

Flooding and the Historic Environment

Guidance for property and land owners in Worcestershire

Flooding and the Historic Environment

This guidance is aimed at owners of historic buildings and other heritage assets, as well as flood-prone lands in Worcestershire. The purpose of the guidance is to highlight key documents and contacts that can help you care for your property before, during and after flood events.

As well as impacting on local communities and associated infrastructure, the effects of flooding on historic environment features and character can be significant. Flooding and flood-risk can have major implications on both the integrity and sustainability of significant heritage assets, alongside their valued contribution to local economies and communities.

Both poorly informed preventative measures, and repairs/restoration following flooding, can degrade heritage assets in the historic environment. This can harm not only the fabric of individual buildings or flood prone areas, but also the County's distinctive and valued character, thus impacting on local amenity and tourism.

Inappropriate works can also cost home owners more in the long run. For instance: the rapid drying of timber framed buildings is likely to cause significant longer term structural problems; while modifications to listed buildings that have not acquired appropriate consent may result in conflict with curators in local authorities and statutory agencies.

Heritage professionals can assist you in the protection or repair of historic assets. There are many experts within both governing authorities and private practices that can help to ensure your home or property can be both adequately protected from flood water, while retaining its value as a heritage asset. The following guidance is designed to provide a basic roadmap to ensure you are able to acquire and utilise the resources available to you, and establish contacts with those who are best placed to support you in future.

This guidance has been produced as part of an *Historic England* funded project undertaken by *Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service (WAAS)* in partnership with *Landscape Research & Management*. The project has aimed to: understand the threats to Worcestershire's historic environment through the impact directly from flood events and indirectly from measures of mitigation, adaptation, and response; provide guidance to make heritage more resilient to these threats; develop effective counter-disaster responses for heritage; inform the responses to these threats by other sectors and organisations; and to critically assess the roles of heritage specialists within governmental authorities and agencies in respect of flooding and flood risk.

This guidance is accompanied by similar documents for members of the public and historic environment practitioners. A series of articles has been produced which: critically assess the recent flood alleviation schemes in respect of their historic environment practices and impact; outline a mechanism devised by WAAS through which to better map historic environment features for use within disaster planning and response; and a study of the impact of recent floods within the county and issues of community resilience, awareness, and capacity in respect of heritage matters. A full project report is also available.

All of these, and further information on the project can be located on the project website – www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/flooding, or by contacting the *Worcestershire Historic Environment Record and Advisory Service* on archaeology@worcestershire.gov.uk.

Who should I contact for advice?

The most important guidance you can obtain will be from your local heritage and historic environment specialists. Early consultation with specialists prior to flood events is likely to be of great benefit to you and your property or land holdings, allowing for a more efficient and cost-effective programme of works if modification or repair is required.

For advice on **Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, and locally listed heritage assets** your most important point of contact will be your district council Conservation and Landscape specialists. In Worcestershire these are:

Bromsgrove District Council – 01527 881326, conservation@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Malvern Hills District Council – 01684 862335, developmentplans@malvern hills.gov.uk

Redditch Borough Council – 01527 534062, conservation@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

