

Starston Parish Council

Starston Floods 23rd December 2020 Report

Report Purpose: To record where flooding took place, the number of properties that had water in them, how many cars were damaged by the floods and what the cause of the floods was eg drains blocked, ditches filled in etc, so that recommendations for NCC/South Norfolk can be identified, as requested by our District Councillor.

Background: Following torrential rain on Wednesday 23rd December 2020, the Beck burst its banks and flooding occurred on the Water/Beck Meadow and Glebe Meadow. All roads out of Starston, except for Church Hill, were blocked by water late evening Wednesday 23rd December/ early morning Thursday 24th December 2020.

Waters quickly subsided once rain stopped early Thursday morning, such that Harleston Road, Pulham Road and Railway Hill were passable again with care by most vehicles later on Thursday morning.

Flood waters on The Glebe and Water/Beck Meadow had subsided by Monday 28th December 2020 ie 4 days later.

Longstanding Starston residents advised that flooding had not occurred to this extent for 52 years. The last time was 1968.

The South Norfolk out of hours emergency line (0800 3896109), local police (101) and NCC Highways were contacted, but they were unable to provide any information on the location of sandbags or assistance in terms of the hazards created by abandoned cars or help to retrieve cars from flood waters. A number of residents tried to find relevant information on the South Norfolk website, but failed to find the webpage which included information on emergency sandbags.

Our District Councillor Clayton Hudson proactively contacted the Chair of the Parish Council on Wednesday 23rd December 2020 and provided helpful advice, despite being in the midst of dealing with flooding issues affecting his own home.

Our County Councillor Martin Wilby proactively contacted the Chair of the Parish Council on Thursday 24th December 2020 and provided an update on the impact of the floods across the Waveney Valley.

The Emergency Plan Co-ordinator was able to assist in connecting resources within the village to residents affected by flood waters, where this had not already been resolved through existing friendships within the village/neighbours. All households in low lying areas that were at risk of flooding from the Beck were contacted either by the Emergency Plan Co-ordinator or the Chair.

Following the floods, all Starston households who had consented to being contacted by the Emergency Plan Co-ordinator (98/155 households ie two thirds) were asked to respond to the Parish Council Chair if they were aware of blocked drains or ditches that need to be

cleared. As a result, ten properties and their surrounding ditches/drains were visited. Advice was also sought from two local farmers who have a long history of the field structure and drains in Starston.

Unrelated to the December 2020 floods, the Environment Agency held a scheduled meeting with Peter Grimble, Jubilee Hall Trustee lead for the Glebe Meadow and landowners who own and control structures along the Beck eg weirs, on Monday 11th January 2021. The Beck is next scheduled to be dredged by the Internal Drainage Board in 2022, a process which is conducted every 5 years.

Flooding Report: Properties with water in them (5) – Railway Hill (1), Harleston Road (1, village hall) – cause: torrential rain leading to the Beck bursting its banks; Cross Road (1) – cause: blocked ditch and land drain; Rushall Road (1), The Street (1) – cause: torrential rain collecting at low point of land.

Properties where flooding was averted by direct local action (3) – Rouses Lane (1); The Street (1); Hardwick Road (1). Flooding averted by either drainage channels being dug by spade or with a tractor or use of sandbags/railway sleepers to redirect rainwater off fields/flowing down a track/overflow from overgrown ditches.

Properties whose gardens were entirely flooded (3) – Harleston Road (1); The Street (2) - cause: torrential rain leading to the Beck bursting its banks and road drains being unable to cope with the volume of water causing surface water to pour down driveways

Damage to cars – none reported, although a number of vehicles had to be removed from flood waters on Harleston Road and Low Road either by farm tractors or local vehicle recovery services.

Ongoing pooling of surface water – **Cross Road** south side at junction with Railway Hill; **Green Lane**, west side, on S bend before Hallwong Lane junction; **Hardwick Road**, east side, on S bend by Slipshoe Lane; **disused railway line** junction with Railway Hill.

Conclusion: Thanks to swift action by local residents and landowners, the impact of the December 2020 flood waters was minimised. Everyone worked together and used their local knowledge and resources in the face of a common crisis. Sincere thanks to everyone who helped. The advice of the District and County Councillors was much appreciated.

As statutory services were busy dealing with higher priorities eg fire brigade were involved with the evacuation of residents from flooded properties in other villages such as Scole, Brockdish and Needham, Starston as a community needed to be self-reliant.

The Starston Emergency Plan again proved itself beneficial in being able to contact those most at risk in a flood situation, and link equipment and people to where it was needed when this could not be

resolved by those on the ground.

Recommendations to minimise future flooding and pooling of surface water on Starston roads

1. **Blocked pipe is cleared**, running to the west of Railway Hill from Crossing Gates down towards the Beck (Highways visited in 2019 and committed to undertake this work). Lead: **NCC**
2. **Blocked pipe is cleared**, running to the west of Railway Hill from Oak Meadow at junction of Cross Road and Railway Hill to the ditch to the south of Grove Hill House. Lead: **NCC**
3. **Blocked Highways drains are cleared.** Drains blocked on 23rd December 2020 were identified on Harleston Road (including under metal manhole cover outside The Old Rectory and close to Brook Cottage); Pulham Road (2 drains on north side of the road, to the west of Streamlet Farm); Railway Hill (drain on west side of road, almost opposite the BT hub green box); a number of drains on Railway Hill, both east and west sides; drains on east and west side of Hardwick Road close to Thurlings Farm House. Lead: **NCC**
4. **Regular clearing of silt on the road surface and clearing of the drains on Railway Hill from Cross Road to Harleston Road**, as leaves and soil carried from arable fields and eroded verges after heavy rain block up the drains. Railway Hill is the main conduit for rainfall off agricultural land as far as Cranes Watering Farm to the Beck. Consideration should also be given to the provision of lay-byes and passing places, with better road edge definition. Lead: **NCC**
5. **Pooled surface water on highways** – a solution to be identified to removing the water on the east side of the S bend on Hardwick Road, to drain it away from this low point. Clearing the blocked pipes leading from the Cross Road junction at the top of Railway Hill and below Crossing Gates may resolve the standing water that accumulates at the T-junction with Cross Road and on the disused railway line. Lead: **NCC**
6. **Property Flood Plan** - the small number of properties that are at risk of flooding due to prolonged torrential heavy rain/Beck bursting its banks may want to consider holding their own stock of sandbags. The experience on the evening of Wednesday 23rd December 2020 was that flood waters rose so quickly, accessing the small emergency stock of sandbags held at Harleston Fire Station was not possible due to the roads being impassable. Lead: **Property owners**

Useful information can also be found at:-

<http://www.norfolkprepared.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Preparing-your-home-for-flooding-single.pdf>

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/flood-and-water-management/information-for-homeowners/property-protection>

<http://bluepages.org.uk/protecting-my-property/>

7. **Field ditches that have not been maintained are cleared**, where these have contributed to pooling of surface water on roads or placed properties at risk of flooding. Lead: **Landowners**

Ann Leitch

Chair, Starston Parish Council

Flooding Report Starston December 2020

Page 4 of 3