



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

BODENHAM FLOOD PROTECTION GROUP COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**16 February 2021
Via ZOOM
18.00**

Attendees

Chair: Andrew Maxwell

Secretary: Debby House

Treasurer: Kathy Tremain

Operations Manager: Adrian House

Events Co-Ordinator: Rebecca Burnill

Member: Dave Clemence

Member: Sadie Chambers

Apologies: none

A Message from The Chairman

Dear Fellow Member,

Firstly, on behalf of the Bodenham Flood Protection Group (BFPG) Committee, I hope this finds you well and that we can each look forward to a return to some level of normality as Spring approaches.

As a preface to the Committee Minutes that follow, I wanted to explain our reasons for leaving the Bodenham Parish Council (BPC) after being a sub-group since the BFPG's inception. During the last quarter of 2020, members were asked to consider standing to form a new committee, which was then duly elected to serve on 1 January 2021. This period gave the future committee the opportunity to think about whether changes to the way the BFPG functions could lead to more streamlined approach, provide greater flexibility in how we operate and potentially help to make joining more attractive to new members.

This also presented the opportunity to form a fully functioning committee (seven strong at present) which will actively debate matters representing the interests of all members and residents of the village. To do so, we will hold a Committee Meeting approximately every 2 months and will ensure that we review and report upon (via circulated Minutes) any questions which you and/or a village resident would like to raise. Going forward we will not be holding monthly meetings of all members and this will help the committee to work more closely together.

On 13th January 2021 we made a request, with supporting documentation, to the BPC to become a Working Group, but still under their auspices. We hoped this would allow us to implement changes and to still remain part of the BPC. Following the BPC's meeting of 1st February 2021, I received a document (Attachment A), via the Parish Clerk, which presented an operating rationale for the option to remain in the BPC (as a Sub-Group), and likewise, an option to leave and form as an autonomous group.

This document was forwarded to our Committee for consideration. It was felt that the option to stay would result in constraints which would prevent the BFPG being able to enact the changes which would allow us to move forward. The points given under the option to leave did, however, satisfy our requirements. As such, we duly notified the BPC on 17th February 2021 of our unanimous decision to leave. A transition period running up to 31 March 2021 has been put forward to allow both the BPC and BFPG time to make the necessary changes. It is important to stress that the separation is amicable and will not affect our eligibility to seek funding from the BPC.

Yours

Andrew Maxwell

Chair, BFPG

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Welcome
2. Outstanding Actions
3. Topic 1 and Vote
4. Operations Update
5. Treasurer's Report
6. AOB

Item 1 Welcome | 18.00 | Lead: Chair

As Chair, Andrew welcomed the Committee to the meeting. He gave a brief outline of the circumstances in which the Group now found itself and put forward his proposal for discussion.

For the benefit of other Group members, the Chair has provided some context to Topic 1, which was discussed by the Committee, and this is represented at the beginning of these Minutes; the full proposal and Bodenham Parish Council (BPC) document is at Attachment A.

Item 2 Outstanding Actions | 18.45 | Lead: Secretary

This item was actually taken after the discussion of Topic 1, timewise. Debby reported that all previous actions apart from 6.1 on Kathy, were completed. Given the discussion of Topic 1, it was proposed and accepted that this action (which was to try and align the finances of the Bodenham Flood Protection Group (BFPG) with those of the Parish Council) could be cancelled.

Item 3 Topic 1 | 18.10 | Lead: Chair/Secretary

The main topic for discussion was the Chair's proposal to remove the Group from the auspices of the BPC (see Attachment A). The Secretary asked each Committee member to provide their comments on the proposal before a vote would be taken. Note: all comments made during this discussion are the personal opinion of each member and have been ratified by each member as representing what was said during the discussion. Those opinions have not been fact checked and have been minuted in their entirety for complete transparency.

KT: Kathy had some personal concerns given her position on the BFPG Committee and as a Councillor on the BPC. However, despite that, her main worries with the proposal were: that being aligned with the Parish Council gave the BFPG some legitimacy when dealing with residents, landowners and external bodies and although the BFPG funding balance is currently relatively healthy, it had taken a long time to get to that point and the Group had always had the BPC as funding back up. She also wondered if reclaiming VAT may be an issue.

SC: Sadie was personally of the opinion that the BFPG should not be tied to the Parish Council and that the Group should steer its own path with full control and not be bogged down with the types of bureaucracy that the BPC naturally has to abide by. She also felt the Group should be perfectly able to conduct its own risk assessments and find its own, higher level insurance than currently provided by the BPC. The same could be said for training. On finance, Sadie felt the Group would be better off being able to control the finance ourselves and there would always be the option of approaching the BPC for funds if necessary, like any other village group.

