



### **Flooding update : 19<sup>th</sup> Sept 2023**

The council is still in response mode following Sunday's extreme rainfall and flooding affecting West Somerset and Wellington.

We're continuing to build up a picture of the impact on affected communities and have had officers on the ground in the area.

As a crucial part of this need the team needs the assistance of all elected members and parish councillors in the affected areas.

Members and parish councillors are doing important work on the ground supporting residents as the 'eyes and ears' of the Council in the affected communities.

It's vital that trusted local intelligence is captured and there may well be people needing support or advice who haven't yet made contact.

Many thanks to Minehead and Wellington Town Councils who have shared useful information and intelligence already.

Any information you can provide will be extremely helpful – details about reporting this are below.

With anticipated further heavy rain tomorrow (Wednesday 20 September) and the potential for further flooding this week it's vital we keep clear channels of communication open.

### **Key points as of 19 September**

- Somerset Council officers have been on the ground in Minehead gathering information and providing advice. Five families in social/sheltered housing in Wellington were rehomed.
- Contact made with two affected residents in Withycombe – road very badly damaged in village, Highways in process of clearing debris and assessing.
- Some 46 calls were received by our Customer Contact Centre via a dedicated line, plus one call overnight.

- Highways reports that A39 and A396 clear-up is complete – attention now focused on smaller roads.
- There are no impacts reported from our waste services or from our partners in public health at this point.
- We've been engaging with our parishes, LCNs and our members regarding flood precautions and helplines.
- A press release was issued on Monday, and we are sharing information on our social media channels. Our website has a prominent banner directing residents to key messages. The comms team have dealt with numerous media enquiries and interview requests.
- EA monitoring situation across moors and reservoirs, assisting in gathering intelligence regarding impacted communities. EA colleagues have started sharing information through the Council's Incident Centre.
- To reiterate – although we cannot say this event was caused by climate change, the science tells us that events like these are likely happen more frequently and this is the third time we've had this sort of event this year. The Council has an important role to play in helping communities become more resilient as well as helping tackle the causes of climate change.

#### **Further rain/Wednesday forecast:**

Further heavy rain currently forecast for tomorrow from about 1pm-2pm in west and north of county, moving across the rest of the county throughout afternoon.

East, South and Taunton and Wellington area as well as West Somerset are vulnerable but no weather warning in place as yet for Somerset.

This needs to be tempered with the reality that forecasts can vary significantly, and this could easily change. EA and our own team continuing to monitor.

Messaging going out on social media channels reminding residents to protect homes and businesses if they are worried about flooding – autumn and winter are on the way so likelihood of further heavy rain and potential flood events.

## How to report

We are encouraging people to get in touch if they've been affected - anyone who has experienced property flooding can report it online at:

<https://swim.geowessex.com/somerset/>

We would be grateful if parishes could encourage people to do this. You can also email [flooding@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:flooding@somerset.gov.uk)

If you are aware of anyone who needs support, please advise them to call 0300 123 2224 and choose option 1 during office hours.

## Flooding and roads – key information

Heavy rain and flooding present a clear and present danger to drivers – road users are urged **NOT** to attempt to drive across flooded roads as it is not possible to estimate the depth of the water reliably.

Our Highways and Street Scene teams are out today in all affected areas assisting with the clear-up operation and assessing damage to roads.

All roads are now open but please be aware our teams will need to sweep and carry out minor repairs asap.

It's vital to prepare for wet conditions if you have to travel and to proceed with extreme caution if you get caught in flood conditions – you can find information and advice here: [Adverse weather conditions \(somersetroadsafety.org\)](http://Adverse weather conditions (somersetroadsafety.org))

If you spot a problem with a drain or gully, or any issue on the highway you can report it easily and quickly here - [Report a problem on the road \(somerset.gov.uk\)](http://Report a problem on the road (somerset.gov.uk)).

## Looking after yourself and mental health

Floodwater can contain hidden dangers such as uncovered manholes or obstacles – so never enter floodwater.

We know that heavy rainfall may trigger feelings of anxiety, fear or worry, particularly for those who have been previously affected by flooding.

Here are some things you can do to help reduce any feelings of anxiety caused by heavy rainfall and the activation of local flood defences:

- ✓ Talk to somebody about how you are feeling, if you don't feel able to talk to friends or family you can call Mindline - Somerset's emotional support and mental health helpline which is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week: 01823 276 892 (local) 0800 138 1692 (freephone).
- ✓ Try and do activities that help you to feel less stressed like exercising, reading, listening to music, or meditating.

- ✓ Help neighbours and others in your community, look out for each other.
- ✓ Follow your normal routine as much as possible.
- ✓ Visit the [Every Mind Matters](#) website where you can find lots of tips and exercises to help manage anxiety.
- ✓ Stay up-to-date on weather information and warnings. If you're aware of the latest information, you may gain a sense of control over the situation.

[Check for flooding - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

### **What to do during a flood**

There is information to help you on what to do during a flood on the [Somerset Prepared website](#). The key point is to always stay safe, in an immediate flood emergency or where there is a risk to life, follow the advice of the emergency services.

### **What to do after a flood**

Following a flood there will be hazards revealed as the water clears, consider the following as you recover from the impacts of an incident.

- Assume floodwater has been contaminated with sewage and avoid contact wherever possible. For further health advice when dealing with flood affected areas visit [Public Health England](#)
- It's important to stop harmful germs that might be present in floodwater from spreading to food. For advice on cleaning preparation areas after a flood visit the [Food Standards Agency](#)
- Flooding presents a number of hazards to utilities in the home. Follow [electric](#) safety advice before switching back on.
- Contact your insurer if you haven't already and let them know the situation. They will advise you of the next steps to take in restoring your home and belongings.
- Reporting when your property has flooded helps the Council investigate why the flood has occurred and look for possible methods to mitigate the risk of it happening again in the future.
- Use the [SWIM](#) website to update your flood record/record recent flooding.

## **What can I do to prepare for flooding?**

Thinking ahead and preparing for what the weather may bring can make a real difference in your home, business and community.

One of the first things to check is whether your property is at [risk of flooding](#).

We also recommend taking precautionary measures and purchasing your own sandbags in case of flooding emergencies. If sandbags are not available, you can use:

- rolled-up mats or carpets
- bags of garden compost
- pillowcases filled with soil (don't overfill them)
- timber boards (possibly screwed to door frames and sealed with mastic)

## **Protect yourself from future flooding**

It is advisable to plan how you'll respond to a flood. Information and plans are available to help you [plan ahead](#).

We also encourage you to download the ['Prepare. Act. Survive.' flood plan](#) to help reduce the impact of flooding.

You can find up to date information on flood warnings by visiting the [flood warnings](#) page on the Government's website.

ENDS