

INTRODUCTION

This document provides a list of questions and answers which have been compiled to explain how Northamptonshire County Council is approaching the management of local flood risk.

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LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

1) What is a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy?

The Flood and Water Management Act (2010) led to a fundamental change in the approach to adapting to the increased risk of flooding. It made Northamptonshire County Council a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), to take the lead in addressing problems of local flooding and coordinating the involvement of all relevant groups in this process. A Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is a crucial means of achieving this aim. It outlines how local flood risk will be managed in Northamptonshire, both now and into the future, and is therefore crucial for gaining community wide support for our activities as LLFA.

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FLOOD RISK

2) What is flooding?

A flood occurs when water overflows or inundates land that is normally dry. This can happen in a multitude of ways. Many floods take several hours or days to develop, giving residents ample time to prepare or evacuate. Others, for instance flash floods, generate quickly and with little warning, which can be extremely dangerous.

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3) Can you explain what is meant by a 1 in 100 chance of flooding in any year?

A 100-year flood is calculated to be the level of flood water expected to be equalled or exceeded on average every 100 years. This is the flood with a 1 in 100 chance of occurring in any year. This is more accurately referred to as the 1% annual exceedance probability flood, since it is a flood that has a 1% chance of being exceeded in any single year. It should be noted that a 100-year flood can happen more than once in a 100-year period. Similarly, a flood level expected to be equalled or exceeded every 5 years on average is known as a 5-year flood, or the 20% annual exceedance probability flood.

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4) What is the difference between a main river and an ordinary watercourse?

A watercourse is any natural or artificial channel above or below ground through which water flows, such as a river, brook, beck, ditch, mill stream or culvert. Main rivers are those classified on the official Environment Agency Main River Map (to view see the Flood Map [here](#)). All watercourses that are not main river are known as 'ordinary watercourses'.

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5) How do I find out if I'm at risk of flooding?

You can find out if your property is at risk from flooding by visiting the Flood Toolkit here: <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/risk/> and entering your postcode.

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6) Why is my ward shown as a priority area – what does this mean?

If a ward has been allocated as a priority area, this means that the impact of flooding within the ward is higher than in other areas. The impacts of flooding considered include the number of environmentally designated sites, the number of community facilities, and the economic impacts, as well as the number of

residential and commercial properties at risk. Our work to manage flood risk will be given precedence in these priority wards. These areas may change over time as and when new data becomes available.

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7) There has been flooding in my area so why isn't it shown as a priority area?

The priority assessment is based on the calculated probability of flooding, so is not affected by any records of historical flooding. In addition, the priority assessment only considers the risk of flooding from surface water and from watercourses, so if flooding of your area was from another source such as sewers, this will not have been considered.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

8) What are the roles and responsibilities of Northamptonshire County Council?

The County Council is responsible for the management of flood risk from surface runoff, ordinary watercourses and groundwater. The County Council has a number of duties and powers that it can exercise under the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and the Flood Risk Regulations (2009). These include:

- Developing, maintaining and putting in place a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy for Northamptonshire which will include risks from surface water run-off, groundwater and ordinary watercourses.
- Establishing local management and governance arrangements with other key stakeholders to ensure delivery of effective joined up management of flood risk.
- Being a statutory consultee on all major planning applications with surface water drainage implications.
- Fulfilling the requirements of the EU Floods Directive by completing a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment.
- Preparing Surface Water Management Plans for areas of greatest risk.
- Establishing and maintaining a register of flood risk management assets with a record of each structure, together with details of ownership and state of repair, and where appropriate the designation of such structures or features which may affect a flood risk.
- Investigating flooding incidents, to the extent we consider necessary, in order to understand their cause and ensure that appropriate agencies play their role in the effective management of flooding incidents and recovery. Visit our Flood Library to download the Flooding Investigation reports already completed in Northamptonshire.
- Co-ordinating flood risk management across the county.

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9) What are the roles and responsibilities of Borough and District Councils?

Borough and District Councils are classed as Risk Management Authorities. They have the following powers and duties:

- The power to carry out flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses.
- The power to designate structures or features which are considered to affect flood risk.
- The power to make byelaws to secure the efficient working of a drainage system in the authority's area, to regulate the effects on the environment, and to secure the effectiveness of flood risk management work.

- The duty to operate their development planning and control functions under planning legislation, having due regard to flood risk as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and associated technical guidance.

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10) What are the roles and responsibilities of the Environment Agency?

The [Environment Agency](#) retains its responsibility for the management of flood risk from the sea, main rivers and reservoirs. It gains a strategic overview role for all forms of flooding in addition to existing responsibilities for the prevention, mitigation and remedying of flood damage for main rivers and coastal areas.

The Environment Agency has permissive powers to carry out works of maintenance, improvement and flood defence on main rivers, including any structure or appliance for controlling or regulating flow of water. The overall responsibility for maintenance of main rivers, however, lies with the riparian owner.

The Environment Agency is also responsible for providing advice to planning authorities, providing fluvial and coastal flood warnings, monitoring flood and coastal erosion risks and supporting emergency responders when flooding occurs.

