

Pitton Flood Action Group
C/O Peartree Cottage
High Street
Pitton
SP5 1DR

22nd April 2018

Dear Resident,

Pitton Village Flood Defences

Following a serious flood in 1995 a siphon was installed in 1997 on the junction of The High Street and Black Lane. The siphon was designed by Such Salinger, a specialist firm of water engineers. The scheme is thought to have cost about £70,000 and was funded by Salisbury District Council (SDC).

The siphon failed to cope with floods in 2001 and 2003. After the 2003 flood, SDC commissioned a further report from Such Salinger and implemented their recommendations to undertake modifications to the siphon and improve the drainage channel and ditches below the siphon. In spite of these improvements, the siphon and drainage channel/ditches failed to cope with the 2014 flood. This was largely due to the increase in the flow of the winterbourne (over previous years) with the result that the siphon and drainage channel could not cope with the extra flow, causing water to build up, flooding houses in the centre of the village.

Since that time, members of the Parish Council and Chris Sankey our flood warden have attended regular meetings of the Wiltshire Flood Action Group at which representatives of Wiltshire Council (both Councillors and staff) the Environment Agency and relevant water companies have discussed issues with Parish representatives.

Initially there was a clear determination to deal with Pitton's problem once and for all. Consulting engineers W S Atkins were instructed to review the situation and on 9th July 2014 they produced a preliminary report outlining four main options. One option – the construction of a large box drain from Townsend to the top of Slate Way was adopted by the Wiltshire Council as their preferred solution. The option had an indicative cost of £850,000. There was then a delay of a year because Wiltshire Council's contractors, Balfour Beatty were replaced by Ringway. However, we were told that once a formal quote for the work was available the appropriate agencies (Wiltshire Council, The Environment Agency and Southern Water) would sort out its funding, although some contribution would be expected from the Parish Council. In preparation for that, provision has been made through the Parish's element of Council Tax charges for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

Eventually the quotation became available at a surprisingly lower figure of £450,000. We were then told that we did not meet the Environment Agency funding criteria. Southern Water had refused to contribute and Wiltshire had no money. We were offered hope that money might become available in the Highways budget at some time in the future but after nearly four years it appears that the solution is unlikely to be delivered.

The Parish Council has resolved to review the data available to us. Funding criteria change from time to time and discussion with our local branch of the Environment Agency has established that the flow of the River Dun through the village is the EA's administrative responsibility, and not that of Wiltshire Highways Department as was first thought. Wiltshire Council owns the siphon, the engineered drainage channel below it, and the bridge and has responsibility for these assets which could be restricting the flow out of the village. The siphon and engineered drainage channel were inherited from SDC when Wiltshire became a unitary authority.

One way forward is to go back to Such Salinger the designers of the siphon, to revisit their 2003 report to see whether low cost improvements, including a review of the efficiency of the existing siphon, engineered drainage channel/bridge and ditches, would provide significant benefits.

Such Salinger have given a quote for their work at £3,395 plus VAT. This quotation will be considered at the Parish Council meeting on 2nd May. The cost would be covered by the money set aside in the two years to 31st March 2017.

We all know of the cost and inconvenience of a flooded village. The W S Atkins report suggests that more than thirty houses could be at risk in a serious flood. We therefore wish to ensure that the Parish Council agrees to instruct Such Salinger to go ahead with their report and you may wish to attend the Parish Council meetings on 2nd May (7.30pm at Farley Village Hall), or write to Catherine Purves (Clerk to the Parish Council – clerk@pittonandfarley.co.uk) giving your views.

Yours faithfully

James Sinclair

Stuart Mariner

Chris Sankey

Pitton Flood Action Group