

Welcome to MANAGING OUR WATERWAYS

Town Hall



Introduction



The Environment Agency are responsible for fluvial flood risk management (streams, rivers, sea etc)

North Somerset Council are responsible for surface water/drainage

Wessex Water are responsible for their drainage systems/sluices

The Independent Drainage Board are a local public authority responsible for managing water levels, flood risk and land drainage

Riparian owners are responsible for the maintenance of riverbanks that adjoin their properties



Environment Agency





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What we will cover today

- Role of Flood Risk Management Organisations
- Rights and Roles of Riparian Owners
- Permitting
- Maintenance
- Flood Resilience

If we cannot answer your question today, we can take enquiries away or help you find out where to get answers.

The Environment Agency's Role

Strategic overview: for flood risk and managing the risk from main rivers, reservoirs, and the sea.

Statutory advisor: planning applications, local and strategic plans, environmental assessments, and nationally significant infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure provider: we allocate funding for and build flood defence schemes. We also operate, maintain and replace significant national flood and coastal defences.

Category 1 emergency responder: warning and informing communities, preparing for and assessing the risk of emergencies.

Permissive Powers

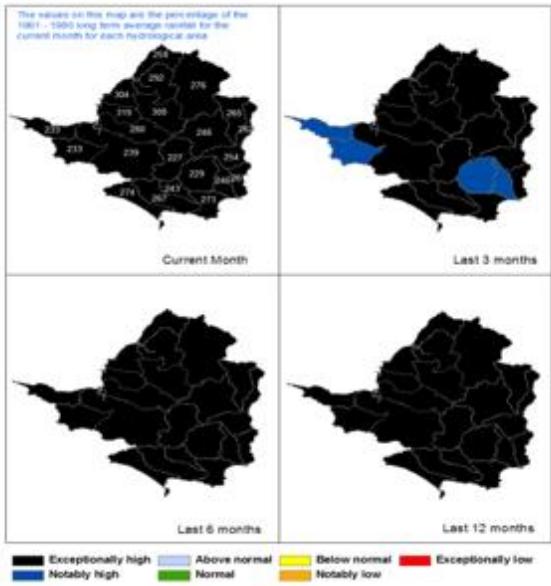
The Environment Agency has **Permissive Powers** to maintain and improve main rivers for the efficient passage of flood flows and the management of water levels.

The Environment Agency does NOT have a duty to carry out either maintenance or new works on main rivers.

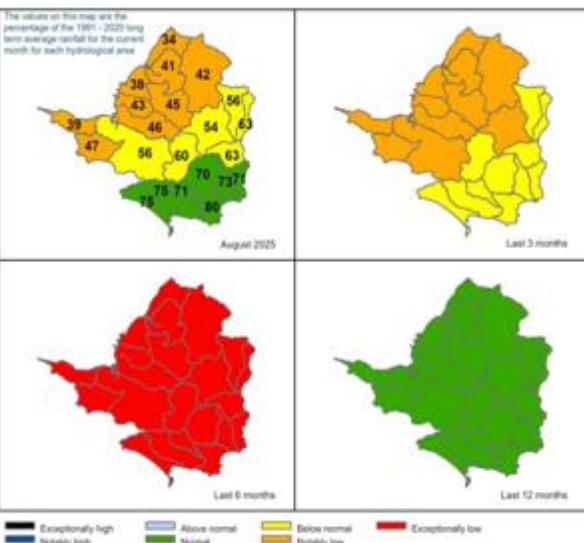
Funding is allocated where it has the greatest benefit to flood risk, to better protect people, property, and wildlife. This might include:

- grass cutting and weed control
- removing obstructions from rivers
- repairing and operating sluice gates and pumping stations



