Brook to rise to 0.9m for the first time since before Christmas, the Brook had already been beaten to the draw by the River Lugg. At Leominster the River had risen above the level at which 'flooding is possible' about six hours earlier. With a five hour lag in water levels at Leominster being reflected in levels here, this meant that, precisely when water was trying to get away into the River down the Millcroft Brook, it was meeting the start of flood water in the River.

Worse was to come, because the Millcroft Brook did not stop as usual at just over 0.9m. For the first time since the telemetry system was installed in May 2010, the water level kept on rising to cause the

third and highest (1.5m) alert to be issued at 3.50am on 16 December. By then a wave of water nearly a foot high was pouring over the parapet of the Brockington Road bridge and spreading North and South along Brockington Road and the stream went on to peak at a record 1.935m at 4.25am.

The culvert formed by the Brockington Road bridge is larger than those at Millcroft Farm and the Ketch Lane junction. However, as we have known since the hydrological report commissioned by Herefordshire Council in 2010, and as was proved again on 16 February, it lacks the capacity to cope with severe flash floods. The same is true of the C1125 road bridge just upstream, which was overtopped in 2007 and again at around 3.50am on 16 February. Flood water from it flowed South along the C1125 to the GP Surgery, then West along Ash Grove Road, before turning South again down Brockington Road, at the end of which a blocked drain meant that it formed a large pool overflowing into the garden of one property and the garage of another.

By daylight on 16 February the Millcroft Brook was already flooding the C1121 (Millcroft Road) up to Millcroft Farm because, although flowing well, it was meeting the growing flood water from the River. The Brook had dropped to its normal level at the telemetry system by 3.15pm, but the River did not peak at Butts Bridge until 2.00am the following day (17 February) when at 3.76m it comfortably exceeded the previous highest level of 3.6m recorded in 2007. The Ketch Lane junction then remained flooded until the morning of 20 February, reaching a maximum depth of 32 inches (0.81m) on the C1121 and 37 inches (0.94m) at the South end of Ketch Lane (C1113) on the evening of 17 February. With depressing predictability a number drivers ignored the 'Flood' and 'Road Closed' signs during the flood and had to abandon their stranded cars. Indeed, on 18 February there was a deserted car blocking each of the three roads into the junction, preventing even tractors and other high wheel base vehicles from getting through.

In other areas surface water once again collected on the C1125 at Eastfields Farm and the garden of Brook Cottage was submerged. On this occasion the Millcroft Brook added to the surface water covering the stretch of the C1125 between Berrington Drive and England's Field, while as usual water coming down Chapel Lane (C114) gathered outside the Chapel. Normally keeping the drains there clear prevents the water getting across the C1125 into Orchard Close. However, this was not the case on 16 February, when flooding was only averted because fortunately at about 3.00am that morning someone in the Close was awake. By diverting the water with sandbags from the Chapel Lane cage, and by keeping the drains clear in the Close itself, several residents prevented the water from doing any major damage until, by about 6.00am, it had dispersed. Similarly, the owners of The Bungalow next to Saffrons Garage had to take emergency action in the early hours of 16 February to collect 60 sandbags from the central container to divert water from Riffins Brook and Bowley Lane around their property.

Unfortunately, it was again Bodenham West of the River which suffered worst. The Church, which had been unusable since October was flooded yet again. Although pumps, sandbags and flood barriers allowed The Weir House and The Forge to escape, similar precautions did not prevent two neighbouring dwellings from being flooded. Finally, in Maund Bryan the A417 had to be temporarily closed and, as usual, flood water affected the gardens of some houses on the Common.

**Monitoring the Ketch Lane Junction.** In the past Balfour Beatty have not normally put out 'Flood' and 'Road Closed' signs covering the roads leading into the Ketch Lane junction. The recent floods were an exception and official signs were put out, although they were not always in the most appropriate places and were not always subsequently removed when flooding had subsided. In the absence of official signage the Group have always monitored water depths at the junction during flooding as a guide to when they should put out and take down their own unofficial signs. For the first time from 18 November onwards this information was published on the Parish Website at least once a day and repeated on *NextDoor*. This seems to have been welcomed by local residents and will probably be repeated in future. (Flooded roads at Bodenham rarely seem to be included in the county-wide flood updates and suggestions that they should be, and also that all flooded roads in Herefordshire should be shown on the County's existing 'roadworks and traffic flow' map, instead of

just in distinctly un-user friendly lists of road numbers, have yet to find favour higher up the county hierarchy).

