

SPAXTON PARISH COUNCIL NOTES – 27 June 2016

The Parish Council meeting which was to be held at Merridge Village Hall but moved to Spaxton Village Hall to ensure there was enough room for members of the public, who wanted to know more about the aftermath of the floods and what could be done to try and prevent a recurrence. Even with the meeting being held in the Pavilion there was standing room only for many of the public who attended the meeting. As there were so many people present, the time for the public to address the Council was extended to 30 minutes but lasted for nearly 45 minutes due to the concerns of the local residents.

The topics raised were:

Digestate Development at Merlyns Farm and Swang Farm. A representative for the Campaign to Protect Rural England reported that a Stage 1 complaint about these developments had been submitted to Sedgemoor District Council. This is because they had not been built as notified and there had been no action to control these unauthorised developments. It will therefore be raised to a Stage 2 complaint to Sedgemoor DC.

Digestate Tankers on Spaxton roads. The size and number of vehicles used by Cannington Enterprises delivering digestate to a greater number of fields in the village have increased. This was reported as dangerous, especially as there no footpaths through most of the residential area with the only way to reduce the danger is to reduce the risk and/or remove the hazard. A suggestion was made that a 7.5 tonne weight limit should be considered to achieve this.

Another point was made about Cannington Enterprises exceeding the approved limit of waste being fed into the digester i.e. more than 11,000 tonnes. *It has now been shown that the figure was due to an error by the Environment Agency that they are running close to the planning limit with waste but there is no evidence that it has exceeded it* and the Environment Agency is monitoring waste input with the County monitoring non-waste.

Flooding in Spaxton, Aisholt and Merridge on 28th May. This was the main concern by the majority of the public at the meeting and the impact that changing farming practices is having on the silt laden floodwaters. It was felt that the flood was caused by poor farming activities and that there is a lack of consideration by the farmers for others who live in the area. It was acknowledged that local people realise that farming is important in a rural area but feel it needs to be done responsibly and follow codes for good farming practice.

One resident reported that they had been knocked over by the force of the floodwater whilst trying to protect their property. Another resident said they had a thick layer of silt, up to 6 or 8 inches deep in places, over their garden and garage and took 70 man hours to clear up and wheelbarrow away and a further 100 man hours since, to finish clearing the aftermath. They also reported that their garden is now covered by a thick layer of clay which will take months or years to return to normal. Many other people expressed their shock of the tidal wave of floodwater that came down off the hills, carrying soil from bare fields where crops are being grown to feed a Bio-digester filling roadside ditches, drains and gullies before being washed on down as far as the Spaxton village hall. Somerset County Highways came out the next day to start the clearance work with tractors, lorries and sweepers, and continued for several more days to reinstated the roadside ditches and try and clear the roads.