

I think some of you may be aware of my interest in the wellbeing of our River Avon and its waterways

Getting on for 3 decades I have lived and worked on them, through the good and the bad times and let me assure you the bad times are getting more frequent and worse

I admit to not being a professionally qualified individual when it comes to hydrological matters. I leave that to those with their desk top computer models and lots of relevant letters after their names

What I do have are years of experience in watching how our water environment has changed.

I respectfully remind you of the previous Chairman of the Environment Agency, Baron Chris Smith of Finsbury's assessment of the Somerset Levels a couple of years ago.

The rivers of the Levels will not require dredging he said.

Yet on instructions from the government Land & Water Limited have thrown dozens of huge machines in there and have been frantically dredging for months.

Our River Avon has not been dredged for over 20 years and the powers that be will claim it will make no difference anyway.

Over 15 years ago I dug back a small section of my riverbank looking for the land drain outlet. Five metres of bank silt later I found it.

On the 30th October 2000 Broadmead Lane Industrial Estate in Keynsham suffered a major flood incident. So rapid was the rise in the river flood level that no warning was possible. I lived there, so witnessed it.

Workshops and offices were deluged with over half a metre of fast flowing filth. Five large cesspits emptied, diesel tanks toppled and spilt, whole trees swept through and narrowboats on hard standing awaiting repair tried sailing off.

The River actually diverted across the immediate southern fields to a depth exceeding two and half metres sweeping rapidly across the only escape route, Broadmead Lane, pushing over a large lorry trying desperately to escape. I personally took a powerful workboat out and rescued the driver. It was a life and death situation.

Avon Fire and Rescue teams also helped take folk from the Industrial Estate to safety.

This happened again in January 2001 and more recently in September 2013 when we had to rescue a gentleman from his 4 by 4 after it had been washed off Broadmead Lane.

We all know what happened on Christmas Eve 2013.

Bath was very lucky on all these occasions. I believe a Neap Tide at Bristol Avonmouth was the saving grace.

In conclusion, I warmly welcome the Kelvin Packer and Jim Collings highly professional Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Team and the inspiration of Louise Fradd with support from John Wilkinson in setting to work the Strategic River Group.

Climate change is here to stay, and lack of river management has to be addressed for we can no longer completely defend ourselves against flood, we have to adapt to live with it, and not just in the City of Bath.