

# Watercourses

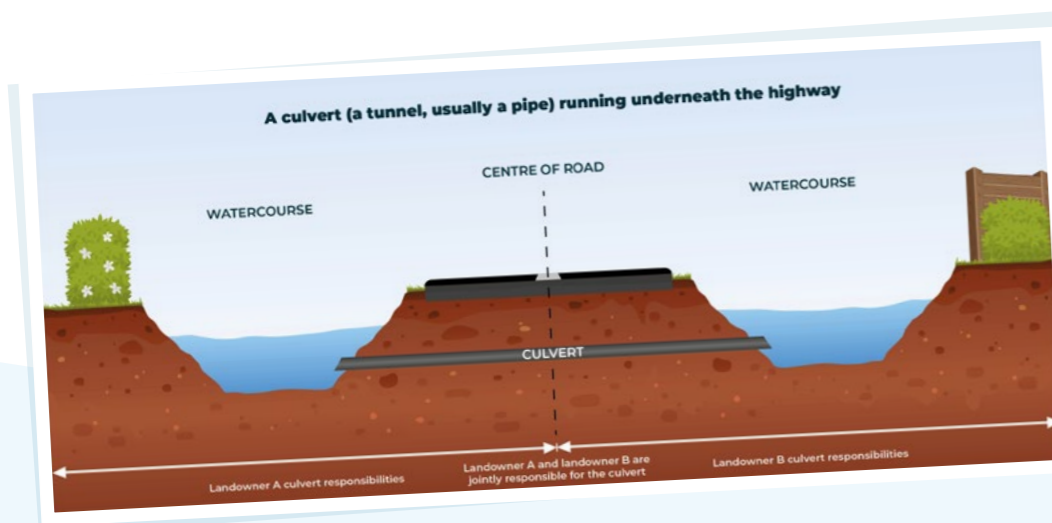
## Who is responsible?

### Culvert watercourses

Many culverts and pipes that run under roads, paths and highways are privately owned. The landowners on either side are jointly responsible for maintenance.

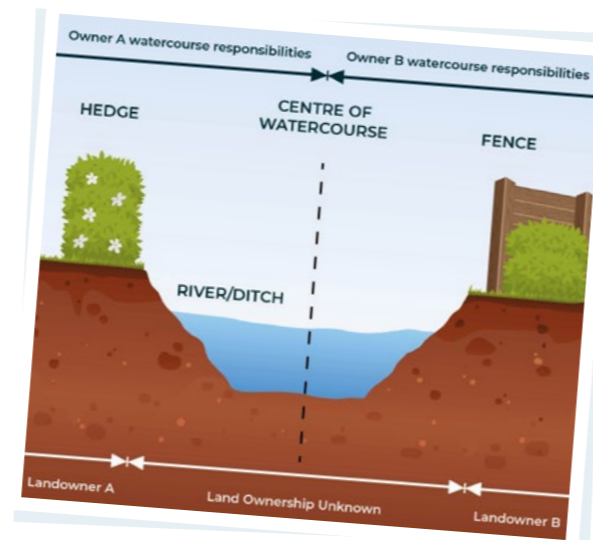
Even if there is a fence, hedge or wall between your land and the culvert you are still responsible for keeping the watercourse clear.

Norfolk County Council has a register of culverts and who owns them. Sometimes responsibility can lie with more than two landowners when a culvert runs behind several houses for example.



### Watercourses on unregistered land

Landowners next to unregistered land are responsible for maintenance up to the centre line of the watercourse.



### Watercourse between properties

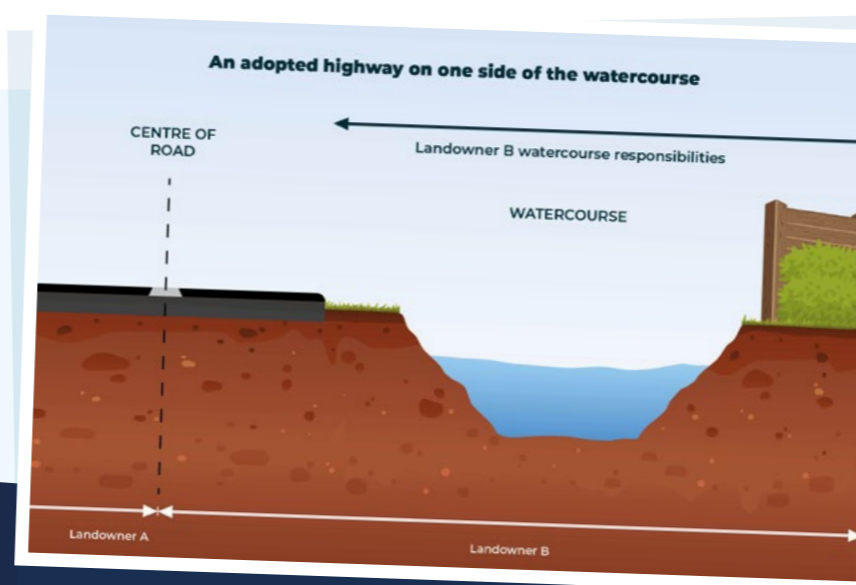
If there is a different landowner or tenant on each side of a watercourse, each person is responsible for their side up to the centre of the watercourse.

