

SAFAG-report to Shipston Town Council-March 2026.

SAFAG (represented by Mike McCarthy) and Wellesbourne were the only 2 Flood Action Groups at the 2nd February meeting of CaBA (Catchment Based Approach). Other attendees included most of the local Agencies and Trusts, together with a number of stakeholders, such as anglers, water quality groups and Canal Trusts.

There was a morning visit to the River Leam at a farm in Huningham, to look at flood mitigation measures installed by SRT (Severn Rivers Trust) and the EA (Environment Agency). These included tree planting, scrapes and wetlands.

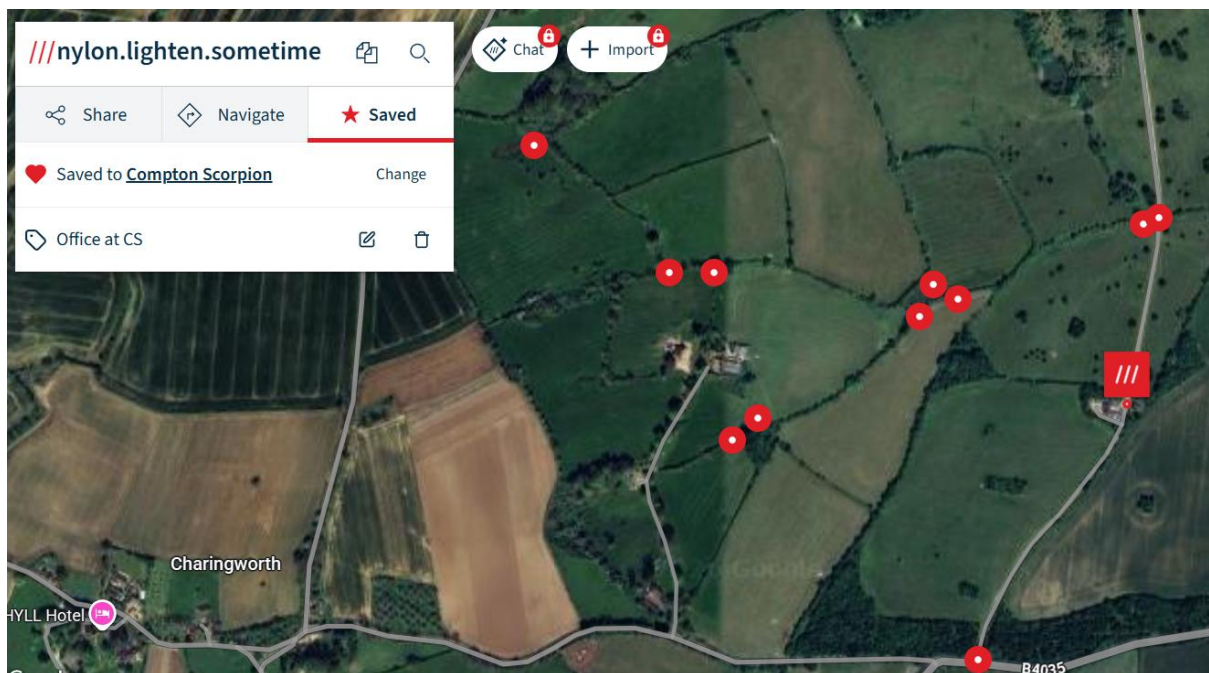
In the afternoon there was a discussion about the 5-year Warwickshire Avon Catchment Plan 2025-2030.

It seems the Agencies are working hard to find funding streams for the various groups.

On the misty morning of 4th February, Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper and John Dinnie carried out a scenic hike across a quagmire obstacle course better known as the Compton Scorpion Estate. This was to inspect the extensive flood mitigation measures recently installed by SRT and EA contractors. These included, 'chop and drop' dams, off-line ponds, in line ponds and wetland areas, together with associated diverter/deflector channels and the desilting of existing overgrown ponds. John Dinnie logged all the interventions onto what3words (*see overview location map below*).

One innovation, not previously seen, was the use of soil surface netting on the diverter channels to prevent excessive erosion.

There are various watercourses at this location, all of which feed into Back Brook. This discharges into the Stour on the northern side of Tredington, between the village and the roundabout on the Fosse.