## **THE AFTERMATH OF THE FLOODS**

**Flood-Related Advice.** We can be thankful that so far most of us have not had both flooding and the pandemic to deal with simultaneously. It is worth remembering, however, that there are two houses in Bodenham which were flooded during Storm Dennis and whose owners are still – almost 3 months later - having to deal with the aftermath. Much useful information was disseminated by Herefordshire Council and the Herefordshire Community Foundation about grants available to those who had suffered flood water inside their dwelling or business premises. This was posted on the Parish Website (both on the home page [www.bodenhamparish.org.uk](http://www.bodenhamparish.org.uk) and in the BFPG section <http://www.bodenhamparish.org.uk/bfpg-home.asp>). We also did what little we could to help the community with advice about such matters as insurance and we continued to press Herefordshire Council for a decision on the allocation of the promised government grants of up to £5,000 to improve the flood resilience of properties. Cllr John Harrington was most helpful in this and, as a result, the necessary advice has recently been received by those most affected and has also been circulated to BFPG members and to the Parish Council.

### **Issues Raised by the Flooding.**

In discussions after the flooding, notably at the Meeting on 25 February, several issues were highlighted. One was the need for better mutual support in an emergency. The way in which some residents in the Conservation Area and others in Orchard Close helped their neighbours when Storm Dennis was at its height was very commendable. The BFPG's own capacity to provide such support is limited because it is a small group and not many of its volunteers are now capable of heavy physical work. The Group did - and will always do - whatever it can to help, especially through its 'buddy system' and by providing early warning, stocks of sandbags and local knowledge. However, when an emergency is imminent and actually in progress it is essential that the community as a whole comes together, that more residents offer their help - especially those whose own houses are not at risk - and that the Parish Council takes the lead in organising this.

Following flooding it should also fall to the Parish Council to assess what damage has been done, what advice and support can be given to those who have been badly affected, what improvements need to be made by the Parish or the local authority by, for example, preventing flooding on the A417 and/ or so many drivers coming to grief on our 'C' roads, and how best to coordinate the clear up effort by, for example, pressing the local authority for the prompt removal of mud from roads, the heavy duty jetting of drains, and the investigation and resolution of such issues as the contamination of residential areas with sewage.

Similarly, the need to replace the Ketch Lane culverts remains a concern which has only been increased by the floods. In addition to their overall lack of capacity, they have more than once been in danger of being blocked by debris. On one occasion the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board (IDB) cleared them and re-sectioned the adjacent stretch of the Ketch Lane ditch. for which we are most grateful; on others they have had to be cleared by Group members by hand.

## **FLOOD PRECAUTIONS**

### **Working Parties.**

For the twelfth consecutive year we completed a full 'season' of working parties during 2019. There were total of 9 evening sessions (compared with 10 the previous year), the first being on Friday, 26 April 2019 and the last on Friday, 20 September 2019. An average of 12 members attended the sessions, 2 more than in 2019 thanks to some very welcome new recruits to replace those members no longer able to carry out physical work. In addition to checking sandbags at the end of the 'season', the

tasks performed have been mainly the ‘traditional’ ones of clearing away silt and cutting back vegetation in the Millcroft Brook.

The two exceptions to this were, first, a Saturday morning (24 August) when fifteen members checked some 212 sandbags in the container behind the Parish Hall, repaired 59 of them, cleaned out the container and bagged up what remained of the Parish’s stock of salt. Second, was a working party on Friday, 20 September when 16 members met at Brook Cottage to help Mr and Cllr Maxwell clear their relief channel and were rewarded with Cllr Maxwell’s much-anticipated cakes.

We would normally now (early May) be starting our working party ‘season’. We shall have to keep the schedule under review in the hope that the lockdown restrictions will be lifted in the not too distant future. It may be possible, even with social-distancing and other restrictions in place, to carry out a certain amount of work in due course - it is, after all, important for the safety of Bodenham Moor and good exercise. Also, the possibility of spraying will be kept in mind. However, at the moment there is no growth worth treating.

