Flooding & other General Advice

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This Document

Tim Adams, (Parish Clerk 1997-2015), has written this document as an information resource to assist householders and landowners and is based on information that is believed to be accurate and useful. It is based on discussions with SCC, SSDC, Highways Agency and the Environment Agency together with information from the internet and local anecdotes. However no responsibility can be taken for any inaccuracies or consequential losses and it should not be considered formal advice. Please contact the author if you have anything to add or correct. It offers information and general advice on flooding and related matters including inter alia sewerage, riparian rights, contacts etc. **Minor updates only since 2014 - some links will not work.**

Background

Blackford is a village of approximately 38 houses and Compton Pauncefoot is similar size.
The stream through Blackford and Compton Pauncefoot (B&CP) is a tributary of the River Cam and benefitted from works in 1982 to the riverbanks in Blackford to help keep the water moving. Blackford is at the very start of the Environment Agency designated 'main river' (see below under 'Planning'). Flooding is therefore less frequent than previously in Blackford as a result. From CP the stream then travels under the A303 to join the Yarlington headwaters.The River Cam flows on to the Royal Naval Station where it joins the River Yeo and the Yeo in turn flows west to the south of Yeovilton and through the town of Ilchester. The river course continues to the west and at Langport becomes the River Parrett – running to the Bristol Channel. It is within the Somerset Water Management Partnership Catchment Representative (CaR) Area of Upper Parrett, Yeo & Isle Parishes. The stream has its headwaters in the hills around B&CP together with a number of springs. The main waters come from 3 primary sources: 1. Maperton, 2. Quarry Hill, 3. Sigwells Hill. The first 2 combine in Blackford around the Crossroads/Hollow and further springs contribute at a number of points all the way through both villages. The A303 is nearby and during construction drainage pipes were laid that bring some road runoff water into the stream. Rainfall from the other side of Maperton Ridge runs into the River Cale and ends up in the English Channel.
B&CP are fortunate that they are relatively high in the watercourse with a catchment area of local hills and consequently only local rainfall and runoff comes through the villages. Most houses are built well above the normal level of the stream and also above the stream banks and are therefore not considered to be at risk. However both villages have some houses at risk as well as Blackford church. A few houses are also at risk from runoff flowing through the houses even though they are not at risk from low level flooding from the stream.
Further downstream the build-up of rain from runoff, converging streams, drains etc causes much greater problems - typically affecting the Somerset Levels.
http://www.parrettcatchment.info/

Blackford Flood Alleviation Scheme 1981/2

The scheme was planned in 1981 and completed in 1982 following a parish request in 1975. The scheme was approved in June 1981 by Yeovil District Council (Health Committee) and subsequently received approval by Wessex Water Authority and planning permission was granted. Homeowners were in favour of the general improvements to alleviate flooding (bridges, culverts etc) but objected to the use of revetment blocks. The works were carried out under Notices to homeowners under Section 27 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1971. Formal Notice to enter properties was under Sections 39 & 103 of the Land Drainage Act 1976. The notes to the scheme included the following:

- The scheme included reconstruction of Blackford Bridge and an accommodation Bridge in Manor Farm, improve the watercourse between the Sigwells Bridge and Blackford Bridge together with other incidental work.
- Revetment Blocks to prevent erosion and to reduce the cross sectional area of the stream to carry the design flood (one in ten year storm)
- The total catchment area draining to Blackford Bridge is approximately 1550 acres.
- Blackford Bridge is approx 2.0m (W) x 1.25m (H) made up of 9 x 1.75m long concrete sections. Cross section approx 2.5m²
- Sigwells Bridge at Shepherds Cross is an old, stone, arched bridge and is estimated to be 1.5m (W) x 1.0m (H). Cross section approx 1.5m²
- Both bridges provide pinch points creating potential backup.
- The stream typical cross section within the revetment is approx 2.7m²
- This gives some idea of the water, together with the significant additional runoff (from hills, fields, roads, houses between the 2 villages) etc that needs to travel under the A303 at CP.

Flooding in 1979

The author currently has limited information but understands that there was severe flooding in May 1979 – in particular Chapel Lane Cottage & the church. There had previously been a series of other floods. The Department of Transport, responsible for building the new A303, accepted that the impact from the discharges of runoff from that road to the A303 was a major factor. The DoT paid the church full compensation of £6500. Notes from 1981 indicate that the area of impervious roads that were responsible were an increase from 4.5 acres on the old A303 to 27 acres with the new road.

Flooding in 2000, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2023

Overnight - between Friday 12th December and **Saturday 13th December 2008** - there was very heavy rainfall causing flash flooding in parts of Dorset, Somerset and Devon.
There was some flooding in CP (roads and at least one property by the stream) and in Blackford roads as well as one house and the church were flooded to a depth of an inch or two. Other properties in both villages had problems with runoff from fields and hills. Other properties were threatened and should be considered 'at risk' – particularly in CP. Other local flooding included South Cadbury (property) as well as major flooding in places such as Wincanton, Queen Camel (including the school) and South Petherton.

On this occasion the stream reached the top of the banks around 7am and kept rising rapidly. By (around) 8am it had peaked and by 11am was back within the banks for most of the village area.
The previous significant **flood of 2000** did not rise so far. It is believed there has not been other flooding between 2000 and 2008 even though residents recall some flooding over the previous years from time to time – especially prior to the 1982 works in the case of Blackford. Whether this flooding is due to climate change or other reasons we may not know - nor whether its a 'once in a lifetime' to have had flooding quite as high as it was in 2008. The 2023 flood indicates such events are becoming more regular. Certainly the affect in other villages and towns nearby was far worse - so we should probably consider ourselves lucky. However it is also a timely reminder that further preventative measures may be appropriate.

The rainfall was measured by a resident at 1.63" (approx 41mm). I believe that a cold front crossed our area around 4am delivering an inch of rain in little more than hour on top of the half inch or so that fell earlier in the night.
In both villages the problems were compounded due to the flash storm causing significant flows of water as runoff from the surrounding fields and down the roads including:

1. Blackford Hollow and Charlton Horethorne roads in Blackford
2. Old Road and New Road in CP

Some pictures may be seen at: http://www.communigate.co.uk/twc/blackford (link broken 2023)

Over the course of the day on **9th February 2009** the stream again rose slowly and steadily - peaking at around 11pm. On this occasion Blackford was not flooded but CP had some flooding of roads as the stream broke its banks. This flooding was caused by a combination of sodden ground, melting snow and steady rain for several hours.

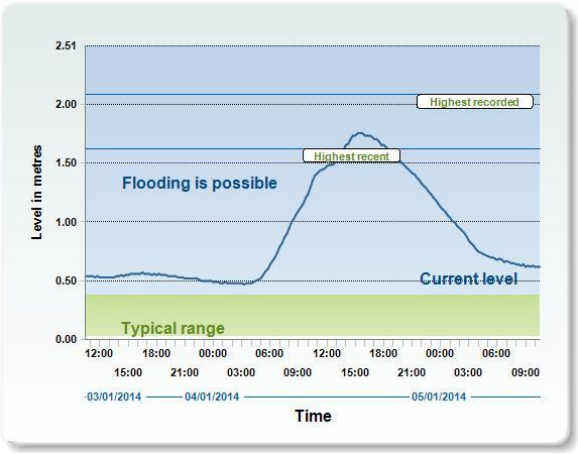
The stream through Blackford and Compton Pauncefoot rose rapidly on the morning of Saturday **4th January 2014.** Over recent weeks there had been numerous weather fronts bringing above average rainfall which had left the ground sodden and unable to absorb rainfall. By mid morning the stream had broken its banks in both villages but did not rise as high as it did in 2008. It is believed that no houses flooded but at least one car 'drowned' when driven into the flooded waters in CP. Runoff from fields added to the problems. Villagers helped to keep tops of drains and gullies clear. As the rain slowed the stream quickly returned to its normal confines.

