

# Wessex Flood Warden Newsletter - Spring 2021



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**Dear Flood Wardens, Community Volunteers and  
Town and Parish Clerks - welcome to the Spring  
2021 Newsletter**

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## **Protecting our Flood Warning Service during the Coronavirus Pandemic**

During the pandemic we ran a reduced Flood Warning Service. This helped our duty officers to preserve our ability to provide warnings where they were most necessary.

We are pleased to tell you that we are now back to business as usual and issuing all Flood Alerts and Flood Warnings across Wessex.

Thank you for your perseverance with this reduced service. We know that many of you rely on Flood Alerts to take action in your communities and use the Alerts to activate and follow your Community Flood Plan.

Our teams will continue to work around the clock to ensure that people have the early warning advice they need to stay safe.

At the Environment Agency we continue to review and improve the Flood Warning Service we provide to communities but to do this we need your help. Please continue to provide our team with any feedback by emailing [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk), this email account is monitored daily by a member of the Flood Resilience team.

Please report any property flooding through the Flood Online Reporting Tool (FORT) <https://swim.geowessex.com/uk>

If you are not familiar with FORT here's a useful video for further information [Flood Online Reporting Tool \(FORT\) Presentation - YouTube](#)

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## Funding Available!



Powering our community

Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) has today announced the launch of a £200,000 fund to build local resilience and protect vulnerable community members across central southern England.

The 2021 round of SSEN's Resilient Communities Fund will open on Tuesday 6 April, with £200,000 available for non-profit making organisations, community groups and charities working to protect and enhance the resilience of those most vulnerable in the distribution operator's south patch; home to some 3.1 million customers.

While last year's grants continue to support the ongoing community coronavirus response, the 2021 fund will support local projects that:

- Protect the welfare of vulnerable community members through enhancing their resilience and improving community participation and effectiveness.
- Enhance community facilities, services and communication – particularly to support local response to a significant emergency event.

The 2021 fund is particularly focused on projects helping vulnerable or isolated people living in SSEN's central southern England network area, with applications of up to £20,000 to be considered by an independent fund panel. The application deadline is Thursday 10 June and funding decisions will be communicated by September 2021.

To find out more about the Resilient Communities Fund, read SSEN's annual fund reports and apply from Tuesday 6 April, please visit: [ssen.co.uk/resiliencefund](https://ssen.co.uk/resiliencefund).



## Dredging complete on section of the River Parrett to cut flood risks on Somerset Levels

A new section of the River Parrett has been dredged for the Somerset Rivers Authority to reduce flood risk to local people, properties, roads and land. Large quantities of silt have been removed from 1.37miles (2.2km) of the river between the village of Moorland and the M5 to increase its capacity to carry flood water.

Dredging started on 16 January and was completed by 30 January (slightly delayed from Thursday 14 January because of a haulage problem). The job was delivered for the Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA) by the Parrett Internal Drainage Board (IDB), working closely with the Environment Agency and Natural England, and using Growth Deal funding from the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

Contractors Van Oord's water injection dredging vessel "Borr" shifted around 22,000m<sup>3</sup> of fine sediments from the bed of the Parrett, down beyond Northmoor Pumping Station. Targeted jets of water separated and mobilised particles so they could be washed away on the outgoing tide.

## Three main reasons for this dredge

Councillor David Hall, Chair of Somerset Rivers Authority, said: "Work along this stretch of the River Parrett is important for three main reasons:

Firstly, it will reduce flood risk for properties in the Northmoor area.

Secondly, it will help to reduce agricultural damages, particularly from spring and summer floods of the kind that we saw locally back in 2012.

Thirdly, because of the better possibilities it creates for managing flows of water around the Somerset Levels, it will help us to make further improvements, like those planned for the River Sowy and King's Sedgemoor Drain later this year. All these things together will benefit a large part of the Somerset Levels." Councillor Hall added: "The Parrett IDB and Van Oord were operating within challenging coronavirus restrictions and I would like to thank them both for pressing on with this essential public service at a very difficult time for us all."

## How River Parrett dredging has recently developed

The new dredge down towards the M5 has several years of SRA partnership work behind it. Following the devastating floods that hit Somerset in 2013-14, the Environment Agency dredged 5 miles (8km) of the Parrett and Tone in 2014, down to Northmoor Pumping Station. The SRA funded a further 0.47 miles (750m) of dredging downstream of Northmoor Pumping Station in 2016, then another 1.4 miles (2.2km) of Parrett dredging between Stathe and Burrowbridge in 2019.

