



During the morning of 5 March 2009 Gren Annets and Rod Lord visited Simon Lavin at StreetCare in Tinkers Lane.

It was a very useful and friendly meeting that hopefully will be the start of a longer term co-operative relationship.

As we already suspected there is no such thing as an overall drainage plan although it looks as if next year government will be making it a statutory requirement on councils to map the drainage assets of their areas to formulate just such a resource with the long term aim of becoming more proactive in the way the whole issue is approached. Simon welcomed this forward step.

The current general drainage policy is reactive - ie they will respond to a phone contact if there is a particular report of a blocked gully. The Borough operates two gully emptying-jetting machines, each of which has a two man crew. They aim to clean out gullies once a year and on more major routes such as the A308 maybe twice a year. They have a VERY small budget which covers the whole Borough, and does not allow for major works to be undertaken. It is however possible that Capital Funding could be provided for major projects. Any such funding would be subject to the Borough's Capital Funding Prioritisation process and Members (Councillors) approval.

Existing plans and data are patchy but there is useful detail information on some of our wet spot zones even though not comprehensive.

It has been agreed that an application will be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council addressed directly to Simon Lavin for a collection of these items to be released. One of our major tasks in the coming weeks will be to audit the actual situation on the ground and fill in the gaps. Simon was of course very interested in any product from that exercise and is also interested in receiving information he categorises as "local knowledge" and also identifying landowners etc.

We had previously sent Simon a link to the website for him to download the OGAFCAP map which he had done so has a clearer idea of what area we are dealing with and also from Gren a thorough description of what we are trying to do and reassurance that we will run suggested plans and proposals past him for reaction before finalising anything.

We identified several of our wet spots that we intend to investigate :

- 1 - Cricket Ground - Oakley Green Road
- 2 - Ledger Farm - Forest Green Road
- 3 - Culvert under road at Chapel - Fifield Road
- 4 - The Coningsby Lane shambles
- 5 - The area of the speed hump - Fifield Road
- 6 - Oakley Green House and Forest Farm area - Oakley Green Road

1 - Cricket Ground - Oakley Green Road

Dave Horton, Drainage Engineer at Streetcare and colleague of Simon Lavin, has recently investigated and found that there is a damaged and blocked pipe where water is supposed to pass under the Oakley Green Road. Excavation and repair of this is now on their list of work and will be going ahead.

They do not guarantee that this will solve the problem as it cannot of course be proved until the next inundation. We will report on progress in due course.

2 - Ledger Farm - Forest Green Road

We are investigating the ownership of the land from which a track exits onto Forest Green Road on the opposite side from Ledger Farm and the Coningsby Lane junction. During extreme conditions large amounts of water emerge from this exit onto the road and eventually try to get into the pond at Ledger Farm or into the Coningsby Lane ditch, causing havoc on the road in the process.

We hope to try and put in place some method of diverting the water at this access into the adequate ditches on either side. We do however need to be very sure that this does not cause extra problems for others elsewhere and we will be taking that into account. A survey in 2000 reveals a pipe under the road from the ditch on the west side of the access to a pond on the corner of Coningsby Lane.

This is an ongoing investigation and we will report in due course.

3 - Culvert under road at Chapel - Fifield Road

Local historical knowledge describes this as originally a small road bridge with a stream passing through Willow Creek's garden, under the bridge and round behind the Chapel site. Apparently it functioned much better as a bridge than as a culvert. There may be some merit in taking another look at that possibility as open ditch routes are far more successful and flexible than closed pipe situations.

The data shows that this is now actually TWO full size culverts side by side but the collection of 3 routes all trying to get under the road at this point means that in extreme conditions the double culvert still doesn't have the capacity to cope. These routes are both west and east of Fifield Road running north and also ALL the Coningsby Lane water trying to get through a 6 inch pipe to the same spot. Willow Creek's garden becomes a very large and threatening pond, the pipe to the culvert from the ditch outside the new houses on the old Hare and Hounds site backs up because the culvert is full, and most of us know what happens in Coningsby Lane !

All of this of course leads to problems along the Fifield Road heading north and backs up as far south as the ditch outside the Fifield Inn overflowing.

If any solution is possible it will inevitably be a long term project and we will report in due course.

4 - The Coningsby Lane shambles

This is of course closely connected with the previous item but offers different solutions which indirectly would slightly relieve the pressure on that spot. We looked at survey material from 2000 when there was local effort to get something done on the Coninsby Lane situation. This survey data is interesting and Simon seemed amenable to the idea of resurrecting this project - even suggesting that they might revisit the original offer of help with pipes and culverts. Excellent news !

There is a detailed study done by a local resident dating from 2000 available below this report on the Environment page which summarises the problem and suggests possible courses of action. The effort failed at the time because of unwillingness of local residents to raise a funding contribution. Hopefully we can now resurrect a version of the project and will report on progress in due course.

5 - The area of the speed hump - Fifield Road

Many residents will be particularly interested to know that there was much discussion of the speed bump, ditch and hole in the hedge situation on Fifield Road. Simon showed a willingness to do something about this as one of our main targets for a Quick Fix. We discussed the possibility of an endless round

of clearing and refilling by Wayside so his intention is to first check with RBWM Enforcement what the situation is as to any possibility that they might have had some sort of permission. Depending on the outcome of this the work will be undertaken to clear the ditch and cut slots in the verge. The bulk of the ditch itself is the responsibility of the owner of the field. We undertook to continue efforts to inform him of the situation. By a circuitous route we have managed to get word to the owner of the recent goings on in his field of which he was apparently unaware. As he is rather frail and not very well he has tasked his son to take charge. So it is possible that communications will improve.

A possible positive outcome of all this is that the dumping of soil in the ditch might actually in the short term get the ditch at least partially functioning again. There is of course no schedule yet on this so we will make a point of checking regularly with Simon Lavin for an update on the state of play.

So at least for the moment the need for volunteers to start wielding spades and diggers at this particular site has been postponed though it remains to be seen if we need to resurrect it for the ditch as a whole depending on how much Streetcare are actually able to do when and if it finally happens.

We will report on progress.

6 - Oakley Green House and Forest Farm area - Oakley Green Road

Site visits were made over the weekend of March 7-8. Oakley Green House shows a two inch watermark at the base of the external walls as evidence that the last bout of extreme weather came very close ! Neighbours in the other half of the house lost power and plumbing for a time.

Their problems stem from large amounts of water flowing out of the field entrance opposite their drive. This whole section of Oakley Green Road becomes flooded as far east as the row of terraced houses where the road rises slightly before falling again towards the Red Lion, Tarbay Lane and Dedworth Road.

There is not a short term solution to this situation and the first step will be to carry out a survey of the falls in the immediate vicinity. A detailed study will be posted soon.

There may be localised problem areas of which we are not aware. We welcome contacts to inform us of these. Please use the contact buttons either on the ENVIRONMENT page or on the CONTACTS page or send an email to environ@ogafcap.co.uk

We are very grateful to Simon Lavin for giving up his time for us and hope to build on this positive start to what we hope will be an amicable, co-operative and productive relationship for all concerned.