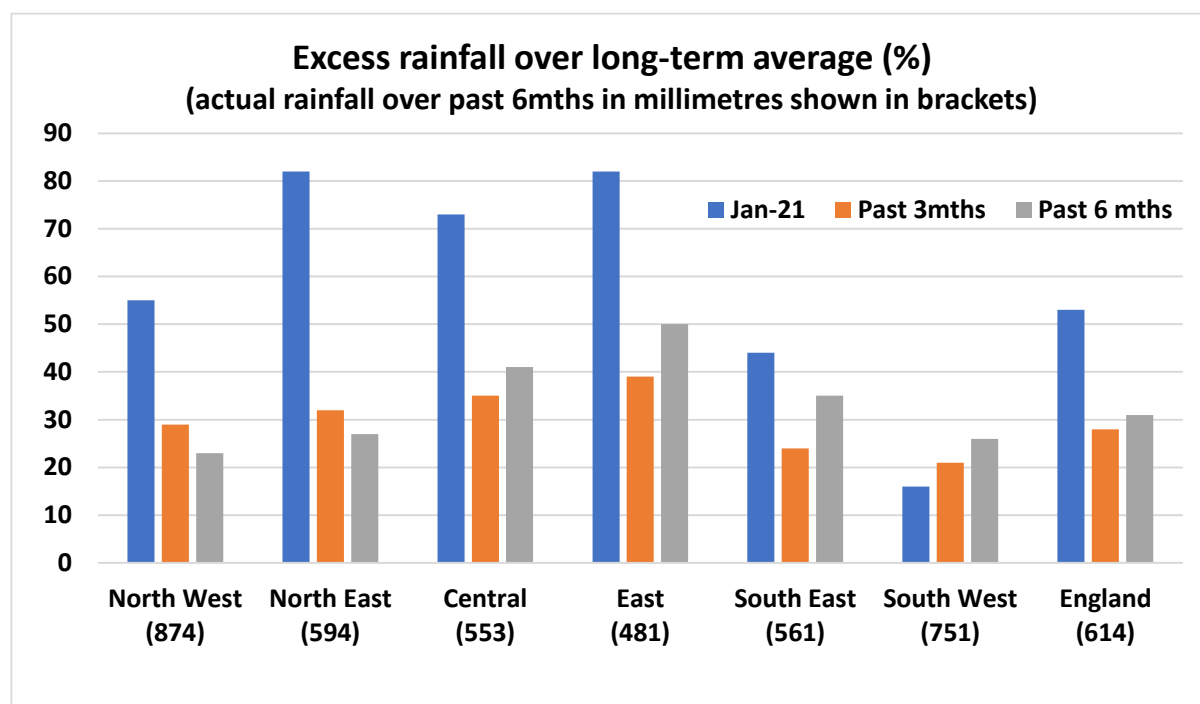


## Local flooding issues

At the time of writing, early-February, Chalgrave parish has numerous flooding issues. There is standing water in the fields – and on the Chalgrave golf course – the ditches are full to overflowing in some places, Parkview Lane has been engulfed for over a month and there are seasonal concerns that large puddles on our roads will become icy hazards.

Considering that Chalgrave parish is on a hill – the parish church stands 465 feet above sea level – the extent of the flooding is surprising. While the underlying geology is sedimentary rock – compressed layers of chalk, limestone and sandstone – most of Chalgrave is described as decalcified boulder clay, which is poorly drained. This is according to the Chalgrave Parish Survey 1986, which can be found at: <https://www.chalgravepc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Chalgrave-Survey-1986.pdf>.





However, if enough rain falls within a short interval, flooding will occur at any altitude. Bedfordshire, and the East of England in general, has experienced heavy rainfall in December and January. The Met Office reports that, for the 3 months to January, rainfall is 39 per cent above the long-term average (LTA) and for the 6 months to January, it is 50 per cent above LTA. While less rain has fallen in East of England than in any other English region – check out the North-West and South-West – the East is further above its typical rainfall than the other regions. Residents of long standing have confirmed that this is one of the worst flooding experiences in the parish in the past 40 years.





Source: The Met Office

Excessive rain has strained local drainage networks, bringing inconvenience and in some cases, genuine hardship to residents, their livestock and pets. Inevitably, questions arise as to the causes of specific areas of flooding and where responsibility rests for their resolution. The Central Beds Council (CBC) website contains a great deal of useful information that addresses these questions.

