

Gloucestershire County Council

Flash flooding this autumn

There was an extraordinary amount of rainfall in September. Gloucestershire received more than 3 times the usual levels of rainfall and our highways teams experienced more than 3 times the number of out-of-hours callouts.

Our proactive approach to drain clearing means that most flash flooding on roads drains away quickly. We can clearly see the ground is already very saturated and the water table level is very high, so further rainfall this winter is very likely to cause flash flooding in areas we wouldn't usually expect to see it.

Every year we clear more than 130,000 drains across the county. Each drain is cleared at least once and some more often. We also carry out reactive clearing operations in response to reports.

To prepare for a particularly wet winter please familiarise yourself with the [Flood Guide](#) on our website which offers lots of help and advice on preparing and dealing with flooding. Residents can help to remove autumn leaves from blocked drains (if it is safe to do so) and add the leaves to compost or a garden waste bin. Otherwise, blocked drains can be reported online with [Fix My Street](#).

We can all help when flash flooding occurs by keeping informed of [\[https://road%20closures/\]](https://road%20closures/)road closures, not driving through flooded roads or moving signage which is there to protect road users and staying up to date with news on our social media channels – on [Facebook](#) and [X \(Twitter\)](#).

Reminder for landowners responsible for ditches and watercourses

Someone who owns property which is next to a watercourse or has a watercourse running through it, is called a 'riparian landowner'.

Legally, riparian landowners have certain rights and responsibilities relating to the stretch of watercourse that flows through or alongside their land. It is not only farmers who are riparian owners.

Homeowners may not realise that the ditch at the bottom of their garden belongs to them and that they may be responsible for its maintenance.

The legal responsibilities to help manage flood risk and protect the environment include:

1. To maintain the watercourse and to clear any obstructions (natural or otherwise) so the optimum flow of water is not impeded.
2. To maintain the banks and bed of the watercourse (including any trees and shrubs growing on the banks) and any flood defences that exists on it.
3. To accept the natural flow from your upstream neighbour and transfer it downstream without obstruction, pollution or diversion.
4. To maintain any approved structures on your stretch of the watercourse.

For further information please read about riparian responsibilities in the Flood Guide: [What are the responsibilities of a riparian owner? | Gloucestershire County Council](#)

Build Back Better

Final, final call for any projects that could use Build Back Better funding. I have a small amount of money to allocate before the scheme ends in January 2025, so please get in touch if your community could do with some extra funding for a specific, community enhancing project.

Highways Local

I have now allocated all of the money from my annual highways local budget to a variety of small issues across the division which either wouldn't happen at all or have been delayed due to other priorities in the Local Highways manager's work programme. The final allocation I have made is to carrying out important CCTV surveys in Cerney Wick, Siddington, South Cerney and Harnhill which are needed in order to progress solutions for long standing flooding issues. I have also allocated money to ensure that further safety enhancements are carried out at the cross roads between South Cerney/Siddington/Kemble/Somerford Keynes road which has seen a spate of crashes and near misses in recent times.

I have already used some of this pot to fund re-surfacing and patching work in other areas as well as booking the community gang to do some tidying of verges and general cleaning.

Highways Maintenance Contract

The highways maintenance contract is currently being reviewed and it is most likely that the current contractor, Ringway, will be awarded a contract extension. I was unhappy with the way this was being pushed through without any consultation with members or scrutiny so following my "call-in" of the cabinet decision, an extraordinary meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee was held at the end of October. I am asking the administration to re-think how it delivers this service before binding the council into another 4 years with this failing contractor. Most of the correspondence I receive from residents is to do with poor highways repairs, damage to vehicles and general dissatisfaction with the roads. So, time to re-think this contract worth tens of millions of ££s!

Motions at Full Council – 6th November 2024

Civic Pride

The Lib Dem group proposed a motion about promoting Civic Pride in our county. For far too long we have seen a cutting and cutting of basic maintenance like road sign cleaning and repairs, diversion signs dumped in verges, verges not cut back or kept clear and graffiti sprayed on lampposts and other street furniture. We have asked Cabinet to look at establishing a team to go around fixing all of these small things which make such a big difference. We have also asked to explore setting up a "best street/play area" award so that communities, parishes and districts can work with the county council to take pride in their local area and celebrate success.

Winter Fuel Payments

Our group also proposed a motion asking the County Council to do whatever it can to support those who will be affected by the removal of the winter fuel allowance. I know that

this can be of particular concern in rural areas where we are often not on main grid for energy supply and housing stock is old and sometimes poorly insulated. Our ask is that we use the Household Support Fund to extend help and also to make sure that all those who may be eligible for pension credit are aware and make a claim. If you know anyone who might be affected or need support, please do let me know and I can ensure they are given the right information and support this winter.

I hope that these generic updates provide some info on what is happening at the councils. For all specific case work, planning matters or localised issues, please email me directly and I will assist where I can.

Best wishes,
Lisa

Lisa.spivey@cotswold.gov.uk

Lisa.spivey@gloucestershire.gov.uk