

An update following Storm Babet

We are writing to update you on how the Environment Agency (EA) and Suffolk County Council (SCC) are working together to support recovery in your community following the flooding by Storm Babet. We know the devastating impact flooding can have, which is why our top priorities are to help communities and further protect people and property.

Suffolk County Council have previously contacted all homeowners who reported they were flooded by the storm. This update is providing additional information on what happened, the actions that have been taken since and next steps for your community. It also provides links to where you can find further information.

The process for investigations and subsequent actions has been published on the Suffolk County Council website.

What happened during Storm Babet?

A succession of weather fronts between 11 and 13 October brought significant rainfall totals (typically between 30mm and 50mm) across Suffolk resulting in saturated land and full rivers. Storm Babet followed between 18 and 20 October with totals of 50-80mm and individual rain gauges recording more than 100mm, which resulted in widescale flooding across the region. Several river level measuring stations indicated flows close to, or even exceeding, their highest on record. The weather remained wet for the rest of the month. Our current understanding is October 2023 was the joint second wettest October in East Anglia on record, dating back to 1871.

Suffolk saw the heaviest rainfall in East Anglia, which caused significant and rapid flooding of roads and properties. The event was characterised by the swift reaction of entire river systems rather than the more usual gradual progression of water downstream. A major incident was declared in Suffolk on the afternoon of Friday 20 due to significant disruption to travel and the high number of flooded communities.

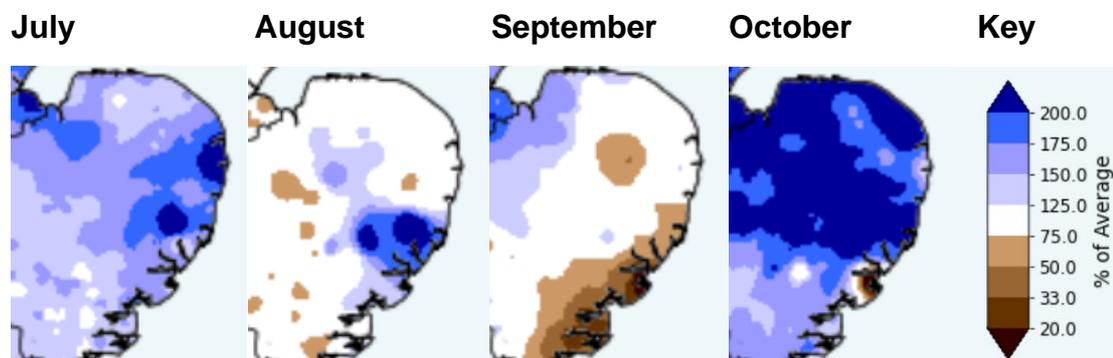
Schools were impacted, and some children had to be hosted overnight. Many roads across the county became impassable with more than 600 stranded and abandoned vehicles reported. The flooding also interrupted water supplies in and around Ipswich.

The EA issued 25 flood warnings across Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.



We have reports of 773 properties flooding internally, across 173 communities. This number may still rise as we continue to investigate the aftermath of the storm.

The following maps illustrate the average rainfall in East Anglia between July and October 2023 against the historical average monthly rainfall.



What are we currently doing?

The EA and Suffolk County Council are working together to record the impacts of the storm, including the number of properties flooded. We are also working with partners and flooded communities to understand the full extent of the flooding and undertake flood investigations.

We continue to inspect for damage e.g. on flood embankments, highway infrastructure, collate flood data, and review our flood warning procedures.

Further Information on next steps for your community can be found on the Suffolk County Council website or through your local Parish Council

Where to go for further information

The links below provide useful information on how to find out if your home is at risk, sign-up for flood warnings and be ready to take action.

- National Flood Forum – advice and support for those affected by flooding - www.nationalfloodforum.org.uk
- Know your flood risk - <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>
- Link to further information about Flood Risk Management in Suffolk: [Flood Risk Management in Suffolk](#)
- Gov.uk has information on what to do before, during and after flooding:
 - To sign up for Flood Warnings: <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>



- To check for flooding in the next 5 days: <https://www.gov.uk/check-flooding>
- To look up your flood risk: <https://www.gov.uk/check-long-term-flood-risk>
- Help with writing personal, business or community flood plans:
<https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding>
- If you would rather speak to someone please call Floodline on 0345 988 1188
- The Blue Pages provides a directory of available flood products:
<https://bluepages.org.uk/>
- Communities Prepared free online workshop, which start in January 2024:
<https://www.communitiesprepared.org.uk/events/>
- Link to the Suffolk Riparian Ownership Guide (responsibilities for managing ditches and other watercourses): [Riparian ownership guide 2019](#)
- Find out about what Flood Risk Management is planned in your area - [Find out about flood risk management plans – Flood Plan Explorer \(data.gov.uk\)](#)

What happened in Needham Market?

