



Press Release from Reading & District Angling Association

Kennet Flood Damage - Report accuses authorities of making 'a bad situation worse'.

Residents in the Pingewood area of West Berkshire, whose homes have been inundated with floodwater since the weekend, have joined forces with neighbouring Reading & District Angling Association (RDAA) to demand answers from both West Berkshire Council and Network Rail who they accuse of negligence and complacency.

In a hard hitting report, published today on the RDAA website, entitled 'River Kennet Flooding at Pingewood - A Bad Situation Made Worse' the authors set out in some detail how both West Berks and Network Rail failed to learn the lessons from the 2014 floods and ensure that floodwater was able to escape to the east underneath the Basingstoke to Reading railway line rather than backing up and flooding premises and homes.

The report illustrates how a blocked culvert under Green Park station caused increased and avoidable flooding, damage and hardship to people and premises west of the railway tracks. RDAA President and former Reading West MP Martin Salter, together with RDAA Fisheries Officer Del Shackleford had been pressing both West Berkshire Council and Network Rail to clear the culvert last week before the river levels rose on Friday night. The Council wrote back claiming that the river levels were unlikely to exceed the 2014 heights - in fact they have set a new record - and Network Rail claimed that the culvert was clear despite the fact that photographs, video and drone footage shows it to be blocked.

At the time of writing (Wednesday January 10th) the area remains flooded. The floodwater has caused substantial damage to a number of residential properties in Kirton's Farm Road, put an electricity sub-station serving 40,000 people in South Reading at risk and has done significant damage to the RDAA fisheries and accompanying infrastructure.

Martin Salter said:

"We have demonstrated beyond doubt that the failure to ensure an adequate escape route for the floodwaters arriving in the Pingewood area on the evening of Friday January 5th contributed to the excessive flooding and damage experienced by local people, businesses and organisations such as ourselves. Both Network Rail and WBC were notified the day before of the impending flood risk and either failed to respond with any urgency or refused to recognise that there was a problem. They have both contributed to making a bad situation worse than it needed to be.

Network Rail have clearly been negligent in failing to ensure that the culvert was kept clear with only one of three pipes able to convey water to the east of their railway tracks. This is despite the recommendations of the 2014 Flood Review and the problem being identified during the planning

process in 2019 for the new £20m Green Park Station. We also have serious questions to ask of West Berkshire Council who, in their role as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) for the area, seem to be in denial that we faced any sort of serious flood risk.”

Local Kirton’s Farm Road resident Cindy Becker, whose home was flooded on Saturday morning wholeheartedly endorsed the angling club’s report and its conclusions saying:

‘To be flooded in unavoidable circumstances, as so many people in the country are at the moment, is difficult and disruptive. However, to be flooded through the negligence of others is particularly distressing, especially when it has resulted in residents not being able to get to work and many children being kept from school. The frustration of seeing RDAA predictions - as in 2014 - being shown to be entirely accurate, and largely ignored, is keenly felt by all residents in the area.’

Ends

Attached:

- A copy of the RDAA report '*River Kennet Flooding at Pingewood - A Bad Situation Made Worse*'
- Also available online *here* -
https://www.rdaa.co.uk/files/ugd/d64b93_6cac919542c7468ca0a8a4c71c84f3a2.pdf

More information:

Martin Salter - 07976946033

Del Shackleford - 07846 038889 (after 11/1)

Cindy Becker - 07929 859352

images and drone footage are available on request from Jamie Stansfield - 07795 274709

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