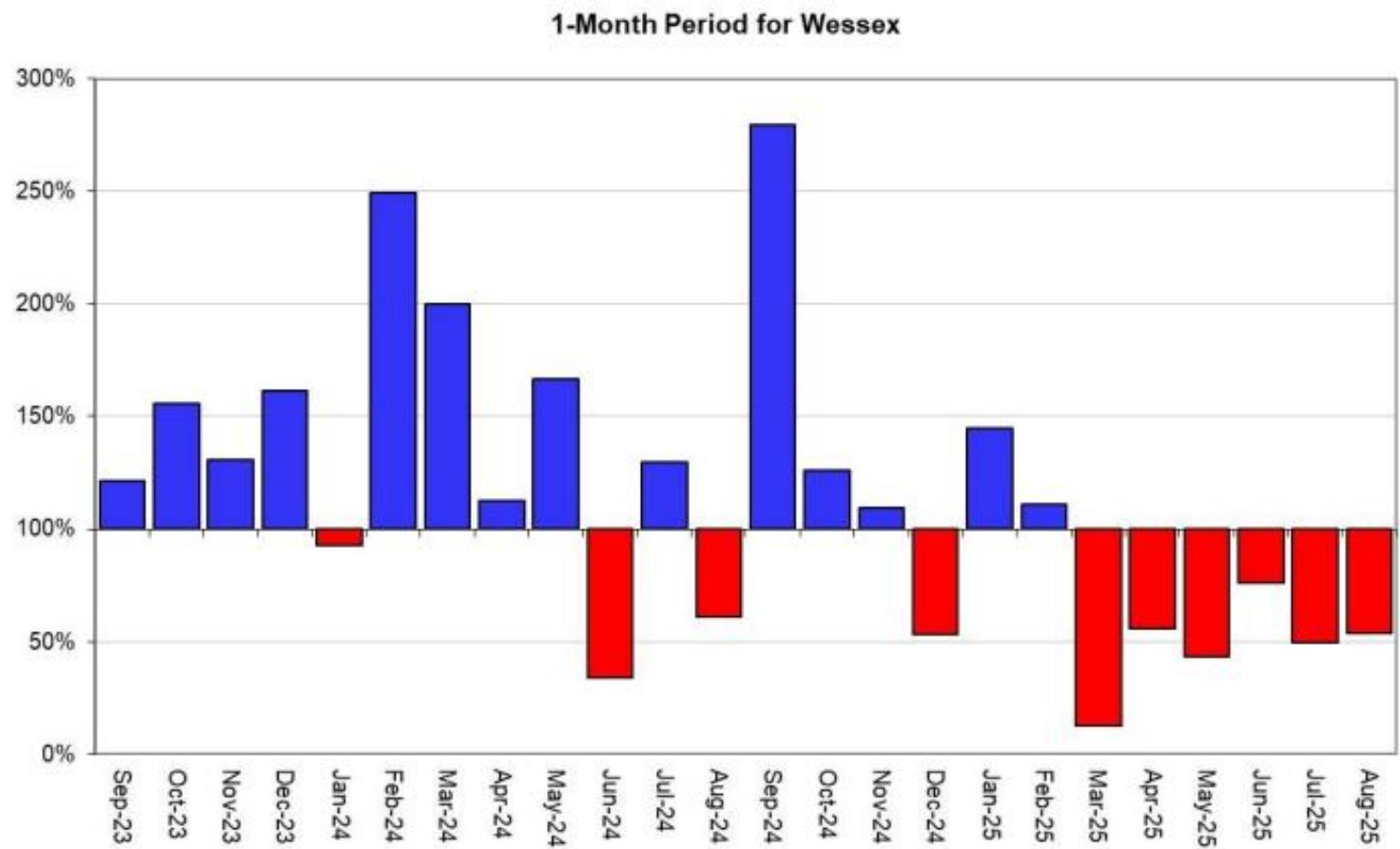


February 2024



August 2025

From very wet to very dry



Are all watercourses treated equally?

