

Key points from meeting

Severn Stoke flood bund update from Environment Agency 07/07/2023

Venue: St Denys' Church. Organised by District Council. Hosted by Parish Council.

Notes by Mrs L. Stevens, Parish Clerk, 07950256363, severnstokeandcda@gmail.com

Questions asked at various points in the meeting have been moved to the Q&A section in these notes for ease of reading.

1) Introduction by Deputy Chair of Parish Council, **Susan Faulkner**

- Welcomes and thanks to all attending. Thank you for use of the church.
- Apologies that the live feed to the website would not connect due to inadequate signal for broadband

2) Introduction by **David Harrison, District Councillor Malvern Hills District Council**

3) Environment Agency Marc Liddarth (Area Environment Manager Worcestershire and Shropshire) [summary of general points]:

- Partnership funding is crucial and allows the project to proceed:
- Harriett Baldwin MP championed the scheme and secured £750,000 from Central Gov to bridge funding gap.
- Chris Prosser has further plugged the funding gap by providing local material and transporting it free of charge.

Environment Agency (EA) Charlie Chandler (West Midlands Flood Risk Manager) [summary of general points]:

- Severn Stoke flood bund – EA has absolute commitment to this challenging project.
- EA takes a strategic overview of flood risk management – focusing on reducing flood risk.
- The Government, through Defra, sets the focus of management policy and the EA works with local authorities within this framework to make the country more resilient to flooding.
- The EA primarily leads on the large-scale capital projects (large rivers and their main tributaries and coastal areas). Severn Trent and local authority tend to lead on smaller projects or surface water schemes.
- 'EA flood risk management strategy' – has a 3 aims: 1) Aim for climate resilient places, 2) Aim for growth in climate resilient economies and infrastructure 3) Nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change.
- *How projects are justified and funded:* Overall benefit (ecological/economic/to population/financially) has to be greater than the cost. 'Industry standards' allow calculation of economic loss of a scheme and if costs/losses are higher than benefits then the scheme cannot be delivered. This is crucial for such a small community as Severn Stoke and has resulted in constraints as to how much money can be

allocated. Funding is via a partnership funding approach – every scheme is examined and the amount of Central Gov funding allocated depends on the number of properties and wider benefits (economic/ecological etc). Any funding gap has to be made up through third party contributions (Local authority/regional committees with an annual budget/businesses/residents).

- Severn Stoke scheme costs are estimated in detail at £2million with a max £2.5 million to be generated in benefits – so every step of the scheme requires tight control and examination of options for best value for money. The final business case was signed off in Xmas 2022.
 - Chris Prosser has helped significantly in balancing the above-described cost/benefit ratio.
 - Worcestershire Highways have also helped by funding and taking control of the project to raise Ham Lane.
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- *Current situation:* As much material as can be stored on site at present has been moved to Severn Stoke. All material is from a local area and has been checked before entering the site. Initially 'fill material' was brought in, plus top soil, plus recycled stoney material to be used for road construction. All material will constantly be checked for suitability as construction proceeds.
 - Archaeology investigations have proceeded and mostly completed on site. The archaeologist will be on site whilst top soil is being removed.
 - Boundary fencing installation and newt trapping will proceed now.
 - Main construction by Jacksons will proceed after newt trapping.
 - Aim is to get all embankments built up by a couple of meters to both sides of Ham Lane by Xmas 2023. More checked material will then be brought in to allow the Highways element to proceed. Worcs County Council aim to complete Ham Lane in Spring 2024.
 - If community does experience an approaching flood event in winter 2023 there will be options to help protect homes and businesses.
 - Tree planting is planned for autumn 2024.

Q- Ham Lane access arrangements during construction and whilst Ham Lane is being raised.

A – The EA is looking at options for a diversion or other options to maintain access and will fully consult with land owners and tenants. Looking at a 2 month period where the original access point of Ham Lane to be closed.

Q – Conclusion of audience is that it will be September before anything happens. I.e. Winter construction. What impact will wet weather have?

A – Works will continue through the winter now – this is a standard for all such projects such as this. If the site is very wet, then works will have to be paused.

