STILTON PARISH COUNCIL

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Ditch Maintenance & Ditch Squad Programme

Introduction

The Stilton Parish Council Ditch Management Programme represents a holistic approach to address the challenges associated with ditch infrastructure. By combining infrastructure improvements, community engagement and sustainable practices, the programme aims to create a resilient and environmentally friendly drainage system that benefits the entire village.

Objectives

1. Flood Prevention:
   - Implement measures to reduce the risk of flooding during heavy rainfall
   - Enhance the capacity of ditches to efficiently channel and manage storm water runoff.

2. Environmental Conservation:
   - Preserve and protect local ecosystems by preventing soil erosion and sedimentation in water bodies
   - Promote biodiversity through responsible ditch management practices.

3. Community Engagement:
   - Foster a sense of community ownership and responsibility for ditch maintenance
   - Inform residents on the importance of riparian ownership in keeping waterways clear so that water can flow.

4. Infrastructure Improvements:
   - Assess and upgrade existing ditch infrastructure to meet modern standards (working alongside local authorities and others with riparian responsibility in the village).

Programme Components:

1. Mapping and Assessment:
   - Conduct a thorough survey to identity and map existing ditches, assessing their condition and capacity

2. Infrastructure Upgrade:
   - Implement necessary repairs and upgrades to existing ditches, focusing on critical areas
   - Consider incorporating eco-friendly materials and design to enhance sustainability.

3. Vegetative Buffers:
   - Establish vegetative buffers along ditch banks to prevent soil erosion and filter pollutants
   - Encourage the planting of native vegetation for enhanced ecological benefits.

4. Community Workshops and Engagement:
   - Organise drop in sessions/on site meetings to inform residents on the importance of ditch management for those with riparian responsibilities
   - Provide information on ditch management on the Parish Council website as a method of information but also to encourage engagement.

5. Maintenance Schedule:
    - Develop a regular maintenance schedule for the village maintenance contractors to follow
    - Establish a system for reporting and addressing issues promptly.

6. Partnerships:
    - Maintain the Stilton Ditch Squad (SDS) involving local residents, Parish Council staff (Caretakers/Clerk) and Councillors to monitor and develop an effective process to respond to differing levels of need with village waterways
    - Collaborate with local environmental organisations, District/County Councils and Government Agencies to secure funding and resources
    - Seek technical assistance and expertise for specialised projects within the ditch management programme.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regularly evaluate the effectiveness of the ditch management programme through performance indicators such as reduced flooding incidents, improved water quality and increased community engagement/confidence. Adjust strategies as needed to ensure long term success.

Document Review

Reviewed: 12 May 2026 (agenda item PC108/26)
Next review date: May 2027
Responsible Officer, Parish Clerk.

STILTON DITCH SQUAD (SDS)

Membership:

Residents, Parish Council staff (Clerk to oversee, Caretakers to report and evaluate risk) and Parish Councillors.

Objective:

To keep Stilton's waterways flowing, raise standards and look for ways to increase effectiveness.

Level/Situation:	RESPONSE:
GREEN Weekly monitoring of village ditches by Amenities Caretaker/residents Ditch maintenance plan being followed and all ditches in good working order Awareness of weather conditions – non threatening	Water flowing freely Ditches maintained (no overgrown patches) Culverts maintained (silt removed) and grills clear of debris
AMBER Weekly monitoring by AC/residents highlights minor issue for solving Ditch maintenance plan in need of general upgrade Wet weather expected	Slight build up of debris in ditch – AC to clear with long handled rake Slight build up of debris at culvert – AC to clear with long handled rake Silt build up – Village maintenance contractor to be asked to clear Clerk to contact Village maintenance contractor, CCC ditch team or external company for advice/quotes Weather forecast monitored
RED Weekly monitoring by AC/residents reveals severe issues with ditch/culvert health such as a blockage or collapse Ditch maintenance plan has caused an issue for effective water flow Severe weather expected with high water table/saturated land/full ditches Blocked culverts	AC to provide first response from land to gauge severity Clerk to contact village maintenance contractor or Flood team for advice Urgent assistance to be organised using Clerk's delegated power to agree to an emergency spend Nearby residents to be advised of situation and risk from flooding (sandbags to be circulated)

Raise standards:

1. Ditch plan of the village to be generated
2. Ownership or responsibility for ditches/culverts to be determined
3. Plan to be added to the SPC website
4. Ditch maintenance plan by the village contractor to be circulated to all SDS members
5. Clerk to check ditch/culvert works are being carried out as planned by the village maintenance contractor
6. Clerk/ACs/Councillors to be trained in ditch management methods.

Increase effectiveness:

1. Grants to be researched for ditch/culvert/grill improvements
2. Collaboration with Flood teams to be fostered allowing information sharing
3. Biodiversity planning to be incorporated into the ditch management programme.