Compton Scorpion Interventions - 4th February 2026

List	what3words address	Description
Compton Scorpion	///nylon.lighten.sometime	Farm Office at Compton Scorpion
Compton Scorpion	///alienated.scoping.quality	Chop & Drop and diversion
Compton Scorpion	///enveloped.watch.saunas	Chop & Drop and diversion
Compton Scorpion	///textiles.prospers.scavenger	Bunded off- line Pond
Compton Scorpion	///mural.similar.handrail	Diverter from ditch to inflow to pond
Compton Scorpion	///cover.passes.inefficient	Large inline pond
Compton Scorpion	///clumped.definite.grills	deflector above pond
Compton Scorpion	///formless.doormat.imprints	cascade of 3 ponds
Compton Scorpion	///marinated.burden.crusaders	Large off- line pond and wetland
Compton Scorpion	///underline.mass.slugs	Confluence of the brooks
Compton Scorpion	///continued.pimples.roofer	Joe's Bridge

Above-key location details of interventions, as recorded by John Dinnie.

Picture below- 'chop and drop' dam in a watercourse, helping to divert the water to an off-line pond and wetland behind the hedgerow.





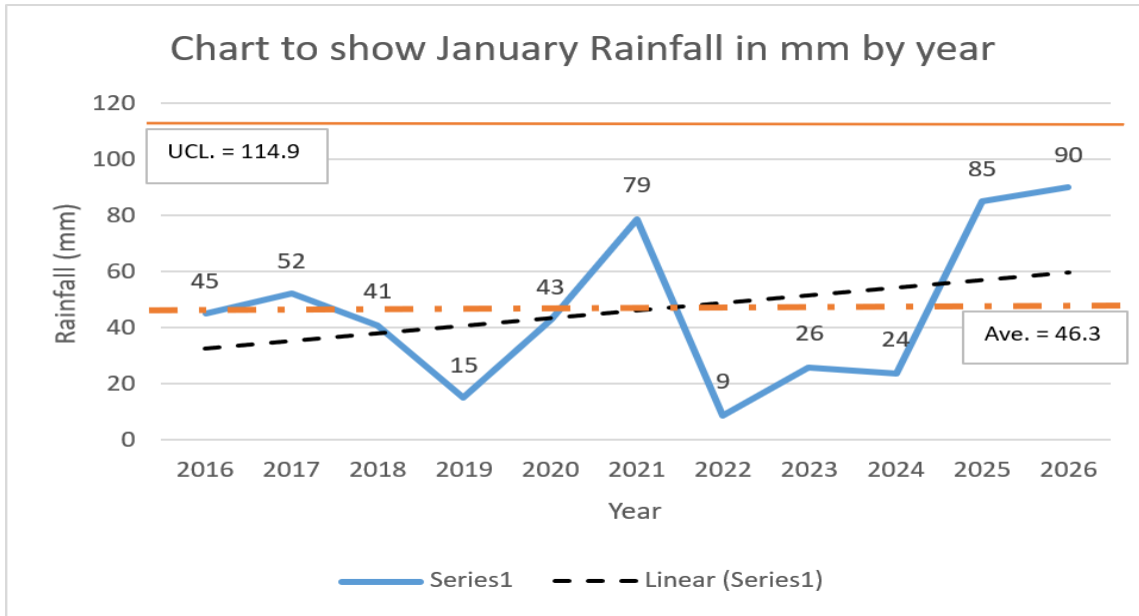
Picture above-large off-line pond.



Picture above-large desilted in-line pond.



Picture above-the use of netting (not seen before) to protect the ground surface from soil erosion. The channel leads to an off-line pond and wetland.



The above chart was prepared by John Dinnie, based on information provided to Mike McCarthy by a local ‘weather guru’. It illustrates the rainfall statistics for the month of January, covering the period 2016 to 2025. If predictions are correct, winter weather will become milder and wetter, with summer being drier and warmer.

Picture below-John Dinnie ventured out during Storm Chandra (late January) to look at some of the dams on Pig Brook-this is an example.



Rainfall isn't consistent across the Stour catchment area. This is illustrated by a review of the rain gauges covering both Shipston and Chipping Campden for a 24-hour period- 8th to 9th February.

Shipston recorded 6.2mm, with Chipping Campden receiving 12.8mm. The western catchment area of the Stour includes Knee Brook, one of the key watercourses which, in spate conditions, contributes significantly to the flood risk for Shipston and the downstream communities.

Under the heading 'Building Water Resilience for Flooding and Drought', SAFAG will be hosting a meeting of the members of the South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group on 19th March at the George in Brailes. Other attendees will include SRT and the EA.

