

## EAST HAGBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL

### MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DULY CONVENED AND HELD ON THURSDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2024

#### 1. ATTENDANCE, APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:

Present were Chairman I. Duff, Vice Chairman P. Dixon, Councillors C. Gover, R. Jaboor.

Apologies were received from Cllrs N. Milner, D. Rickeard and C. Shaikh, and District Councillors B. Manning and A-M Simpson.

In attendance was L. Lloyd (Clerk).

I. Duff indicated there is 1 vacancy for a parish councillor.

#### 2. PUBLIC FORUM AND QUESTIONS: None

#### 3. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 9<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2024:

The minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 were approved by Council and signed by I. Duff.

#### 4. REPORTS FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS:

I. Duff confirmed receipt of the District Councillors' Report. I. Duff highlighted the Land Use Consultancy consultation on Open Spaces which includes an interactive map, I. Duff completed the survey and noted that not all East Hagbourne's designated green spaces in East Hagbourne Parish are included on this map.

Also highlighted was the Didcot Garden Town cash boost, and whether it might be possible to obtain support for the resurfacing of FP1 which connects south Didcot to West Hagbourne as it is an important connecting route. Please see attachment 2 for the full report.

#### 5. ITEMS FOR DECISION:

- a) **Approval of the new Emergency Plan for publication on the website:** R. Jaboor confirmed he had circulated a final version of the Emergency Plan to councillors ahead of the meeting. It was noted that the useful contacts list would be updated as volunteers come forward. Councillors approved the Emergency Plan and it was agreed that it would be posted on the website.
- b) **Footpath 12 and 15 Remediation**
  - i) **To review revised quotes received from contractors:** Councillors reviewed the 3 revised quotes and noted that the prices for FP12 are very similar, ranging between £9,750 and £10,320 (+VAT). FP15 varied with contractors A and B under £10k and contractor C quoting £16k due to concerns over the existing ground status. It was discussed that FP15 is not as urgent a need as FP12, as the most problematic area is the few metres by the bridge at the Fieldside end and it perhaps does not warrant thousands of pounds to resurface the entire length.
  - ii) **To select a contractor for the remediation works (subject to OCC approval):** It was agreed that the council should reconsider the need for expenditure for FP15. No approval has been given by OCC at this stage although communication has now been made with R. McNaught to try and progress the matter. It was agreed that as FP4 is due to be completed in June by one of the potential contractors, it would be wise to appraise these works ahead of a decision on a contractor for FP12.
- c) **To review the EHPC Tree Planting Proposal for footpaths 17 & 16 and**
  - i) **To adopt the proposal as a Parish Council project:** I. Duff confirmed that the proposal to plant 3-4 oak trees alongside FP17 and a mix of c.16 birch and fruit trees alongside FP16 had been circulated by D. Rickeard ahead of the meeting. The project aims to enhance these footpaths for people and wildlife as well as sequestering carbon. Planting would be best carried out in late Autumn. Councillors adopted the proposal as a Parish Council project.
  - ii) **To approve discussions with the neighbouring farmers and OCC:** Councillors approved discussing the project with farmers and OCC.
  - iii) **To note and approve in principle the expected budget as outlined in the proposal:** Councillors approved in principle the expenditure of c.£760.00 as outlined in the proposal.
- d) **Allotments**
  - i) **To discuss and agree an amount not exceeding £1000 to be allocated for allotment maintenance in the 2024-25 budget:** P. Dixon proposed that £750 should be allocated to allotment upkeep for hedge trimming and plot clearance. Councillors approved the allocation of funds. P. Dixon noted that there is also a possibility that the area adjacent to the Wilcher Close gate could be revamped into a biodiverse or wildlife friendly area, potentially with some financial support from an organisation such as TOE.
  - ii) **To consider whether to add the agreed amount to the existing Allotments category, or create a new Allotment Maintenance category within the 2024-25 budget:** Councillors agreed that a new Allotment Maintenance category would be created in this year's budget.