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11) What are the roles and responsibilities of the Bedford Group of Drainage Boards?

The [Bedford Group of Drainage Boards](#) covers an extremely small area to the southernmost part of the county, on the periphery of Milton Keynes within the Great Ouse catchment area. They are defined as a Flood Risk Management Authority; they undertake consenting and enforcement of works to ordinary watercourses under Section 23 of the Land Drainage Act 1991 within their district and have the delegated powers within the whole of Northamptonshire. They also have the power to adopt and maintain sustainable drainage systems, and provide advice and direction to local authorities as part of the planning application process in relation to flood and water management.

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12) What are the roles and responsibilities of water and sewerage companies?

Water and sewerage companies are responsible for managing the risks of flooding from sewer systems. A public sewer is a conduit, normally a pipe, which is vested in a Water and Sewerage Company, or predecessor, that drains two or more properties and conveys foul, surface water or combined sewerage from one point to another point and discharges via a positive outfall. Public sewers are designed to protect properties from the risk of flooding in normal wet weather conditions. However, in extreme weather conditions there is a risk that sewer systems can become overwhelmed and result in sewer flooding.

Since October 2011, under the 'Private Sewer Transfer', Anglian Water will adopt piped systems on private land that are connected to a public sewer. Sewerage Undertakers have a duty under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991, to provide sewers for the drainage of buildings and associated paved areas within property boundaries.

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13) What are the roles and responsibilities of riparian owners?

Under common law, a riparian owner is someone who has a watercourse within or adjacent to any boundary of their property. Where a watercourse is sited between two or more property boundaries each owner may be equally responsible up to the centre line of the watercourse. This ownership extends to any structures in or adjacent to the watercourse (such as weirs, trash screens or defences).

Although not defined as a flood risk management authority under the Act, riparian owners retain their own duties and responsibilities for watercourses on or adjacent to their land as set out in the Land Drainage Act 1991. For more details please see our [Guide for Riparian Owners in Northamptonshire](#).

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14) What are the roles and responsibilities of communities and Parish Councils?

Communities will be better prepared to cope during and after a flooding emergency if everyone works together using their local knowledge. Identifying and planning for the risks that may be encountered during a severe flood could help in reducing the potential impact on individuals and the wider community. Being prepared and able to respond to an emergency can also help communities recover more quickly.

A community flood plan can provide practical steps that you can take to inspire and involve residents and local communities and groups to work together to improve your knowledge of the risks of flooding and how to deal with flooding incidents. The County Council, along with the Environment Agency, can provide help and support developing these for your community.

Community Flood Wardens are members of the local community - individuals, Parish Councils, Neighbourhood Watch or any local community groups, and are supported by local authorities, the Environment Agency and the Northamptonshire Local Resilience Forum. The nominated volunteers become part of the Community Flood Plan for their area. They also receive direct flood warnings from the Environment Agency and pass these on to their neighbours. They can act as 'eyes and ears' of the community by updating the Environment Agency, local authority and emergency services about the situation on the ground.

Homeowners are encouraged to reduce flood risk to their own property by:

- Adapting their building, permanently or temporarily, to improve its resistance and resilience to flooding, for example by using waterproof materials in the walls and floors or adding door and window flood barriers – the Flood Toolkit provides a great deal of guidance about how to protect property (<http://www.floodtoolkit.com/risk/prevention/>) and the Blue Pages (www.bluepages.org.uk) provides details of commercial companies that can provide these products;
- Gaining greater awareness of flood risk by signing up to receive flood warnings (<http://www.floodtoolkit.com/warnings/>); and
- Obtaining adequate insurance where available (<http://www.floodtoolkit.com/pdfs/13%20Insurance/13.Insurance.html>).

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15) What are the roles and responsibilities of the Highways Authority and the Highways Agency

Northamptonshire Highways is responsible for the provision and management of highway drainage under the Highways Act (1980). This excludes motorways and trunk roads (M1, A5, A43, A45, A14 and the M45) that are the responsibility of Highways England.

The owners of land adjoining a highway also have a common law duty to maintain ditches to prevent them causing a nuisance to road users.

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16) What are the roles and responsibilities of developers

Managing flood risk is a major issue for any development. The location, layout and design of developments (in that order) are the most vital factors determining both the likelihood and consequences of flooding.

Built developments should be located in areas of lowest risk in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework. Developers need to ensure the land use and layout is appropriate to this risk. Properties

and access roads are vulnerable to flooding, whereas open space and informal recreational areas are generally compatible and can help manage flood risk by making space for water.

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WARNINGS AND INSURANCE

17) How can I receive flood warnings?

The Environment Agency provides a flood warning service in areas at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea. Flood warnings are issued:

- **Direct to you** - Receive warnings by phone, text, email or fax. Sign up for the Environment Agency's free Floodline Warnings Direct service on their website or by calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188.
- **On the Flood Toolkit** - View up-to-date information about flood warnings in force and check out the latest flood risk forecast here: <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/warnings/>
- **By calling Floodline on 0845 988 1188** - You can listen to recorded information on the latest warnings and predictions or speak to an operator for more general information 24 hours a day. The operators can also provide a quickdial number which gives you faster access to information for your area.
- **Through the media** - You may see or hear warnings on television and in radio broadcasts.
- **Social Media** - You may see or hear warnings on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram etc.