The SRA has also been funding regular maintenance dredging since 2016 using water injection dredging techniques. Compared with conventional techniques involving big excavators, water injection dredging is less disruptive to residents and has less impact on the environment. It is also quicker and cheaper

At their most recent meeting in December, SRA Board members heard that £441,000 was being saved on the Northmoor to M5 dredge by using water injection dredging techniques. This money will now be used to fund other flood risk reduction activities across Somerset, in the SRA's Enhanced Programme of works for 2021-22, which the SRA Board will decide upon at their next meeting in March.



(Pictured: Van Oord's water injection dredging vessel "Borr" in display mode with water injection bars raised, during a short trial near Moorland in January 2020. The bars are usually submerged)



# Report property and highway flooding issues



Please inform us of flooding to your property or area, you can also request street sweeping and the clearing of road drainage gullies when considered necessary to reduce the risk of flooding.

## Report property or area flooding

This should be reported on the Flood Online Reporting Tool (FORT) database. It's possible to report flooding by property or by area, this information may support an investigation. [Report area flooding and property flooding](#).

## Sandbags

Dorset Council do not have a statutory requirement to provide sandbags, residents with properties at risk from flooding should take steps to source sandbags from their local builder's merchant for example. In an emergency sandbags may be available from stores located around the county. The [Dorset Council sandbag policy and store locations can be found on the Dorset Council website](#).

## Road gullies

Dorset Highways proactively inspect and empty gullies on the strategic network only, roads that do not form part of the strategic network or gritting routes are dealt with re-actively. [Blocked gullies can be reported on the Dorset Council website](#) or by telephone.

If a storm could result in property flooding, please report by telephone on 01305 221020.

## Street cleansing

[Request a street sweeper online](#) or by telephone on 01305 221040.

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## Why not host the Groundwater flooding video on your town or parish council website?

We recently produced a groundwater flooding video to share with you at the online resilience days. Great news, we are now hosting the groundwater video on the EA Youtube channel.

If you are in a groundwater affected area in Dorset or Wiltshire, you may find it useful to host this link on your town or parish council website, particularly if you have a dedicated flooding part of your website. Its easy to host, just copy and paste the link [https://youtu.be/AV8t9O\\_aE-A](https://youtu.be/AV8t9O_aE-A)

The video explains what groundwater is, where it occurs and how and why communities are vulnerable to groundwater flooding. The video also sign posts viewers to some useful information on groundwater flooding and also how to sign up to receive the groundwater flood alerts and warnings.

Please click on the green picture below to find out how you can sign up to receive groundwater warnings.

As always please get in touch with us at [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk) if you need any further assistance on sharing the video on your webpage.



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### Know your local authority's policy on sandbans



- BANES** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Bristol City Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Dorset Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Mendip District Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - North Somerset Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Sedgemoor District Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Somerset County Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - South Gloucestershire Council** - see their policy [here](#)
  - Wiltshire County Council** - see their policy [here](#)
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## Summary from Dorset Prepared Flood & Winter Preparedness on-line Event for Flood Wardens and Community Emergency Volunteers



Thank you to all the flood wardens, community emergency volunteers and community representatives who joined us for the Dorset Prepared event in February. We had over 100 people across all of the live presentations covering sessions from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue, Environment Agency, Dorset Highways, Dorset Civil Contingencies Unit, Dorset Flood Risk Management, Communities Prepared and Wessex Water.

Many of the sessions are available to watch again and you can access them via the Dorset Prepared website: <https://www.dorsetprepared.org.uk/community-involvement/dorset-prepared-flood-winter-preparedness-virtual-event-for-flood-wardens-and-community-emergency-volunteers/>

Some of the live session recordings unfortunately are not available due to technical issues in MSTeams which captured participant names, so we are unable to share these due to GDPR. Recordings from Communities Prepared, including the role of a flood warden and community emergency volunteer, the role of the coordinator and snow warden training are available and links are available on the Dorset Prepared site (see above)

There are also a number of additional pre-recorded videos and resources which are available. Topics range from a flood warden checklist to a video from the MetOffice talking about the National Severe Weather Warning Service, the MetOffice App and how storms are named. Many of the videos and resources available are generic and not Dorset specific, so please take a look and see what would be helpful to you.

