

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-April 2025.

Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper and Ben Goren, together with volunteers Simon Brookes and Paul Neal, carried out some maintenance, repairs and improvements to the various leaky dams at Hen Brook (Brailes).

Using on-site wood branches, some dams were built up and strengthened, with the structural stability of others enhanced with rebar, stakes and wire banding. Some upper sections of the water channel were dug out to improve water flow and to reduce overspill onto the field.

The main advantage of such work mornings is that there are no contractor costs.

In anticipation of the drier Spring and Summer weather, SAFAG will be looking at the more significant repairs and upgrades to some of the catchment area interventions. Joe Dee, SAFAG's primary use contractor, has confirmed his availability. This will allow any identified works to be actioned promptly, after due authorisation from STC.

From time to time, it's necessary to obtain some consumables to assist the SAFAG work team to carry out the minor upgrades/maintenance. Rather than delay this process to seek STC expenditure approval, it would be helpful if some discretion can be exercised, allowing the smaller/cheaper items to be purchased without seeking prior approval. This would only apply to the materials/consumables used by the SAFAG work team.

Recommendation-that SAFAG be authorised by STC to purchase materials/consumables up to the value of £50, without obtaining prior consent. Any expenditure will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account.

Stour Valley Lions Club has approved a donation to SAFAG of up to £900, for the defined purpose of 'the production and distribution of educational/flood advice leaflets'. SAFAG will need to cover the initial outlay costs and then seek reimbursement from Lions up to the offered amount of £900. The funds will need to be used by 31st March 2026. Mike McCarthy and Brian Cooper attended the Lions Den Presentation evening to accept this offer and to thank the Club for their generous support. An A4 flyer (designed by Ben Goren) is to be delivered to the properties which have historically flooded and those in the close vicinity which may be at risk. The distribution will include areas in Shipston, Long Compton, Brailes, Tredington and Newbold, as well as locations where leaving a supply will be of benefit to local residents and the general public.

The flyer will explain SAFAG's activities in trying to 'Slow the Flow'. Guidance, tips and advice on how to be prepared will also be included. For example, it will explain how to sign up for flood alerts and how to access the site to monitor the River Stour water level at the measuring gauge in Shipston. This site also records whether water levels are rising, remaining steady or falling (this is also a useful guide to the water flows across the catchment area).

Recommendation-that STC approves the spending of up to £900 (as donated by Lions) to cover the printing and any distribution costs of a flyer to be delivered to the identified risk areas of Shipston and the surrounding communities.

The expenditure and reimbursement will both be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account.

Mike McCarthy and John Dinne (in his capacity of Town Mayor) attended the 'Spirit of Shipston' Civic Service. SAFAG promotional material was available and the event provided a useful opportunity to network with other Shipston organisations.

Ben Goren continues to engage with landowners in Brailes, to promote SAFAG's objectives and to seek the opportunity for additional interventions.

Mike McCarthy was invited to attend and participate in a meeting at Stourton Village Hall which was arranged to review and discuss the flooding and sewage problems affecting the Cherington and Stourton area. It provided the opportunity to explain SAFAG's work and successes in relation to flood mitigation measures. SAFAG promotional material was also available and on display.

The meeting was chaired by Manuella Perteghella (Stratford MP) and, in addition to local residents and Parish Councillors, there were representatives from the Environment Agency (EA), Severn Trent Water, WCC Flood Team, WCC Highways, and councillors representing STC, SDC and WCC.

It's understood that a review is to be planned for 3 months' time.

Ben Goren updated SAFAG's website with details of this meeting.

After the Stourton meeting, Mike McCarthy was contacted by a Sutton under Brailes resident and informed that a bund (installed by SAFAG) had deteriorated, resulting in a visit to assess the situation, which was subsequently followed by a meeting with the landowner. A 4- stage plan has been agreed to reduce the significant surface water run off from the land into Sutton Brook. In the absence of a traditional Parish Council, a local residents' group has put aside a small amount of money for NFM maintenance and may, if required, be in a position to make a contribution.

Whilst at Sutton under Brailes, Mike McCarthy was able to establish that the EA and Severn Rivers Trust (SRT) have commenced work locally at Church Farm. This involves the desilting of a large pond. Additional NFM interventions are also planned, although the timings will be dictated by when the EA and SRT can secure funding.

The dams at Stretton Brook are known to have suffered some significant damage over the winter period. Some have been washed away, and others have toppled over and scoured the banks of the watercourse. Mike McCarthy had a meeting with the Compton Scorpion Estate Manager to review the options. It appears the smaller leaky dams have been causing some issues so it's possible that these will be removed and replaced with larger stronger dams in the wooded area on the upstream side of the old railway embankment. Discussions continue.

Following a report on the Compton Scorpion Estate from SRT and the EA, it's likely that additional NFM work will be carried out, subject to the landowner's approval and the allocation of the required funding.

The order of rebar (1m x 10mm-40) has been delivered to the WCC depot on the Brailes Road, ready for use. It's in a locked room with other SAFAG consumables. The on-site record has been updated.

A review of future rebar requirements indicates that a supply of some longer rebar lengths (1.25m x 10mm) will be required to help secure slightly larger dams. 1.25m is not a standard length, but a supplier has been found who can cut sizes to order.

Recommendation-that STC approval the purchase of additional rebar-1.25m x 10mm-20, at a quoted cost of £80.76 (this includes delivery).

This expenditure will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account.

The April report to STC referred to the flooding affecting Mill Street car parks. Those who leave their cars there (particularly visitors who are unfamiliar with the risk of flooding in adverse weather conditions) are at risk. Brian Cooper and Ben Goren designed a notification to be delivered to the hospitality and event locations near or close to the Mill Street car parks and the town centre. It requests that the venues monitor the river levels and warn customers/guests if localised flooding is imminent, so that vehicles can be moved to safety. It includes details of how to sign up for flood alerts, as well as how to monitor the River Stour water level at the Shipston gauge. As only a small number of notifications were required, these were printed up at STC (thanks go to Emily) and were delivered by Brian Cooper to the identified locations.

Recommendation-that STC approve for payment the mileage and car parking expenses invoice for £167.50, submitted by Mike McCarthy.

This expenditure will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account.



Picture-team at work on Hen Brook at Brailes.