Worcester City Council – 01905 722559, development.orchard@worcester.gov.uk

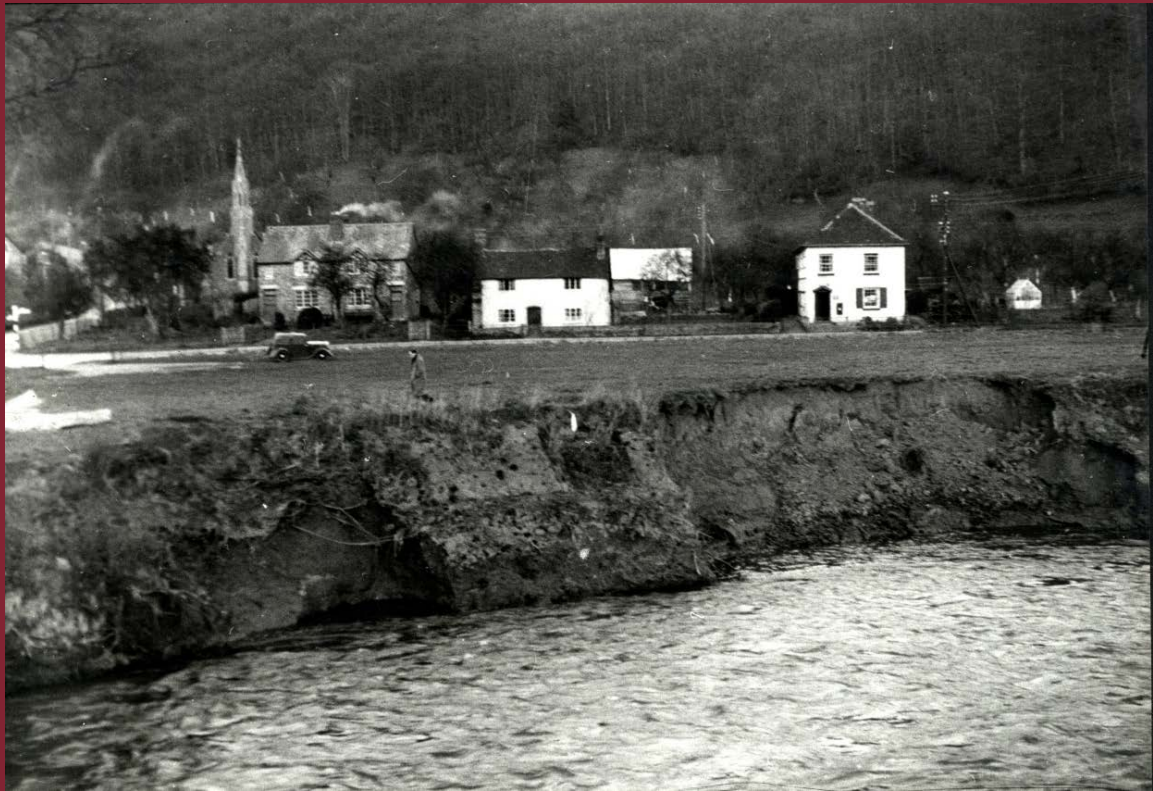
Wychavon District Council – 01386 565323, planning@wychavon.gov.uk

Wyre Forest District Council – 01526 732536, conservation@wyreforestdc.gov.uk

For professional guidance on **Grade I and II* Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, and Registered Battlefields** you can contact the West Midlands regional team of *Historic England* - 0121 625 6870, west.midlands@historicengland.org.uk

Advice on the **archaeology and undesignated historic environment assets of the county** can be obtained by contacting the *Historic Environment Advisory Team, Archive and Archaeology Service* of *Worcestershire County Council* – 01905 845560, archaeology@worcestershire.gov.uk .

Beyond government authorities, there are a wide array of private contractors and consultants who hold considerable expertise in modifying and repairing historic buildings who may be willing to offer their services. Commissioning surveys and advice from specialists in advance of flood events may highlight means through which to save money in the longer term. Regulatory organisations such as the *Institute of Historic Building Conservation* (<http://www.ihbc.org.uk/>) or the *Chartered Institute for Archaeologists* (<http://www.archaeologists.net/>) collate lists of services which are deemed to operate to adequate levels of professional standards.



A long history of flooding in Worcestershire

Worcestershire has a long history of flooding, and while very little can be done to avert these extreme events, we can mitigate for their impact through advanced preparation. Written records for significant flood events go back into the late-Medieval period, with evidence for earlier floods recorded by landforms, sedimentary evidence, and archaeological discoveries.

