

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-February 2026.

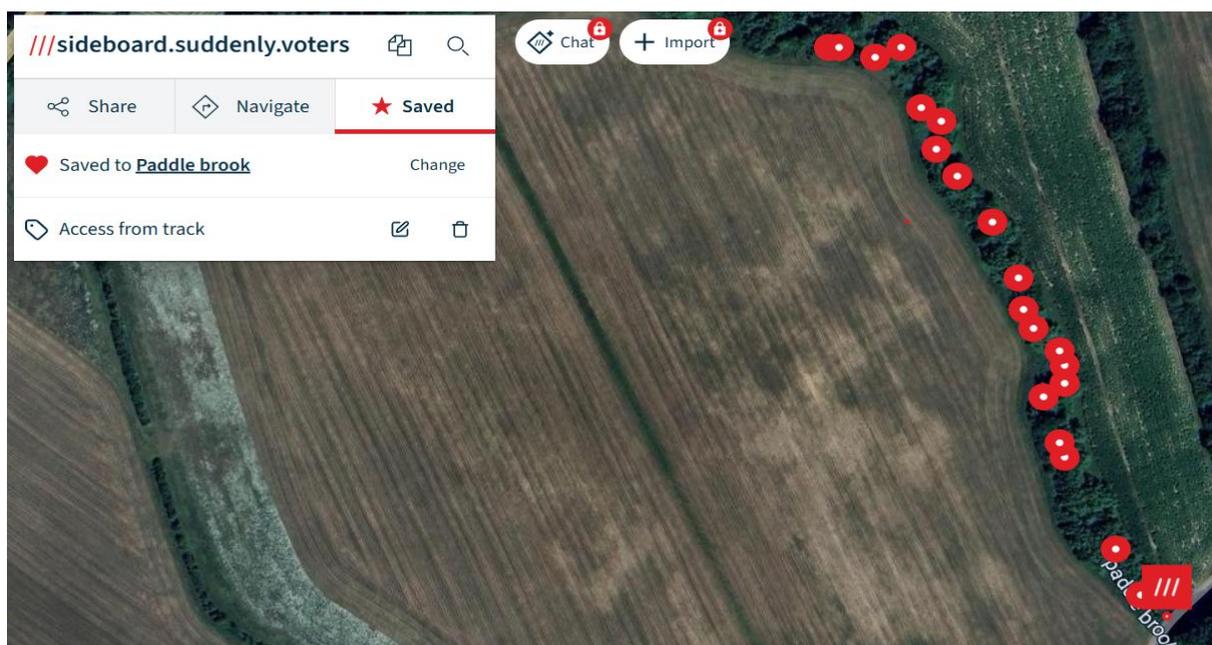
Closing a road in Shipston because of flooding, for safety reasons, isn't a decision delegated to STC. It requires permission/authorisation from WCC/ local Police which can be difficult to secure, especially during periods when the authorities are busy struggling to cope with the wider impact of traffic disruptions.

Nottingham County Council (Notts CC) have overcome this problem by creating the Community Flood Signage Scheme. Quite simply, it allows trained members of the community to close local roads (within defined/agreed parameters) during periods of significant flooding.

Brian Cooper came across this scheme because of a Facebook report and contacted Notts CC to obtain further details. Any identical initiative in Warwickshire would require the WCC Flood Team to implement it. The contact details for the Principal Officer (Dr Josh Wells), Flood Risk Management, Highways and Transport at Notts CC have been passed to the WCC Flood Team and WCC Councillor Dale Bridgewater. It is for them to decide whether to investigate and consider something similar for implementation across Warwickshire.

Update-a response has been received from the WCC Flood Team (Jagjit Mahal). It appears that they were already aware of this scheme, having had previous contact with Notts CC. There have been discussions about it and running a trial. Further enquiries are to be made and SAFAG will be updated with any developments, including defined conditions.

The benefits of logging the details of the leaky woody dams on what3words can best be illustrated by the results. Thanks to the skills of John Dinnie, an assessment visit can now give an overview visual positioning of the dam locations, in addition to the more precise what3words locations. The examples below are taken from the November 2025 visit to the eastern section of Paddle Brook.



