



Hurstbourne Tarrant
PARISH COUNCIL

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To all Riparian landowners in the Parish of Hurstbourne Tarrant.

Proposed regrading works to the River Swift

The village of Hurstbourne Tarrant is fed by two winterbournes. The main river course comprising of the Bourne Rivulet and River Swift fills from springs along the valley as far as Vernham Dean, and a less frequent problem that emerges from the Netherton valley. Village lore named the two winterbournes as the Hen and the Cock respectively. The Environment Agency have authority over any works on the main river, which has only been adopted by the EA to just north of Upton.

The water from the Netherton valley is not an annual problem but occurs every few years. Around 1961/62 the then Highways department upgraded the main A343 road and dealt with the water from the Netherton valley by fitting a 600mm pipe under the highway. This could pour onto Dene Green which filled and held water which then overflowed into a 600mm pipe adjacent to the bus stop. This pipe runs under the pavement down to its exit point in Church Street where it enters the Bourne Rivulet. Unfortunately, the size of the pipe was reduced to 300mm at the junction with The Crescent, which causes a major blockage. Before 1961 the water from the Netherton valley ran down the surface of the road which appears to have been more effective as we can find no evidence of properties flooding at that end of the village prior to then. Planks were required to cross into property frontages but that was all. It is possible that allowing Dene Green to store water raises the groundwater levels which then affects the properties downstream for about 100m. Increasing groundwater is, however, caused by various factors.

There have been several critical flooding events in recent history. The last in 2014 led to the formation of the Bourne Valley Flood Group which consisted of representatives from Vernham Dean, Upton, Hurstbourne Tarrant, Stoke and St Mary Bourne. Previous events have led to official

reports being raised on the best way to deal with the flooding, the last major one being the Halcrow report compiled by the Environment Agency in August 2002 as a result of the 2001/2002 floods. Recommendations were made then to reinstate the riverbed to its natural state, and to carry out some highways works. Unfortunately, the report was not acted on.

Although the Environment Agency has authority over the river, they have devolved the maintenance of the river to the landowners (Riparian ownership). Many differing reasons means this maintenance has not always taken place.

You normally own a stretch of watercourse:

- that runs on or under your land
- on the boundary of your land, up to its centre

The deeds for your property or land will tell you if this is not the case. The following link gives more information regarding Riparian ownership and responsibilities (please let the Clerk know if you require a printed copy).

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

The Bourne Valley Flood Group (BVFG) campaigned for a new report to be undertaken and acted upon. The group managed to interest the Environment Agency which in turn led to Hampshire County Council's involvement. Because this was a whole valley problem, funding was made available for the research, and Operation Pathfinder came into being.

Operation Pathfinder was led by Simon Cramp of Hampshire County Council and involves the Highways Agency, Environment Agency, County Council's Engineering consultancy, Test Valley Borough Council, and representatives from each village.

The engineers from the Environment Agency and HCC have walked the river from Vernham Dean through to St Mary Bourne and recorded measurements. In summary, there are several areas where quite large engineering projects need to take place, for example Upton and Vernham Dean. However, Hurstbourne Tarrant only needs to reinstate the main riverbed, and make some modifications to the Dene Green end. Works have already taken place on Dene Green to transfer the water from the Netherton valley more directly to the main pipe, with the installation of the new ditch courtesy of the army engineers after the 2014 floods. Highways engineers need to enlarge the 300mm pipe at the junction with The Crescent, and the pipe has been checked along its entire length and obstructions removed. Part of the pipe was blocked with a partial collapse and other material build up, which contributed to the 2014 issues. The engineers did raise the suggestion of bunding certain field areas where flood waters could be held but this does not have any support from

landowners or the BVFG and therefore will not be happening.

Funding has been received from Test Valley Borough from Community Infrastructure Levy money. This will cover the proposed works to the Swift from the Stoke boundary up to the southern side of Upton. Upton is of course divided between two Parishes, and at this time the engineers are still working on a solution. TVBC has acknowledged the ongoing works and has stated the future bids for funding additional work are likely to be agreed.

Stoke and St Mary Bourne have completed the work across land in their Parish and this can only be beneficial for us further up the valley as the water should disappear downstream much faster. In fact, the river has coped very well on their section. It is now our turn to act on the advice from Operation Pathfinder.

As mentioned previously we are fortunate that the work required in HBT is not so onerous. The Environment Agency does not want to build a 'canal', so we have only to reinstate the riverbed to its natural state. This basically means removing any build-up of silt and debris to the natural level of the river, usually indicated by the stone bed. The banks are not to be disturbed to any great extent, nor dug away resulting in potential loss of natural habitat. The removed silt is to be disposed of within the landowners' curtilage.

The Parish Council have sought the relevant permissions from the Environment Agency and these have been received. The BVFG met with interested landowners from HBT and Upton back when the initial plans were surfacing, and now the advice has been finalised and the necessary funding been raised, the Parish Council is in a position to explain to each landowner everything which needs to be done as advised by Operation Pathfinder.

The aim is to reinstate the riverbed to a working state which was probably last in place over 50 years ago. There are no current plans from the Environment Agency which specify individual areas for the work. When the engineers walked the length of the Bourne valley, they could not examine some smaller sections due to access. Their request is that the river needs to be dug out to expose the original bed, which is open to interpretation and some parts will require less work than others. These areas will be agreed between the landowner, contractor and the Parish Council. This is part of the overall Pathfinder report and a copy of the further work which will be the responsibility of the Highways Agency is attached to show that HCC will be undertaking projects which join up with our work on the river.

If any landowner does not wish the Parish Council to undertake the work required on their land, then it must be pointed out that this decision could have some knock on effect downstream or upstream, and that the EA may enforce maintenance work in the future, the cost of which would then have to be met by the landowner themselves.

In February & March of 2020, we received several flood alerts, and the groundwater rose to levels high enough to make the Netherton river rise, but the new ditch on Dene Green proved its worth by not allowing the water to overflow. The Swift also flowed well. Landowners are best placed to form an opinion on whether the river worked well across their property earlier this year, when the Netherton valley didn't rise, or whether it needs attention in specific areas.

The effect of future flood events after our work is complete cannot be certain, but an assumption could be made that any works in Upton and Vernham Dean may lead to a more effective way of sending their flood water downstream towards HBT. Therefore, the Parish Council would encourage landowners affected by this issue to take advantage of the opportunity to reinstate the riverbed at no cost to themselves. HCC and the other agencies have given us a great amount of support in the Bourne Valley when other areas were in fact flood damaged to a greater extent. We may not get such support again if we don't take the opportunity to do the work now.

We hope to commence the river work in September while the ground is still firm, and therefore little or no damage will be caused by the equipment used.

Please supply a contact telephone number as a call will be made to inform you that work will be due to commence on your land.

If you have any questions. I am happy to meet in person and discuss this further if you would like any more information or have any concerns. We would like to meet with every Riparian owner before work commences, if possible. Please contact the Clerk on the details above to arrange.

Kind regards



Ian Kitson, Chairman, Hurstbourne Tarrant Parish Council