



Reducing flooding in Chesham Newsletter Summer 2018

This newsletter provides an update on the ongoing work by the partnership between Chesham Town Council, Chilterns District Council, Buckinghamshire County Council and the Environment Agency to reduce flooding in Chesham.

Vale Brook culvert condition



Current route of the Vale Brook

The Vale Brook runs through the centre of Chesham. This brook is largely underground in a series of buried tunnels (called culverts). Some of the culvert sections are now over 150 years old and they are in varying states of disrepair. The debris within the culvert limits the amount of water that can flow through it, causing a flood risk during heavy rain.

Earlier this year, we commissioned another CCTV survey of the whole length of culvert, from Townsend Road down to where it joins the River Chesh. This survey lets us see the latest condition of the culvert to assist our decision making to develop options to reduce short and long term flood risk.

The survey confirmed which sections of the culvert are in poor condition and where debris has built up. The CCTV remote vehicle used to enter the culvert was unable to enter sections through the town centre due to excessive debris. We are working with our contractor to develop a plan to remove some of the debris from the culvert to allow the camera vehicle to pass through. This is a difficult process because of the small size of the culvert and potentially poor condition of the culvert structure.



CCTV image of the Vale Brook Culvert

Vale Brook Public Consultation

After our initial public consultation in June 2017 we are further refining our options for a permanent, long term solution to the aging culvert. Our proposal mainly consisted of a new culvert and section of open river running through the car park to the west of the High Street. This land is predominantly owned by Chiltern District Council (CDC). As such, CDC wanted to ensure this was the best long term option for the town. CDC have commissioned a separate study to either rule out or introduce a possible alternative option



of routing the river through Skottowes Pond in Lowndes Park.

We will provide another update on the progress of this project in the autumn following the next CCTV survey, which should take place this summer and further discussions between the partners to determine which of the flood reduction options, if any, can be progressed.

Vale Brook clearance

In October 2017, Chesham Environmental Group volunteers cleared out a stretch of the Vale Brook that runs next to Topps Tiles on Townsend Road. They cut back overgrown vegetation and removed large amounts of fly-tipping and litter. As well as improving the appearance of the area and its habitat value, their work has reduced the flooding risk posed when rubbish is swept into the culvert downstream and causes blockage.

The clean-up was the result of lots of partners working together. Impress the Chess made contact with the landowner to get permission to do the works, Topps Tiles allowed the use of one of their parking spaces to pile up the rubbish, nearby Wickes donated jumbo bags to remove the green waste and Chiltern District Council collected the rubbish.

Chesham Environmental Group will be returning to the site this spring for some follow-up work.

Pednormead End area of Chesham

Buckinghamshire County Council are also working on options for managing surface and groundwater flooding in the Pednormead End area of Chesham. As part of these works we identified an opportunity to restore a section of the Missenden Stream. This was completed in February 2018. The Missenden Stream flows into the River Chess which is one of a number of chalk streams originating in the Chilterns. Chalk streams are a globally rare habitat, confined

mainly to North West Europe. England has the majority of the world's chalk streams and as such, has a special responsibility to conserve this rare wildlife habitat.

The restored reach is located along a 200m section of the Missenden Stream which flows through part of the Great Hundridge Manor Estate, bordering Chesham Tennis Club and the grounds of the Tennis Club itself. Historically, the river channel in this location has been widened, deepened and impounded by two concrete weirs. As a consequence, flow, when present, is sluggish and the reach acts as a sink for sediment, which overlies much of the gravel bed especially on the upstream side of the weirs and adjacent to the tennis courts, where the channel is at its widest.

By carrying out this restoration work, this section of the river Chess catchment will be returned to a more "natural" state. It will allow the natural chalk stream processes to re-create habitat, carry natural amounts of sediment and reconnect the channel and floodplain. Once the habitat is created the wildlife will come back to this reach of the river Chess.



Missenden Stream ready to be recolonized by wildlife

Advice on making your property resilient to flooding is available on our website at

www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding

For further information on our plans to reduce flood risk in Chesham please email

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