

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-August 2025.

Mike McCarthy's pending house move away from the Tredington/Shipston area will result in the eventual departure of the last original member of the SAFAG team. It's expected that this is likely to occur by the end of this year, or early 2026. Until then, he intends to remain semi active and contribute to the phased introduction of revised plans and objectives covering the next 2 years.

The group members place on record their thanks to Mike for the enormous contribution made to SAFAG over the past 11 years. From arranging and attending presentations, meetings, liaising with landowners, farmers, contractors and various agencies, to regular inspections of interventions and organising SAFAG workdays- the list is extensive. This knowledge and experience cannot readily be replaced. Consequently, the core group members (Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper, John Dinnie and Ben Goren) had a meeting to discuss how this will affect the future role and activities of SAFAG, and to prepare accordingly.

The primary task is to retain an element of continuity and to ensure that the key current records are accessible to the team members. Much of the historic records are paper based and may in the future be of interest to the Shipston Museum, if a display of localised flooding were to be considered.

Everything else will be stored digitally (arranged by Ben Goren), with secure access for the SAFAG team members. It will take some time to collate this information. John Dinnie will step up to lead the group with Mike McCarthy to support as and when required. An identified priority will be to create a restricted access centralised record of the names, locations and contact details for the landowners, farmers and active agencies, such as the Environment Agency(EA), Severn Rivers Trust (SRT) as well as local government (SDC and WCC). Mike McCarthy will collate this information, together with the maps identifying the locations of the various interventions, and Ben Goren will arrange for the digital storage.

A record of SAFAG's key contractors (names and contact details) has already been completed by Brian Cooper.

To review and manage this transitional period, meetings will now be held monthly rather than on an ad hoc basis.

It's clear that additional members will need to be recruited, both for the core group and the team of volunteers.

The monthly report from SAFAG will be used to keep STC updated with developments.

Note-it's understood that Maggie Goren, a well-known resident of Brailes and former local flood representative, intends to submit to the parish magazine (The Feldon News) an article expressing appreciation for Mike McCarthy's efforts over the years to help deliver flood mitigation measures locally.

The Shipston Forum has been contacted and it's hoped to run an acknowledgement for the work Mike McCarthy has carried out over the years to mitigate localised flooding.

Repairs/upgrades will be required to some of the leaky woody dams at Draycott, on a watercourse which feeds into Knee Brook. A visit is to be arranged to identify the work required.

STC's website includes a booklet 'Shipston on Stour, Tredington and Newbold on Stour Emergency Advice', prepared by SAFAG in Spring 2015.

This provides contact points, together with advice and guidance, in the event of flooding. Because the document is now 10 years old, Brian Cooper has been validating the information, some of which is out of date. Once this has been completed, a revisited booklet will be designed/created by Ben Goren and submitted to STC to replace the existing one.

Representing SAFAG, Mike McCarthy attended a meeting at Cherington Village Hall, organised by Manuella Perteghella, MP for Stratford on Avon. This was a review of progress on the local sewage and flooding issues affecting the Cherington and Stourton areas which were raised at an earlier meeting in March.

There were representatives from WCC, STW (Severn Trent Water), as well as Parish, District and County councillors. Residents also in attendance were from Cherington, Stourton and surrounding areas, including Brailes and Long Compton. The EA chose not to attend.

It provided the opportunity to question the officials on the prevailing concerns, as well as the plans/proposals to deliver long-term solutions to the problems (primarily sewage discharge) which have existed in the area for several years.

Mark Banning, representing WCC, was unable to explain why the WCC Flood Strategy is still uncompleted after nearly 10 years. This needs to be followed up- Brian Cooper will ask WCC Councillor Jo Barker to investigate and advise.

Furthermore, the Stour catchment doesn't seem to be receiving any funding support from the RFCC(Regional Flood & Coastal Committee) multi- million pound project.

STW have prepared an overview report, detailing their activities and plans for the area. The acid test will be whether their actions/proposals will stand up to a repeat of the winter weather experienced over 2024/2025.

STW will now be looking at the Brailes area.

Note-the meeting provided the first opportunity to use the desktop display kit-see photo below. Ben Goren will be designing some additional signage for this.



SRT's work in the Sutton under Brailes area extends beyond the de-silting of one pond which was mentioned in the June report to STC (including pictures). There are other historic ponds at this location which were created by the current landowner's grandfather. They will also require de-silting and this is likely to be a future SRT project.

SAFAG hopes to arrange a meeting with SRT to get a better understanding of their plans and proposals for the Stour catchment, some of which are understood to be dependent on funding

In the meantime, SRT have completed a pond and 3 silt traps/scrapes on the Sutton under Brailes side of Brailes Hill, the objective being to reduce water run-off and help slow the flow into the Stour. They plan to return later this year to implement some woodland planting in the same Sutton under Brailes area. *See picture below-one of the 3 silt traps/scrapes.*



Alcester Town Council (ATC) is in the early stages of preparing a flood action plan. Having viewed the SAFAG website, an invitation was extended to John Dinnie and Brian Cooper to visit and review how SAFAG had organised and delivered the flood mitigation measures for the Stour catchment area.

