

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-December 2025.

Severn Rivers Trust (SRT) have successfully secured CIL funding of £60K from SDC to cover various pipeline (spade ready) projects, under the project title of 'Shipston on Stour Natural Flood Management Advanced'.

With one exception, all of these have been referred to in previous reports to STC. More specifically these cover- wetland scrape creation and leaky barriers at Compton Scorpion Estate, and pond restorations at Church Farm (Sutton under Brailles) and at Yerdley Farm (Long Compton).

The one scheme not previously reported is the floodplain reconnection at Leys Farm Livery near Alderminster-downstream of Shipston.

All the projects share the objective of increasing water storage on land upstream of residential areas, slowing the flow of surface water during peak rainfall events and reducing the rate and volume of rainwater reaching communities downstream. There are identified additional benefits-a reduction in soil erosion, increased biodiversity and carbon storage.

Each landowner will be required to sign a consent form, agreeing to the installation of the interventions on their land. This will include their future maintenance responsibilities.

The project case submitted to SDC included an acknowledgement of the close working relationship between SRT and SAFAG.

Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper and John Dinnie visited Shire Hall in Warwick for a meeting with WCC Councillor Dale Bridgewater and Jagmit Mahal (WCC Flood Team).

This proved to be both constructive and informative. An overview of SAFAG's historic and current activities was given and it was agreed that NFM was now becoming a more widely accepted flood mitigation option.

There was broad acceptance that catching the water where it falls (in the headlands of the River Stour) is the way forward and that this should form the basis of a catchment wide approach, introducing and incorporating nature-based solutions (ponds, bunds, wetlands and tree planting). Another objective is to promote the introduction of better farming practices. SAFAG suggested that the efforts of all the interested parties/agencies (EA, SRT, WCC, SDC, SAFAG etc) would be better coordinated by the creation of a dedicated Project Officer. Herefordshire County Council has used this approach for the rivers Wye and Lugg.

The lack of funding for the on-going programme of intervention maintenance over the longer term was raised, as the current financial position could only sustain the planned level of repair/upgrade repairs for around 18 to 24 months. WCC's funding model is likely to change in April of 2026, which may provide some scope for support.

A follow up meeting is already scheduled for 13th May 2026 to review this, as well as the other matters discussed at the meeting. In the meantime, SAFAG will continue to gather evidence and information which can be used to underpin the representations made.

Post meeting, a request was sent to Councillor Bridgewater, proposing that one of WCC's Flood Team apprentices (plus mentor) visits Shipston for a half day local meeting with the SAFAG team. This would be followed by a visit to some of the local interventions to get a better understanding of the work being carried out in the Stour catchment area. This would also be an ideal way of developing the working relationship with WCC.

SAFAG welcomes STC Councillor Jo Barker (who also serves as WCC Councillor for Shipston), to the core team. This should provide a more direct line of communication and influence at county level.

As previously reported, the booklet titled 'Shipston on Stour, Tredington and Newbold on Stour Emergency Advice', which can be found on STC's website, is out of date. Primarily, this document covers flooding and its consequences. Most of the information is still valid although some of the contact/advice line details need to be updated.

This has already been reviewed, with only one piece of information outstanding- confirmation of the Emergency Rest Centre details. It was originally planned to defer updating the booklet until this was known but, with adverse winter weather approaching, it's been decided to proceed with a new version. This will then replace the existing document on the website which can be amended to include the Emergency Rest Centre location once this has been confirmed.

The existing document would be very difficult to change, so a new one will be required.

Ben Goren and Brian Cooper met recently to assess the changes required and to agree the format.

Recommendation-that STC approves the quote from Ben Goren for £100 to cover the cost of a new version of the Emergency Advice booklet for STC's website.

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

Friday 15th November saw a day of continuous steady rainfall, causing disruption across the area. The gauge at the Shipston river bridge continued to rise with the Stour reaching a peak of 2.9m at 5.45am on Saturday 16th November. As expected, the car parks on Mill Street had begun to flood, but there were no reports of homes being affected. Some local Facebook comments suggested the remedy of de-silting the arches under the bridge to facilitate the flow of water.

Some years ago, the EA looked at hard engineering and/or de-silting. Both were discounted because they were not considered to be feasible.

In fairness to the EA, they remain active in the area and frequently work alongside SRT and regularly liaise with SAFAG to identify local opportunities, especially with NFM.

In addition, they have provided financial support, with grants to SAFAG via WCC (£195K) and re-imbursing the cost of initiatives such as (WFA) Whole Farm Appraisals (£25K) and (WEIF) Water Environment Improvement Fund (£36K). In total, this has amounted to around £256K. This has directly supported the installation of many of the interventions (leaky dams, ponds, bunds, wetlands and tree planting) upstream of Shipston, on and around the various brooks and watercourses which

feed into the Stour. All are intended to 'slow the flow' and mitigate the impact of localised flooding.

