

River Waveney Winter Flooding Briefing

Introduction

This is a briefing to inform and advise you of the flooding that took place in December 2020 from the River Waveney and associated tributaries. We will explain what happened, what our role is, how we work with partners and what the next steps are for your community. It will not give you all the answers you want at this early stage.

What happened?

In December 2020, East Anglia received an exceptionally high amount of rainfall, the River Waveney area received 50mm in 18 hours, and a total of 71mm in 96 hours.

Across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk we issued flood alerts to 21 different areas and flood warnings to 16 locations during the flooding between 24 December and 2 January 2021.

The widespread flooding and devastating impacts on people, homes and communities was a consequence of heavy rainfall falling on an already wet catchment which was especially sensitive to intense rainfall.

The Environment Agency has a strategic overview of all sources of flooding and coastal erosion. We are also responsible for flood and coastal erosion risk management activities on main rivers and the coast. Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) are county councils and unitary authorities. They lead in managing local flood risks (ie risks of flooding from surface water, ground water and ordinary (smaller) watercourses).

At the end of December 2020 over 300 properties across Norfolk & Suffolk suffered the devastating consequences of flooding. Within the River Waveney catchment we have records of at least 89 residential properties being flooded internally from main rivers, although this number may be higher if flooding was not reported. Table 1 below provides further information on the communities where we are aware of flooding having occurred from main rivers, with many other properties having flooded from ordinary watercourses, surface water or ground water across the catchment. Norfolk County Council as the LLFA are producing a Section 19 report (as stipulated by the Flood & Water Management Act) which compiles information on flooded properties across Norfolk and produces recommendations. Suffolk County Council are producing their own Section 19 report following the flooding in Beccles.

Our role during flooding

We cannot stop all flooding, but we work to limit the impact and we do help communities to prepare. We provide 24/7 cover to respond to flooding and pollution incidents. We issue alerts and warnings to help people reduce the impact of flooding from main rivers, reservoirs, estuaries and the sea. Our primary roles during flooding are:

- providing a warning and informing service
- operating the flood defences and structures we own and manage
- being part of a multi-agency incident command and control group

Environment Agency (EA) staff were working in the wider area across Norfolk & Suffolk responding to incident reports and checking defences.



Flood Warnings

We provide a warning and informing service through our Flood Warning Service. We have a network of both rain gauges and river gauging stations to monitor the height and flow of rivers. If a river level is measured or forecast to reach above a typical range this means that flooding is possible, and a flood warning or alert may be issued.



At 17:04 on 23 December we issued the flood alert for the River Waveney from Diss and the River Dove to Ellingham, including Bungay: *be alert, stay vigilant and make early preparations.*



At 00:24 on 24 December we issued the flood warning for the River Waveney from Bungay to Ellingham: *flooding is expected, take action to protect yourself and your property.*

At 02:10 on 24 December we issued the flood warning for the River Waveney from Diss to Bungay.

If you are in an area able to receive flood warnings from us but did not receive the Floodline warnings issued as listed above, please check that you are signed up to receive them by contacting Floodline on **0345 988 1188** or sign up at: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>

Managing and responding to flooding

During the flooding we worked closely with professional partners to minimise flooding across the Waveney River catchment area. This includes working with professional partners, including the police, fire service and the rest of our partners on the Local Resilience Forum (LRF). A meeting of the LRF took place on 28 April to review the incident and we continue to work together on the recovery side of the incident.

For the duration of this event, staff were conducting 'river runs', which are operational checks of the rivers and flood plains. They would check local pinch points and bridges to ensure no debris was holding back flows, clearing any obvious blockages that could impede flows.

Data

We are collating and processing the data received from our flood survey and are reviewing our flood warning service to ensure we provide an accurate and timely warning service for future flooding. We will let you know if changes are made to your flood warning service.

We are in the process of updating our flood risk model of the River Waveney which we hope to complete by the end of this year. This will utilise the information we obtained from the December 2020 flooding.

Later this year we hope to carry out threshold surveys of the properties that were known to have flooded, to help us understand the scale of the flood risk. This, in combination with the updated flood risk modelling, will help us ascertain if there are cost beneficial ways to reduce the flood risk.



Community <i>(County where properties were flooded shown in brackets N-Norfolk S-Suffolk)</i>	Properties flooded from main river	Properties flooded from ordinary watercourse	Properties flooded from surface water	Properties flooded from combined source
Beccles (S)	1			9
Brockdish (N)	2	17		
Bungay (S)	5			
Diss (N)	8		5	
Ditchingham Dam (N)	28			
Earsham (N)	6		2	
Eye (S)	2			
Flixton (S)	1			
Geldeston (N)	3			2
Gillingham (N)	1		2	
Needham (S)	3			
Scole & Waterloo (N)	6		8	
Shelfanger (N)	12	1	1	
Wainford (N&S)	7			
Woodton (N)	4			1

Table 1: Numbers of properties internally flooded where at least 1 property is likely to have been flooded from a main river.

Have you been flooded? – please let us know

We are very keen to know about all the properties that have been flooded internally, so that any data we capture can help inform future decisions. If you have not contacted us to report flooding at your property, please let us know, as we are very keen to know the full extent of the flooding in the River Waveney catchment. Please email enquiries_eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk. Or ring 0203 0255472. Information relating to flooding from ordinary watercourses, surface water or ground water will be shared with Norfolk County Council or Suffolk County Council as the LLFA and included in their Section 19 report.

We will communicate with residents of properties known to have flooded internally to investigate options for managing flood risk.

We have created an online survey and would encourage all residents who were flooded to complete it by using the following link. <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/I7HEVS/> if you require a paper copy please call Tina Starling on 07500 884454.

All the data and information we capture is reviewed and the results help to inform our flood warning service, ensuring we provide an accurate and timely warning service for future flooding. We will let you know if changes are made to your flood warning service.



Where can I find out more?

Register with our Flood Warning Service by visiting our website: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings> or call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

You can check if your property is at risk of being flooded by visiting our website: <https://www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding>

Contact us

You can send us any comments or questions on this update by emailing enquiries_eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk.