## 6. ITEMS FOR REPORT:

- a) **Planning Applications:** I. Duff confirmed the council has an extension until 13<sup>th</sup> June to submit a response to P24/S1268/FUL at Lower Cross Farm. As a self-build the property would be exempt from CIL contributions. It was noted that the application is highly likely to be approved following pre-application advice and as such the Parish Council response will include suggested conditions in particular regarding property access, biodiversity requirements and cessation of industrial works on site. For P24/S1461/LB 36 Blewbury Road, it was agreed that the Parish Council will submit a response of 'No Objection'
- b) **East Hagbourne Sport and Recreation Committee:** Nothing to report.
- c) **Cemetery Committee:** P. Dixon confirmed that the tap was found to be broken and reported by a cemetery visitor on 25<sup>th</sup> May. This has since been replaced.
- d) **Employment Committee:** C. Gover confirmed that the Essentials for Employers OALC course was useful but mostly aimed at larger councils with more employees. The clerk's Annual Appraisal was held on 13<sup>th</sup> May. No concerns were raised by councillors or the clerk. It was noted that the clerk will keep a record of hours worked as recent months have been busier and the flexible working hours should balance out over the course of the year. It was also noted that increased notice of annual leave from the clerk would be beneficial. C. Gover will circulate a note on this to all councillors.
- e) **Flood Management:** I. Duff reported that he has had queries from Jane Bell regarding ownership of the land abutting sections of the watercourse through the parish. It would be possible to confirm these details using Land Registry for a small cost. It was also asked whether a complete investigation of the watercourse in the parish could be carried out by OCC/SODC to propose further improvements. This can be requested; however it is unlikely that it could be added to the existing channel desilting and bridge removal project that has now been included on the provisional projects list by OCC for completion this year.
- f) **Community Speedwatch:** R. Jaboor reported that he now has a contact for Blewbury speedwatch. He is looking to see if the three people that have now completed the online training can join either a Blewbury or Harwell session to capture the practical training required. They will then be ready to run sessions in East Hagbourne. Ideally we should have four trained volunteers as we need a minimum of three for each session. It was suggested that the previous speedwatch volunteers could be approached to perhaps sign up again.
- g) **Neighbourhood Plan:** Nothing to report.
- h) **Housing development adjacent to the village hall:** I. Duff reported that there are now only 5 houses left to sell via Deanfield.
- i) **Matters raised at the Chairman's Surgery and OALC Councillors Forum:** I. Duff reported that the last Chairman's Surgery was mainly concerned with questions about the Hagbourne Fun Run (not a Parish Council event), an offer of assistance for improvements to FP8, and some support for the 20mph extension along Blewbury Road and part of New Road. The next Chairmans Surgery is on 21<sup>st</sup> June. Nobody was able to attend the OALC Councillors Forum this month.

## 9. Correspondence:

L. Lloyd confirmed the following items of correspondence:

Cameron Rae – indicated that the public consultation to start w/c 10<sup>th</sup> June

Oxfordshire Councils Charter communication. Encouraging Parish Councils to sign up to the Charter – this will be launched on 1<sup>st</sup> July at the OALC AGM.

## 10. Finance:

- a) Expenditure and receipts since the last meeting and account balances:

**a) Payments since last meeting:** **NB: Payments pending are shown in yellow and are not included in the account balance shown in c)**

Payee	Item	Online Payment/ Cheque No	Amount	VAT	Total	Date
Grundon Waste Management	PSI-1061553 Cemetery waste bin collection April	DD	£39.95	£7.99	£47.94	21/05/2024
Shield Maintenance Ltd	INV 7587 Dog bin and waste bin emptying April 2024	D Rickeard / C Gover	£125.66	£25.13	£150.79	23/05/2024
Dark White Digital	INV 001530 Web hosting May 2024	D Rickeard / C Gover	£30.00	£0.00	£30.00	23/05/2024
EHSRC	INV 240404 Pavilion hire for PC meeting 18/04/2024	D Rickeard / C Gover	£25.00	£0.00	£25.00	23/05/2024

