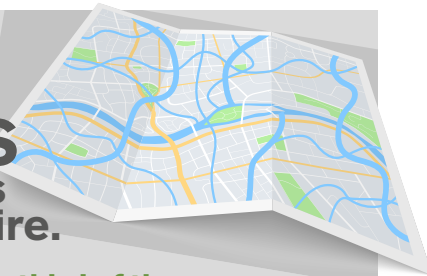


# NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

There are approximately **8000 MILES** of watercourses in Cambridgeshire.

This is equivalent to one third of the circumference of Earth which equals the distance from London to Tokyo. 17 square miles of land is used by water bodies...

...that's an area equivalent to **6300** football pitches!



Watercourses may be open ditches, streams, dykes, or they may be culverted, which means piped.

They can be dry or wet but usually carry some water after significant rainfall.

Waterbodies include ponds, basins, lakes and reservoirs.



Watercourse maintenance is first and foremost a riparian responsibility

Riparian rights and responsibilities exist for those who own or tenant land on or next to a watercourse, with riparian rights being to receive the flow of water from upstream and riparian responsibilities being to maintain the free flow of water for those downstream.

Watercourse management is separate to watercourse maintenance and is the responsibility of a variety of authorities. Managing authorities have powers that mean they can undertake some maintenance works, but this is not possible for every single watercourse in the county.

A risk management authority only has a duty to maintain a watercourse if it is on land that they own or tenant, and then their duties are a riparian responsibility, as is the case for any other person or organisation who owns or tenants land on or next to a watercourse.



Those with riparian responsibilities may need a consent or permit from a managing authority for construction works that may affect the flow of water, such as piping a watercourse, reprofiling banks, or temporary damming.



**Priority should be given to flood risk and biodiversity in the water environment. This means keeping watercourses open (not culverted) as much as possible.**



**Flood risk management is separate to watercourse maintenance and is the responsibility of a variety of authorities.**



**It is a common law presumption for a watercourse centreline to mark a land boundary.**

**Each landowner or tenant adjoining the watercourse normally has riparian responsibility up to the centreline of the watercourse.**



**This means if there is a watercourse at the edge of your land, you have a riparian responsibility to maintain that watercourse, unless there is any evidence to indicate otherwise.**



**If a watercourse is next to a highway, the presumption is for the adjacent landowner or tenant on the non-highway side, to have riparian responsibilities to maintain the whole watercourse, irrespective of whether highway water discharges to it, unless there is any contrary evidence.**



**If a watercourse is next to a hedge, the presumption is for the adjacent landowner or tenant on the hedge side, to have riparian responsibilities to maintain the whole watercourse, unless there is any contrary evidence.**



**If the land is tenanted, it is up to the tenant and the landowner to agree between them who is to take on the riparian rights and responsibilities.**



**Even if there is a watercourse behind your fence, you have riparian responsibility to maintain the watercourse up to its centreline, unless there is any contrary evidence.**



### Contact us

If you require assistance accessing any data or information discussed above, have a query, or would like more information about a topic or relating to your site, please do not hesitate to contact us at:

[floodandwater@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:floodandwater@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) or Call 0345 045 5200 between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday, ask for a member of the Flood Risk team.



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