
Laxey Laundry Services

Dear Sir/Madam,

14th Nov 2019

We have been asked to compile a letter giving details of the flood incidents in Laxey which have affected us, both recently and in the past, describing in as much detail as we can recall how it developed.

Fortunately, despite being badly effected by the floods on each occasion, we are still trading from the same site here in Glen road but our insurance has now become a big issue. On each of the previous occasions it was thought that "it won't happen again" but consequently after the third flood event we are very reluctantly going to have to seriously consider relocating the business.

The first flood experience we had at the site was in Oct 2002 when we were trading from the cellar area of the current Mona Lisa building.

Flood waters came down the drive and into the cellar from both Minorca hill and Glen road.

We had no means of protecting the site such as sandbags or barriers etc as we were not aware that flooding was a realistic possibility.

Water flowed down Minorca Hill with great force from Ballaragh and Ramsey road after heavy and prolonged rainfall. The old Laxey bridge had a slight hump in it so the flood waters turned onto Glen Rd, it also turned into the Glen view apartments car park behind our site, to quite some depth, which enabled it to seep through the stones of the old barn building.

Water also flowed in great quantity from the Glen road direction, coming from both the culverts and waterfall site near the football pitch but in much greater volume from an area opposite the Glen Rd local Authority houses, this area is locally known as the "river beach garden" and the river wall is particularly low at this point.

The flood waters at our business reached a depth of about 4 foot, completely filling the cellar and immersing our machinery. Our insurance company replaced the machinery, and notably no excess was applied to our policy at this time as it was thought to be a one off event.

The second, more devastating flood took place on 3rd Dec 2015.

We had by that time expanded and relocated the business into the old barn and "curiosity shop" adjacent to the restaurant, although we were still renting and using the cellar of the restaurant for certain work.

Following the previous flood, we had some basic brackets fitted to the entrance of our drive into which we could slot wooden planks, and the DOI had raised the dropped kerb slightly and fitted a slotted drain gulley across the entrance.

Unfortunately on the afternoon of the flood in 2015 these did not save us as the water again came down from Minorca Hill and onto Glen Rd in surprisingly large volume but in much more alarming quantity from further up Glen Rd again.

I later heard that trees and river debris had jammed under the bridge at the old power station building and that had forced the river onto the road along again with the water from the waterfall and the culverts by the football pitch.

Apparently some of this water re entered the river at the tennis courts but the remainder carried on down Glen Rd to be joined by a very large volume coming once again from the "river beach" area.

An eye witness on Glen Rd said that the river was coming over the wall at the beach garden at "over 2 foot above the wall".

This large volume then continued down the Glen Rd on to our premises to a depth of about 2 foot on the road at one time, entering our site despite the planks being in place.

Unfortunately, cars were still trying to get up and down the road, these were creating bow waves, there were no sandbags available in the village as the DOI yard was locked up with the man holding the key to its sandbag store apparently living in Glen Vine!

Flooding to our business was also greatly exacerbated by large volumes of foul water coming up through the two manhole covers within the yard as the sewer became overwhelmed and back charged to the nearest exit which is our site.

Flooding of our premises was again to a depth of about 3 foot in the cellar and fortunately due to our rudimentary wooden barrier and the help of many local volunteers and neighbours the depth of water in our main building was limited to about a foot to 18 inches.

All of our machinery in the cellar was again ruined and some of the machinery in our main building was affected.

Water on the road receded rapidly when the river wall opposite our site collapsed under the weight of water on the road and the flood water then re entered the river.

We however were left dealing with the waters within the site.

I cannot now recall how the collapse of the bridge and the double decker bus entering the river, blocking the remaining arch affected the flood waters on the Glen Rd side, as by this time we were all in a state of shock, but I think that this more effected the Shore pub side of the river than us?

The consequent clean up operation and salvage of any machinery took its toll on both our staff and ourselves but we were able to provide basic services within 24 hours of the event.

Dealing with the insurance claim and loss adjusters took considerably longer and we would not be up and running to full capacity again until the following May of 2016.

Following the 2015 floods, Laxey Laundry invested over seven thousand pounds in flood protection measures.

An aluminium flood barrier was manufactured and installed at the top of our shared driveway and two high powered pumps were installed in a purpose made sump in the yard which were designed to activate automatically in the event of water entering the driveway.

One pump discharges into the sewer manhole and in the event that the sewer again begins to backcharge, the second more powerful pump ejects the water directly onto the road beyond our flood barrier, there is a sensor which detects any water in the yard and this then calls me on my mobile phone. Additionally, we built a "flood box" within the yard which contains sandbags, flood boards for insertion into other door openings a petrol water pump, torches and two inflatable "balloons" for inserting into the sewer pipes.

All of these precautions were put in to place to satisfy our insurers, who although continue to insure our business have increased our premium by almost 300% to a practically unmanageable level whilst also applying a large excess to the policy in regard of flooding.