Designated
Main Rivers are
shown in red

Ordinary
Watercourses
are shown in
blue



Surface Water & Ordinary Watercourses



Wessex Water
YTL GROUP

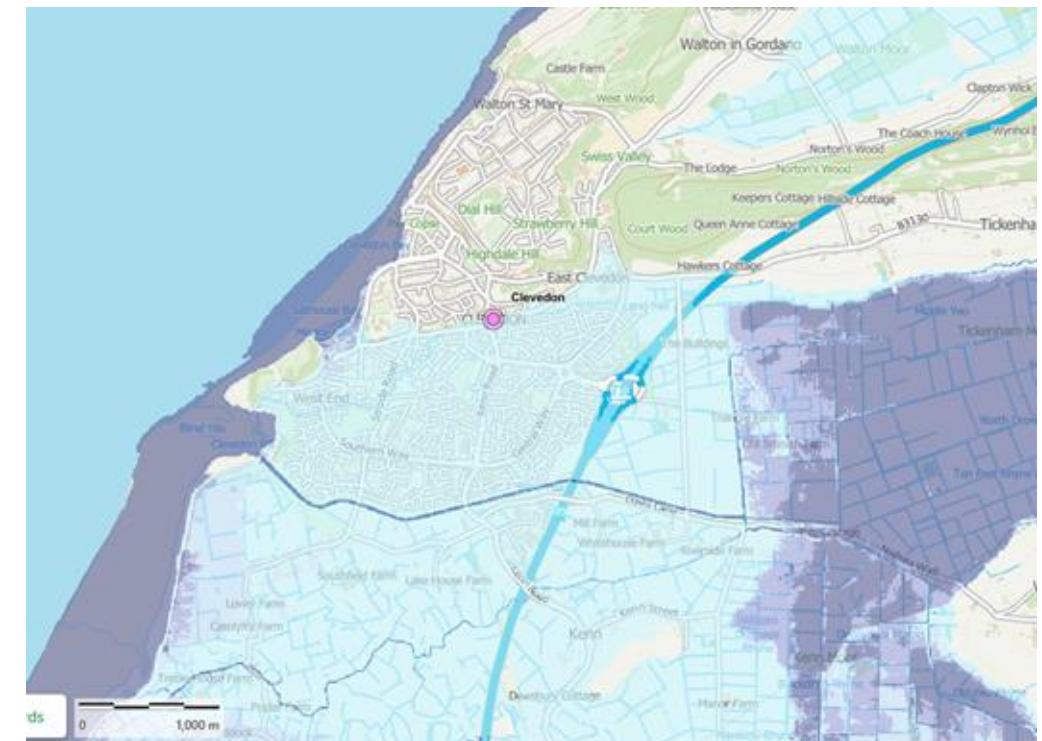


**SOMERSET
DRAINAGE
BOARDS
CONSORTIUM**
AXE BRUE, PARRETT & NORTH SOMERSET LEVELS
INTERNAL DRAINAGE BOARDS

Flood Risk in Clevedon



Surface Water Flood Risk

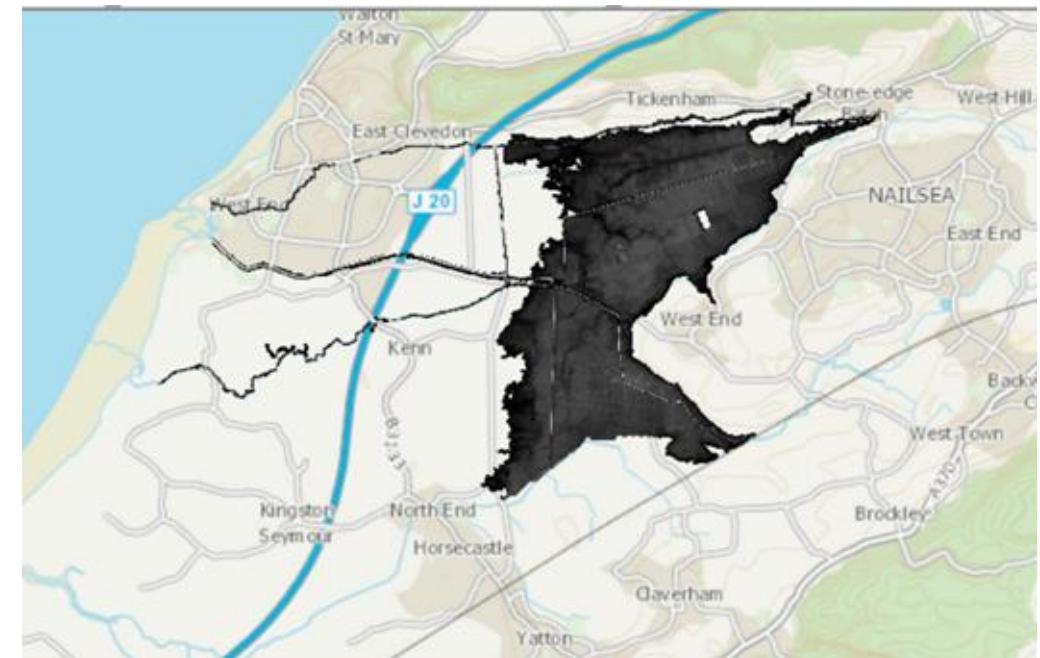


Rivers and Sea Combined Flood Risk – this risk is primarily from Coastal Flooding