The height of the County's rivers during flood events is often recorded, such as on the wall below Worcester Cathedral, where the height of significant events is recorded back to 1770. Existing 18th and 19th century descriptions are also very detailed, allowing us to reconstruct a fairly accurate picture of the extreme severity of a number of events throughout the period.

Documentary evidence also illustrate that a sudden flood event in 1615 washed away the wooden bridge at Tenbury. In 1986 timbers pertaining to the structure were excavated 1km downstream within channel silts. The largest of these measured 15.5 metres long, providing some indication of the power of the water moving through the area. The timbers are now stored at Avoncroft Museum.

What guidance is available?

Obtaining and consulting guidance on dealing with flooding in respect of heritage assets is vital. There are a range of documents that can support you, with the following providing a good starting point:

This will ensure that you are aware of the key issues that you need to consider before, during and after flood events. This will also allow you to assess whether those employed to undertake work such as architects, building surveys, or structural engineers are doing so with appropriate consideration of heritage and related legislation.

The *Historic England* website provides a wealth of information and guidance on a range of issues, including planning for flood risk and response –

<https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/technical-advice>

This includes the '**Flooding and Historic Buildings**' guidance which is designed to assist those who live in, own or manage historic buildings that are threatened from flooding. Advice is provided on preventative measures as well as on the inspection, conservation and repair of historic buildings after flooding.

Wychavon District Council has produced a short guidance document title '**Flooding in Historic Buildings**', which outlines steps to take to help the drying of historic buildings in the immediate aftermath of a flood. Having a printed copy on hand for reference may prove invaluable. The document can be downloaded from <http://www.wychavon.gov.uk/heritage-and-conservation>.



Is my property a heritage asset?

There is a common misconception that 'historic' buildings are only those which have been designated as a Listed Building. In fact, less than 5% of existing buildings that date to before the 20th century are listed.

The designation of heritage assets by Historic England only covers those which are deemed to be of national significance, and therefore often exclude buildings, landscapes, and archaeology which have a substantial value to the local area and its communities.

Many of the practical issues surrounding repairing or modifying Listed Buildings may therefore apply to your property. It is therefore highly worthwhile consulting a specialist if your property is over 100 years of age, or may be of special architectural interest.

How can I access information on a heritage asset?

There are several avenues through which to find information on your home or land. Doing so will allow you to make informed decisions on how to appropriately manage and/or repair these buildings or features in response to flood risk or damage respectively.

The **Worcestershire Historic Environment Record (HER)** manages a database of the county's heritage assets numbering over fifty thousand records. These records hold information on many of the historic buildings, archaeological monuments, and historic landscape character of the county, alongside details on previous works undertaken in respect of such assets. The HER can also provide copies of a range of historic mapping and other documentary resources. Some of this information is available online through the **Heritage Gateway** (www.heritagegateway.org.uk), many of the reports of previous works can be accessed through the **Worcestershire Archaeology Online Library** (www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/library). It is also possible to request information by email or telephone (see the 'Who to contact...' section), or by visiting The Hive in Worcester.

The National Heritage List for England provides information on the country's designated assets including Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments - <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>

Information on Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and Locally Listed Buildings can often be obtained from your local Conservation Team. In Worcestershire, there is a separate team for each of the six districts.

Large amounts of additional information are likely to be available through local sources, including libraries and the local/county Records Office.

Records of heritage assets are only as good as the information provided to them. Providing copies of surveys and/or work undertaken in respect of heritage assets is therefore strongly encouraged, and is likely to be a statutory obligation for owners of Listed Buildings or Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

Checklist

It is strongly recommended that you complete the following checklist in preparation of flood events as a minimum measure towards protection your heritage asset. Obtaining bespoke advice for the property or feature in question remains however the most effective approach.

