



# **Coastal and Flooding**

## **Purbeck District Council Roles and Responsibilities**

# Coastal and flooding – Purbeck District Council roles and responsibilities

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## **Coastal and flooding – Purbeck District Council roles and responsibilities**

### **Introduction and purpose of this document**

A range of complex processes contribute to flooding and coastal issues in the district. As well as a set of complex interactive processes, the issues are further complicated by a complex range of roles and responsibilities across a number of organisations. This document sets out to explain the key roles and responsibilities for the majority of the most common flooding and coastal issues. It explains what the statutory obligations are of relevant organisations as well as other, often optional, powers.

The aim of this document is to try to bring some clarity to the sometimes ambiguous and uncertain picture about who should do what in the event of particular flooding or coastal events. It does not cover the Council's role in relation to strategic coastal management and flood risk planning. The document contains a section about potential further optional activity that Purbeck District Council could decide to do. The section covering this tries to set out some rough resource implications that would be associated with those potential activities. This should enable councillors to decide which, if any, of these additional activities they would like to investigate.

Flood and coastal erosion risk management is primarily regulated by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Act provides the framework for allocating responsibilities for dealing with the risk of flooding and of coastal erosion.

Under the 2010 Act the Council is a "Risk management authority" along with the Environment Agency, Dorset County Council (which is the lead local flood authority), the water company (Wessex Water), and the highway authority.

Dorset County Council as the lead local flood authority has a duty to investigate flooding incidents to:

- identify which risk management authority has flood risk management functions in respect of the flooding; and
- establish whether that authority has responded or is proposing to respond to the flood.

There are duties on the various bodies to cooperate and to provide information.

The 2010 Act also allows the Council or another responsible body to designate a structure or feature as being something that affects a flood or coastal erosion risk. The effect of designation is that "a person may not alter, remove or replace a designated structure or feature without the consent of the responsible authority.

Most of the duties and powers that arise from the 2010 Act are however concerned with prevention rather than reacting to an event. So in many instances the starting point in responding to a flooding or coastal erosion event will be to exercise general powers and duties, for example dealing with homelessness or if Council land is affected, carrying out any obligations as a landowner.

### **Emergency response**

The emergency services (fire, police and ambulance) lead on most emergencies. Purbeck District Council has a supporting role including providing a control centre if it is needed; coordinating the distribution of sandbags; determining whether buildings have become dangerous; setting up rest centres if people need to be evacuated; and arranging temporary accommodation for people who have become homeless as a result of an event.

### **Community engagement and awareness raising**

This section sets out the recently completed projects and current activity associated with community engagement and awareness raising.

This Council was involved in the Coastal Change Pathfinder Project for the Jurassic Coast. The aim was to raise awareness of the effects of sea level rise and global warming on the coastal

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communities along the Jurassic Coast. It selected 6 pilot areas one of which was the North Beach Cliffs at Swanage. It considered what might be expected during severe events with the expectation of cliff recession and coastal flooding.

This project led to the formation of the Swanage Coastal Change Forum which specifically aims to raise awareness of the issues in Swanage. This is an on-going forum which has held two stakeholder open evenings with community stakeholders.

Living with a changing coast (LICCO), is a cross-channel project helping coastal communities to better understand and prepare for the impacts of climate change, including sea level rise and erosion on their coastline. Partner organisations from Devon, Dorset and Normandy are working together on this part European-funded project, led by the Environment Agency. The project covers a period of three and a half years, from April 2011 to September 2014. This project is very relevant to Purbeck as part of the area covers Poole Harbour and the coast up to Durlston Head.

## Flooding

Flooding is generally due to excess rainfall but how that flooding arrives at a particular area and who may be responsible for investigating or resolving that issue varies. The headings below show who is responsible for resolving particular problems as well as Purbeck District Council's role in terms of mandatory action (must do) and discretionary powers (may do).

## Surface water

Surface water flooding can cause problems in terms of flooding in houses and on roads. Responsibility for issues relating to surface water flooding vary depending on the underlying cause and this is set out in the following table.