April Skies Ltd	INV0239 End of Year Internal Audit 2023/24	D Rickeard / C Gover	£135.00	£0.00	£135.00	23/05/2024
L. Lloyd	Expenses (ICO Registration Fee)	D Rickeard / C Gover	£40.00	£0.00	£40.00	23/05/2024
Home Start Southern Oxfordshire	S137 Grant	D Rickeard / C Gover	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	23/05/2024
OALC	INV W-3284 Talking Tables Event	D Rickeard / C Gover	£40.00	£8.00	£48.00	23/05/2024
Life Education Wessex & Thames Valley	S137 Grant	D Rickeard / C Gover	£100.00	£0.00	£100.00	23/05/2024
OPC Drains	INV 7349 Drain investigation and clearance 25/04/2024	D Rickeard / C Gover	£168.00	£33.60	£201.60	23/05/2024
L. Lloyd	May Salary	D Rickeard / C Gover	£784.69	£0.00	£784.69	31/05/2024
Dark White Digital	INV 001554 web hosting June 2024		£30.00	£0.00	£30.00	
Shield Maintenance Ltd	INV 7671 Dog bin and waste bin emptying May 2024		£125.66	£25.13	£150.79	
Shield Maintenance Ltd	INV 7700 Clearance at Butts Piece Wood		£334.60	£66.92	£401.52	
EHSRC	INV 240504 Pavilion hire for PC meeting 09/05/2024		£25.00	£0.00	£25.00	
BGG Garden & Tree Care	INV 113.24 Parish and Cemetery cuts April		£475.00	£95.00	£570.00	
Hagbourne Village Hall	INV 1740 Q3 Meeting Room Hire		£30.00	£0.00	£30.00	
BGG Garden & Tree Care	INV 163.24 Parish and Cemetery cuts May		£425.00	£85.00	£510.00	
L. Lloyd	June Salary		£784.69	£0.00	£784.69	
Hagbourne Parochial Charities	July Instalment for Butts Piece Rent 2024/25		£447.43	£0.00	£447.43	

**b) Receipts since last meeting:**

From	Item	Amount	Date
EHSRC	Insurance Contribution 2024/25	£500.00	10/05/2024
Plots 8B and 10	Allotment Rent	£37.00	14/05/2024
SSE	Wayleave payment	£53.94	22/05/2024
Plot 2B	Allotment Rent	£15.45	22/05/2024
Oxfordshire Memorials	Cosson memorial G185	£175.00	23/05/2024
Nationwide	Instant Access Savings account interest - May	£149.92	31/05/2024
Redwood Bank	35 day notice account interest May	£231.20	31/05/2024
	<b>Total</b>	<b>£1,162.51</b>	

**c) Accumulated Account Balances (reconciled online 05/06/2024)**

Unity Trust Bank - T1 current account	£21,820.58
Unity Trust Bank - Instant access account	£57,098.56
Redwood Bank - 35 Day Notice Savings Account	£85,000.00
Nationwide - Instant Access Business Savings Account	£80,386.36
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>£244,305.50</u></b>

**d) The Special Project Balances (as of 05/06/2024) are:**

Community Infrastructure Levy Fund	Received 24/04/19 so requires spending by 23/04/24	£121.40
	Received 30/04/21 so requires spending by 29/04/26	£1,517.73
	Received 27/10/21 so requires spending by 26/10/26	£3,307.90
	Received 27/04/22 so requires spending by 26/04/27	£3,035.45
	Received 28/10/22 so requires spending by 27/10/27	£2,127.82
	Received 28/04/23 so requires spending by 27/04/28	£55,413.82
	Received 27/10/23 so requires spending by 26/10/28	£106,843.63
	Received 26/04/24 so requires spending by 25/04/29	<u>£4,165.09</u>
	Total CIL money	£176,532.84
Community Projects Reserve Fund		£4,712.91
Planned Development Support Fund		£5,303.15
Cemetery		<u>£16,052.43</u>
	Total	<u><u>£202,601.33</u></u>

**e) General Reserve (as of 05/06/2024)** £41,704.17

- b) Review and approval of pending payments:** The Council reviewed the pending payments and approved those without prior minuted/regular payment approval.
- c) Progress with Unity Bank change of signatory:** L. Lloyd confirmed that as there has been no progress with the ID requirement for N. Milner, it would be advisable for an alternative councillor to be the fourth signatory on the mandate. Councillors resolved that R. Jaboor should replace N. Milner as the new signatory for Unity Trust Bank.

**11. Items for report and inclusion on the July agenda:**

None noted

The meeting closed at 8.42pm.

Items for consideration for the July agenda must be received by the clerk no later than Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> July.

The next meeting will be held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2024 at the Pavilion, Great Mead, East Hagbourne.

Signed.....Dated.....