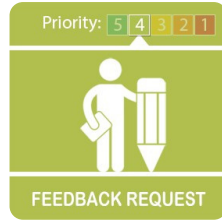
Please email us at [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk) if you have any queries about the event or need any assistance.



**Future training opportunities – have your say**

We would like to hear from you to help us plan any further online training. Please email us at [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk) if you would like more on-line training and include details of any specific topics that would be of help and we will work with partners to see what we are able to provide.

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## **Message Sent on Behalf of Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority**

### **Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Authority - Consultation of draft Community Safety Plan 2021-24**

We are consulting on our draft Community Safety Plan, which sets out the key challenges and risks facing us over the coming years. With future financial uncertainty, the plan details what we intend to carry on doing and what we intend to review and do differently, in order to continue to provide a high level of service to our communities.

Working with others is central to how we deliver our services, and this will continue to be at the heart of everything we do. For that reason, we invite you to [visit our website](#) to view our draft plan and the accompanying video, which provides a short overview.

If the link does not work please cut and paste the following into your browser:

<https://www.dwfire.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/draft-community-safety-plan-2021-24-consultation/>

The consultation period runs from 17 February until 13 May 2021 and we would welcome your feedback, through a short set of questions on our website. If you wish to raise anything specific, or require any further assistance in accessing the information, please email us directly at [consultation@dwfire.org.uk](mailto:consultation@dwfire.org.uk).

Kind regards

Councillor Rebecca Knox  
Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority

Ben Ansell  
Chief Fire Officer

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## Speedy response helps secure Bath vaccination centre



In less than an hour of being asked, the EA sent more than 140 sandbags to Bath Racecourse to help the Avon Fire and Rescue Service secure the tents being used for Covid-19 vaccinations.

Unable to use steel pegs due to the underground electricity service, the Fire and Rescue Service Station Manager contacted Julian Sandford, Flood and Coastal Risk Management Advisor for the North Somerset Asset Performance team, to find out where sandbags could be purchased.

Julian contacted Jamie Donaghy, Team Leader for the Wessex Incident Preparedness (WIP) Team and, within 30 minutes, two dumpy bags containing 80 – 100 sandbags had been loaded onto a vehicle and trailer and were en-route to Bath to be delivered by James Winchester. The EA hold a stock of sandbags that can be used during flooding incidents.

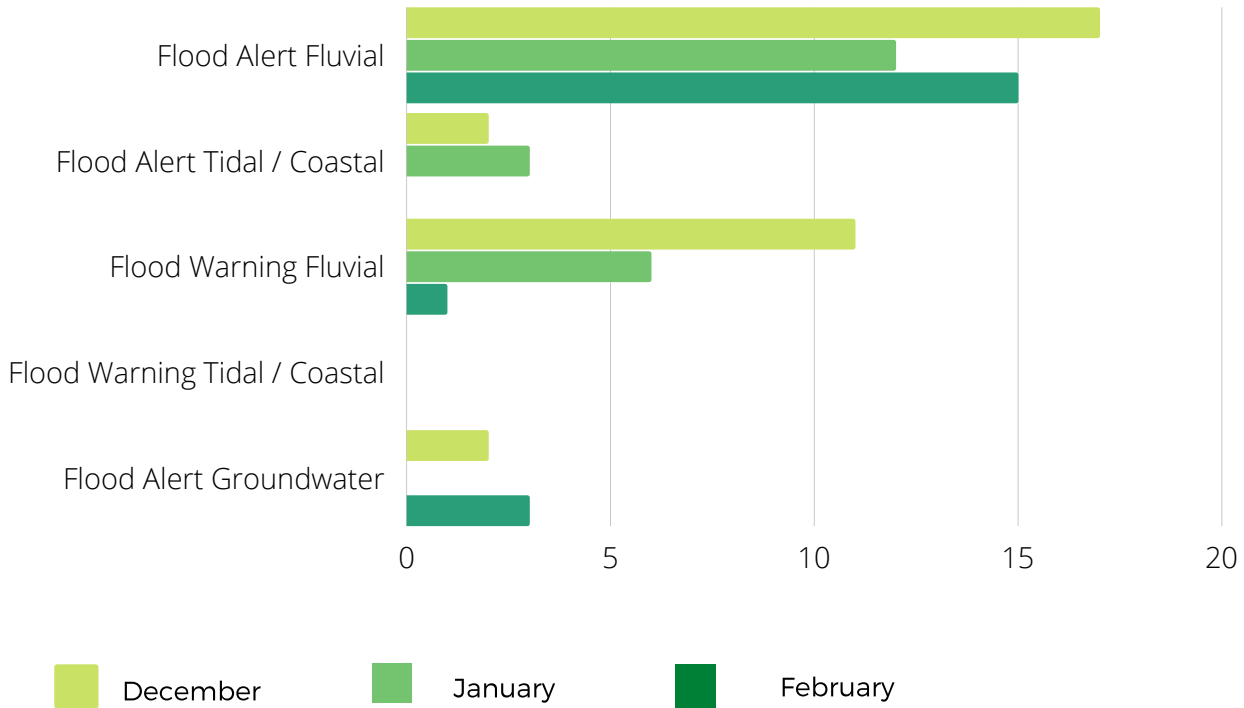
“I’ve been asked by the Avon Fire and Rescue Service to pass on the greatest of thanks to the EA, but namely Jamie, James and Anton Barnard from the WIP team for responding with such speed and willingness and for repeating the request for a further 40+ sandbags the following day due to worsening weather conditions”, said Julian.

