

Flooding

Be prepared!



This leaflet outlines who is responsible for reducing the risk of flooding and what you need to do to protect yourself and your property from flooding. It also contains telephone numbers and websites where you can get more information.



Canal &
River Trust



Environment
Agency



West Berkshire
COUNCIL

Flooding

What can we all do about it?

Nobody can stop flooding entirely. Instead a joint effort between the Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Riparian Owners, residents and the community is needed so that the risk and impact of flooding can be reduced. This requires having a greater awareness of local flood risks, the need for regular maintenance of drainage assets and water courses and being prepared to respond to a flooding incident, should it happen.

In West Berkshire we can be affected by a number of types of flooding:

River Flooding

River flooding happens when a river cannot cope with the amount of water draining into it from the surrounding tributaries or land. As a result, rivers and streams overtop their banks. In West Berkshire we are lucky to have a number of beautiful watercourses running through our area. However this can result in properties within floodplains being flooded during periods of heavy and/or prolonged rainfall or due to rising waters from rapid thaw of snow on the ground, or from water coming up through the ground as the water table rises.

Surface Water Flooding

Surface water flooding, or 'flash flooding', occurs during periods of extremely heavy rainfall, often over short periods. This can be due to drains being blocked, or the ground being either already saturated, or extremely dry which means that the water cannot soak away causing run off from the increased volume of water. This can lead to 'flash flooding' in areas not normally prone to flooding. It is difficult to predict where this type of flooding may occur.

Groundwater Flooding

Groundwater flooding is caused as a result of excess rainwater filling up aquifers after it has filtered through the soils. How far below the surface it goes depends on various factors relating to the area you live in, including the geology of the land. For example we have areas in the Lambourn Downs, that could be affected by groundwater flooding. The Environment Agency monitors groundwater levels and issues Groundwater Flood Alerts in some areas of West Berkshire.

The first sign of groundwater levels rising will be evident as flooding in your cellar or water ponding in low lying land or ditches.



Who is responsible for what?

Drainage Systems

- 1. Drains:** are pipelines which move foul sewage or surface water runoff from a single property. A drain is still a drain until it joins a sewer, even if it passes outside the property boundary. Maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner.
- 2. Highways Drains:** are pipelines which move surface water runoff from the public highway only. Highway drains discharge to public sewers, rivers and other water courses. Maintenance is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council but only within the highway boundary.
- 3. Sewers:** are pipelines which move foul sewage or surface water runoff from more than one property. They are normally the responsibility of Thames Water.
- 4. Culverts:** are are pipelines usually of a fairly large diameter (450mm or greater) which move surface water, land drainage or river water through a catchment area to an outfall such as a river or other major watercourse. Many watercourses have been culverted but this does not make them sewers. Maintenance is generally the responsibility of the Riparian Owner except where they pass under highways where responsibility passes to West Berkshire Council. Thames Water is responsible for maintenance of some culverts but not in all cases. The Canal & River trust are responsible for Culverts passing under canalized sections
- 5. Manholes:** are chambers constructed on sewers at changes of direction or level in the pipeline and for the purpose of gaining access for maintenance. For manholes on public sewers maintenance is the responsibility of Thames Water.

6. **Inspection Chambers:** are chambers constructed on drains at changes of direction or level in the pipeline and for the purpose of gaining access for maintenance. Maintenance is the responsibility of the owners.
7. **Highway Gullies:** receive surface water runoff from the highway. They trap silt and minor debris and are linked to highway drainage systems. They often have some water sitting in them. Maintenance is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council.
8. **Highway Grips:** are small channels cut through highway verges to convey surface water run off from the highway directly to roadside ditches or watercourses. Maintenance is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council.
9. **Trash Screens:** are metal grills fixed across the entry points to culverts to prevent children and animals gaining access and to prevent debris being washed in. Maintenance depends on the precise location and owner but is usually the responsibility of either Thames Water or West Berkshire Council.
10. **Balancing Ponds:** are large concave areas of open land designed to temporarily store excess surface water when a rain storm generates runoff above the capacity of the piped system. Responsibility for maintenance varies and may be Thames Water, Local Council, Highway England or private landowners.