### **Sandbags.**

In addition to about 1,000 sandbags already distributed in properties around the Village, some 260 were given out during the floods. One of the Group’s first tasks will therefore now have to be to check our central stocks of sandbags in order to confirm how many we have left, and at the same time repair any which require attention. We are also already making plans, with the help of the Parish Council, to purchase some more filled sandbags to replenish our stock which, despite careful maintenance, has been gradually dwindling over the years.

Every year the Secretary sends out emails reminding everybody on the BFPG’s mailing list to check their flood precautions and to confirm how many sandbags they have, whether or not the sandbags are in good repair, whether they need more, and so on. Similarly, from October onwards notices were posted on the Parish Website and in the *Newsletter* urging residents to think ahead with the simple message – be prepared – not only with sandbags, but with other flood precautions such as flood barriers, warm and waterproof clothing, wellingtons, torches and their batteries, etc. Despite this, there were a number of instances in which people found themselves faced with imminent flooding and asked for sandbags as a last minute emergency - and in more than one case in the middle of the night. Clearly in most cases they had either not bothered to think ahead and request the sandbags they needed in good time, or they had failed to look after the sandbags they already had to ensure that these were fit for use when the emergency arose. We will go on trying to get the ‘be prepared’ message across, but sadly, as with drivers ignoring ‘Flood’ signs, it looks as though we may have to accept defeat by ‘human nature’.

**The Moor Brook.** Well before the first flood in October concerns had been raised about the high level and sluggishness of the Moor Brook at Brook Cottage and the possibility that these indicated blockages downstream. Mr Les Harrison, the Area Engineer for the River Lugg IDB, was therefore contacted and he inspected the Brook as far as he could while the maize crop was still in the fields. In his view any slowing of the Brook was likely to be owing to vegetation, such as reeds and flag irises, growing in the bed of the Brook downstream from the C1125 bridge. He arranged for the IDB’s contractors to start clearance work in November, but the atrocious weather meant that nothing could be done that month or in December. Despite extremely difficult ground conditions, clearance of the Brook finally started in early January and was completed by the end of the month.

**Spraying.** In addition to its usual mowing and spraying of those sections of local watercourses which its contractors are able to reach, the IDB once again generously provided the Group with some of the herbicide needed to suppress growth along its watercourses. Starting in early May 2019, the Chairman was therefore again able to spray the vegetation – mainly watercress and mare’s tail - in the Millcroft Brook. Although this did not remove the need to clear the weed from the Brook, it made it, being dead,

somewhat easier to pull up. More importantly, by killing the first growth, the seeding of further growth was reduced and this lessened the overall task facing working parties.

## **RIVER WYE AND LUGG NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT PROJECT**

In late 2017 the Government allocated £15M towards initiating natural flood management (NFM) projects across the country – that is, projects designed to use natural methods (such as better soil management, planting more trees, and building leaky dams and retention ponds) to absorb or at least slow down flood water. Some £626K of this was allocated to Herefordshire for seven catchment areas, one of which is Bodenham.

As previously reported, the Bodenham part of the Project was ‘launched’ at the Siward James Centre on the evening of Wednesday, 23 January 2019 and was followed by the formation of the Bodenham Brooks NFM Community Group to help take the Project forward. The Group’s first Meeting was held in the Siward James Centre on the evening of Tuesday, 12 March 2019 and since then steady progress appears to have been made, albeit without much direct input by either the BFPG or local residents. This is because the work has been mainly carried out by Mr Tom Jolly, the Catchment Advisor from the Wye and Usk Foundation, who has the task of liaising with farmers and landowners on the implementation of NFM measures. He has contacted a number of local landowners and planning has been going ahead for the reinstatement of an attenuation pond and for the construction of about a dozen leaky dams. Measures, such as cover cropping and ‘no tillage’ regimes, are also being discussed with local farmers with the aim of improving soil structure and better water retention.