List

what3words address

Log natural
Dam blockage

Paddle Brook	///sideboard.suddenly.voters		
Paddle Brook	///huts.belts.blur	1	
Paddle Brook	///exile.poses.zealous		1.5
Paddle Brook	///furniture.grumble.fights		1.8
Paddle Brook	///branching.pencils.century	2	
Paddle Brook	///encodes.quickly.gender	3	
Paddle Brook	///traps.bypass.slam	4	
Paddle Brook	///daydreams.raced.item	5	
Paddle Brook	///formation.unstable.goodnight	6	
Paddle Brook	///woodstove.zealous.options	7	
Paddle Brook	///mats.craftsman.trees	8	
Paddle Brook	///inflating.trickster.servers	9	
Paddle Brook	///uplifting.besotted.factually	10	
Paddle Brook	///starts.pulled.buckling	11	
Paddle Brook	///marriage.palm.dentures	12	
Paddle Brook	///tricks.volunteered.thumb	13	
Paddle Brook	///fake.decanter.fell	14	
Paddle Brook	///chef.hides.animals	15	
Paddle Brook	///thin.costly.broom		
Paddle Brook	///rural.kidney.fairly	16	
Paddle Brook	///topics.delight.siblings	17	

The above listing is from John Dinnie's more comprehensive report, which included ranking the condition of the various dams and a description of the identified repair works, ranging from rebuilds to the more minor tasks which could be carried out by the SAFAG team.

Once the remaining dams on this section of the watercourse have been checked, a schedule of repairs/upgrades will be completed so an appropriate contractor's quote can be obtained.

Braving the sub-zero temperatures, on the morning of Monday 5th January, Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper and John Dinnie visited Woodlands Farm at Long Compton to assess the on-site interventions on a watercourse now named as Whichford Woods Brook (Woodlands Farm Brook-James Walton). This feeds into Nethercote Brook.

2 ponds, a wetland and 20 dams were located and logged onto what3words by John Dinnie.

The slatted dams were all in good condition, with 2 identified as suffering from minor erosion of the watercourse bank. The temptation was too great so, using some on site available wood, impromptu appropriate repairs were carried out.

A chance encounter with the landowner provided some information about his plans for further flood mitigation measures. An additional attenuation pond is being created, together with some identified natural pond areas (which could be extended to form wetland features), all helping to slow the flow of water downstream towards the village.

It was established that the installation of ponds further upstream of Nethercote Brook would create the most effective means of local flood mitigation. Representations will

be made to the relevant landowners by the owner of Woodlands Farm, who is also Chair of LCFAG (Long Compton Flood Action Group). SAFAG will be kept updated and, where appropriate, will seek to involve the EA and SRT who are likely to be interested.

Picture shows Mike McCarthy using on site wood to address the erosion issue. Note- most of the dams on this watercourse have additional vertical frontal supports which improve structural stability as well as helping to catch the brash being washed down from upstream. This extra support is something the SAFAG team feels can be re-used elsewhere on slatted dams



