

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-July 2025.

SAFAG's role is evolving, with increasing emphasis on providing leads and introductions to the Environment Agency (EA) and Severn Rivers Trust (SRT). These organisations then produce reports to landowners and farmers for their consideration. Where agreement is reached, these agencies can fund and project manage any agreed interventions, such as ponds and wetlands etc. To date, works have been carried out in Chipping Campden, Sutton under Brailes and Todenham, with Compton Scorpion and Long Compton to follow.

Networking with other groups and organisations is now a very useful way of spreading the concept of 'slow the flow' and the benefits of a range of interventions (especially ponds and wetlands-with environmental benefits), to mitigate flooding. To this end, Ben Goren and Mike McCarthy have been liaising with the Chair of SWFG (South Warwicks Farmers Group), which consists of 50+ farmers. The plan is to arrange a Flood Resilience Day in the Sutton under Brailes area in October/November with around 12 local farmers. The objective is to lobby them to install further flood prevention measures on their land.

SAFAG will want to cover the costs of this dedicated purpose meeting (refreshments-tea, coffee etc). Potentially, this could be very productive if further interventions can be installed on upstream farmland. Details are yet to be finalised, and any proposed expenditure will require the approval of STC at the appropriate time. To prepare for this possibility, a provision will be made within SAFAG's General Fund for this and similar opportunities.

At the June meeting of STC, approval was given for the verbal quote received from Simon Healey for the work required to build some new replacement leaky dams on Stretton Brook -£900 plus VAT, a total of £1,080. However, the invoice received was for £1,350 plus VAT, a total of £1,620.

The contractor underestimated the amount of time required to carry out the identified work, resulting in an extra day's cost (£450 plus VAT-a total of £540). It seems it took longer than expected to move the materials, create access to the selected new build locations and overcome the steepness of one dam.

The work has been inspected by Mike McCarthy. The new dams are large, sturdy and secured with strong posts and enhanced with wire banding.

Pictures of 2 of the new dams are shown below.

Landowner fences were removed for access and are due to be re-erected.

Some re-seeding will be required-this can be carried out by the SAFAG team.

The contractor has been told that only £900 plus VAT, a total of £1080, was going to be paid immediately, with the additional amount requiring the authorisation of STC.

Recommendation-that STC approve the additional cost of £450 plus VAT (£540) for the intervention works carried out on Stretton Brook.

This will be costed against the SAFAG designated bank account (Maintenance Fund).



Brian Cooper represented SAFAG at the River Day event in Shipston, which was part of the Great Big Green Week. It was an opportunity to participate in a druid river blessing of the River Stour.

Springtime is when any work on interventions generally starts, primarily because of weather and access arrangements. The historical practice of limiting the May meeting of STC to the appointment of the Mayor and the approval of Standing Orders etc resulted in a timing issue this year because of the need to commence work on some Pig Brook interventions, before the quote was received and approved. This was because of favourable weather, ground conditions, access arrangements and contractor availability. The June meeting of STC would've been too late as the contractor wanted to complete the intervention repairs in late May.

On this occasion (April meeting), STC gave permission for the work to proceed.

Note- The agenda and minutes of the May 2025 meeting of STC confirm that there was some urgent business undertaken, including a vote, at the request of the Planning Committee (Bellway Homes consultation).

Consequently, if a time critical quote approval were to be required at the same time next year, SAFAG will request an agenda item for the May meeting to enable any proposed works to be considered and approved.

Reference to the verbal quote from Joe Dee (£2,700 plus VAT) for the repair work on the Pig Brook interventions was included in the June report to STC-for information purposes. Permission to proceed had already been given at the April meeting, even though the cost had not at that time been established.

For the record, and the avoidance of doubt, acceptance of the quoted cost from the contractor should be put to a formal vote at a meeting of STC.

Recommendation-that STC approve the quote of £2,700 plus VAT from Joe Dee for the repairs to the interventions on Pig Brook.

This will be costed against the SAFAG designated bank account (Maintenance Fund).

The repairs on the Pig Brook leaky dams have now been completed. Mike McCarthy and Brian Cooper have inspected the work. There has been a significant enhancement to the structural stability of these interventions, as evidenced by the large number of additional supporting posts used. Part of the problem on this watercourse was the erosion of the banks which tended to affect the operational effectiveness of some of the dams.

By restoring the banks and securing these in place using planks and posts, this should address this issue-time will tell.