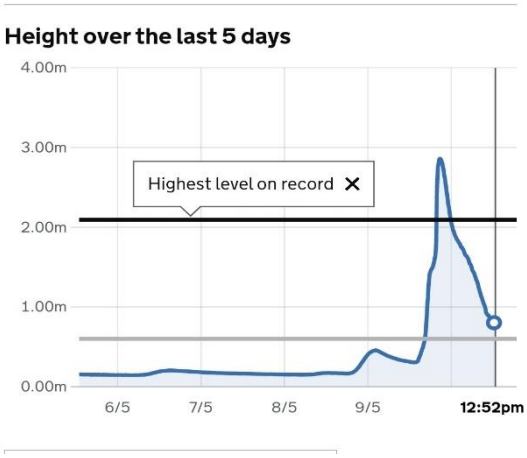
On **24th March 2023** a series of exceptionally heavy and prolonged showers from mid-morning until mid afternoon caused the stream to rise and break its banks causing flooding of fields & gardens as well as minor flooding of the crossroads in Blackford. The road in Compton Pauncefoot in vicinity of Downyard flooded and one car was unfortunately "drowned" when driven into it. The fire brigade was called to one property & pumped water away. The EA attended and offered advice to other householders. Yeovilton weather gauge only recorded around 17mm rainfall but was measured at 38mm by a resident with much higher localised rainfall. By early evening the stream was already back within normal confines and by morning had fallen significantly.

On **9th May 2023** a series of exceptionally heavy and prolonged thunderstorms from late-morning until late afternoon caused the stream to rise and break its banks causing flooding of fields & gardens as well as minor flooding of the crossroads in Blackford. The road in Compton Pauncefoot in vicinity of Downyard flooded. The fire brigade was called to at least one property. I believe a handful of properties had minor flooding. The EA attended and offered advice & sandbags to other householders. Yeovilton weather gauge only recorded around 36mm rainfall over 24 hours but was measured at 63mm over 7 hours by a resident - with much higher localised rainfall. By early evening the stream was already back within normal confines and by morning had fallen significantly. There were small landslips of mud and small trees in the hollow. Flooding of North Cadbury & Queen Camel was significant and made the national news. MetOffice estimated the rainfall over North Cadbury area may have been over 100mm and perhaps over 120mm. Under the **Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Section 19** SCC is investigating the background, reasons, lessons and future planning etc. The Act requires LLFAs to investigate flood incidents where necessary, based on each LLFA's published flood investigation criteria set out within their Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in order to establish responsible parties as well as their actions as a result of the flooding event

Rainfall: Environment Agency Yeovilton weather gauge

The Environment Agency has a monitoring station that gives a clear idea of how the water levels in the River Cam at Weston Bampfylde rise and fall.
Record High Levels
0.60m is considered normal.
2.09m 13.12.08
2.85m 9.5.23
Environment Agency





Meetings to discuss options & advice

Meetings have been held with SSDC & Environment Agency and separately with the Highways Agency.

1. Parish representatives met SSDC/EA on 18th February 2009 to ensure all that is practical is being done to alleviate future problems. They will do what they can to keep gullies and grills clear to cope with normal circumstances. Clearly they could come & clear them today and it be a problem again tomorrow with new detritus and other material washed down so its not practical to have a lot of extra planned maintenance. Rather we should report issues as and when seen. They will try and monitor better as well.

There are no immediate thoughts of any significant works that can be done to alleviate matters. Both on grounds of finding suitable scheme, cost, avoiding impact on others downstream etc. e.g. runoff from old A303 coming down the Hollow - if diverted - is liable to create issues on grounds of cost as well as needing to avoid impact on others downstream such as at CP or the Mill House etc.

They will clear the stream a bit further - to go as far as the bridge at Manor Farm but are unlikely to increase the regularity.

Interesting to note that the Hollow Bottom/Chapel Lane corner does not appear on their maps as 'at risk' so they were asked to correct that.

South Somerset Highways will review the hollow to see what can be done to prevent landslips and maintain gullies etc. Probably needs some tree work as well.

The EA and SSDC will try and talk to local farmers about the timing and way they plough - to see if they can reduce runoff from their fields.

They looked at culverts under the roads etc all the way to A303 at CP. The culverts seem to be generally sufficient even though they may cause some backup (due to capacity constraints) – but it is not enough to justify change and also needs to avoid impact on others downstream.

Summary of main points with SSDC/EA:

1. Flooding in Blackford is compounded by flows of runoff down Blackford Hollow and Charlton Horethorne roads. South Somerset Highways (SSH) will endeavour to keep drains clear and working to full capacity. The village should report problems when seen.
2. Similar problems in Compton Pauncefoot down Old and New Roads will be followed up by SSH. The village should report problems when seen.
3. The EA will arrange for local farmers to be contacted and encouraged to follow best practice (ploughing schedules, ploughing methods, crops etc) in order to minimise runoff.
4. The EA will update their 'at risk' map to take into account the Blackford Hollow/Chapel Lane corner by the stream. Subsequently the EA advised that even though it is an error they cannot correct it without major surveying etc – which is unlikely to be done.
5. The EA will try and find the resources for more detailed mapping of levels in the centre of both villages so that flows and potential flooding can be better understood.
6. The culvert at Shepherd's Knap is smaller and may contribute to backup due to its level being only slightly less than Blackford centre - but is not currently considered to justify change.
7. The culverts in CP (in particular: entrance to Downyard and under old A303) are pinch points but do not currently justify change. Both may contribute to backup and flooding in the Downyard entrance in exceptional times.

8. Downyard could consider with the local landowner and farmer a scheme to divert flood waters around to the North of the development. Would require EA & SSDC permission. However this may not help due to the pinch point at the old A303 and may simply cause unwelcome additional flooding in the area of Home Farm which in turn would potentially backup to Downyard again. Careful modelling would be needed.
9. Homeowners should consider individual flood defences e.g. flood boards and airbrick covers.
10. Homeowners may consider applying for grants via the DEFRA "Property-level flood protection and resilience" and can contact Geoff Mackett at SCC for further advice & co-ordination.
11. Any works to alleviate flooding must take into account the potential to cause additional flooding further downstream.
12. The regular cycle of work in Blackford will be extended west to the bridge at Manor Farm (end of stone revetments) and the EA will review the current cycle of work. However the current contract has recently been given to SSDC for 4 years.
13. The A303 drainage may need further investigation to review if anything can be done to alleviate flooding as a result of this source of additional water.

2. Parish representatives met the Highway Agency drainage experts on 13th March 2009 to review the impact of runoff from the A303.

Summary of main points with HA:

1. They do not currently know where their drains run.
2. We showed them the known drainage that Peter King knew was installed with A303 building in the 1960's(?). One on Maperton road and one near Woolston (this one does not impact our flooding).
3. It is possible the Maperton drain mentioned in 2 above also takes water from the old A303. This would of course increase quantities but adds to complications over responsibilities (e.g. SCC etc).
4. HA will prioritise discovery of A303 drainage and do any necessary maintenance. They already have a 10 year plan to do this but will move B&CP up the priorities and aim to complete it this year
5. It is very unlikely they will make any changes apart from maintenance unless as part of a scheme that would need to be driven by the Environment Agency. Judging from our previous meeting with EA this will be unlikely.
6. It was noted that some of the stream/ditches are in a poor state of maintenance (fallen trees, blockages etc) – this is landowner responsibility. However we may need to consider that if the stream flows better it may simply bring the water faster into the 2 villages – causing more problems as it then backs up at other pinch points such as culverts under the roads. If it is felt that action should be taken then someone will need to contact the EA and/or landowners.

Subsequently it was confirmed a drainage asset survey of the A303 between South Cadbury and Wincanton was programmed in 2008/09 but deferred due to lack of funds. As a result of our enquiry they will move this survey up the programme with a view to getting it done in 2009/10, although they cannot guarantee this will happen.

Meeting in North Cadbury under Section 19 FWM Act

Under Flood and Water Management Act 2010 Section 19, SCC is investigating the background, reasons, lessons and future planning etc. Meeting held 12.6.23 with SCC including Civil Contingencies, Planning, Waste Management, Highways, Flood Risk Management as well as Environment Agency, Somerset Rivers Authority. Author attended to make sure B&CP is part of the investigation.

Previous S19 reports
https://www.somerset.gov.uk/beaches-ports-and-flooding/flood-investigations/

What can be done?