This was a great example of helping out our Local Resilience Forum partners for an important cause and getting some well deserved praise along the way!





**In total across Wessex in the last three months we issued:**

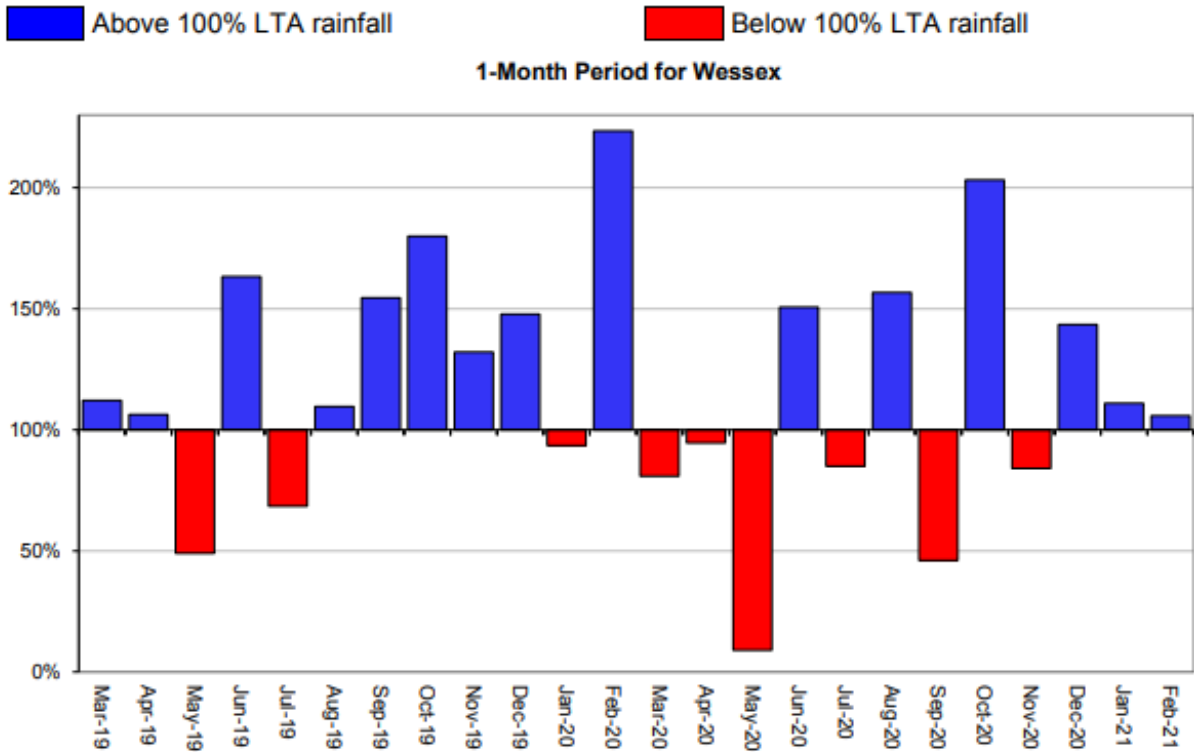


## Fluvial and Groundwater conditions

### FLUVIAL

February rainfall in Wessex was normal at an average of 69mm or 106% of Long Term Average (LTA). This compared to 223% in 2020. The week following Valentine’s Day accounted for nearly 70% of the total. Monthly mean flows were ‘normal’ or ‘above normal’ at the majority of reporting sites, and daily river flows peaked in response to the main rainfall events. The dry end to February led to a recession in flows, although the groundwater