Q- Jacksons currently have a framework agreement only with EA. Has the EA signed a contract with Jackson?

A- The EA has a standing framework contract for initial mobilising of works of this nature – this is already in place for Severn Stoke. A contract covering the construction phase is in final stages of discussion and the EA is confident all will be in place shortly.

Q- Excavation and construction element question.

A – Design is the same as Upton and Uckingham. Firstly the process will be to strip off top soil and flatten. The centre of the embankment will be dug to 1m depth and a back fill of clay will be inserted to act as a plug for the water. The EA has good confidence and experience that this design works well in this area. Material will be carefully compacted in layers. Design will cope with seepage and surface water. Future pumping arrangement plans are in place similar to Uckingham – IE not a large built arrangement such as at Kempsey as technology has improved and volumes of tributary/surface water in Severn Stoke are less.

Q – 10% of material already on site? Is the EA confident that the outstanding balance of material to be brought in will be sourced and brought to site?

A – Yes, no problems envisaged. 1/3 of material needed is on site. Prossers are committed and fully involved.

Q – Confirmation with regard to testing

A – All material has been tested and brought in under correct protocols and sources are all verified. All material is safe. No material is sub-standard – some stoney material has been brought in for exact purpose of construction roads and was never intended for use in the bund.

Q – Have the limitations in budget resulted in a compromise in design of the bund?

A – Project is fit for purpose but not in a way that compromises the end job that will be achieved. Frugal decision making has resulted in an overall design is fit for purpose with future climate change conditions built in.

Q – Planning conditions outstanding?

A – All planning conditions have either been discharged or are on the way to being so, with no problems anticipated by the County Council, District Council or the EA.

Q – Archaeology could yet hold up plans?

A – Standard procedure is that if something is found the archaeologists will come in and decide quickly whether to remove or leave in situ and protect. It is rare that anything is found that causes significant delays.

Q –Breakdown of costs.

A - 2/3 of total cost of the project is on construction and future pumping designs and installation. Archaeology costs account for a significant chunk of the rest.

Harriett Baldwin MP – “One of the smallest schemes but also the most challenging and complicated”

“It has often been necessary to bring together all involved to find a way forward. Confident now after listening to the EA presentation that this scheme will get built. Risks have been mitigated as much as they can be. Feel profoundly that what is being achieved is really important for future generations and to protect the A38 as a strategic highway. Residents can rely on my commitment to this project.”

David Harrison District Councillor MHDC

Archaeological excavations summary report will be out shortly from Aiden Smith (Wychavon and Malvern hills district councils)

- There have been found elements of a fairly high status medieval settlement to the west and south west of the church - This was not expected by the team. It may be possible that the medieval settlement became vacated due to the plague.
- It is possible that ditches acted as a boundary feature, isolating a high status building possibly a medieval hall, located at the far end of the excavations to the south west of the church. Considerable decent sized post holes were packed with stone. A recreation of what the building would look like will be provided in due course. Glass drinking vessel fragments were found – extremely rare.
- Motte and bailey castle may have been in situ – a Norman castle, approx 200m west of the excavations. Several of the linear features excavated on site run towards the motte. A coin from period of Edward I was found in one of these features – one of the best examples of its type.

Matt Maginnis - Lead organiser from WCC for the Bund.

“County Council are fully committed to supporting delivery and have formal role as highway authority, lead responsibility for surface water and also in Ham Lane raising and construction – this aims to be carried out next spring. All tenants and Anglers association will be fully consulted on Ham Lane works be it a diversion or other arrangement. Most works aim to be within closed fishing season. Works have already been carried out on A38 to better capture surface water and remove it from the village. – ie hold back, slow down and remove surface water from the surrounding landscape. There will be no stone unturned to make sure this project happens”.

Chris Prosser – “as a company we are fully committed” – thanks given by all to Chris.

FLAG thanked by Harriett Baldwin MP at end of meeting, with their work being the starting point for all this important community project.

Future actions

- EA will come back end of October 2023 to update further. DH to organise.
- EA to attend PC meetings
- EA - Regular six weekly newsletters to residents.

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