

Maintenance Activities

The maintenance of watercourses plays a key role in flood risk management. Most watercourses will require annual maintenance. It's important to plan when and how this is done.

Open watercourses

Keeping banks clear

- Removing anything that will cause an obstruction and increase flood risk either on your land or downstream if it is washed away.
- Removing any waste resulting from maintenance activities to ensure it does not fall downstream into the watercourse
- Always leave a development-free edge on the banks next to a watercourse to allow for easy access

Maintaining vegetation

- Make sure any work done fits with the natural river system and it is important to consider any impact on wildlife when undertaking maintenance activities
- It is recommended to cut vegetation to just above the water level on one side so leaving the fringe of the bank uncut, maintaining habitat

Regular de-silting

- The original profile of the watercourse should not be altered when de-silting, so that the overall gradient and flow patterns stay the same
- The same depth of silt should be removed along the length of the ditch

The best time to conduct maintenance activities on open watercourses is late September/October, before any heavy winter storms and when the vegetation has naturally died back.

Good



Poor





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Culverted watercourses

Culverts generally require specialist machinery to properly maintain them. They can only be accessed through a manhole.

Regular checks of water flows through a manhole by a competent person can give an indication of whether the watercourse is flowing or not. If water is stationary and rising in the manhole this could suggest a blockage downstream in the pipe.

CCTV inspections of the culvert can identify blockages, levels of silt, root infestations and the structural condition of the culvert. This is best carried out by a specialist contractor.

Good



Poor



Failed



Maintenance

- Culverts with high levels of silt or blocked with silt will need to be jetted. A specialist vehicle will be required that uses pressurised water to flush out the system and extract the material. This has to be undertaken with care as some systems can be damaged with high pressure jetting.
- Root infestations - A specialist vehicle will be required that has a root cutting facility to remove all the roots in the pipe. Once a pipe has roots entering it, it will need regular root cutting.
- Other blockages and structural damage may require excavation to expose the section requiring repair or unblocking. If this occurs you may want to consider de-culverting the watercourse.
- Sediment traps should be cleared regularly.