

Environment Agency East Anglia Flood Risk

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Flood Warnings

How do I know if my property is at flood risk?

You can check if your property is at flood risk by visiting: [Check for flooding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/check-for-flooding)

What are flood warnings and how do I sign up for them?

We have a network of both rain gauges and river gauging stations to monitor the height and flow of rivers. If a river level is measured or forecast to reach above a typical range this means that flooding is possible, and a flood warning or alert may be issued.

We provide a warning and informing service through Flood Warnings Direct. Alerts and warnings can be sent to you by text message, phone call or email. Register with our Flood Warnings Direct service by visiting our website: www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings or call FloodLine on 0345 988 1188.

Reporting

Who should I report flooding to?

Depending on where the flooding comes from will dictate who needs to be informed and who would deal with that flooding.

Flooding	Authority	Contact Details
Main Rivers, Coastal Flooding and Reservoirs	Environment Agency	Incident Hotline- 0800 807060
Surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses	Suffolk County Council	www.suffolk.gov.uk/flooding 0345 6060 6171
Surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses	Norfolk County Council	Report a flood - Norfolk County Council 0344 800 8013
Surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses	Essex County Council	Essex Flood and Water Management 0345 743 0430
Sewer Flooding	Anglian Water	www.anglianwater.co.uk 03457 145145

What is a Section 19 report?

Section 19 reports are a requirement under the Flood & Water Management Act 2010, that Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) will investigate flooding under certain situations

Suffolk County Council, will carry out Section 19 investigation when:

1. Where there was a risk to life as a result of flooding
2. Where internal flooding of one property (domestic or business) has been experienced on more than one occasion
3. Where internal flooding of five properties has been experienced during one single flood incident
4. Where a major transport route was closed for more than 10 hours as a result of flooding
5. Where critical infrastructure was affected by flooding
6. Where there is ambiguity surrounding the source or responsibility of a flood incident.

Norfolk County Council will consider whether an investigation should be carried out, under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, in order to determine:

Which authorities have relevant flood risk management functions

Whether each of those authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

It's not the responsibility of Norfolk County Council to resolve the flooding, however as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) we may investigate the cause and notify any relevant Risk Management Authority.

In Norfolk these authorities include:

The County Council and associated Highways Authority
Highways England
Anglian Water, Essex and Suffolk Water
Environment Agency
Borough and District Councils
Internal Drainage Boards

Norfolk County Council take a risk based approach to investigating flooding, using the Flood Investigation Protocol and impact criteria. The following types of flooding will initiate a flood investigation

- Any risk to loss of life or serious injury

- One or more properties flooded internally and/or one or more properties rendered inoperable or their functions severely compromised due to the access to the premises being impassable
- Any section of a national category 3 road or above made impassable due to flooding and/or flooding to priority 1 and 2 gritting routes.

Individual property addresses are not published within Investigation Reports or shared with any commercial third parties.

Essex County Council, will respond to every reported flooding incident and then make an assessment whether to carry out a detailed investigation under the terms of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

We will investigate incidents of flooding if they meet the following criteria:

- The internal flooding of a property on more than one occasion OR
- The internal flooding of five properties during a single flood incident

AND

- If the source of the incident or who is responsible is unknown

Maintenance

What channel maintenance does the Environment Agency undertake?

We have a routine maintenance programme for the main rivers.

The amount of maintenance works we can undertake depends on our budget allocation in any given year. Each year, we plan and deliver a programme of maintenance that focuses on activities and locations where there is the greatest flood risk and need for intervention.

We do undertake less maintenance of rural watercourses than in the past. This is because we are required to spend flood risk management funding on works that have a demonstrable benefit in reducing flood risk to people and property (i.e. homes and businesses with a postcode).

All watercourses are regularly inspected, and maintenance works planned according to the level of flood risk to people and property. This means that the maintenance work that we do is targeted where there are properties at a high risk of flooding, and this allows us to spend taxpayer's money where it delivers the greatest benefits in reducing flood risk.

Would dredging reduce the likelihood and consequences of flooding?

Dredging as an approach to flood risk management is often mentioned by riparian landowners and residents, particularly those that have lived next to a watercourse for a long time and remember this type of channel maintenance taking place in the 20th century.

First and foremost, it is important to establish the difference between dredging and desilting. The former involves the removal of the consolidated material below the natural level of the bed which deepens the river channel, whilst de-silting removes just the fine, un-consolidated sediment without removing any of the hard bed of the river.

Dredging and desilting can form part of our maintenance programme. We consider each location carefully and undertake this type of maintenance where we know it will make a difference. Understanding where dredging and desilting will – and will not – reduce flood risk is key.

We plan dredging and desilting works where they are technically effective, good value for money, do not significantly increase flood risk for others downstream and are environmentally acceptable. The effectiveness of this type of maintenance varies substantially from river to river and within a particular river so we assess it on a location-by-location basis.

In many locations, dredging and desilting do not achieve a sustainable and effective reduction in flood risk because rivers can quickly silt-up again. In addition, works of this nature do not increase the carrying capacity of the channel sufficiently to significantly reduce the height of flood water on the floodplain when the river comes out of its banks. Furthermore, dredging and desilting can increase flood risk further downstream.

As a result, we are actively encouraging communities to not see dredging and desilting as standalone solutions to reducing flood risk and the following blog post <https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2020/02/21/floods-and-dredging/> provides a useful starting point to understand this position.

Why did we dredge more in the past?

Historically around the UK, rivers were frequently dredged to improve land drainage and support agricultural production. After the Second World War there was a greater need for food production. Rivers were deepened and widened to drain land and increase flow to create more land for agriculture - often with unintended consequences, such as flooding downstream, or a decrease in flow rate that resulted in deposition and a build-up of even more silt in the channel.

The 1970s to the 1990s brought a change in direction because of an increased understanding of how rivers work and the effect dredging has across the catchment. Funding steered away from land drainage and management, to protecting people and property from flooding, resulting in a decrease in dredging for land management. Today, we focus our work on locations where the risk of flooding, economic loss and risk to life are the greatest.

Riparian responsibility

Is the Environment Agency responsible for undertaking channel maintenance on main rivers?

Whilst the Environment Agency is the Risk Management Authority responsible for managing flood risk from main rivers and the sea, this does not automatically mean that we have maintenance responsibility.

We only have permissive powers to carry out flood defence works, including maintenance works, but no legal obligations to do so. In addition, these powers only apply where there is a flood risk to people or property (i.e. businesses or houses with a postcode) not outbuildings, gardens or farmland.

The responsibility for maintaining a watercourse lies with the riparian owner. Further information on riparian ownership can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>.

What rights and responsibilities does a riparian landowner have that relate to flood risk?

Riparian landowners have certain responsibilities which include maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse, and keeping the banks clear of anything that could cause an obstruction and increase flood risk, either on their land or downstream if it is washed away. In addition, they must keep any structures on their land, (such as culverts, trash screens, and weirs) clear of debris, and remove fallen trees and woody debris from the channel where it poses a flood risk to people and property.

Riparian landowners have the right to protect their property from flooding. However, they must accept flood flows through their land, even if these are caused by inadequate capacity downstream. A landowner has no duty in common law to improve the drainage capacity of a watercourse he/she owns.

We would advise riparian owners to contact us for advice and guidance on how best to maintain their section of river to avoid any environmental damage that they could be liable for. In addition, some works such as desilting may require a Flood Risk Activity Permit or an exemption. Further information on the permitting process can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>.