

## **- MILVERTON**

More details as requested by Cllr Gwil Wren about activities funded by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) in the Milverton area.

### **Natural Flood Management online auctions 2021-22**

Every year since 2018 Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) has given grants to successful bidders for works to help stop flooding. Somerset farmers are invited to bid via an auctions website ([www.naturebid.org.uk](http://www.naturebid.org.uk)) for Natural Flood Management (NFM) measures which they believe would work well on their land.

The auctions are organised for the SRA by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW). They are reverse auctions. In conventional auctions, bids go up until the highest one wins. In reverse auctions, people who submit lower bids are triumphant.

Manor Farm at Otterhampton successfully bid for grants for better post-harvest maize management across 131.84 hectares of land in several locations, including the parish of Milverton (also the parishes of Cannington, Wembdon, North Petherton, Oake, Nynehead). Watercourse Hillfarrance Brook, catchments Tone and Parrett.

A note on maize management: water running off from compacted maize ground can contribute to localised flooding. Problems can be minimised by encouraging the infiltration of water through soil. Useful techniques include drilling and cultivating fields with a winter cereal or ryegrass, after maize has been harvested. Establishing green cover helps to intercept rainfall and protect the soil surface.

To get the grants they bid for, farmers have to cut their maize before 1 October. This rule is intended to allow for more time, after harvesting, for run-off reduction works to be carried out. If works are left too late, then the soil can simply become too wet for success.

### **Natural flood management grants for capital schemes 2021-22**

At **Lower Lovelynch, near Milverton**, Hillfarrance Brook, works were done to reduce flooding and lessen the amount of soil deposited on a troublesome corner on the B3187 between Wellington and Milverton. Too much water from an uncontained spring was flowing down onto the road.

Works consisted of four main elements:

- Digging a ditch to contain and divert water into an existing culvert to take water into an existing drainage pipe.
- Cutting grips to re-direct water onto grassland to slow its flow, allow for infiltration into the ground and for sediment to settle.
- Extending an existing grassland area and installing a silt trap.
- Installing raised banks to intercept and slow run-off, and stabilising those banks with hedge planting.

## **Drain jetting 2021-22**

125 drains were jetted for the SRA in 2021-22, including 33 in Somerset West and Taunton, and Wiveliscombe Road in Milverton.

Under existing budgets, Somerset County Council's Highways Department can only afford to jet drains when a bad blockage has occurred. SRA funding allows for earlier preventative maintenance at locations known to suffer problems with flooding. Final selections of drains for jetting are made using local knowledge and professional judgement.

## **Somerset West and Taunton**

### **Grassland sub-soiling 2019-20**

Lower Cothay Farm, in that year's NFM online auctions, won grants for grassland sub-soiling between Nynehead and Milverton (Lower Cothay Farm), Hillfarrance Brook, in total 38.66 ha. Grassland sub-soiling helps to aerate the soil so it can hold more water. Very wet weather made ground conditions unsuitable for grassland sub-soiling in autumn 2019, so all grants were carried over until autumn 2020.

### **Highways referrals 2019-20**

In 'Highways referrals' SRA partners look for answers to highway flooding problems in better management of land nearby. Cases generally involve Somerset County Council's Highways Department and the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW), with the former referring problems on to the latter. Highways officers may be told about matters by various sources – for example, residents or parish councils – or they may spot issues themselves, when they are out and about. (As indeed may FWAG SW advisers).

One case investigated in 2019-20 was at **Baghay Farm Lane, Milverton**. Run-off and silt from an arable field were causing problems on the road and in residential areas. Large gullies in the field caused by soil erosion were a factor. Appreciating that there were issues, the farmer dug some channels across the field to divert water away from properties and installed a series of temporary bales on the headland to help reduce soil loss on to the road.

### **Grants for equipment and training 2018-19**

The SRA funds grants for equipment and training given to Somerset communities by Somerset Prepared. One of the biggest grants given in 2018-19 went to Milverton.

Milverton Parish Council was given a contribution towards a diesel generator, torches, foil blankets, first aid kits and training, snow shovels, rechargeable floodlights, hi viz jackets and walkie talkies. The equipment is used by the 40 or so volunteers registered to help

with Milverton's Emergency Plan. It helps to improve the resilience of the village's Designated Place of Safety.

### **NFM schemes 2017-18**

This year schemes included one at Bickley Farm, Milverton (watercourse = tributary of Hillfarrance Brook, Tone catchment). A leaky pond was created which can store up to 5000m<sup>3</sup> of floodwater.

### **NFM schemes 2016-17**

The SRA drew on £550,000 of Growth Deal money from the Heart of the SW Local Enterprise Partnership to fund nearly 50 schemes across Somerset. These included one at Houndsmoor Farm, Milverton (watercourse = tributary of Hillfarrance Brook, Tone catchment), where a rainwater harvesting system was installed to manage water from a roofed area of 450m<sup>2</sup> with an outlet to a leaky pond.

### **- PINKSMOOR**

More details as requested by Cllr Janet Lloyd about Pinksmoor Farm activities funded by Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA). These have largely been on the outskirts of Holywell Lake, and are probably best covered in chronological order.

### **Soil visits 2018-19**

The rationale for SRA funding of soil visits by the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group SouthWest (FWAG SW) is that better soil husbandry helps to reduce the run-off of surface water. Keeping soil in good health also brings obvious benefits to farmers.

Sometimes soil investigations lead on to bigger natural flood management projects. As at Pinksmoor Farm, which had a visit in 2018.

### **Natural flood management online auctions 2018-19**

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Pinksmoor Farm (in the catchment of the Upper Tone) successfully bid for 40 metres of hedge planting on a new bund on the outskirts of Holywell Lake. This planting – which took place in 2019 and was featured on BBC Points West – filled a gap in the lower corner of a field. It has been helping to stop localised flooding.

FWAG SW regarded this as a great example of hedge planting on a bund; they were “very pleased” with it.

Hence partly its selection for appearance on TV with Clinton Rogers.

Hence partly, also, further schemes in subsequent years.

### **Hedge planting on earth bank 2020-21**

**Pinksmoor Farm, Holywell Lake**, 84.6 metres in the corner of a field just outside Holywell Lake, complementing a previous hedge and bank installed with SRA funding from 2018-19’s online auction. Both have helped to reduce road flooding. Upper Tone catchment.

### **NFM auctions 2021-22: hedge planting on earth banks**

**Pinksmoor** near Wellington, Pinksmoor Farm, 69.4 metres of hedge planting on banks in a good cross-slope location and the bottom of a sloped field; parish Wellington Without; watercourse upper Tone; catchment Tone.

### **- WIVELISCOMBE**

More details about SuDS inspection in Wiveliscombe as requested by Cllr Dave Mansell.

The main aims of SRA-funded inspections of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are to ensure that SuDS are built in accordance with the exact designs that were approved by local planning authorities, and that they work as they are meant to work. Local planning authorities have the power to enforce changes to constructed SuDS schemes, and where necessary they use this power.

SuDS inspections are carried out by inspectors based within Somerset County Council.

SuDS inspectors check schemes for compliance against 16 different criteria, such as water quantity, design requirements, health and safety, system blockages, water quality, structural components, biodiversity, materials, vegetation and future maintenance arrangements.

The only site in Wiveliscombe that has been inspected is Style Farm, Wiveliscombe. A SuDS inspector made an initial assessment on 29 October 2021 during the construction phase. Most SuDS features - such as the headwall outfall and flow control device – were incomplete.

Photos were taken but no report was produced.

It was on the list to be re-inspected when complete, but we have been told that the inspector is going to be instructed to re-visit the site to check on progress.