

NEWS ARTICLE FOR NFF NEWSLETTER
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(headline)

Flying the FLAG for Kempsey

(body copy)

Villagers from Kempsey in Worcestershire have reformed their Flood Action Group (FLAG) in a bid to secure Local Levy funding for its flood alleviation scheme.

Kempsey homes have flooded 23 times in the last 30 years. In July 2007, more than 150 properties – almost a tenth of the village – suffered some degree of flooding from the River Severn and Hatfield Brook. The main A38 that runs through the village was closed for three days. Several homes are still unoccupied 18 months and four floods later.

Villagers were therefore delighted when the Environment Agency designed a viable flood alleviation scheme. The proposal is to build a bund around the outlet of the Hatfield Brook, with a pump to move excess water into the River Severn.

FLAG members presented the scheme, along with more than 50 letters of support and a 452-name petition, to the Midlands Flood Defence Committee (FDC) meeting in January. However, the FDC had decided at a previous meeting not to prioritise Kempsey's flood defences for implementation in 2009.

FLAG are now working with the Environment Agency, parish council and district council to prepare a robust case to present at the FDC meeting in September. The hopes are that Kempsey's flood alleviation scheme will then be approved for 2010/11.

FLAG has three working groups – Communications (with villagers and external organisations); Funding (organising fund-raising events, and seeking third party involvement to reduce the scheme’s estimated £1.45m cost); and Data (sourcing accurate data about the impact and cost of flooding to the village).

Standard bearers for FLAG are chairpersons Dan Corns and Cathy Garner. Cathy owns one of two grade 2 listed thatched cottages that were used as hospitals for Cromwell’s men in the Civil War. Both cottages have flooded six times in 12 months, are uninsurable and unfit to live in.

Cathy said: “Some people, like me, are in danger of getting into serious debt, with houses that are unsellable and standing empty. But, the flood alleviation scheme won’t just benefit us. Insurance costs should come down, house prices should go up and road access should improve for everyone in the village.”

(info box)

A compelling case for Kempsey:

1. The sheer numbers of homes and people affected regularly by flooding make Kempsey’s case critical. In 2007, around 150 homes were affected by flooding. Many older people were cut off from road access and had to be rescued by neighbours and emergency services.
2. Contamination caused by flooding of the village sewer works presents a major public health hazard.
3. Homes and businesses are cut off when the main A38 through the village is under water. This major trunk road is frequently used as a diversion route when the nearby M5 is closed.
4. Villagers are on almost constant flood alert each time there is heavy rainfall.

(exploded quotes)

“It’s flooded so often now, I’m afraid it’ll happen again every time it rains heavily”

“July 20th 2007 was a totally unexpected summer’s day – preparing for Beth’s wedding in a week’s time and then suddenly having to lift furniture, and at 4am climbing out with my arthritic husband over the stable doors into 4ft of rising sewage and river water. It was a miracle we got him out”

“Having to evacuate complete with pets and carrying furniture above our heads was traumatic. We have neighbours who are still not back in their homes”

(ends)