Scrutiny Commission
Section 19 Flood Investigation

Jon Winstanley
Service Director Environment
Paul Bacchus
Principal Engineer Flood Risk & Drainage

West Berkshire Council

What is a Section 19 Report

- Local authorities: investigations
- (1) On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a lead local flood authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate:
  - (a) which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
  - (b) whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.
- (2) Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must:
  - (a) publish the results of its investigation, and
  - (b) notify any relevant risk management authorities.
- For ease of reference, this is Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, setting out the duties of a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) when it becomes aware of a flood event. Notably, the duty is to investigate "to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate", rather than requiring an investigation into every flood incident.



Figure 1: Flooding at Burghfield

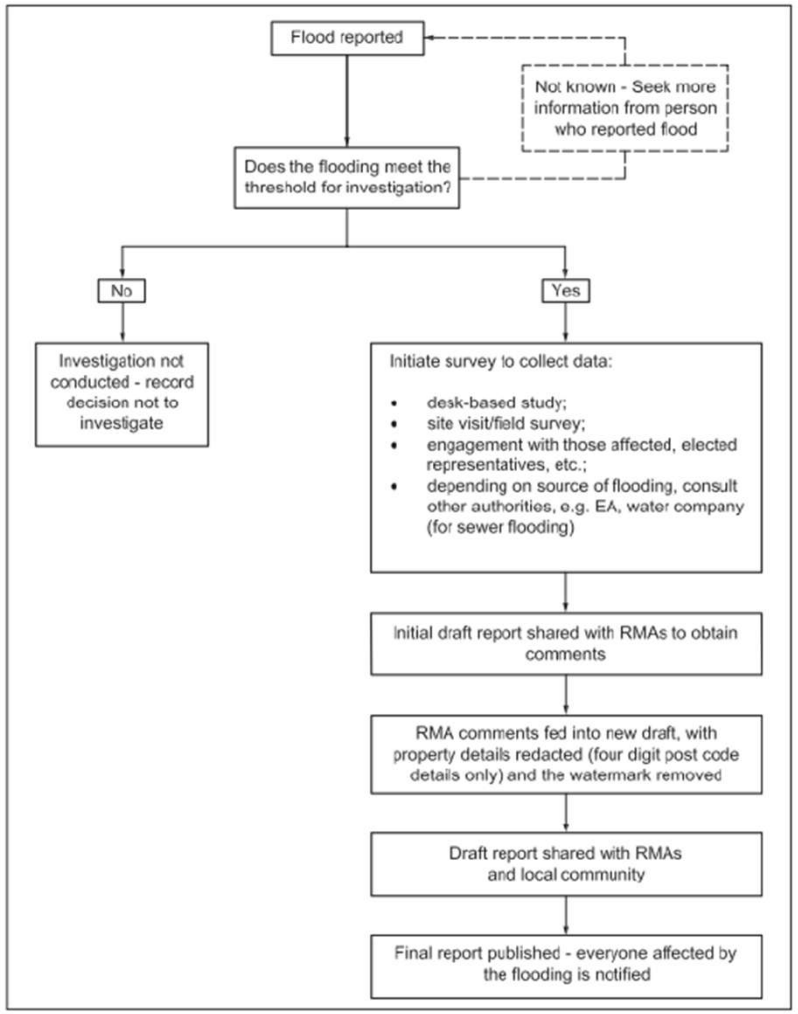


Figure 2: Recommended process for flood investigations

BS 85600:2017 Post-event flood assessments - Guidance on investigating flooding incidents :

