



Witney Flood Group

Witney Flood Group

Update

Waterways Day, 9 October 2026

Agenda

- Why we exist
- The problem with Witney
- We are dammed
- Summary of Recent Activities
- Clearance Work
- Sensors Project
- Capture the Island
- Our Partnerships
- Progress with Partners
- Plans
- Questions

Why We Exist

- **Joined Up thinking and Teamwork**
 - With EA, WODC, WTC, OCC, Thames Water
 - Engage and support those at risk of flooding
 - Represent silent voices
- **Watercourse Maintenance**
 - Looking after what we have already got - removal of silt, fallen trees, obstructions
 - EA – Main River
 - WODC – Ordinary watercourses
 - Riparian Owners – Throughout
 - Now doing our own light maintenance with permissions, insurance, RAMS, safety officer – tired of waiting
- **Gauge Boards at more Key Locations**
 - Sensors Project - 11 Sensors and Gauge boards installed by WFG
- **Greater Channel Capacity through the Town – Engineered Solutions**
 - Town Bridge Reconstruction
 - Langel Common Footpath
- **An Attenuation Scheme for Witney**
 - Between Worsham and Crawley
 - Hailey Road Drain

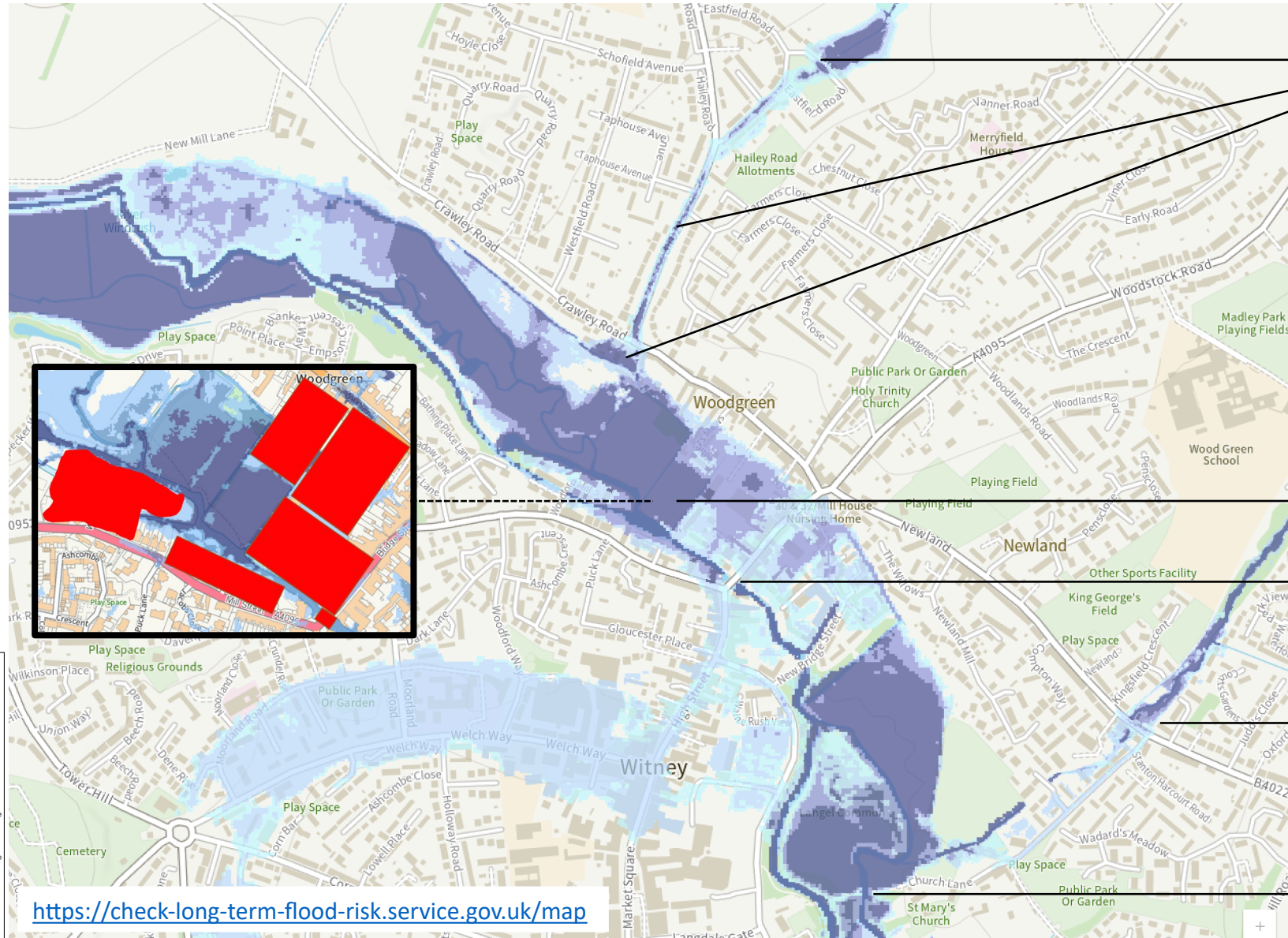
The Problem With Witney

- **Topography**
 - Why was it a blanket town full of mills? Water power!
 - Millers maintained the waterways, it was their livelihood
 - Extensive floodplain above and below, engineered solutions won't affect our neighbours
- **Overdevelopment**
 - Several structures added or modified for the wrong reasons
 - New developments - surface water drainage and holding ponds
 - Transport and new development over flooding
 - Broken planning system, enabling overdevelopment
- **Deterioration of Public Services, excuses after excuses**
 - EA defunded at several points over the years, now ineffective
 - Environmentalism over taxpayers
 - Climate change is no excuse for inaction. Reducing risk will reduce damage
 - Thames Water – Sewer and Sewage works capacity. Private company = shareholder value
 - Residents told to apply Property Flood Resilience (PFR), makes it our problem
- **Low Awareness**
 - 'Doesn't affect me'
 - People forget a flood, or move on quietly