From the foregoing and in opinion of author there should be *ongoing* engagement with the multiple stakeholders including:
SCC: Local Community Networks (LCNs), Highways, Climate, Flooding & Environment etc
Environment Agency
Yeovil Rivers Community Trust (YRCT)
Parrett Catchment Project (PCP)
Somerset Water Management Partnership (SWMP)
Highways Agency: impact from A303 runoff etc
Insurance: Flood Re is a joint Government and insurance industry initiative to enable you to find affordable insurance for qualifying properties that are at risk of flooding or have been flooded.
Parish (including neighbouring parishes)
Wessex Water
Landowners: adding dry ponds, impact from ploughing and other practices

Adding dry ponds (aka detention/attenuation ponds) in scheme with Landowners and EA/SCC could help both locally and further downstream. With other wildlife and environmental benefits. See Appendix 5
SCC should reinstate more regular clearing of gullies – to annual.
Gully tops need frequent (but irregular) clearance. Perhaps Parishes should take formal responsibility in conjunction with residents? E.g. "adopt a gully" scheme?
Tree Planting Schemes could be considered to help water soak in the ground etc. With other wildlife and environmental benefits.

Residents: typically have a poor understanding of matters including
Planning inc Driveways, septic tanks/STP, changes to flood defences that might impact others etc
Riparian Rights
Sewage inc septic tanks, STP, drainage fields/soakaways/outlets to waterways
Minor schemes that could help (not requiring planning): e.g. humps to divert runoff from running into property, temporary flood barriers etc

SCC should take a lead role in educating residents, coordinating with all stakeholders, issuing general and specific advice etc

Detention/attenuation ponds
Based on total catchment area draining to Blackford Bridge is believed to be approximately 1550 acres= approx. 627 hectares. Entire parish will be much greater.

Extreme rainfall up to 25mm in one hour will not normally cause a problem locally (may still cause problems further downstream).

Unusual and excess rainfall greater than 25mm in one hour is liable to cause issues

Detention pond possible locations (Map at Appendix 5):
1. East Blackford: East Hall Cottages towards Maperton Dairy.
2. East Blackford: West Hall Farmhouse to East Hall Farm
3. Central Blackford: North of church, Blackford Hollow to West Hall Farmhouse
4. Central Blackford: South of Manor Farm. Tennis courts to Sigwells road
5. East Compton Pauncefoot: Sigwells Road to Mill House
6. East Compton Pauncefoot: north Compton Castle lakes
7. East Compton Pauncefoot: west of Mill House towards Downyard
8. North Compton Pauncefoot: prior to A303 culvert
9. West Compton Pauncefoot: south Higher Farm to Manor Cottage

Local Authorities

Somerset County Council (SCC)

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/beaches-ports-and-flooding/flooding-information-and-advice/
SCC have advice and information available on their website and I extracted the following from the old website: http://www.somerset.gov.uk/somerset/ete/highways/index.cfm "SCC are responsible are responsible for keeping roads and pavements free of flooding that might cause a hazard or an obstruction to highway users. They are not responsible for preventing flooding to private property; that is the owner's responsibility, unless the situation is the result of something they have unreasonably done or not done". Roads are managed on behalf of SCC through South Somerset Highways.

South Somerset District Council (became Unitary Authority with SCC from April 2023)

https://www.somerset.gov.uk/beaches-ports-and-flooding/flood-prevention-and-sandbags/?district=South+Somerset

SSDC had advice and information available on their website (no longer available but reprinted for historical information).
http://www.southsomerset.gov.uk/flooding and I have extracted the following from their old website: The District Council has a policy of providing help and advice to householders who are facing a flooding emergency.

Sandbags

The Council can provide a limited number of sandbags for properties that are in imminent danger of flooding. There is a general restriction of 6 sandbags per main doorway (not doorways to garages or outbuildings). If you request additional sandbags, you must pay for them and the cost is currently £2.50 per filled sandbag.

Emergency Flooding Report

If you want to report an imminent flooding emergency outside of normal working hours Call 01935 462462 and you will be automatically directed to the Council's emergency service.

Advice: Advice on dealing with specific flooding problems can be obtained from a member of the Council's Engineering Services team.

Environment Agency

https://www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/flooding-extreme-weather
There is a considerable amount of information about flooding and flood risk available from the Environment Agency's (EA) website. The EA have also produced some useful practical advice leaflets on a number of issues. These are listed on the Environment Agency website.
Call **Floodline** on 0345 988 1188
You can phone Floodline to find out if you can register for Floodline Warnings Direct, a free service that provides flood warnings direct to you by telephone, mobile, email, SMS text message, fax or pager. As well as signing up for warnings, you can get simple advice on what to do before, during and after a flood. I am not sure we are in their 'high risk' areas but it may be worth reviewing:
https://www.gov.uk/browse/environment-countryside/flooding-extreme-weather

You may be able to request that you are added to warnings for the River Cam (even though we are a tributary that may be worthwhile). The author was added to River Cam warnings after the flooding in 2008 and received a timely warning several hours in advance of the flooding in 2009. Clearly this cannot be relied on as the sole warning due to the flash nature of flooding on occasion.
https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk/station/3078
This shows our nearest river monitoring station (River Cam at Weston Bampfylde) that is on our stretch. As you can see it reached 2.09m 13.12.08 and 2.85m 9.5.23 – which were the dates that we had localised

flooding too so is a useful guide.
Rainfall monitoring Environment Agency Yeovilton weather gauge

Highways Agency

The HA is responsible for the A303 and associated drainage via their partner (InterRoute?). The A303 is nearby and during construction drainage pipes were laid that bring runoff water into the stream. One on Maperton road and one near Woolston (this one does not impact our flooding).
It is possible the Maperton drain mentioned above also takes water from the old A303. This contributes to the rapid rise in the stream during rainfall. See Flooding 1979 above.
customercare@area2.interroutejv.co.uk

Flood and Water Management Act

The Flood and Water Management Bill was enacted in April 2010.
Roles and responsibilities will change with upper tier authorities (County and Unitary Councils) having a lead role in respect of many aspects of flooding and surface water flooding in particular. **Section 19** requires LLFAs to investigate flood incidents where necessary, based on each LLFA's published flood investigation criteria set out within their Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in order to establish responsible parties as well as their actions as a result of the flooding event.

It also created greater responsibilities for land (riparian) owners and potential enforcement.

Planning

It is suggested you check with both SCC and the EA before making any changes as their requirements are not the same. Flood Maps at Appendix 6.

Blackford is at the very start of the Environment Agency designated 'main river' and by no stretch of the imagination can be called either a large stream or river or a larger arterial watercourse even by the time it gets to CP.
EA definitions:
Main Rivers are watercourses designated as such on **Main River** maps (held by the Environment Agency) and are generally the **larger arterial watercourses.**
Main rivers - these are usually larger streams and rivers

It is understood the stream was designated 'main river' at the time of the 1982 works in Blackford.

With regard to the general status of changes the Environment Agency can insist that development, changes, structures etc may need permission from the EA (even if planning permission is not required) e.g. if its 'a structure within 8m of a main river' or can create a risk of flooding (in their view). Their powers under the Water Resources Act 1991 allow them to take enforcement action where necessary on those carrying out unconsented works which are deemed to be increasing local flood risk etc. Planning Policy Statement 25 http://www.communities.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planning/planningpolicyguidance/planningpolicystatements/planningpolicystatements/pps25/ gives guidance as well and includes potential impact of Climate Change as well as other aspects. All adds up to the EA having lots of powers!

The EA and SSDC should be 'reasonable' and 'proportionate' in their requirements!

These may be worth a look more generally:
http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/br/flood_performance.pdf
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/31626.aspx
http://publications.environment-agency.gov.uk/pdf/GEHO0407BMFL-e-e.pdf

Riparian rights

The Environment Agency is responsible for the management of main rivers and is the supervising authority for our watercourse. The Local Authority (In this case South Somerset District Council) has "Permissive Powers" which are available to them through the "Land Drainage Act 1991". Some maintenance works are contracted out by the EA to SSDC.