As you are aware the most recent flood was on 1st Oct this year

After heavy overnight rainfall I was alerted at 7am that water was within the site, and on arrival we placed the flood barriers, sandbags etc around and laid out the pump ready for use.

However, despite the devastation that was being experienced by residents in the upper part of Glen Rd, we did not have any water enter our site from that direction.

Flood waters, again from the "river beach" did reach a depth of about a foot on Glen Rd approaching our site but these were directed back into the river by the large new slots that the DOI had installed into the new river wall opposite, during its reconstruction.

The flood waters that entered our site on this occasion came once again from the surface water coming down Minorca Hill from Ballaragh which entered the car parking area of the Glen view apartments to a depth of about 2 foot, this seeped into our building through the walls (like a sieve!)

The owners of the car park and Glen Rd apartments have done nothing to alleviate the repeated flooding of their car park and nothing to prevent water from Minorca Hill coming down their drive, we had to go around the back and sand bag it ourselves, but by then it was too late.

Large volumes of sewer water again back charged up through the manholes up until the point where I was forced to reach into them up to the top of my arm and insert the inflatable balloons which once inflated, stopped the flow.

It was then a matter of dealing with the water that had already entered the site and that which was coming in through the back wall.

Our new pumps along with our staff and once again kind friends, village residents and neighbours helped us keep the flood waters under control and although depths in the cellar again reached about 3 foot only a few stores were damaged as following the 2015 flood we no longer have machinery in that area.

Water did penetrate the main laundry area in the barn but not to a depth that it affected any machinery, as this had be raised on plinths after the second flood.

In conclusion I would say that we are fully aware that we are now in an "at risk" location in lower Glen Rd but this was not the case when we established the business back in 2000. and to avoid what we feel is certain repetition of these events, we intend to relocate the business to higher ground.

Whilst we realise that no one can stop the rain coming out of the sky, and it is not the MUA's or governments responsibility to "prevent" flooding, the events could have been alleviated or even avoided had both the DOI and the MUA more fully acted upon the concerns and observations of residents following the previous events.

Although the slots in the DOI's new river wall saved us this time around, drainage ditches, culverts and gullies still remained largely overgrown and unmaintained after the 2015 event, despite my own and the local authorities calls.

Personally I feel the MUA has to take a large part of the blame for the last event, not only for the obviously disastrous breach of the river wall at the wooden mills but in our case for their failure to install the non return valves into the manholes within our driveway after having assured us that they would do so after the flooding of 2015.

These valves were finally fitted by the MUA last week!

As a previous long serving member of the local authority and a community minded person I took time from work in late 2015 to accompany the local authority clerk on a full tour of lower Laxey from the Laxey Glen gardens to the beach along with a surveyor and a mapping device.

We took the best part of the day visiting and recording sites where water had left the river and entered the road, we spoke to residents and recorded their experiences, listened to their concerns and noted their advice.

I was confident that something would come of this work and I attended meetings with MUA officials at the commissioners offices where we were told of

“Effluvial mapping” and “remodelling of flows further up the village”

Evidently nothing became of our efforts as none of the concerns raised within our survey were acted upon and the mapping remained just that, mapping, no one actually turned up in the village with a shovel and did any actual physical work on the river banks or on the glen road culverts .

The river banks remained overgrown, debris remained in the trees opposite the flour mill where it had lodged in 2015 and the culverts, drains and ditches remained blocked or inadequate or both.

Certainly one of the major culprits to the flooding are the culverts and underground pipework around the football pitch, DOI yard and old police station areas on Glen Road, authorities have been aware of blockages and the inadequacy of the system for some years, but other than an occasional courteous DOI appearance, nothing was affectively done.

It is good to see the activity that is now evident on Glen Rd to try and alleviate future events, but this has come too late for those of us who now have to try and insure or in future, sell our properties, and I feel this could have been avoided had the authorities acted upon previous concerns.

Residents and businesses of Glen Rd are now left to deal with uninsurable and unsellable properties, the question is can the government step in to help get insurance cover or will properties in the lower part of Laxey have to eventually be abandoned ?

Those with the qualifications and the means to have acted upon residents concerns after the 2015 event should be ashamed of themselves and ashamed that all they achieved within four years of the next flood were a few maps, none of which anyone has yet seen, and a concrete catchment trough on Baldhoon road (which videos show the water missing on the day in question)

Is it true that the results of the mapping exercise carried out by a U.K. Based company had been available since 2016 and that they indeed predicted an event just such as that which happened last month?

If this is true, then the MUA are negligent for failing to act on information that was in their hands.

Sadly, with no qualifications or hydrological mapping expertise I can predict with some accuracy the location of the next flood event on Glen Rd, it will definitely be the river entering the road in the area of the “river beach” opposite the commissioners houses, as it comes over there every time, even now with all the activity going on in the Glen Rd there still seems to be nothing getting done about it.

Moving forward, we now have to actively seek a new location for the business as if and when it floods again, we cannot financially recover.

Yours sincerely
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