

6. Flooding Update

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Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to update members on progress in dealing with land drainage and flooding matters across the District.

Recommendations

It is recommended that members note the current situation with regard to flooding and land drainage issues.

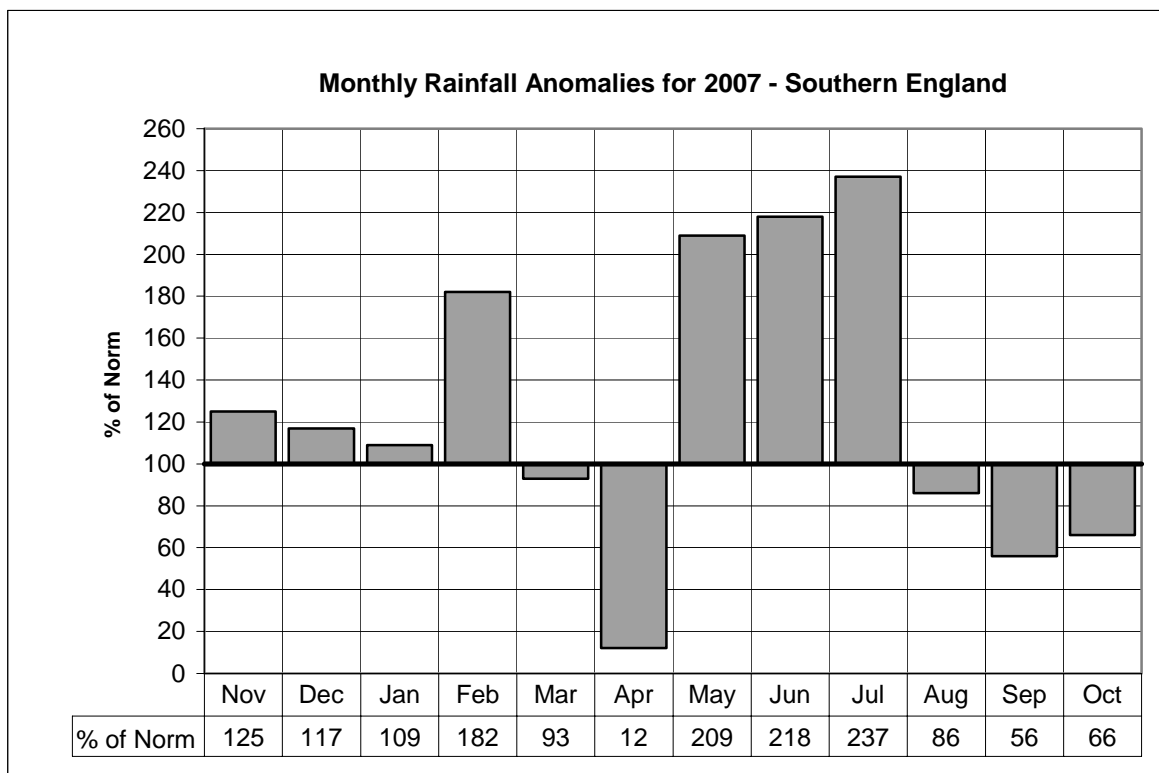
Background

Flooding update reports are periodically presented to members in order to advise them of ongoing flood alleviation works and any policy issues or developments in respect of flooding matters.

Report

1. Rainfall Trends

Rainfall over the last year has averaged at 25% above the long-term average but there have been some notable periods of significant variation from the normal cycle of rainfall. The monthly variations to the norm are indicated in the graph below from which it can be seen that the summer months experienced particularly higher than average rainfall.



July was a particularly wet month, especially in the Gloucestershire area as was widely reported in the media. Total rainfall for July in the Gloucestershire and South Somerset areas respectively were approximately 200mm and 100mm. These figures represent anomalies above the normal expected rainfall for this particular month of 450% and 237%. The fact that there was particularly high rainfall in the Gloucestershire area is simply down to the vagaries of the weather patterns in the UK.

