

Morpeth – Flooding FAQ's

- 1). How and when does the Mitford Dam operate?

The flood alleviation scheme consists of the upstream dam on the River Wansbeck, an upstream dam on the Cotting Burn, flood walls, flood gates and earth embankments within the town of Morpeth.

The dam at Mitford will automatically come into operation when the River Wansbeck rises to pre-determined levels upstream. This is monitored by Environment Agency (EA) staff.

In Morpeth, it is normal for the river level to spill over onto the surrounding riverside footpaths (see question 5 below) and high up the flood walls and flood embankments before the upstream dam operates. This occurs to give the best standard of flood alleviation to homes and businesses.

- 2). Are all properties in Morpeth protected by the Mitford Dam?

Not all properties are protected by the flood defences or by the Mitford Dam. If you want to find out if your property is at risk of flooding please visit the following government website: <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>

- 3). When does the EA shut the flood gates?

We make operational decisions such as floodgate closure based on river level and weather forecasting, and as such, this may result in some floodgates being closed across our region before catchment-wide Flood Alerts are issued. If issued, the Flood Alert message will include details of our operational response, including our plans to close floodgates, or the status of them if they are already closed. A Flood Warning will be issued if we have a forecast indicating the river level is likely to exceed the height of defences (including flood gates), or we observe flood defences not operating as expected, and as a result we expect to see properties flooded.

- 4). What do the Flood Warning Service levels mean, i.e Flood Alert and Flood Warning, etc?



What it means - Flooding is possible, be prepared. This is issued between two-hours to two-days in advance of flooding with the impacts expected to be flooding to footpaths, recreation land and car parks. A Flood Alert will not be issued between the hours of 9pm and 7am (unless absolutely necessary) and may therefore be issued in advance if the impact is later in the evening.



What it means – Flooding is expected, immediate action required. This is issued when impacts expected on the ground are flooding of homes and businesses, flooding of railways and roads, with major impacts, and extensive flood plain flooding.



What it means – Severe flooding, danger to life. This is issued when flooding poses a significant risk to life.

Further information on the flood warning service can be found by visiting www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings or by contacting your Community Engagement Officer at colin.hall@environment-agency.gov.uk.

- 5). Are there areas in Morpeth that the EA and Northumberland County Council (NCC) allow to flood?

There are a number of low lying areas of the town which also still regularly flood, like riverside footpaths, the entrance road to Matheson's Gardens and Oldgate Court, Matheson's Gardens car park and the Newmarket East car park. These areas are areas that can be used to safely hold excess water, when river levels are high, to allow as much flow from the river to pass through, lessening the risk to property level flooding. The EA is funded to protect properties, ie housing and businesses, not car parks and footpaths.

- 6). How does the new NCC surface water scheme at Bennetts Walk work?

The recently constructed scheme at Bennett's Walk has improved the efficiency of the surface water collection system by installing a new linear drain, reprofiling a section of carriageway and ensuring emergency pumping can be carried out effectively. The improved surface water collection system will continue to discharge to the River Wansbeck when river levels are within their normal range.

When the adjacent river rises to a level which could cause Bennett's Walk to flood, the flap valves covering the outfalls from the highway drainage will close. The flap valves prevent river water flowing back through the highway drainage and flooding Bennett's Walk, but also prevents the highway drainage from discharging to the river. In this situation, Northumberland County Council will pump any accumulating water over the flood wall to prevent flooding of Bennett's Walk.

As part of the ongoing works to address the reported issue of backflow through this gully - a new inspection chamber and non-return valve has been fitted on the existing lead from the gully on the north side of the Goose Hill / Bennetts Walk / Alexandra Road junction.

7). Where do I find help with finding flood insurance?

Flood Re is a joint initiative between the Government and insurers. Its aim is to make the flood cover part of household insurance policies more affordable. Visit - www.floodre.co.uk for more information.

8). How do I sign up to the Flood Warning Service?

You can sign up to receive free flood alerts and warnings by visiting www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings

9). Where can local river levels be viewed online?

Flood river levels can be viewed online by visiting <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/river-and-sea-levels>

10). What is the best contact number to ring if people are worried about potential flooding?

If you have any concerns about potential flooding in your area please call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

For further information about the services of the Environment Agency please visit www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency or on social media @EnvAgencyYNE @EnvAgency