We Are Dammed



Witney Flood Group



Hailey Road Drain

Development on the floodplain

Town Bridge

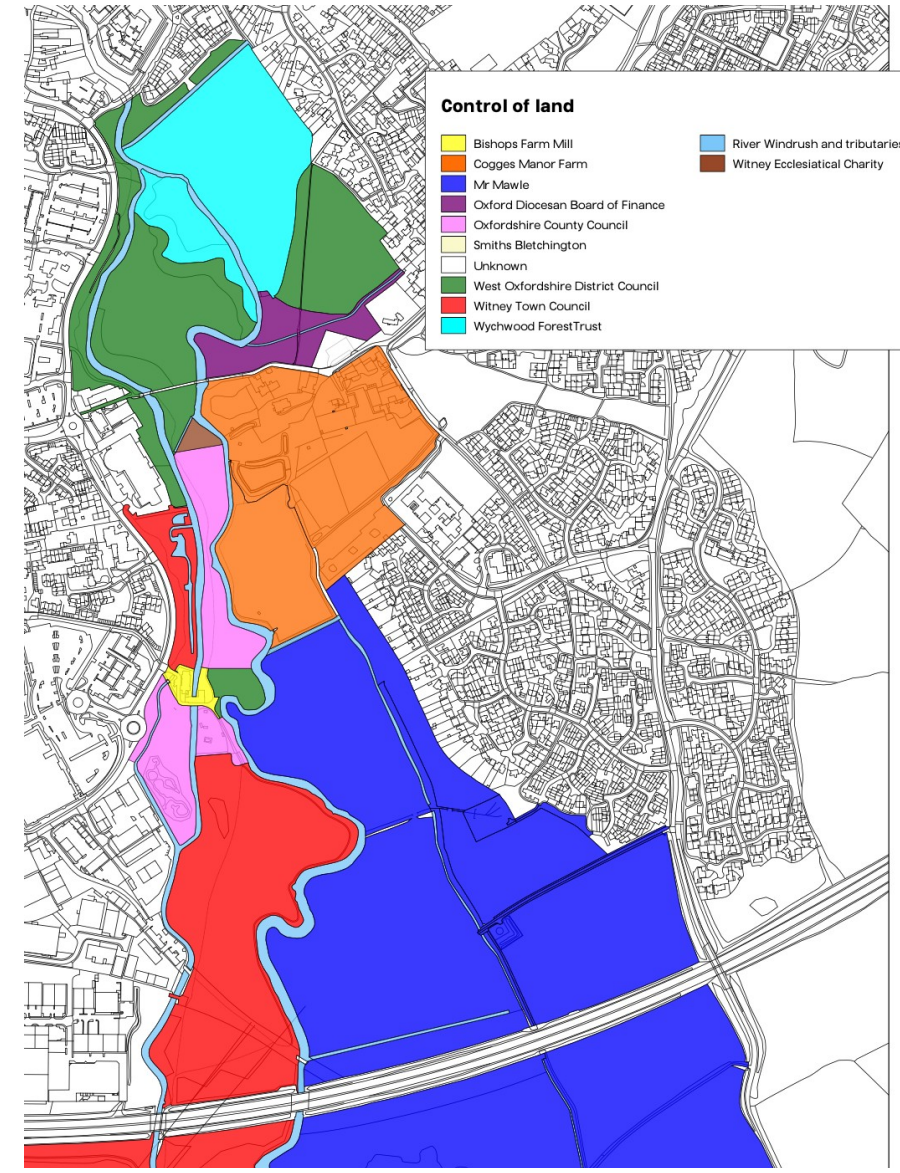
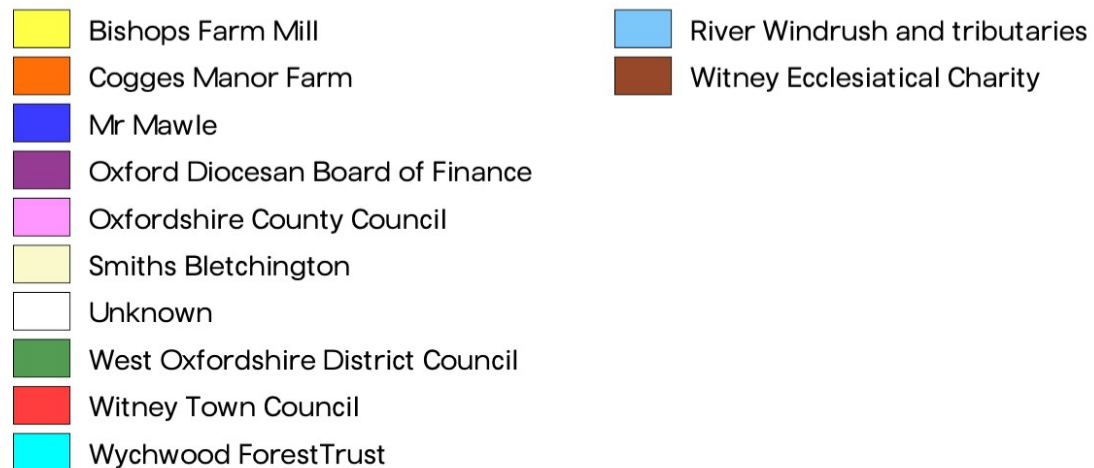
Madley Brook culvert

Langel Common footpath

Engaging Landowners

- 2 Direct Letters sent
- WFG has no authority
- 'EA not funded for enforcement'
- Town and Parish Councils?

Control of land



Recent Activities – Direct Action

- Undertaking Maintenance Work
 - Direct engagement with Landowners
 - Permissions, Insurance, RAMS, Safety Officer, Equipment
- Largest group of Flood Wardens in Oxfordshire
- Planning Applications - North Witney Objection
- 4 New Sensors and Gauge Boards added
- Press and Public Engagement Events
- Capture the Island



Clearance – Woodford Mill Trash Grid (WMRA)



Fallen branches, debris – this trash grid protects the site from debris getting caught in sluices and the turbine channel

Clearance – Woodford Mill Meadows (WODC)



Fallen branches, debris including dining chairs, large sofa cushion

Clearance – Woodford Mill Meadows (WODC)

