

Press release: Be prepared and protect your property against risk of flooding

Be prepared for the unexpected is the stark warning from volunteer flood wardens in Calderdale.

Katie Kimber is one of two Environment Agency flood wardens in a newly formed group set up to help protect residents and businesses in Luddenden Foot and they are looking to recruit more this Autumn.

She lives a row of houses at the bottom of the Calder Valley that has a canal running at the front and a river behind them, with their gardens protected by a high wall. Until Boxing Day 2015 they had never been flooded.

Katie said:

I was completely unprepared. I had only just moved to the area and even though the damage I suffered was minimal compared to houses just a stone throw away it made me determined to be ready for the next time.

The mother of two children, aged 12 and 15, now has a flood plan for her own property and has helped set up a flood container for her local community kitted out with sandbags, Floodsax, brushes, spades, gully cleaners, wheelbarrows, gloves and hand hygiene gel – all the provisions needed for clean-up operations.

Katie has recently attended a sessions with Calder Valley Search and Rescue where the team demonstrated the dangers of water and how to keep safe during a flood event. She has worked with her husband to develop an app called Flood Aware for tracking water levels in the local area. Her role is to work with the Environment Agency to provide them with valuable local knowledge about what is happening on the ground and to support her community in the event of a flood – particularly older and vulnerable people living in the hamlet.

Her advice to all residents is to make sure they have measures in place to protect their own property, sign up for the Environment Agency weather warnings and flood alerts available by email, text and phone, check what the warnings mean and what they should do, keep a close eye on the weather outside and the levels of nearby rivers, particularly during prolonged, heavy rain.

Katie, whose day job is working for Watermark Flood Fund Calderdale, a Community Foundation For Calderdale project which raises money to provide grants in case of future flooding and provides public relations support for Landlines and Watermarks – a unique community arts project with a water theme – said:

Expect the unexpected, have FloodSax or something similar ready under your sink and an emergency bag full of essentials such as a change of clothes, wellies, mobile phone, snacks. Even if you feel silly knock on your neighbour's door if you have any concerns.

A positive to come out of the recent flooding incident is we have become a very close-knit community, we know and look out for each other.

Karl Boggis, father of two young boys, joined the Mytholmroyd flood group shortly after there were two flood events just two weeks apart in his village in 2012. The group has developed from being a small local pressure group to being the 'eyes and ears' of organisations such as the Environment Agency (EA) with 22 active volunteer wardens covering eight zones. The flood wardens receive early warnings of bad weather on the horizon from the EA's duty officer and one of group's first tasks is to set up a communications cell in one of their living rooms to provide people of Mytholmroyd with regular updates using their Facebook Group about all flood related activity.



Karl is part of the Mytholmroyd flood group

They communicate with each other using radios, visit neighbours to ask them to move any cars at risk and move property upstairs to safety, help evacuate local schools if necessary and will direct traffic to keep it out of flood water.

Karl, a town councillor and former town Mayor, said:

We know all the hot spots now, which areas are more at risk of flooding so we visit them first to check everything is OK and make them aware of the likelihood of bad weather. We have evacuation plans for some houses, check drains and gullies to make sure they are not blocked. When necessary, we will open up the cabin store in Mytholmroyd for people to collect sandbags.

A lot of our work is through effective communications and making sure people don't panic. We ask people to stay at home, turn their radios on and if they have elderly neighbours please check on them.

As part of my role I visit people in my local community to introduce myself as their flood warden so they know who to contact if they have a problem. Most of our hard work is actually to help people clear up after a flood.

Karl, a property developer who also works part-time in a utility warehouse distributor, had six of his seven properties badly damaged during the Boxing Day floods with water reaching 10ft in his own house. He said:

Sometimes we do get alerted to bad weather and it doesn't materialise which does make people complacent. However, the effects of floods are so devastating it is much better to be warned and be safe than sorry.

All flood wardens in Calderdale are being encouraged to take part in an exercise to test their flood plans on the 20th October to coincide with the Upper Calder flood sirens being sounded as part an annual test.

When asked what qualities you need to be a flood warden Karl said:

You need plenty of community spirit, a desire to help and good local knowledge helps.

Jon Follows, flood resilience officer with the Environment Agency, said:

The local knowledge flood wardens can provide on the ground is invaluable. They complement our work by implementing their community action plans and offer a key point of contact for us to be able to warn and inform people.

These days with climate change our weather is becoming even more unpredictable and so it's vital for communities at risk to protect themselves by signing up for free flood warnings, and prepare a flood plan.

1 in 6 properties in England are at risk of flooding – that's almost 5 million people. A big worry is that only about half of the people who are in a flood risk area, actually know about it.

Jon's advice is to start by taking three simple steps to help protect you, your family and home from the devastating effects flooding:

- Check your flood risk – Use the [Environment Agency maps](#) to find out if you are at risk from flooding
- Register for Floodline – sign up tel: 0345 988 1188 or visit: www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings
- Do something to be prepared. Start with a quick personal flood plan and find out what the different flood warnings mean visit www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy
- Advice for people who've been flooded is available at: www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood

If you are interested in becoming a flood warden or would like to ask questions, please email the flood resilience team at yorkshiresw.fim@environment-agency.gov.uk.

For the latest information on current flood warnings and the local weather forecast, Calderdale residents can visit the 'Eye on Calderdale' website – www.eyeoncalderdale.com

You can also stay up to date by following @EnvAgencyYNE and #floodaware on Twitter.

