

Press release: Church bells to be back-up warning for flooding in Starcross

Church bells will be the back-up warning for flooding in Starcross.

The Environment Agency has worked with Starcross Flood Group, St Paul's Church and flood wardens to create a contingency plan unique to the village if all usual forms of communication fail.

The chances of residents not getting warned by traditional electronic methods via the flood warning service are remote. But every flood plan has a contingency and Megan Debenham, the Flood Group Co-ordinator for Starcross, suggested using the 18th and 19th-century bells in St Paul's Church.

Community fundraisers and funding from the Environment Agency has restored the bells and surrounding masonry to their former glory and the bells returned to their tower on Tuesday 19 February 2019 after an absence of 4 months.

Jane Fletcher-Peters of the Environment Agency said:

As well as building flood defences, we also work with communities to create a flood plans – a set of actions of what to do in the event of flooding.

These plans always have a contingency for warning residents. While flood wardens knocking on doors is the most obvious solution, if flooding is at night, then residents could be asleep or wary of answering the door.

So we work together to find practical solutions like shining car headlights into houses and making people aware if that is accompanied by knocking, it could be a flood warden at the door.

Starcross is very much a boating community so it made sense that if the church bells were sounded to warn of flood, ringers would adopt an SOS peal familiar to residents.

Tim Miles, churchwarden of St Paul's Church, said:

We are very excited to welcome the bells back to the church and will sleep soundly knowing they are ready if needed to warn villagers of flooding.

Starcross' use of the church bells comes 13 months after the Environment Agency began £4million of work to better protect more than 600 properties from coastal flooding in the area. The Environment Agency installed 2 new floodgates at Church Road and Generals Lane slipway and raised the car park levels and extended the slipway at the Fishing and Cruising Club.

In Cockwood the harbour wall was raised along Dawlish Road in line with predicted sea level rises. There are also 2 tidal gates as part of the scheme that the community will operate on the Environment Agency's behalf.

There are 5.2 million homes and businesses in England at risk of flooding. The Environment Agency monitors flood risk and issues alerts and warnings accordingly:

- Flood Alert – Prepare. Flooding is possible
- Flood Warning – Act. Flooding is expected. Immediate action required
- Severe Flood Warning – Survive. Severe flooding. Danger to life

Check your flood risk, know what to do if flooding was expected, and be ready to respond. Check your flood risk and keep up to date with the latest situation at www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-at-risk-of-flooding, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow [@EnvAgencySW](https://twitter.com/EnvAgencySW) on Twitter for the latest flood updates in Devon and Cornwall.