



ENVIRONMENT
AGENCY

Chew Magna

Reducing the risk of flooding

Chew Magna in Bath and North East Somerset District Council has a long history of flooding, both from the River Chew and the Winford Brook.

The National Rivers Authority, predecessor to the Environment Agency, proposed a flood defence scheme in 1995, but due to a combination of the economies and public opinion the scheme could not proceed.

As a result the Agency made a commitment to carry out enhanced maintenance in 2001/2002 to ensure river channels were free of potential flow obstructions. This work was to be managed by the Agency's North Wessex Area Flood Defence Operations Team within its annual maintenance budget.

This extensive programme of maintenance was outlined to residents at a meeting in March 2001 and the proposals were reiterated in the August 2001 parish council magazine.

Agency engineers met with local residents to discuss flooding issues and give advice on how to protect individual properties from flooding.

Works carried out

In August 2001 128 tonnes of silt were removed from the River Chew at Tunbridge and disposed of at a local landfill site. The silt - more than a metre deep in places - was blocking an archway of the bridge.



Before, during and after the removal of 128 tonnes of silt at Tunbridge



From September 2001 onwards the Agency's workforce has been removing debris, fallen trees and other obstructive vegetation from the channel of the River Chew - from Dumper's Farm to Pensford. Approximately 10 miles of the river have so far been cleared and by August 2002 the workforce will have cleared the River Chew as far as Keynsham, where it flows into the River Avon.

The Winford Brook has been cleared from Silver Street, near the church, to its confluence with the River Chew.

Following the March 2001 meeting several local residents have installed flood protection devices on their properties - e.g. flood boards at doors and windows - and many



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Dredging the millstream

more are in the process of doing so. A store of empty sandbags and a stock pile of sand are kept at the local fire station for use by residents during flood events.

A local flood warden scheme was set up in September 2001 by the parish council. 10 flood warden areas were identified and local people have taken on the roles of wardens. The scheme is run and owned by the parish council, supported by the Agency.

A new river flow gauge is being built in Chew Stoke. This will help provide an improved flood warning service for the area. Additional flood warning sites in the catchment are also being investigated.

In April 2002 the Agency dredged the millstream channel - upstream of Spratt's Bridge on the Winford Brook - as the stream suffered constant blockages the previous winter. This will enable a more consistent flow to the millstream.

Land owned by the Agency at Tunbridge - where silt had been stockpiled - was levelled off in May 2002, ensuring the banks were maintained at their original levels. 10 tonnes of silt were removed and the land has been planted with trees - mainly fruit-bearing - and a grass/wildflower seed mix.

The Agency has also pursued an education programme, to ensure that riparian (riverside) landowners understand their responsibilities in maintaining the banks and bed of the watercourse.



The future

An annual programme of inspection and maintenance work will be carried out by the Agency. This will include:

- Removal of debris/obstructive vegetation on the River Chew, from Dumper's Farm to Tunbridge.
- Removal of debris/obstructive vegetation on the Winford Brook, from Streamleaze to its confluence with the River Chew.

Annual inspections of the watercourses will be carried out to check for unconsented works e.g. garden compost heaps too close to the watercourse, or construction of outbuildings/extensions adjacent to channel edge - and the Agency will use enforcement powers if necessary.

The Agency will annually maintain its land at Tunbridge, including grass/bank cutting and managing the hedge adjacent to Dumper's Lane.

In 2003 the Agency will be carrying out works on its land to stabilise the flood bank between the River Chew and Dumper's Lane. This will involve the placing of stone gabions (baskets) at the toe (bottom) of the bank, and regrading the bank to a shallower angle. The bank height will remain unchanged. It's hoped these works will also improve the local habitat for native crayfish, numbers of which have declined recently.

Chew Magna is an area at risk from flooding, but effective management of the channel will ensure this risk is not increased by blockages or reduced flood conveyance.

Key messages

Note 1:

If you are carrying out any non-routine maintenance works within 8 metres (24 feet) of the River Chew, Winford Brook or any of the millstreams, you require Land Drainage Consent from the Environment Agency. Failure to do so is a criminal offence. Please contact the Agency to request an application. Tel: 0845 933 3111.

Note 2:

If you are a riverside (riparian) landowner, you have a duty to maintain the bank and channel of the watercourse, including the removal of obstructions and ensuring a clear passage of flow across your land. For more information on the rights and responsibilities of a riparian landowner and a copy of the leaflet Living on the Edge please contact the Agency. Tel: 0845 933 3111.

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