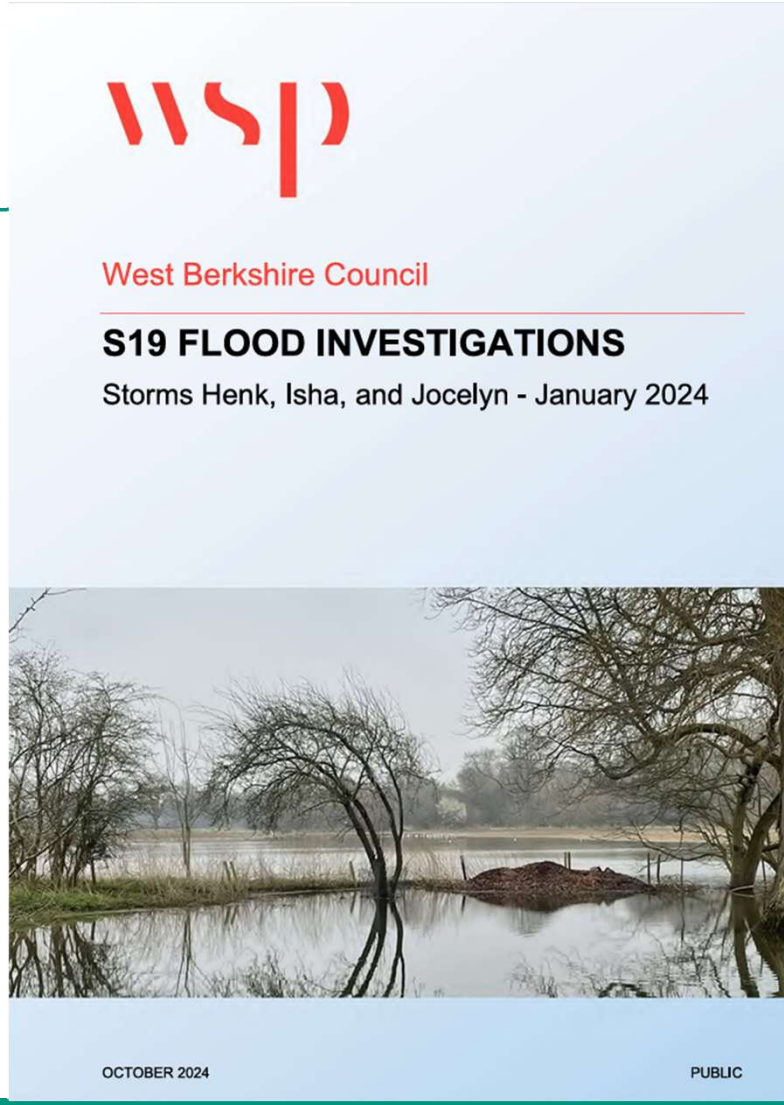
From BS 85600:2017:

> *The following are guideline thresholds for determining the need for an investigation, but can vary depending on whether the area(s) affected is rural or urban and whether there is any ambiguity as to the source of the flooding:*
>
> 1. *flooding of significant infrastructure (hospital, school, utilities, treatment works, etc.);*
> 2. *flooding of a key transport link, e.g. primary routes (A-roads and motorways), key rail links;*
> 3. *internal flooding of one or more premises on more than one occasion in the past five years (excluding gardens and detached garages/out-buildings, but including integral garages); and*
> 4. *internal flooding of five or more properties in close proximity during a single incident.*
>
> *If any of the criteria are met then a flood investigation should be commenced, taking account of the severity and extent of flooding (to inform timescales and resources.*

Additional guidance was published in 2025 after the 2024 flood event.

WSP Report

- The WSP Section 19 Flood Investigation Report was commissioned by West Berkshire Council following significant flooding associated with Storms Henk, Isha and Jocelyn in January 2024. It was published in October 2024.
- The investigation examined a number of locations across West Berkshire where internal property flooding and other significant flood impacts were reported, with the aim of understanding how flooding occurred, identifying the contributing sources and mechanisms, and reviewing the roles and actions of the relevant Risk Management Authorities.
- The report assesses hydrological conditions and root causes of flooding during the storm events, including rainfall, river, groundwater and drainage influences.
- Critical information was able to be gathered thanks to contributions from residents, flood wardens, Parish Councils, and ward members. The process was also greatly assisted thanks to contributions from local flood groups and catchment partnerships.
- It also reviews existing flood risk assets and responsibilities and provides recommendations to relevant Risk Management Authorities help reduce future flood risk and improve resilience across the affected communities.
- Whilst sewer flooding does not form part of the S19 reporting this was acknowledged to have occurred during the winter 2024 storm events.



