

Report to Attleborough Town Council

6 November 2023.

I would like to lead by thanking Attleborough Town Council for their continued efforts and support since the floods on 20 October 2023, as well as the many other agencies and individuals that have stepped up to support our community and those that are actively working to formulate and implement a proper plan for short-term and long-term solutions, to ensure affected residents (and the wider community) are protected from further flooding.

Since these tragic events unfolded, the Town Councils officers and some members have worked incredibly hard to support those affected, some examples of which have included, opening the Town Hall as an emergency evacuation point, providing a hot meal to those in need, coordinating donations and distributing flood relief items, facilitating the public forum and inviting key partners to attend and distributing over 400 sandbags to affected and high risk households last week, in a combined effort with Breckland District Council – and for this I would like to give Paula, our grounds-team and Cllr Fraser recognition for going above and beyond in their duties.

The response from Attleborough Town Council and other key partners has demonstrated some of the best collaborative working I've seen in all of my years as a councillor and shows the seriousness that this matter is being treated with, which I hope will serve as some reassurance to those affected.

Notes from the public forum last Monday, 30 October 2023, are available on the Town Council website, and the commitment made for a next-day site visit of the Norwich Road development was fulfilled on 31 October 2023. The multi-agency visit was attended by representatives of Norfolk County Council, Breckland Council, Serco, and the Internal Drainage Board – as it may be of interest, the NCC representative was Steven Halls (Senior Flood Risk Officer, who attended Mondays public forum) and Breckland had multiple representatives present including the Director of Planning and Building Control, an Enforcement Officer and local Ward Members. Following this visit some remediation works have now been completed within the new development site.

An urgent meeting also took place last Tuesday, 31 October 2023, between Norfolk County Council, the Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance, Breckland Council and Anglian Water to discuss the specific issues that caused flooding at the Mill Lane culvert and connected watercourse. This was a further to an initial meeting facilitated by George Freeman MP on Wednesday 25 October 2023 and as such, George has provided a comprehensive update (attached) as part of his continued support.

The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) are still receiving flood reports from residents in the affected area, however, Norfolk County Council have enough reports to start gathering observations and information directly from residents, which will go towards the formal investigation. I have been advised that only those who have reported flooding to NCC will be visited (next week), however those that haven't can be captured on the day via report forms. NCC would also like to hear from those who have been displaced and are currently staying in temporary accommodation.

A revised Community Emergency Plan has also been drafted with the assistance of Debbie Read, Emergency Planning Officer at Breckland Council and will be considered at item 20 on tonight's agenda.

Further updates will be available in due course.

Cllr T Taylor.

From: FREEMAN, George <george.freeman.mp@parliament.uk>
Sent: Friday, November 3, 2023 9:01:34 AM
To: FREEMAN, George <george.freeman.mp@parliament.uk>
Subject: Attleborough Flooding – Update

Morning,

Attleborough Flooding – Update

As someone who has been in contact with me regarding the terrible flooding that has recently affected many households and businesses in Attleborough, I thought you would appreciate a brief update on progress this week.

As you will be aware, on Monday, the Town Council and local district and county councillors held a public meeting in the town for local residents to speak with key stakeholders. The event was well attended and I am pleased to report that stakeholders have been following up on a number of the points and concerns raised – with additional site visits undertaken to the culvert and watercourse on Mill Lane (as well as the culvert in Briar Gardens). Meetings with developers to assess drainage on their building sites have also taken place and I am aware that a series of additional measures, along with further clearing of drains and ditches, are already being implemented – with anecdotal reports of additional blockages being addressed. I will continue to monitor progress closely.

Further to the emergency meeting I held last week (see [here](#)), an urgent meeting took place on Tuesday between Norfolk County Council, the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance, Breckland Council and Anglian Water to discuss in greater depth the specific issues that caused flooding at the Mill Lane culvert and connected watercourse.

As many are aware, the culvert and watercourse were divested to riparian ownership many years ago. While that question of who will take on the long term ownership remains (and I can assure you that I continue to push very hard on that and have challenged all stakeholders to work collaboratively to develop a proper strategic plan and solution for the issue), I welcome the collective recognition that something needs to be done as soon as possible, with agreement that the inadequate and unsafe trash screen that caused many of the recent problems needs to be replaced.

On a without prejudice basis (of who will assume long term responsibility for the culvert and watercourse) and as a gesture of goodwill, Anglian Water have agreed to have their contractors assess the trash screen and culvert and work up the design for a much safer, more effective replacement. All stakeholders will then jointly fund the improved screen and Anglian Water will install it.

In the meantime (and again on a without prejudice basis and as a gesture of goodwill), Anglian Water will endeavour to send staff every couple of weeks to keep the existing trash screen clear. (Breckland, NCC and Anglian Water are also discussing a longer term plan for removing any debris collected from the culvert and watercourse)

I would like to reiterate however that I will keep on the critical question of who will assume the long term responsibility and ownership of the culvert and watercourse – and am already liaising with the key stakeholders on the date for a follow-up meeting to discuss that matter further.

NCC have also confirmed that the gulleys around Mill Lane have been cleared (with additional review taking place of gulleys on surrounding streets) and I understand that an assessment is taking place as to whether the trash screen at the Briar Gardens culvert should be removed.

A full flood investigation is now being led by NCC in line with their statutory processes. Although their Flood and Water Management team had already been working on proposals to better mitigate flooding in this area (as a result of the [December 23rd-24th](#) flooding event), there is recognition that their Flood Plan for the area, and its associated work, now needs accelerating and upscaling. I have committed to supporting NCC as they seek to secure the additional funding required to implement any recommended measures, as well as to engage with key local landowners.

As you may be aware, I am in the process of reconvening the [Mid Norfolk Flood Partnership](#) I previously established – and will ensure Attleborough is represented in those vital conversations.

I also continue to liaise closely with local councillors, as well as affected residents who have been in touch with me.

Rest assured, I am determined to do everything I can to speak up for those affected in Attleborough, as well as those across Mid Norfolk.

If you have not yet visited it already, you may be interested to take a look at my flooding campaign page [here](#) – where you can find more information my ongoing campaign work on these issues, in addition to upcoming updates.

If I can be of any additional assistance, please do let me know. I hope to be able to provide another update soon.

Yours,

George

George Freeman MP
MP for Mid Norfolk