Cause / issue	Who should resolve the problem	What Purbeck District Council must do	What Purbeck District Council may do
Natural surface run-off	Landowner and householders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Report all known problems to Dorset County Council as the lead local flood authority (it has a duty to investigate flooding matters)</li> <li>We have a duty to cooperate with Dorset County Council and any other risk management authority (as referred to in the introduction)</li> <li>Inspect our area to detect any statutory nuisances</li> </ul>	No specific powers
Runoff from development	Developers and householders		Impose planning conditions to prevent problems
Blocked ditch or covered watercourse	Landowner unless ditch is for solely for draining highway in which case see below for blocked highway gullies and drains.		Serve a notice requiring nuisance to be stopped
Blocked or inadequate highway gullies and drains	Highways Agency on trunk roads/Dorset County Council on other public highways or landowner if private road		
Blocked drain	Private owner		
Field run-off	Owner but Dorset County Council has powers to stop discharge onto highway in some instances		

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### Main rivers

The Environment Agency is responsible for main rivers. It deals with consents, enforcements and is a statutory consultee for Planning matters. The Main Rivers in the district are the Frome, the Piddle, the Sherford (up to Kings Bridge by the Bakers Arms roundabout), the Swan Brook, Ulwell Stream, the River Win, Byle Brook, Corfe River and Bere Stream. All other watercourses are classified as Non-Main River

Cause / issue	Who should resolve the problem	What Purbeck District Council must do	What Purbeck District Council may do
Overflowing banks	Landowner. Environment Agency has powers to enforce them to do this.	Duty to cooperate with the Environment Agency and other risk management authorities (as referred to in the introduction)	No specific powers
Blocked rivers			
Collapsing banks			

### Non-main rivers

Dorset County Council, as the lead local flood authority, is responsible for dealing with non-main rivers. It has consenting and enforcement powers.

Cause / issue	Who should resolve the problem	What Purbeck District Council must do	What Purbeck District Council may do
Overflowing banks	Landowner. Dorset County Council has powers to enforce them to do this.	Duty to cooperate with the other risk management authorities (as referred to in the introduction)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carry out works to deal with the problem if the works are for the purpose of managing flood risk from an ordinary watercourse</li> <li>Carry out works to deal with the problem if the works are for the purpose of managing flood risk from the sea by maintaining existing works</li> </ul>
Blocked rivers			
Collapsing banks			

### Ground water

Very long seasonal periods of rainfall with saturated ground causing flooding due to raising of the ground water table. Generally in low lying locations or could be as a result of a spring. There have only been a few incidents of groundwater flooding in the district. Dorset County Council as the lead local flood authority has overall responsibility for ground water flooding. Sometimes ground water flooding can also lead to surface water flooding (see table on page 3 for more details or roles and responsibilities related to surface water flooding).

### Water mains

Burst water main can cause flooding of houses and roads. This is generally the responsibility of Wessex Water but there are some private water mains within the district.

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### Foul Sewage

Foul sewerage is principally the responsibility of Wessex Water and enforcement action could be taken by the Environment Agency or Purbeck District Council Environmental Health where this results in a pollution problem or nuisance.

Cause / issue	Who should resolve the problem	What Purbeck District Council must do	What Purbeck District Council may do
Collapsed / blocked public sewer	Wessex Water. Wessex Water is responsible for the common connecting drain serving a property	Investigate pollution problems (when not the sea or any river) and serve notice on the appropriate individual / organisation to deal with problems. For pollution of the sea or river, the Environment Agency is responsible.	No specific powers
Collapsed / blocked drain	Private owner		
Flooding of public sewerage system from surface or ground water	Wessex Water with support from Dorset County Council		
Overflowing septic tank / cess pool or private foul drainage	Private owner but Environment Agency or Environmental Health (depending on pollution problem ) have powers to make owner deal with the problem		
Overloaded public sewers	Wessex Water		
Overloaded drain	Private owner/owners		
Failure of public sewer pumping station	Wessex Water		
Failure of private sewer pumping station	Private owner		

### Tidal flooding

Extreme high tides causing flooding. This is generally as a result of a high tide being higher than predicted due to the effects of low atmospheric pressure and on shore winds. This can affect areas around Poole Harbour such as Lytchett Minster, Upton and Wareham. Also affected is Swanage and to a lesser extent West Lulworth. Extreme tides can also limit the ability of river, stream and surface water outlets to discharge with the consequence of flooding upstream. No agencies have specific responsibilities associated with tidal flooding but a variety of agencies could be involved in responding to individual instances.