**ATTACHMENT 1: ACTION LIST**

Action No	What	Who	Status
2023-03-01	Deanfield Homes Car Park Land Transfer	LL	Transfer documentation signed at meeting on 26 <sup>th</sup> March. Still awaiting confirmation of transfer from solicitors.
2023-06-02	Parking and Traffic Management on Main Road	NM	On hold
2023-06-03	Footway repairs in the parish	ID/PD/RJ	Prioritise potential repairs for OCC to review
2023-10-01	Disabled Parking spaces in the village car park	LL	Research options and costs
2023-10-03	Weed management on Main Road	LL/ID	SODC channel clearance along Main Road w/c 6 <sup>th</sup> May. Awaiting feedback from SODC and a quote for weed treatment from BGG.
2023-12-01	Footpath 4 surface improvements	LL	TOE Grant confirmed in mid-March, works are scheduled for w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> June (weather dependent).
VARIOUS	<p>Footpath accessibility:</p> <p>2023-12-02 FP10 MFL to West Hagbourne</p> <p>2023-12-03 FP12 Church Lane to Fieldside</p> <p>2023-12-04 FP13 Parsonage Lane</p> <p>2024-01-01 FP1 West Hagbourne to Didcot</p> <p>2024-03-01 FP12 Fieldside to the Causeway</p> <p>2024-03-02 FP15 Grange Footpath</p> <p>2024-03-03 FP8 Bakers Lane to The Croft</p> <p>2024-04-01 FP30 Village Hall</p>	LL/CS/PD/ID	<p>Chasing OCC for a meeting between OCC/EHPC and WHPC to assess FP10 and FP1 and for approval for potential works to FP12, FP15 and FP8. Approached R. McNaught for assistance as A. McEwan-James has not been able to respond to recent requests.</p> <p>2024-01-01 – Seeking advice from District Councillors as to whether the DGT funding may support improvements to FP1</p> <p>Volunteer labour is available for FP8 aggregate laying subject to OCC approval</p> <p>Agreement in principle to spend CIL money on FP12, FP15 and FP8 improvements</p> <p>3 revised quotes for potential works for FP12 and FP15 received.</p> <p>Field owner approved final spec for FP12 and reviewing options for FP12 between the Causeway and the Church</p> <p>Chase quote for FP13 from OCC Highways, investigate obtaining comparison quote</p> <p>FP30 – initial review of possible surface improvements needed</p>
2023-12-09	Community Speedwatch	RJ	<p>Harwell Speedwatch session attendance to be arranged</p> <p>Online training details sent to volunteers to complete – 3 people have completed online training so far</p> <p>Reviewing speedwatch locations</p>
2024-01-02	Emergency Plan / Flooding documentation Review	RJ/LL	Emergency Plan Approved. Resident feedback and volunteers for emergency contact list now required.
2024-01-04	Car Park Drainage	LL/OCC	OCC to review the car park drainage connection details from OPC Drains along with their own drainage plans for Main Road. Additional jetting arranged by OCC for 15/16 <sup>th</sup> August.
2024-02-01	Pavilion Lease Renewal	DR/LL	Further investigation required – DR and LL to meet and discuss.
2024-02-03	Cycle Parking at the village car park	LL	Liaise with VH Committee ref signage / alternative solutions. There may be grants available if it is agreed that alternative cycle provisions are required.

2024-02-04	Flood Management in the Parish	CS/DR/PD	Meetings with OCC, SODC and EA complete. Expression of interest for funding from OCC's Flood Risk Management funding for 2024/25 submitted and acknowledged. L. Travers obtaining quote for works. 23/05/24 – Email confirmation from OCC that EHPC's proposal has been included in the provisional projects list for funding this year, subject to supplying further information. 06/06/2024 – Flood Group has requested full information on watercourse adjacent land ownership in the parish – this will involve land registry requests at a small cost.
2024-03-04	Main Road 20mph limit	OCC	OCC have indicated that the public consultation is scheduled for w/c 10 <sup>th</sup> June
2024-03-05	From APM: Step reinstatement on Main Road/Bakers Lane footpath	OCC/LL	OCC's Carl Stallwood to investigate and progress the matter with SGN (NB: this is an OCC Highways matter)
2024-03-06	From APM: Main Road to Coscote road surface	OCC	An OCC matter as no agreement was made with the developer during the planning process and the S278 agreement to maintain and repair the main agreed access route to the site. The Parish Council has full support from our County Councillor, Jane Murphy, to lobby for repairs and reinstatement.
2024-04-01	CIL Projects Shortlist	ALL	Councillors reviewing and updating project proposals following discussion at the APM