West Berkshire COUNCIL

Impact i

- The January 2024 storm events, particularly Storm Henk, resulted in widespread flooding across Burghfield (Burghfield Bridge, Pingewood and Sheffield Bottom), Eastbury, Great Shefford, Lambourn, Newbury (North and South), Pangbourne, Purley-on-Thames, Streatley and Winterbourne.
- The flooding affected residential properties, roads, community infrastructure, agricultural land and utility assets, causing disruption to local communities and transport networks.
- The investigations identified a range of flood mechanisms including fluvial flooding from rivers and streams, surface water flooding from intense rainfall, groundwater emergence, highway drainage exceedance, and interactions with ordinary watercourses and drainage systems. In several locations, flooding was influenced by a combination of these sources, together with factors such as restricted watercourse capacity and local drainage constraints.



Figure 3: Flooding in Newbury North near Newport Road

Impact ii

No.	Location	Total No. of Properties Flooded	Properties Internally Flooded	Properties Externally Flooded	Road Closures
1	*Burghfield Bridge*	15	10	5	1
2	*Pingewood*	4	1	3	2
3	*Sheffield Bottom*	10	7	3	2
4	*Eastbury*	9	6	3	2
5	*Great Shefford*	10	3	7	1
6	*Lambourn*	5	3	2	1
7	*Newbury (South)*	10	7	3	2
8	*Newbury (North)*	51	4	47	2
9	*Pangbourne*	4	4	Unknown	0
10	*Purley on Thames*	75	25	50	5
11	*Streatley*	21	6	15	0
12	*Winterbourne*	11	2	9	1

- The majority of the flooding occurred on the 5th of January, following Storm Henk which occurred on the 2nd Of January. However, areas Of West Berkshire remained inundated for varying lengths of time, due to Storms Isha and Jocelyn causing further flooding.
- In total, approximately 210 properties in total that experienced a form of flooding as a result of the 2024 flood event.
- Of these, approximately 77 properties experienced internal flooding and approximately 133 properties experienced external flooding.
- Additional flooding was reported and recorded during this period, the total number of properties that were reported as flooded is as shown in the table (internal 78, external 147, total 225).

S19 Actions West Berkshire Council i

- Within the WSP S19 Reporting for 2024 there were 41 recommended actions relating to West Berkshire Council as a Risk Management Authority/Lead Local Flood Authority/Highways Authority.
- As of September 2026;
  - 28 actions have been marked as completed.
  - 8 are currently being addressed under active works.
  - 4 are under investigation.
  - 1 matter has been marked as unknown but is expected to be addressed as part of standard gully cleansing.
- Notably:
  - Much of the effort has focused on areas such as Burghfield, where there are multiple sources of flooding and where interventions requiring West Berkshire Council (WBC) input have been necessary.
  - Additional documentation was commissioned in Winterbourne to satisfy an investigation into the causes of flooding and efficacy of the existing flood alleviation scheme.