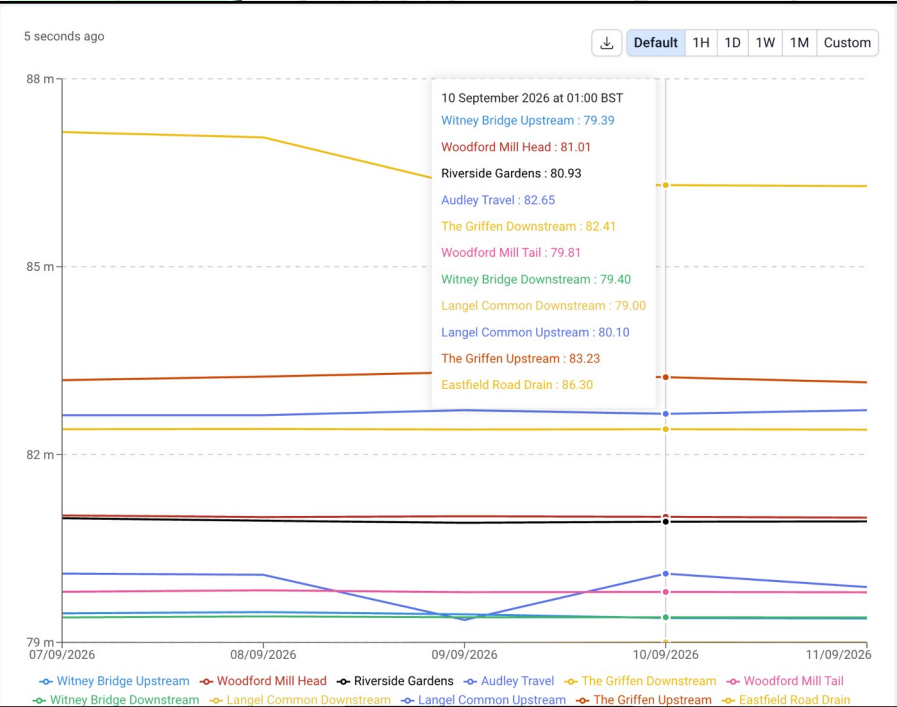
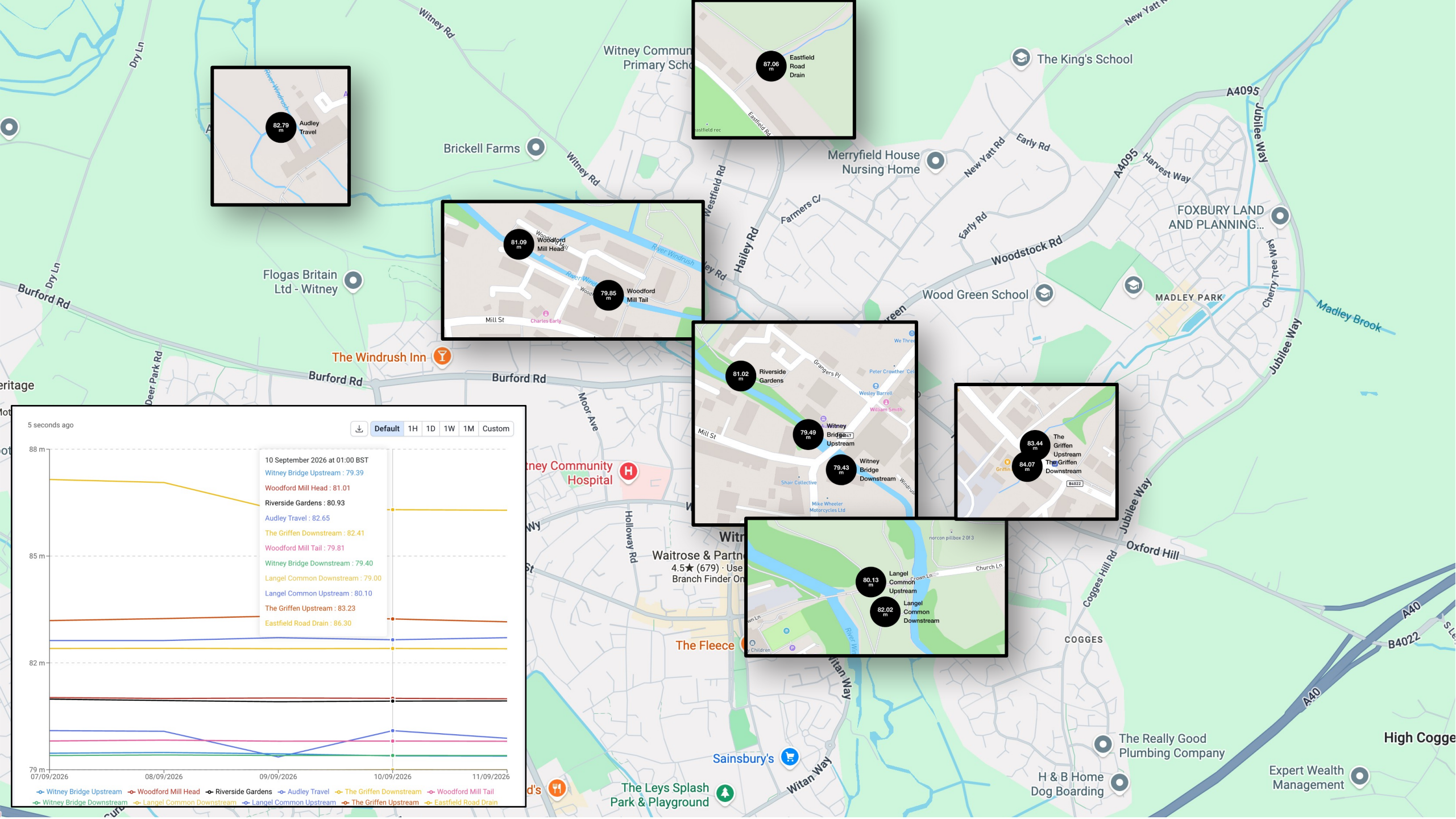