Storm Babet delivered heavy rainfall in the River Gipping catchment between 19 and 22 October. At the Needham Market rainfall gauge the highest totals were recorded on Saturday 20 October where over 50mm of rainfall was recorded in 24 hours.

Storm Ciaran followed on Thursday 28 October, but rainfall totals were lower reaching 23mm over this 24-hour period.

Rain fell quickly onto saturated ground causing surface water run-off and high river levels. Flooding occurred from the River Gipping and its tributaries known as the Orchardgate Watercourse and the Lion Barn Drain. There was also flooding from surface water run-off. Areas affected include properties at Foxglove Avenue and Barking Road, Pinecroft Way, Lion Lane, Maitland Road, Coddendam Road, Highlands Close, John Swain Close, Hawks Mill Street and Crown Street.

We have confirmed records that 37 properties were flooded internally. These figures are likely to be refined as further information is gathered.

During Storm Babet our river level gauges at Stowmarket and Creeting recorded the highest levels since 1979. A flood warning for the River Gipping through Needham Market was issued at 17:12pm on 20 October 2023 in response to rising water levels at our river level gauge at Creeting. We understand many properties had flooded in advance of this from smaller ungauged tributaries and watercourses, surface water run-off and overland flow brought by intense rainfall.



What have we been doing?

After the storm EA officers visited Needham Market on 25 and 27 October and 23 November to ascertain what happened and speak to residents affected. We collected evidence of water levels and flow routes to enable us to identify the source of flooding and any immediate actions to be taken by us or our partners such as Suffolk County Council as the Lead Local Flood Authority, Suffolk Highways and Babergh and Mid Suffolk Council.

As part of our routine maintenance programme, we have continued to undertake channel maintenance works in Needham Market, including vegetation clearance from the main river section of the Lion Barn Drain (completed on the 9 October) and the Orchardgate Watercourse. Our maintenance programme also includes vegetation clearance on the main River Gipping, which is carried out if an inspection of the watercourse indicates that work is needed to reduce flood risk to people and property. Planned works includes localised in-channel weed control at specific targeted sites where the flood risk is greatest.

We also complete operational checks on 5 structures throughout Needham Market up to 4 times a year, all structures are in a good state of repair and operated as expected during recent flooding. These assets are the sluice and weir at Hawks Mill; 2 weirs close to the B1078/Coddenham Road; and a weir just upstream of the A14 - A140 junction. In addition, we inspect and maintain the flood wall located next to the River Gipping at Crown Street.

What are the next steps?

The Environment Agency and Suffolk County Council are working closely to undertake Flood Investigations. The report will establish the causes of flooding and make recommendations for future improvements to managing and responding to flooding in Needham Market. The lead authority in these investigations in Needham Market is the Environment Agency and we continue to work closely with Suffolk County Council who will publish the final report.

Prior to recent flooding the EA have been working on a flood risk project in Needham Market to install property flood resilience measures, such as waterproof flood doors and air brick covers to individual properties at risk from the River Gipping and Lion Barn Drain. Recent information received will help inform next steps for the project, including potential to increase the offer of Property Flood Resilience measures to additional properties that have been flooded.



We will also be undertaking a thorough validation of our flood warning service, including reviewing the flood warning and alert target areas and the thresholds which trigger them. We are investigating potential improvements to telemetry and data collection with a view to improving the accuracy and timing of information provided by our flood warning service.

If you have any photos, videos and accounts of the flooding can you please fill in the short survey available here: <https://forms.office.com/e/WPfN1DAv8a> If you have already reported this to the EA or SCC, you do not need to complete this form.

Property Flood Resilience Grant

Suffolk County Council is preparing the PFR grant application process to comply with government requirements and intends to **launch in early 2024**. All properties that have been reported to the Council, via the Highways Reporting Tool, will receive a direct communication when the scheme is launched.

In summary, eligible property owners (both domestic and commercial) can apply for **up to £5,000 (including VAT)** to help make their property more resilient to future flooding. Up to **£500** of the grant can be used to contribute towards survey costs.

Property owners will be responsible for sourcing their own surveyor and grants of up to **£5,000 incl. VAT (including survey costs)** will be paid retrospectively to the property owner once the Council receives proof of the completed installation and invoicing for the approved measures.

Further information into the grant eligibility and conditions can be found on the Suffolk County Council website here: <https://www.suffolk.gov.uk/about/flood-recovery-information-for-suffolk>

Important numbers and contacts

Floodline - to find latest information or report flooding

Telephone: 0345 988 1188 / Textphone: 0345 602 6340
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Incident Hotline - to report blockages or areas of concern and flooding

Telephone: 0800 80 70 60

If you have any questions please contact: enquiries_eastanglia@environment-agency.gov.uk

