

**SELLY PARK SOUTH FLOOD ACTION GROUP**

**RESPONSES TO THE CRITICISMS OF THE FLOOD ACTION GROUP BY RESIDENTS OF FASHODA ROAD PUBLISHED IN THE BIRMINGHAM MAIL TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2012**

**THE CRITICISMS: FLOOD DEFENCES WERE 'TOO SLOW'**

"Residents and traders have accused the Selly Park South Flood Defence Group of not delivering sandbags quickly enough to prevent the water from gushing into properties".

"They were also critical of the group .... for not enforcing road diversions sooner".

Beautician from Vogue hairdressers said: "It took them a long while to get the sandbags in place and to sort out the road closures".

**RESPONSES BY JOHN CLAYTON, SPS FLOOD ACTION COORDINATOR:**

**We are an unpaid volunteer group** made up of residents living within or close to the flood risk zone, established to help other residents in the area in time of flood. The flooding on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> June happened extremely quickly. Most of our volunteers were out at work or away from their homes for other reasons. There were very few of us available to carry out flood defence work when the problem started. As soon as I saw the seriousness of the situation I set in progress the process of phoning all of our volunteers. Those who could left work or whatever else they were doing and returned to Selly Park South as soon as they could, despite encountering serious traffic congestion on the way. Once on site our volunteers worked very hard to help residents, many of them remaining on duty for more than six hours.

Flash flooding by rainwater ("surface water flooding") happened almost immediately. I responded to a call for help from Vogue hairdressers immediately by providing them with four of the sandbags which I purchased previously myself to protect my own home. Once in place these bags defended the shop door completely. I have since donated these sandbags to the hairdressers as a gift so they have defence on site for any future emergency.

As soon as the seriousness of what was happening became evident I requested Birmingham City Council Highways Drainage Department to activate the arrangement we have with them to deliver sand bags in bulk. A BCCHDD contractor's van got to us quickly with a first supply of sandbags and I and the contractors tried to defend the most vulnerable properties and people. The two lorries bringing another 350 sandbags were held up in city-wide traffic congestion caused by the flooding. However they arrived before the water from the by now overflowing River Rea reached its deepest levels and the contractors worked very hard to ensure all properties were protected. As far as I am aware the scale of flooding of homes in Fashoda Road was not anywhere near the level of the disaster of September 2008, so we have learned from the past. I do not believe the statement that *water gushed into properties* is true. I found no evidence of this. Only limited ingress of water was reported to me. SPSFG also issued air brick protectors to residents and although these did not function 100% efficiently they did save houses from under floor flooding.

We have no legal powers to enforce traffic diversions and in doing so we do to an extent put ourselves at risk. Some drivers were very abusive and aggressive to our people diverting traffic. It is the responsibility of the Police to enforce road closures and traffic diversions. The Police failed to respond to a 999 call from me, a call from the Head of Birmingham City Council Emergency Planning Department and a call from Selly Oak City Councillor Karen McCarthy. I have complained to the Police about them letting us all down.

**I HOPE THIS ANSWERS THE CRITICISMS AND I INVITE YOU TO ATTEND THE AGM OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM AT 7.30PM THIS EVENING, TUESDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY, AT CHRIST CHURCH SELLY PARK, 953 PERSHORE ROAD, SO WE MAY DISCUSS THIS MATTER MORE FULLY.**

John Clayton, Flood Action Coordinator, Selly Park South Flood Action Group.