

January 2022 Flooding in Lancashire

Chorley Road, Bamber Bridge, South Ribble

Flood & Water Management Act 2010

Section 19 Investigation

December 2023



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Executive Summary

A number of homes on Chorley Road were flooded during heavy rainfall in Bamber Bridge and Walton-le-Dale overnight from 31 December 2021 into 1 January 2022 and again on 8 January 2022.

Local investigations identified that a culverted watercourse passing close to the affected houses had been accidentally obstructed during demolition works at a nearby development site, causing the watercourse to back up and overflow into the public highway. The houses flooded when water levels in the highway rose above the levels of the property thresholds.

The problem was remedied when the relevant parties replaced the damaged and obstructed lengths of the culvert.

Some of the affected homes had been flooded or nearly flooded in previous years. A significant investment by the county council's highway authority between 2016 and 2018 had replaced lengths of defective culverts carrying a local watercourse, since when there had been no more reports of flooding.

No other premises nearby reported internal flooding, although there had been relatively frequent reports of nearby ponding to the highway when highway gullies needed extra cleaning.

A report under Section 19 of the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 is required to document the investigations made into the flooding of these houses. This report is also required to identify where further studies or works are needed, and by which risk management authority.

In regard to this event, the risk management authorities that had a role were:

- a) The local highway authority;
- b) The lead local flood authority, and
- c) The District Council.

None of the risk management authorities have any outstanding studies or works to be completed. It is a key finding of this Section 19 investigation that the reported flooding was very localised and was caused entirely by the obstruction to the culvert carrying the local watercourse.

SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Flood & Water Management Act 2010 Duty

Lancashire County Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority has a duty to investigate flooding in accordance with Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 as follows:

Section 19 states:

On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a lead local flood authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate:

- a) Which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
- b) Whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must:

- a) Publish the results of its investigation, and
- b) Notify any relevant risk management authorities.

This report documents our understanding of the events resulting in flooding of houses on 31 December 2021/1 January 2022 and 8 January 2022.

SECTION 2 – THE WEATHER EVENT

2.1 The Met Office records that a large band of rain moved northeast across the UK through the early hours of Friday 31 December 2021, bringing persistent rain to northern England, Northern Ireland and southern Scotland, as well as heavy showers to most of Wales and the southwest of England. Then on Saturday 1 January 2022, with a low-pressure centre remaining to the northwest of the UK, cloudy and windy conditions dominated through the rest of the day.

2.2 This wet start to the week was followed by generally cool and showery conditions. Then on the morning of Saturday 8 January there was further torrential rain which affected Manchester and northwest England, with some poor road conditions.

2.3 In comparison to other flooding events in Lancashire, these conditions were not particularly remarkable for winter. However they were sufficient to overwhelm this local drainage system which had been damaged by unconsented works.

SECTION 3 – RESPONSE TO THE FLOODING

3.1 On 30 December 2021, an affected resident contacted Lancashire County Council to report that a blocked watercourse was resulting in continuous flooding at the side of his house. As well as receiving emergency attendance from the police and the local highway authority's out of hours service, the enquiry was referred to the council's Flood Risk Management team to identify relevant landowners and to initiate contact with them to request them to clear any obstructions in their respective lengths of culvert.

3.2 The most likely location of the urgent problem was identified as a development site downstream from the affected homes, where authorised site clearance works were underway as part of a valid planning permission (see Figure 1 below). Issuing letters to landowners was paused, to enable discussions between flood risk officers and local planning authority officers so as not to accidentally compromise the planning authority's control of the way the development was being delivered. The letters were then issued on 1 February 2022, by which time the developer was fully engaged in the process.



Figure 1 – damage on site in vicinity of culvert collapse

3.3 The county council's officers identified the value of a detailed survey of the culvert to enable them to inform relevant parties very clearly of what improvement works were required. This survey was carried out on 14 February 2022, a week after the affected residents experienced further flooding (5 & 6 February 2022).

3.4 By the end of February 2022, the required repair works had been completed and there have been no further instances of flooding in this location since this date.

SECTION 4 – SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 The damage done to a culverted watercourse in Chorley Road, Bamber Bridge during demolition and site clearance works, had caused such a significant blockage that the watercourse was unable to flow normally. This prevented the proper drainage of the watercourse and the local highway drainage systems that depend on the watercourse.