Open Watercourses

- 1. Ditches:** are channels, usually man made, cut for the purpose of conveying surface water runoff to streams and rivers. Maintenance is the responsibility of Riparian Owners.
- 2. Roadside Ditches:** these are the responsibility of the adjacent landowner even if they are outside the property boundary. Maintenance is the responsibility of Riparian Owners. The only exception is if they have been dug by the Highway Authority - either West Berkshire Council or Highways England depending on who maintains the road, specifically for the purpose of draining the highway.
- 3. Streams:** are usually naturally occurring watercourses which tend to meander through open land, receive surface water from the surrounding land and ditch networks and discharge to the river system. These streams are known as 'ordinary watercourses' under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Maintenance is the responsibility of Riparian Owners
- 4. Main Rivers:** There are seven main rivers which flow through West Berkshire. They are the Thames, Kennet, Lambourn, Great Shefford Stream, Winterbourne Stream, Pang, Enborne, the Foudry Brook and Sulham Brook. The maintenance of these rivers is the responsibility of the Riparian Owner. The Environment Agency has permissive powers to carry out maintenance on these rivers, where funding and resource allow therefore reducing flood risk.
- 5. Floodplain:** Is a natural feature and is defined as an area of land along the course of a river valley that has historically been the subject of flooding. 7% of West Berkshire is in floodplain. The responsibility for floodplains remains with the landowners.

6. **Canal:** The Kennet & Avon Canal which passes through West Berkshire takes two forms. The major part was entirely man made whilst the remainder was formed by canalising the existing River Kennet. There are 34 locks, 29 sluices (4 of which are automated) and 16 weirs in the West Berkshire Council area. Maintenance of the canal is the responsibility of Canal & River Trust. During times of flood a team of operatives are responsible for water control. They also have a volunteer group on standby to deploy flood warning sleeves on to the locks. Responsibility for maintenance of the River Kennet, where not Canalised is the responsibility of the Riparian Owners.
7. **Sluices:** are control structures on watercourses, primarily on the rivers and canal. They were constructed to control water levels and flow volumes. Maintenance is the responsibility of the individual owners. In some circumstances the Environment Agency has certain powers or agreements to operate the sluices.



Land Drainage Responsibilities and Riparian Land Owners

Land Drainage Authority

West Berkshire Council is the local Land Drainage Authority under the [Land Drainage Act 1991](#). The Act gives the Council the power to deal with obstructions in ordinary watercourses where that obstruction to the flow of water creates a risk of flooding.

In order to use their powers the Council has a policy relating to the formal action process which includes service of notices on landowners through to doing the works and then recovering the costs from the Riparian Owner

Riparian Owner

You are a Riparian Owner under common law if any river or watercourse lies within or adjacent to the boundaries of your property. Where a watercourse is between your property and an adjacent property you may have joint riparian responsibilities. The watercourse may range from a reasonable sized ditch, stream or river with a constant flow to nothing more than a depression which carries water infrequently. Watercourses may also have been piped or culverted but the Riparian Owner responsibilities still apply.

Responsibilities of Riparian Owners

You are responsible for:

1. maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse including trees and shrubs growing on the banks, and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise;

2. allowing water to pass on without obstruction or pollution and you must not cause any obstruction to the free passage of fish;
3. keeping the bed levels clear of matter that could cause an obstruction, either on your land or by being washed away by high flow to obstruct the watercourse downstream;
4. watercourses and their banks should not be used for the disposal of any form of garden or other waste;
5. keeping clear and operating any structures that you own such as culverts; trash screens weirs and sluice gates.

In addition

6. You have to accept flood flows through your land.
7. You may have flood defences such as walls and embankments on your property which are vital for the protection of both yourself and others. You should discuss the maintenance of such defences with the Environment Agency, in the case of main rivers, and in the case of all other watercourses, with West Berkshire Council.

