

Our Ref: SP/FC/303722

1st February 2021

Your Ref:

Bressingham and Fersfield Parish Council
C/o Dr Amanda McMurray (Chair) and Mr Michael Mortimer (Clerk)

Sent by Email to: bandf.pc@outlook.com

Dear Amanda and Michael,

Re: Advice re drainage issues at Common Road, Bressingham and Allotments in Bressingham.

Further to our previous correspondence and meeting regarding the above, I discussed the drainage issues on site with Mr Hines (125 Common Road), Mr and Mrs Pearce (117 Common Road) and Dr Amanda McMurray (Chair of the Parish Council).

My understanding is that the immediate drainage system to the culvert under the road at 117 Common Road has consisted of a 9 inch pipe from the south and an 8 inch pipe from the north, draining into a silt trap within the grounds of 117 Common Road, which then feeds into the culvert under Common Road. This then leads into a 6 inch pipe which is located parallel to the track leading to the Allotments and into the ditch to the north of the Allotments.

I was informed on site, that in 2016, Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways installed new gulleys and a manhole into the highway to assist with clearing and draining surface water on Common Road. These new structures were then connected to the existing culvert which crosses under the road at 117 Common Road to a pipe parallel to the track leading to the Allotments.

Mr Pearce confirmed that he initially contacted NCC Highways Department in January 2018 to discuss the flooding issues following a period of heavy rainfall, as the garages and land at 117 and 125 Common Road were flooded. Investigations were undertaken by Mr Pearce and NCC Highways. Mr Pearce stated that the culvert under the road was blocked and the 6 inch pipe outlet into the ditch to the north of the Allotments was flowing at approximately 15%. I understand that Highways responded in 2018 stating that "No action has been taken at this time, but we will continue to monitor the problem. We have assessed that the defect does not currently meet our intervention criteria, but will continue to monitor as part of normal scheduled inspections".

Mr Pearce also confirmed that he contacted NCC Highways again in December 2020 when flood water inundated garages, workshops and the dwelling at 125 Common Road and there was an immediate risk of flooding to 117 Common Road. It was confirmed that the garden of 117 Common Road was under approx. 4 inches of water, for approx. one week. Investigations were undertaken again by Mr Pearce and NCC Highways. Mr Pearce stated that the culvert under the road was approx. 75% blocked again and the 6 inch pipe outlet into the ditch to the north of the Allotments was flowing at approximately 15%.

I understand that NCC Highways inspected the manhole and culvert and responded on the 9th December 2020 as follows; "We have inspected and are going to resolve the problem - After investigation we have confirmed action is required. Defects are scheduled for repair depending on the nature of the defect and work needed but on average can take approximately 6 weeks". On this basis, the NCC Highways scheduled repair works should have been carried out on the week commencing 20th January 2021.

I understand that Mr Robert West of NCC responded on 11th December 2020 stating that it was his opinion that the outfall ditch to the north of the Allotments was not maintained and that he suspected root damage to the pipe located parallel to the Allotment track. Mr West confirmed NCC carried out some work under the road "several years back" but confirmed that pipework entering 117 Common Road and the private pipe along the Allotment track was not NCC Highways responsibility. Mr West confirmed that he was willing to assist by arranging a tanker to attend to see if pressure jetting would assist.

I believe it would be helpful to first determine and confirm that Norfolk County Council Highways have adopted the culvert or have it listed as one of their assets. I assume that the culvert is a Highways asset based on Mr West's response on 11th December 2020. I understand that the ditches and drainage systems leading to the silt trap at 117 Common Road are the responsibility of the adjacent landowners, unless there are historic records stating that they were created for the draining of the main highway. However, upon inspection these appeared to be relatively clear and did not appear to be contributing to the flooding issues. However, I could not inspect the pipe leading from the north from 125 Common Road. I will therefore assume for this purpose that the culvert is listed as a Highways asset.

It would appear from the information provided by local residents that the drainage and flooding issues have only been apparent since the installation of the gulleys and manhole within the highway in 2016 and since this surface water drainage system has been connected to the culvert under Common Road. It is certainly plausible that silt and debris from the highways surface water is contributing to the blocking of the culvert on a regular basis and restricting the flow of water drained from the west of Common Road and could therefore contributing to the backing up of water to 117 Common Road.

At the site meeting, Mr Hines lifted the manhole cover in the highway outside 117 Common Road and upon inspection, the water level was so high that the culvert could not be seen or inspected. Therefore, there appeared to be a restriction of the flow of water from that location, into the pipe running parallel to the Allotment track. I then inspected the outlet into the ditch to the north of the Allotment and there was water flowing from the pipe outlet, into the ditch. However, the water was slow-flowing and at low pressure and therefore it is clear that between the manhole in the highway, and the outlet to the east, there appears to be a blockage restricting the flow of water.

To remediate the flooding and drainage issues, I believe that there is a requirement for Norfolk County Council to regularly check and clear the structures along the road including the gully's, manhole and culvert, especially following periods of unprecedented heavy rainfall, as has been experienced in recent years. If NCC Highways are willing to pressure jet and clear the culvert of silt, this should in theory allow more water to flow into the pipe along the Allotment track and into the ditch to the north of the Allotments. The ditch to the north of the Allotments was reasonably maintained upon inspection and would benefit from some vegetation clearance, however this did not appear to be a cause of the restricted flow. Therefore, if the culvert is still blocked I would suggest that a request is made to desilt the culvert as soon as possible. This should then allow the pipe along the Allotment track to run at full capacity and clear the backlog of water into the ditch.

Furthermore, I would advise contacting the riparian owners of the private drainage pipes and ditches leading to 117 Common Road to ensure that all adjacent landowners keep their ditches and culverts clear, free of rubbish, debris, excessive undergrowth, tree roots etc.

Once the culvert has been cleared and de-silted, with the intention of clearing the backlog of water currently in the manhole, I would suggest that further inspection and a camera survey is carried out on the pipe along the Allotment track to check for any blockages, leaks, tree root ingress etc. Depending on the results of a survey, this will assist with further advice as to whether a new, larger pipe should be installed along the Allotment track to allow for more regular periods of heavy rainfall. If following the survey, there is no blockage, leak or damage to the pipe along the Allotment track, this would suggest that the restricted flow is due to the regular blocking of the culvert under the road.

Therefore, currently we are unable to correctly determine the exact cause of the restricted flow between the manhole and outlet to the east, until both the culvert is cleared by NCC Highways and a survey has been undertaken on the pipe along the Allotment track. If the survey finds that the pipe along the track is damaged or blocked this can then be remediated by the Parish Council.

It may be prudent for the Parish Council to discuss a management plan for the pipe along the track in the near future, as heavy rainfall is likely to become a more regular occurrence in our weather systems with forecasted changes to our climate. Therefore, this could include investigating the costs for installing a new, larger pipe along the Allotment track to allow for an increase in volumes of rainfall and reducing the risk of flooding in the future. However, this will need to be completed in conjunction with NCC Highways keeping the culvert under Common Road clear, otherwise a new, larger pipe will still not solve the drainage issues.

If you have any queries or require any further assistance with contacting NCC Highways, please do not hesitate to contact me.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Scott Parke', written in a cursive style.

Scott Parke, BSc (Hons) FAAV

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