

Briefing Note for Parish and Town Councils Watercourse and Ditch Flood Risk

As you will be aware there has been a substantial increase in flooding incidents in recent years. Wiltshire Council as Land Drainage Authority continues to work with many local communities to appoint Flood Wardens and help plan for such events to reduce the risk to people and property.

Wiltshire Council often approaches landowners to request them to clear overgrown and blocked ditches and watercourses where there is a risk of flooding. However, there is an extensive network of watercourses and ditches in the county it has been found that Parish and Town Councils have in many cases been successfully able to provide valuable assistance in identifying and helping to resolve these issues including working with us to help reduce the risk of flooding in their communities.

As part of the partnership working initiative I would like to ask your Council to become more involved in the early stages of this process and using your local knowledge and contacts to make the initial informal approaches to landowners to undertake clearance of their ditch or watercourse. The first approach could for example be made by telephone or email followed by a letter. For your assistance we have attached a template for the first and second letter to this briefing note. We would also ask that you retain copies of any emails or letters sent to the landowners. Town and Parish Councils have both local knowledge and contacts and the ability to take a less formal approach and the Parish Council's role would be perceived to be a neighbourly reminder highlighting the parish's role within the community. Wiltshire Council will be looking to informally review this initiative within 6 months.

The suggested approach is set out below:

1. An informal approach by (telephone or email) from a Parish or Town Council representative is made asking a landowner to clear ditches and watercourses.
2. If there is no action by the landowner the first letter can be sent requesting action.
3. If the clearance is still not undertaken a second letter can be sent to the landowners.
4. Should you encounter any problems please do not hesitate to contact the Council's Drainage Team who can then prioritise any further action as appropriate. If necessary then may also instruct the Council's legal team should any formal legal action be necessary or arrange for a referral to the Environment Agency where a watercourse is a main river.

If you would like to discuss this matter further or require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact Renate Malton, Project Officer on 01225 712514 (mobile 07827 954856) or by email renate.malton@wiltshire.gov.uk

Yours sincerely



Simon Jacobs

Initial Letter for Watercourses and Ditches for use by Town and Parish Councils

(Name)
(Address)

(Date)

Dear (Name)

Maintaining Ditches and Watercourses (name & location of watercourse)

The Parish Council note that the above watercourse is in a condition such that the proper flow of water is being impeded and is no longer functioning as an efficient drain.

The Parish Council understand that you are the owner of the adjacent land and consequently you are responsible for maintaining the ditch.

It would be appreciated if you could arrange to clear this ditch as soon as practicable in order to reduce the flood risk to your neighbours and residents of the parish.

Rather than involving Wiltshire Council as this stage we are simply approaching you as your local Parish Council to request that you make the necessary arrangements to clear this watercourse.

Your co-operation regarding this matter would be appreciated. We do hope that you will be able to work with us to help reduce the risk of flooding in our community

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on or another member of the Parish Council on

(Name)
(Designation)

(Name)
(Address)

(Date)

Dear (Name)

Re: Maintaining Watercourses (name & location of watercourse)

The parish council wrote to you on to advise you that your watercourse is in a condition such that the proper flow of water is being impeded and it is no longer functioning as an efficient drain.

If the work is not carried out the Parish Council may need to formally refer this matter to Wiltshire Council who may then make a referral to their legal department.

If you believe that somebody else is responsible for the condition of the watercourse please provide us with that person's details and your reasons for believing that the condition of the watercourse is attributable to them.

If you would like further information on your rights and responsibilities as a riparian owner the Environment Agency has a booklet "Living on the Edge" which can be found on their website at www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Should you be unable to arrange the work to be carried out for any reason or require assistance please contact the (name) on the number below or email (parish council email)

Your sincerely/faithfully

(Name)
(Designation)