

# The Management of Flood Prevention

November 2016

Members of the Science and Technology Group gathered at Erica's house for their November meeting to hear Karen Fisher, Team Leader of Strategic Flood Management at Bucks County Council, outline the general scope of flood prevention measures implemented in Buckinghamshire since 2007.

If I understood her correctly, Mrs. Fisher admitted that although Bucks County Council has statutory power for the management of flood prevention, it has no *duty* to act, save for co-ordinating the activities of other agencies, depending upon what type of flooding has to be prevented or addressed. She explained that flooding from main rivers currently rests with the Environment Agency whereas flooding from surface water and groundwater lies with the local authority; water authorities (Thames Water in our area) deal with flooded sewers only. In the event of a flood, it was acknowledged that such a fragmented infrastructure often led to a denial of responsibility by one or more agencies if the fundamental cause could not be firmly established.

So far as planning applications are concerned, the Flood Management Team acts in an advisory capacity to Aylesbury Vale District Council (the local Planning Authority) for developments of more than 10 houses (or a development occupying an area greater than one hectare) and the Team may recommend 'sustainable drainage systems' (SUDS). These include 'green roofs' (such as the one in the Visitor Centre at College Lake), permeable paving (to slow down run-off), the inclusion of swales (deep ditches to channel rainwater) and other initiatives to replicate nature and encourage biodiversity. Natural England and the NFU are also working with farmers to find ways of improving drainage to their land.

The good news is that the Flood Management Team maintains an Asset Register comprising a considerable amount of data about structures, such as bridges, culverts, walls, etc, that can cause obstructions to surface run-off and, in turn, create flooding. The Team assesses the risk of these potential obstructions and the Environment Agency publishes information on its website ("What's in my back yard?"), which the public can access if they are concerned about possible risk to their property.

It was interesting to learn that if a number of houses are at risk from flooding in a particular area, the owners can, as a community, apply for government funding to install flood prevention measures to their homes, such as air-brick covers. However, as some of these measures will be immediately visible to a prospective buyer, some owners may not be willing to advertise that their property is at risk!

In view of many construction sites (completed and planned) for new houses in the neighbourhood of Aston Clinton and surrounding villages, Mrs. Fisher's presentation was very relevant to local concerns.

Colin thanked Mrs. Fisher for her very interesting talk. Thanks also to Erica for providing the usual high standard of refreshments afterwards.

*Janet Cato*

*November 2016*

[Flooding in Bucks website](#)