

## **Anglian Water meeting notes 18 March 2024**

2PM at Meldreth Recreation Ground pumping station.

2:30-4:00 at Melbourn Hub meeting room: 30 High Street Melbourn

### Attendees – Melbourn area

- Susan van de Ven County Councillor
- Jose Hales District Councillor
- Sally Ann Hart District Councillor
- Nick Garner Meldreth Parish Council
- John Travis Melbourn Parish Council
- Sarah Phillips South Cambridgeshire District Council Environmental Health
- Brian Heffernan Cambridgeshire County Council Flood team

### Attendees – Anglian Water

- Gavin Elliott – Water Recycling Network Manager
- Luke Murphy – Water Recycling Asset Performance Manager
- Colin Rogers – Network Support Technician
- Scott Weston – Regional Trenchless Manager
- Emily Linsdell – Regional Engagement Executive (Apologies – car broke down)

## AGENDA

### 1. Welcome

2. Meldreth foul water back-up in about one dozen households in concentrated area: short and long-term solutions to ongoing household foul water back-up resulting in unusable plumbing, and some foul water flooding, as per ongoing correspondence.

3. Meldreth: Water infiltration issue identified in 2022.

4. Melbourn issues – Foul water back-up in small number of household properties in concentrated area: Understand from AW recommendation to steam clean the fat build up along the length of the sewer duct. One of the operatives sent a camera along the pipe and confirmed the significant fat build up was exacerbating the problem caused by the inadequate diameter of sewer pipe.

5. Communication and public reporting

6. Actions and follow-up

7. AOB

## **Meeting Notes**

## **Response to action points awaited from AW**

### **Response from councillors**

### **Response from SCDC**

### **Response from CCC**

#### **How Meldreth Pumping Station works:**

Whaddon station pumps to Meldreth Station via Whitecroft Rd/Marys Way junction manhole.

But, Whaddon pumping station doesn't talk to Meldreth. Telemetry.

Problems under rainfall conditions with infiltration into system. Combination of things happening. Whaddon has infiltration too. When two villages both have it, pumping into same system, something gives. **Need to look at Whaddon too. Action: when?** Please see the section 'out of incident mode' below

Meldreth system is dual assist, pumps support each other. Working as it's designed to.

#### **Capacity study of Meldreth pumping station is done via desktop exercise. Dry capacity. Action: Can we have a physical hydraulic modelling exercise?**

As the team explained, the capacity of Meldreth pumping station is modelled via a desktop survey, which uses dry weather flows as this is what the system is designed for, and we are regulated on. Since the meeting, we have spoken to our modelling team about the possibility of doing physical modelling. Our Senior Modeller confirmed that we do not build physical models and that doing so would not have any benefits over the desktop exercises that we use.

#### **Measuring system performance:**

Would it be a good idea to actually measure the performance of the system? Have good information about the system you own.

Model done previously – trying to work out average flow rate. If surface water flows go into AW system it's terrible. Is that the root cause?

#### **Planning and development, role and influence of Anglian Water:**

AW has no power to prevent or control development.

Anglian Water are not statutory consultees but tend to comment if 10 dwellings or more. If specific concerns they probe.

Nor is LFA (Local Flood Authority, ie County Council) a statutory consultee. Needs to be a major development of ten or more. But wouldn't preclude making a representation.

Planning system at SCDC – regardless if one or 1000 homes, would it be helpful for AW to get sight of planning applications?

AW does not get notified of extensions. Nothing on permitted development.

Damson Close Meldreth (new development off Whitecroft near Chiswick End): AW have asked, where is their surface water going? Waiting to hear.

Developers might stick surface into foul water.

What measures exist, or need to exist, to make sure developer puts in proper surface water measures, to prevent surface water entering foul water system? (See below SCDC response)

#### **Incident Mode:**

AW has been in 'incident mode' much of the time since September 2023, the first of a series of storms/major rainfall events.

Incident is triggered by number of jobs coming in, flooding.

When ground water high it comes back quickly.

AW don't have capacity to respond to all incidents as they would wish. For example, they have a limited number of tankers to pump out; worst incidents will take priority and others will not get that service. **Does AW have plans to increase response capacity?**

We are focussing on tackling the causes of sewerage issues, such as removing water from our network that shouldn't be there, so that we can make positive impacts in the long term rather than treating the symptoms reactively in the short term.

