

## Minutes

East Garston Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting in the village hall on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2023 with Thames Water representatives to discuss the sewers.

Meeting started at 6pm

1. Present; Sue Tulloch (Chairman), Deana Carpenter (Vice Chair), Jonathan Rabbitts, Peter Smith, Liam Robson  
From Thames Water; Richard Aylard Sustainability Director, Karen Nelson Network Manager, Nikki Hines Stakeholder Engagement, Amanda Buttimore (Office Manager for Laura Farris), Clive Hooker (Ward Councillor Downlands) and Howard Woollaston (Ward Councillor Lambourn & Chair of LVFF – arrived after introductions)  
Martyn Wright East Garston Flood & Pollution Forum  
Sonia Coyle (Stand in Clerk)  
51 members of the public (MOP's)  
Apologies; Annabelle Eyre, Laura Farris

2. ST then handed over to MW to give some background of the situation in the village.  
There are 2 sewers in East Garston (EG) the main Bockhampton sewer has had major improvements and problems appear to have been resolved. But EG is served by a separate sewer network which runs from Eastbury to EG pumping station and this is the main focus of the meeting tonight.  
There has been a long history in EG of sewer flooding due to groundwater infiltration, and the subsequent discharge of untreated sewage into the River Lambourn; in the past there has been 200-300hours of discharge going into the river in a year.  
In 2021 there was some relining work done but it wasn't tested in 2022 as the ground water levels were too low. TW this year had to use tankers 24hrs a day during April/May to prevent flooding, but when tankers failed to arrive, the system backed up, and manholes overflowed.  
At a meeting in May TW told us that further investigations into leaks were being made and they would share with us their plans for repairing/re-lining, which would start in the summer. These promises were made but we have heard nothing.  
During August & September TW were chased again and we were told that they had identified where the problems were and were going to secure funding.  
On 11<sup>th</sup> Oct there was a WBC Scrutiny Commission Mtg during which TW reported that as the work had not been done, if there was a wet winter tankers would have to be used in EG.  
On 16<sup>th</sup> Oct at The LVFF meeting TW stated that their next focus would be EG where we will be getting quotes for relining. TW confirmed no work done so tankers would be used if flooding occurred.  
The current situation is the sewer is flooded, so manholes are overflowing into the river, downstairs toilets in some properties are unusable and tankers are in operation 24/7.  
MW had been given permission to give an example of one parishioner who cannot get upstairs and has to use a commode, they then have to wait for someone to come in and empty it upstairs.  
MW then referred to some TW slides that showed very similar findings of investigations, and proposed repair works, that TW had presented at a public meeting in Lambourn in 2013. He commented that not much progress had been made in the last 10 years.

ST then explained questions were submitted to TW for the original meeting – the answers to which had been included on the agenda, but KN would give a further update.

KN is aware that the Lambourn Valley has suffered for years. During 2012/13 when there was very bad weather TW were unable to test during the next 3 years due to dry weather. In Jan 2019 TW were caught out by the weather. As a result KN's winter planning now starts the winter before, bore hole levels are monitored and then visits start to check man holes. Over more recent years when ground water rises it submerges the pipes and any small cracks will then allow the water to get in. Puddles can create standing water over manhole covers which can leak and also cause a problem. Less of an issue in EG but building sites can also cause issues. There can also be human intervention which includes over pumping from locations on properties into the network and this is often done behind closed doors so is difficult to stop but TW do try. There are also issues with infiltration from private drains and it is difficult to get the private owners to address this.

TW have focused on Lambourn to make a start and have had success. Ditches have been cleared to keep the water moving, a well has been disconnected from the network and some manhole covers have been sealed. The filtration unit in Lambourn hadn't been used for the last 2 years but it has this year and so more work needs to be done.

There were tankers in the village up until 16/6/23, the rate at which levels rose Sept-Nov KN has not seen before. The team has been and looked at the pump station in Lambourn and the discharge coming out of the filtration system is of a very high standard.

MOP asked if KN would drink that water KN explained that the filtration unit is not a sewage treatment plant, although the sewage is much diluted with groundwater with solid material having been filtered out

MOP asked are phosphates & nitrates being monitored – NO, but levels of ammonia are measured, and are very low.

