



Loxwood Parish Council

c/o Foxways, Pinkhurst Lane, Slinfold, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 0QR

Clerk: Mrs Jane Bromley

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1st March 2021

To: James Humphreys, Environment Agency, Solent and South Downs Area

By email: James.humphreys@environmentagency.gov.uk

Dear Mr Humphreys

Loxwood Stream Improvement Project

You will be aware that over the last few years there has been a considerable amount of discussion with regard to the potential improvement of the Loxwood Stream to alleviate future flooding. The length of Stream south of the B2133 Guildford Road in Loxwood is classified as Main River. A series of flood forums, initiated by Loxwood Parish Council (LPC), were held between October 2015 and the present day. These were attended by the Environment Agency (EA), West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and Chichester District Council (CDC), together with other interested parties and residents.

Although there have been other flooding events, the worst flooding occurred in December 2013 when 11 houses and numerous gardens were inundated along the course of the stream. Following this event, the EA commissioned Mott Macdonald to develop a flood risk management scheme with cost benefit analysis. In 2017, this assessment advised that such a scheme was not economically viable and whilst the EA decided not to take any further action, they did encourage LPC to pursue locally funded mitigation measures.

In 2018, funding was obtained by LPC from WSCC Operation Watershed to appoint the specialist consultant, Water Environment Ltd, to carry out a feasibility study including enhanced stream modelling and evaluation of a previously identified "long list of options". This study, which was completed in September 2020, recommended a three phase project to provide a series of improvement measures, including works on both public and private land.

The works on public land, comprising enlargement of several highway/footpath culverts, would be the responsibility of WSCC and they are currently considering implementation of one important element of work, namely the widening of the Station Road culvert.

If the EA, as flood risk management authority, are unwilling to promote this project, then by default, the majority of works on private land would have to be coordinated and funded by LPC. Following extensive discussions with public bodies and private property owners, the Parish Council has come to the decision that it cannot pursue this project for the following reasons:

1. LPC does not have the necessary expertise, or funding, to carry out a project on this scale. A preliminary estimate in excess of £500k (including professional project management) for works on private land is much larger than originally envisaged.
2. Some of the work is required on private land where the owners are not vulnerable to flooding and consequently have no incentive to allow such work to take place. LPC has no statutory powers to enforce this necessary work, as such powers presumably reside with EA.

LPC has therefore come to the conclusion that the only organisation capable of carrying out the recommended stream improvement project is the EA and have advised those residents that suffered property flooding in 2013 of their reluctant decision to abandon the project. LPC also expresses deep concern that extensive new development currently being planned in Loxwood will significantly exacerbate the stream flooding situation in future years.

LPC is extremely disappointed that, having followed advice and encouragement from the EA, it now finds itself unable to proceed with a project to carry out flood mitigation works on the Loxwood Stream. LPC wishes to ensure that in future the EA is more prudent in offering advice to parish councils, which can lead to a significant waste of time, effort and resources.

Yours sincerely

J Bromley

Jane Bromley
Clerk, Loxwood Parish Council

Cc : Tom Lamboo, Environment Agency
Sue Furlong, WSCC - Operation Watershed
Kevin Macknay, WSCC - Flood Risk Engineer
Dominic Henley, CDC - Senior Engineer Environment