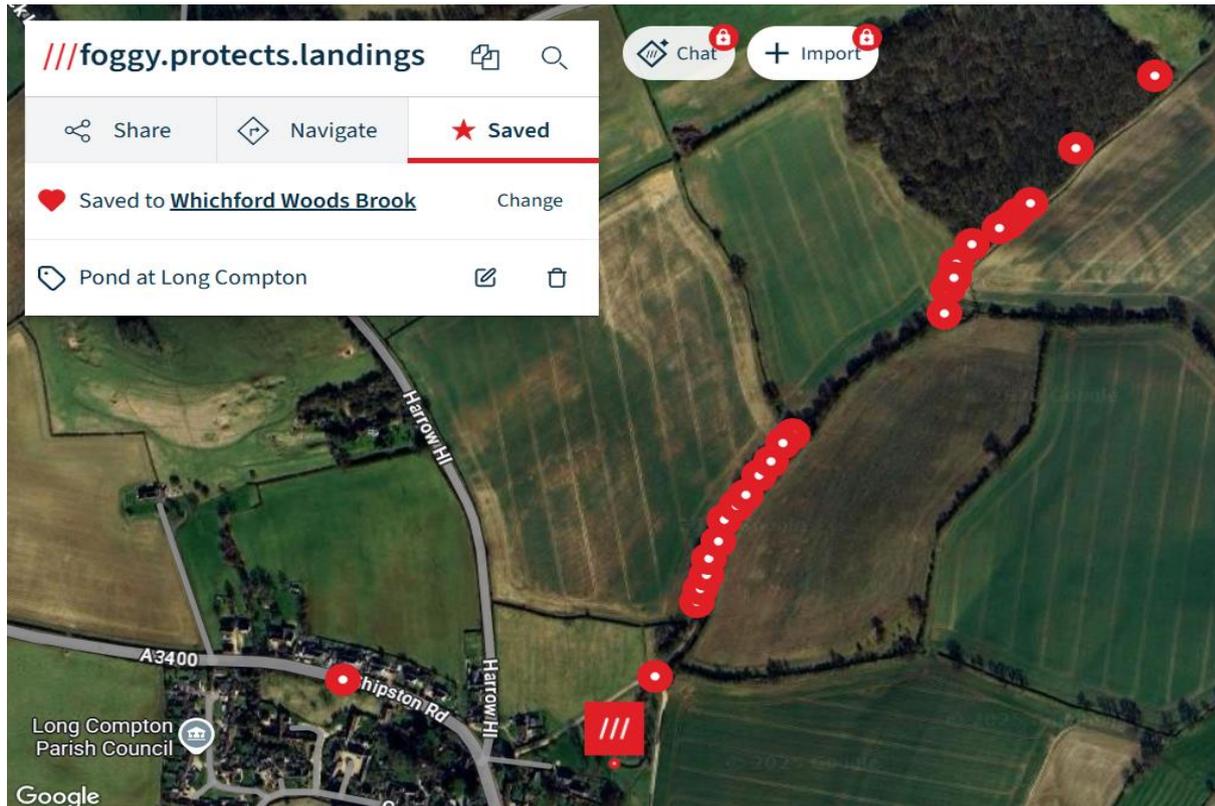


Picture above-the designated wetland area. There has been significant coppicing/tree removal. This was due mainly to the removal of diseased ash trees (ash dieback). The landowner has been recommended to leave logs lying on the ground to help reduce water flow and improve filtration.

Picture below- pond originally created by the landowner- subsequently enlarged with help from SAFAG.



The what3words map of the logged interventions on Whichford Woods Brook (Woodlands Farm Brook-John Walton) is shown below. Other than from photos, most who read this report (either at STC or from SAFAG's website) will not have seen interventions (especially leaky dams) in their actual location. This is because permission is normally required from the landowner/farmer to walk the land to see them. Not so in this case. The brook runs adjacent to a public footpath which leads from the main road up to Whichford Woods. The interventions are easily visible from the public right of way, so it's an ideal opportunity to see them in operation. Feedback indicates it's also a very pleasant and popular walk.



3 days later (Thursday 8th January), the intrepid trio were out again. After collecting supplies from the WCC Depot, it was a visit to Sutton under Brailes (New Barn Farm), to carry out some repairs to 2 leaky woody dams on Sutton Brook. The steepness of the of the watercourse bank proved to be a bit of an obstacle, with the water being deeper than first thought (as Brian Cooper discovered). Using the new post supports and banding, the stability of the 2 dams was consolidated. All the interventions along this section of Sutton Brook (Middle), a total of 17, were checked/assessed and were logged onto what3words by John Dinnie. At least one will require some additional support, while others may need work to address erosion of the watercourse banks and to enhance overall structural stability (vertical supports or rebar which would also help catch any brash from upstream).