The meeting was with representatives of ATC's new flood team who also provided, in advance, a list of the matters which were of interest to them.

This included administration related procedures, the relationship with STC, the role of external agencies (such as the EA and WCC), selection and role of the core group members and volunteers, insurance cover, any emergency/flood action plans, as well as the type of NFM interventions and their required maintenance (especially leaky woody dams).

Copies of SAFAG's recent flood awareness flyers were left, which contained key contact points and websites to assist residents prepare in the event of a flood warning/alert being issued. The role of SRT was also explained.

ATC is already in contact with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Heart of England Forest and the EA. The latter has yet to decide whether hard engineering on the River Arrow and/or the River Alne is feasible.

It's hoped that the meeting provided some constructive guidance, based on SAFAG's experiences over several years, and the offer has been made to provide further information and help if required.

John Dinnie and Brian Cooper revisited Butler's Road Farm in Long Compton to complete a task which had previously been curtailed due to time constraints. The intention was to find all the dams on a stretch of watercourse and determine what work, if any, would be required. This was completed, despite the extensive undergrowth, up to the point where access wasn't possible to the next section of land. It's not known whether there are any interventions on that final stretch. If it is discovered that there are more to identify and record, the appropriate access permission will be sought to complete the review.

John Dinnie used the what3words app to record the position of those dams that were located and then created an excel spread sheet to collate all the key information (including some photos). Overall, the dams were in good condition, although a number do have a large gap between the bottom of the dam and the water level. For most of these, posts and rebar on the upstream side to catch the brash is likely to be sufficient. A few may require alternative remedies. Because the operational efficiency of the dams hasn't been compromised, the minor upgrades being considered are a low priority.

This will be discussed at the next SAFAG meeting to decide how and when to move forward with any identified work. To ensure that inconvenience to the farmer is minimised, it's likely that this will be deferred until Autumn 2025 or Spring 2026. Undergrowth clearance, for safety reasons, will be a priority.

Pictures below- This illustrates the access difficulties. The watercourse borders the hedgerow/trees in the background. In many areas, the dense undergrowth (primarily brambles) concealed and covered both the watercourse and the dams.



It was necessary to be cautious when clearing a path through the brambles to the watercourse because it would be easy to step into the ditch which was found to be quite wide and deep in places.



Recording the location of this dam on the what3words app. The undergrowth concealing this intervention and watercourse was typical of what was encountered during the search to locate all the dams.

On 11th August (time to be confirmed), there is a scheduled on-site meeting at Cornmill Meadows. The various interested parties will be there to review and discuss the creation of a pond, which will be funded and project managed by SRT. SAFAG will be attending.

The proposed location (grid reference SP 26457 39692) is adjacent to Pig Brook, and is defined in the Landowners Consent Form, together with pond dimensions, all of which will require STC's approval. The proposals include a channel to push water from Pig Brook to the pond. SRT has already calculated that these combined measures will have only a very small positive impact on localised flood mitigation, although there are environmental and wildlife benefits.

As SAFAG is looking to consolidate its relationship with SRT, it should be an opportunity to discuss other matters of mutual interest, especially their future proposals for Long Compton and the Compton Scorpion Estate.

The repairs/upgrades to the leaky dams on Nethercote Brook in Long Compton were inspected by Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper, John Dinnie.

Additional supports have been added to some because of significant damage caused by last winter's storms, including erosion to the banks. This watercourse is particularly challenging because it is wide and very deep in places. Initially, it was difficult to find some of the dams targeted for remedial works, due to extensive undergrowth. 3 had not been repaired/upgraded, almost certainly because the contractor couldn't locate them due to thick vegetation (especially brambles). Unplanned/unscheduled work, especially to prevent erosion, was carried out on some of the other dams and this easily compensated for those that were missed. Joe Dee has been contacted and will be returning to complete the work on the 3 dams originally missed.

See 4 pictures at the end of the report.

It has become apparent that the contractors are occasionally faced with a difficult task in providing a quote/estimate for planned works as some of the costs, materials and time taken, can vary and are likely to be outside their direct control. This has already been experienced with Simon Healey who miscalculated the time needed to complete the installation of the new dams on Stretton Brook. In future,

this may require a certain flexibility when comparing estimates/quotes with the final invoice.

