

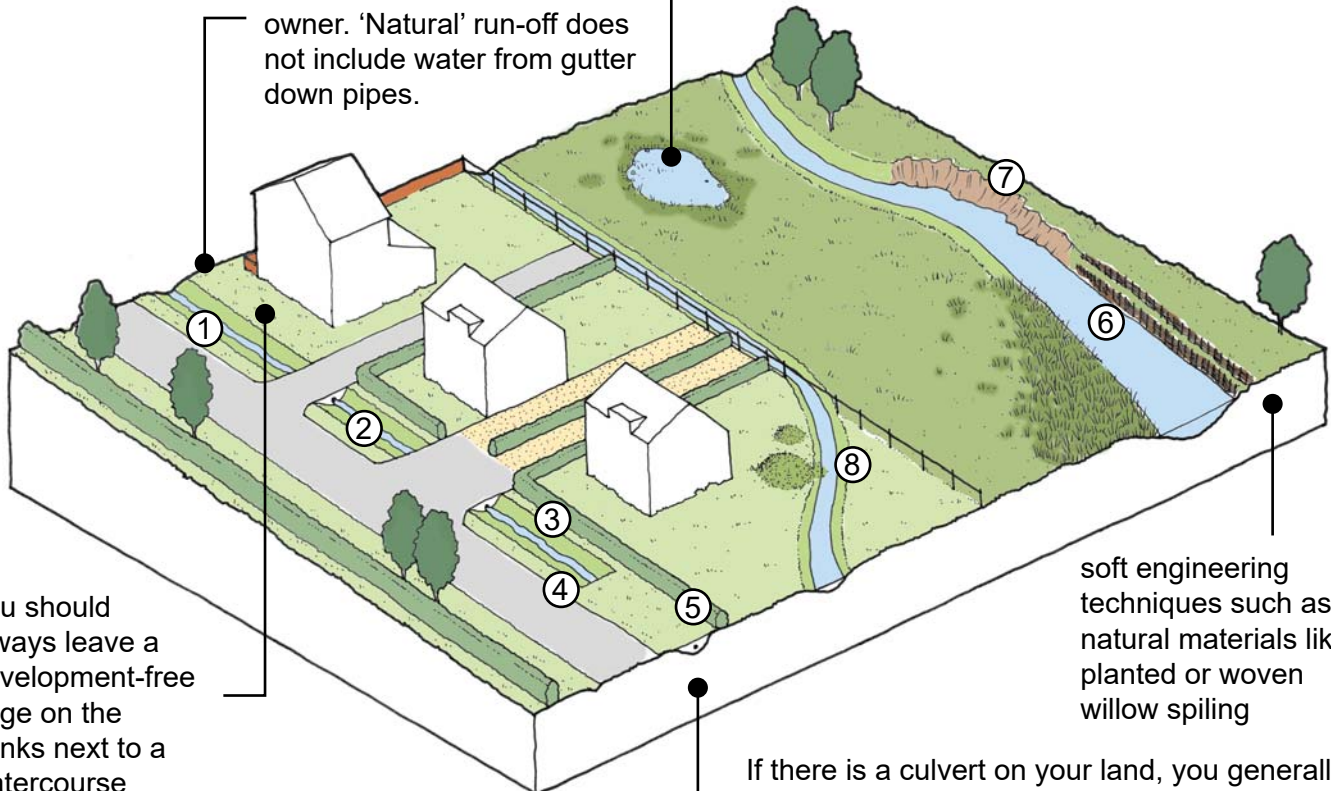
Riparian Ownership

What are my responsibilities?

Central
Bedfordshire

A lower riparian owner is entitled to the natural flow from a higher owner. Therefore, one owner may not do something that will substantially interfere with the natural flow of another owner. 'Natural' run-off does not include water from gutter down pipes.

surface water features usually belong to the owner of the surrounding land, a management company may be in place



You should always leave a development-free edge on the banks next to a watercourse

soft engineering techniques such as natural materials like planted or woven willow spiling

If there is a culvert on your land, you generally own it from where it enters to the point it leaves your land. It is your responsibility to keep it clear of debris and running freely. If a culvert runs along the boundary of two landowner's land, they are jointly responsible for the culvert.

