



# What we are doing to prepare for winter - Somerset Levels and Moors

1 November 2023

## Winter preparations

We are currently carrying out our typical winter operations, which includes checking our flood assets and pumping stations, and clearing debris screens and other assets to ensure they are fully operational.

We are well prepared for winter, having completed works that include desilting a number of main drains, including Northmoor Main Drain, Saltmoor Main Drain, the Penzoy System and Westonzoyland Engine Rhyne. Our annual Somerset Levels and Moors programme of weed cutting/vegetation removal has also been completed. Our programme of tree works (sapling removal) along the right bank of the River Parrett in the Burrowbridge area has been progressing well, however this work has temporarily been paused due to current high water levels. This will resume when conditions allow. Works have also been completed at Highbridge Clyce, which is now fully operational. This reduces the need to use the Cripps and Huntspill Rivers.

Bank inspections along 30-40km of bank have been carried out since the flood event in January, and priority repairs have been undertaken where needed. Since last winter, we have worked with communities and partners to make some changes to the trigger levels that determine when we initiate the deployment of the high-volume pumps. This will ensure an efficient deployment when needed. They will still only be used when there is sufficient water to pump, and enough capacity in the main channels to receive the flood water. We are updating our trigger plans on the [gov.uk](https://www.gov.uk) website.

We always operate Monksleaze Clyce as per agreed protocols, and will continue to use the Sowy proactively throughout the winter months as required. We will continue to do so in agreement with the Internal Drainage Board.

In both the Axe/Brue and Parrett/Tone catchments, because of the very wet conditions this autumn we have moved early to winter penn levels. This has been done in agreement with our partners.

As an additional measure in preparation for Storm Ciarán, water levels have been reduced at key pumping stations to approximately 100mm below normal winter penn. This creates extra capacity in the drains and channels for the rainfall that is forecast, and should help delay the point at which the moors start to fill. We are maximising pumping at Langport stations to continue removing some of the stored water ahead of the forecast rainfall.

We are monitoring weather conditions and river levels across Wessex area 24/7. With the approach of Storm Ciarán, we have opened our incident room in Bridgwater.

## Public Engagement Events

We are planning two events in December for Somerset Levels & Moors residents which will focus on flooding and preparations for winter. These events will be an opportunity to hear about some of the actions we have been taking to reduce flood risk, and a chance to access support and information to ensure we can all be as ready as we can be for winter rainfall.

The events will be held at:

Burrowbridge Coronation Hall – Tuesday 5th December 2023 from 5pm to 7pm

Moorland Village Hall – Thursday 7th December 2023 from 5pm to 7pm

Residents will also have the opportunity to speak with our partners including the Somerset Rivers Authority and Somerset Council who are also supporting the events.

## Outlook

Tides are currently falling, with levels in the Lower Parrett and Tone reducing, helped by flow being diverted through the Parrett Flood Relief Channel.

Rainfall over last 24 hours has been minimal with little response in rivers. Rain is forecast tonight (Wednesday 1 November) and into tomorrow.

The latest Met Office Forecast is for the bulk of the rain coming in with Storm Ciarán falling on Wednesday and Thursday. Expected rainfall totals are 20–40mm widely, with up to 50-60mm in a few places. There is the possibility of one or two high ground places seeing above 80mm, particularly on the Blackdown Hills and the Mendips.

Friday's rainfall forecast is currently 7mm max, 1 mm average, and Saturday's rainfall forecast is 18mm max, 6/7mm average.

## Flood warnings for Somerset

Flood Alerts are currently out for:

- South East Somerset Rivers
- Lower Tone and Parrett Moors
- River Yeo and River Parrett Moors - Muchelney and Thorney

It is likely more flood alerts / warnings will be triggered over the next few days. Catchments are saturated following recent rain and rivers are responding quickly.

## Flooding advice and information

Our advice to the public is to stay safe and not enter floodwater – just 30 cm of fast flowing water can move a car, and just 15 cm of fast flowing water could be enough to knock you off your feet.

- Call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 for updates on flooding, to sign up for flood warnings, or to report flooding.
- Go to the Gov.uk website or search 'know my flood risk' to sign up for Environment Agency flood warnings, receive information on the risk in your area and what to do in a flood.
- Sign up for flood warnings at [www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings)

- Visit the Environment Agency website [www.gov.uk/environment-agency](http://www.gov.uk/environment-agency) which contains information on current river levels and flooding
- Follow us on X (formerly Twitter) <https://twitter.com/EnvAgencySW>
- Visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/environmentagencywessex>