After presentations, there will be a visit to Church Farm-the aim being to promote/demonstrate alternative farming practices and natural flood mitigation measures (ponds, wetland, tree planting), with the objective of catching rainfall where it falls.

As host, SAFAG will be responsible for the refreshment costs (butties/tea/coffee). STC was pre-advised of this in the July 2025 SAFAG report which was presented to the Town Council on 14th July.

It's estimated that, based on the numbers likely to attend this business meeting, the cost shouldn't exceed £250.

Recommendation-that STC approves the expenditure of up to £250 to cover the cost of refreshments for the meeting with the South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group. This expenditure will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account (General Fund).

On 12 February there was a meeting between Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper, John Dinnie and volunteer Simon Brookes. This was to review and consider the options for recording the location of the various interventions and creating a centralised digital record, accessible to the key SAFAG members.

Although this is still being investigated, along with google maps, it appears that the what3words app does include enhanced options (Pro version and version for teams), both of which will require the purchase of an annual licence. From the information obtained so far by John Dinnie (23rd February), the Pro version won't deliver SAFAG's requirements, and requires multiple individual licences. The terms and conditions of the teams version are being reviewed, before a final decision is made.

The SAFAG core group had a meeting on 19th February to discuss a number of pending matters. In attendance, STC Councillor Vanessa Benjamin-Smith (Chair), Mike McCarthy, Brian Cooper, John Dinnie and WCC and STC Councillor Jo Barker.

The current financial position was covered by Brian Cooper, including pipeline expenditure. Once all the remaining interventions on Paddle Brook have been assessed (in hand), a contractor's quote will be sought for the expected major repair/upgrade works.

Mike McCarthy outlined the arrangements concluded so far for the meeting arranged with the South Warwickshire Sustainable Farming Group. It's hoped this will lead to more local farmers supporting natural flood mitigation measures.

Representations by Mike McCarthy with a key location landowner in Long Compton have resulted in an opportunity for leaky woody dams on a couple of watercourses. If this develops further, SRT will be invited to visit and assess the potential and, hopefully, fund any agreed works. If not, SAFAG may consider covering the cost.

Update-Mike McCarthy has since contacted both the EA and SRT with details about this opportunity and will continue to monitor developments.

The SOS (Save our Shipston) campaign against the extensive development proposals for Shipston was debated. SAFAG will provide flood related help and guidance, if so requested, and will liaise with STC's Planning Committee as required.

The proposals for Cornmill Meadows were reviewed. If some form of diverter dam is considered, diverting excess water from Pig Brook to the on-site pond, this may be subject to WCC and EA consultation and approval. It was agreed to donate 1 bag (25k) of flood bund mix seeding for use around the pond and channel areas.

In the interests of SAFAG volunteer safety, it was decided to acquire a further supply of high viz vests, identical to those worn by the core group team when on-site. Mike McCarthy to investigate.

Update- the actual cost of acquiring 10 additional high viz vests amounted to £52.67, including delivery. The order was placed without pre-authorisation from STC and retrospective approval will be requested.

Recommendation-that STC retrospectively approves the purchase of 10 additional Flood Action Group high vis vests at a cost of £52.67.

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

With the advent of better weather, it's intended to step up the number of intervention inspections, which will provide opportunities for the SAFAG volunteers to lend a hand.

Update-to ensure identified Health and Safety and Risk Assessment requirements are covered, Mike McCarthy has designed an interim Briefing Form which will be reviewed prior to the commencement of any visit/work- day. Each attendee will be required to sign a copy to confirm understanding and compliance.

The telescopic ladder, previously being stored by Mike McCarthy, has now been moved to the WCC Depot where SAFAG's consumables are currently retained. Before doing so, a secure locking device (combination lock) and chain was obtained to secure the ladder against unauthorised removal at a cost of £23.98.

As this expenditure (£23.98) falls below the £50 limit approved by STC at the April 2025 meeting of the Town Council, prior authorisation wasn't requested. A re-imburement invoice has been submitted. The cost will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account (General Fund).

Flood resilience in Shipston was reviewed. Currently, there is no Shipston Emergency Plan in place. This will be raised with STC by Vanessa Benjamin-Smith and Jo Barker. There is the need to identify suitable Emergency Centres and, once confirmed, the Emergency Advice booklet (prepared by SAFAG) on STC's website can then be updated with the relevant details. A formalised procedure for the notification of Lawns2Mow (Flood Wardens) needs to be instigated by STC.