Riparian rights and responsibilities.
As a riparian landowner you have certain rights and responsibilities in relation to the watercourse flowing through or adjacent to your property. These "riparian rights" are based on common law and have been defined as a result of legal cases over many years. These rights are not absolute, however, and you may, in any event, have to obtain consent from the Environment Agency, Local Authority, or other body for certain activities connected with the watercourse.

Blackford Flood Alleviation Scheme

See above for background to the scheme.
During 2011/2012 the clerk had discussions about responsibility for maintenance of the “assets” - with EA, SSDC & SCC (Highways). All parties stated that they had no responsibility for maintenance - which was the responsibility of riparian owners. The clerk informed all parties that he doubted that riparian owners would accept/agree to their position: in his view riparian owners are unlikely to agree or accept that they can be obliged to take on ‘ownership’ of repairs to the flood defences other than a reasonable riparian role (revetment blocks appear to go beyond that). It seems very odd to imagine that works to the revetments which were neither requested or wanted (by some landowners) and indeed the detail of the revetment works was objected to by the Parish as well as landowners can then be other than ‘owned’ by some or all - SSDC/Wessex Water/EA. No legal agreements were entered into by landowners.
The Clerk suggested that the likely outcome will be gradual decline creating a huge cost in many years time that could be avoided by a ‘stitch in time’ approach.

Your Rights
Ø You are presumed to own the land up to the centre of the watercourse, unless it is known to be owned by others or yourself in its entirety.
Ø You have the right to receive flow of water in its natural state, without undue interference in quantity or quality.
Ø You have the right to protect your property from flooding, and your land from erosion. You will in most cases need the prior consent of the Environment Agency for any work.
Ø Before starting any work on or adjacent to a watercourse, you must submit plans of what you propose to the Environment Agency and the Local Authority to determine whether you require an Environment Agency consent and/or planning permission. If the work affects sites of known conservation or archaeological value, you may need further permissions from the relevant English Authorities. Environmental issues, including flood risk, wildlife conservation must also be considered.

Your Responsibilities

Ø You have the responsibility to pass on flow without obstruction, pollution or diversion affecting the rights of others

Ø You have the responsibility to accept flood flows through your land, even if caused by inadequate capacity downstream, as there is no common law duty to improve a watercourse.

Ø *You are responsible for maintaining the bed and banks of the watercourse (including trees and shrubs growing on the banks), and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise, including litter and animal carcasses,* even if it did not originate from your land. South Somerset District Council can give you advice on the removal of animal carcasses.

Ø You must not cause any obstruction to the free passage of fish.

Ø *You are responsible for keeping the bed and banks clear of any matter that could cause an obstruction, either on your land or by being washed away* by high flow to obstruct a structure downstream. Please help us to protect water quality - do not use riverbanks for the disposal of any form of garden or other waste where there is any danger that it will be washed into the river. This includes grass clippings, which are highly polluting.

Ø *You are responsible for keeping clear any structures that you own* such as culverts, trash screens, weirs and mill gates.

Ø You are responsible for protecting your property from water that seeps through natural or man-made banks. Where such seepage threatens the structural integrity of a flood defence, we may wish to see that it is repaired.

Ø You must control any invasive alien species such as japanese knotweed. If you suspect such a species is present, please get in touch. We can advise you on how to manage and control these species.

Ø Failure to carry out your responsibilities could result in possible civil action from others.

General Information and Advice

Many theories are being put forward as to why we are experiencing flooding. We are told many times by the media as well as members of the public that it is to do with "Global Warming" and “Climate Change”, well that may be partially to blame however there are likely many more reasons that also contribute.
One reason is the disappearance and maintenance of watercourses (ditches). Whilst you may feel that the ditch running beside your property is of no consequence, ugly or no longer required you couldn't be more wrong. All ditches are important and they all serve a purpose. Not all ditches are "wet" ditches, they may only become wet when they are required to drain the surrounding area, be it your garden, a field, or the highway.
A ditch can be a thing of beauty and with the modern trend of water gardens can be used to enhance your garden. Watercourses are an attraction for wildlife and will attract it in from many miles. Unfortunately people always associate ditches with rats, and this may be true with unkempt dirty ditches.
SSDC is often willing to offer you advice about improving a watercourse. We must however remind you that to carry out any works within a watercourse would normally require Environment Agency consent in writing. Not obtaining this consent may be unlawful.

Farming

The timing and way land is ploughed can inevitably have an impact on runoff – not just of water but soil as well through erosion. Soil erosion is bad for the field, dangerous on roads and silts up drains and watercourses. Best practice should always be followed.
Hedge trimmings and mud on road should be removed on a timely basis, again following best practice, to help keep drain tops and gullies clear - as well as for safety of road users and to avoid damage to tyres etc.

Driveways

As far as possible driveways are encouraged to be made from gravel and other products that allow water to be absorbed by the ground rather than runoff. Splay fronts of driveways where they meet the road should be tarmac (or similar) in order to prevent gravel ‘creeping’ onto the roads. Buildings and patios all impact runoff as well.

From 1 October 2008 new rules have applied for householders wanting to pave over their front gardens. You will NOT need planning permission if a new driveway uses permeable (or porous) surfacing which allows

water to drain through, such as gravel, permeable concrete block paving or porous asphalt, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally. If the surface to be covered is more than five square metres planning permission will be needed for laying traditional, impermeable driveways that do not control rainwater running off onto roads.

Flooding from private sewers and drains

Private sewers and drains are the responsibility of the property owner. If there were a blockage or defect on such a sewer or drain, all property owners (who share the sewer/drain) upstream of the blockage would normally be expected to share in the cost of its removal. If shared owners cannot agree, the SSDC Environmental Protection Team can serve a legal notice on all of the houses involved requiring them to clear it. If it remains blocked after 48hours, they can clear it themselves and will charge each of the houses an equal amount, including administrative costs, for the costs incurred.

Run-off from higher land

Individual landowners are responsible for the drainage of their own land. This means accepting and dealing with natural flows from adjacent higher land. It is not an offence to let water run off onto nearby land unless the flow has been artificially concentrated in a particular place. If you have problems you may need private legal advice.

Cellars

Water in cellars (where not from sewers, drains, water mains or blocked watercourses)
Property owners are responsible for dealing with groundwater water ingress into cellars. Note that specialist advice should be sought before preventing water ingress by sealing walls externally or internally. A resulting external pressure build-up could cause structural damage. SSDC environmental health officers may be able to help investigate the source of the water, provided that Wessex Water has already investigated and ruled out the possibility of leakage from sewers and water mains.

Waterlogged gardens (not due to the above sources)

Property owners are responsible for dealing with waterlogging problems.

Sewerage

All houses in the villages are connected to private septic tanks or private package treatment plants. It is the householder responsibility to maintain them as appropriate and seek advice as necessary.
Package treatment plants need to maintained to manufacturer's specifications – this is vital to ensure that the discharge meets Environment Agency regulations, environmental laws and to prevent damage to the treatment plant.
Most septic tanks will probably require emptying once every 1 to 3 years (annual emptying is often advised unnecessarily) depending on usage and should be inspected for build-up of solids that will cause the soakaway to fail and the septic tank to be unable to work as intended. *The sludge in the septic tank should never build-up more than halfway at most.* Soakaways should be monitored to ensure that partly treated effluent does not come to the surface or reach our watercourses – causing smells and potential for disease.

All owners of septic tanks should know their location and check the tank and soakaway regularly.

We all have responsibilities as good neighbours as well as to the environment! e.g. The use of the stream by children to have fun should continue to be encouraged and be safe from such pollution but of course *all* risks should be properly assessed as well before permitting by the responsible adults etc. Clearly the Parish does not take responsibility for such assessments.

Many old tanks may appear to be satisfactory but if the tank is too small then the discharge will not be treated sufficiently and in some cases soakaways may need renewing to cope with the much larger volumes of discharge by modern households and due to the inevitable sludging up in any case.

Use of chemicals or disposal of cooking fats etc should be minimised to ensure the biological function is maintained.

Surface water from gutters etc should not be directed to septic tanks/treatment plants – as it will cause overload. Such water should be directed to a separate soakaway - or to the watercourse only with permission obtained from the Environment Agency.