Even if there is a fence, hedge or wall between your garden and the watercourse, you are still responsible for keeping the watercourse clear, unless any title deeds state otherwise.

### Adopted highway on one side of the watercourse

An adopted highway is a road maintained by Highways England or the council. The landowner on the watercourse side has maintenance responsibilities for the whole watercourse.

Even if there is a fence, hedge or wall between your land and the watercourse you are still responsible for keeping the watercourse clear, even if the title deeds do not show the watercourse.



### Watercourse owners have rights as well as responsibilities.

These include receiving unpolluted water, protecting your property from flooding, fishing (with a licence), and the removal of a small amount of water from a watercourse for domestic use (also requires a licence). You can find out more online at [www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse)

## WATERCOURSE CHECKLIST



- ✓ Carry out regular inspections and keep the watercourse clear of any debris, for example, litter, grass cuttings, branches, vegetation and animal carcasses.
- ✓ Maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, including cutting back trees and shrubs.
- ✓ Allow water to flow without obstruction, pollution or diversion. Ask yourself: could a fish swim through the watercourse?
- ✓ Remove invasive plant species
- ✓ Keep any structures, such as grills, clear at all times
- ✓ Ensure you apply for consent or a permit for any construction or alterations that could affect the flow of water
- ✓ Carry out repairs or remedial works as directed
- ✓ Follow any byelaws (a law made by the local council)

### CHECK YOUR WATERCOURSE REGULARLY

It's important to carry out regular inspections of your watercourse, particularly if you are responsible for a culvert, if you know your watercourse is prone to littering or fly-tipping, or if other obstructions such as garden waste are regularly dumped in it. Report fly-tipping online [www.gov.uk/report-flytipping](http://www.gov.uk/report-flytipping)

## BE PREPARED

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding)

To report a flood

CALL

**0344 800 8013**

If you are in immediate danger call **999**

## REMEMBER



- ✓ Always put safety first when clearing watercourses.
- ✓ Clear your watercourse when the weather is fine and dry
- ✓ Avoid clearing in nesting season (February to the middle of August)
- ✓ Never enter floodwater to try to clear a blocked watercourse.
- ✓ Sign up to receive flood alerts  
[www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings](http://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings)

# Fight flooding & keep water flowing in Norfolk

**NSFA**  
Norfolk Strategic  
Flooding Alliance

**The best protection against flooding is to prevent flooding where possible.**

- Keep your guttering, downpipes and drains clear of leaves and mud.
- Report blocked or broken highway drains near your property online.
- Check for blocked watercourses near your property. Look for watercourses behind hedges, fences and walls at the edge of your garden.



**NSFA**  
Norfolk Strategic  
Flooding Alliance

 Norfolk County Council

The Norfolk Strategic Flood Alliance is a taskforce that works together to ensure local communities and infrastructure are safer and more resilient to the risks of inland and coastal flooding. The Alliance includes representatives from the Environment Agency, Anglian Water, the Association of Drainage Authorities, the Water Management Alliance, Water Resources East, the Norfolk Resilience Forum, the Broads Authority and Norfolk's county, borough, city, district and parish councils.

 **Norfolk**  
County Council

**Call 0344 800 8013 to report flooding**

Call **999** if you are in immediate danger

[www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/flooding)

# What is a watercourse?

Watercourses move water from one place to another. They can be natural or artificial, and might be completely dry for long periods of time, sometimes years.

**Call 0344 800 8013 to report flooding**

Call **999** if you are in immediate danger

*\*a tunnel, usually a pipe, that carries water under a road, bridge, path, or between ditches for example.*

Different types of watercourses include:



Streams



Pipes or culverts\*



Rivers



Dikes and ditches

# Have you got a watercourse near your house or business?

## Do you know who is responsible for keeping it clear?

- ✓ If you live on, lease, or own land next to a watercourse, you are responsible for maintaining the watercourse, regardless of the boundary indications on any property deeds.
- ✓ If you are a tenant or landlord, check your tenancy agreement to confirm who is responsible for the maintenance of a watercourse.
- ✓ The different rights, responsibilities and common laws involved with watercourses are called Riparian Rights, read more online: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/watercourses](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/watercourses)

Read our handy guide to **watercourse responsibilities inside!**

