

Storm Babet flood and response – update

More than 30 Castleton properties around two “hot-spots” were affected by flooding on 20th October and are still in recovery. The flooding has been described by lifelong residents of the village as the worst in living memory.

On the day, our HPBC councillor Joanna Collins responded quickly to organise more sandbags from HPBC (our store of 40+ sandbags having been cleared the day before) and these were put to good use especially around The Island where Mountain Rescue turned out to help shore up the stone wall running alongside Peaks Hole Water, which had sprung numerous leaks. The river rose much higher than the paths at Waterside and elsewhere e.g. at Vicarage Lane. We’ve since had a lot more full and empty sandbags from HPBC and DCC, the store at the back of the Village Hall is full once more, and we’d like to thank these authorities for their help.

On November 9th a meeting was held in the Village Hall, organised by the Parish Council and the flood wardens, and very well attended by those affected by the flooding. The objectives of the meeting were to hear experiences and observations, exchange tips and generate a list of questions for key authorities, in order to improve Castleton’s flood resilience. Maps were handed out and affected property owners were encouraged to mark up and comment on the direction of flood water. Amongst the topics raised and discussed were:

- responsibility for structural integrity of the river walls and other river infrastructure
- Repeated blocked drains and ineffective response from DCC Highways
- The need for all individuals to report faults including blocked drains
- Government flood relief grants administered by HPBC and DCC and the need to submit a form to HPBC and a Flood Report to DCC in order to qualify for these
- Professor John Gunn’s expert opinion of why the flood was so extreme
- Preparation for floods including useful equipment to have on hand
- Responses to flooding, those of residents and flood wardens, and the role of other village people in helping those in vulnerable properties

The meeting was constructive and the flood wardens (including two newly signed up) are now putting together a more robust flood plan. Notes of the village flood meeting and the new flood plan will be published. A follow-up village flood meeting will be organised for early in 2024, and we aim to have John Gunn (hydrologist with knowledge of underground water routes in our area) and representation from the Environment Agency (EA).

Before and since that meeting Parish Council and flood warden actions have included:

- Following up river wall responsibility with EA, DCC
- Meeting Nigel Gourlay (our DCC councillor) regarding ineffective drains clearance
- Confirmation of John Gunn’s willingness to join a village meeting
- Flood warden meeting and production of a more robust draft flood plan
- Gathering of more contact information for owners of vulnerable properties – essential for communications
- Attendance of a parish councillor at a HPBC Emergency planning session
- Confirmation that the government flood resilience grant of up to £5K per household will be administered by DCC