A secondary ditch, feeding into Sutton Brook was found with 6 leaky dams. All will benefit from the same upgrades identified for some of the dams on the primary watercourse. Time constraints meant these could not be logged onto what3words.

However, the location and both watercourses are easy to reach and it's likely that a SAFAG team can carry out the required work at an appropriate time.

Picture below shows Mike McCarthy and John Dinnie working on one of the dams on the main watercourse (Sutton Brook). Behind the camera, Brian Cooper, drying off after misjudging the depth of the water.

Note the significant erosion of the nearside bank. This was partially filled with on-site wood, together with brick, stones and small blocks of discarded concrete.



Prior to the commencement of the work, it was necessary to buy 2 boxes of large nails from John Lyne's in Shipston to fix the support posts to the dams, together with a small Stanley Knife to cut the banding. The total outlay was £11.61.

Because the cost fell under the defined limit of £50, as approved by STC at the April 2025 Town Council meeting, prior approval wasn't required.

The unused nails and Stanley Knife will be stored at the WCC Depot with SAFAG's other consumables.

Following the work undertaken on Sutton Brook at New Barn Farm, a review of potential Health and Safety issues was undertaken. The steepness of the watercourse bank presented a significant problem. Although not insurmountable, it made the task much more difficult than was necessary. As a result, Mike McCarthy

subsequently purchased a portable collapsible (telescopic) ladder at Wellesbourne Market for £40, which he has tested, and risk assessed as suitable for SAFAG's use. It will easily fit into the boot of a car, and it can be extended to a height which will allow for safe ascent and descent, to overcome the obstacle of steep watercourse banks. It is also suitable for working on dams when the water level is higher than wellington boot level.

As the outlay cost for the ladder didn't exceed the authorised limit of £50, prior approval wasn't required from STC. A reimbursement invoice has already been submitted to STC by Mike McCarthy for this, and the nails and Stanley Knife. **A total of £51.61. This expenditure will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account (Maintenance Fund).**

It's anticipated that the ladder will eventually be stored at the WCC Depot, but it will need to be chained (with a combination lock) to the bench, to protect against theft/unauthorised removal.

A recent article in the Stratford Herald (16th December) reported that STW (Severn Trent Water) is now using satellite technology to track extreme weather in a bid to keep wastewater systems running smoothly. Using it allows them to see what's happening on the ground, even through thick cloud cover, providing a bird's eye view of flood risks.

It's unclear if this new technology could be extended to cover the River Stour and its key watercourses, to help monitor pluvial and fluvial flooding risks across the upstream catchment area, and to possibly issue timely and accurate flood warnings to Shipston and the downstream communities.

This is likely to be covered in the meeting with STW on 29th January, and details of this will be included in the March report to STC.

The January SAFAG core team meeting provided the opportunity to review a few pending matters.

An invitation has been received to participate in the Rivers Day event on 14th March. Details have yet to be confirmed, but it's likely this may include a presentation and the use of promotional display material.

SDC Councillor Dave Passingam, already a volunteer and supporter of SAFAG, had been invited to join the core group. His local knowledge, and channel of communication to SDC, will be of considerable benefit.

Although Ben Goren has stepped down from the core team, he remains active in the Brailes area and keeps SAFAG updated with relevant local flood related matters. The plans to create and centralise a digital record of the intervention locations are being reviewed. It's known that the EA originally had much of this information, but it's unclear whether it's still available for use. Enquiries will be made. In the meantime, one of the volunteers is known to have considerable technology skills and will be approached about taking on this task.

To increase the profile and local awareness of SAFAG's activities, the Shipston Forum will be requested to provide regular updates on the activities carried out, which will help with the on-going drive to recruit more volunteers.

Update-Brian Cooper contacted Laura Parker, editor of the Shipston Forum, who has agreed to publish regular news updates (including photos). SAFAG's contact details will be included for those who may be interested in volunteering.

It's intended to prepare a plan to visit/assess more interventions over the period February to May 2026. The support of the SAFAG volunteers will be required and their availability over this period is being established. Once confirmed, an appropriate schedule of dates and target locations will be drawn up.