Flood Risk in Clevedon



Lidar map of Clevedon showing land elevation

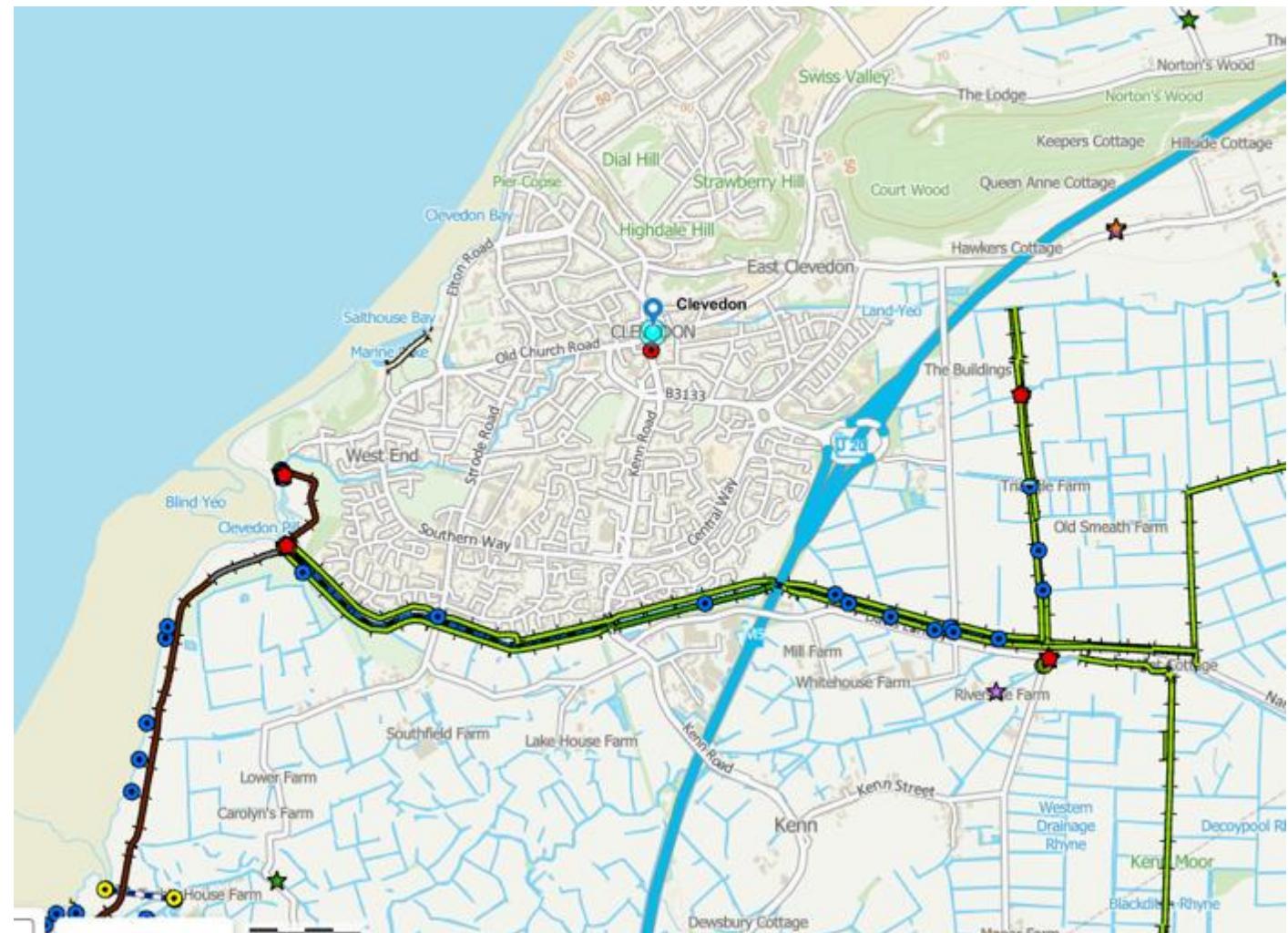


Modelling for river flooding from the Land Yeo with a 0.1% chance of happening in any year (1 in 1000)

Flood Risk Assets in Clevedon



1981 Storm Surge
www.clevedonpier.co.uk



Managing main rivers: who is responsible?

Main Rivers tend to be larger rivers, but can also be small watercourses, drainage channels or covered culverts.

The Environment Agency can use its permissive powers to carry out maintenance, improvement, or construction work on main river, but is not obliged to do so.

Funding for maintenance work is nationally allocated, and takes into consideration legal duties as well as flood risk.

Ultimately, responsibility for maintaining a main river falls to the riparian owner.

Who is a riparian owner?

Where a river runs along the boundary of land, the riparian owner will own up to halfway across the watercourse, unless stated otherwise in property deeds.

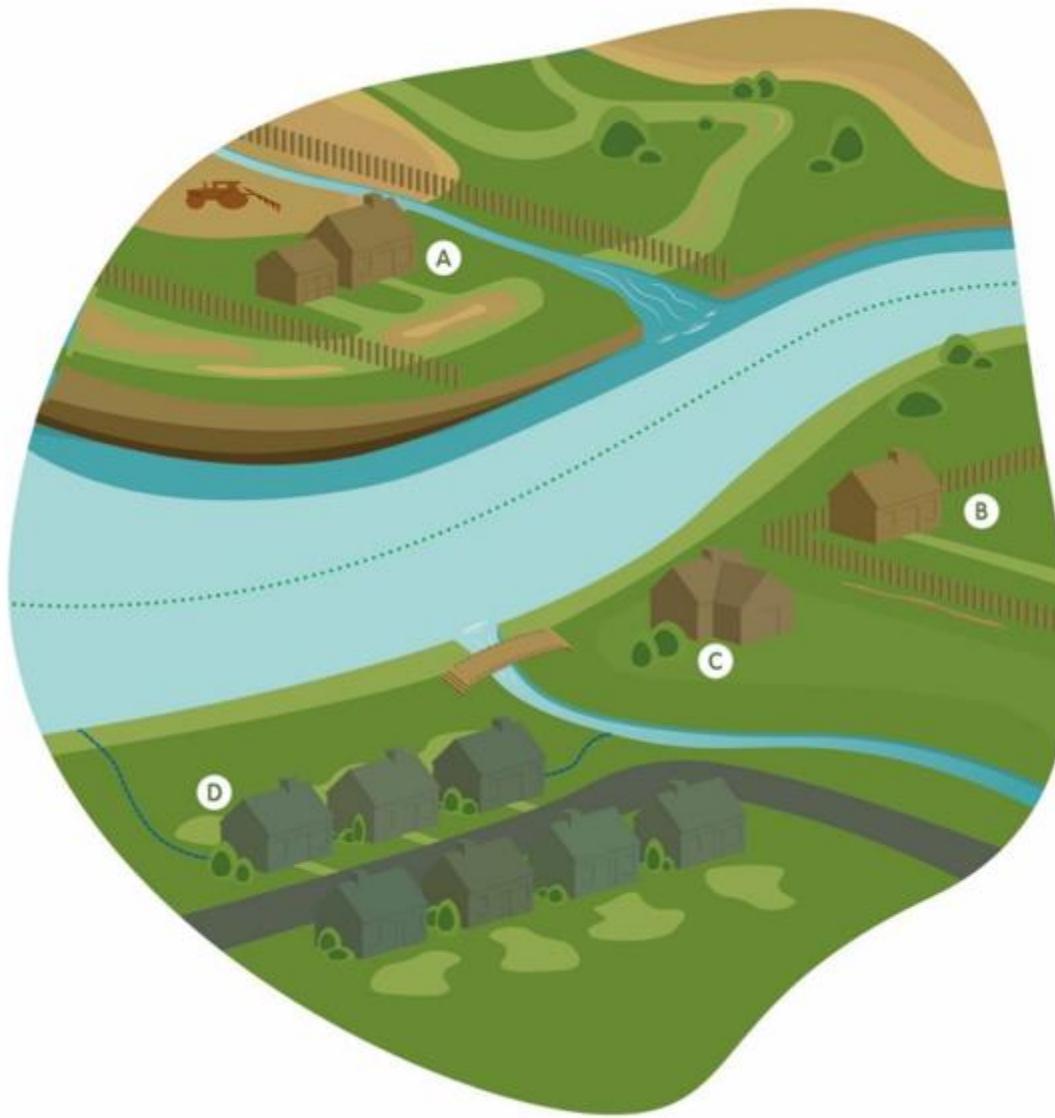
A watercourse can be culverted, natural, or artificial and includes channels that are dry for long periods of time and may not flow every year.