4.2 Under heavy rainfall on a number of occasions after the damage had been caused, areas of public highway were flooded to such an extent that water breached the thresholds of nearby homes and caused extensive flood damage to the ground floors of the properties and required an emergency out of hours response from the police and the local highway authority.

4.3 The culvert was in due course repaired by the parties responsible for the damage. There has been no repeat of the flooding since these repairs were carried out.

4.4 This incident has revealed how very important it is that developers properly identify all drainage assets on their site/s and obtain consent for any works impacting on watercourses in advance of site clearance, demolition and construction.

4.5 The council's Flood Risk Management team endeavours to make watercourse management advice available to developers alongside every response given to planning consultations, wherever this is identified as appropriate. The council's guidance and procedures for Ordinary Water Course Regulation are available from the council's website: [Alterations to a watercourse - Lancashire County Council](#).

4.6 The team's planning advice service includes an option for developers to access site-specific advice and guidance on management of ordinary watercourses in and around their sites.

4.7 The team engages with the Local Plan process, and uses that opportunity to highlight the need for careful management of surface water, and the value of a systematic and thorough approach to surface water management as explained on the council's website: <https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/938918/guidance-notes-for-sustainable-drainage-systems-pro-forisk-management-authority.pdf> and on the Flood Hub website: [Planning & Development | The Flood Hub](#)

4.8 This incident has also revealed two potential risks in regard to the way the county council manages customer contacts relating to flooding:

a) obstructed watercourses on private land are generally investigated by the Flood Risk Management team, which has no role in giving an emergency on-site response and which cannot receive or respond to alerts made outside of working hours; and

b) Highways incident reports received and responded to out of hours are generally not recorded in shared systems so they are generally not available for taking into account when reviewing flooding incidents for priority attention.

Risk (a) has been identified and managed better in recent times through the addition of new action codes enabling records to be more easily and accurately shared between the two parts of the county council's organisation.



Risk (b) remains to be addressed. It is anticipated that this will happen through the adoption of a new records management system and improved out of hours works procedures, both currently under review.



APPENDIX A – DEFINITIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Lancashire & Blackpool Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

In addition to the requirements of Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act ('the Act'), the Lancashire and Blackpool Local Flood Risk Management Strategy ('the Strategy') sets out how flood risk should be managed locally.

The Strategy states that the Section 19 investigations will help to:

- Improve the understanding of flood risk by providing an invaluable tool for understanding the sources and mechanisms of flooding;
- Identify assets that have a flood risk management function, which may need to be designated; and
- Identify where additional works and studies are likely to be necessary, that LCC or other risk management authorities can integrate into their prioritised flood risk management plans.

Key Definitions

The Risk Management Authorities

The risk management authorities are identified in the Act as follows:

- a. The Environment Agency,
- b. The lead local flood authority,
- c. A district council for an area for which there is no unitary authority,
- d. An internal drainage board,
- e. A water company, and
- f. A highway authority.

Each of these organisations has powers and duties under various legislation and regulations for the responsible management of natural water, flood risk and in some cases coastal erosion.

The Act requires all the risk management authority to cooperate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions.

In Lancashire, the risk management authorities support partnership working in the following ways:

- at operational levels by joint investigations and through the Operational Making Space for Water meetings;
- at tactical level by sharing priorities and direction between organisational managers, and
- at strategic level by engaging with Councillors/Cabinet Members/Senior Managers.



Lancashire, Blackpool and Blackburn-with-Darwen are also represented on the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee where cross-boundary projects, resources and data are shared with Cumbria, Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.

The village of Earby in Pendle District is a special case in that it lies within a river catchment that falls towards North Yorkshire, so its local Environment Agency services are supplied through the Yorkshire team. This gives the Lancashire partnership a direct connection to the Yorkshire Regional Flood & Coastal Committee. Earby also receives services from the Earby and Salterforth Internal Drainage Board which replaces a number of the lead local flood authority functions.

