

COUNTY COUNCILLOR'S REPORT

The extreme rainfall on Thursday 1st June was another example of the direct impacts of Climate Change: warmer air and hotter seas give both more rain in general, and greater probabilities of really extreme localised rainfall, which is extremely hard to plan for or mitigate against. We increasingly run into the problem of our drainage systems all having been designed for a (previously) predictable range of climatic events, that we are accelerating out of. This is exacerbated by the general disrepair of most public assets after more than a decade of austerity. For people in Priory Mews, 5 of whose homes were flooded, it is further exacerbated by a former Secretary of State at appeal allowing the owner of Castle Priory to block a drainage tunnel and build a wall to "prevent flooding from Priory Mews" into his property. SODC and OCC will be preparing a Section 19 flood report on how best to manage the risk of future events.

Perhaps not entirely coincidentally, adding to OCC's work on Climate Adaptation, we have a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy out for consultation, until 23rd August.

<https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/local-flood-risk-management-strategy> Your input would be greatly appreciated.

Turning to the "more rain in general" result of warmer air and hotter oceans...I'm well aware of the problem with overgrown paths and cycleways; locally including that from Charter Way to Fir Tree Avenue. Even with absolute priority given to them, the exceptionally verdant growth resulting from almost perfectly timed rainfall and warm spells for the last 2 years means that there are not enough contractors or officers available to keep pace. Public rights of way are in my portfolio, and I have fortnightly meetings with the Officers in charge. I was shocked to find Oxfordshire has 2800 miles of them (nearly as much as we do of highways), and there are 1,600 open items on FixMyStreet about verges and pathways.

There are good scientific reasons to suspect that this change in weather patterns may be persistent, so I'll be looking to get extra investment into vegetation clearance in next year's budget: however, there are an awful lot of priorities (including flooding) that may come out on top.

I'm also trying to sort out with Thames Water why they put up traffic lights around Slade End roundabout on 12th Aug, then didn't turn up on 13th, or by time of writing on 14th. The TW Head of Engagement is on the case, as are our Highways team.

That's is from the Hautes Pyrenees, where it is raining.

Cheers!

Pete

Dr Pete Sudbury (Green Party Cllr, Wallingford Division)

MA (Cantab), BM, BCh, MRCPsych, MBA.

OCC Deputy Leader | Climate Change / Environment / Future Generations

Mob: (44)7721 510518

*Do pick up the phone: it's much nicer to talk to a human being,
& my inbox is always bombed out!*