dominated South Wessex rivers were supported by fairly high groundwater levels, so declined at a slower rate compared to the more responsive north Wessex rivers. The six month running rainfall total remains higher than LTA.

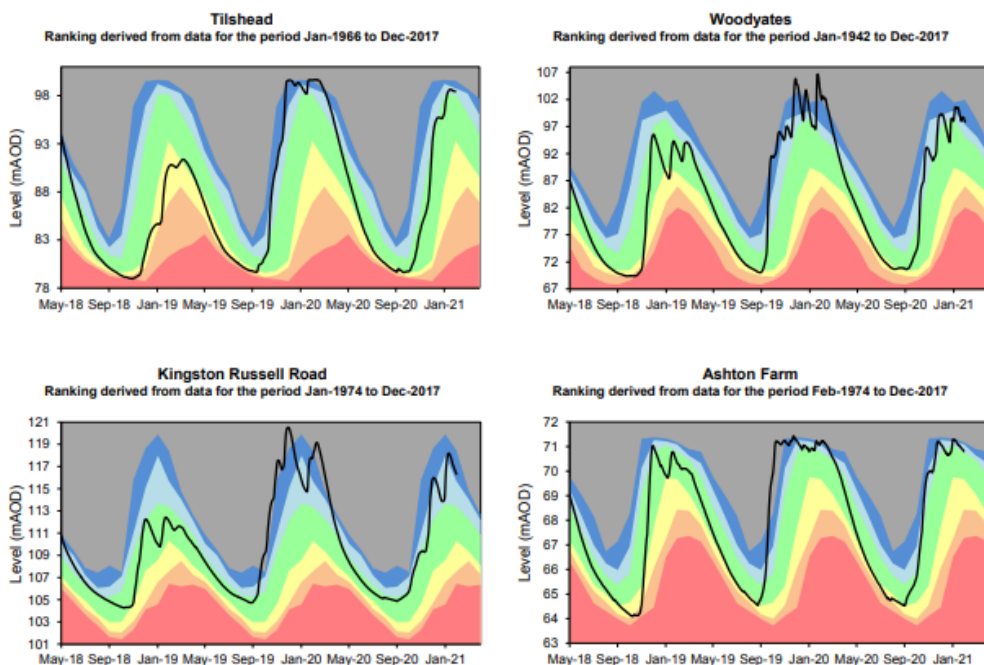
Total reservoir storage remained at 99% for Bristol Water and 100% for Wessex Water.



**Figure 1.2:** Monthly rainfall totals as a percentage of the 1961 – 1990 long term average. Produced using HadUK data based on the Met Office 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from rain gauges (Source: Met Office © Crown Copyright 2021). Provisional data based on Environment Agency 1km gridded rainfall dataset derived from Environment Agency intensity rain gauges.