TW liaise with the environment agency with levels and monitor the quality of the water in order to be sure it is acceptable

The plan is to get a filtration unit for EG. There will be an over pump in place which will result in some noise, but it will stop the tankers.

MOP asked when this would take place? KN Hopefully next week.

KN confirmed Funding has been allocated as follows.

450m lining in Eastbury & 9-man holes

50m lining in EG

1.4km lining in Great Shefford has been completed and a further 48m is planned to be re-lined

MOP asked when will lining work be completed in EG? KN The pipes are full so this cannot be done until levels drop.

In response to a question from MOP about the feasibility of installing larger pipes, KN wants to fix problems rather than making pipes larger.

MOP stated we have had 10yrs of TW lining the sewers and we still have issues.

KN said the system in the village usually works Apr-Jan, if there wasn't groundwater it would work.

MOP asked how often will the filtered output be tested? KN Once a week at the moment.

MOP asked if you seal up all the pipes will that solve all the problems. KN No, we will always try to be one step ahead as there will be weak spots.

ST asked if property owners can legally be made to fix their privately owned pipes that are leaking? KN Issues have been identified and we will have conversations. If not resolved then TW will refer to the council.

MOP asked if only the top layer of filtrated water will get fed through? KN No, all readings show there is no ammonia and we are happy to show our readings.

MOP asked if the filtration system breaks down how quickly will it back up and how quickly will we get a tanker? KN We will try to repair and not send a tanker out.

MOP what about drugs/antibiotics going into the water, do you test for that? RA Sewage works will take a certain amount out but there is a very high level of dilution going back in. You can only find infiltration when it's happening and that is what KN and her team are working on.

MOP Event duration monitor (EDM) doesn't show volume of water going into the river it only shows the time and duration of the last discharge. RA EDM tells you when & how long the discharge is but not the volume. This is not a priority at the moment. Data is available and we're happy to share. RA would like the map to show the last 7 days and this will need computer experts to do. RA hopes development time will be set aside next year.

MOP stated there are a lot of listed/historical buildings in this village which need to be protected from sewage discharges from manholes and burst sewer pipes.

DC asked if parishioners should let TW know if there is an issue. KN replied yes, but that the flood forums are also very good at keeping them informed, bulletin board number to be issued to everyone.

MOP Mains water is also an issue with low pressure being a problem. What is going to happen? KN unable to answer as not part of her remit.

MOP Can we not have new rising main? KN No, you can't connect it to the station.

MOP When filtration system is set up can TW put something down to tidy up the track as it is regularly used by MOP's. KN Yes TW will make good.

ST asked if filtration unit will fit within the current parameter of the pumping station. KN explained that a few branches need to be cut back but otherwise the plan is to have in place before Christmas.

JR asked if new linings going into the pipes have a life span. KN Yes 50/60years.

JR asked is it still cheaper to do all this monitoring and repair work rather than putting new pipes in. KN Yes, team can be out monitoring, rather than intruding properties.

MOP asked about the financial viability of TW and dividend payments. RA explained that the company was receiving further funding from its shareholders and was confident that TW would survive.

MOP said that TW are proposing to OFWAT a price increase for next year, will you be going ahead with this. RA This is about smart meters, transfer schemes, and planning for the future. We need a big plan to meet government expectations.

MW asked can we absolutely guarantee that work needed to seal the pipes will be done when the water drops. RA said KN has the funding authorised and he will support her in this.

CH thanked TW for coming along and addressing in person the issues that have come up for the residents of EG. He wanted to stress however, that he considered the situation to be very serious and unacceptable. There are people in EG who wake up wondering if they will find sewage in their homes or in their gardens and getting the repairs done needs to be an absolute priority.

The meeting ended at 19:18

Following the meeting KN has asked for this additional note to be added.

I have been part of the LVFF for a number of years and it has been massively useful for us to gain information from those who live in and represent the valley. They are able to give locations where flood water may be causing an issue and then we are able to focus on these with our network investigations. The collaborative discussions have helped so much. I am grateful to the voluntary flood wardens and residents who attend, along with Howard.