

# Village Sewers Damaged by Mining Subsidence repair team win friends despite 6 months disruption

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**K**ellington is a medium sized village close to Selby with a population of some 1,000. Despite its location close to the major Yorkshire conurbations it is still largely rural in character. The village is active and retains the necessary ingredients for a thriving community – a corner shop, post office, primary school and two pubs. As a result there is an excellent community spirit. However, mining subsidence had restricted the hydraulic capacity of sewers and caused flooding and nuisance in the area. Yorkshire Water had an obligation to repair damage to the sewers within the AMP3 period.



Kellington: Working close to houses needed cooperation of all the residents

courtesy: MWH

Wastewater West CaSP – MJ Gleeson and MWH in conjunction with their strategic partners Peter Duffy Limited and Mowlem Johnston Limited – the strategic partnership formed to deliver the Wastewater Programme for capital works in Yorkshire Water's Western Area during AMP3 – were issued a brief to repair the damage to sewers in the area.

## Initial phase

Initial phase of the project was to confirm which of the sewers needed to be replaced. Replacement needed to be within the constraints of the existing system, to ensure that the downstream end matched the existing sewer levels and the upstream level was constrained by the level of the house connections, to avoid the need to relay these or cause the flows to back up into the properties.

The results of this initial study was used in negotiating the level of compensation from UK Coal to fund much of the scheme.

The scheme was going to involve major disruption to the village for six months, requiring road closures and bus diversions. The

partnership was very aware that the work could have a major impact on the lives of the inhabitants and sought to ensure that the effect of their presence in the village would be as acceptable as possible.

## Why, how and when

Having recognised from an early stage in the project the potential impact in the village of our work the most sensible way of ensuring support was to explain:

- \* what we needed to do and why'
- \* what potential benefits of the scheme would be for villagers;
- \* when they were going to experience disruption;
- \* listen to concerns and address these if at all possible.

So many schemes are delayed due to the resistance of a community to work in their area, and the theme is a lack of mutual understanding. This was addressed by setting up a liaison meeting with the parish council. The purpose was to understand their issues with flooding in the village. This allowed us to identify the flooding



Kellington: Construction site

courtesy: MWH

that we would not be resolving, as it was beyond the sewerage system and was caused by other sources.

The villagers were, therefore, entirely clear what would be addressed and what would not be addressed. We also listened to the concerns that they had about the construction work, so that these could be addressed when considering the best way to conduct work on site.

The parish council were very supportive of the scheme and keen to reduce flooding in the area which had been a long standing problem for them. In support of the scheme they even published an article in the parish magazine voicing support, detailing the work and warning of the dangers of construction sites to discourage youths causing security problems for our construction work.

Subsequent to this, Yorkshire Water issued a letter drop to the area, inviting the residents to an open forum to see details of the scheme and where residents were able to clearly understand the impact of the work. This enabled residents to know specifically when access to their house might be disrupted for a few days and plan what they would do. Older or disabled residents might have issues of mobility that we would wish to be considerate about.

Construction activities have a reputation for over-running due to issues on site. Yorkshire Water commissioned an Interactive Voice Response (IVR) message that was updated weekly to ensure that the residents could check for specific updates of progress and when the localised disruption might occur adjacent to their property. In the event work was so well planned and undertaken that despite encountering additional difficulties, the work was carried out to the original programme.

Customers were given a phone number to contact Yorkshire Water in the event they had a complaint or query, and it would be dealt with within 24 hours by a member of the project team.

Residents also became so confident of the construction team that they took particular issues to the site team direct and were dealt with in a courteous manner with small matters resolved locally.

Work spanned the Christmas period and the project team were only

too happy to donate a Christmas tree for the village green, and a permanent fixing point for their future yuletide decorations.

#### Communication, co-operation & fond farewells

Local residents saw a construction job executed as we would always wish the public to see our work, by a polite considerate workforce, finishing on time and within budget. The investment of time and effort in communicating with the villagers really paid dividends. When the gangs were having their last day the parish council put photos of the gang's last breakfast break on the website! A quote from the website speaks volumes in referring to the construction team:

**“ They have become a familiar part of the village over the last few months, and we shall miss seeing them around, though obviously not the disruption that an undertaking of this scale inevitably brings. Throughout their time here they have been courteous, helpful and have done their best to keep disruption to a minimum – thanks lads”. ■**

**Note:** The author of this article Veronica Flint, is a Project Manager with MWH



“Last Breakfast”