

# New Legal Powers to Help Prevent Flooding

Wokingham Borough Council now has new legal powers to help prevent flooding across the borough, following its successful application to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to make land drainage byelaws.

Wokingham Borough Council has published the following press release:

## **New Legal Powers to Help Prevent Flooding**

The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 allows local authorities to make land drainage byelaws to help regulate changes to flows in watercourses, manage obstructions and vegetation, and repair damage to river banks, among others.

Failure to adhere to these byelaws in the Wokingham Borough is now a criminal offence which can be prosecuted in magistrates' courts. This will help the borough council carry out its duties as a highway authority and also as the lead local flood authority.

"The risk of flooding and the impact of new major developments are matters of concern to very many residents and businesses in our borough," said Josie Wragg, interim director of environment at Wokingham Borough Council.

"Although we always try to persuade those who don't act responsibly to rectify problems, it will be useful to have these powers if action is ignored."

Wokingham Borough's specific byelaws give the borough council control over land within eight metres either side from the bank of a ditch. This will prevent development, or any features and structures, from being put too close to the ditch. This will allow the council to protect the natural flood plain, create a 'buffer zone' for biodiversity, and stop properties from flooding.

A six-week public consultation was held last year before the council's application to DEFRA to make sure the views of residents were taken into account.

A copy of the confirmed byelaws can be found on the flooding webpage, under 'useful information and websites' section, on the borough council's website: [www.wokingham.gov.uk/community-and-safety/emergencies/drainage-and-flooding/](http://www.wokingham.gov.uk/community-and-safety/emergencies/drainage-and-flooding/)