

The logo for Southwell Flood Forum. It features a stylized icon of three horizontal lines to the left of the word "SOUTHWELL" in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font. Below "SOUTHWELL" is the word "FLOOD FORUM" in a larger, bold, blue, sans-serif font. Underneath "FLOOD FORUM" is the tagline "Community Protection & Support" in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.

SOUTHWELL FLOOD FORUM

Community Protection & Support

15th July 2015

Rt Hon David Cameron MP
House of Commons,
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Cameron,

You will remember that during the Newark and Sherwood by-election last year that both you and George Osborne visited the area and saw for yourselves the devastation of flooding on July 23rd 2013 which affected over 250 houses and businesses in Southwell. The Chancellor promised at the time that Southwell would get what it needed to prevent future occurrences. We fought for the Repair and Renewal Grant and this was eventually backdated to April 2013 to include areas other than the Somerset levels and the Thames basin.

At a meeting with the lead flood authority, Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC), Newark and Sherwood District Council (NSDC) and Environment Agency (EA) we were told that any residue from this grant be donated to community level protection schemes. More importantly we were told that it could be banked and ring-fenced until 2018 so that NCC could complete the flood model and decide on the necessary mitigation measures that would be necessary to reduce the risk of future flooding in Southwell. This was both recorded and minute

Southwell Flood Forum worked tirelessly within the community to encourage householders to install personal property protection and explain the value of donating any surplus money to the community fund so that property in general would benefit from catchment-wide schemes around the town. We are proud to have raised in excess of £156,000 so far which has exceeded our target community contribution of £125,000 for general mitigation measures. We have been encouraged in our efforts by all the agencies involved and particularly by NCC, NSDC and EA. However we have recently been told that the money collected into the Community Fund via the Repair and Renewal Grant has to be spent by

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September 2015. This is obviously completely impractical as no worthwhile scheme can be designed, tested, costed, tendered and implemented within that timescale.

Indeed the flood model has only recently been completed after two year's work and we are still waiting for the results of potential mitigation measures to be run through the model and evaluated. To hurry this important project would be a recipe for disaster.

It would be much better 'Value for Money' to invest these monies into a considered and integrated solution – see footnote.

We are devastated and frustrated by this situation. The town was previously flooded in 2007 and despite a long list of recommendations in the report not one measure has been implemented. The community have worked tirelessly to support the lead flood authority and help ourselves by reporting gullies, drains and gutters that needed cleaning, reporting other areas that needed attention due to lack of maintenance and clearing over 3 kilometres of watercourses.

We have been misled by politicians and partners. We have lobbied at the highest level to plead our cause but to no avail so far. The community is now furious at the way we have been treated and are demanding action to ensure that the money they have donated to protect their properties is available for use to install general mitigation measures.

We would ask both yourself and George Osborne to urgently review this matter with Treasury staff and offer a sensible solution so that the community in Southwell do not have to live in continual fear of being flooded.

Yours sincerely,

Rob Jordan
Chair, Southwell Flood Forum

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Footnote

Professor Colin Thorne, Chair of Physical Geography, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nottingham specialises in river and flood risk management.

In referring to the December 2013 floods in the South he wrote in his paper in The Geographical Journal 2014 180 297–309 doi: 10.1111/geoj.12122 ...

“in responding to public outrage politicians are reacting to recent events, rather than shaping the future of flood risk management. This can never deliver the integrated portfolios of flood risk management measures necessary to manage future flood risk affordably and sustainably, and evidence-based decision making represents a better way forward.”

(Thorne et al. 2007).