The arrangements and agenda for the visit (20th January) of WCC Councillor Dale Bridgewater and representatives of the WCC Flood team were reviewed.

This will be followed by a visit from Rachel Woodward, Community Flooding Officer- Warwickshire, Severn Trent Water on 29th January. No set agenda required.

On a damp and misty Monday morning (19th January), Mike McCarthy and Brian Cooper visited 2 separate locations on the Northwick Park Estate, to inspect the various interventions.

Firstly, to Day's Lane in Blockley. This cul-de -sac leads uphill to a footpath, adjacent to which there are a number of recorded silt traps. These were originally created to capture water flow and sediment, thereby reducing the flood risk to Blockley village. The overgrown vegetation made it difficult to find them individually (*see picture below*), as they seemed to blend into one another. As far as can be ascertained there are 11. Their size and large capacity more closely resembles attenuation ponds rather than silt traps. They will benefit from some excavation to improve operational efficiency, although this would be a job for heavy equipment. Perhaps the next time SRT are working in the area?

Supporting the silt traps is an area of cross-slope woodland, which was planted (approx. 300 to 400 trees) to help absorb and control downhill water flow. This is now beginning to mature.





Picture above-the cross- slope woodland area. In the background, one of the houses benefiting from the flood mitigation measures at this location.

Next up, a trip to the Northfield Park Business Centre. The on-site watercourse, Marbrook, discharges into Knee Brook to the east of this location. There is one large bund, and a very effective area of wetland (*see picture below*). To locate the leaky dams, it was easier to walk in the watercourse itself. There are 12 dams (including 2 spreaders). 2 were identified as needing to be raised in height. With ample materials on-site, it's considered that this work, together with some additional flood mitigation opportunities, can be carried out by the SAFAG team in late spring/early summer.





Picture-Mike McCarthy enjoying a stroll in the Marbrook watercourse. It was considered safer to do this, rather than trying to keep climbing up and down the slippery watercourse banks.

WCC Councillor Dale Bridgewater (portfolio holder for Flood, Fire and Rescue) and Jagjit Mahal (WCC Flood Team) attended a meeting on 20th January, arranged by SAFAG, and hosted by LCFAG (Long Compton Flood Action Group).

Representing SAFAG- STC Councillor Vanessa Benjamin-Smith (Chair of SAFAG), Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper and John Dinnie.

For LCFAG-James Walton (Chair of LCFAG) and Sam Gibson.

Mike McCarthy led the presentation covering SAFAG's work across the entire Stour catchment. This included the team's move towards nature- based options and 'catch the water where it falls' solutions, together with the promotion of better farming practices. The need to create a top- down co-ordinated process was emphasised, with the recommendation that the various agencies look to support the creation of a Project Officer.

Funding remained an on-going concern, as SAFAG's current programme of intervention repairs/upgrades can't be sustained over the long term due to financial constraints.

The team continues to seek new project opportunities and, because of its local connections, will seek to act as an introducer for SRT and the EA who seem to have better access to funds.

Sam Gibson then delivered a presentation on behalf LCFAG, identifying the issues and concerns arising from the most recent localised flooding in 2024, when a number of properties were affected. This covered both the impact of inadequate culvert capacity and the Nethercote Brook and Shawnbrook in spate conditions. Research has led the LCFG team to consider various solutions, including the creation of additional ponds/bunds/flood plains upstream of the village, as well as a by-pass which would carry the excess water around the village and discharge into the western section of Nethercote Brook. The latter option would need to address the concerns about possibly increasing the flooding risks for those communities further downstream.

Dale Bridgewater and Jagjit Mahal both emphasised the need for LCFAG to prepare a business case, to include multiple modelling options. As with all potential new schemes/applications, securing funding will be the key.

SRT have also been liaising with LCFAG on various schemes (more ponds) in Long Compton.

James Walton has been liaising with local farmers and landowners about further flood mitigation measures.

The meeting concluded with a brief visit to some of the locations identified in Sam Gibson's presentation, including a leaky dam and pond at Woodlands Farm.

