

NEWS RELEASE

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Fight Flooding by Clearing Channels

SENT ON BEHALF OF THE NORFOLK STRATEGIC FLOODING ALLIANCE

Flooding is a real threat in Norfolk through the winter: keeping even the smallest watercourses clear and flowing freely will help protect homes and businesses safe.

A build-up of flood water with nowhere to drain to can quickly turn a minor incident into a disaster for the home. By checking the drains and ditches on their own property, residents can take action to mitigate the effects of flooding on their home.

To keep your property, and those around you, safe from flooding, property owners must check ditches and watercourses on or adjacent to their land and keep them clear. Even smaller watercourses which may be dry for most of the year, play a key drainage role in wet weather. Find out more about your responsibilities at www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding

Under UK law, landowners have a responsibility to keep watercourses on their property clear, even if only a few feet of the ditch pass through their property. Hedges or fences that are erected within the boundaries of a property can even prevent owners knowing they have a watercourse to maintain.

Lord Richard Dannatt, Chair of the Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance (NSFA), said: "It's easy to put flooding into the 'out of sight, out of mind' box, and not think about it until the waters start rising, but the most effective steps to protect your home and yourself are taken much earlier. A quick check of your drains and watercourses, making sure water flows freely, can take just minutes but can save you hundreds of thousands of pounds in damages by giving water somewhere to drain to other than into the home.

"There are of course other actions that can be taken to prepare for flooding: on a countywide level, we in the NSFA have put in place new practices, new channels and new ways of working to make sure we can respond to flooding and mitigate its impacts more effectively across Norfolk. But to make the country truly resilient, we need everyone to play their part and think about how they can protect themselves and their homes this winter."

Making sure that water can flow smoothly and easily through existing ditches and watercourses will protect properties from flooding and keep the local community safe. Property owners must keep these ditches clear of fallen trees, branches, bushes, garden refuse or rubble and litter will help water flow: a simple test is to ask whether a fish could swim through the ditch or watercourse. If the answer is no, water flow could also be obstructed and lead to flooding of the property.

For drains in public places and along Norfolk's highways, the County Council's Highways Team work to clear them and keep roads open. You can report any blocked or broken drains on Norfolk's highways via www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding

Cllr Andrew Proctor, Leader of Norfolk County Council, said: "Winter always brings challenges, including the risk of flooding, but as with icy roads or colds and flu, there are simple steps we can each take to mitigate the risks and stay safe. Checking your drains and watercourses at your own home is essential to make sure flood water can drain quickly and effectively away from your home. This only takes a few minutes and can keep your home dry and your

family safe. This check is equally important on any other land you own which could prevent flooding there or impact on the safety of other people.”

To report a flood, or find out more about how to prepare for flooding, visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding

In an emergency, residents across Norfolk can report flooding by telephone via 0344 800 8013. If you are in immediate danger, dial 999 immediately.

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The Norfolk Strategic Flooding Alliance is a taskforce, brought together in early 2021, to work so that Norfolk communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding. The Alliance includes, among others, the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Water Management Alliance, Water Resources East, the Norfolk Resilience Forum, the Broads Authority and Norfolk’s County, Borough, City, District and Parish Councils.

For political comment

For details of cabinet members, committee chairs and agendas, please see: www.norfolk.gov.uk/cabinetandchairs
Group leaders’ and councillors’ contact details are available at: www.norfolk.gov.uk/countycouncillors

For further information please contact:

Communications Team at Norfolk County Council

Tel: 01603 228888

Email: pressoffice@norfolk.gov.uk



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