

# Flooding

*Be prepared!*



The purpose of this leaflet is to outline the various roles and responsibilities and what you need to do to protect yourself and your property from flooding. There are also telephone numbers and websites where you can get more information about flooding.



**ENVIRONMENT  
AGENCY**



**West Berkshire**  
C O U N C I L

# FLOODING

## *What is it? What can we all do about it?*

Nobody can stop the risk of flooding entirely. Instead a joint effort between the Council, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, Riparian Owners, residents and the community is needed so that we can reduce the risk and impact of flooding. This involves having a greater awareness of local flood risks, having regular maintenance of our water channels and being prepared to respond to a flooding incident should it happen so we can reduce the impact.

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

### **River Flooding (Fluvial)**

This is flooding as a result of rivers and streams overtopping their banks. In West Berkshire we are lucky to have a number of beautiful water courses running through our area. However this can result in properties within flood plains being flooded in periods of heavy and/or prolonged rainfall due to the rising waters, rapid thaw of snow on the ground, or from water coming up through the ground.

### **Flash/Surface Water Flooding (Pluvial)**

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

### **Groundwater Flooding**

This is flooding 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.

In West Berkshire we have areas in the Lambourn Downs that could be affected by groundwater flooding. The Environment Agency monitors groundwater levels and if necessary, underground pumps are used to reduce water levels and therefore the risk of flooding. In some circumstances however it may be that flooding may still occur. The first sign of groundwater levels rising will be evident as flooding in your cellar or water in low lying land or ditches.



# Who is Responsible for What?

## Drainage Systems

- **Drains:** are pipelines which move foul sewage or surface water runoff from a single property. A drain is still a drain, even if it passes outside the property boundary and until it joins a sewer. Maintenance is the responsibility of the property owner.
- **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.
- **Highways Drains:** are pipelines which move surface water runoff from the public highway only. Highway drains discharge to public sewers, water courses, rivers and often a combination of all three. Maintenance is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council.
- **Highway Gullies:** receive surface water runoff from the highway. They trap minor debris and are linked to highway drainage systems. They normally have some water sitting in them. Maintenance is the responsibility of West Berkshire Council.
- **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.
- **Sewers:** are pipelines which move foul sewage or surface water runoff from more than one property. They are normally the responsibility of Thames Water.



- **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.
- **Culverts:** 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.
- **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 but is generally the responsibility of either Thames Water or West Berkshire Council.
- **Balancing Ponds:** are large concave areas of open land designed to temporarily accommodate excess surface water when a rain storm generates runoff in excess of the capacity of the piped system. Responsibility for maintenance varies and may be Thames Water, Local Council, Highway Agency or private landowners.

## Open Watercourses

- **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.
- **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 the Highways Agency depending on who maintains the road, specifically for the purpose of draining the highway.



- **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. Maintenance is the responsibility of Riparian Owners
- **Main Rivers:** There are seven main rivers which flow through West Berkshire. They are the Thames, Kennet, Lambourn, Pang, Enborne, the Foudry Brook and Sulham Brook. The maintenance of these rivers is the responsibility of the Riparian Owner. The Environment Agency have permissive powers to carry out maintenance on parts of these rivers, where funding and resource allow, to reduce flood risk.
- **Flood Plain:** 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 area is in flood plain. The responses of flood plains remains with the landowners.
- **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. Maintenance of the entire canal and maintenance of the man made sections is the responsibility of British Waterways. Responsibility for maintenance of the canalised sections of the river is the responsibility of the Riparian Owners.
- **Sluices:** Sluices: are control structures on watercourses, primarily on the rivers and canal. They were constructed to control water levels and the 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.



# Riparian Owner & Responsibilities

## 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/river with a constant flow to nothing more than a depression which carries water infrequently. Watercourses may also be piped.

## 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 the 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.

## Responsibilities of Riparian Owners

- **You are responsible for:**
  - maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse including trees and shrubs growing on the banks, and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise
  - allowing water to pass on without obstruction, pollution or diversion affecting the rights of others and you must not cause any obstruction to the free passage of fish



- 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 a structure downstream.
- The Rivers and their banks should not be used for the disposal of any form of garden or other waste.
- keeping clear any structures that you own such as culverts; trash screens weirs and sluice gates.

***In addition***

- You have to accept flood flows through your land.
- 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.



*You may have flood defences such as walls and embankments on your property which are vital for the protection of both yourself and others.*



# Planning and Flood Reduction

There are policies to try to design out flooding when there are new developments or changes to existing structures of buildings including new drives. This falls into two areas:

## Planning Applications for new developments

On receipt of any planning application made to the Council one of the considerations is in relation to Flooding. 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 experts from the Environment Agency 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 in this area.

## 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 run off. The order requires that any proposed 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 concrete block paving with gaps, porous asphalt or gravel, wheel track only paving or through installation of 'soak-away' systems.



# What the Council does when flooding is forecast or happens...

*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.
- Encourage landowners, home owners and businesses to take action to reduce the impact of flooding on their own properties.