- We have obtained and consulted key guidance** such as 'Flooding and Historic Buildings' from *Historic England*.
- We have consulted my local Conservation Team, Historic Environment Record, and the National Heritage List for England** to obtain available information and advice on the heritage asset(s) in my care.
- We have ensured these guidance documents and sources of information will be accessible** in spite of potential impacts of a major flood event, such as the loss of electricity and/or internet connectivity.
- We are aware of the form and level of any statutory designations pertaining to my property** (such as Listed Building status). I have at least a basic understanding of my obligations to obtain relevant consents or permissions in respect of these designations, alongside the means through which to do so (such as retrospective Listed Building Consent).
- We have created a bespoke action plan for use both during, and in the immediate aftermath of a major flood event** to inform measures to appropriately drain, dry-out, and/or repair the heritage asset(s) in my care.
- We have obtained a list of local contractors who hold sufficient expertise to undertake remedial works** in response to flooding which will not jeopardise either the long-term integrity of the heritage asset(s) in my care, or my ability to retrospectively acquire the necessary legal consent in respect of designated assets.
- We are registered with the *Environment Agency* 'Flood Line' service** to ensure I am sufficiently warned of the need to implement my plan of action in respect of my property.

Who else can I contact outside the heritage sector?

The following is a non-exhaustive list of those in non-heritage disciplines who can aid you in planning for, or responding to flooding:

Environment Agency - 0800 80 70 60, enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency Flood Line (pre-register for local warnings and alerts by email or text) – 0345 988 1188 or 0845 988 1188

National Flood Forum – 01299 403 055, <http://www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk/>

The Flood and Water Management Team, Worcestershire County Council – 01905 765522, flooding@worcestershire.gov.uk

The Emergency Planning Unit, Worcestershire County Council – 01905 766171, emergencyplanningstaff@worcestershire.gov.uk

North Worcestershire Water Management (a shared District Council service covering Bromsgrove, Redditch & Wyre Forest) - 01562 732570, Kirsten.Huizer@nwwm.org.uk

The Lower Severn Internal Drainage Board - 01454 413340, admin@lowersevernidb.org.uk

Canals and Rivers Trust – 0303 040 4040, enquiries.westmidlands@canalrivertrust.org.uk

Severn Rivers Trust - 07817 622919, severnrivertrust@btconnect.com

Severn Trent Water – 0800 707 6600, www.stwater.co.uk

Natural England - 0300 060 6000 enquiries@naturalengland.org.uk

Planning, Economy and Performance, Worcestershire County Council - 01905 766723, sp@worcestershire.gov.uk

Minerals' Planning, Worcestershire County Council (advice on mineral resources) – 01905 766374, minerals@worcestershire.gov.uk

Woodland Trust – 01476 581111, england@woodlandtrust.org.uk

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust - 01905 754919, enquiries@worcestershirewildlifetrust.org

Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust – 01905 855184, eht@worc.ac.uk

Act Now!

Advanced consultation with heritage specialists can prove highly beneficial. Expert advice on the best means through which to protect and/or repair your property or land during and after a flood event can minimise impact to both your assets and yourself.

Ill-informed measures in the immediate aftermath of a flood event can seriously compromise the long term integrity and condition of the asset. For instance: while failure to allow historic buildings to dry slowly may result in warped or split structural timbers and cause damage to stone and plasterwork; leaving timbers saturated can expose them to rot through fungal attack. Conservation specialists can also assist you in understanding the processes of obtaining the necessary Listed Building or Schedule Monument Consents to carry out repair work.

Finally, it is essential to remember that conservation and heritage professionals are likely to be in high demand during and immediately after a flood event; and may not therefore be able to provide advice within your required timeframe. Devising a bespoke plan of action for the protection and/or repair your property or asset in advance is therefore essential. This can be readily achieved using the recommended guidance documents.

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Contact

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Worcestershire County Council

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Sawmill Walk
The Butts
Worcester
WRI 3PD

01905 845560

archaeology@worcestershire.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk/archaeology/flooding

www.landscape-research-management.co.uk

<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/>

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