

Desilting

What you might see

You may see our Environment Agency teams, or contractors on our behalf, desilting specific areas or sections of Main River, or areas around flood risk management structures. This could be done by jetting with high pressure water, or by physically removing the silt, either by hand or using machinery.

The Environment Agency bids for public funding every year to carry out this maintenance and we use our permissive powers to deliver the works. Other ordinary watercourses are still important to local flood risk, but are likely owned by the landowner who will be responsible for maintenance and conveyance.



What we are doing and why

Desilting involves removing silt from structures or sections of river bed. This can ensure the structures operate effectively and it can, in some cases, improve conveyance through the river system and increase channel capacity



Desilting can, and does, contribute to reducing flooding in some locations. In others, it can be an extremely inefficient and ineffective way to manage flood risk, as the natural processes in many rivers can cause the silt to return and accumulate in the same places very quickly. We therefore target this work where we can be confident it will achieve effective and sustainable reductions in flood risk.

We carry out desilting in locations where we know it will make a difference. We need to be sure that desilting will not increase flooding downstream, and that desilting is compatible with restrictions around protected species.



How we are supporting wildlife and the environment

Desilting can have serious and long lasting negative impacts on the environment. For example, it can damage or destroy fish spawning grounds and make river banks unstable. Silt can become suspended in the water, lowering oxygen levels, potentially releasing harmful chemicals that may be present. This, in turn, impacts on wildlife, and water quality downstream. The silt that has been removed from rivers can be difficult to dispose of, particularly where it is contaminated due to the historic industrial activity on the lower catchments of our rivers.

Before we undertake dredging and desilting activities we make sure the work will not have any negative impacts on the environment, water quality or flood risk elsewhere in the catchment. We also design and undertake the work in a way that improves the river habitat or, if that is not possible, minimise any impact as much as we can.



For more information or to contact us

Call: 03708 506 506

Email: EMDenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Incident hotline: 0800 80 70 60

Please use this number, which is open 24 hours a day, to report incidents such as flooding, blockages, unusual flow of water, damaged flood defences or pollution.

To find out more about our maintenance activities, please visit consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-midlands/flood-risk-management or scan the QR code.

