

**Cheltenham Flood Wardens
Meeting Wednesday 6 November 2024, 6 – 7.30pm
Montpellier Room, Municipal Offices**

NOTES

1. Present:

Flood wardens: Rob Rimell,, Peter House, Lisa Chatterji, Paul Kent, Ian White, Ken Ross, Andy Parnham. Online: Suzanne Williams, Rob Gill.

CBC: James Mogridge, Chloe Hopper, Helen Down

GRCC: Rachel Seymour

Guest: Gareth Mead, Severn Trent River Rangers (online)

2. Introduction to the role of the River Rangers – Gareth Mead, River Rangers Manager, Severn Trent (joining online)

Gareth Mead gave an overview of the scheme, please see slides.

- The team is 2 years old and there are 10 river rangers across the patch which covers from Scunthorpe to Buxton, to the Stroud and Cam area. The team is split into pairs so there is no lone working as they do enter water courses and the area is divided between them. Lauren Quinn is the senior river ranger covering our area.
- The ranger walks the watercourses, inspects assets, engages with stakeholders and communities, does river sampling, community work, education on sewer misuse, customer engagement and river monitoring. The team has carried out 320 inspections in Worcestershire/Gloucestershire this year and they have boats to be able to see assets in rivers.
- To contact the team: riverrangers@severntrent.co.uk You can email them to invite them to meetings or with concerns about pollution.
- Severn Trent has responsibility for sewer pollution but blocked highways drains in heavy rainfall are GCC's responsibility.
- Gareth also explained that the team looks for drain misconnections where a household appliance is connected to the wrong drainpipe so foul water goes to the surface water sewer and pollutes rivers. The waste water sewer feeds into waste water treatment but the surface water sewer goes into rivers and streams. Please report any issues of soap seen in water courses.

Discussion

- River sampling is an Environment Agency responsibility so would be the first port of call for requests for kits, but Severn Trent work closely with them. **Action – Helen** to contact Liz at the EA for clarification on who to contact. It was thought that they are usually given out as part of projects where data is sought.

3. Update from Cheltenham Borough Council's flooding team including the September floods – James Mogridge and Chloe Hopper

Please see slides.

- Chloe introduced herself as the new Climate Change and Flooding Support Officer.

- James covered the September flooding, which saw new areas flooding due to surface water, particularly in West Cheltenham. Residents in these areas would not be as aware of flood resilience as those who live by the rivers.
- James thanked the group for all of the reports which were sent in.
- The Cox's Meadow flood storage area started to fill on the Friday and more went in on Monday, leading to a flood warning in Charlton Kings, but luckily the Chelt didn't burst its banks upstream of Cox's Meadow. Downstream of the Chelt, it was at its highest level since 2007.
- 15 properties were listed on FORT as having flooded, but it is likely that there were more that weren't reported.
- A new flood scheme is being developed at Grange Field due to risk of flooding to neighbouring properties.
- Lisa asked how to contact the council out of hours. The contact email address which is monitored when there is an emergency out of hours is: emergency.planning@cheltenham.gov.uk
- We could also set up a Whatsapp group between flood wardens and the flooding team. It would not be a guaranteed way of contacting the council out of hours in an emergency (as the flooding team are not on call) but would be useful for sharing information in normal times (documents could be saved within it) and the emergency planning number could be added to it during an emergency. **Action – Helen** to email the group to ask for confirmation of contact numbers for the Whatsapp group.
- Ken asked whether there was scope to amend how much water goes into the scheme at Cox's Meadow. James explained that the EA are looking at the flood model for the Chelt again with the latest climate change scenarios.
- Chloe has sent out a link to Met Office courses online.
- Rob R raised the issue of reporting pollution – the environment agency has a 24 hour hotline and uses what3words to identify location.

4. Communicating with your Community – Rachel Seymour, Gloucestershire Rural Community Council

Rachel gave the attached presentation with some ideas about communicating with your community both during a flood and in normal times to increase awareness and resilience.

The group discussions came up with the following ideas in response to the question:

What information could you be sharing out to your communities?

- Who does what and how to contact them (i.e. the EA)
- What to include in your [flood pack/emergency kit](#)
- Awareness of risk in the community and risk prioritisation
- Leafletting and signposting to useful information sources – Rachel's regular newsletter provides regular updates.
- Changes homeowners can make to reduce risk e.g. soakaway drives, [rain gardens](#), [water butts](#)
- How to report blockages and overgrowth to the relevant authorities (highways, EA, county/borough council)
- Where to find flood prevention equipment (also known as property flood resilience measures) – [blue pages](#)

- Who you are and what the flood warden role involves
- Updates regarding river levels or key messages coming from county/borough councils and the environment agency
- Met office weather warnings
- [Waterside living guide](#)

Paul shared that he has a pre-prepared email to share following a flood alert, which includes who does what and photos of the Cox's Meadow flume.

5. Feedback from flood wardens

- **key issues in your patch**

Peter reported that he is still waiting for resolution on the footpath falling into Moorend Brook, which was a worry when it blocked up in the September flood. The local councillor is helping.

- **feedback on the flood warden scheme (survey circulated)**

Please use the short survey to give your feedback on the scheme if you haven't yet had a chance – thank you!

<https://forms.office.com/e/VqTUv0gwic>

- 6. Date of next meeting:** To be arranged for March and June/July 2025 – **action – Helen** to circulate possible dates.