

Trees and Flood Risk

Trees which have fallen or are at risk of falling into watercourses are often seen and reported to the Environment Agency. Fallen trees and large low-hanging branches have negative effects including:

- Preventing the weed cutting and grass cutting of the river channel and banks
- Blocking the channel and creating a barrier to high flows
- Breaking off and travelling downstream causing blockages on bridges

All of these **increase flood risk** to nearby properties.



Responsibilities

The responsibility for maintaining trees lies with the land owner, or *riparian owner*, in the first instance. Riparian owners are people who own land adjacent to a watercourse. More information on riparian responsibilities can be found on the gov.uk website.

www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse

The Environment Agency does not own most of the land along main rivers and has no direct responsibility for maintenance on private land. The Environment Agency may use its permissive powers to carry out maintenance work or blockage removal where it is considered there is an imminent risk of flooding.

Positive Action You Can Take

Cut down branches and trees before they fall into the river. This regular maintenance ensures things don't get out of hand and difficult to manage as trees grow bigger.

Think about forming a community group which could pool resources and time to help each other. Due to birds nesting in the warmer months, autumn is the best time of year to undertake work on trees. This also makes sure the rivers are clear before winter.

Do not plant trees close to the river as they can cause problems with blockages and maintenance in the future. Willows are especially fast-growing and liable to splitting and falling, therefore it is advised not to plant these.