## ATTACHMENT 2:

<b>Title</b>	District Councillors' Report
<b>Councillors</b>	Cllr Anne-Marie Simpson & Cllr Ben Manning
<b>Parish</b>	East Hagbourne Parish Council
<b>Date</b>	6 June 2024

[Booking link](#) for planning surgeries for town and parish councils  
**Corporate Plan Performance Report – [Third Quarter](#)**  
**Climate Action Plan Performance Report – [Third Quarter](#)**

### Open Space Public Consultation

Land use experts at [LUC](#) are supporting the council to gather information about green spaces in the districts.

As part of this LUC are asking residents and organisations to complete a short online survey to understand how they use green spaces in their local area. This ranges from parks and recreation grounds to natural spaces like woodlands and meadows.

The survey runs from **Thursday 30 May to Sunday 30 June 2024.**

You can take part in and help share LUC's short survey here:

[South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse GI and Open Space Public Survey](#)

If you have any questions about the survey, please email the LUC team at [SouthandValeGI@landuse.co.uk](mailto:SouthandValeGI@landuse.co.uk).

### New partnership to tackle crime in rural areas

A new crime fighting partnership is hitting the fields and farms of rural Oxfordshire.

The Rural Crime Partnership is bringing together Thames Valley Police, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Vale of the White Horse District Councils and the Community Safety Partnerships to tackle crimes such as fly-tipping,

burglaries and theft in rural areas. There will also be more support for local communities on crime prevention as well as an increase in the gathering and sharing of information about rural crime.

Rural crime affects victims' livelihoods, physical and mental wellbeing and that of the wider community. In 2023 the National Farmers' Union reported a 22 per cent increase in the value of rural crime with costs reaching a total estimate of £49.5 million across the UK.

The project has been made possible thanks to £156k funding the partnership secured from the Police and Crime Commissioner for Thames Valley and the Home Office's Safer Streets initiative.

Initiatives include:

- New covert cameras to be used by the Police's Rural Crime Taskforce alongside off-road bikes to target criminals in hard-to-reach areas.
- Working with farmers to improve security. Farms will be eligible to sign up for security checks and will be given DNA marking kits for agricultural machinery. These kits include property marking labels to deter theft, and where theft happens enable machinery to be tracked back to the farm.
- A new Rural Crime Advisor will work to promote rural crime prevention and engage with rural communities, industries, farms and organisations such as Young Farmers and the National Farmers' Union, to help them become harder to target for criminals.
- New surveillance equipment will help district councils catch fly-tippers and tackle hot spot areas.

Find out more on [the Rural Crime Partnership's website](#).

### **Everyone Active grants 2024/25**

We have launched another round of 'Everyone Active 2024/25' in South Oxfordshire to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents and the role we play in providing high quality active opportunities for our communities.

We have a budget of £50,000 - with a maximum of £1,000 for each application - for projects that benefit more than one individual becoming active or sustaining activity, to groups of residents, in South Oxfordshire.

The grant scheme is open to a wide range of not-for-profit groups and sports clubs, town and parish councils/parish meetings, not for profit pre-schools, PTAs and local authority run schools or academies for non-statutory elements of the education programme.

Please help us to spread the word! For more information visit the [Everyone Active grant scheme webpage](#) or email [grants@southandvale.gov.uk](mailto:grants@southandvale.gov.uk)

### **New Housing Enforcement Policy**

Our new Housing Enforcement Policy supports residents as well as social housing landlords, private landlords, letting agents and tenants by setting out in a clear and transparent document the housing standards we expect in the districts. The policy also explains the enforcement approach we take against non-co-operative landlords.

We have a strong track record of engaging positively with landlords and the majority provide a good quality service to their tenants. However, where necessary, we must take robust action against rogue landlords who are unwilling to meet the required housing standards set out in the policy. This policy will help ensure a fair and consistent approach to housing enforcement in the districts.

The policy supports our corporate objectives to help us provide homes and infrastructure that meet local needs. It also builds upon the work already being undertaken by our Private Sector Housing team to promote and maintain good housing standards in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse.

You can view the policy on our websites [Vale/South](#).

### **New online training course for small businesses launched**

The Department for Business and Trade has launched the [Help to Grow: Management Essentials course](#), a free online course with practical tips and resources for small business leaders.