Check your property deeds as hedges, fences and earth banks may not signify your legal boundaries.

Land ownership can be complex. It is sometimes unknown or disputed, even when looking at title deeds for a property.



Typical circumstances of riparian ownership



- **Property A:** The stream, and up to the centre of the watercourse that runs along their boundary
- **Property B:** Not a riparian owner
- **Property C:** Up to the centre of the watercourse on their boundary, and halfway across the stream
- **Properties D:** The culvert running beneath their properties

Withdrawal of Maintenance

Reason for withdrawal and steps taken:

- Rising operational costs
- Low risk from fluvial flooding
- Withdrawal of maintenance notices sent out in June 2025

Next steps:

- Consultation – Purpose & Timeframes

We continue to respond to incidents such as channel blockages, as well as undertaking an extensive maintenance programme on high risk watercourses

Your Watercourse: Rights and Roles



[Home](#) > [Environment](#)

Guidance

Owning a watercourse

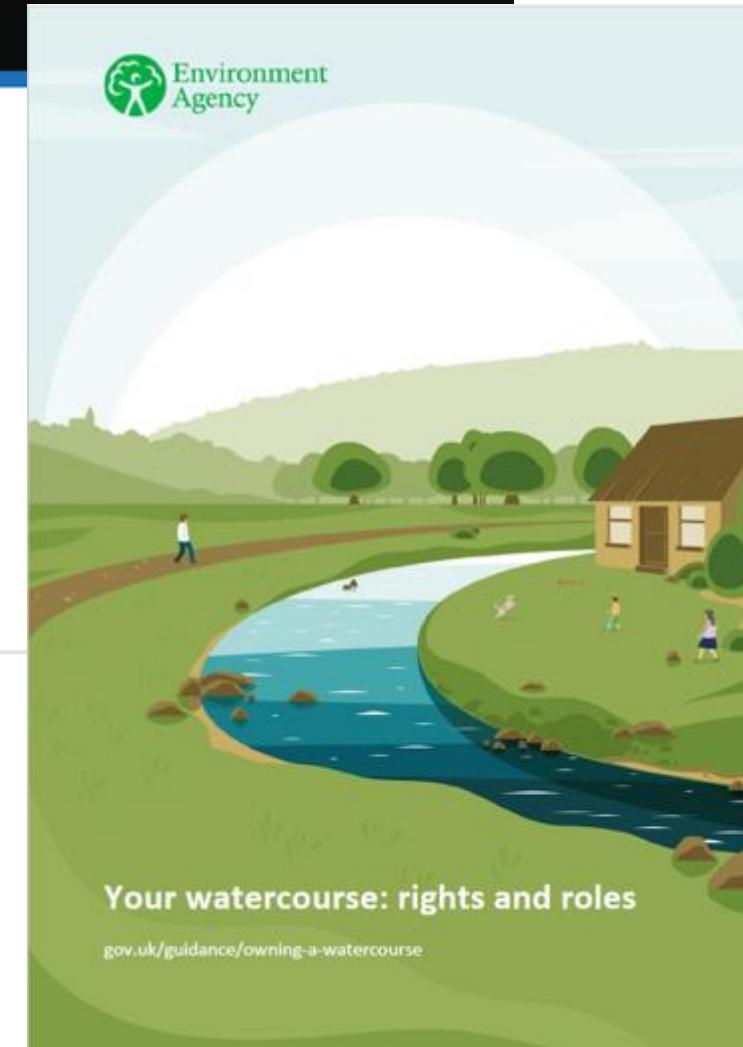
Your responsibilities and rules to follow for watercourses on or near your property, and permissions you need to do work around them.