Drains, septic tanks and treatment plants should be monitored to ensure that flooding cannot cause untreated or partially treated sewerage to escape - professional advice should be sought as necessary.

New regulations came into force from 2015 and there are things you must do if your property has an existing discharge where you release sewage to the ground or to surface water. Further changes came into force in 2020 and can impact sale of houses as solicitors will check for compliance.

https://www.gov.uk/permits-you-need-for-septic-tanks

Soakaways

Many older septic tanks have problems to some greater or lesser extent… most were installed many, many years ago when the usage without dishwashers, washing machines, showers (or even regular baths!) mean that the amount of throughput was completely different. The soakaways were often made with old broken stones etc with little protection to stop silting up from soil ingress or silt from the septic tank. Rainwater or runoff should never be diverted into a septic tank as it creates too much liquid for the tank or soakaway to cope with. It will often be easier and better to renew a soakaway rather than mess about with improvements. But further inspection will of course help decide the best way. Septic tank soakaways must never discharge into a ditch or stream (discharge from a treatment plant can - under EA permissions).

We all have responsibility for our own health & wellbeing as well as for the environment, neighbourly relations etc to check that our septic tanks and treatment plants are working correctly - including soakaways.

Septic tanks should be emptied on average every 1 to 3 years - some may require annual emptying. Check for sludge levels with a cane and have it emptied as soon as 1/3 to 1/2 sludge between base of tank and outlet pipe - anyway long before sludge reaches the outlet pipe to the soakaway. If the sludge enters the outlet pipe it can quickly silt up the soakaway which may then need total replacement. A good 'crust' on top is a sign that the septic tank is working fine and should not be confused with sludge. Treatment plants should be de-sludged and maintained as appropriate - normally on an annual basis.

Use a minimum of chemicals and avoid cooking fat in your drains etc - in order to keep the enzymes working well and avoids sludging up.

Problems with soakaways may not always be obvious but may include bad smells, leaching to the surface or into the stream etc.

A replacement soakaway will normally involve the following:

1. Follow Environment Agency guidelines on necessary shape, length, depth etc. This requires percolation tests (to check how the ground soaks away). They could be done yourself as there is easy guidance on the internet.
2. Preferably herringbone rather than simple rectangle shape. But that may depend on available area.

3. Include perforated pipe
4. Surrounded/covered by ‘clean’ stone. Normally 50mm size
5. The clean stone should be covered by suitable material or polythene to prevent soil ingress
6. The pipe leading from the septic tank should have an inspection chamber/small manhole so you can check for silting etc.
7. Care needs to be taken because of proximity to the stream for most of our parish – also there may be springs or other soakaway outlets that could be leached into even if further away.

The best person to assist may depend on access etc. e.g. Can you get a full digger in? Or will it need to be a mini digger?

Check the Building Regulations and Environment Agency for detailed advice. Google for further information!
Section H2 of the Building Regs and BS6297 2007 +A1 2008 are the areas that cover this I believe. My understanding is that deep borehole, rainwater soakaway crates & tunnels etc are not allowed for foul water drainfields

Road Gullies/Drains

SCC/South Somerset Highways had a program to clear road gullies at least once a year – some are now on longer cycles. The tops of the drains can become blocked with leaves or other detritus and it is recommended that we all endeavour to help keep them clear or report problems as soon as possible. SCC will usually try and make special clearances as quickly as they can but will not increase regular planned maintenance.

The culverts under roads are some of the most important points where any blockage can cause rapid build-up of water and flooding. Any blockage should be removed (if safe to do so) or reported to South Somerset Highways. https://www.somerset.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/drains-and-gullies/

Verge and Boundary Maintenance

Verges are managed as part of planned maintenance programmes by SCC & Somerset Highways. The frequency of verge/hedge cut backs are dependant upon the type of road and upon seasonal growth. The maintenance of most boundaries between private property and the highway is the responsibility of the adjacent land owner.

Ditches

See also Riparian Rights above. The responsibility for maintaining ditches and piped watercourses is not always straightforward:

Open ditches
Ditches are the responsibility of landowners. Roadside ditches belong to the adjoining landowner and not the highway authority, except where land has been acquired for new road building.
The highway authority, which is Somerset County Council in this area, has rights to divert highway water to a roadside ditch and may maintain it, but is under no obligation to do so.
Landowners may drain water on their land to any ditch on the property.

Piped in ditches and culverts
Piped in ditches and culverts are usually the responsibility of the landowner. Where pipes have been installed in a watercourse or ditch near the road, it still is the responsibility of adjoining landowners, unless the highway authority installed the pipework to improve the highway.
In that situation, the highway authority would need the consent of the landowner(s) and evidence of this consent would make the highway authority liable.

If landowners wish to pipe in a ditch they will require the consent of the Environment Agency. For details call 08708 506 506 or visit www.environment-agency.gov.uk
So if there is an open or piped in ditch, culvert or watercourse on your land, it is your responsibility to maintain it, or you could be liable for any damage caused by flooding if you fail to do so.

Flood Prevention

See Appendix 3. Individual householders should review their options to reduce risk to property and may include:
Sandbags: See above under SSDC
Air Brick Covers: One point of entry for flood water is airbricks.
Door Barriers: Many different commercial solutions are offered that can be very effective.
Toilet plugs: To prevent flooding coming up via drains.
Humps: or similar - to prevent runoff entering houses

Grants

It is possible that grants are available for individual properties in some cases. There may be benefit in grouping together as a B&CP scheme if there are a number of properties at risk. If so this will need further research and somebody to lead the effort. (2023 – not updated)

DEFRA scheme:
http://www.defra.gov.uk/environ/fcd/adaptationandresilience/propertyresilience.htm
(note just £5m available for the whole country)

SCC contact: geoff.mackett@somerset.gov.uk Civil Contingencies Officer
SSDC contact: Pam Harvey

Alerts etc

Sea & River levels online:
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/riverlevels/default.aspx
The nearest monitoring on our river is at Weston Bampfylde:
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/riverlevels/120716.aspx?stationId=3078

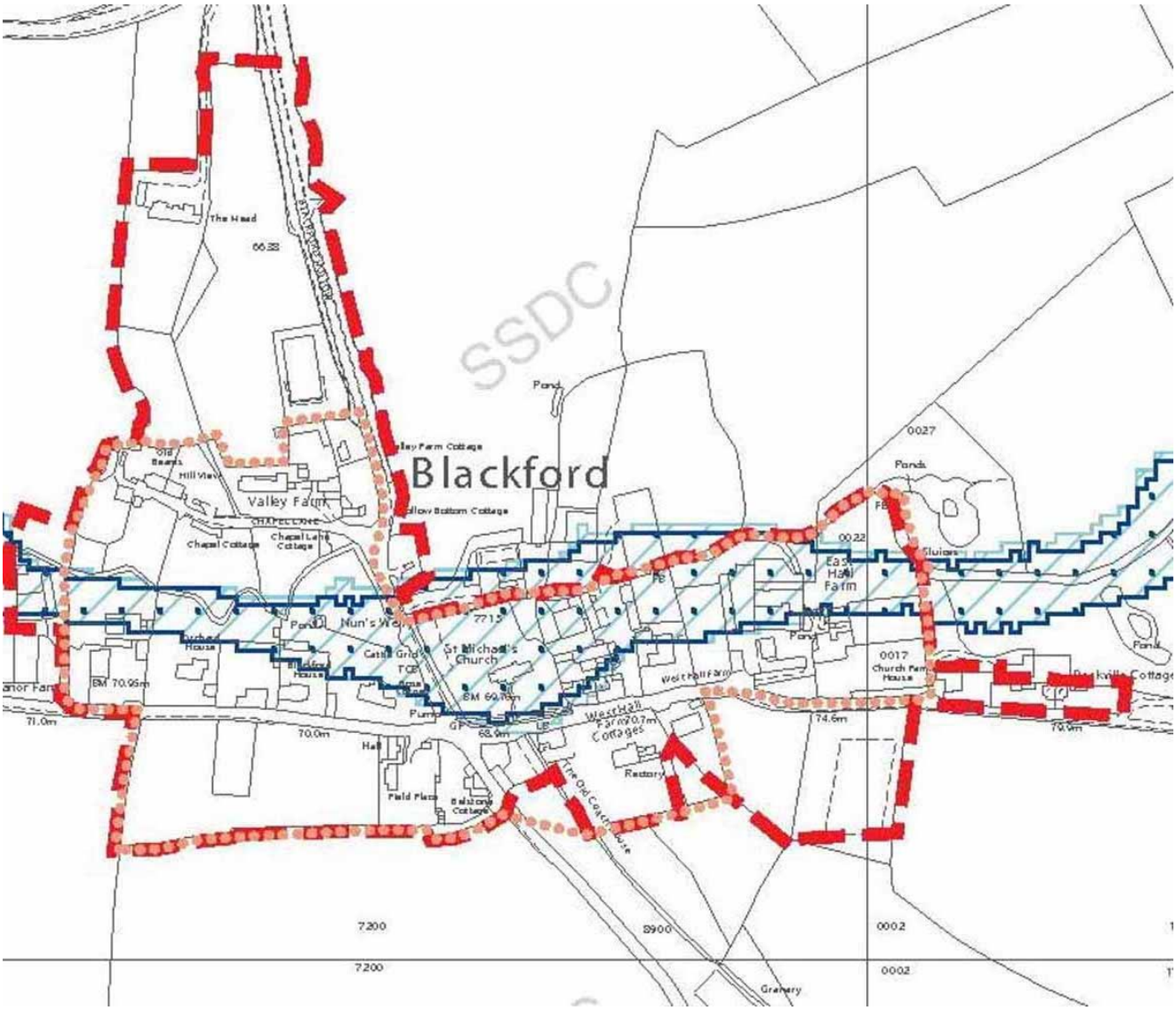
Red Cross are offering Community training in conjunction with Tesco:
Contact Patricia Edwards?

