

KINNERLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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Rt Hon Owen Paterson MP
House of Commons
London
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By email only to:
Patersono@parliament.uk

21 October 2020

Dear Mr. Paterson

Shrewsbury North West Relief Road and increased flooding in our Parish

As our MP, can you please help protect our interests from a threat that we have only recently become aware of, but about which we have yet to be consulted?

On behalf of Kinnerley Parish Council, I wish to express our considerable concern and amazement at the development of proposals for a dam / embankment as part of the Shrewsbury North West Relief Road (SNWRR), and the dramatic effect it will have on parts of our Parish and neighbouring rural areas.

In presentations by the River Severn Partnership and in papers presented to Shropshire Council Cabinet on 7 September 2020, this scheme is being hailed as a miraculous solution to flooding and climate change in Shropshire as well as an opportunity for economic gain.

Astonishingly, the available documentation to date neglects to detail the probable implications of this proposal for communities upstream of Shrewsbury, including our own and those in Powys. Hence, a project heralded as 'Shropshire Flood Prevention' is grossly misleading, because it is at the expense of vast parts of North Shropshire and Powys.

The proposal to allow flooding in a large area of North Shropshire, would include communities which we as a Parish Council represent, including Edgerley, Pentre, Maesbrook and Farm Hall, along with our neighbours in Melverley. These areas already provide a natural flood plain to hold water back from Shrewsbury, forming a larger expanse of water in our area, with resulting flooding of residential properties, businesses, farmland and roads.

In the flooding of February 2020 significant numbers of properties in our Parish were flooded, agriculture land and businesses submerged and many households cut off by road for as long as a fortnight, with many properties in our Parish still recovering. However,

the implications for North Shropshire and the borders are deliberately minimalised in the paper presented to Shropshire Council's Cabinet. In the proposal made by the 'River Severn Partnership' for an embankment / dam, hundreds of hectares in North Shropshire would be subjected to deeper and more sustained flooding and many more areas would start to flood with resulting implications for property and business as well as implications for roads in North Shropshire thus affecting access and business links. Figures quoted suggest that a massive 130 square miles (34,000 hectares) of farmland might be flooded, which is nearly 50 times the combined areas of Lake Vyrnwy and Clywedog Reservoir, the only two existing artificial lakes on the Severn/Vyrnwy catchment.

Implementation of this proposal would permanently raise the water table just a few miles upstream of Shrewsbury. It would therefore reduce, rather than improve, flood plain capacity for the absorption of severe weather events, which with global warming will become more frequent. Flooding would be shared to more people and businesses but with less warning than now.

We as a Parish Council understand all too well the negative impacts of flooding and realise the importance of collaborating along the length of the rivers Severn and Vyrnwy and their tributaries to find mitigating solutions. This should include measures for the holding of water back when necessary and for slower run-off from the headwaters, dredging to aid its passage in the right places and at the right times, careful considerations in building allocation, building design, the benefits of careful tree planting, management of drainage and eco systems. However, the suggestion of a dam merely moves the problems further upstream.

To date Kinnerley Parish Council has received no information, update or communication whatsoever from Shropshire Council or the 'River Severn Partnership' about this project, despite the fact that the proposal would massively impact our Parish and locality, and despite Cllr Nutting's recognition at the recent Marches LEP Board meeting on 29 September that community consultation was sorely lacking to date.

To be able to partake constructively in any effective public consultation, our Parish Council, individual households, businesses and landowners need reliable projections and data. To engage in any consultation process, we need detailed and specific information pertaining to each property and business.

In the first instance, our parishioners must be assured that the 'River Severn Partnership' and Shropshire Council have a full and comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the implications of the proposed construction of an embankment or dam to the depths, occurrence, regularity and duration of flooding to individual properties, particular businesses, specific farmland, individual roads and access in North Shropshire.

In addition, we also need comprehensive modelling of how the combined implications of the embankment or dam construction and the projections of a 0.85 m increase in flooding will affect specific properties, roads and land in our area over the next 50 years. It is only when residents, business proprietors, landowners and councillors have this information that they can fully contribute to the consultation process.

The 'River Severn Partnership' speaks of promoting 'greater health, wellbeing and prosperity outcomes'. At the same time, it purports to value 'historic heritage and landscape'. In our parish there are those who have suffered substantial depths of water in their own homes in February 2020. They are still recovering emotionally and financially whilst undertaking refurbishment of their properties. Now they face the emotional strain and financial uncertainty of the prospect of more frequent flooding and deeper and longer lasting flood water as a result of the proposed dam. There are families who have moved into the area investing their life savings in their home or business alongside those who have lived for generations in this community. There are families that have invested their life efforts in businesses such as tourism, hospitality, hairdressing, child minding and agriculture, whilst others have committed their life savings to restoring listed buildings in the area. Meanwhile, others already wade through water or over fields in order to work in the wider community as nurses, librarians, mechanics, engineers, teachers or to run their own businesses during flooded times. The statement in the Cabinet papers that 'a focus of the consultation and engagement process would be to understand and mitigate possible negative impacts [of the proposed dam/ embankment] **wherever possible**' is not a strong enough pledge.

Our Parish Council represents communities along the Rivers Severn and Vyrnwy that have been promised to be consulted, but we are still waiting. Please will you also pledge that that they will be listened to?

Yours sincerely

Nick Barclay

Nicholas R Barclay

Chairman

Kinnerley Parish Council

cc: Rebecca Pow MP (Minister for flooding), Daniel Kawczynski MP, Cllr Peter Nutting, Cllr Matt Lee, Mark Barrow, Andy Begley

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