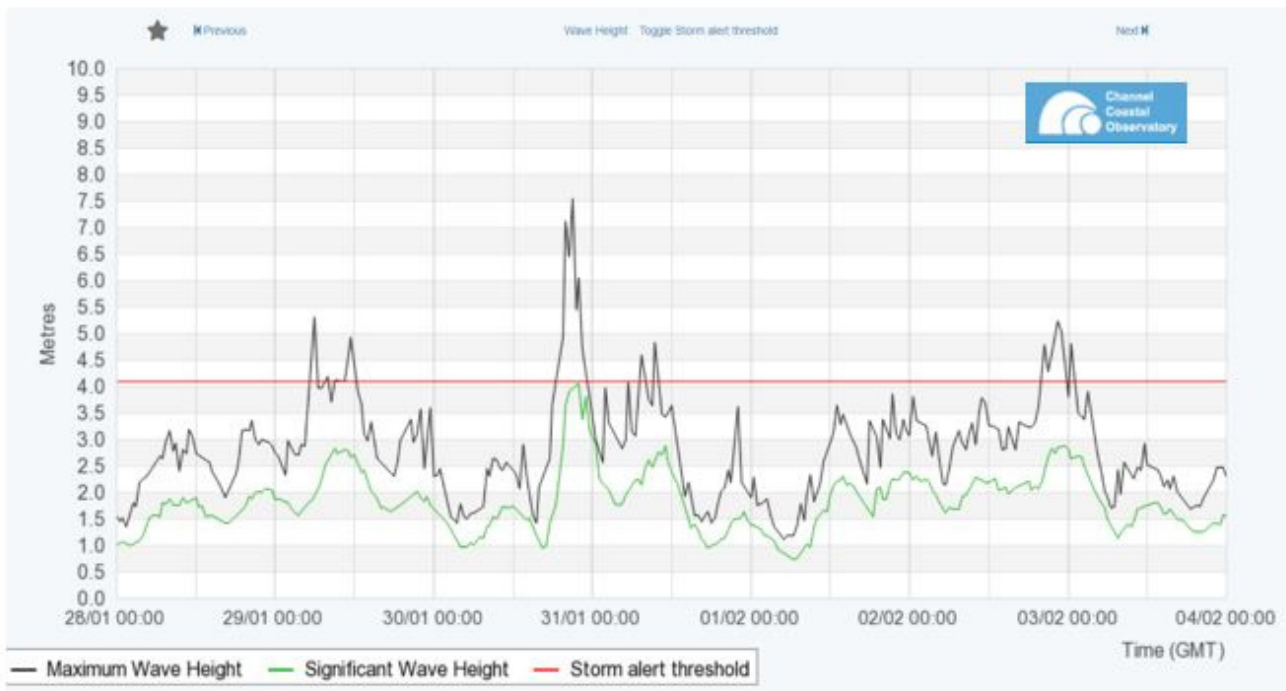
## GROUNDWATER

The annual groundwater recharge season started in October with over 200% of LTA rainfall and three of the four subsequent months delivered above average totals, pushing groundwater levels to peak in mid-February with all sites above Flood Alert thresholds. Levels never attained last year's peaks and were significantly lower than the disastrous winter levels of 2013/14. Although many communities started to see the impact of flooding, the most vulnerable properties are now almost all protected by property level resilience measures including domestic pumping solutions. Correspondingly little damage was reported.



## TIDAL SITUATION

February dawned facing recovery from overnight storms along the coast on 31st January. A member of the Coastguard was seriously injured when a series of exceptional waves overtopped the beach at Chiswell. The Channel Coastal Observatory wave buoy at Chiswell recorded 7.60m (25') waves. Elsewhere there was some overtopping at Swanage during gales in the middle of the month. Storm Darcy brought a further period of strong winds towards the middle of the month, however their generally easterly direction meant that most locations in Wessex were fairly well sheltered.



**Are your contact details up to date?**



This is a reminder for you to keep us updated with your current e-mail addresses and mobile/landline numbers. We do not use the Flood Warning Service to access your details. We have our own separate database which is why we ask that you contact the Wessex Flood Resilience team direct with any changes/updates. We keep this information in a secure location and use this information to keep you up to date with warden news and events in your area, as well as to contact you in relation to your role. We will, of course, only contact you during sociable hours.

We will only share your contact details with members of the Local Resilience Forum with regard to your role as Flood Warden or Community Emergency Volunteer. We will not transfer the personal data that you provide outside the European Economic Area and you have the right to withdraw consent for us to hold your data at any time.

You have rights under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) is the supervisory authority for data protection legislation. The ICO website has a full list of your rights under data protection legislation, you can access this here: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/individual-rights>

For general information on how the Environment Agency treats your personal data and how to contact us, see our Personal Information Charter:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency/about/personal-information-charter> (this link can only be viewed with Chrome if you are using a PC).

Please e-mail [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk) with any changes to your details so that we can keep our database and you up to date!