RB: Rebecca's only concern was the cost of insurance and the Groups ability to continue funding it year on year. Added to that, she also noted that any insurance that was used would have to include public as well as personal liability.

Andrew responded to this by explaining that he was concerned that the BPC's current insurance might not be fully up to date to offer the protection necessary., Following his initial investigations last autumn he had received an insurance quotation carrying an annual premium of £235. He added that this was to cover both public and personal liability but that the group might also wish to look into cover for equipment. He felt that this was an affordable sum.

DC: Dave commented that he had reflected after the last meeting on the challenges of having a joint bank account with the BPC and the issues that had thrown up. He felt that being under the BPC auspices tended to limit the Group and its activities. Whilst he would not object if the vote was to stay with the BPC, he was more swayed towards independence simply because the new committee had provided a level of reinvigoration to the Group and therefore felt that exciting times lay ahead. The only concern he had was that being under the BPC, landowners may take more notice of requests for work under their riparian responsibilities.

Adrian noted that the BPC had not been active in this area anyway and landowners who had been approached recently had been more than accommodating to the Group's requests for help.

AH: Adrian explained that he felt that the BPC had been playing catchup over the Group and to now come up with the proposal that a Councillor should steer it, was too little too

late. The BPC had every opportunity to get involved last August (2020) when the Mitchesons announced they would be standing down due to family commitments. That was the point at which the BPC should have taken 'control' if they so wished. Adrian reflected that, at the meeting in August, he had voiced his opinion that the Mitchesons would be a hard act to follow, but this Committee had stepped up and so there was no need for council direction. In addition, he could not think of any of the current councillors who would want, be willing, or be able to take on the job or have the knowledge to do so.

In conclusion, Adrian noted that the BFPG had managed without the council's intervention for several years and he believed that it could carry on supporting the residents & their property for several more without the unnecessary obstacles that the BPC would want to impose.

DH: In a personal capacity, Debby said she was saddened that the choices the Group had been given, effectively backed it into a corner as it appeared there was no flexibility. Reflecting on Kathy's point about the legitimacy of the Group under the BPC, Debby noted that she had initially felt the same. However, there are now more community flood groups out there than ever before and she felt that the Group would benefit from being part of a wider, like-minded community. She could not see the benefit in being given direction from a Councillor who would have no background in the Group and would effectively become the Chair. Finally, like Dave, Debby was also looking forward to moving the Group into a new and exciting future. The key thing was to raise the Group's profile in the village by using social media as well as more traditional communication methods. This in turn would encourage new members, a vital lifeline if the Group is to remain a positive asset to the village for years to come.

AM: Andrew stated that he would have liked the Group to stay under the BPC umbrella if possible, however he could not countenance being steered by the BPC. Even though there has been no indication that the BPC would have wanted the BFPG to leave, the BPC are bound by rules which are not conducive to the way the Committee wishes to move forward.

In answer to the legitimacy question, Andrew said he believed this to be a mind-set rather than fact. Many residents are unlikely to be aware that the BFPG is part of the BPC. Finally, in answer to the concerns over funding, Andrew reminded the Committee that the BPC had made clear that it would still consider requests for donations, as it would from any other group. He suggested the BFPG set a safety valve under which it would need to consider asking for help. On the question of VAT, it would need to be paid as the Group was not setting up as a charity.

There was then a short, general discussion. Rebecca asked Kathy if she could advise on how much money was raised for the BFPG account in a given year through fund raising activities. Kathy said that the two main events generated approximately £700-800 a year. It was acknowledged that the Group would need to do additional fund raising in order to maintain or increase that amount to keep the account healthy.

Kathy agreed with Adrian's point about the BPC not taking the opportunity to get involved with the Group last August, which had saddened her. She also reported that she was in ongoing contact with the Parish Clerk in order to reconcile any difference in the figures. Andrew stated that it was a concern that things had stagnated to the point where the BPC had no intimate understanding of how the group worked.

There was a general feeling of sadness that this vote was needed when the Group had simply asked to change title from sub-group to working group. However, it was accepted that the restraints that parish councils work under would not be conducive to the direction the Group needed to go in to stay relevant and that a fresh start, as a voluntary community group, was probably what was needed.

The Secretary then called the meeting to order and asked for a show of hands in support of the proposal to inform the Bodenham Parish Council of the Group's wish to leave its auspices. The vote was unanimously carried. It was agreed that a tentative date of 31st March 2021 would be sensible, to give time for the changes to be made and any other admin to take place.