From: [Environment Agency](#)

Published 15 February 2018

Last updated 16 July 2024 — [See all updates](#)

[Owning a watercourse - GOV.UK](#)
(www.gov.uk)

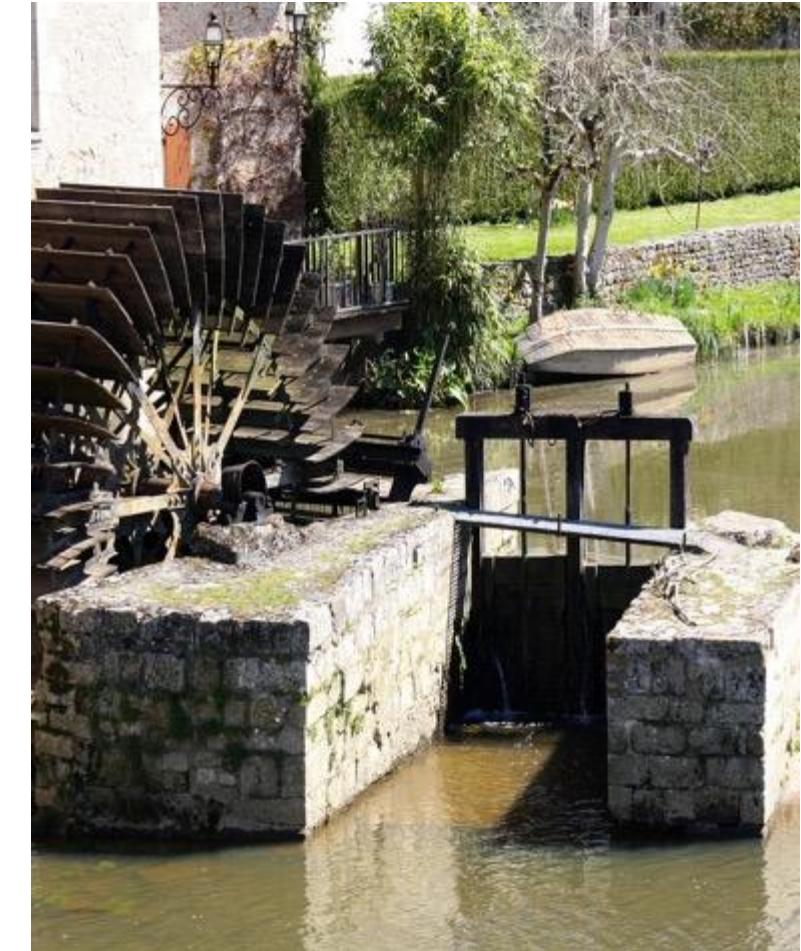


Your Rights as a Riparian Owner

- Receive the water in its natural state, undiminished in flow, quantity, and quality.
- Protect your property from flooding and your land from erosion.
- Abstract a maximum of 20 cubic metres (20,000 litres) of water per day without licence.
- Use the water in a watercourse for normal purposes, such as watering livestock, Use the for other purposes e.g., milling, manufacturing or irrigation

Your responsibilities as a riparian owner

- Let water flow naturally with undiminished quantity and quality
- Do not obstruct the flow of a watercourse to the detriment of your neighbours.
- Keep structures you own, such as weirs, mill gates, moorings, culverts, and access bridges, free from obstruction and in safe condition



Your responsibilities as a riparian owner

- Don't disturb certain species or habitats on the banks or in the watercourse such as birds and fish spawning/eggs
- Prevent invasive species from spreading into the wild or neighboring land.
- Do not allow the watercourse to become polluted. Don't throw garden waste, wastewater, chemicals, or anything else which could cause pollution on the banks or in the water.