Planning Policies and Flood Prevention

There are policies to try to design out flooding in new developments or changes to existing structures, buildings and new drives. This falls into two areas:

Planning Applications for new developments

Any planning application made to the Council is considered in relation to flooding risk. This can be split in two parts a) will the development be at risk of flooding due to the current environment around it, such as in a flood plain, and b) will the approval of the development potentially give rise to a risk of flooding elsewhere that currently does not flood. This is carried out through the consultation process involving staff from the Environment Agency, West Berkshire Councils drainage team and the utility companies.

As a result if you are considering submitting a planning application you should also consider the flooding implications, employing experts if necessary to assist you.

Planning Applications for Drives

From 1st October 2008, the Government introduced changes under The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (No. 2) (England) Order 2008. The order is aimed at reducing the flood risks caused by surface water runoff. The order requires that the forming of any new driveways or parking areas, or renewing of existing driveways will require planning permission if they are constructed using surfaces that do not allow the water to soak through the ground.

However, permeable surfacing will still receive automatic permission. Surface water can be drained using permeable surfaces such as porous concrete block paving constructed according to manufacturers specifications, porous asphalt, gravel, wheel track only paving (where the in-between area remains permeable) or through installation of 'soak-away' systems.

What the Council does before and during a flood....

Before any Emergency, including flooding, the Council prepares by:

- Having a major incident plan which is exercised and regularly reviewed;
- Having a severe weather plan including a section on flooding;
- Training staff on how to respond to a major incident;
- Working with our partner responders to identify risks and ensure that there is a co-ordinated response;
- Encourage landowners, home owners and businesses to take action to reduce the impact of flooding on their own properties;
- Work with community flood forums and groups to develop their own community emergency and flood plans.

If we are warned of heavy rain that may cause flooding the Council will:

- have staff and contractors on standby;
- prepare more equipment in order for us to respond;
- Warn any specific areas that may be affected, if they are known; alert communities to prepare.

If significant flooding happens the Council will:

- open our Emergency Operations Centre;
- deploy staff to the affected areas;
- deploy contractors and equipment to support the community;
- work together with all the other emergency responders including the Environment Agency, Canal & River Trust, Thames Water, Thames Valley Police the Fire & Rescue Service and many many others;

- set up communication links with the areas affected, including Parish Councils, community groups and nominated flood wardens;
- After the flooding the Council will support the communities in the clear up process.

The Council has limitations however and in wide scale flooding events it simply cannot get to all places flooded or those at risk of flooding.

To save confusion it is important to know what the Council does NOT do during a flooding incident.

The Council does not have the responsibility to:

- Protect individual homes and businesses
- Provide sandbags

These are the responsibilities of the owners of the property. As a result individuals should make sure they are as prepared as possible and have a plan for flooding just as you should have a plan for a fire.



What YOU should do to prepare yourself, your home or businesses from flooding:

Your responsibilities...

- Identify if you are living in a flood risk area by visiting the [Environment Agency - Check the flood risk in your area.](#)
- Protect your home or property,
- Provide your own temporary flood defences,
- Arrange adequate insurance cover for your property and possessions, keeping your policy to hand and protected from flooding,
- Have a plan in place so you know what you and your family will do.

Be Prepared:

If you live in an area susceptible to flooding:

- Register to receive flood warnings and alerts from the Environment Agency either phone Floodline on **0345 988 1188** or visit [Environment Agency - sign up for flood warnings](#) to register;
- Check your local flooding outlook for any flood warnings in place and river levels in your area on - [Live Flood Warnings;](#)
- Keep a list of useful numbers to hand including insurance details;
- Have a flood plan for your home so you know what to do if you are warned of flooding or experience it;
- Know how to turn off the gas and electricity safely.

