

4. Probable Causes

The investigation into this flood event has involved a number of organisations and locally supplied information. Based on the investigation the following are considered contributory to the cause of the flood event on the 23rd July 2017:

- 4.1. The topographical nature of Ilminster i.e. lying in a hollow on land historically known to be a wet/marshy area with a large catchment area made up of predominantly impermeable clayey soil.
- 4.2. The natural routes for the unhindered flow of surface water run-off from the upper catchment area to the low lying areas of the town, for example, Beacon Hill to Old Road to North Street to Ditton Street.
- 4.3. The likelihood that the catchment area was already saturated prior to the intense rainfall on the 23rd July.
- 4.4. An intense rainfall event on the 23rd July within a short duration.
- 4.5. Blocked or partially blocked highway gullies and local drainage systems allowing exceedance flows to reach the Ditton Street area of the town.

5. Rights & Responsibilities

In the context of this flood event the following risk management authorities, groups and individuals will have a role to play.

The Lead Local Flood Authority (Somerset County Council) In accordance with the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 upon becoming aware of a flood event the Lead Local Flood Authority must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, carry out an investigation and publish the results notifying any relevant risk management authorities of its findings. Under the Land Drainage Act 1991 SCC have permissive powers to require works for the removal of obstructions to maintain the flow of any ordinary watercourse.

In particular the LLFA have responsibility for ordinary watercourses, and surface water and ground water flooding.

Environment Agency (EA) – The Environment Agency carries out maintenance, improvement or construction work on main rivers to manage flood risk. A main river is defined as a watercourse marked as such on a main river map, and can include any structure or appliance for controlling or regulating the flow of water in, into or out of a main river.

Highway Authority - Somerset County Council, as Highway Authority, is responsible for maintaining the highway. Highway drainage is designed to manage the rainfall upon the highway. These systems are not designed to manage excessive run-off from third-party land or from watercourses. The highway drainage is maintained in accordance with risk management principles.

Landowners and residents – Options to further address this flood risk will be considered as detailed above, however it should be recognised that

homeowners have an important responsibility in protecting their properties.

It is recommended that residents be supported in developing a Flood Action Plan for their community to mitigate the impacts and reduce the time taken to recover should further flooding occur.

In addition it is recommended that homeowners consider steps that can be taken to protect their homes and that they are offered advice on property level flood protection products, suppliers and potential sources of supplementary funding.

Riparian Owner's Responsibilities:

Under common law landowners are the riparian owner of any watercourse within or adjacent to the boundary of their property. Where a watercourse is sited between properties each owner may be equally responsible.

Riparian owners' responsibilities include the maintenance of the bank and bed of their section of watercourse to prevent any obstruction to the flow in the watercourse. Common failings include failing to keep vegetation under control and failing to obtain consent for installing pipes or culverts or undertaking other work that may affect the watercourse.

Riparian owners also have ultimate responsibility to protect themselves and their property from flooding.

Recommended Actions

The following table sets out the actions identified following this flood event. The Lead Local Flood Authority will monitor the delivery of these actions with the relevant risk management authorities.

	Action	Addressing
1	SCC Highways to carry out gully cleansing of the roads identified by residents as having blocked / partially blocked or surging gullies.	Standard reactive action process.
2	Local coordination of Highway's gully cleansing works to ensure as many gullies can be accessed as is possible and are not obstructed by parked vehicles.	Access to gullies.
3	Review the frequency of gully cleansing in Ditton Street and surrounding roads to ensure the level of maintenance reflects the flood risk in this area.	Flood risk of area.
4	Property Level Resilience / Protection (PLR) inspections to be made of the properties that experienced internal flooding by the LLFA. The LLFA to discuss joint working and scheme opportunities with the EA given the multiple sources of flood risk.	Protecting properties and property owners that experienced internal flooding, potentially with a programme of PLR work.
5	Review the local community response to the flooding and support the development of community resilience through the Town Council. LLFA, Civil contingencies and the EA to work with the Town Council to review and where necessary develop the local flood plan in the context of any lessons from this event	To help increase local flood resilience.
6	Although it is not considered that the Shudrick Stream contributed to this flood event, based on the contributions provided by the community at the drop-in meeting, the LLFA believe that due to the historical flooding of Ilminster it would be prudent to	Maintain and performance of receiving watercourse, including opportunities for schemes and funding.

	<p>carry out a CCTV survey of the culvert running from Shudrick Lane to Wharf Lane. LLFA to share findings with the EA to be certain no obvious obstructions are in the culvert that may have contributed to the flooding, and establish if increased flow and speed of flow from this flood event has damaged the culvert and/or introduced obstructions into the culvert. Survey should also be used to consider historic capacity issues, noting the significant technical and financial challenges associated with this infrastructure.</p>	
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