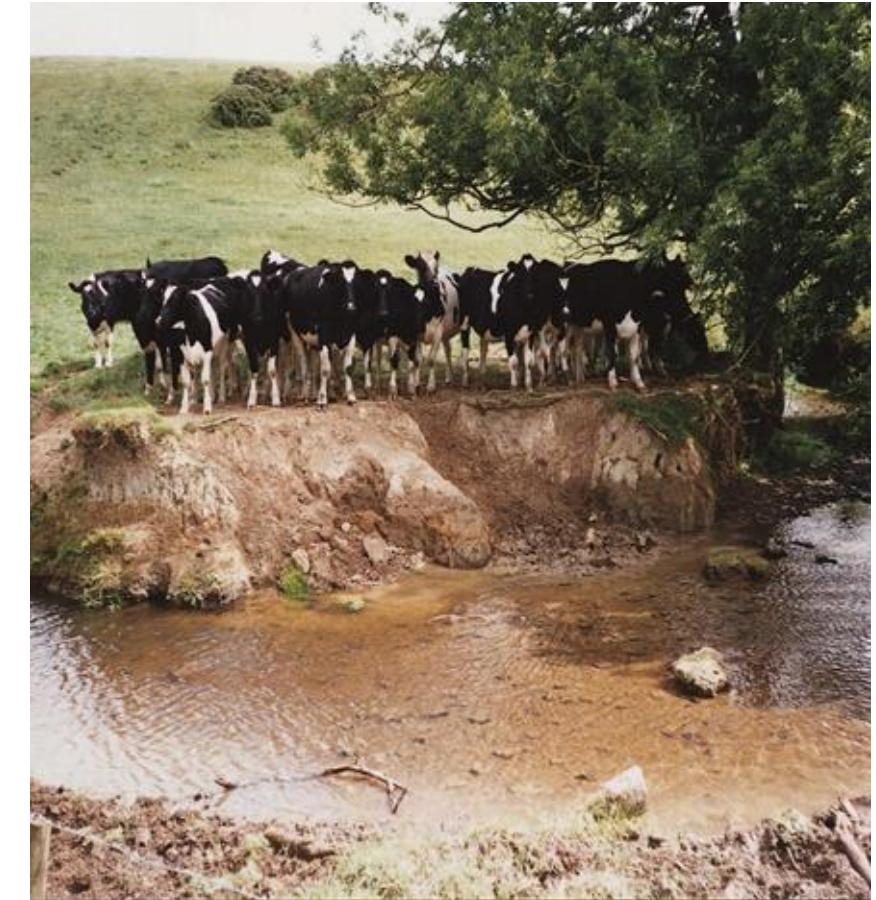
Environmental Permitting



- Various licenses/permissions might be required.
- Main River works (within 8m fluvial / 16m tidal) - Flood Risk Activity Permit (FRAP)
- Ordinary Watercourse - land drainage consent
- Other relevant permissions might be needed, such as waste, impoundment, abstraction or discharge licences.
- As long as it's not a designated site like an SSSI, you do not need a permit to cut vegetation

Permitting: Exemptions

- Many activities may be covered by registering an exemption [Exempt flood risk activities: environmental permits - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/exempt-flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits)
- Exemptions are free but must be registered
- The activity must meet the description and conditions required for that exemption



Best Practice – Trees, Branches & Shrubs



1. Trees along a river can provide stability to the bank, shading for the watercourse to reduce weed growth and important wildlife habitats. When managing overhanging branches, trim only those lower branches that may cause an obstruction to the flow of water.
2. Consider leaving in branches that fall in the channel, simply pulling and securing them into along the bank if they are causing an obstruction.
3. If trees or branches fall in the channel, only remove them if they pose a specific flood or navigation risk.

Silt and detritus may be good for wildlife, and removal may cause issues downstream. Make sure you understand why you are removing any obstruction and think about its consequences.

Best Practice – Vegetation Management

1. Bankside vegetation: where bankside vegetation must be managed, consider leaving one bank uncut, in particular during bird nesting season.
2. Marginal vegetation: unless there is a clear flood risk, retain 20% of the marginal vegetation as valuable wildlife habitat and bank protection.
3. Vegetation management: if vegetation management is required, consider cutting only one side of the channel. Always ensure the conditions are safe and the appropriate equipment is used. Avoid bird nesting season and always check for the presence of wildlife. Ensure you do not damage the channel bed or bank sides.

If possible, leave vegetation near the river for 24 hours and then remove from the bankside. This helps wildlife, prevents blockages, and helps water quality issues. Always remove immediately if the vegetation includes non-native invasive species.