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### Coastal

#### Erosion and flooding

Erosion by the sea can have different effects depending on the height of the shore or land behind. The Environment Agency takes the lead role where erosion by the sea is resulting in flooding due to washing away of tidal embankments or overtopping of sea walls.

Where the land is higher than any flood level, e.g. where there are cliffs, the issue is one of erosion and land instability and the Council would take the lead role where it is proposed to implement a coast protection scheme.

#### Landslides and rock falls

Landslides and rock falls are predominantly associated with the coast but may occur elsewhere. The types of failure can range from mud slides where the land has become excessively wet and has run down the face to rock falls. This might occur where a cliff has become undercut by the sea or the effects of freezing during the winter or drying out and the effects of expansion during the summer as well as water saturating and destabilising the cliff. This can affect properties and people at both the top and bottom of the cliff.

Cause /Issue	Who should resolve the problem	What Purbeck District Council must do	What Purbeck District Council may do
Danger to public on public footpaths	Dorset County Council can close public footpaths if unsafe	No specific duties	No specific powers
Danger to public on permissive footpaths/beaches	Owner		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Where a building or structure is dangerous, Purbeck District Council may either serve notice on the owner requiring them to take action to remove the danger or where immediate action needs to be taken Purbeck District Council may take action and recover the costs from the owner</li> <li>If funding available from others, carry out works to deal with the problem if the work is desirable for managing the risk of coastal erosion</li> </ul>
Danger to cliff top property			
Danger to property undercliff			
Private coast protection scheme		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider planning applications to carry out works</li> <li>Consider request for consent as coast protection authority.</li> </ul>	No specific additional powers

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### Beach debris

Generally beach debris such as flotsam and jetsam would be cleared by the beach owner but many of the beaches have beach cleaning weekends where volunteers clean the beaches and the waste material has been removed by the Council.

Where landslide debris has been deposited on beaches this has historically been left to wash away. Where this has included concrete slabs and building debris a lot of this has also been left. However, a lot of this type of material was removed from Swanage beach as part of the Swanage Beach Recharge Scheme.

In the event of a major pollution incident on the coast the Council has arrangement with Dorset County Council for preferential use of a specialist contractor for shoreline clean up

### Potential future role for Purbeck District Council

The following table sets out some discretionary activities that the Council may consider carrying out in relation to flooding and coastal erosion. It attempts to set out the strengths, weaknesses and resource implications of such discretionary activity.

Strengths	Weaknesses	Resource implications
Ensure meetings between landowners and householders and relevant agencies take place to resolve specific issues		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement and meeting expectations about community leadership role</li> <li>Who else will do it if we don't?</li> <li>Potential to find workable solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived assumption of responsibility</li> <li>Raises expectations even further</li> <li>How to resolve the unresolvable</li> <li>May not be able to reach a consensus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills - Need for mediation skills as well as good events organisation</li> <li>Officer time - a significant amount of time to trace landowners and organise meeting.</li> <li>Money - possible small cost for venue.</li> <li>May be unknown resource implications depending on outcome</li> </ul>
Continue reporting known problems to risk management authorities and other interested organisations		
Potential to improve multi-agency working		Could be done within existing resources
Continue seeking partnership funding for specific works or projects to alleviate problems or raise awareness where appropriate		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community engagement and meeting expectations about community leadership role</li> <li>Potential to improve multi-agency working</li> <li>Potential to find workable solutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Perceived assumption of responsibility</li> <li>Raises expectations even further</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills - Need for specific skills for grant applications</li> <li>Officer time - a significant amount of time to put a bid together.</li> <li>Money – likely to need match funding.</li> </ul>
Continue to provide press releases to inform the public		
Community engagement and meeting expectations about community leadership role	Perceived assumption of responsibility	Could be done within existing resources