

## **B&NES Cabinet 16.1.2020 – Deputation concerning Mead Lane Moorings (agenda item 15)**

*Phil Harding – Chair of Planning, Saltford Parish Council & Chairman of Saltford Environment Group*

In October I received and quickly submitted to B&NES Council technical design information concerning the 2005 bio-engineered stabilisation of the riverbank in Mead Lane. The scheme, rock armour secured with riverbank vegetation, was installed to “*protect the highway from becoming dangerous*”. Loss of part of the highway was then predicted by Halcrow to occur within 5-10 years if no action was taken. The scheme was not designed to take boat moorings including narrow boats that typically weigh 20+ tonnes. SEG also took professional advice from a Bath-based coastal and inland civil engineering consultancy who agreed that Mead Lane’s bio-engineered riverbank is not suitable for boat moorings which damage the scheme.

Mead Lane provides the only road access to Wessex Water’s Sewage Treatment Works as well as to residential properties and businesses; 24/7 access is imperative. The lane has beneath it a pumped sewer main and other buried services. I therefore alerted Wessex Water to the danger posed to their facilities; they share our concerns and have made representations to the Council, including at CEO level.

During December a brief survey by me and two residents including a geologist concluded that rock armour is missing in several places. On 20<sup>th</sup> December a trench dug by Wales and West to repair a fractured gas main filled with water as the river rose on the other side of the roadway to near flood level; river water was rising beneath the roadway across its full width. The integrity of the scheme that originally had a 40-50 year design lifespan has clearly been compromised by a “fix and forget” approach to asset management.

Moorings commenced a few years after the 2005 works straightened the riverbank. The 2017 and 2018 mooring trial by effect advertised Mead Lane as a free mooring thus attracting a growing number of boats causing ever more damage. The longer you delay a mooring ban the more extensive and expensive the repairs; this increasing waste of public funds and risk to infrastructure needs to stop. As your background report recognises, climate change is creating more extreme weather including heavy rainfall events. The resultant increase in river flow accelerates the erosion of riverbank stabilisation schemes like Mead Lane’s.

**Saltford Parish Council and Saltford Environment Group implore you to agree to implement an immediate mooring ban** to protect the stability of the riverbank from further damage and the key infrastructure it protects. We also ask you to:-

- (i) install effective **physical measures to protect the riverbank** and the highway edge from vehicles;
- (ii) instigate an urgent **structural survey** of the riverbank with a view to **repairing the rock armour** before the end of the summer and autumn floods put the undefended highway at further risk;
- (iii) **designate Mead Lane riverbank as a flood defence asset that protects important infrastructure** requiring care and maintenance; and
- (iv) to take forward the proposal for designating Mead Lane riverbank as a **Local Nature Reserve** to protect the vegetation that underpins the riverbank’s bio-engineered stability whilst providing public amenity benefits - leisure, recreation and education. This has strong local support.

B&NES Council should discuss with the Parish Council & residents implementation plans for those works.

The Lemon Gazelle report highlights the wider social and environmental issues associated with boat moorings on the River Avon, a **Site of Nature Conservation Interest**. As a separate case to Mead Lane, B&NES Council can use the Lemon Gazelle report to inform an investigation with key agencies on how best to support, manage, and enforce the use of moorings on the River Avon. The objective would be to make the river safer for all users including the live-aboard community whilst protecting this important Site of Nature Conservation Interest, a key ecological asset.