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
3.1 Formally write to the BPC informing them of the BFPG's wish to leave the auspices of the Parish Council, checking what they require to facilitate this	Chair	17 February 2021(done)
3.2 Group insurance to be put in place	Chair	31 st March 2021
3.3 A Group bank account (on-line) to be opened	Treasurer	31 st March 2021

Item 4 Operations Update | 18.50 | Lead: Ops Manager

Adrian informed the meeting that he had been given a date of Thursday 18th February by Hydro International, for the new telemetry system to be installed. He reminded the Committee that he had requested that the trigger level be changed from 1.5 metres to 1.2 metres on the new system, this was because at 1.2 - 1.25 water starts flooding over the C1125 culvert & Brockington Road bridge and so the 1.5 trigger is already too late. The level of 1.5 had only ever been reached once & this had been during storm Dennis on 16th February 2020.

He then reported on the number of alarms. Between 20th January to date there had been 5 alarms.

20th Jan 21:55 0.5

20th Jan 22:40 0.9 (in 45 mins risen 0.4 metre)

28th Jan 00:15 0.5

28th Jan 01:10 0.9 (in 55 mins risen 0.4 metre)

30th Jan 06:15 0.5 Max level reached 0.82 @ 10:10 am then receded over the following days.

He explained that each time when the .5 & .9 levels are reached the system uses 15 SMS's in total and there is currently a credit of 275 following the purchase of an additional £40 of texts.

Adrian then reported that the first 2 planned work parties to clear debris from the Millcroft Road culvert had been unable to go ahead due to the vast amount of water on both the road & the fields, making it unsafe. Saturday 13th February saw this work go ahead, with the first gathering of some members of the Tier 1 team. This gave the opportunity to introduce some of the new members to the Group.

Ten members turned out on a very fresh morning to clear away the remains of debris that the flooding had brought, this included removing compacted branches/twigs from both the

Powis field and the roadside & a large blockage (of approx. 2 meters) was cleared from the smaller culvert that runs under the road. An excellent turnout & the goal set was achieved. (Note: Social distancing was abided by as much as possible and tools were wiped down before and after the work. This is something the Group may have to contend with for some time to come).

He then turned to the Working Party calendar. He reminded the Committee that the preference amongst members (especially those who work), was to change working party days to a Saturday morning rather than a Friday evening (although this would need to be flexible and additional days may be required). The plan was still to do fortnightly sessions and run the season from April to September.

The preliminary dates for this year (lockdown and social distancing permitting) are:

10th April, 24th April, 8th May, 22nd May, 5th June, 19th June
3rd July, 17th July, 31st July (BH W/E), 14th August, 28th
August (BH W/E), 11th September, 25th September.

There may well be opportunities as the need arises to fit in the odd evening or Saturday in-between if there is a requirement, and if the ditch clearance behind Orchard Close goes ahead, there may be an extra area there for the Group to work. Andrew clarified that this work is dependent on the BPC agreeing to pay towards the clearance of the ditch and that quotations were being sought by Mike Stephens.

Andrew requested that a slightly later start than 09:30 may benefit some members. Adrian said he was open minded on times and would go with the majority, when he received their confirmations.

Item 5 Treasurer's Report | 19.10 | Lead: Treasurer

The Treasurer reported that the last reported balance was £5,087.96. Since then, the Group had spent a total of £222.16 on the Zoom account, first aid kit, chains and hooks and waders.

Income of £20.99 was a refund of VAT. Kathy has exchanged e-mails with the Parish Clerk to ascertain which BFPG invoices were involved. It will be necessary for the Parish Council and the BFPG to reach a mutually agreed figure for the balance of the Group's funds if they need to be released at some future date.

Kathy stated that fund-raising had raised between £700-800 per annum in previous years with donations of £1500 since the Group's inception. The BPC had also contributed approximately £4500 in the last few years.

Item 6 AOB | 19.20 | Lead: All

The Secretary informed the meeting that there had been a number of queries to the Group over whether it would be possible to install flood measurement gauges along Millcroft Road to warn drivers (and walkers) of the depth of flood water. She asked the Committee if anyone would like to investigate this as a one-off project. Sadie volunteered to do so and Debby promised to send her as much information as she could to get started.

Andrew informed the meeting that the Church had requested the use of sandbags to create a wall following a recent surge of water from the river across the graveyard. They also asked to borrow one of the Groups pumps. Andrew, with the help of Sadie, Helen and Adrian had refilled the cages by the school following the Church's request. Mike Stephens was going to check the pump was in good working order and show them how to use it.

Andrew also reported that he had been approached by a resident asking if the Group could help clear the kerbsides in Brockington Road by the playing field and a bit further down. Debby and Adrian pointed out that (as this was their road) they did not believe this was the Group's responsibility. If it was not the Parish Councils then the BFPG could not be expected to take it on as it would end up doing the whole village. The responsibility belongs to Hereford Council and a complaint can be registered on their website. In fact, Debby had already done so twice in the last 6 months. Andrew said he would report that back to the resident.