The Risk Management Functions

The risk management authorities have responsibility for flood risk management functions as defined under Section 4 (2) of the Act:

- (a) a function under this Part,
- (b) a function under section 159 or 160 of the Water Resources Act 1991,
- (c) a flood defence function within the meaning of section 221 of that Act,
- (d) a function under the Land Drainage Act 1991,
- (e) a function under section 100, 101, 110 or 339 of the Highways Act 1980, and
- (f) any other function, under an enactment, specified for the purposes of this section by order made by the Minister.

Riparian Landowners

The term 'riparian' is applied to landowners who own land adjoining or containing a river or watercourse. They have certain rights to use the water flowing across their land for their own purposes, and in regard to flood risk management they also have a number of responsibilities, including the following:

- to maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, and also the trees and shrubs growing on the banks;
- to clear any debris, even if it did not originate from their land. This debris may be natural or man-made;
- to keep any structures within their ownership clear of debris. These structures include culverts, trash screens, weirs and mill gates.

If riparian landowners do not fulfil their responsibilities, they may face enforcement action taken by the relevant risk management authority.

Interconnections between responsibilities

Public sewers in Lancashire are principally the responsibility of United Utilities plc or Yorkshire Water plc. Copies of the record maps indicating the location of public sewers in Lancashire are held in the water companies' head offices. These companies also keep records of pumping stations, and any water treatment works which form part of the public sewage system.



Private drainage systems are the responsibility of each owner whose property it drains. Where more than one property uses a private pipe, responsibility is normally shared proportionately. The private system comprises all the pipes up to the point of connection with a public sewer (this can include the entire system where it is connected to a septic tank, cesspool or soakaway). Formal records indicating the location of private drainage systems are not held by any risk management authority. The deeds of a property may include details.

The highway surface water drainage of all adopted public roads, other than trunk roads or motorways, is the responsibility of LCC as the local highway authority, including roadside drainage gullies and certain roadside ditches. Drainage from trunk roads and motorways is the responsibility of Highways England. Drainage of private unadopted roads is normally the responsibility of private property owners who make use of or adjoin the road.

Land drainage comprises systems of rivers, watercourses, ditches, culverts, pipes, lakes, and ponds intended to drain water resulting from rainfall and flows from underground sources. Typically, the primary responsibility for maintaining responsible flows in land drainage systems lies with the riparian owner or owners, with the LLFA, Environment Agency, IDB or local councils holding enforcement powers to use if the landowner/s default in their duties.

All drainage systems eventually discharge into the sea as the lowest possible point for water to collect. In Lancashire, this is at Morecambe Bay or the Irish Sea directly.

All drainage networks are formed from combinations of these systems to overcome historic demands of efficiency, simplicity, and convenience. For example, a highway gully may well connect to a length of highway drainage pipe before connecting to a private ditch, or a public surface water sewer, or directly to a main river. The original reasoning for these arrangements may now be forgotten or inappropriate for current needs, but the physical interconnection of drainage systems means that it is often impossible to tell just from looking at flood water exactly where the barrier to flow arises and therefore exactly which organisation may need to take remedial action.

It is therefore vital for the risk management authorities to share information and collaborate during investigations and that they are allocated to the appropriate organisation to lead.

Key Functions of the risk management authorities

Environment Agency

The flood risk management responsibilities of the Environment Agency include the following:

- a. strategic overview for all forms of flooding;
- b. provision of a National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) to cover all forms of flooding;
- c. a power to request information from third parties in connection with flood risk management duties. Risk management authorities have a duty to co-operate with the Environment Agency in the provision of such information;



- d. a duty to co-operate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of flood risk management functions, which may include the sharing of information with other relevant authorities;
- e. a duty to have regard to Local Flood Risk Management Strategies;
- f. a duty to be subject to scrutiny from lead local flood authorities' democratic processes;
- g. responsibility for managing coastal flooding;
- h. responsibility for managing fluvial flooding from main rivers;
- i. updated provisions for the regulation of reservoirs;
- j. permissive powers to carry out maintenance work on main rivers under Section 165 of the Water Resources Act 1991;
- k. the provision of flood forecasting and warning services;
- l. the provision of flood maps;
- m. the provision of flood related information and advice;
- n. investment in flood defences, supplemented through partnership funding where appropriate;
- o. a power to take enforcement action where flow in a main river has been impeded and may cause a flood risk.