Once the ground/weather conditions permit (it's too dry at the moment), there will be some re-seeding required.

Several of the dams will benefit from increasing the overall height. It's likely this will be a task for the SAFAG team and volunteers, and this is being investigated.

Pictures of 2 of the dams are shown below.



Dam at Pig Brook-note the large number of posts used to secure both the intervention, and the planks used to retain the re-constructed bank of the watercourse.



Dam at Pig Brook-just additional posts-no problem here with water erosion of the bank.

Currently, the only intervention within the Shipston built up area boundary (illustrated on the Policies Map-pages 44 and 45 of the Shipston Neighbourhood Plan) is a leaky woody dam, at the bottom end of a drainage ditch leading from Hanson Hill to the Oldbutt Road green space. This intervention was originally built by some Oldbutt Road residents to minimize the impact of flooding caused by a blocked culvert entrance. There have been historical flooding issues around this location and representations have been made by residents at town council meetings in the past. After significant damage to the leaky dam following heavy and prolonged rainfall events in early 2024, it was repaired and enhanced by SAFAG.

The drainage ditch leads to a closed culvert (STC's responsibility) on the green space. The entrance is protected by a grill to prevent debris/brash from entering the culvert but, if the grill is blocked by rubbish, this can lead to localised flooding. Periodic inspections indicate that this seems to be kept clear on a regular basis. However, there is a gradual build-up of silt close to the culvert entrance, especially over the autumn and winter periods.

Periodic removal of the silt is a regular maintenance task which falls to STC to arrange.

A picture of the culvert and affected area is at the end of this report.

The reports submitted to STC are also distributed to the SAFAG group members and volunteers, a few days after the relevant TC meeting. It ensures that everybody is kept up to date with key developments and pending activities.

The reports are also posted onto the SAFAG website which will allow potential volunteers/interested parties a better understanding of the routine tasks undertaken, as well as future plans and objectives.

Mike McCarthy recently participated in a Nature4Water Warwickshire Avon webinar. It was promoting water quality and resilience, together with investment and solutions, in the Warwickshire area. This included NFM (Natural Flood Management) and NBS (Nature Based Solutions). Mention was made of a new resource gradually being introduced across the UK to facilitate the creation of new natural leaky dams and wetlands. What is it?

See picture at the end of this report.

Updates

1. From the March and June reports. In May, local parish councils were approached about contributing towards the cost of maintenance work on the Stour catchment area interventions. Some acknowledgements were received and Long Compton Parish Council responded positively, albeit with conditions. Discussions are ongoing.
2. From the April and June reports. The flood awareness flyers have been distributed amongst the SAFAG team and volunteers for delivery within Shipston and the local villages. This will be phased over a few weeks, to include 'at risk' areas, parish councils and key locations within the respective communities. In Shipston this will include copies being deposited at such locations as the Post Office, Library, Schools, Leisure Centre, Medical Centre, Ellen Badger Hospital etc.

Note- So far, distributions/deliveries known to be completed- Shipston (John Dinnie, John Fedorowycz and Brian Cooper), Tredington (Mike McCarthy) and Newbold (Len Grey).

As the printing invoice for the flyers has been received from KMS Litho, a reimbursement request and report were sent to Stour Valley Lions Club who have transmitted the printing costs of £321 to the SAFAG designated account.

From the April report. Manuella Perteghella (Stratford MP) recently chaired a meeting at Cherington Village Hall (in Stourton) to review the flooding and sewage problems affecting the Cherington and Stourton areas. A follow up/review Multi Agency meeting has been arranged at the same venue- 9.30am on 11th July. SAFAG will be attending.

3. From the June report. The exhibition display kit (with its own storage bag) has been delivered to NCH. When not being used by SAFAG, it can be made available to other groups/organisations-as approved by STC.
4. From the June report. Some of the leaky woody dams at Butlers Road Farm at Long Compton will require some maintenance work. It has been decided that this can be carried out by the SAFAG team and volunteers. A further site visit may be required to locate and assess the dams not found at the last inspection and determine whether SAFAG has sufficient materials to complete all the planned work.
5. From the June report. STC approved the request for business/contact cards for the 4 SAFAG core team members, with the condition that the expenditure was not to exceed the £130 quoted by KMS Litho. The order was placed with online printer BananaPrint, at a total cost of £76.75.



Culvert at Oldbutt Road green space.



Potential new recruit for SAFAG?