Note-SAFAG has already arranged a follow up meeting with Dale Bridgewater and Jagjit Mahal at Shire Hall on Wednesday 13th May. This was agreed shortly after the original meeting on 6th November 2025.

Mike McCarthy represented SAFAG at the meeting of LCFAG on 22nd January. Also in attendance, WCC and STC Councillor and SAFAG member Jo Barker.

In the Chair-James Walton. Jane Brewin, who originally formed the flood group, has resigned from both the Parish Council and LCFAG, due to policy disagreements.

The general consensus was that the visit from WCC Councillor Dale Bridgewater and Jagjit Mahal (WCC Flood team) was a positive step and an overview was given for those not attending the meeting on 20th January.

LCFAG intends to press ahead with a modelling exercise and has so far raised approx £30K towards the cost.

SRT has commenced work on 2 new NFM (Natural Flood Management) ponds on Yerdley Farm, close to Nethercote Brook.

The group continues to liaise with WCC Highways about culverts, drains and bypasses.

Note-SAFAG has 42 recorded interventions on Shawnbrook at Ashby Farm in Long Compton. This has recently been sold. James Walton is attempting to establish contact with the new owner to discuss additional flood mitigation options and secure permission for SAFAG to visit and assess the existing dams, ponds and wetlands

At the request of STC Councillor Hilary Kelly, John Dinnie attended an on-site meeting at Cornmill Meadows on 23rd January, together with Dave Hudson and Imogen Rutter (SRT).

Although there is clear evidence that the created scrape does fill up to a reasonable level of water from Pig Brook, it doesn't appear to last long.

SAFAG has been requested to look at installing a diverter dam, thereby allowing the water in the scrape to remain for a longer period.

The best location has yet to be confirmed and permission from the EA may be required.

If this proceeds, it may provide an opportunity for SAFAG and its volunteers to build a dam from scratch. This last occurred over 5 years ago at Stretton.

SAFAG's materials/consumables are stored at the WCC Depot on the Brailes Road (next to Shipston Re-cycling Centre). The stock control record at that location has been revamped by Brian Cooper to make it simpler and easier to use. A copy is retained off-site, just in case the original goes 'walk about'.

Periodic inspections are carried out at the depot, with both records being updated and reconciled as required.

On 29th January, the SAFAG team (Mike McCarthy, John Dinne, STC Councillor Vanessa Benjamin-Smith, and WCC and STC Councillor Jo Barker) hosted a visit from Rachel Woodward (Severn Trent Water, Community Flooding Officer for Warwickshire), together with a colleague Paul who has been with the STW team for 3 weeks. Also attending-SDC Councillor Olivia Hatch.

The STW team have only been in post for a couple of months and are attempting to establish contact with all the relevant local organisations. The use of STW's satellite technology to monitor flooding is being investigated and SAFAG will be updated once the enquiries have been completed.

Positive community-based discussions, with an overview of SAFAG's role and objectives being covered, with the expectation that the STW team deliver more than just 'sign posting'. The issues/problems about SUDS, drains and attenuation ponds on the Campden Road were of particular interest with a number of questions being raised.

Overall, the meeting represented a useful opportunity to network and establish a working relationship with STW.

Updates

From the November report. A correction. The number of interventions reported on Woodlands Farm was incorrectly recorded as 37 dams, 2 ponds and a wetland. This should be 1 pond, 1 wetland and 24 dams.

From the December report. The new Emergency Advice Booklet (covering flooding and extreme weather conditions) has been completed and sent to STC to replace the previous version on STC's website. Once the Emergency Rest Centre has been designated by STC, the document will be updated.

Note- as at the date of this report, the Advice Booklet had not yet been put on the website.

From the December report. The team has set the objective of assessing 278 interventions over the period April 2025 to March 2026. Since the last update to STC, the number inspected has risen from 158 to 239 (218 dams, 4 ponds, 2 bunds, 11 silt traps, 1 tree planted area and 3 wetlands).