MetOffice has an email warnings system:
https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=UKMETOFFICE

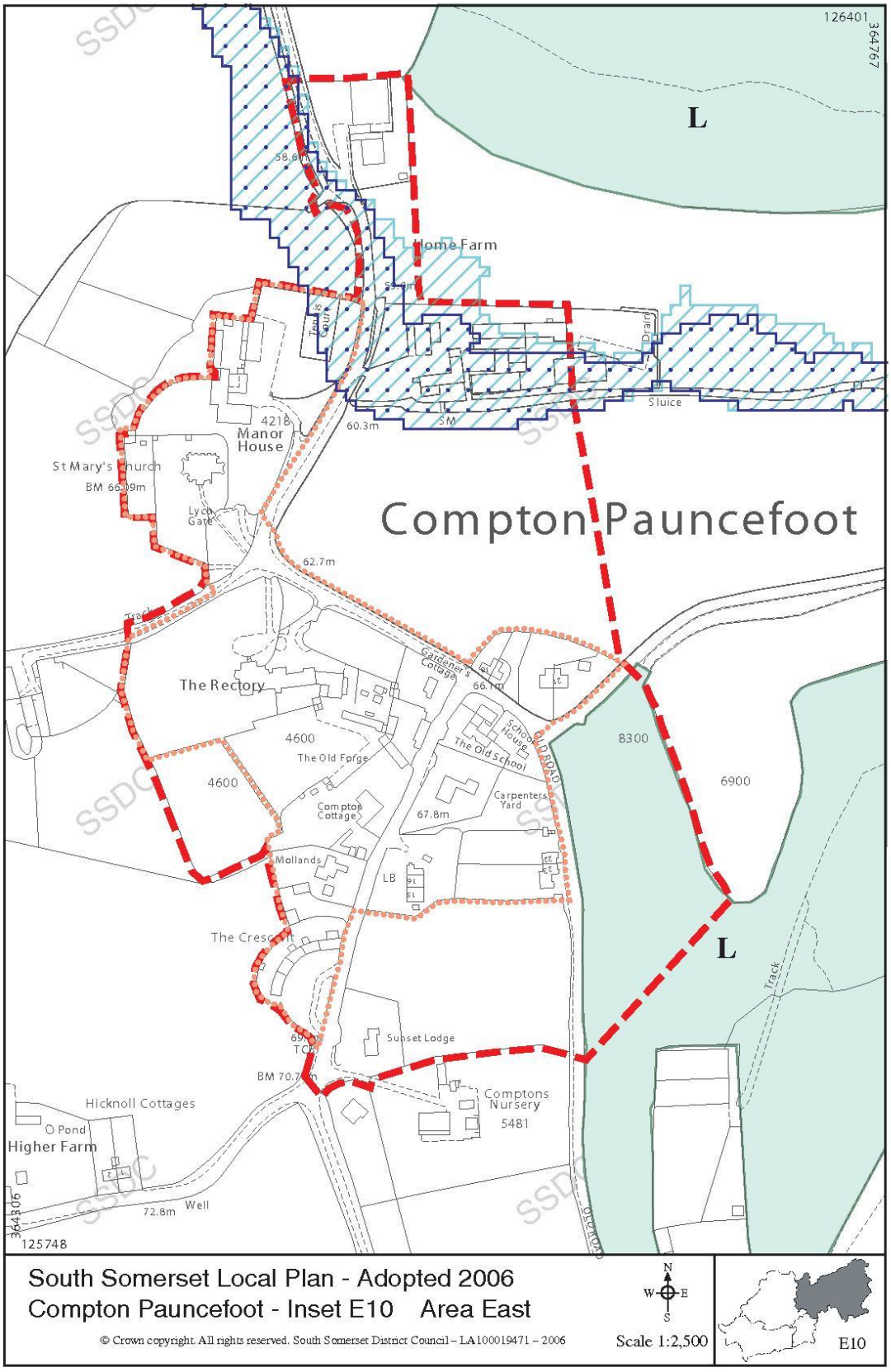
Environment Agency can offer Flood Warnings – You should request ‘River Cam’ warnings even though we are technically a little up-river!
0845 988 1188
www.environment-agency.gov.uk
If problems .. contact John Rowlands 01278 484598

Highways Agency alerts:
https://service.govdelivery.com/service/multi_subscribe.html?code=UKHIGHWAY

Appendix 1 Blackford Map



Appendix 2 Compton Pauncefoot Map



Appendix 3 Insurance and Action Plan

This is a generic list that you should adapt to suit your circumstances

Are you covered?

Check your household insurance policy. How much cover do you have for contents? Is it enough? How much is your flood excess? Does the policy mention alternative accommodation? If you feel cover is lacking, get alternative quotes. Many insurance companies have their own flood maps that show 'at risk' properties in more detail than the Environment Agency. This means different companies may not all take the same approach to the risks.

Preparing if you are at risk

If there is a risk of flooding you should take some simple steps to prepare.

In your home you should:
•Put plugs into sinks and weigh them down with something heavy.
•Downstairs toilets may need a bung to stop sewage/flood waters coming up the toilet.
•Turn off gas, electricity and water supplies at the mains. Find out where these are well in advance of any flood.
•Unplug all electrical items and store upstairs or as high up as possible.

Consider preparing a flood kit that can be stored where you can easily get to it if your home is flooded.

You should include waterproofs, including rubber gloves, a supply of bottled water, a first-aid kit, including a supply of any essential medication, a list of useful telephone numbers and charged mobile phone if you have one, blankets and warm clothing, a stock of non-perishable food items, a portable radio and supply of batteries, a portable pet carrier for your pet if you have one and a torch.

To reduce flood water getting into your home you should:
•Silicone sealant - open doors and windows, smear a layer of this around the frame, then shut and lock the door/window.
•Ideally, cover doors, windows and airbricks with plywood, sandbags or metal sheeting.

For furniture and appliances you should:
•Move as much furniture and electrical items as you can upstairs. Alternatively raise them up on bricks or blocks - this may be very helpful for large appliances such as fridge/freezers.
•Move furniture away from walls, as this helps when drying your property later.
•If you can, roll up carpets and rugs and put them upstairs.
•If there is no time to remove curtains, hang them up over the rail so they are kept above flood water.
•Leave internal doors open, or ideally, remove them and store them upstairs.

For personal items you should:
•Think about moving items with sentimental upstairs permanently, so you do not forget to move them in the case of a flood.
•Keep important personal documents in a sealed bag, and in a location safe from floodwater.