Lancashire County Council

This council has a dual risk management role, in its capacity as both highway authority and lead local flood authority.

As the lead local flood authority, the council has a number of duties and powers, in addition to the duty to investigate flooding set out above. These include:

- a. a duty to develop, maintain, apply, monitor and consult on Strategy for its area (copy available from the website www.lancashire.gov.uk);
- b. a duty to develop and maintain a register of structures or features which might impact on flood risk, including ownership and condition (the Flood Risk Asset Register is available on the website www.lancashire.gov.uk);
- c. the management of the consenting process for works that are likely to affect the flow characteristics of ordinary watercourses (Land Drainage Consent – guidance available on the website www.lancashire.gov.uk);
- d. a power to undertake works for managing flood risk from surface run-off or groundwater;
- e. a power to request information from third parties in connection with flood risk management duties. Risk management authorities have a duty to co-operate with the lead local flood authority in the provision of such information;
- f. a power to designate structures and features that affect flooding or coastal erosion.
- g. a power to take enforcement action where there is an obstruction to an ordinary watercourse that may cause a flood risk.

As the local highway authority, the council has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to maintain highways that are maintainable at public expense. This includes responsibility for highway drainage, as well as for the condition and safety for users of all highway assets including roads, footways, bridges and culverts, street lighting and traffic signals.



As local highway authority, the council has a duty to co-operate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of flood risk management functions, which may include the sharing of information with other relevant authorities.

The council also has private responsibilities for land drainage where it is a land owner.

City and Borough Councils

The flood risk management responsibilities of City and Borough councils include the following:

- a. a power to designate structures and features that affect flooding or coastal erosion;
- b. a duty to exercise their flood risk management functions in a manner consistent with local and national strategies, and to have regard to those strategies in their other functions;
- c. a duty to be subject to scrutiny from LLFAs democratic processes;
- d. a power to do works on ordinary watercourses where this has been delegated by the lead local flood authority;
- e. a duty to co-operate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of flood risk management functions, which may include the sharing of information with other relevant authorities.
- f. a power to take enforcement action where there is an obstruction to an ordinary watercourse that may cause a flood risk where the power has been delegated by the lead local flood authority.

City and Borough Councils have a number of wider functions and roles that can be relevant to flood risk management and response. These include local planning, housing, environmental health and community engagement activity, as well as private responsibilities for land drainage where they are a land owner.

Internal Drainage Board

An Internal Drainage Board is a local public authority established in areas of special drainage need in England and Wales. These Boards have permissive powers to manage water levels within their respective drainage districts. The Boards undertake works to reduce flood risk to people and property and manage water levels to meet local needs.

The expenses of an Internal Drainage Board are predominantly funded by the local beneficiaries of the water level management work they provide. Each Board sets a budget for its planned work in the forthcoming year and any investments it needs to make for future projects.

More information about Internal Drainage Boards can be found from the Association of Drainage Authorities (www.ada.org.uk).

Water Companies

The flood risk management responsibilities of water companies (in Lancashire: United Utilities plc and Yorkshire Water plc) include the following:



- a. a duty as sewage undertakers under Section 94 of the Water Industry Act 1991, to provide & maintain sewers for the drainage of buildings and associated paved areas within property boundaries;
- b. responsibility as sewerage undertakers for lateral drains and public sewers, the latter being defined as a conduit, normally a pipe that is vested in a Water and Sewerage Company, or predecessor, that drains two or more properties and conveys foul, surface water or combined sewage from one point to another point and discharges via a positive outfall;
- c. responsibility for any flooding which is directly caused by its assets – i.e. its water or sewerage pipes;
- d. a duty to be subject to scrutiny from lead local flood authorities' democratic processes;
- e. a requirement to exercise flood risk management functions in a manner consistent with the national strategy and guidance and have regard to the local strategies and guidance;
- f. a duty to co-operate with other relevant authorities in the exercise of flood risk management functions, which may include the sharing of information with other relevant authorities.

Civil Contingencies Responsibilities

The risk management authorities listed above (with the exception of the Internal Drainage Board) have additional responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, which provides the statutory basis for dealing with a response to flooding in emergency situations. These include flood preparedness planning and flood response.

