

## BACKGROUND

- More and more people are finding themselves at risk from flooding.
- More than two million properties in England and Wales are at risk from flooding from rivers and the sea. Changes in our climate, resulting in fiercer storms and wetter winters, will increase that risk. It will never be possible to prevent flooding but we can all manage flood risk to reduce the likelihood of flooding and its impact.
- 3 main types: surface water / river / coastal
- Also more of our countryside and green spaces in towns (such as front gardens and drive ways) are being paved over – which means heavy rainfall cannot soak away
- Surface Water Flooding - is caused because the volume of water falling or flowing onto hard surfaces overwhelms existing drainage systems. This type of flooding risk are usually short lived and associated with heavy downpours of rain, thunder storms etc.
- Small watercourses (such as streams and ditches) and highway drainage systems can usually cope with certain frequencies of storm and rainfall intensity.
- BUT Flooding can be caused by the sheer volume of water or indicate a blockage or maintenance problem with the system.
- A **watercourse** is a river, stream or ditch. It may not always have water in it but will be an important channel for water to flow down during heavy rainfall. Helping to keep water flowing, for example by clearing drainage grilles or removing dumped waste, could make a big difference to whether the area gets flooded or not.

## RIPARIAN OWNERS

- If you own land adjoining, above or with a watercourse running through it, you have certain rights and responsibilities. In legal terms you are a 'riparian owner'. (If you rent the land, you should agree with the owner who will manage these rights and responsibilities.)
- If a watercourse runs alongside your garden wall or hedge you should check your property deeds to see if the wall or hedge marks your boundary.

- If your land boundary is next to a watercourse it is assumed you own the land up to the centre of the watercourse, unless it is owned by someone else.
- If you own land with a watercourse running through or underneath it, it is assumed you own the stretch of watercourse that runs through your land.
- Riparian owners have a responsibility to manage their own flood risk.
- You have the right to protect your property from flooding, and your land from erosion. However, you must get your plans agreed with Suffolk County Council first.

### **How you can play your part**

- Everyone has an important part to play, particularly the following:
- Land and home owners whose land adjoins a watercourse (known as 'riparian owners') need to make sure that the flow of water is not obstructed in any way. They can also help to maintain existing flood defences.
- You should keep the banks clear of anything that could cause an obstruction and increase flood risk, either on your land or downstream if it is washed away.
- You are responsible for maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse and the trees and shrubs growing on the banks.
- You should also clear any litter and animal carcasses from the channel and banks, even if they did not come from your land.
- You must keep any structures, such as culverts, trash screens, weirs and mill gates, clear of debris.
- You should not cause obstructions, temporary or permanent, that would stop fish passing through.
- Riparian owners who want to make any changes to streams and ditches – for example, putting in culverts or other structures, will need to talk to Suffolk County Council first. Please contact 01473 260929 if you would like to discuss this further or need practical help and advice.
- To download a copy of the Environment Agency's guidance "Living on the Edge" visit: [www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31626.aspx](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31626.aspx)