Not all floods are alike: they come from a variety of sources and will behave differently depending on the conditions in which they arise. Each type of flood requires its own type of response:

| Where's the water coming from?  | Why does it happen?   | Who's the Lead Authority?   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Surface water</b><br>           | <p>Caused when rainwater can't drain away into natural or man-made systems, instead it collects on the surface in pools or flows over the ground.</p> <p>It is more difficult to predict surface water flooding, compared to other types of flooding, and it will usually occur rapidly but be relatively short lived.</p>  | <p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council)</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 0300 300 8000 Office hours / 0300 300 8098 Out of office hours</p> <p><b>E-mail:</b> <a href="mailto:floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">floodrisk@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a><br/>(not to be used in an emergency – in an emergency call 999)</p> <p><b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/</a></p> |
| <b>Ground water</b><br>           | <p>Occurs when water levels in the ground rise above the land surface. It is most likely in areas underlain by permeable rocks such as chalk or sandstone, called 'aquifers'. This type of flooding can last for weeks or months.</p>   | <p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council). See below for contact details.</p>  |
| <b>Ordinary watercourses</b><br> | <p>These are all watercourses that aren't labelled as 'main rivers' by the Environment Agency. They often include smaller channels like streams, ditches and brooks and can be above or below ground (e.g. in piped 'culverts').</p>  | <p>Your <b>Lead Local Flood Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council) has strategic responsibility. See <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood">www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/flood</a></p> <p><b>The Bedford Group of IDBs</b> also control some watercourses see below for details.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Riparian owners</b> are responsible for making sure watercourses are working effectively.</p>   |
| <b>The public highway</b><br>    | <p>When water pools within the boundaries of the public highway it is considered as 'highway flooding'. This might happen when drains become blocked.</p> <p>Highways authorities provide and manage highway drainage to keep the roads safe. They are responsible for managing surface water flood risk on roads through maintenance of the highway drainage system.</p> | <p><b>Highways Authority</b> (Central Bedfordshire Council)</p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 0300 300 8049 (24 hours)<br/> <b>Online:</b> <a href="http://www.cb-report-it.co.uk/index.aspx">http://www.cb-report-it.co.uk/index.aspx</a><br/> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk">http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>OR</p> <p>The <b>Highways England</b> for motorways and trunk roads</p>                                       |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Sewers and drains</b></p>  | <p>This can happen when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked, causing them to surcharge. The chance of sewer flooding will depend on the capacity of the local sewerage system and the amount of rain that falls.</p> <p>In urban areas, surface water flooding and sewer flooding often combine, polluting the floodwater.</p> | <p>For public sewers the local water and sewerage undertakers are responsible for managing the flood risk from public sewers. These are:</p> <p><b>Anglian Water:</b><br/> <b>Telephone:</b> 08457 145 145<br/> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.anglianwater.co.uk/">www.anglianwater.co.uk/</a></p> <p><b>Thames water</b><br/> <b>Telephone:</b> 0845 9200 800<br/> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.thameswater.co.uk/">www.thameswater.co.uk/</a></p> <p>OR</p> <p><b>Individuals</b> are responsible for private sewers and drains within their property boundaries.</p> |
| <p><b>Water mains</b></p>        | <p>Water pipes can become corroded with age or damaged due to ground movement.</p> <p>This type of flooding is not related to rainfall but can cause localised disruption to transport and damage to buildings, particularly properties with a basement.</p>  | <p><b>Thames Water</b><br/> <b>As above</b></p> <p><b>Anglian Water</b><br/> <b>As above</b></p> <p><b>Affinity Water</b><br/> <b>Telephone:</b> 0845 7823333 (24-hrs)<br/> <b>Web:</b> <a href="http://www.affinitywater.co.uk">www.affinitywater.co.uk</a></p>   |

Source: [https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/migrated\\_images/flood-guide-3\\_tcm3-7582.pdf](https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/migrated_images/flood-guide-3_tcm3-7582.pdf)

Arguably, the most serious type of flooding in our parish is highway flooding, and the Parish Council is working with the Highways Authority to resolve instances of persistent flooding, notably Parkview Lane.

It is worth pointing out that housing development is a frequent cause of new flooding problems. Developers often fail to anticipate the impact of their activities on the flow of water through or around their developments. Where development impedes the water flow from its original course, there will be unintended consequences. These problems may not materialise until years after the development has been completed.

While the resolution of most flooding issues comes down to CBC or the water utilities, landowners and households also have responsibilities. If you own land adjacent to a watercourse or which has a watercourse running through it, you are considered to be a riparian owner and as such you have certain legal responsibilities.

The Council assumes that responsibility for maintaining a watercourse, which includes ditches and culverts (watercourses that have been piped underground), rests with the riparian owner unless it can be proved otherwise.

Responsibilities of a riparian owner are to:

- maintain the watercourse and to clear any obstructions (natural or otherwise) so the normal flow of water is not impeded
- maintain the banks and bed of the watercourse and any flood defences that exist on it
- accept the natural flow from your upstream neighbour and transfer it downstream without obstruction, pollution or diversion



- maintain any structures on your stretch of watercourse including culverts, weirs and mill gates

Rights of a riparian owner are to:

- receive a flow of water in its natural state, without undue interference in quantity or quality
- protect your property against flooding from the watercourse and to prevent erosion of the watercourse banks or any structures

The Highways Authority within CBC has been overwhelmed with requests from parish councils over the past couple of months, regarding flooding issues. While there may well be a delay in addressing our local issues, rest assured that your Parish Council is on the case.

Cllr Peter Warburton

Figure 1: Dunstable Road near the junction with Chalgrave Road.

Figure 2: Parkview Lane



Figure 3: Chalgrave golf course bordering Dunstable Road