Regarding tankering, our resources are unfortunately not limitless and we have to continue to prioritise using tankers to ensure we meet our permit conditions regarding sludge treatment and to protect the environment where our assets are impacted by high groundwater levels.

#### **Out of Incident Mode:**

When we're out of incident mode, the planned activity is to prioritize different areas with different actions – camera, cleaning, etc.

For Meldreth, to better understand the cause of the drainage issues in the village, we plan to carry out investigations into the root causes. This will involve using a camera to review different parts of our network to understand if there are areas where surface water flows could be influencing the issues being experienced. We are currently in the process of planning these investigations and obtaining required resources. We are unable to give timescales, as this investigation work is also subject to levels in the network. Unfortunately flow through the network is still too great for camera work to be undertaken - we don't have visibility of the state of the pipe work, extra flows and infiltration when the sewer is completely full.

We are also committed to carrying our investigation work in Whaddon to explore infiltration issues.

How much water from road can get into manhole/sewage system? Quite a lot.

Ditches: do you have a programme of assistance for ditches, and if so, how do we access? Can different authorities work together? **AW: we are happy to feed into a multi-agency approach.**

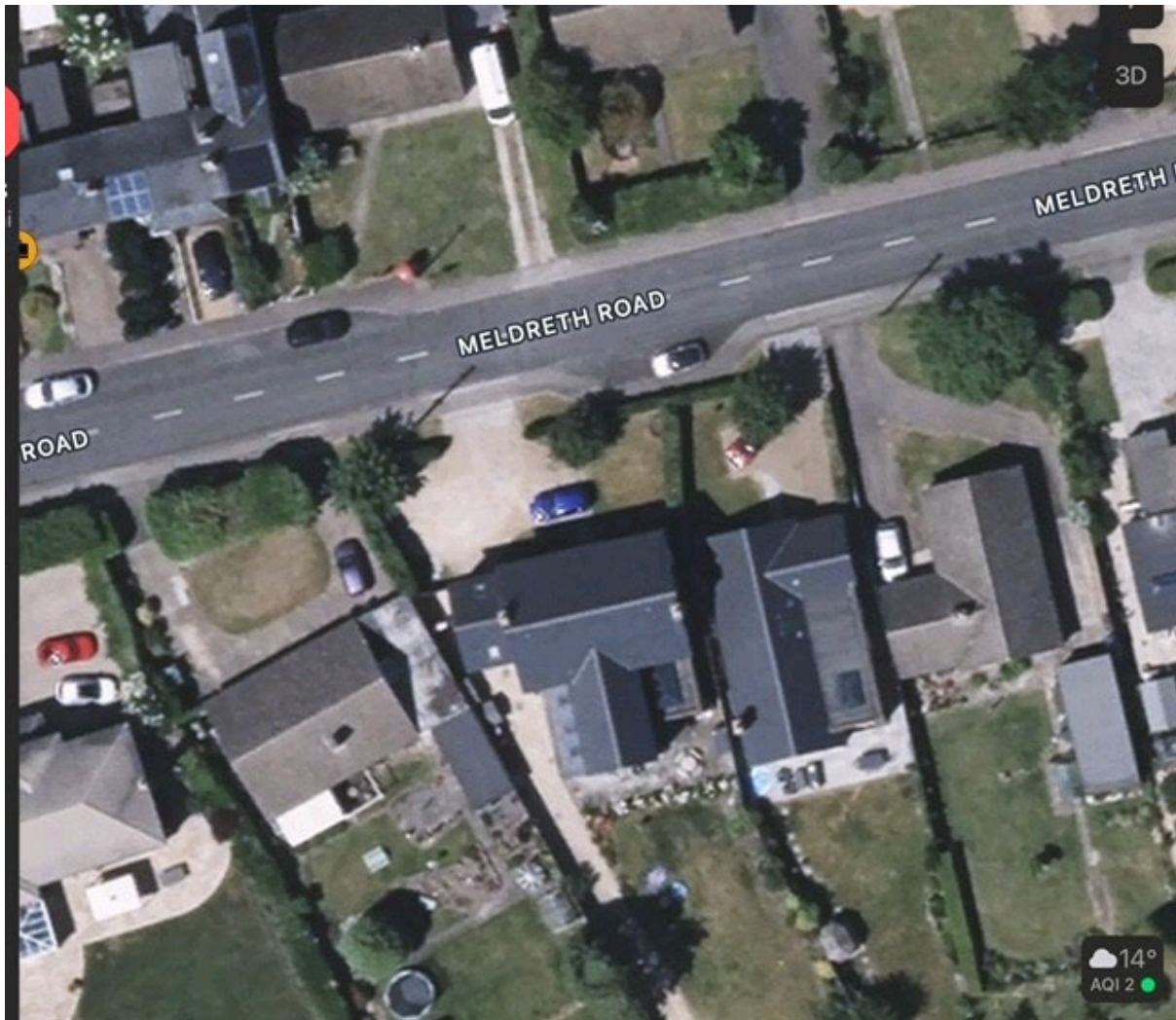
#### **Understanding the local area ground water and springs:**