Fallen branches and debris including shopping trolley, camping chairs, full car exhaust

Clearance – Woodford Mill Meadows (WODC)



Fallen branches blocking the watercourse





Witney Flood Group

Partnerships



**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL
Celebrating 50 Years



**FLOODED
PEOPLE UK**



Cotswolds
Rivers Trust



Environment
Agency

Progress With WODC

- **Clearance on Council owned Land**
 - Meadows between Woodford Mill and West End
 - Madley Brook upstream of Newland Road culvert
 - West Branch needs work
- **New council leadership post elections**
 - Witney Site Visit 15 September
- **Offering our support whilst Drainage Engineer replaced**
 - Will continue to support future S19 Reports

Progress With EA

- **Very Little – Relationship has deteriorated**
 - Site inspection last year yielded nothing
 - Engagement – sometimes respond, when prompted
- **Concerns – Statements Made at Site inspection**
 - "We no longer maintain the east branch because its capacity doesn't affect flood risk"
 - "With lower river levels at present, leaving fallen trees to hold back water is good for the ecology"
 - "The EA won't be following up contact made with riparian owners in November 2023 reminding them of their responsibilities" as all the information WFG gathered has been destroyed.
 - "The EA is no longer funded to carry out enforcement"
 - Unable to tell us what maintenance had been carried out
 - 2026 Maintenance Schedule - still waiting to see it
- **Waiting to meet new Area Director, facilitated by MP's Office (9 months wait)**

Witney Flood Alleviation Scheme

- **Witney FAS progressing slowly, low Cost/Benefit ratio**
 - Previous Hydraulic Model was defective, now being updated
 - Detailed survey completed – have reviewed output material
 - Flood Model being calibrated and updated
 - Next stage is further readout – programme gate
 - Business Case viability still low

Progress with Flooded People

- **Initial Engagement**

- Witney site visits and interviews
- Realisation this is an issue at UK level

- **First Annual Conference**

- Met like minded people
- Issues we face are uncannily identical

- **We are part of a nationwide community**

- We feel supported and cared for, now actively promote the Charity
- Capability and experience to influence Government Policy Making

Plans

- **Maintenance**

- Continue to engage Landowners (2 direct letters sent) as EA does not enforce
- Conduct all maintenance we are capable of, now we have proof of capability
- Annual maintenance site visit with all parties to assess/ record what is needed

- **Escalations**

- Meet EA Regional Director, supported by MP
- Meet OCC LLFA and Highways Leaders – insufficient maintenance and decisions

- **Projects**

- Continue to push for higher levels of maintenance, we need a desilting project
- Sample shoals to debunk excuses that ‘Silt might be contaminated’
- Improve website, learning materials, engage schools and businesses

Questions?

- **Questions for Us**

- **Questions for You**

- How can you personally support us to achieve more?
- How can we help others replicate our work?
- How can we help promote good practices elsewhere?