The second Meeting of the Bodenham Brooks NFM Community Group was held on the evening of Thursday, 28 November, again at the Siward James Centre, and was attended by ten local residents. The main issue for discussion was how the local community could help with the gathering of the evidence required by the Environment Agency (EA) to demonstrate the effectiveness, or otherwise, of NFM measures - only if our, and similar, pilot projects can show that these measures have a positive effect in reducing flood risk, will they be rolled out across the country as a whole.

As part of the evidence-gathering effort volunteers were - and are - being sought to help with such tasks as fixed point photography and recording the morphology and ecology of the main watercourses in the Bodenham Catchment. (Anybody wishing to help can contact the Project Coordinator, Mrs Beth Lewis at [bethany.lewis@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:bethany.lewis@herefordshire.gov.uk) or on 01432-260739). However, the main sources of ‘hard’ data are a new rain gauge, which was set up during the year at Pencombe, and the existing early warning telemetry system in the Millcroft Brook at Brockington Road. The possibility of installing a similar telemetry system in the Moor Brook was discussed by both the BFPG and the Parish Council during last Summer, but the NFM Project was unable to fund it and, because doubts were expressed about such a system’s long term value if the Parish were to provide it, the idea was eventually shelved.

Another requirement imposed by the EA was that the data gathered from this and other NFM projects should be made publicly available. A website has therefore been created to achieve this and, for example, the last few months’ data from the Pencombe rain gauge can be found on it (at <http://www.timeview2.net/accounts/mapview/524> with password *slowtheflow*). Unfortunately, publishing data from the telemetry system in the Millcroft Brook has proved problematic because its existing non-public website contains the names and contact details of a number of BFPG members. It cannot therefore be simply duplicated on the public site unless these details are first removed or hidden, a requirement which has yet to be resolved. With the Covid-19 restrictions in place, and with key project officers, such as Mrs Lewis, redeployed onto coronavirus-related duties, this, and progress on the NFM Project generally, seem to be suspended for the time being.

## **FLOOD RISK INSURANCE**

The introduction of the Flood Re scheme has made obtaining flood-related insurance at reasonable rates less of an issue in recent years. However, with the help of Mrs Mary Dhonau the Group

continues to maintain a list of insurance firms and brokers who specialise in providing flood risk cover. This is available to any local resident on application to the Group's Secretary.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

No health and safety incidents were recorded during the year to add to the only two minor occurrences in the Group's nearly twelve years of existence.

### **EXTERNAL CONTACTS**

**BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester.** At 9.40am on Wednesday, 13 November the Secretary was invited to speak on BBC Radio Hereford & Worcester's '*Elliott and Toni at Breakfast*' Show. The subject, inevitably, was flooding in light of the damage recently done in the North of England and the Secretary was able to spend about 5 minutes expounding the BFPG's philosophy of self-help.

**Brimfield and Little Hereford Flood Group.** On 14 February we received an email from the Brimfield and Little Hereford Flood Group asking what advice we give to local residents about obtaining sandbags. In our reply we explained the BFPG system and our source of additional empty sandbags and also put them in touch with Mrs Dhonau.

**River Lugg Internal Drainage Board.** During Storm Dennis Mr Les Harrison, the Area Engineer for the IDB, rang to find out how Bodenham was faring, while Mr Charles Pudge, the Board's Chairman, visited us during a tour of the IDB's area, using a tractor to get through the floods around the County. These expressions of interest were most welcome and we were able to inform them that the relief channel and other works completed by the IDB in 2007-08 had been a major factor in keeping Bodenham Moor safe.

### **Herefordshire Council.**

Also very welcome were several calls from our Ward Councillor, Cllr John Harrington, who offered on each occasion to do what he could to help. During one of these the Secretary explained that we were planning to hold an open meeting at which BFPG members and local residents could provide feedback on their recent experiences and put forward their ideas for improvements. Cllr Harrington indicated that Herefordshire Council might possibly hold a county-wide meeting of parish representatives to provide similar feedback and the Secretary suggested that, if so, Herefordshire Council might wish to use Mrs Mary Dhonau, Bodenham Parish Hall and the BFPG to repeat the success of the Herefordshire Council '*Know Your Flood Risk*' Day on 7 November 2011. Sadly, the coronavirus pandemic has put a halt to any such initiative, at least for the present.

