

Westonzoyland Parish Council - The Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan – Discussion & Comment Document as Agreed at PC Meeting on 19 May 2014

1. Current Context

- a) The winters of 2012/2013 and 2013/2014 have both seen flooding in and around Westonzoyland worse than in the living memory of any village resident
- b) In 2013/2014 the village was under flood alert for 3 months
- c) In 2013/2014 the land around Westonzoyland was flooded to very significant depths before the bulk of the heavy winter rainfall
- d) In January emergency evacuation plans had to be actioned in view of the imminent flooding threat to a part of the village

In short, there is an existing flooding threat to Westonzoyland that requires to be addressed.

2. The Somerset Levels and Moors Flood Action Plan

The use of the Sowy and Kings Sedgemoor Drain (KSD) “to relieve pressure in the Rivers Parrett and Tone” is seen as a key priority of the “20 Year Plan”. This “relieving of pressure” will involve greater quantities of water passing through the water systems adjacent to Westonzoyland – although over the last two winters it has been shown that these systems cannot deal with the current quantities of water

The EA “Programme of Works” for the planned 8-km of dredging shows that downstream dredging of the River Parrett is currently programmed to end at Northmoor Pumping Station – just a very short distance downstream from Westonzoyland Pumpng Station. Villagers have looked at the River Parrett in the area of Northmore Pumping Station and advise that silting is particularly bad from Northmoor PS downstream to Linden Farm. In terms of moving water through and away from Westonzoyland and in terms of the optimum use of the two pumping stations it is our view that the current dredging work should be extended at least as far as Linden Farm

The plan states that an effective scheme is required “to increase capacity of the Sowy/Kings Sedgemoor Drain system”. A £4million joint County Council and Environment Agency scheme has already been announced at the A372 to raise the road, install sluice gates and enlarge the culvert under the road for the river Sowy. Implementation is planned for 2014

A component of the “20 Year Plan” is to “consider making permanent existing temporary local protection at Westonzoyland”

In short, key components of the “20 Year Plan” directly impact Westonzoyland and residents and representatives seek assurances they will be fully engaged in the decision making process

3. Known Issues

- a) Given the current inability of the Sowy/KSD system to cope with existing quantities of water it is apparent that capacity needs to be increased prior to implementation of actions to let more water into the system (e.g. A372 work)
- b) The KSD has significantly less capacity than was the case some years ago. Local anglers and other parties attest to very considerable amounts of silting and suggest that the KSD is only 4ft deep in a stretch from Chedzoy to the A361
- c) As the Plan states, the use of the Sowy and KSD, combined with pumping at Beer Wall and Dunball to relieve pressure in the Rivers Parrett and Tone was tested in late February 2014. We agree that the strategy was broadly successful. It needs to be borne

in mind, however, that it was fortuitous that rainfall virtually ceased whilst this activity was underway. A similar strategy will not automatically be as successful in the future but nonetheless pumps should be permanently placed, or at worst, available for installation within hours

- d) As well as capacity within the KSD system the ability to remove greater quantities of water per second at Dunball is vital. The current 70 cumecs is insufficient at high-risk times. In addition, the ability to remove water from the KSD at high tides needs to be permanently available
- e) The lowering of the Aller Spillway has increased the risk of flooding to the villages (including Westonzoyland) along the route of the Sowy Relief Channel and the KSD. The recent work to this Spillway, the impact it has caused and the need for remedial action were major items of debate at the January meeting of the Parrett Internal Drainage Board that was held in Westonzoyland
- f) Extra pumping capacity should be considered at Westonzoyland Pumping Station. This would assist in preventing the Penzoy New Cut from coming out of its banks and adding to the flooding pressure on the village as it did during this years floods
- g) The Penzoy New Cut is badly silted up, particularly as it approaches the KSD
- h) The “door” at Lake Wall has been inoperable for at least two years (??) due to the absence of an opening mechanism meaning that one water relief option for the village is not possible
- i) The temporary defences built at Westonzoyland in 2014 were not positioned in the optimum location. In addition, we feel that defensive options should be investigated for other low-lying parts of the village
- j) Given the stated increased strategic importance of the KSD/Sowy in flood relief there are issues of ownership and responsibility for local water management that need to be addressed. For instance, the temporary defences at Westonzoyland were built by the EA although they stated it was not their responsibility
- k) Many of the rhynes and ditches around Westonzoyland are in a poor state and require maintenance and/or clearing