

MALMESBURY FLOOD WORKING GROUP
UPDATE 1 OCTOBER 2019

In 2017 the EA told us that there would be no comprehensive flood protection scheme for Malmesbury. The key messages were as follows:

1. A flood defence scheme to the target national standard of protection of 1 in 100 years could not be justified as the costs of such a scheme (~£400,000) would exceed the economic value of the damages suffered.
2. EA would however provide temporary flood defences to cut off the flow of flood water through the Memorial Gardens into St Johns Street.
3. In addition the EA was committed to providing funding and support for individual property protection measures. (flood gates, air brick covers etc.)
4. Finally EA mentioned the possibility of a community-led scheme.

THE COMMUNITY-LED SCHEME

The FWG has been developing a low-impact community-led scheme to protect the Lower High Street/St Johns area with the support of Wiltshire Council staff. The scheme consists of raising the wall along the garden side of the leat by approximately 1 metre for some 70 metres, installing a demountable defence across the Memorial Gardens to meet the wall by the corner of the leat. In addition there would be ancillary works including pump-sumps to evacuate leakage, a flood exceedance pathway through the W&F car park and minor works downstream. Together these will prevent floodwater from entering at-risk Lower High Street houses and crossing into St Johns Street. The EA have confirmed that houses further along St Johns Street and Baskerville not protected by the scheme will be eligible for property-level protection. The scheme will not result in increased flood risk elsewhere.

At the moment:

1. We have produced outline designs in conjunction with Wiltshire Council.
2. The EA have accepted that their temporary flood defences will not work without the community-led scheme's leat wall. As part of their considerations the EA carried out 2 model runs which confirm that the scheme will provide protection up to at least 1 in 30 years.
3. We have received support at recent Wilts Operational Flood Working Group meetings from the chair, Cllr Jonathan Seed.
4. Danny Everett, the Wilts Council principal drainage engineer has agreed that Wiltshire Council will promote the scheme and submit it to the Wessex Regional Flood Defence Committee for local levy funding. If successful this will provide 100% funding.
5. Mr Everett will also secure the agreement of affected property tenants and owners.
6. Wiltshire Council would construct the scheme under their highways and flood management powers.
7. The demountable defences would be purchased as part of the scheme, and stored and put in place locally. This would not require special equipment for the handling of its components.

8. We have drafted an Outline Business Case (OBC) using the standard EA template to submit to the RFDC.
9. Wiltshire Council have asked their contractors to cost the scheme.
10. The missing element is production of the cost-benefit analysis required for the OBC. In addition to the Wiltshire Council costing this will require full modelling of the base case (the present situation), the do-nothing case and the scheme, to calculate the benefits. In order to do this we have received a quotation for £5000 plus VAT from Dr Chris Whitlow of Bristol, an expert in this modelling who has been doing work on the Avon for the EA. His price includes a report suitable for appending to the OBC and providing detailed justification for the scheme. Wiltshire Council have offered to contribute £3000 and in discussions the FWG requested that Malmesbury Town Council made up the remaining £2000 and routed payment via themselves in order to recover VAT. Wiltshire Council have indicated that they are happy with this.

We are aiming to submit the OBC to the RFDC meeting on 14 January 2020, and MTC's confirmation is urgently requested.

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1 October 2019