



REAL STORIES

BUILDING AND USING NETWORKS

GEOFF RUNS A WORKSHOP NEAR THE COAST

Geoff: “I’d ring my architect contact for advice... or the engineer. I use them regularly, so they’d do that for me.”

The flood...

“It had been raining and at around about 20 minutes before high tide, the water came over and started coming in the back of the building. We’d had sandbags down and then the water started to recede and all the staff were going, ‘Oh well that’s okay.’ And I said, ‘We haven’t had high tide yet.’ So I think it was rainwater first coming down, and then high tide...and that receded slightly, and then high tide came to meet it and then the water very, very quickly came up to a height of about two and a half, three foot in the office and the workshop.



It swamped all the machines, the CCTV system, the digital phone system and all the rest: everything basically. And it continued to rise to the point that I think it was chest-height at some parts of the property. And to lock up, one of the lads had to go in, so he was wet up to his chest.

I think it lasted about an hour and a half, something like that. Then it subsided and we just locked up and went home.

I just got one of my builder contacts in to build a wall the next day – people that we’ve known for years. Because if it hadn’t happened before, we figured if it was going to happen again it was probably going to happen the next day. And certainly it did come up very, very, very close the next day.”

Recovery and improving resilience...

“The next day we borrowed a machine from a company that we know and we got going that way... and we got engineers out to fix the other machines. So I think we were up and running within four hours the next day. And probably fully operational two days after that, three days after that. We had a spare digital phone system, which we put in ourselves, and we had to get a new CCTV system; and the other machinery survived – they just needed cleaning out and servicing.

I’m not sure what I’m going to do in the longer term. I think we could put a big stopcock on, um – probably on the soil pipes¹, but I don’t know: I’d have to have a look at it. Because, you know, even most soil pipes that go into the ground are just plastic, but you probably need to put metal ones in; because the pressure of the water, it’s probably way beyond what the plastic pipe’s designed to cope with. I’d ring the architect to check all of that out... or the engineer, yeah. I use them regularly yeah, so they’d do that for me. They might have to do a bit of research, but they’d probably come back to me the next day and say, ‘We have to do this if you want to do it.’”

¹ i.e. the sewage pipes