Outside you home you should:
•Move anything not fixed down into a safer location, e.g. dustbins, garden chemicals, car oil and similar.
•Move your car to higher ground to avoid damage.
•Weigh down manhole covers outside the house to prevent them lifting or even floating away and leaving a hazardous hole.
•Sewage treatment plants need checking to ensure that flood waters do not cause expensive problems for the electrics, pumps etc.
•Septic tanks and soakaways can become flooded and efficiency impaired – even after floods have receded.

Installing your own flood defences

If you know you are at risk of flooding many products can be installed in advance that can be attached or taken off when needed. These include 'flood boards' or air brick covers. You can also get plastic skirts to surround your whole property, or temporary free-standing barriers which can protect a group of properties.

These defences are not guaranteed to work in all circumstances but some have recently been given Kitemark approval to ensure they are adequately tested and manufactured.

Your local authority may be able to supply you with sandbags that can be used at short notice if there is an imminent risk of flooding.

The Environment Agency has produced guides to making more lasting changes to your home to combat flooding.
http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/homeandleisure/floods/default.aspx

Appendix 4 Land Drainage Responsibilities

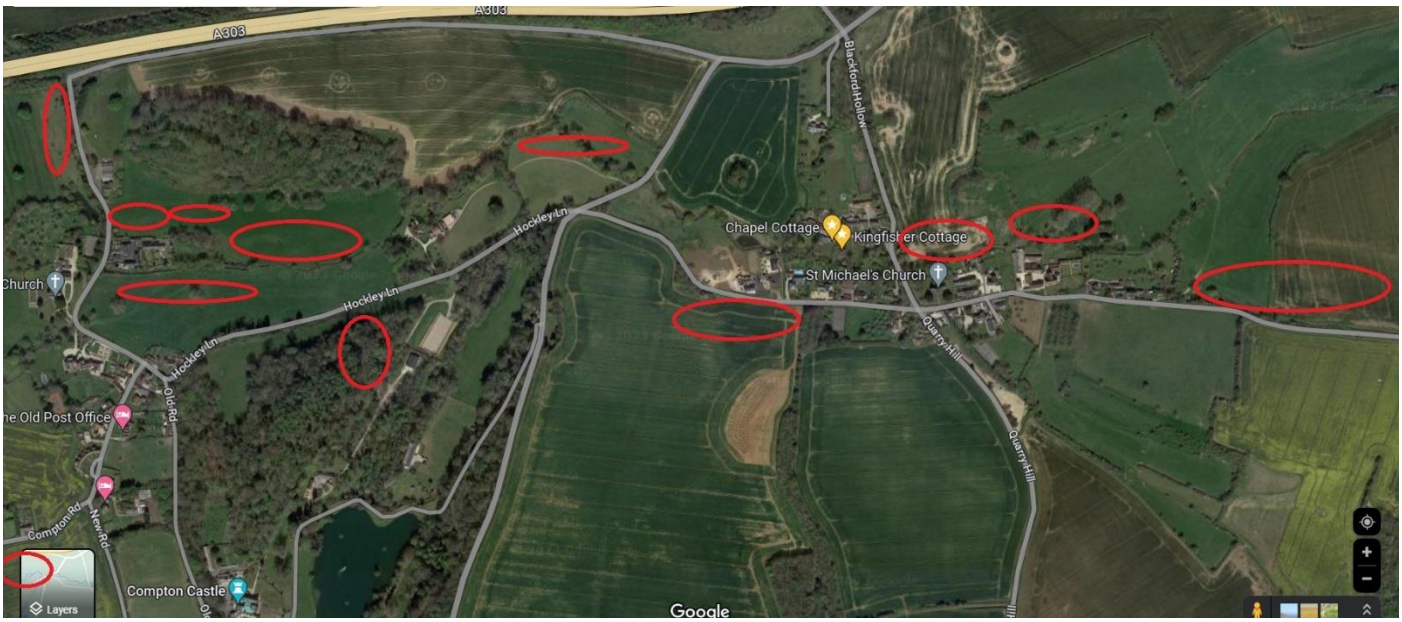
Land Drainage Responsibilities, Powers, Rights and Roles.

There are, at the local level, a number of organisations that have a role in respect of land drainage and flooding. The statutory powers relating to these are generally embodied in the Water Resources Act 1991 and the Land Drainage Act 1991 although certain functions are also contained within the Public Health Act 1936 the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Highways Act 1980 :

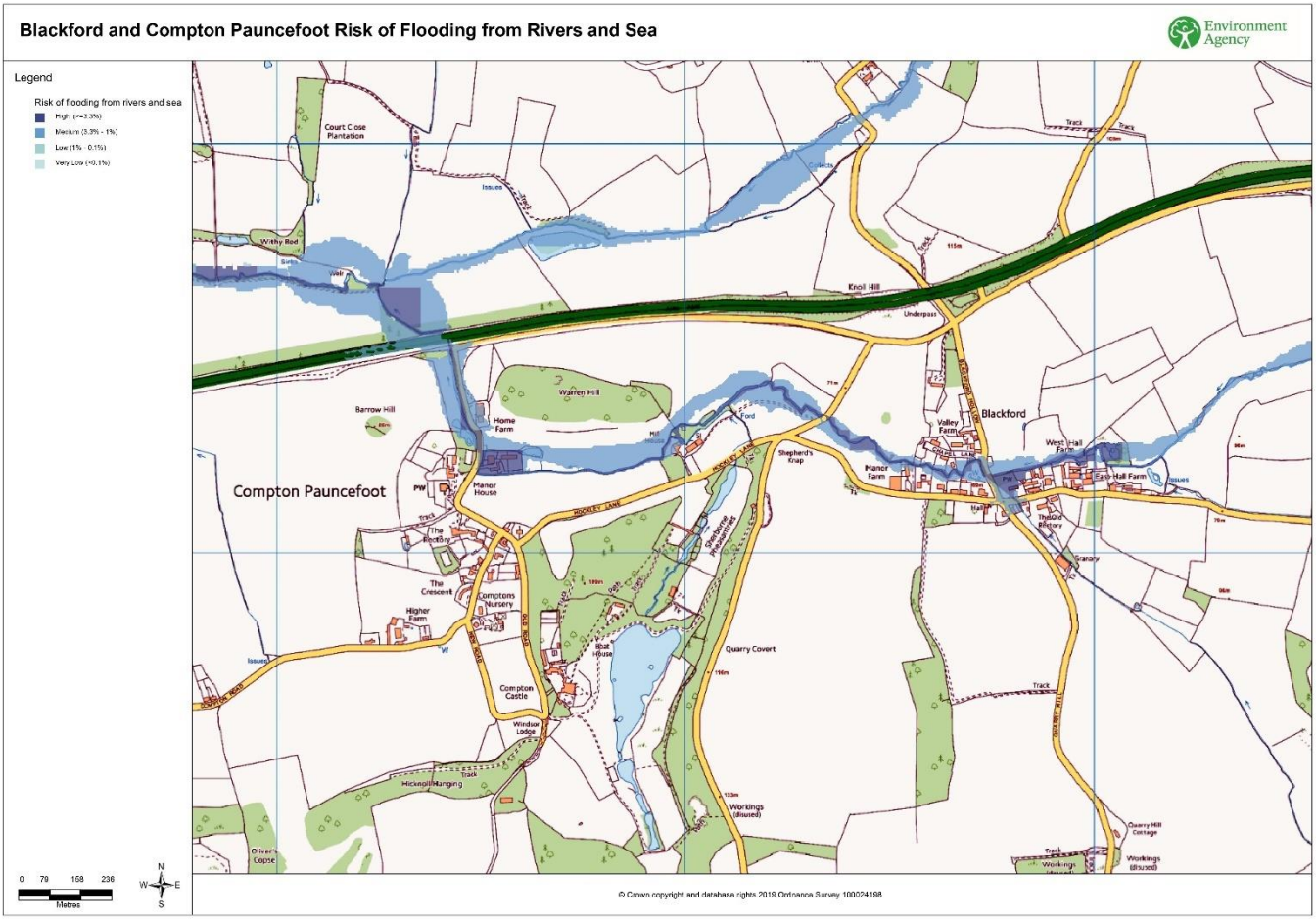
Definitions	
'Watercourse'	Defined under the Land Drainage Act 1991 as "all rivers and streams and all ditches, drains, cuts, culverts, dikes, sluices, sewers (other than public sewers within the meaning of the Water Industry Act 1991) and passages through which water flows".
'Main river'	Specifically designated lengths of watercourse and are generally the larger arterial watercourses. Main rivers fall under the jurisdiction of the Environment Agency.
'Ordinary watercourse'	Watercourses that do not form part of a main river. They are generally under the jurisdiction of 'drainage bodies' although the EA act as the consenting authority in respect of any works involving culverting, diversion, abstraction, etc.

