



WELLINGTON HEATH PARISH COUNCIL

To: Cllr Sebastian Bowen, Chair, Herefordshire Council

Copy: Liz Harvey – Ward Councillor

Paul Esrich, Malvern Hills AONB Unit

Bill Wiggin MP

Flooding in Wellington Heath

Wellington Heath Parish Council is suffering from considerable issues associated with water runoff, poor drainage and flooding. The parish council has very limited ability to improve the situation since it is in the main caused by poorly maintained road drains and gullies which should be dealt with by Balfour Beatty, working on behalf of Herefordshire Council. We therefore ask for your urgent assistance to ensure an improvement in the infrastructure before the autumn and winter brings the inevitable heavy rain and worsens the situation.

Localised flooding is a concern in many areas of the parish, with its steep hills and limited provision of surface water sewers, which are often blocked or inappropriately positioned. In heavy rain conditions, water floods down the roads causing danger to both traffic and pedestrians and bringing debris in its wake. Overflow from foul sewer manholes can present difficulties in storm conditions. In the freezing conditions of winter, ice becomes a hazard.

A major area of concern in the village is the road which goes through the centre of the village “The Common” and the road /public footpath known locally as “Pub Lane”. We set out below a detailed description of the problems in this area, although these are replicated in other areas of the village.

Issue: example of the road known as “The Common”

Drains and gullies on the road central to the village, “The Common”, are not fit for purpose and are unable to deal with the runoff from roads higher up the village. This leads to unsafe driving conditions and danger to pedestrians.

During the recent heavy summer rainfall on 27 July, the roads were awash with water, debris was deposited down the length of the road, gardens were flooded and the water almost entered one of the bottommost houses. Pictures below give some idea of the situation.



The Common



Pub Lane

The cause: Failures of existing drainage

The drainage infrastructure has failed to keep up with the development of the village and is poorly maintained. At the top of The Common, water accesses it from Top Road, which runs between Church Lane to the west, and Raycombe Lane to the east.

On Church Lane, there are no drains at all. Water was formerly absorbed in part by a triangle of grass at the junction with Ledbury Road/Top Road/Church Lane, which has an oak tree planted in it. This triangle has subsequently been surrounded by a kerb (contributing to the death of the oak tree) and the Parish Council was refused permission (by Balfour Beatty) to remove some of the kerbstones to allow water to drain onto it. Some of this water runs along Top Road, joining other water which then runs down the Common.

On the section of Top Road running to Raycombe Lane there is considerable water gathered on the road and joined by run-off from fields which are raised above the level of the road. The drain/gully at the junction of Top Road and The Common is placed some distance from the verge and water runs between the two and continues down The Common. A photograph is given below.



Drains/gullies further down The Common have not been adjusted since the road was widened many years ago, and now sit over a metre from the verge and the water bypasses them. Again, a photograph is included is below. Many other drains further down the road are again badly placed due to historic changes. Some sit proud of the road where it has been eroded. **Can remedial work be undertaken by Herefordshire Council to rectify these issues so that drains are again placed where they will capture the majority of the water running down the road?**



Others are blocked, some with grass growing in them (see photograph below).



Added to this, the ditches which should absorb the runoff from the drains have not been maintained and are blocked and overgrown. **Can Herefordshire Council take action before the winter to ensure that all drains/gullies are in a condition to fulfil their proper purpose?**

Planning permission has been granted for new houses which have been built or are in the progress of being built. All of these have driveways which reduce the space available for roadside ditches to absorb water runoff.

Some of the problems are caused by new housing development, or changes made to existing houses and their surrounds. These have generally been carried out with the agreement of Herefordshire Council planning department.

Conclusion

Looking to the future, we anticipate an increase in extreme weather events such as that on 27 July this year. We also know that further housing development, in line with Herefordshire Council plans, will be carried out.

Wellington Heath Parish Council needs urgent assistance from Herefordshire Council to deal with the problem of surface water and flooding on roads and run off from these roads into village properties.

Clearing and unblocking of drains and gullies would achieve much; it should be carried out before winter rains cause further problems.

More fundamentally, a review of the current provision of drains and replacement of badly placed drains and provision of further drains is required. **Can remedial work be undertaken by Herefordshire Council to rectify historic errors such as road widening without new drainage provision, so that drains are again placed where they will capture the majority of the water running down the road?**

Any other advice or assistance which you can provide to help us improve the situation would be appreciated.

We ask for your urgent assistance in this matter.

Heloise Tierney, Parish Councillor

On behalf of Wellington Heath Parish Council.