

# CHAFFCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Public Meeting at Chaffcombe Village Hall held on Monday 18th November 2024 at 6.00 p.m.

### 1. Attendance and Apologies

#### Those present:

Mrs M Butler (Chair Parish Council)  
Mrs G Wills (Vice Chair Parish Council)  
Mr R Bale (Parish Councillor)  
Mr D Bracher (Parish Councillor)  
Mr S Robinson (Parish Councillor)  
Mrs S Osborne (Somerset Councillor)  
Mrs S Morley (Parish Clerk)

#### Apologies

#### In Attendance

Neil Ogilvie (Somerset Council)  
Rachel Whaites (Somerset Council)  
Hannah Stanton (Reservoir Warden)  
Tom Wanner ) Engineers for  
Herman Stehle ) Somerset Council  
24 Members of the public

The was the second meeting about the proposed work at the Reservoir, arranged by the Parish Council so that Somerset Council could give more details about the proposed works.

### 1. Presentation by Somerset Council

The presentation began by explaining the legislation which governs reservoirs in England and Wales. They are the only piece of infrastructure which is governed by their own Act (The Reservoirs Act 1975). The Act provides that regular formal 10 yearly inspections must be carried out by an engineer who will make recommendations to ensure the safety of downstream populations. At the last inspection deficiencies were identified and therefore it was mandatory to look at risk and the possible failure of the reservoir and the consequences of this.

It was explained that there are various categories of risk with category A being the highest with possible consequences meaning loss of life and significant damage and potentially hundreds of lives at risk. There is a big inundation area downstream of the reservoir reaching as far as Bridgwater.

When doing an assessment of the risk the guidance sets out two approaches: one a standard approach which would involve mitigating as much risk as possible by having a bigger overflow and raising the dam; the second a risk based approach looking at mitigating the risk downstream. Today the risk based approach is usually taken because it is more cost effective. To mitigate all risk would be prohibitively expensive so the risk based approach looks at mitigating the risk to life.

The assessment of the Chard Reservoir looked at the probability of the failure of the dam and the stilling basin in a number of scenarios: 1 in 500, 1 in 5,000. There were a number of options considered and several were short-listed and tested.

At this point a question was asked about the sluice gates. The answer is that the sluice operator lives in Taunton but there are local people who can operate the sluice if rain is forecast/ Clearing of the sluice is done regularly.

The options open to the engineers were to get the risk as low as reasonable taking into consideration costs. A physical study was carried on a 3D model to see what the water is doing. At this point a video of the model was shown showing how the water behaves at various flows, with all culverts open or with two culverts closed and with the proposed wall in place. The 3D model showed that by closing two culverts and building the wall the risk was significantly reduced. In a massive rainfall event this will not eliminate flooding, but it will prevent failure of the dam and therefore prevent catastrophic loss of life downstream.

Another question was asked about the level of risk and it was pointed out that these 1 in 5,000 events may not happen or they may happen tomorrow. People need to remember that Queen Camel had flooded very badly last year and everyone has seen the recent terrible events in Valencia.

Questions were asked about the proposed wall. This will be a maximum of 1 meter high and will taper off with a bund to the anglers car park. The water can go round it so it will not prevent flooding. The object of the wall is to protect the dam not to prevent all flooding. It was stressed by the engineers that failure of the dam would cause catastrophic flooding and loss of life because thousands of gallons of water would be released in one go. The wall will not change the overflows. The risk to properties by the reservoir is not from the reservoir itself but from water going into the reservoir. The priority is to protect more than 700 houses downstream, not just the properties around the reservoir. Water will go

around the wall and cause flooding but the wall will ensure the dam holds and is not breached so the flooding will not have the same impact.

A question was asked about how the wall will protect the dam from erosion underneath. The answer was that water flowing over the dam would speed up erosion.

A question was asked whether they are working with the Ilminster flood group who have money to study the impact and risk of the River Isle flooding. Yes they are engaging with the Ilminster group. In the event of catastrophic flooding, Ilminster would be flooded but the work on the dam would prevent loss of life.

Questions were asked about the loss of the footpath when the wall is built. The footpath was only put in 3 years ago and is not a public right of way. No-one wants to see the loss of the footpath. However at the moment the priority is to build the wall to ensure the safety of the dam. When the wall has been built it will be possible to see how much space is available to re-instate the footpath.

A question was asked about having a gate in the wall. This will not be possible because it will not be possible to ensure it is closed in an emergency.

A question was asked whether there will be access to the anglers' car park. The anglers are concerned that the car park remain open during the work and the reply was that they will try to ensure that there is somewhere for the anglers during the work because the anglers manage the fish stocks in the reservoir.

A question was asked if the road will be closed during the work. The answer is that the work will last several months and road closure will be avoided as much as possible.

The public meeting finished at 7.25 and Cllr Mary Butler thanked everyone for coming along to explain the work in more detail.