

JS Parish Council Environment Report for meeting on 13-07-2023

Environmental Manifesto Resolutions

Last year Stevington experienced the hottest two days ever experienced with a maximum air temperature of almost 40°C. Council should be aware that extremes of temperature and humidity are increasing. We are very likely to see this repeated or even exceeded over the next 4 or 5 years as we enter the next 'El Niño' period. If, as expected, this does occur, it is very likely that some of our older, very young or more vulnerable residents will suffer heat stress as few homes are designed to reduce temperature and humidity in the home. The Stevington Environment Group are very much aware of this growing risk and included a resolution in the 2022 Environmental manifesto to establish a Stevington heat and drought resilience group. SEG therefore request SPC to adopt resolution 2 of the manifesto.

Proposition: that SPC adopt resolution 2 of the 2022 Stevington Environmental Manifesto

Resolution 2 : To improve Stevington's resilience to climate change by establishing a 'Heat and Drought Resilience Group' with the following aim.

The first priority should be to assess the potential of and create proposals for adapting key community buildings as heat refuges. This group will work in partnership with custodians of our key community buildings, e.g. Church, Church Room, Village Hall and Baptist Chapel, and other community groups as appropriate.

This group will operate in a manner similar to and in parallel with the currently active Stevington Flood Group and will also work with SEG to support feasibility assessments studies for community scale energy sources as required.

Stevington Flood Group

The Stevington Flood Plan has recently been updated to address direct flooding from surface water and flooding from burst water mains. The risk assessment section has also been updated to address these added risks and been corrected for accuracy and readability and will be reviewed on 27th July.

The next stage will then be to conduct a table top exercise with the Borough council's flood resilience group to test the Stevington Flood Plan and make any necessary amendments.

Storage of Flood response Equipment

The Flood group have arranged for the purchase of the 5' x 3' Asgard Securestore Metal Shed.

Arrangements have been made with the Stevington Social Centre Committee to locate the shed in the secure area behind the village hall.

The shed will be delivered as a pack to the village hall site and will be constructed on site in the secure area by a flood group working party.



Blocked drains

A resident posted a message on Stevington Face book about three blocked, surface water run off drains at Mill Farm, 68 Park Road. Following a recent torrential downpour, there was some flooding described by the resident as "serious flooding". Flood group is now aware and have notified

Bedford Borough Council via the 'blocked gully' website. The notification has been acknowledged by the council. The flood group will now include these grilles on the inspection list.

Hedge Cutting

A resident emailed me about tree and hedge cutting near Pells Farm adjacent to Foxbrook in June. She had concerns about nesting birds in the trees and that his actions were against the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

I checked the act. The act does not legally protect a tree. The Act protects active nests of wild birds, and requires tree cutting to be delayed if it would result in damage to or destruction of a known active nest. This specific point was checked with Mr Pell who confirmed that the felling of the trees did not disturb any nesting birds.

In terms of SPC environmental policy, it is good practice to restrict hedge and tree cutting to times when nesting is not in progress. The deciduous trees and hedge are important from an environmental perspective and should not be removed unless the trees are dying or have a disease. However, there will always be arguments for cutting hedges for maintenance, appearance, light, visibility and general highway safety. These decisions have to be balanced against ecological/environmental arguments for not cutting.

Natural England provide guidance about hedge cutting in their publication, 'Hedge cutting: answers to 18 common questions' ISBN 978-1-84754-024-9, which can be used to support SPC policy and decisions on timing and extent of hedge trimming when these questions arise in future.

Tulip bulbs

A package of Tulip bulbs has been donated to the village by Bedford Borough Council. These were picked up by the clerk and transferred to SEG for planting and distribution. Discussions are in progress to identify a communal location for planting, that will enable them to be watered during dry periods. Any remaining bulbs will be offered to village residents for garden planting.