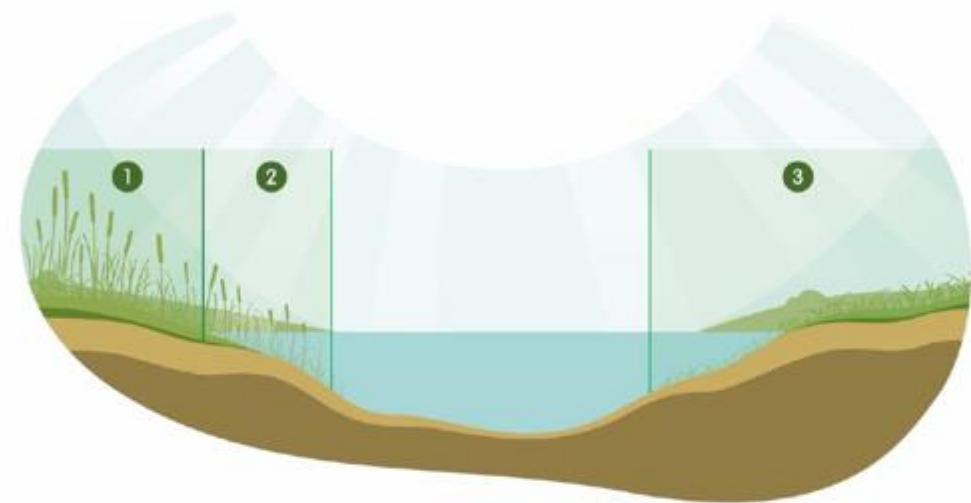


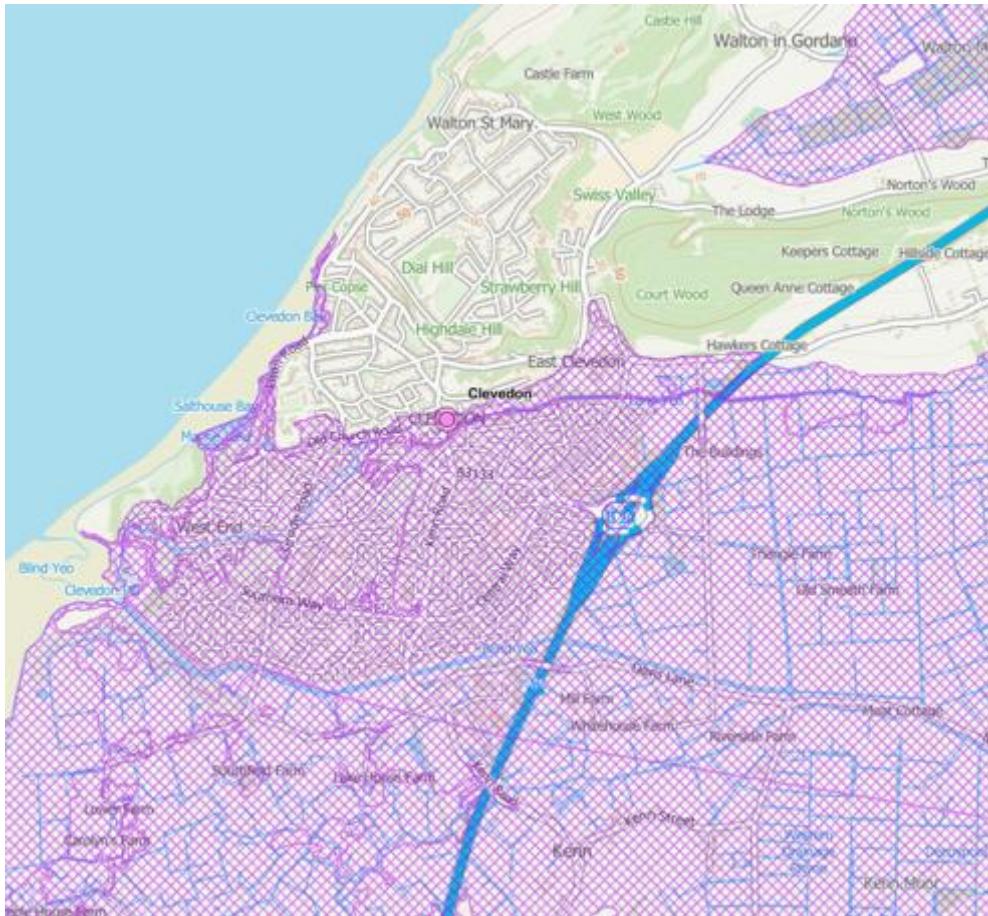
Diagram 2 - An example of how to manage a watercourse, retaining wildlife benefits such as marginal vegetation.

Diagram 2 shows a cross-section of a watercourse. On the left is uncut vegetation above the water (labelled 1) and on the water's edge (labelled 2). On the right bank (labelled 3) is cut grass.

Safe working – risks and hazards

- Always consider your health and safety when taking care of your watercourse, and never put yourself at risk.
- Do not go inside a culvert. You could get trapped or poisoned by gases.
- Do not block access to any authorities who may need to carry out routine or emergency works
- Do not enter floodwater – just 15cm of fast flowing water can knock you off your feet, and hazards can be hidden in the water.
- During flooding, if there is a blockage on a main river, call the incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60

Flood Warnings & Flood Resilience



<https://www.gov.uk/get-flood-warnings>

The Land Yeo through Clevedon

- We will continue to bid for funding from the national allocation for maintenance work on the Lower Land Yeo
- We do not own any assets through Clevedon and do not have any legal duties
- Maintenance work is also dependent on safe access to the watercourse, which is limited due to garden furniture and obstructions



Useful links

<https://www.gov.uk/flood>

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>

<http://www.gov.uk/permission-work-on-river-flood-sea-defence>

Questions?

WessexEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

WessexMaintenanceConsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk

Q&A

Want to ask a question?
Please raise your hand and
a microphone will be
brought to you.



Closing Remarks



Thank you