On Monday, 24 February a team of about a dozen volunteers from Herefordshire Council unexpectedly arrived at the Parish Hall as a Flooding Response and Resilience Team. We briefed them on which areas of the Parish had been most affected by flooding and the volunteers then dispersed in pairs around the area to speak to residents and hand out literature, cleaning materials and, where there had been damage, immediate grants of up to £500 per household. This was a most unexpected and welcome initiative by the Council.

**Wellington Parish.** As mentioned above, two residents from Wellington, Mr Graham Webb and Mr John Major, attended our February Meeting, after 49 houses in their Village had been flooded in Storm Dennis. We subsequently corresponded with Mr Webb and with the Chairman of Wellington Parish Council, Cllr Jenni Gowan, over their plans to set up a flood action group. Mr and Mrs Webb also visited Millcroft Farm on Friday, 13 March and we discussed with them the issues Bodenham faced after the 2007 floods and showed them what had been done since then to try and prevent a recurrence. It was proposed that we should give a talk to a meeting in Wellington on 23 April, but the Covid-19 emergency obviously meant that this had to be cancelled.

**Eardisland Parish Council.** On Sunday, 8 March we received an email from the Parish Clerk of Eardisland Parish Council to say that they were planning to set up a flood resilience group. A meeting with the Parish Clerk and the Vice-Chairman of the Parish Council to discuss flooding issues was planned for Wednesday, 25 March at Millcroft Farm, but this has had to be postponed because of the Covid-19 situation.

**Walford and Leintwardine.** Also on 8 March Mr Ian Urry of Walford contacted us to say that the Village had decided to form a flood action group. He asked for a chance to discuss the problems faced by Walford and this meeting took place at Millcroft Farm on 9 March when we explained the issues confronting Bodenham after the 2007 floods and showed him what had been done to try and protect local properties in future. We also assisted by sending him copies of BFPG documents to help with the setting up of his Group and we have subsequently heard the good news that significant progress is being made. Leintwardine and Walford residents have agreed to form two groups and seek adoption by their respective parish councils. They have also agreed to share information and co-operate on a number of projects.

**The Parish Website.** In the first half of March the Parish Website ([www.bodenhamparish.org.uk](http://www.bodenhamparish.org.uk)) experienced a peak in the number of users accessing it, particularly new users (941 out of a total of 1,033) and especially users looking at the BFPG section of the Website.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS TO RESEARCH**

On 31 May 2019 we were contacted by Mr Adam Wood who was starting a Masters degree in Human Geography at Aberystwyth University. For this Mr Wood was “researching how the co-creation of knowledge between flood policy makers, the environments agency [*sic*] and local communities within and around Herefordshire and the Wye has been effectively used in policy”. He requested a telephone interview with the Chairman. This took place on 11 June and lasted about an hour, during which the Chairman answered questions about all aspects of the Group’s activities and suggested other people whom Mr Wood might usefully contact. He also invited him to meet members by attending the working party session on 21 June, but in the event this invitation was not taken up.

Mr Wood did, however, visit the Group’s monthly Meeting on 30 July 2019. At this there was a lively discussion on the subject of flooding, community volunteering, the issues the Group had encountered in managing flood protection for the Parish, and the effectiveness (or otherwise) of the Group’s interactions with the Parish Council, Herefordshire Council, the Environment Agency and central Government in securing support for the reduction of flood risk. Mr Wood subsequently followed up on this by conducting another telephone interview, this time with Cllr Tilford.

### **SOCIAL EVENTS**

**Annual Barbecue.** The Annual Barbecue was kindly hosted by Mr and Mrs Clark at ‘Rosewood’ on Saturday, 22 June 2019. Some 25 members and guests attended, the weather was excellent and everybody thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

**Annual Bonfire Party.** The Annual Bonfire Party was held at Millcroft Farm on Saturday, 12 October. Some 20 members braved the weather, which was not kind and which affected the bonfire itself, meaning that for the first time it only partially burnt through.

**Annual Quiz Night.** A very enjoyable Quiz Night was held in the Parish Hall on Friday, 29 November with Mr and Mrs Moule again acting as Quiz Master and Adjudicator respectively. There was a good turn out and the occasion raised £328.00 for the Group’s funds.

