



Flooding at Merton Fields

Solutions promised to stop future flooding at Merton Fields

The parish council which installed a pond to prevent flooding, which then flooded, promised solutions were being sought to stop it happening again. Oliver Saunders of Stratton St Margaret Parish Council's open spaces team admitted he had "underestimated" the amount of water that would collect in the pond at Merton Fields Park when it was dug. He said: "The amount of water coming into the park has not changed, but we stopped the water leaving the park and that's what created the flooding. "I was staggered at the alarming amount of water that collected in the corner of that pond, I underestimated how much there would be."

When asked whether any surveys were done before the pond was dug, Mr Saunders added: "I'm aware of what the soil is like in the area, I studied geological maps and spoke to the Environment Agency, so I had enough facts to make these choices. None of the information I had led me to believe there would be so much water." "We will investigate the drains in the park and try to get them cleared up."

The pond was created to drain excess rainwater and create a new freshwater habitat, but the pond quickly overflowed, and water spilled over footpaths and breached the bank next to nearby housing estates just before Christmas.

Historically, the area around the field is prone to high groundwater, which made matters worse. Kris Talikowski lives nearby and called a meeting at St Philip's Church so that concerned neighbours could voice their views about the flood risk to parish councillors. Mr Talikowski said: "I have an amazing view of the pond from my window and I watched as it was dug and started to fill up, then emailed the council when it began flowing under the fence and towards the houses. "A mistake has been made so how do we fix it and ensure the right solution is in place? Any heavy rain could cause it to happen again. "All options need to be considered, expensive or otherwise, then put to a public consultation, like the pond dig should have been in the first place. "I usually have nothing but positive words to say about the parish council for their level of engagement. This is our area and we should be involved in learning about any decisions of a permanent solution. "Will any options be open to consultation?" Mr Saunders replied: "Yes." The parish council will now meet with experts from Swindon Borough Council to discuss the best way forward, though an overflow system has been suggested.

Source: Evening Advertiser 11th January 2020