Section 19 WBC Actions List

No	Parish	S19 Report Reference	Description of works	Risk Management Authority	Status	Status
0	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.3	Riparian owners within Burghfield Bridge, should ensure that ditches are well maintained and allow the free passage of water during flood events.	Riparian/WBC	Completed	WBC have communicated relevant riparian responsibilities to ditch owners in the area
1	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.4.	It is considered there may be potential ongoing issues with the condition, and therefore the capacity, of existing highway drainage assets along Pingewood Road North. It is acknowledged that the design standard of existing highway drainage is likely to be lower than the rainfall event recorded and that it will also not be designed to cope with groundwater. However, it is recommended that a CCTV survey could be undertaken to confirm its condition. Remedial works could then be identified and prioritised in consideration of their impact on local flood risks.	WBC	Active Works	WBC has completed the CCTV works along Pingewood North. Further works are ongoing to ensure full functionality, including repairs and upgrades. Repairs have been completed in the vicinity of the outfall.
2	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.5.	It is recommended that West Berkshire Council could review the current highway drainage maintenance schedule and, where appropriate, increase the frequency of inspections. Alternatively, these assets could be marked as a priority, and arrangements should be made for pre-emptive inspections on receipt of forecasts of heavy rain.	WBC	Completed	The gully cleansing programme was reviewed as part of the four-yearly cycle for 2024/25. The trash screen inspection programme remains in operation for critical assets, with weekly inspections undertaken during the winter period.
3	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.6.	The area may also benefit from a local level flood mitigation scheme including the retrofit of drainage facilities to improve conveyance capacity and reduce the risk of blockage. There may be the potential to divert flow from the Kennet and Avon Canal into fields to the north as a form of temporary storage and controlled release. Further data needs to be collected to ascertain the potential benefits and options for the provision of practicable solutions.	WBC	Completed	WBC has communicated with landowners; however, primary responsibility for any works affecting capacity within the canal rests with the Canal & River Trust.
4	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.7.	During WSP's site visit to Burghfield Bridge, residents expressed concerns that general land use changes and raising of land may have increased flood risk.	WBC	Completed	WBC LLFA worked with the Planning Enforcement Team to ensure that hardstanding surfaces created for a car park were removed.
5	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.8.	Where there is sufficient evidence that land use change or land raising has taken place without relevant consent, West Berkshire Council as planning authority and LLFA may choose to use enforcement powers to ensure any works deemed to have increased flood risk is rectified.	WBC	Completed	WBC LLFA worked with the Planning Enforcement Team to ensure that hardstanding surfaces created for a car park were removed.
6	Burghfield - Burghfield Bridge	5.7.11.	There may also be potential for a flood alleviation scheme along the River Kennet which should be further investigated and communicated with West Berkshire Council. The floodplain to the north of the River Kennet could be more efficiently utilised for floodplain storage during times of high flows, to reduce the potential for the canal and river to overtop their banks. This will require further investigation and communication between West Berkshire Council, the Environment Agency, and local landowners.	EA/WBC	Under Investigation	This is not currently considered viable. It also requires a response from the Environment Agency (EA) and the Canal & River Trust. WBC will follow up on this matter.

Figure 4: Extract from S19 action list

S19 Actions West Berkshire Council ii

- The S19 items have been run concurrently with actions to address highway flooding and enquiries over the last two years.
- Prioritisation has been given on the following basis:
  - Complexity / Resource Requirement
    Does the issue require specialist professional input, significant technical investigation, or a complex engineering solution to resolve?
  - Cost
    Is the estimated cost of investigation, design, and/or remedial works greater than £10,000?
  - Scale of Impact
    Does the issue affect a substantial part of the highway network, a large geographical area, multiple properties, critical infrastructure, or require significant land acquisition?
  - Health & Safety Risk
    Does the issue present a significant risk to public safety, property, or the operational safety of the highway network?
- Severity of the issue is also considered crucially as shown in the table on the right.

Priority	Description
1	Internal property flooding (water enters a building).
2	External property flooding (water accumulates around buildings but does not enter).
3	Flooding affecting a principal road or high-speed route.
4	Flooding affecting a secondary road.
5	Flooding affecting gardens, driveways, or private external areas.
6	Flooding affecting fields, agricultural land, or open spaces.
WQ	Water quality issue or pollution incident.
Info	Issue requiring an information campaign, awareness initiative, or desktop study only.
M&O	Maintenance and operational issue requiring routine intervention rather than capital works.

S19 Actions West Berkshire Council iii

- **Actions**
- Highway drainage maintenance and repairs
- Grip and ditch clearance, and trash screen maintenance.
- Drainage surveys and CCTV – proactive investigations.
- Working with planning enforcement.
- Working with other RMA's and organisations.
- Working with flood risk groups, and catchment partnerships.
- Investigating watercourse breaches and advising of riparian responsibilities
- Commissioning studies into causes of flooding and options.
- Additional work:
  - Supporting implementation of NFM/Nature Based Solutions across the region.
  - Working with LPA with respect to new development.