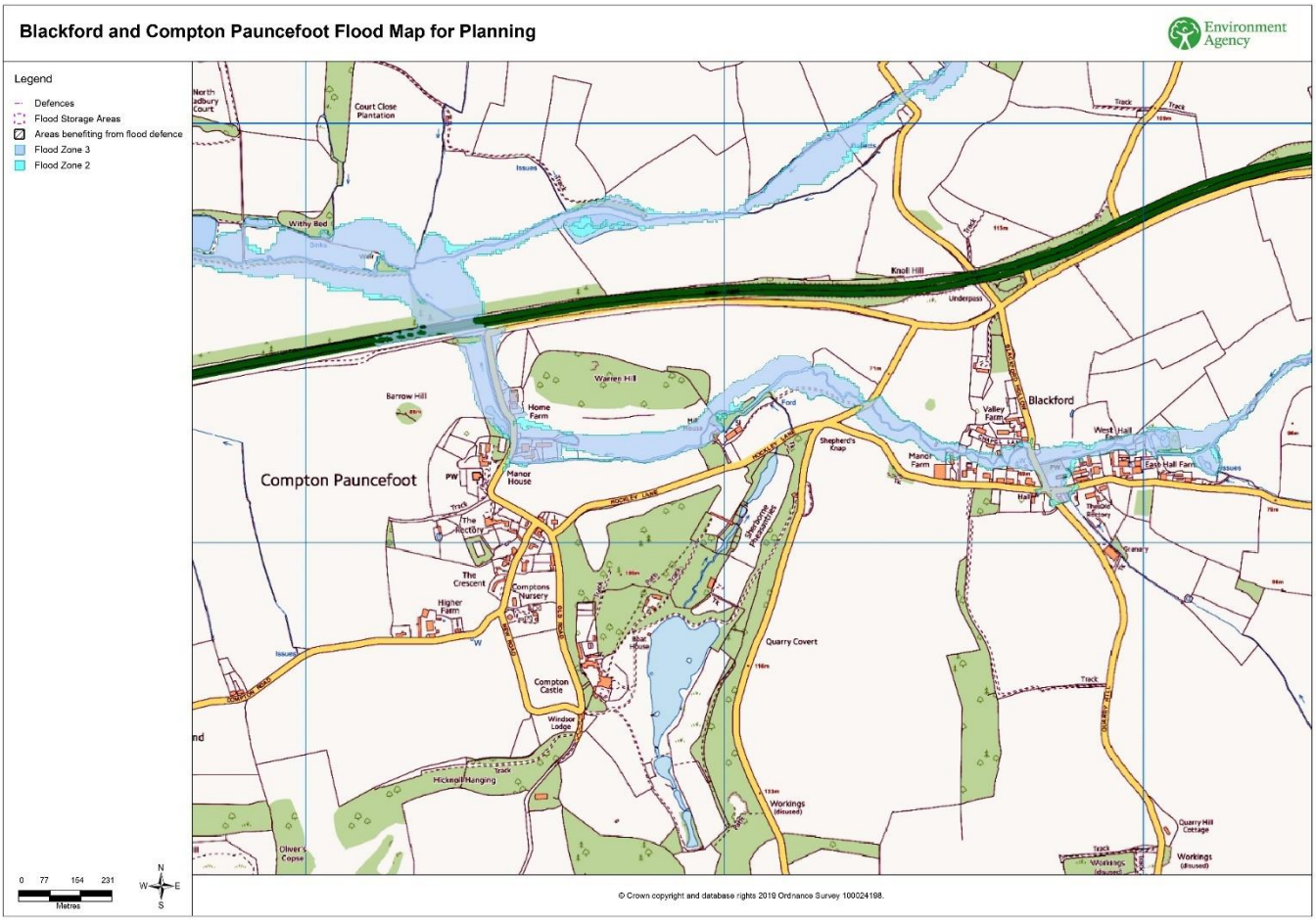
Organisation/Group	***Responsibilities, Powers, Rights and Roles***
Environment Agency	a. general supervisory role over all aspects relating to flood defence with a more specific role in respect of improvements or maintenance to designated 'main rivers'. b. regulating authority for works/activities in and alongside watercourses (except in internal drainage board areas). c. influence, through the planning application process, land use and development particularly within flood plain areas. d. produce Flood Risk mapping and manage historical flood records/data e. install and operate flood warning systems. f. protection and conservation of the natural environment, whilst carrying out flood risk management activities.
Local Authorities: **County Council**	The County Council has two distinct roles a. Designated as a 'local authority' under the terms of the LD Act with discretionary power to serve Notice on owners requiring them to remove obstructions from 'ordinary watercourses' (S25 of the LD Act). b. As a Highway Authority with responsibility under the Highways Act 1980 to keep roads free from flooding with powers to drain water from a highway into a nearby watercourse and to prevent water flowing on to a highway - this latter power is often difficult to enforce.
District Council	Designated as a 'local authority' under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991, District Councils have a role in alleviating flooding problems where possible. Powers exist to: a. implement works to prevent, mitigate or remedy flood damage – subject to consent by the EA and b. serve Notice on owners requiring them to remove obstructions from 'ordinary watercourses' in order to secure a proper flow (S25 of the LD Act). The above land drainage powers are discretionary and SSDC's policy is to exercise them where property is at risk of internal flooding. The District Council may also give guidance/assistance on flooding issues and issue sandbags under certain circumstances in times of flooding.
Internal Drainage Boards	Designated as a 'drainage body' under the terms of the Land Drainage Act 1991, Drainage Boards have similar powers to District Councils for certain, specific, generally low-lying areas. Their principal interest is in the protection of agricultural land from flooding and they undertake maintenance work or improvements on certain 'viewed rhynes' with this in mind although they do also carry out works to protect properties from flooding.
Landowners (Riparian owners)	The role of Riparian Owners *(the owner of land containing or adjoining a watercourse)* is generally not fully understood. Among other things they have the right to: a. Receive flow of water in its natural state, without undue interference in quantity or quality b. Protect their property from flooding and their land from erosion They also have a responsibility to: a. Pass on flow without obstruction, pollution or diversion affecting the rights of others. b. Accept flood flows through their land, even if caused by inadequate capacity downstream. c. Maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse (including trees and shrubs growing on the banks, and for clearing any debris, natural or otherwise, even if it did not originate on their land d. Keep the bed and banks clear from any matter that could cause an obstruction. Whilst riparian owners are under no common law duty to clear a watercourse which becomes silted or obstructed through natural causes, under statute law (S25 of the LD Act 1991) drainage authorities may require and enforce them to carry out such works.

Appendix 5. Potential Locations Detention/attenuation ponds



Appendix 6: Flood Maps




Blackford and Compton Pauncefoot Flood Map for Planning
Environment Agency
Legend
Defences
Flood Storage Areas
Areas benefiting from flood defence
Flood Zone 3
Flood Zone 2
Compton Pauncefoot
Blackford
Court Close Plantation
Withy Bed
Knoll Hill
Underpass
Barrow Hill
Home Farm
Manor House
Shepherd's Knap
Manor Farm
Valley Farm
West Hall
East Hall Farm
The Rectory
The Crescent
Comptons Nursery
Higher Farm
Quarry Covert
Compton Castle
Windsor Lodge
Hickeral Hanging
Oliver's Copse
Workings (disused)
Quarry Hill Cottage
0 77 154 231
Metres
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