Essentials is the latest addition to the ['Help to Grow' toolkit](#) supporting UK small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

The course is suited for leaders of newer or smaller SMEs, or those who are looking to explore the principles of business growth and management. Business leaders can access the course through the [Help to Grow website](#).

Please help share this information with any small businesses you know in the area.

### **Cash boost for improvements across Didcot Garden Town**

More than half a million pounds is being invested into Didcot to help deliver important community improvements as part of the ongoing delivery of plans for Didcot Garden Town.

The funding, approved by South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils, will be used to improve green spaces, encourage greater biodiversity and improve wayfinding signage across the town.

Improved wayfinding will allow people to easily find where they want to go, highlight local spaces and encourage people to walk or cycle. It will help promote notable destinations and connectivity within the expanding communities of Didcot, looking at how we can improve the experience of residents and visitors.

The proposals, set out in the Wayfinding Strategy, are designed to resonate with the town's history, natural setting, and relationship with the area recognised nationally as Science Vale.

A number of projects proposed in the Green Infrastructure Strategy, have been approved to improve access to green spaces across different areas of the town too.

In the northeast, money will be spent on improving green spaces through food growing and public art as well as increasing biodiversity.

Working with landowners, we will look to make improvements to the National Cycle Route 544 in the southeast of the town, which will result in clearer sight lines, better lighting and better access, making it safer to use.

In the southwest, work will be carried out to enhance and develop the southern perimeter route between Mowbray Nature Reserve and the proposed Alma Park/Neighbourhood Park/ Boundary Park/Robin Way Park. This work will include play and exercise features.

The funding and proposed strategies were approved at the most recent [South Oxfordshire District Council cabinet meeting](#) and [Vale of White Horse District Council cabinet meeting](#).

### **New 'Let us Bee' areas**

Following on from the success of our Let It Bee trial last year our parks team is continuing with our land management where we allow the grass grow on sections of land we own or manage. This year we have added new sites to our meadow areas following recommendations from residents, council members and town and parish councils. For more information please see our grass cutting pages our websites ([South/Vale](#)).

### **Join the Pride festivities at Cornerstone Arts Centre**

Cornerstone Arts Centre in Didcot invites everyone to join in with its Pride this June with a variety of events designed to celebrate and showcase the LGBTQ+ community.

From 13-15 June, there will be something for all ages to enjoy, including drag cabaret, free family-friendly crafting, life drawing, and yoga.

The PHWOAR Next Door: Return of The Queers takes the stage on Friday 14 June. 'PHWOAR' showcases an exceptional lineup of Oxfordshire drag performers and burlesque artists in an explosion of laughter and glitter. This show was a resounding hit last year, and the group promises to return to Didcot with a bang.

Cornerstone is committed to involving as many people as possible to celebrate the diversity and inclusion of all its customers involving everyone in its Pride events and has included a free crafting activity that all ages can participate in.

For more information about the shows and workshops, [visit the Cornerstone website](#).

### **Natural flood prevention scheme to help homes in Wheatley and Littleworth**

A new natural flood management scheme is now in place at the Littleworth Nature Reserve aiming to reduce the flood risk for those living downstream in Wheatley.



South Oxfordshire District Council has worked with Oxfordshire County Council and was awarded £21,350 from an Environment Agency fund for natural flood management for this project.

The councils employed the Freshwater Habitat Trust to design a scheme for the Littleworth Nature Reserve to slow the flow of water through the railway cutting at the site and provide temporary water storage within the nature reserve itself.

This should reduce the risk of flooding to areas downstream including Littleworth and Wheatley, which had been affected previously during periods of prolonged heavy rain.

In addition a culvert entrance within the nature reserve was cleared and an extra grate added upstream to trap leaves and silt to reduce the risk of the main entrance to the culvert getting blocked.

A series of natural 'hinge' dams were created using eight willow trees on site, which involved cutting part way through the tree trunks and folding them over, leaving the tree still attached to the stump so that the dam remains a living structure.

Finally, contractors installed willow spiling - weaving branches between wooden stakes - to act as a natural flood barrier along the route of the water in the railway cutting. This creates a leaky hedge-like structure that will help slow the flow of water outwards.

Both the hinged trees and willow spiling should resprout and take root, strengthening the structures over time and increasing channel 'roughness'.