

Weed spraying to reduce flood risk

What you might see

You may see our Environment Agency teams, or contractors on our behalf, out and about weed spraying on some of the embankments that serve as flood defences, where this is required.

Embankments need regular maintenance. 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.



An example of what you might see when us or our contractors are weed spraying

What we are doing and why

Large broad leaved weeds can block out the sunlight, which impedes grass growth, so we need to regularly cut and spray off the broad leaves during the summer months. Grass helps protect the earth embankment underneath from external erosion caused by rainfall, wind, currents, wave action, human and animal movement, and traffic, so we need to ensure the grass can grow properly. Broad leaved vegetation can also damage the embankment by root penetration, overturning, encouraging burrowing animals, and concentrating flows, which can then cause scour.



How we are supporting wildlife and the environment

In order to protect wildlife and the environment during weed spraying, ourselves and our contractors will ensure that: there is at least a 2 metre buffer between the spraying area and any watercourse so that the chemical does not enter the water; the chemicals are used and stored in compliance with industry standards; there is no spraying within 24 hours of rainfall, high tides or a flooding incident; wind direction and speed is monitored to ensure that the chemicals are controlled; we ensure that it has been at least 14 days since the previous grass cut and will be at least 14 days before the next grass cut; signage is displayed before spraying, and for at least 2 days after spraying; and extra care is taken if there are cropped fields adjacent to an embankment that is being sprayed.

These measures reduce the risk of the chemicals entering watercourses or being spread more widely than the intended embankments.

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.