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18) Are there flood warnings for surface water?

There are 15 local flood warnings available for surface water and these can be viewed here:

<http://www.floodtoolkit.com/warnings/>

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19) Am I able to get insurance against flooding?

If your property has suffered from flood damage in the past, if there is a history of flooding in your community or you are within an identified flood risk area, it can sometimes be difficult to find insurance cover. If you experience problems insuring your property against flood risk, the following guide could be of use: <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/pdfs/13%20Insurance/13.Insurance.html>.

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PROPERTY PROTECTION

20) Who will help me if my area/property floods?

If your area floods, the emergency services will work together to ensure people are safe and moved from the affected area.

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21) What can I do to protect my property?

Water can get into a building in many different ways, even through the walls or up through the floor, depending on the nature of the flood and the construction of your property. It is not possible to make your property completely flood-proof but there are two ways you can reduce the flood risk to your property:

- Flood resistance measures – designed to stop the water getting in.
- Flood resilience measures – designed to limit the damage caused by flood water that does get into the property and to reduce the time needed to get back to normal after a flood.

The first priority will be to stop flood water getting into your property. There are a growing number of flood products that help to keep flood water out of your home or business premises, such as flood doors, flood boards and air-brick covers which can be placed across openings when flooding is expected.

Assessing the flood risk to a particular property and deciding how to reduce it is not easy. It is therefore strongly recommended that, prior to fitting measures, you arrange for an independent survey of your property by a suitably trained, independent professional with expertise in flood risk assessment. See the [Flood Toolkit](#) for more information. It is important to note that flood products are not designed to prevent groundwater flooding, which is likely to require more specialist solutions.

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22) Where can I find flood protection products?

The Blue Pages directory www.bluepages.org.uk provides details of commercial companies that can provide bespoke flood and coastal erosion risk assessments and products.

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23) Why don't you provide sandbags? Where can I get them from?

It is not the local authority's duty to provide sandbags; these can be purchased from a local DIY store, builders' merchant or through suppliers on the Blue Pages directory www.bluepages.org.uk. It is the responsibility of all homeowners / residents to protect their own property. However, if a residential property is being flooded by water from the highway, the highways authority may supply sandbags at their discretion. Residents who are aware that their homes are at a high risk of flooding are recommended to obtain their own sandbags to enable early preparation before floods happen.

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24) Where can I get further advice and support?

The National Flood Forum (NFF) is an independent charity representing and supporting those affected by or at risk of flooding, and can be contacted through their website www.floodforum.org.uk or on 01299 403055.

The Blue Pages directory www.bluepages.org.uk provides details of commercial companies that can provide bespoke flood and coastal erosion risk assessments and products.

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FLOOD REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION

25) Who do I contact if my property is being flooded?

All emergency contact details can be found here: <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/emergency/>

If the flooding is an emergency: contact Fire and Rescue by calling 999. This service is primarily responsible for saving life. They may also pump out floodwater from your property. During flooding, you should focus on the safety of yourself and others.

If the flooding is highway related: use the Street Doctor service at:

<http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/roads/streetdoctor/Pages/Step1.aspx> to report flooding relating to a highway such as blocked ditches, blocked drains or flooding on a road.

If the flooding is from a burst water main or sewer flooding: contact your service provider (Anglian Water Services, Thames Water Utilities or Severn Trent Water).

For all other flooding: use our online report form at <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/emergency/report-flood/> to report all other flooding. Please note that this service is not to be used in an emergency situation. We will endeavour to respond to your submission within 21 days.

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26) When will you investigate the flooding of my property?

As the Lead Local Flood Authority for Northamptonshire, one of the Council's duties is to investigate flood events that occur within its area as it deems necessary.

Upon learning of a flood event within Northamptonshire, the Council will consider whether an investigation should be carried out, under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act, in order to determine:

- Which authorities have relevant flood risk management functions; and
- Whether each of those authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

It is not the responsibility of the Investigating Officer to resolve the flooding, however they will investigate the cause and notify any relevant authority.

Upon learning of a flood event within Northamptonshire the Investigating Officer will follow the established 'Flood Investigations Protocol' whereby it will be determined whether an investigation should be carried out, taking into account the available resources and significance of the event. The Council's thresholds for formal investigation are as follows. A formal flood investigation will be carried out if one or more of the following occurs:

- Flooding has affected critical infrastructure for a period in excess of 3 hours from the onset of flooding.
- Internal flooding* of one property has been experienced on more than one occasion in the last 5 years.
- Internal flooding of five properties in close proximity** has been experienced during one single flood incident.

*Definition of internal flooding: Where water crosses the threshold of a commercial or residential building.

**Definition of close proximity: Where it is reasonable to assume that the affected properties were flooded from the same source or interaction of sources.

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27) Where will you publish your flood investigations?

We will publish our flood investigation reports on our Flood Toolkit here:

<http://www.floodtoolkit.com/risk/investigations/>

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