- Consider when to move your car to an area which will not be flooded;
- Make up an emergency kit which should include items that can be used in times of flooding. This could include:
 - Copies of your home insurance documents
 - A torch with spare batteries
 - A wind-up or battery radio
 - Warm, waterproof clothing and blankets
 - Wellingtons, rubber gloves
 - A first aid kit and prescription medication
 - Bottled water and non-perishable foods
 - Pet foods
 - Baby food and baby care items
 - A list of important contact numbers.
- Look at [West Berkshire Council - Emergency Planning and Community Resilience](#) for more information on how to prepare yourself for an emergency;
- Have purpose made flood defence equipment or practical DIY flood prevention kits such as ply board with plastic sheeting (compost bags can be useful) prepared to block doorways & airvents;
- A number of companies sell purpose built door, window & airbrick covers. The Environment Agency website has some information and a guide on flood defences [Temporary and Demountable Flood Protection Guide](#) and the [National Flood Forum website](#) has information on products and how to protect your property;
- Check to see if you have a community emergency group and flood wardens in your area and make sure you have their details and they have yours so you can get updates – or get involved.

What YOU should do if flooding occurs:

Do Not...

- Do not allow children or pets to play in flooded areas.
- Do not use electrical equipment which has been exposed to floodwater until checked they are safe to use.
- Do not use food that has been in contact with flood water. Throw it away.
- Do not use contaminated water to drink, wash or prepare food.
- Do not throw rubbish into watercourses or leave debris on banks.
- Do not dispose of damaged goods until your insurance company has inspected them.
- During the recovery phase, beware of bogus traders offering assistance.



Always get written quotations on Headed Paper. Landline telephone contact numbers and registered address. Never pay in advance and only pay when satisfied.


What YOU should do if flooding occurs:

Do...

- Stay Calm. Don't panic
- For river flooding, listen to local flooding forecasts and for further advice call the Floodline Service 0345 9881188 press option1 then enter the quickdial number for your local river. These numbers are listed later in this document and on the Environment Agency Website;
- Listen to the local radio for up to date news on the flood before, during and after for advice as to what you should do;
- Check that neighbours or any vulnerable members of your community are aware of any flood warnings issued;
- Turn off gas & electricity supplies. Remember not to turn them on until your property has been properly inspected;
- Store valuable or sentimental possessions as high as possible or upstairs if you can;
- Find a place to move pets to;
- If you live in a bungalow, caravan or any dwelling without an upstairs and you find yourself in difficulty alert the emergency services early so that you can be evacuated;
- If you are trapped by floodwater stay by a window and try to attract attention;
- If you move out to stay with family or friends do let neighbours and family know as soon as possible to prevent concern;
- Contact the police to let them know you are not in your property;
- Assume flood water contains sewage. Wear protective clothing such as rubber gloves if you're cleaning up and cover up any cuts and grazes;
- Call your doctor if you show any symptoms such as diarrhoea or vomiting after a flood.
- Recover from the flood, repair your building;
- Arrange alternative accommodation if your home or property is uninhabitable;
- Keep detailed records of damaged items for insurance purposes;
- Dispose of debris and furniture and other flood damaged items from your home in a legal manner;

Know the Flood Warning Codes

	What to do	Timing	Actions
Online flood risk forecast	Be aware. Keep an eye on the weather situation.	Forecasts of flooding on our website are updated at least once a day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Check weather conditions. ● Check for updated flood forecasts on our website.
	Flooding is possible. Be prepared.	Two hours to two days in advance of flooding, (or longer for the River Thames).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be prepared for flooding. ● Prepare a flood kit of essential items. ● Monitor local water levels and the flood forecast on our website.
	Flooding is expected. Immediate action required.	Half an hour to one day in advance of flooding (or longer for the River Thames) in advance of property flooding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Move family, pets and valuables to a safe place. ● Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so. ● Put flood protection equipment in place.

