

Groundwater Community Briefing

29th January 2026

Current Situation

Following heavy rain from Storm Chandra, groundwater levels have risen sharply across the Dorset and Wiltshire area. These levels are as high, and in some places higher, than the 2013/2014 levels that caused widespread flooding. We are also seeing groundwater impacts for communities that we have not seen before. This briefing provides an update on the current groundwater situation and flood risk advice and guidance.

At time of writing, there are currently 30 out of the 35 groundwater Flood Warnings in force. There are also multiple groundwater Flood Alerts across Dorset and Wiltshire.

Overview

You can find an overview of Groundwater Flooding and impacts of groundwater flooding here: [What is Groundwater?](#) and an [Animation on Groundwater](#).

The groundwater flood warning service is available to communities along the chalk catchments in Wessex. It is important that residents sign-up to the flood warning service to receive an advance notification of the impacts of groundwater flooding.

A groundwater flood alert will give you an early heads up that levels are rising and to allow plenty of time for activating any property flood resilience measures. An alert covers a much larger area and will give a long lead time for preparations. If there is a groundwater flood warning available for your community, this will give you notice of when groundwater flooding is expected to flood properties.

Since 2014, the Environment Agency have been working with Lead Local Flood Authorities, Highways teams and Wessex Water to install property level resilience measures and to improve road drainage and sewerage drainage at several previous hot spots.

We would encourage reporting groundwater flooding using the FORT (Flood Online Reporting Tool) tool or directly to your Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The link for FORT can be found below.



For the most up to date flood warnings and alerts please visit:

www.gov.uk/check-flooding

You can also sign up for flood groundwater flood warnings at:

<https://www.gov.uk/get-flood-warnings> , alternatively call Floodline on 0345 988 118 (24 hour) *Groundwater flood warnings are an opt in service.*

Local groundwater, river and rainfall data can be accessed online at:

www.gov.uk/check-flooding

For context you can compare the current level with the highest recorded level at the borehole.

Report flooding using FORT (Flood Online Reporting Tool) or directly to your Lead Local Flood Authority. The FORT tool is available in both Dorset and Wiltshire: <https://floodreport.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/>

Looking Ahead

The weather outlook is looking unsettled bringing further rain, with a yellow rain warning issued for today Thursday 29th into Friday 30th January. Although rainfall totals are not forecast to be high, it will fall on already saturated ground and will cause groundwater levels to rise further. We recommend you consider the actions and advice below.

Actions and advice

- Think and prepare now for what you'll do if flooding occurs where you live, don't wait until flooding happens
- If you have a personal flood plan you should put it into action
- Move valuables from basements and cellars
- If you have a pump, ensure it is serviced and working effectively
- Keep drains and gullies around your property free of debris
- You may need to improve surface water drainage and/or install and assess sump pumping arrangements
- If you own part of the river bank you should keep the banks and bed of the river clear of debris (Find out more: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse>)



- We are encouraging parishes at risk to develop a [Community flood plan](#), identifying local issues and working with the different agencies to prepare and respond to flooding
- Report flooding using FORT or directly to your lead local flood authority (LLFA).

Notes on pumping

If you are thinking about where you will pump water to, you should contact:

- Your local Environment Agency office if you are thinking about pumping water into main rivers or boreholes
- Your local authority if you are thinking about pumping water into ditches, watercourses or piped watercourses
- The water company if you are thinking about pumping water into public surface water sewers or foul sewers
- The Highways Authority if you are thinking about pumping water into highway drain.

Consider the risks of pumping onto or near a highway or footpath. You must make sure that pumping water from your property doesn't impact others, this would include when the water freezes and causes a danger.

Useful Contacts

Dorset Council: 01305 221000

Flood Online Reporting Tool (FORT): [Report flooding - Dorset Council](#) (available to residents in both Dorset & Wiltshire)

Dorset Council Sandbags & Local Flooding Advice:

<https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/emergencies-severe-weather/flooding/sandbags-and-local-flooding-advice.aspx>

Dorset Council Urgent Highway Drainage Maintenance: 01305 221020

Dorset Council Non Urgent Highway Drainage Maintenance:

<https://dorsetself.achieveservice.com/service/report-a-gully--drain-or-flooding-issue>

Wiltshire Council: 0300 456 0100 drainage@wiltshire.gov.uk or [Wiltshire Council Booking and Reporting](#)

Wessex Water: 0345 600 4600 (24 hours)

Floodline: 0345 988 118 (24 hours) www.gov.uk/flood

Environment Agency National Incident Hotline: 0800 80 70 60

Environment Agency Flood Resilience Team: floodwessex@environment-agency.gov.uk (office hours)

