

Flood & Coastal Risk Management

Raising funds

Raising funds locally to invest in flood risk management

Following one of the wettest summers on record, in July 2007 Gloucestershire had its worst flooding in 60 years. Over 350,000 people lost their water supply and 500,000 people retained their electricity supply only by the emergency erection of temporary defences at Walham substation. More than 42,000 people lost their power supply for up to a day when the Castle Meads substation was shut down for the erection of temporary defences.

Left with costs of £35 million and the fear of further floods, Gloucestershire County Council decided it must take a lead in securing better flood prevention and protection in the future. This is especially true for those communities that only need small schemes, which while significant locally, may not be able to compete with other schemes for flood defence grant-in-aid money in a nationally-prioritised programme.

A public survey showed that nearly 57 per cent of people would support paying an additional levy for flood risk management in their council tax. So in 2008 to 2009 a 1.1 per cent levy was applied, equating to an additional cost of 21p a week for a band D property.

This raised an additional £2.3 million fund for fighting flooding. The council used some of this money to raise additional funds until it had a total of over £6 million. £1 million was reserved for collaborative work with the district councils in the county. The county council asked them to submit proposals for high-priority needs for which they could both match any contribution from the county and achieve a reduction in flood risk within a year.

One of the 63 projects proposed was at Bourton-on-the-Water which is a picture-postcard village in the Cotswolds. The attractive old stone bridges over the River Windrush (a tributary to the Thames) as it flows through the village contribute to flood risk by causing water to back up when the river is running high, and the low river banks are easily overtopped. About 35 properties are likely to be affected during a flood, with a one per cent chance of this happening in any given year.



Courtesy D Stevenson

With the commitment of the parish, district and county council and ourselves, a legal agreement was established for three separate projects to help the village. The Highways Authority has created a bund to protect its highway through the village, and this in turn will keep floodwater away from properties. Supported by an initial investment from Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council, we have created some additional flood bunds upstream of the village around the natural floodplain of the river. Cotswold District Council has committed to extend an existing drainage ditch and build a further bund. These will encourage surface water to pass to the floodplain rather than into properties in the village.