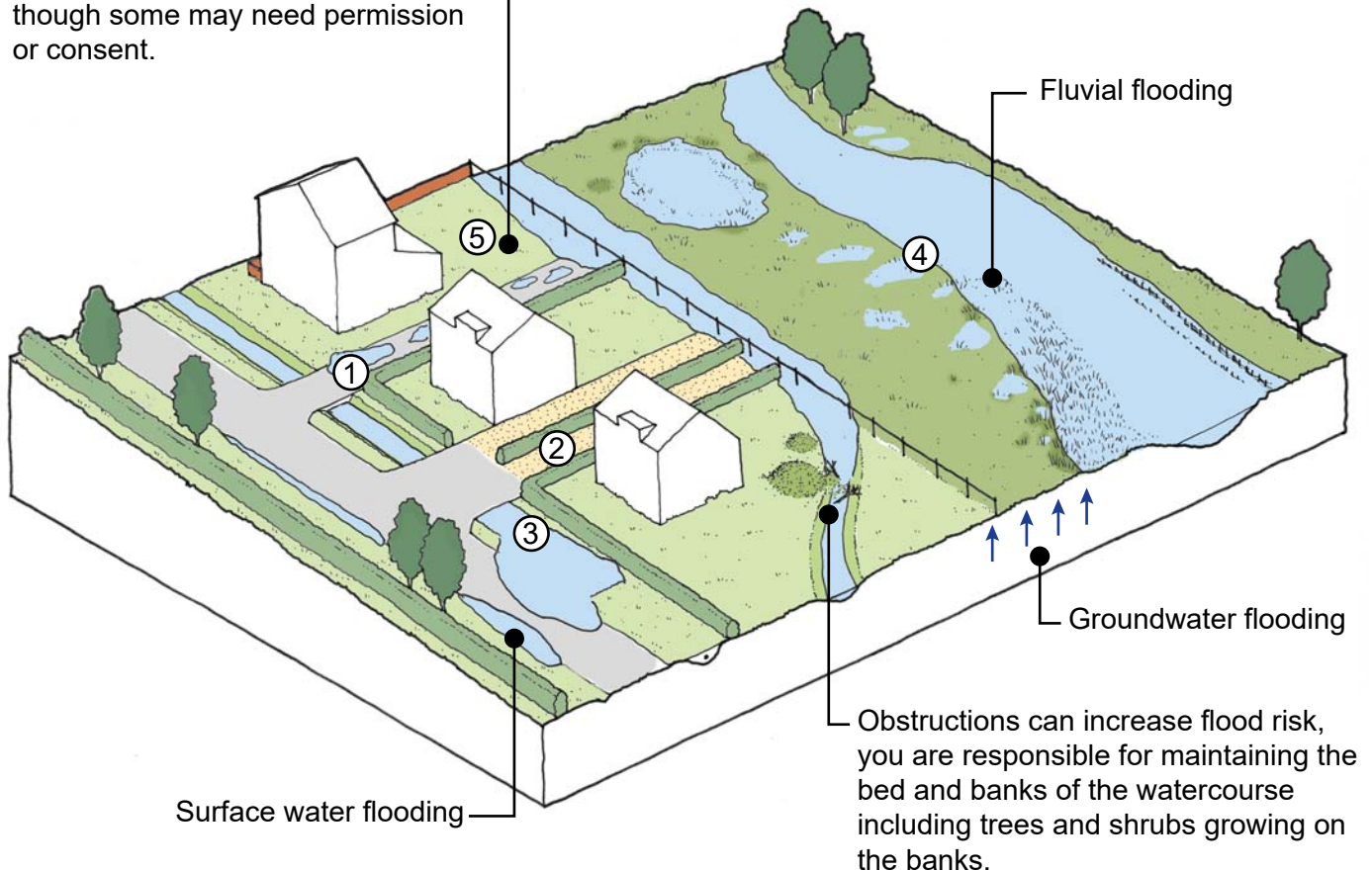
- ① Maintain the watercourse and clear any obstructions (natural or otherwise) so the normal flow of water is not impeded
- ② The riparian owner of a roadside ditch is normally the adjoining landowner. Although water from the road may drain into the ditch, the landowner is responsible for maintaining it. Even if a ditch is outside of the property boundary, ownership should remain with the adjacent landowner.
- ③ Maintain any structures on your stretch of watercourse, including culverts, weirs and mill gates
- ④ Roadside verge is usually the responsibility of the Highways Authority for maintenance
- ⑤ Hedges and trees along the boundary of your property are your responsibility to maintain
- ⑥ Maintain the banks and bed of the watercourse and any flood defences that exist on it
- ⑦ Farmers are required to use techniques that prevent rainwater washing topsoil into watercourses
- ⑧ Accept natural flow from your upstream neighbour and transfer it downstream without obstruction, pollution or diversion

Riparian Ownership

Flood Risk

Central
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Householders are responsible for protecting their own houses / riparian owners are entitled to have flood defences on their property though some may need permission or consent.



- ① Paving over of driveways and gardens can increase surface water run-off. If the surface to be covered is over 5 square metres planning permission will be needed for laying traditional, impermeable driveways such as tarmac or concrete
- ② You will not need planning permission if a new or replacement driveway (of any size) uses permeable surfacing which allows water to drain through, such as gravel, permeable concrete block paving or porous asphalt, or if the rainwater is directed to a lawn or border to drain naturally.
- ③ Water cannot flow through blocked culverts, and may back up and cause flooding above ground.
- ④ Floodplains are the area of low-lying land adjacent to a river over which water flows in times of flood. Areas of floodplain are often under pressure for development, it is essential that proper evaluation before development is carried out to correctly assess flood risk so as not to increase flood risk elsewhere.

Riparian Ownership

Frequently Asked Questions

Central
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If your property is adjacent to a watercourse of any description you are presumed to be a riparian owner and should be maintaining it regularly. This will have the benefit of reducing the risk of flooding from the watercourse at times of bad weather for both you and your neighbours.

When to do the work	late September through to March as this should minimise impact on nesting or breeding birds and will help prepare for increased winter flows.
What tools/machinery to use	Regular maintenance using hand tools is a lot less damaging to the environment than infrequent maintenance using machinery.
How much to remove	Make sure not to take out too much when removing silt: changing the profile of the channel can increase flood risk upstream or downstream.
Create buffer strips	Keep a vegetated berm on the banks of watercourses; this is important for biodiversity but also helps reduce the amount of sediment going in.
What to do with the spoil	Place it on the bank for a few days to allow organisms to migrate back, but don't place it there permanently as it can easily wash back in.
Check for protected species	Such as Water Vole, find out if any have been recorded on or near your land
Apply for consent if required	Please remember you may require consent to do this work. Contact the appropriate flood risk authority for advice.

Central Bedfordshire in Contact

Find out more

For more information and advice on your full responsibilities and rights as a riparian owner further information is available in the Environment Agency's publication: 'Living on the Edge'



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customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk



0300 300 8302 (Office hours)
0300 300 9098 (Out of hours)