## Where to find further information

For local weather information including weather warnings visit the Met Office at [www.metoffice.gov.uk](http://www.metoffice.gov.uk)

[River and sea levels and to sign up for flood warnings](#)

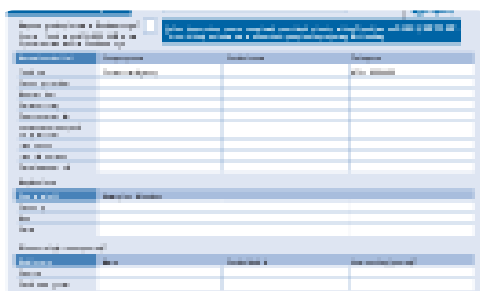
[Wessex Area Water Situation Reports](#). Monthly reports are produced on Gov.uk

Flood Re has been set up to help those households who live in a flood risk area find affordable home insurance. For more information contact your insurer or visit [www.floodre.co.uk](http://www.floodre.co.uk)

The National Flood Forum provide further advice and support at [www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk](http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk)

Flooding: Find out the answers to frequently asked questions [here](#)

[Property Flood Resilience Toolkit | The Flood Hub](#). This toolkit contains all the resources you need as a basic introduction for your property to become more flood resilient. Click on each resource to download it and build up your toolkit!



## Personal Flood Plan Template

The personal flood plan includes a list of things you should do (like moving sentimental items to safety), and provides space for you to note down important contact details such as your utility companies and insurance



# community flood plan



Parishes and communities working together

Community or group	Address		
Floodline Quickdial Number	Which Environment Agency flood warnings are you registered to receive?		

Local flood warning trigger  
select either one of the options of the floodline

## Community Flood Plan Template

This flood plan template is for anyone involved in supporting communities or groups to improve their ability to plan for a flood



### What to do before, during and after a flood

Practical advice on what to do to protect you and your property from flooding



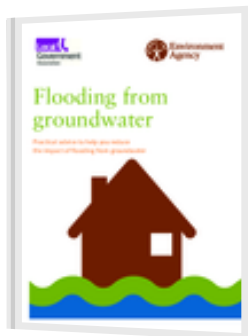
### Would your business stay afloat?

A guide to preparing your business for flooding



### Prepare your property for flooding

A guide for householders and small businesses to prepare for flooding



### Flooding from groundwater

Practical advice to help you reduce the impact of flooding from groundwater

## Flood Warnings - Do you know what to do?



**PREPARE**

- Prepare a bag that includes medicines and insurance documents
- Visit the [flood warning information service](#)



**ACT**

- Turn off gas, water and electricity
- Move things upstairs or to safety
- Move family, pets and car to safety



**SURVIVE**

- Call 999 if in immediate danger
- Follow advice from emergency services
- Keep yourself and your family safe

## Useful contacts

Contact Floodline on **0345 988 1188** for up to date flood warning information or advice.

Contact the Environment Agency incident hotline on **0800 80 70 60** to report flooding, blockages in rivers or any other environment incident.



## Reporting flood risk and riparian responsibilities

If you are concerned about blockages, obstructions to flow in the river or know of cut vegetation being deposited in the watercourse, which can cause pollution, remember to ring our Incident Hotline **0800 80 70 60** which is open and manned 24 hours a day. You will be given advice and guidance and the information you share will be recorded and passed to the relevant duty team who will be able to take any necessary actions.

If your community is affected by flooding please remember to share this information with us. Photos, times and description of flooding are vital in helping us understand how your community has been affected and what we can do going forwards, whether it be changes to flood warning thresholds or assessing your community for a scheme or property flood resilience measures.

If you have received training on the Severe Weather Information Management (SWIM) system you can record information directly at [www.swim.geowessex.com](http://www.swim.geowessex.com). SWIM has recently changed its name undergoing a significant upgrade - it is now called FORT standing for Flood Online Reporting Tool, better reflecting what it actually does.

We are working to improve the way wardens and flood groups can feed information into the system. Wardens will be able to enter and maintain their own contact details, they will be able to add more detailed flood extents onto the map and will be able to share a link with members of their community which will allow the public to upload photos and videos directly into their community flood report.

Alternatively you can email us at [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk)

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## Keeping in touch



If you are a new flood warden or have received this newsletter from your Town or Parish Clerk, please contact the Wessex Flood Resilience Team at [floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk) so that we can update our records and sign you up to receive the newsletter and invitations to future training opportunities.

[Subscribe to the Flood Warden Newsletter](#)

[Why not forward this Newsletter to a friend?](#)



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