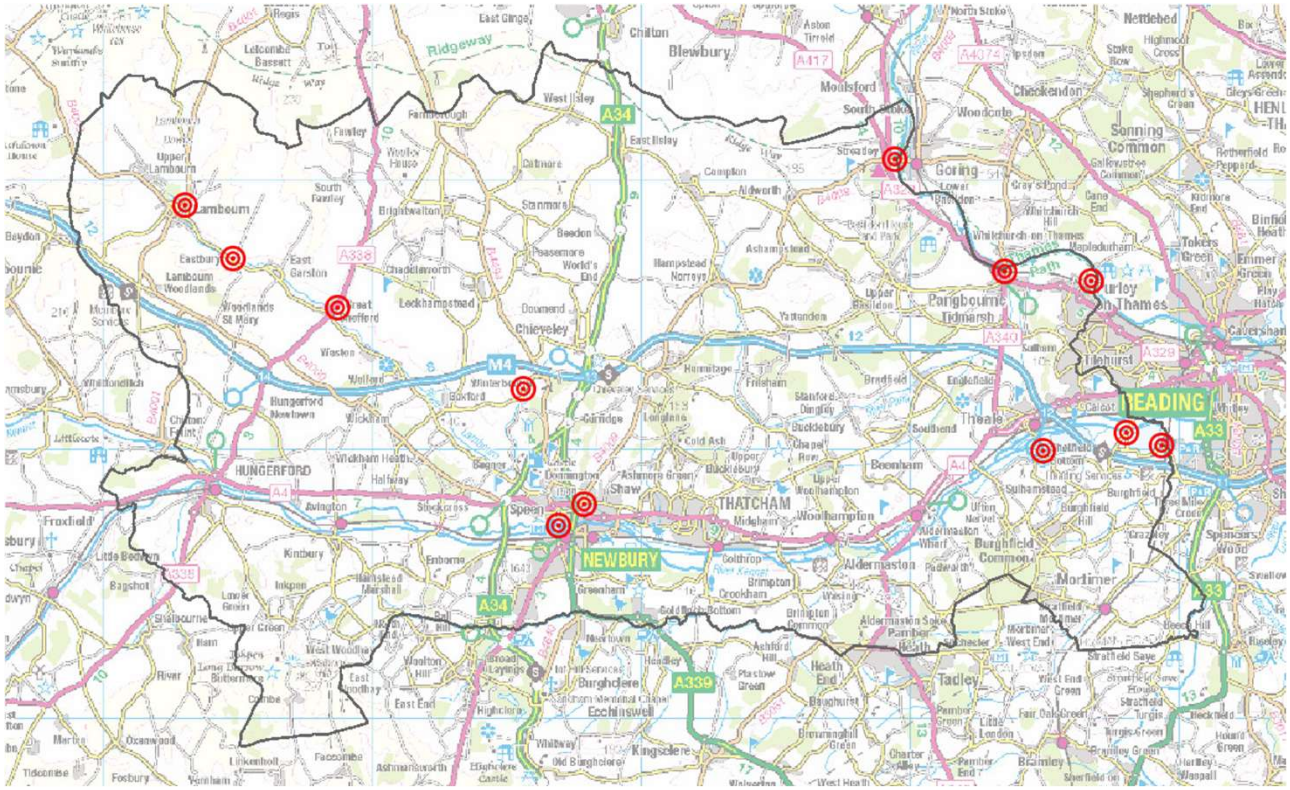


Figure 5: Areas covered in the S19 Reports

West Berkshire COUNCIL

Government Grants

- A minimum of 50 properties flooded internally.
- A total of £120,450.80 was distributed

Grant	Description	No. of properties benefiting	Total funding issued.
Community Recovery Grant	£500 grant if their residence was deemed to have been impacted by Storm Henk between 2nd to 12th January 2024.	45	£22,500
Council Tax Discount	A 100% Council Tax discount may be awarded for a minimum of three months for those impacted by the flooding.	45	£48,196
Business Recovery Grant	Small-to-medium-sized businesses that were flooded were eligible for grants of £2,500.	9	£22,500
Property Flood Resilience Repair Grant Scheme	Up to £5,000 available per property to make homes and businesses more flood resilient and to allow them to recover more quickly from future flooding.	41 applications have been approved in principle. 7 have completed works and claimed funding.	£27,254.80

District wide maintenance & inspections

FY25/26

- 13,206 Roadside gullies cleansed or inspected
- 141 Soakaways cleansed or inspected
- 1,549 Grips cut or inspected
- Significant improvement in number of CCTV surveys and inspections carried out across the district.

What next?

- Actions from S19 that are still under investigation, or active works to be completed.
- Reach out to other RMA's (Thames Water, Environment Agency) to establish what progress has been made on items that were recommended in S19.
- Continue to pursue flood risk projects in accordance with statutory duties, in partnership with Thames Regional Flood Coastal Committee.
  - Funding to continue be sought to deliver priorities.

Questions?

West Berkshire COUNCIL