On Boxing Day 2015 around 370 properties were flooded in Mytholmroyd as extreme rainfall affected the upper Calder Valley. Since then, Environment Agency teams have carried out thousands of inspections, made crucial repairs and constructed temporary defences. A flood action plan for the town was published in May 2016 setting out plans for permanent improvements to flood protection.

[Press release: New steps to tackle](#)

Littering announced

New steps will be taken to deal with litter louts and those few who mindlessly throw rubbish from their vehicles, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey announced today.

Cleaning up our streets and countryside currently costs the taxpayer almost £800 million a year and so maximum on-the-spot fines for dropping litter will almost double from April next year – from the current limit of £80 to £150 – in order to deter and punish the anti-social minority who continue to drop rubbish.

In future councils will also be able to impose these fines on the owners of vehicles from which litter is thrown, even if it was discarded by someone else. The government is clear these fines should not be abused simply as a means of raising money, so guidance on how fines should be applied will be issued to councils.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Littering blights our communities, spoils our countryside and taxpayers' money is wasted cleaning it up.

Throwing rubbish from a vehicle is just as unacceptable as dropping it in the street and we will tackle this antisocial behaviour by hitting litter louts in the pocket.

These new fines will make sure the perpetrators, not the local community, bear the cost of keeping our streets and roads clean.

Today's announcement means that:

- From April next year, the maximum on-the-spot fine local authorities can issue for dropping litter will nearly double, from £80 to £150. The minimum fine will increase from £50 to £65, while the default fine will increase from £75 to £100.
- For the first time, local authorities will also be able to apply these penalties for littering to vehicle owners if it can be proved litter was thrown from their car – even if it was discarded by somebody else.

The changes to fines for littering follow a public consultation as part of the launch of England's first ever Litter Strategy in April 2017. These new findings showed the vast majority of respondents were in favour of increasing on-the-spot fines.

More than 85% were in favour of increasing fixed penalties for littering, while local authorities agreed that new penalties to tackle littering from cars would help to improve environmental quality in their area. The government is today confirming that it will proceed with these measures, with

legislation introduced by the end of this year and the new fines in place by April next year, subject to parliamentary approval.

The government is clear however that councils must not abuse the power to impose fines. Councils should take into account local circumstances, like local ability to pay, when setting the level for these fines. Government guidance will be issued around the turn of the year to ensure the new powers are used in a fair and proportionate way by local authorities.

[Press release: Playground reinstated after ground collapse](#)

Pupils at an infant school in Derbyshire are 'back on the right lines' after the final touches have been made to their playground, which had been affected by historical coal mining.

On Friday 13 October 2017 new game markings were drawn onto the playground of Elmsleigh Infant and Nursery School in Swadlincote, Derbyshire.



One of the children using the playground

Over 200 pupils at the school were left without a playground in May 2017 when

a seemingly small dip on the surface of the tarmac turned into a small ground collapse.

The Coal Authority, which deals with the legacy of Britain's coal mining, confirmed that the hole was the result of past coal mining and quickly began repairs. The collapse was initially infilled with stone before drilling was undertaken to ascertain the extent of the problem in an area where coal was known to occur within a shallow coal seam or outcrop.

Drilling revealed the extent of the collapse and it was designated as being a shallow unrecorded shaft – a possible bell pit. Shallow workings were also found under the remainder of the playground and so the Coal Authority capped the shaft with a reinforced concrete slab and also filled the old workings with concrete grout.

The initial work was completed during the first week of the summer holidays, but the pupils were still without the final repairs – the markings geared for outdoor play on the ground. At all times the pupils safety was of utmost concern and alternative provisions were made to ensure all children had access to outdoor play.

Specialist contractors working on behalf of the Coal Authority reinstated the markings, including a rainbow and number squares that have been designed by the youngsters themselves.



A playground decoration

Alan Hines, Project Manager for the Coal Authority, said the markings will bring an end to the repair work.

He said:

It will be good to see the playground finished with new markings that have been designed by both children and parents. This will bring a very nice end to an incident, which saw both the playground and the markings ruined.

Charlotte Hancock, the school's Business Assistant, said the work will be the final part of the repair programme. She said:

The event was quite surprising.

A small dip in the playground on a Friday had turned into a hole by Monday. Fortunately, no one was hurt during the incident but it left the children without their large playground.

The playground was reinstated over the summer holidays and all the children then needed were some new markings that would let them play their games during break times.



A butterfly playground decoration

Notice: AL4 8DF, Affinity Water Limited: environmental permit application advertisement

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for waste operations, mining waste operations, installations, water discharge and groundwater activities. The arrangements are explained in its [Public Participation Statement](#)

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency office you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
- when you need to comment by

The Environment Agency will decide:

- whether to grant or refuse the application

Consultation outcome: Proposed Control of Mercury (Enforcement) Regulations 2017

Updated: Summary of responses and government response added.

We want to know what you think about how we plan to enforce controls on mercury in the UK. The controls will apply the requirements of [EU Regulation 2017/852 on mercury](#).

We are interested in the views of those in industries that use mercury or deal with mercury waste, as well as those involved in dentistry. In particular, we would like to hear whether you view the approach proposed as

being appropriate and proportionate.

This is a joint consultation led in England by Defra, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), with input from the Department of Health. In the Devolved Administrations it has been led by the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Northern Ireland) and the Department of Health (Northern Ireland).