

## Published 09-01-2023 Lynne Jones for K FAG

Following on from the online meeting we had with the Allerdale Network Team, Rod and I had a very useful couple of hours one morning with the Allerdale Team and CCC staff. We did a tour of some of the main "problem spots" and were able to explain what the problems were and where they impacted (as that is frequently not in the immediate vicinity of the culvert/drain). It was very useful to have both councils represented as they seemed to work together well. I appreciate the future is uncertain with council changes.

The results of this tour were:

1. An understanding of the consequences for properties in Penrith Rd when the culverts on The Hawthorns, Eleventrees and Chestnut Hill get blocked and the need for regular maintenance to keep them clear. Sadly, we were informed that we can no longer expect the same standard of maintenance service that we have become used to. Also, the consequences for the A66 of the culvert (responsibility of Highways England) on the edge of the allotments below the Hawthorn's culvert is fully understood.
2. Rakefoot Lane: some reconfiguring of the grass edges of the road to allow drainage into the channels was proposed.
3. The issues with drains on Chestnut Hill not taking water because of the steepness of the slope was flagged up. Alternative designed gully tops may be needed as the pipes in the road can take the flows - or maybe vents in the kerbs which are less likely to get blocked with leaves. We have asked. I am not hopeful there will be any changes. As with the culverts we were told that we cannot expect the same standard of roadside gully maintenance/clearing we have come to expect – and that was none too impressive.
4. The problems with flooding around the path to the school, Low Brigham and the sorting office had been investigated. There is a section of drain which has collapsed at the back of the row of cottages and there is also a tree which is impacting on the flows. CCC were dealing with it.
5. The ponding in the road by No1 Briar Rigg from Crosthwaite Beck being unable to fully drain under the old railway line was to be investigated. The ownership of the railway line was uncertain but I have passed on the local residents' view that it is Allerdale.

Mostly we were encouraged to use the Flood Hub for reporting blocked drains. It seems they are totally reliant on their computer system flagging things up so the more people submit a drain issue the more likely it is to be addressed. Apparently there is a welcome change from prioritising A roads, then B roads etc. for drain clearance and more a drive to clearing the drains which are the most nuisance. As an example of the effectiveness of the computerised blocked drain reporting system the gully outside Rod's house was reported blocked on 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and again on 28 Dec. It remains blocked even after the removal of two buckets full of debris from its sump.

However, there is no way that we in Keswick can expect to have anything like the routine drainage clearing that we feel we need - there are teams and they are deployed over a wide area so the good local knowledge and expertise we used to have is no longer there. We had asked for a lengthsman, someone who was contactable

with local knowledge and they suggested that we asked the town council if they could fund this? Apparently, Seamus had heard of another community in Cumbria with a lengthsman but he has not got back to tell me where that was. I asked on the National Flood Forum site for information on places where lengthsmen were employed and I had three responses:

Worcester have a county scheme: The CC train the lengthsmen, who then work for an agreed rate with individual PCs. The PC claims the cost back from the CC. Eligible work is defined by the CC. Ours inspects culverts and cleans the grills as necessary, in addition to basic footway maintenance etc.

Churchtown in Lancashire (thus in the same Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Area as Keswick) had a Lengthsman in Churchtown they shared the cost with another small village close by.

The Parish Council Precept is part of Council Tax and is collected from local electors via their Council Tax payments.

How is it Calculated? The Precept requirement is the difference between the Parish Council's estimated income and its anticipated spending requirements for the financial year (its budget).

A Parish Council/ Town Council can set its budget and spend its Precept on the local environment. Expenditure is audited and small PCs are manned by volunteers.

Obviously the amount of precept depends on the population, and Council tax is based upon rateable value.

The larger the population the bigger the precept.

We trained our own

Lengths men.

But of course some assets are the responsibility of the RMAs and Riparians.

Getting to the bottom of whose responsibilities each ditch, trash screen etc, was difficult.

Dulverton on Exmoor said about 10 years ago there was a scheme to encourage parishes to have lengthsman and some shared them. There are limits to what they are insured to do.

Perhaps this is something the Town Council could consider please? CCC, as primarily responsible for surface water flooding, seemed very keen on our asking! Those who are at risk of flooding are not interested in whose water course it is, they just need reliable maintenance whether it be an EA water course or a highways drain. Maybe appointing someone who is shared by the other local parish councils to spread the cost? There might even be some resilience funding somewhere? We have an area of particularly high rainfall and autumn brings the usual problems with leaves blocking screens and drains, I would suggest that makes it essential for our area to have more regular upkeep.

Lynne Jones

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