creating a better place

Environment Agency

Mr C P Wayman - Town Clerk
Buckingham Town Council
Town Council Offices
Buckingham Centre
Verney Close
Buckingham
MK18 1JP

Our Ref: FR02S076/PRT
Your Ref: 532/11

Date: 13 December 2011

RECEIVED
19 DEC 2011

Dear Mr Wayman

Re: The River Great Ouse in Buckingham

Thank you for you letter of the 23 November 2011 about maintenance of the River Great Ouse in Buckingham.

The section of river through Buckingham is classified as a high flood risk system because of the potential impact of flooding to people and property. All high risk systems are inspected annually and any works identified such as de-silting, bush / tree clearance and obstruction removal, to keep the channel at it's target condition (in a suitable condition for flood risk), are added to the maintenance programme.

The last inspection was in July / August 2011 and some tree / bush clearance works was identified to reduce the risk of blockages. The rest of the channel is at or above it's target condition so no further maintenance is planned for next year.

If you wish to discuss this matter further please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Paul Taylor
FCRM - Asset System Management (Central)

Direct dial 01480 483262
Direct fax 01480 483239
Direct e-mail: paul.taylor2@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency

Buckingham

Location	Buckingham, Buckinghamshire
Source of flood risk	River Great Ouse
Last flooding	The last flood event in Buckingham occurred in July 2007
History of flooding	There have been four significant flood events in Buckingham; March 1947, December 1979, April 1998 and July 2007. The April 1998 event in Buckingham flooded 75 properties, and the most recent flooding in July 2007 flooded 96 properties.
MP	John Bercow
Local Authority	Buckingham town council Aylesbury Vale District Council Buckinghamshire County Council

Buckingham is situated on the River Great Ouse in Buckinghamshire. It is one of the first major towns to flood in an event in the Upper Great Ouse catchment. Buckingham has a history of flooding and although the priority score has meant that Buckingham has not had a flood defence scheme built, it has been awarded DeFRA funding and Local Levy money for a property level protection scheme which was completed in December 2010.

The probability or likelihood of flooding is described as the chance that a location will flood in any one year.

An area at risk of flooding can be expressed as having:

- A 1 in 100 chance of flooding in that location in any year
- Or a 1% chance of that location being flooded in any year

However, this doesn't mean that if a location floods one year, it will definitely not flood for the next 99 years. Nor, if it has not flooded for 99 years, will it necessarily flood this year.

The **lower the percentage** then the **less chance** there is of flooding in any one year; the **higher the percentage** then the **more chance** there is of flooding in any one year.

The flood map that shows the probability of flooding in Buckingham is currently in the process of being updated. It should be available in January 2012.

For more information on flood maps please visit our website. http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/31662.aspx.

Over the past 10 years we have commissioned a number of studies and reports into the viability of a flood alleviation scheme, but due to technical, environmental and financial reasons, they have not gone ahead.

In 2005 the Environment Agency produced a project appraisal for a flood defence scheme for Buckingham. The preferred option was for a combination of an upstream flood storage area at Water Stratford and raised flood walls within the town. This option would have provided increased protection to 131 properties at a cost of £2,914k (2005 prices). The resulting priority score meant that the scheme did not attract Grant in Aid from Defra.

Following flooding in July 2007 the scheme was reviewed in March 2008 with a view to seeking Local Levy funding; however, the review showed that the scheme was still not economically viable.

In 2009 Aylesbury Vale District Council won £325k of funding from Defra to implement property level flood protection measures in Buckingham, the Environment Agency contributed a further £250k from Local Levy funding. The works, managed by AVDC, were completed in December 2010 and provide increased flood protection for 87 properties in the town.

The River Great Ouse through Buckingham is inspected annually. This identifies any works such as de-silting, bush / tree clearance and obstruction removal required to keep the river in a good condition and reduce flood risk.

The last inspection was July/August 2011 when tree and bush clearance works were identified to reduce the risk of blockages. This work will be added on to the maintenance programme for 2012.

Dredging and clearing channels is an important part of our maintenance programme and we do it where we think it will help, but in some circumstances dredging is not always the best long term solution. It can be time-consuming, very costly and not as effective as other flood risk measures when these factors are taken into consideration.

It is important, however to keep in mind that, when we experience exceptional rainfall and resulting floods like we did in Cumbria, there are few flood measures and defences in England that could have held it at bay.

March 1947 – extensive flooding of the River Great Ouse at Buckingham

December 1979 – Flooding occurred in Buckingham

April 1998 – Flooding of 75 properties in Buckingham

2005 – Environment Agency produced a project appraisal for a flood defence scheme in Buckingham. The priority score of the scheme meant that it did not attract grant in Aid from DeFRA.

July 2007 – Flooding of 96 properties in Buckingham

March 2008 – Following the flooding in July 2007, the scheme was reviewed with the view to receive local levy funding, however the scheme was not justifiable.

2009 – Funding was awarded to Aylesbury Vale District Council for property level flood protection measures in Buckingham.

December 2010 – Completion of the property level flood protection measure scheme, protecting 87 properties.

January 2012 – Upper Ouse Hazard Mapping project will be completed which will re-map the flood zones and revise the flood warning through Buckingham.