Whaddon: Eternit used to extract water; closed down a few years ago so ground water level is higher, including springs.

**Action:** Get info from Whaddon Parish Council.

**Response:**

The rising spring is in Meldreth Road by the old Queen Adelaide site. It is right by the lay-by photo attached. The spring is in the garden with the blue car parked in it. The rising spring is feeding into the drain all the time.



**Get clarification from EA when abstraction license expired.**

Marys Way Meldreth manhole overflow: Could put forward an application to seal a manhole. That would only push the problem elsewhere. Big drainage ditch right nearby heading toward Whaddon. Effluent into water course: EA would say no. Discharge would be a problem.

**Meldreth affected properties follow-up:**

Returning Wednesday. Cleaning pipe, hopefully to complete. Need to see how it operates after cleaning completed. Spot check, camera checks. If it wasn't working as it should, problems would not be confined to heavy rainfall events.

**Then because Whaddon pumps to Meldreth, AW will camera. When? - Please see section 'out of incident mode' above**

**Melbourn affected properties follow-up:**

Logged report information to be shared by S van de Ven with AW. **Done – emailed to AW Public Affairs. Action: needs AW response.**

Finally, Gavin we alerted you to case work in Water Lane, Melbourn and you said reference numbers would be helpful:

19 March 2023: 23411378

Blockage cleared. Cause believed to be wipes and leaves. Left clear and free flowing. Customer happy.

11 June 2023: 23793829

Blockage cleared. Cause believed to be Fats, Oils and Grease (FOG) and silt. Additional high pressure Jetter ordered to attend and clean pipe.

25 December 2023: 24855910

Blockage cleared. Cause believed to be FOG. Left clear and free flowing. Customer happy.

### **Communication**

Vital to get faults logged on AW website or there is no record and response won't happen; prioritization affected.

Best way of asking for help? Most people try call centre. Longer wait. 1000s of calls. Try website. Called self-serve.

**BUT: we tested the website during the meeting and it was not operating. Gavin to report this to AW.**

If we know we have a problem with the online reporting system, to stop inconveniencing customers by only allowing them to only get so far with the system, we close it down while we sort out the problem and instead ask customers to ring our call centre. This was the case in the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> March.

Reporting system is onerous. Make it simple.

**ACTION: Use residents to test improved reporting system. (Response from AW – limited offer with of phone reporting only, which as stated above is not AW's recommended route. Can anything further be done, AW?)**

We are looking into reporting procedures, but we would ask customers to continue to report issues online and over the phone. As explained above, if customers have experienced problems with reporting, this will be because we are fixing an issue with the online system.

We appreciated the feedback that Susan provided on the WhatsApp survey, and as a result we have removed the survey functionality as we appreciated that it is not always appropriate here.

### **Wider picture and similar problems elsewhere:**

We're up against it with climate change and wet weather to this extent becoming the norm. Therefore need to think in new ways. Multi-agency approach needed.

Incumbent on all of us working collaboratively. New builds and how you retrofit solutions. Local attenuation ponds. Money needed.

Question: What is the state of the AW pipe system? Must be old, need better maintenance, and therefore be particularly susceptible to infiltration of ground water.