Global warming and climate change are topical issues and may or may not be a factor here but, for members' information, allowance is being made in the development control process for climate change.

It will be seen from the 'Rainfall Anomaly' graph above that August was below average in terms of total rainfall. What this does not show is the fact that in that month there were a number of very heavy, localised storms in the Council's area. Of particular note are storms that occurred in the Chard area on 15th August and at Compton Dundon on 6th August. The latter event involved 65mm of rain falling over a period of about 1.75 hours and gave rise to flooding of some 31 properties. This, statistically speaking, is a storm that should occur once in 160 years and is a clear demonstration of the more 'stormy' weather conditions being experienced over the last few years that give rise to fairly unpredictable 'flash flooding' problems.

Also, since flooding problems in these circumstances generally relate to sewerage and highway drainage systems becoming blocked or overwhelmed, they are often difficult for the District Council to resolve. Where such problems are reported to the Council, after initial investigation, they are generally referred to the sewerage or highway authority as appropriate although, in some cases, advice/assistance on self-help options such as local flood protection measures is given where the problem is a recurring one.

2. Emergency Flood Defence Measures

The Council continues to issue sandbags and the general policy in this respect is that 6 bags per doorway will be issued free of charge to households as and when required. A charge of £2.50 per bag will normally be made if more are required. The Council's policy is that prevention of internal flooding is more important than protecting gardens or outbuildings. It is often the case that householders order sandbags as a precautionary measure in order that they are instantly available when required. One drawback with this is that, unless kept in the dry, sandbags have a limited life and can often disintegrate at the critical time. Alternative types of sandbags are currently being looked at in order to overcome this particular problem. Householders with recurring flooding problems are generally advised to install floodboards or undertake what can often be relatively simple flood defence measures to protect their property.

The need for householders to consider self-help measures is being actively promoted and, with this in mind, a Flood Awareness event is being planned by the District and County Council's Emergency Planning teams.

3. Minor Works

There has been a general reduction in widespread flooding problems and, although much of this reduction can be attributed to the different pattern of rainfall, it must also be recognised that over the last few years there have been a significant number of minor flood alleviation works implemented. This, combined with advice being given to members of the public about self-help options, gradual changes in land management practices, etc., has helped to reduce the number of properties at risk of flooding across the district as a whole.

Minor works are continuing and the current schedule is attached at page 4.

Financial Implications

Details of the 2007/08 District-wide budget and expenditure in respect of land drainage works are shown in the table below where it can be seen that, of the total budget of £99,520, £15,510 is currently uncommitted but it should be born in mind that:

- (a) possible flooding and the requirements for sandbags during the forthcoming winter is an unknown quantity;
- (b) the schedule of Minor Works is based on currently known problems whereas others may be identified in the ensuing months.

Land Drainage Expenditure (Revenue) 2007-08

Code KP145	Description	Budget	Actual at 30/11/07	To follow (est'd)	Anticipated total	Balance
1000	Routine (maintenance of ditches, screens)	36,490	17,392	15,880	33,272	3,218
1001	Non-routine (minor works,sandbags, etc)	46,190	19,340	21,350	40,690	5,500
1500	Operational Costs	2,210	0	0	0	2,210
2004	Transport group (standby crew, etc)	9,240	0	7,100	7,100	2,140
3004	Supplies & Service	5,390	0	0	0	5,390
3990	Misc. Exp / projects	0	54	5,000	5,054	-5,054
9930	Regular income	0	-106	-2,000	-2,106	2,106
	Totals	99,520	36,680	47,330	84,010	15,510

Implications for Corporate Priorities

Dealing with flooding problems and offering advice to members of the public in respect of flooding matters fulfils the Council's Corporate Aims of promoting a balanced natural and built environment and of improving the health and well-being of our citizens.

Other Implications

None.

Background Papers: *Area West Report December 2006*