Rebecca then informed the meeting that she had been giving some thought as to how the Group could raise funds even in these difficult times and following discussions with Andrew and Debby (during which a few ideas were mooted), it would seem that an open-air event would be best and one that encourages families to understand the work of the Group (and hopefully encourage membership). To that end, Rebecca was going forward with the idea of an Easter Treasure Hunt to take place probably in the conservation area of the village. Rebecca would come up with a plan and share with the Committee.

Rebecca also noted that there was a couple who play folk instruments who she planned to approach for a possible concert on the village green.

Dave asked whether, given the number of large logs that the working party cleared during the work session, there was any way of identifying where they may come from to prevent them causing future problems. Adrian pointed out that the problem came from landowners cutting their hedges back and then the debris being floated on flood water across fields until it ended up in the brooks. There was no way to identify where it could come from, however, we could contact the Parish Clerk to ask if the Lengthsman and the Footpath Officer could be tasked with reporting any obvious blockages that the Group could help to clear.

Debby also suggested that in every comms piece the Group puts out, a message should be there about residents reporting possible problems to the Group.

On a more personal note, Dave asked if the telemetry specs could be sent to him to set the system alerts to his phone.

Finally, Andrew asked for the following actions to be minuted:

For the rest of the Committee to make general comments on the new Constitution, (recognising that some changes will now be required following the vote)

For all members to be informed of the changes to the Group status (Post-meeting note: it was agreed afterwards to include the message at the beginning of the minutes to keep everything as transparent as possible and avoid confusion).

Action items	Person responsible	Deadline
7.1 Send information to Sadie to enable Action 7.2 below	DH	18 February 2021 (done)
7.2 Investigate and report back on feasibility of flood measurement gauges along Millcroft Road	SC	No date
7.3 Request to go to Parish Clerk to ask for help identifying potential problems	DH	1 March 2021
7.4 Telemetry information to be passed to DC	AH	After 18 February 2021
7.4 Constitution and letter to BPC to be sent to the whole BFPG Committee	DH	18 February 2021 (done)

Membership News: NTR

DoNM: 16 March 2021 18.00

Attachment A

**Brook House
Bodenham
Hereford HR1 3HS**

BFPG Committee

6 February 2021

Dear Committee Member,

At our Committee Meeting, 12 January 2021, we unanimously agreed to approach the Bodenham Parish Council (BPC) with a request to change our status to that of a Working Party. This was to reflect our wish to streamline our activities and to emphasise that we now have a newly elected, fully functional committee in place.

A Terms of Reference (ToR) was then submitted to the BPC along with our newly drafted Constitution and a supporting PowerPoint presentation to provide a comprehensive background to our request. If acceptable, we would fully commit to continue to be part of the BPC.

The submitted documents were reviewed by the BPC at their formal meeting on 1 February 2021.

Yesterday, I received clarification of the BPC's position through two scenarios: one, if we were to remain as an entity of the BPC and the other, should we choose to leave the BPC and set up as an autonomous group. Below (In blue text) is a copy of what was sent from the BPC Clerk and which has been minuted and passed by the BPC.

IF THE BFPG WISHES TO STAY IN THE PARISH COUNCIL AS A SUB-GROUP:

- A Parish Councilor must sit on the BFPG committee as a full voting member and offer steorage to the Group. (This Councilor cannot hold any other position on the BFPG Committee)
- The BFPG Constitution must be amended in line with the policies and practices of the PC. (This is a detailed analysis and would be completed prior to final decision). This would include a review of the make-up of the membership, roles and the structure of the Group.

- The BFPG must undertake the necessary risk assessments, training and certification as required by the PC's Insurance Policy.
- The assets of the BFPG would remain in the ownership of the PC
- The bank account held by the PC on behalf of the BFPG would need to be reviewed with regard to legal position for the PC. The financial relationship regarding VAT would also be reviewed.

IF THE BFPG WISHES TO LEAVE THE PARISH COUNCIL TO FORM AN AUTONOMOUS GROUP:

- The BFPG would have full control of its membership, structure and procedures.
- The PC will transfer the BFPG funds to a nominated bank account and remove any BFPG assets from its asset register.
- The BFPG would organise its own insurance policy as a volunteer group.
- The PC would remain committed to the purchase and maintenance of any village or PC assets relating to flooding such as the Telemetry system.
- The BFPG would remain eligible to seek funding from the PC, as any group or organisation in Bodenham is.

From the above, it is evident that our request to remain within the BPC cannot be achieved unless we follow policies which are at odds with our wishes. As such, I am making the proposal to the BFPG Committee that we elect to leave the BPC and through a smooth transition, become an autonomous group to continue our work and move forward.

A discussion followed by a vote will be taken as to whether we remain in or to leave the BPC at our next Committee meeting, 16th February 2020. I will, of course, respect whichever way you chose to vote and whatever the outcome, we will retain a cordial relationship with the BPC.

Yours

Andrew Maxwell

Chair BFPG