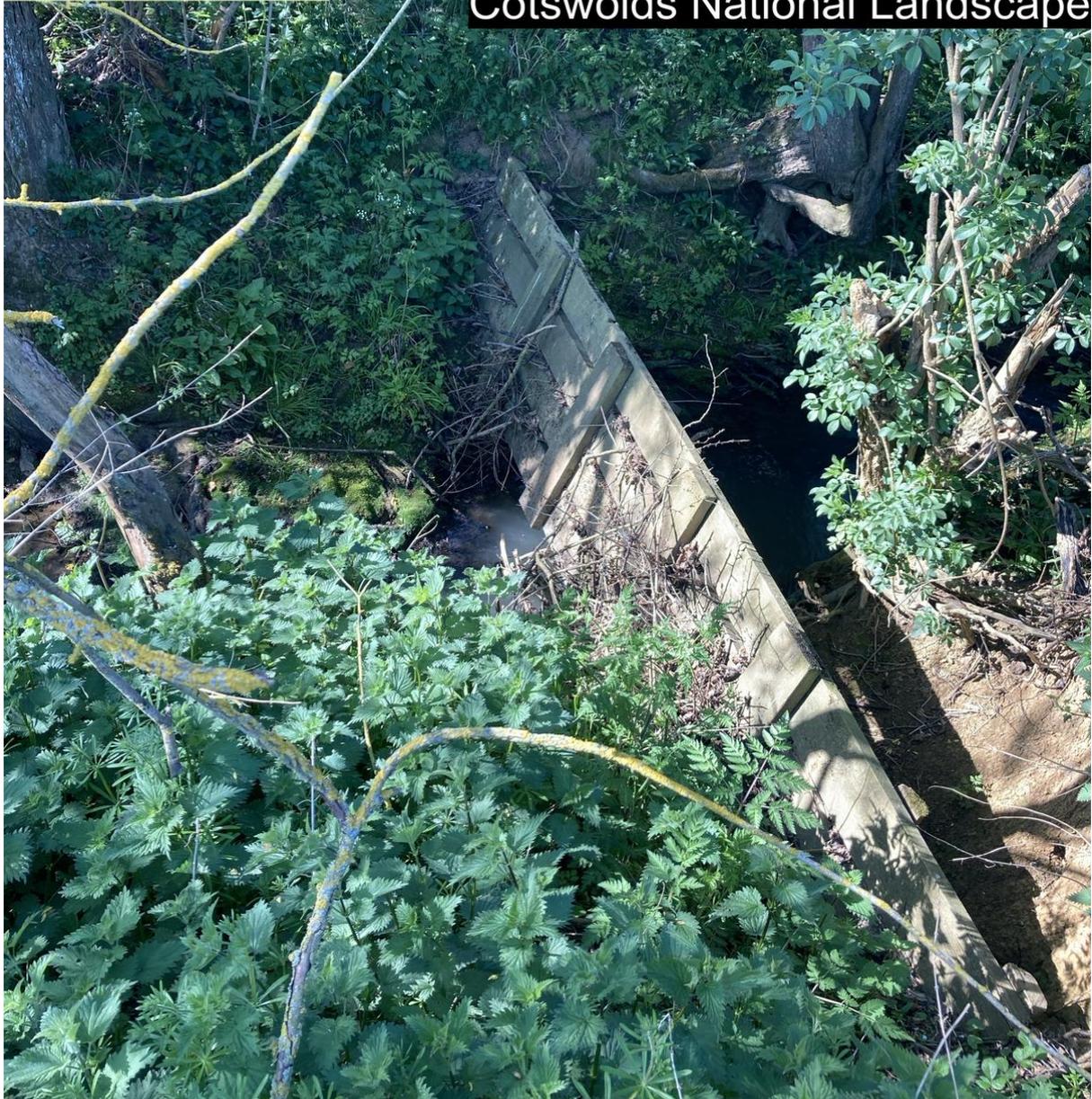
Another problem (for contractors and SAFAG team members) is finding interventions which have become concealed behind undergrowth/extensive brambles. The SAFAG team will be looking into possible solutions (including extending the use of the what3words app), or perhaps something more directly visible, such as stakes/poles with painted top sections.

Updates

1. **From the July report.** Distribution of the flood awareness flyers. Now completed-Brailes (Ben Goren) and Alderminster (Dave Benton).
2. **From the July report.** STC approval was given to accept the estimate for £2,700 plus VAT from Joe Dee for the repair works on the Pig Brook leaky woody dams. The actual invoice submitted was for £2,600 plus VAT. A saving of £100.



30 April 2025
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Shipston-On-Stour
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CV36
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Cotswolds National Landscape



One of the leaky woody dams on Nethercote Brook, damaged because of the winter storms.



This newly constructed dam replaces the previous one which was washed away by the force of the water. The debris from the original dam is still in the watercourse, hidden behind the trailing tree branches.



The contractor has created an innovative way to improve overall strength and stability. The posts in the background are attached to the tree in the background. Watercourse bank also stabilised because of previous erosion.



This dam wasn't originally scheduled for any work, but the erosion to the bank was addressed to improve overall stability. Some re-seeding will be required.