**Annual Coffee Morning.** On Saturday, 8 February 2020 Mrs Liz Davies yet again organised a hugely successful fund-raising Coffee Morning at the Seward James Centre. The total raised after expenses

was £450.00. This brought the total raised by Mrs Davies and her helpers since her first Coffee Morning in 2009 to an amazing £5,103.00.

**Social Calendar for 2020.** Subject to all the obvious caveats, the programme for 2020 remains that:

- a. **Annual Barbecue.** The date offered is Saturday, 4 July at 6.00pm at Willow Cottage, Maund Bryan.
- b. **Annual Bonfire Party.** All being well, the Bonfire Party will be held on Saturday, 10 October at 6.00pm at Millcroft Farm
- c. **Annual Quiz Night.** The Quiz Night is planned for Friday, 27 November in the Parish Hall.

### **SUMMARY**

This has been a memorable year for the BFPG, because, after years of the flood risk being low and the potential for complacency becoming correspondingly high, all the Group's planning and hard work has been put to the test by a succession of major floods, some as bad as, if not worse than, that of July 2007. Indeed, during Storm Dennis a new record was set for the level of the River Lugg at Butts Bridge in Leominster and similarly for us at the Ketch Lane junction. At the same time the highest previous level recorded by the telemetry system in the Millcroft Brook since its installation in May 2010 was exceeded by more than 50%.

Unfortunately, the floods proved too much for the Church and for two houses West of the River, but the fact that Bodenham Moor, the main focus of our efforts, escaped more or less unscathed must be counted a success. However, as I stress every year, we have not done this alone and we must thank the Parish Council for helping to pay for the maintenance of the telemetry system and provision of empty sandbags so that we can replace those which have been damaged; Herefordshire Council for the interest and support given by our Ward Councillor, Cllr John Harrington, as well as for the longer term work being done through the NFM Project to reduce the flood risk to our community as a whole; and Balfour Beatty Living Places for all they do for us by, for example, providing flood warning signage and ensuring that our local drains are kept clear.

Our particular thanks must, however, go to the River Lugg Internal Drainage Board not just for providing us with herbicide, for helping us with their work at the Ketch Lane junction and for clearing the Moor Brook, but especially for their foresight in constructing and subsequently maintaining the relief channel at Millcroft Farm. The difference between the flood of July 2007, when 40 houses in Bodenham Moor were damaged, and the floods of the past few months, when none were, is very largely because the channel now eliminates the chokepoint created by the culvert at Millcroft Farm and lets storm water escape freely onto the floodplain.

The other major factor in keeping much of the Parish safe has, of course, been the proper maintenance of local streams, and in particular the Millcroft Brook, by the BFPG, thus ensuring that these watercourses perform to their maximum capacity. Thus, again repeating what I say every year, the BFPG make an important contribution to the community and this is attributable, above all, to the enthusiasm and hard work of the Group's members. Accordingly, the greatest thanks go, as always, to all those who have continued to support the Group, whether by taking an active part in working party sessions, by attending and contributing to meetings, by helping to organise our social events, by making donations, or by lending their support in any other way.

K.A.M.

BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP  
2019-20 Committee and Area Representatives' List

Chairman/ Operations Manager:  
Treasurer/ Secretary:

Mr Tony Mitcheson  
Mrs Babs Mitcheson

The Moor:

The Moor Road/ Sandbag Cage:  
Chapel Lane Sandbag Cage Keyholder:  
Brockington Road (2 -31)  
Brockington Road (1, 32, 36, 38, 40, 42 & 42A)  
Brockington Road (33, 35, 37, 39, 41, 43, 44 - 54)  
Siward James/ Sandbag Cage:  
Ash Grove Close:  
Ash Grove View:  
Millcroft Road:

Mr Andrew Maxwell  
Mr Robert Pritchard  
Mrs Sue Pearman  
Mrs Rebecca Burnill  
Mr Adrian House  
Mrs Victoria Paterson & Cllr Kathy Tremain  
Mrs Jean Fryer  
Mr David Harris  
Miss Barbara Gibson

Bodenham Village:

Church and Bodenham Village:  
Sandbag Cages Keyholder

Mr David Ayshford Sanford  
Mr Barry Wilson

Maund Bryan:

Mr Philip Broomhead