	What to do	Timing	Actions
	<p>Severe flooding. Danger to life.</p>	<p>When flooding poses a significant threat to life and different actions are required.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stay in a safe place with a means of escape. ● Be ready should you need to evacuate from your home. ● Co-operate with the emergency services. ● Call 999 if you are in immediate danger.
<p>Warning no longer in force</p>	<p>No further flooding is currently expected for your area.</p>	<p>Issued when a flood warning is no longer in force.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Flood water may still be around and could be contaminated. ● If you've been flooded, ring your buildings and contents insurance company as soon as possible.

Quickdial numbers for local river flooding forecasts, phone Floodline 0845 988 1188, select Option 1 then enter the relevant Quickdial number	Quick Dial for flood warning areas only	Quick Dial –for flood alert area which covers all the flood warning areas
River Pang & Sulham Brook		
River Pang for Frilsham, Stanford	171033	171102
Dingley and Bradfield	171034	
River Pang at Bucklebury	171035	
River Pang at Tidmarsh	171036	
River Pang at Pangbourne	171037	
Sulham Brook for Theale	171039	
Sulham Brook for Sulham including Sulham Lane for the Tidmarsh area	171101	
Sulham Brook at Pangbourne	171004	
River Kennet		
River Kennet from Mildenhall to just above Hungerford River Kennet from Mildenhall to just above Hungerford including Ramsbury and Chilton Foliat	171005	171008
River Kennet and its tributaries at Hungerford River Kennet, the River Dun and the River Shalbourne at Hungerford and Eddington	171006	
River Kennet from Denford down to Marsh Benham River Kennet from Denford down to Marsh Benham including Kintbury	171007	
River Kennet at Newbury River Kennet at Newbury including the confluence with the River Lambourn south of the A4	171009	
River Kennet for Thatcham and Colthrop Properties closest to the River Kennet at the Burghfield, Southcote, Coley and Holybrook areas.	173149	

River Kennet from Theale down to Reading River Kennet from Theale down to Reading including Burghfield, Calcot, Southcote and The Oracle	171012	
River Lambourn		
River Lambourn from Upper Lambourn to Great Shefford River Lambourn from Upper Lambourn to Great Shefford including Lambourn, Eastbury and East Garston	171014	171017
River Lambourn from Weston to Bagnor including Boxford River Lambourn from Weston to Bagnor including Easton, Boxford, Woodspeen and Winterbourne on the Winterbourne Stream	171015	
River Lambourn from Donnington to Newbury River Lambourn from Donnington to the Shaw area north of the A4 in Newbury	171016	
River Enbourne		
River Enborne from Gore End down to Aldermaston River Enborne from Gore End down to Aldermaston including the Ecchinswell Brook and Kingsclere Brook	171018	171021
Foudry Brook		
Foudry Brook from Stratfield Mortimer to Green Park	171019	171021
River Thames		
River Thames at Goring and Streatley River Thames from Cleeve Lock to Child Beale Park, above Pangbourne, including Goring and Streatley	171329	171331
River Thames at Purley Village	171212	171215
River Thames at Pangbourne and Whitchurch	171211	

Groundwater Flood Alert Codes

Groundwater flooding in the Lambourn Valley catchment	Communities at risk of groundwater flooding in the Lambourn valley including several villages and Great Shefford.	171903
Groundwater flooding in Pang Valley catchment	Areas at risk of groundwater flooding including West Ilsley, East Ilsley and Compton	171904



Useful Contacts and Links

West Berkshire Council

West Berkshire Council

01635 42400 Office Hours

01635 42161 Out of Office Hours

Environment Agency

Environment Agency

General Enquiries: **03708 506 506** (Mon-Fri 8am-6pm)

Incident hotline: **0800 807060** (Freephone* 24 Hour) – to report flooding or pollution.

Floodline: **0345 988 1188** (24 hour service) - to speak to an operator for advice, listen to local river flooding forecasts and sign up to receive Flood Warnings.

Thames Water

Thames Water

To report an urgent sewer related matter call our 24 hour customer service team on 0800 316 9800.

Thames Water Sewer Leaflet

Met Office

Met Office

Canal and River Trust

Canal & River Trust