The next phase of intervention visits/assessments was discussed. Establishing contact with the relevant landowner/farmer, to secure access consent, is proving to be difficult because SAFAG's records aren't always accurate. Phil Wragg's contact book is available and will provide some of the information required. This is being stored at the new 'SAFAG' room at NCH and will be joined by the records accumulated since 2006. These will be gradually sorted and re-organised.

Brian Cooper has contacted the 5 individuals who have expressed an interest in the volunteering opportunities with SAFAG, and additional information has been provided to

them. 2 have requested the opportunity to accompany the team on a visit, to better understand intervention assessments and the role requirements.

Although volunteers are expected to take personal responsibility for their own safety, and for any other team members on site, the question of liability insurance arose. It's currently unclear whether STC's insurance cover extends to SAFAG's volunteers. Vanessa Benjamin-Smith will investigate this and update the team accordingly.

Subsequent to the SAFAG meeting, Mike McCarthy identified that some further enhancements would be needed to adhere to the prepared Health and Safety protocols being introduced by SAFAG, primarily for the benefit of volunteers. Anti-bacterial wipes for the first aid kit and safety glasses to deliver eye protection, especially when in areas of woodland and extensive undergrowth. 12 glasses were obtained and 6 packs of anti-bacterial wipes- these will be retained with the first aid kit in the 'SAFAG' room at STC.

As the expenditure (£22.24) didn't exceed the defined £50 limit, prior authorisation wasn't requested from STC. A reimbursement invoice has been submitted.

The cost will be allocated to the SAFAG designated bank account (General Fund).

On the afternoon of Thursday 19th February, John Dinnie and SDC Councillor Dave Passingham revisited Paddle Brook. The inspection of the interventions on the first section of this watercourse was carried out in November 2025, so this was the opportunity to complete the task. A total of 30 leaky woody dams have been accounted for along Paddle Brook, and all have been logged onto what3words by John Dinnie.

With a number identified as requiring major works, a schedule will be prepared and a contractor's quote obtained for approval by STC.

On 23rd February, Brian Cooper, John Dinnie and volunteer Paul Neal visited the Ditchford area to look at the interventions on Brexit Brook. A Health and Safety briefing was carried out on site and documented.

There was evidence of significant coppicing along one side of the watercourse, which helped with locating the leaky dams but, with much of the woody debris still in place, it required careful walking to ensure no mishaps. A total of 21 interventions were located (19 log dams, 1 pond and 1 bund). These were logged onto what3words by John Dinnie.

Overall, most of the leaky dams were in reasonable condition and seemed to be operationally effective, with some requiring the height to be raised and/or erosion/scouring issues to be addressed, and a few others needing additional/replacement support posts. 2 or 3 will need to be rebuilt due to significant damage. Once a schedule of work has been prepared, a contractor's quote will be obtained for approval by STC.

The watercourse extends into Northfield Farm which, according to the records, has 22 dams (believed to be all slatted), one of which was clearly visible from the farm boundary. Access permission will be sought from the relevant farmer/landowner to visit and inspect those interventions.

From Northfield Farm, Brexit Brook passes under the Fosse Way and emerges on the Stretton side of the road where there are more dams to be checked.



Picture above-the extensive and visually brutal coppicing bordering Brexit Brook. Some of the wood could be used to drop into the watercourse to further slow the flow of water.

Picture below-volunteer Paul Neal inspecting one of the dams on Brexit Brook which will require some remedial work-see leaning support post. There is evidence of scouring and the height needs to be raised.



Updates

From the February report. Observant readers of that report will have noticed that a review of SAFAG's meeting with (STW) Severn Trent Water on 29th January was due to be included in the March report. There was sufficient time for it to be added to February's.

From the February report. SAFAG's call for further volunteers featured on the front page of the February edition of the Shipston Forum, together with a picture of the flood mitigation project of tree planting on Church Farm at Sutton under Brailes.

The article generated 4 enquiries, with another coming as a recommendation from one of SAFAG's existing volunteers.

From the February report. The Emergency Advice Booklet is now available on STC's website. From the Home page, select menu, then Shipston on Stour, followed by Shipston Area Flood Action Group. This then opens onto a SAFAG introduction page. The link to the Booklet is at the top.