Ben Goren ventured out on 14th November, during the heavy rainfall, to check the leaky dams on Sutton Brook in Brailles. Some photos were taken.

The picture below shows the situation before the peak levels of water flow. It was expected that, within a few hours, the level would've risen further. It illustrates the volume and force of flood water which the dams face in spate conditions.



Representing SAFAG, Mike McCarthy attended the November meeting of LCFAG (Long Compton Flood Action Group). Also in attendance were WCC Councillor Jo Barker, a number of local farmers, Parish Councillors and residents. WCC's Flood Team were absent. The flood support 'Resilience Group' is now up and running. Using cameras, the problems with the culverts have been identified and resolved. It's estimated that a minimum of 24 local properties were internally flooded last winter. The group intends to use Storm Geomatics to assess the various potential schemes around Long Compton at an estimated cost of £70K-this has yet to be funded.

Any new works which seek to bypass the village will require monitoring by the LLFA (Local Lead Flood Authority-WCC) and SAFAG to ensure that there is no increased flood risk to downstream communities (including Shipston).

Going forward, LCFAG is clearly focused and well-motivated.

Mike McCarthy recently walked Sutton Brook between Brailes and Sutton under Brailes. This was a preliminary visit rather than a full inspection of any interventions. As expected, undergrowth was still high, but it was possible to quickly check the visible slatted dams. Most were in good condition. 2 were leaning and will require multiple posts to be installed to prevent further deterioration.

Because SAFAG has a post rammer at the WCC Depot, this repair work can be carried out by the team-it will only require the purchase of some suitable posts (1.8m x 110mm, half round and treated) available from Batsford Timber. STC has an account with the supplier so an order can be placed after STC has approved the expenditure. To avoid a delivery charge, John Dinnie has offered to collect the posts from Batsford Timber and take them to the WCC Depot for temporary storage. Using the team to carry out this work will represent a significant cost saving compared to using a contractor.

Recommendation-that STC approves the purchase of 12 posts (1.8m x 110mm-half round) from Batsford Timber at a cost of £71.64 plus VAT.

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

John Dinnie, Brian Cooper and SDC Councillor Dave Passingham visited Ditchford Farm to inspect some of the interventions on Pig Brook, including a side stream with feeds into the brook. The locations had already been recorded on what3words which simplified the task of finding them.

The first section of Pig Brook (Ditchford Farm), including those on the side stream, comprised of 1 bund (in good condition) and 10 dams, one of which was leaning slightly.

Some were silting up which inhibited the water flow and others were affected by excessive build-up of vegetation debris

It's likely that any remedial work can be carried out by the SAFAG team, when conditions are better suited. This will be discussed at the next team meeting.

The remainder of the leaky woody dams along Pig Brook, up to the Hanson Track bridge over the brook, had already been inspected and logged onto what3apps.

They were quickly revisited to review how well they had coped with the recent heavy rainfall. Some desilting may be needed, together with further minor works to help secure the banks of the watercourse. All could be carried out by the SAFAG team in the future.

A photo of the leaning dam (with debris vegetation) is at the end of this report, together with a picture of the large bund.

While in the area, a visit was made to the designated Shipston and Stretton on Fosse Habitat Banks, bordering Pig Brook. Further details will be included in the January 2026 report from SAFAG to STC, as the Environment Bank proposals may provide opportunities for further nature- based flood mitigation measures.

Updates

From the October report. The repairs/upgrades to the leaky dams on Sutton Brook at Brailes have been completed. It was touch and go whether this would have to be deferred until next year due to concerns about the ground and weather conditions, as well as contractor availability

Brailes Parish Council will be re-imbursing SAFAG with the net cost of £1,750. This will be actioned once the contractor submits the invoice to STC.

A picture of one of the repaired dams is shown below.



Note the support required to stabilise the bank of the watercourse. This type of erosion is now becoming a regular problem.

From the November report. The SAFAG team have set a target of inspecting 290 interventions annually (April to March) over a 3-year period. The total for 2025/2026 will be reduced by 12 to 278. This reflects the fact that the owners of Campden House (on the Cam near to Chipping Campden) have made a commitment to maintain all the interventions on their land (1 pond, 2 bunds and 9 leaky dams). The total of interventions inspected so far is now 158 (154 dams, 3 ponds and 1 wetland).

The first picture below shows the leaning dam at Ditchford Farm (on the side stream feeding into Pig Brook), with the vegetation debris which has built up. A few of the others were similarly affected by this type of debris.

The second picture below shows the bund at the bottom of the Ditchford Farm section of Pig Brook. It's large and, in places, is more than 1m high. The scale can be appreciated by reference to Dave Passingham standing in front of the bund. It has an entry and exit pipe, allowing for the gradual discharge of water from the field into Pig Brook, which is behind the bund and in front of the hedgerow in the background.