Anglian Water capital programme: Ten-year programme: various schemes. Five-year period with regulators.

Ground water problem as much as surface water. Planning, highways, sustainable drainage enforcement, riparian responsibilities carried out, surveys need to be real not desktop.

SCDC – sweeper teams getting called out for keeping drains clear of debris. Don't have the capacity to do as much as would be ideal. Five sweepers for 106 villages.

**How can we bring agencies together to partner on solutions to deal with climate change? (What does AW see as practicable?)**

We are very much aware that the threat of climate change is felt by the East of England region more than anywhere else in the UK. Almost a third of our region is below sea level and extreme weather is becoming more commonplace, with more frequent episodes of drought and flood. The final three months of 2023 alone saw more rainfall than for the whole of 2022, meaning it was the wettest year on record in the East of England. We've seen 10 named storms, and more than one and a half times the normal amount of rain in the last six months.

As you will know, flooding and drainage issues are complicated, with many different organisations having a range of roles and responsibilities. We look after the sewers and any flooding from manholes. The Environment Agency has responsibility for fluvial (main river) flooding and a strategic overview of all sources of flood risk. County Councils (or Unitary Authorities) have responsibility for groundwater, surface water, ordinary watercourses (anything not classed as a main river) and flooding from highways in their role as the Lead Local Flood Authority and the Highways Authority. The nature of the current challenges, and as part of their duties as flood risk management authorities, means all agencies need to work together to develop a plan for managing surface water and groundwater, and reducing the risk of issues like this in future.

Anglian Water is happy to be involved in future collaboration work between the different agencies.

**Information, education and individual household action:**

If every house had a water butt? Nice but enforceability is hard. Better would be physical infrastructure – balancing pond. But maintenance thereafter is a big problem.

More information and education needed.

**Riparian ownership and responsibility** – leaflet for local use circulated by CCC and distributed to all parish councils

**Question to AW: If you had lots of money what would you do?**

**'Find out where all the extra water is coming from.'**

Water scarcity group - now need foul water group.

**Meldreth Village Flood Avoidance Committee.** Annual tour of hotspots for all types of water issues. Annual meeting with AW. Always includes SCDC and CCC officers, parish council, SCDC and CCC Cllrs.

Collaborative work possible but needs action points responded to, or exercise is of no value.

### Follow-up from SCDC:

- Building Control – we have requested informative regarding surface water discharges to be added to decision notices
- Planning – we will include the same informative on decision notices for householders etc.
- Anglian Water – GCSP will send weekly decision notices to AW
- County – HJ has forwarded email to Frank Jordan
- Intern Project – we will progress this with the UoC (aiming for 6 interns) in the summer
- Comms- GCSP to draft leaflet for Parish Councils to share with their residents (informative) with input from Lee Hillam

### Follow-up from Cambs CC:

- It is understood that AW operate financially in pre-programmed spend regimes of Asset Management Plans (AMP's) and it would be good to know which version/incarnation they are currently working to and how any assets of theirs at your location (pumps, sewers etc.) feature with respect to the current AMP.
- In the event that no spending is programmed or ringfenced for the community, could they advise what assets of theirs might be likely to be considered for future AMP's and if there are any "in year opportunities" for unspent or underspent funding.
- Are there any plans to carry out surveys for ground water infiltration of their pipes and (foul) systems that would identify and eliminate superfluous/extraneous contributions to their foul systems?
- Similarly, are there any plans to cctv/survey the foul systems at Melbourn/Meldreth towards identifying mis-connections ([Water fittings regulations \(anglianwater.co.uk\)](http://www.anglianwater.co.uk)) towards educating the relevant customers and residents as well as reducing superfluous/extraneous contributions to their systems? It is appreciated there is a philosophy that one does not find problems until they are sought out by programmed/scheduled surveys, but if this could be considered it is yet another potential "marginal gain" in the battle against surface water flooding in respect of property flood alleviation!
- It is also understood that AW used to run an initiative where they would fund projects that could demonstrate a reduction in surface water contributions to their (foul) systems (e.g. construction of a pond or Natural Flood Management (NFM) initiatives, towards preventing access to AW's' systems. Are there any plans to revive this as previous applications were a bit unnecessarily bureaucratic and were future applications less so, they may invite more interest.