

# COLLIER STREET PARISH COUNCIL



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Ms Joanna Vincent  
Public Enquiry Manager  
For Gateley Harmer  
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1<sup>st</sup> April 2021

Dear Ms Vincent,

## **Leigh Flood Storage Area**

Collier Street Parish is downstream of the Leigh Storage Area and is a parish that has seen several flooding events and properties flooded over the years which have increased in the last 20 years. Although the Parish is not directly affected by the operation of the Leigh Storage area any improvements in storage would potentially benefit the Rivers around the Parish. The Rivers Teise, Lesser Teise and Beult go round and through the Parish. The importance of ensuring the correct operational procedures as laid out in the River Medway (Flood Relief) Act 1976 are in place and if the application is approved a condition should be attached that requires the EA to operate the FSA so that all communities downstream benefit as was laid out when the Act was original put in place.

The opportunity to increase the size of the Leigh storage is especially important not only to protect Tonbridge and Hildenborough in particular but it will also help other communities further down river such as East Peckham, Collier Street, Laddingford and Yalding. In the areas not directly affected a reduction in water levels all helps those who do not meet the criteria for Property Level Protection.

The Medway Rivers Relief Act 1976 specifically mentions operating the Leigh FSA to benefit particular of the land in the parishes of Tonbridge and Hildenborough. It also mentions areas further downstream, and this is recognised in the same section of the procedures, where it is stated that communities downstream of Tonbridge will benefit from the operation of the Leigh FSA due you a reduction in peak flows on the River Medway. This benefit decreases proportionally the further you go down stream as other



factors such as flows from other tributaries and the shape of the floodplain, become more influential in determining local flood risk.

The increase in flooding in the past few years in the Medway Catchment has meant a lot of things have been done including providing Property Flood Protection to some 250 houses and more is planned in the coming months. Data produced by the EA shows flooding in 1927,1947,1960, 1963,1968,2000, 2013/14, 2019/20 and 2020/21. So, a lot more in recent years than in previous times.

The reason that PFR has been introduced is that some storage areas that had been proposed and suggested did not get the go ahead due to cost benefit ratios and modelling showing it may cause other areas to flood.

It is our understanding that the Leigh Storage has gone through the all the appropriate planning stages for selection and appropriate funding is available and been secured and so therefore should proceed as outlined in the EA proposals that have been submitted. Over time many other storage areas have been talked about and rejected for several reasons including meeting the strict cost benefit ratios. We now have a scheme that does meet the criteria and should proceed.

PFR has benefitted some properties but there are some that did not qualify for various reasons and as a result are still at risk if the extension to Leigh does not go ahead as planned.

It is our understanding that if the storage area increase does not happen the proposed embankment at Hildenborough will not proceed and PFR will be offered. As stated, before we have concerns over this solution.

It is noted that from the EA modelling increasing the storage water level at the barrier is unlikely to have a significant impact upstream of the FSA. However, without it down stream communities are still at risk. Given the current arrangements communities are and rightly so concerned every time alerts and warnings are issued by the EA. These alerts and warnings are on the increase.



It is also noted that the current proposals are supported by Kent County Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Tonbridge and Malling Council, Tunbridge Wells Council, Sevenoaks Council and the Upper Internal Drainage Board. All these organisations are involved with flood related matters and we would support all the documentation they have submitted to the enquiry.

The scheme being put forward helps communities, business and helps with the vision of Government and the EA of better protection for all in an ever-changing environment.

It is our view that to meet the challenge of more intense and more frequent heavy rainfall events being posed by climate change we need to be far quicker in investing in works that are proactive in reducing flooding. No one measure on its own protects every community but by using all the techniques available the chance of flooding to properties is reduced.

The proposals put forward at Leigh meet this challenge and as a Parish Council we would fully support the scheme as laid out in the documents submitted by the EA.

Yours faithfully,

*David Goff*

Cllr David Goff,  
Chairman,  
Collier Street Parish Council