*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

*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
- Set up communication links with the areas affected, including Parish Councils

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 is 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 for flooding:

## Your responsibilities...

- Identify if you are living in a flood risk area
- Protection of your home or property
- Provide your own flood defences
- Recover from the flood, repair your building
- Arrange alternative accommodation if your home or property is uninhabitable
- Dispose of debris and furniture and other flood damaged items from your home in a legal manner
- Arrange adequate insurance cover for your property and possessions, keeping your policy to hand and protected from flooding.

## 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 0845 988 1188 or visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).
- Check river levels on the internet (Environment Agency website)
- Keep a list of useful numbers to hand
- 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, electricity and water safely.
- 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.
- Have a few sandbags, purpose made flood defence equipment or practical DIY flood prevention kit 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. A guide to temporary flood defences can be viewed on the Environment Agencies website at <http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk> and products can be viewed on the National Flood Forum website [www.floodforum.org.uk](http://www.floodforum.org.uk)

What *YOU* should do if flooding occurs:

## DO NOT...

- Do not allow children 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.



## DO...

- Stay Calm. Don't panic
- For river flooding listen to local flooding forecasts and further advice call the Floodline Service press option 1 then enter the quickdial number for your local river. These numbers are listed 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
- If you are trapped by floodwater stay by a window and try to attract attention.
- Turn off gas, water & electricity supplies. Remember not to turn them on until your property has been properly inspected.
- Store valuable or sentimental possessions up high 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 so that you can be evacuated.
- Remove your car to an area which will not be flooded
- If you move out to stay with family or friends do let neighbours and family know as soon as possible to prevent concern.
- Assume flood water contains sewage. Ensure you wear rubber gloves when handling effected items



*Do not allow children to play in flooded areas*

# Know the

# FLOOD WARNING CODES



## What it means

**Flood Alert** -- A Flood Alert means that flooding is possible and that you need to be prepared.

### What to do

- Monitor local news and weather forecasts.
- Be aware of water levels near you.
- Be prepared to act on your flood plan.
- Check on the safety of pets and livestock.
- Charge your mobile phone.



## What it means

**Flood Warning** - means that flooding is expected and that you should take immediate action. You should take action when a flood warning is issued and not wait for a severe flood warning.

### What to do

- Move cars, pets, food, valuables and important documents to safety.
- Get flood protection equipment in place.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
- Be prepared to evacuate your home. Protect yourself, your family and help others.
- Act on your flood plan.



## What it means

**Severe Flood Warning** - means that there is severe flooding and danger to life. These are issued when flooding is posing significant risk to life or disruption to communities.

### What to do

- Collect things you need for evacuation.
- Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies if safe to do so.
- Stay in a high place with a means of escape. Avoid electricity sources.
- Avoid walking or driving through flood water. In danger call 999 immediately.
- Listen to emergency services. Act on your flood plan.

| 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 |
|---|---|---|
| <b>River Pang &amp; Sulham Brook</b>  |   |   |
| <b>River Pang for Frilsham, Stanford Dingley and Bradfield</b>  | 171033                                  | 171102  |
| <b>River Pang at Bucklebury</b>   | 171034                                  |   |
| <b>River Pang at Tidmarsh</b>   | 171035                                  |   |
| <b>River Pang at Pangbourne</b>   | 171036                                  |   |
| <b>Sulham Brook for Theale</b>  | 171037                                  |   |
| <b>Sulham Brook for Sulham including Sulham Lane for the Tidmarsh area</b>  | 171039                                  |   |
| <b>Sulham Brook at Pangbourne</b>   | 171101                                  |   |
| <b>River Kennet</b>   |   |   |
| <b>River Kennet from Mildenhall to just above Hungerford</b><br>River Kennet from Mildenhall to just above Hungerford including Ramsbury and Chilton Foliat | 171004                                  | 171013  |
| <b>Hungerfd River Kennet and its tributaries at Hungerford</b><br>River Kennet, the River Dun and the River Shalbourne at Hungerford and Eddington          | 171005                                  |   |
| <b>River Kennet from Denford down to Marsh Benham</b><br>River Kennet from Denford down to Marsh Benham including Kintbury                                  | 171006                                  |   |
| <b>River Kennet at Newbury</b><br>River Kennet at Newbury including the confluence with the River Lambourn south of the A4                                  | 171007                                  |   |
| <b>River Kennet for Thatcham and Colthrop</b>   | 171009                                  |   |
| <b>River Kennet from Theale down to Reading</b><br>River Kennet from Theale down to Reading including Burghfield, Calcot, Southcote and The Oracle          | 171012                                  |   |

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

## Ground Water 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 West Ilsley, East Ilsley and Compton | Areas at risk of groundwater flooding including West Ilsley, East Ilsley and Compton                              | 171904 |

# Useful Contacts and Links

## West Berkshire Council

[www.westberks.gov.uk](http://www.westberks.gov.uk)

01635 42400

## Environment Agency

[www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk)

General Enquiries: **08708 506 506** (Mon-Fri 8-6)

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

Flood line: **0845 988 1188** (24 hour service) - to speak to an operator for advise or listen to local river flooding forecasts.

## Thames Water

[www.thameswater.co.uk](http://www.thameswater.co.uk)

**0845 9200 800** – to report problems with the sewer system

## Met Office

[www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

