

Horncastle Town Council update - December 2025

This update aims to provide those in Horncastle with the latest work the Environment Agency and Lincolnshire County Council have been doing, and are continuing to do, to reduce flood risk.

Actions taken since Storm Babet

Reservoir review

Following Storm Babet, the Environment Agency Chief Engineer carried out a review of Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir. This was published in February 2024 and [you can read it here](#). It was reviewed by an independent organisation (GeoSmart Information) who published their findings in October 2024. [You can read the independent review here](#).

The Environment Agency have since been investigating and completing the recommendations from the Chief Engineers review. The design of Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir has been checked to ensure it conforms to industry standards, and some minor improvements are being made. The Environment Agency's ability to switch the reservoir between manual and automatic mode has been simplified. The flood storage reservoir operates automatically by default, and it can only be changed to manual using a key available to trained and competent staff. The Environment Agency have ensured that they have a backup of the software that controls the flood storage reservoir. Alarm messages received by duty officers have been refined and made clearer, specifically whether an alarm is "for information" or "for action". These actions and the remaining recommendations from the Environment Agency Chief Engineer review will ensure that Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir operates as effectively as possible when required.

Section 19 Report

Following the flooding which occurred in Horncastle, Lincolnshire County Council - in its role as Lead Local Flood Authority - undertook an investigation under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. These investigations determine which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions and whether each of those has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood event. In Lincolnshire, in the interests of transparency, Lincolnshire County Council go a stage further than what the act prescribes by making recommendations to be considered by relevant risk management organisations. It should be noted that the purpose of a Section 19 report is not to blame or hold any authority or individual to account nor legally enforce any recommendations made. Under the Act, Lincolnshire County Council have no powers to compel authorities to act on recommendations. However, as has been demonstrated organisations do work closely together and liaise over any recommendations or interventions that may be undertaken.

Further information on Flood Investigations undertaken by Lincolnshire County Council [can be found here](#). Inserting 'Horncastle' in the search field will provide information on the causes of flooding and recommendations made following the flooding which occurred. The recommendations are updated once they have been addressed or meaningful updates can be provided on progress. This information is also shared with the Town Council, and the Section 19 report and summary of recommendations made can also be found on the [Flooding Information pages](#) of the Horncastle Town Council website.

Within the Section 19 Investigation report a number of recommendations were made for Lincolnshire County Council highways department with a number of interventions being considered by Highways Drainage teams at the following locations: John Brown Close, Prospect Street, Accommodation Road, Hemingby Lane.

In addition, the Floods and Water Team at Lincolnshire County Council continue to work with East Mercia Rivers Trust on proposals for the Thunker Drain catchment area. All surveys are now completed, and works are progressing to the next phase of assessing the options and outlining next steps for the project. This work will look into how river flows can potentially be better managed in the areas through measures such as storage or slowing flows by using natural flood risk management techniques. More detailed information will be available once the options have been assessed.

In addition, six locations have been identified to install telemetry gauges in watercourses which is being supported through the Lincolnshire County Council Project Groundwater team. Once up and running data will be available via a company called Udlive where information can help inform and warn of changes in river levels during rainfall events. It can also help shape links with the Lincolnshire Resilience Forum for emergency plan development and support. Tenders are soon to be awarded and Lincolnshire County Council teams will work closely with the Town Council on implementation.

The Environment Agency has responded to all of the Section 19 recommendations for which it is the responsible authority. These responses are also available to [view here](#).

Environment Agency Incident Duty Officer training

Environment Agency Incident Duty Officers have reinforced their existing extensive knowledge through refresher training. This included revisiting established procedures for responding to operational alarms, mobilising field teams, and managing how the flood storage reservoir reduces flood risk downstream. They have also consolidated their understanding of how the main rivers flow through Horncastle, identifying areas prone to flooding and ensuring field teams are prepared to take effective action to reduce flood risk.

Environment Agency maintenance

Most Environment Agency maintenance work is delivered in the spring, summer and autumn months when vegetation growth is usually greatest, and when it is safer to do. During the higher risk winter season, the Environment Agency are still active carrying out inspections and removing blockages. Below is a summary of the maintenance work the Environment Agency have been doing and are continuing to do, as well as some of the challenges they face. When referring to “assets” these include raised embankments, mechanical structures and navigation assets as well as the Flood Storage Reservoir. Environment Agency funding for maintenance is limited. The Environment Agency prioritises maintenance funding on assets that provide the greatest flood risk reduction for people and homes across all of the Lincolnshire & Northamptonshire Area. Further to the summary below, the Environment Agency also works with its partners at Witham Third Internal Drainage Board so that they have the opportunity to deliver maintenance in locations where Environment Agency funding does not stretch to. Witham Third Internal Drainage Board are delivering maintenance this year only on some main rivers at their expense. The Environment

Agency recognises the value of this partnership working and would like to extend thanks to Witham Third Internal Drainage Board for supporting maintenance work.

Flood risk management asset inspections

Environment Agency asset inspections generally fit into two categories. Public Safety Risk Assessments ensure that a site is safe for the public. Visual condition assessments help assess the condition of an asset and detect any visible changes in the condition. They allow for timely intervention should the condition of the asset fall below target. In 2025, the Environment Agency have completed 207 asset inspections in the Horncastle, with a further six planned before the end of the calendar year. These inspections have covered the River Bain upstream of Horncastle, the River Bain, River Waring and Thunker Drain through Horncastle, as well as the River Bain, Old River Bain and Horncastle Canal downstream of Swimming Bath Sluice.

When condition assessments identify an issue, the Environment Agency acts quickly to repair them as soon as possible. Recent examples of these works include repairs and replacement of dangerous steps and fencing at Thimbleby Trout Farm slacker, and repairs to several flap valves to ensure they are operating to their designed function.

Flood Storage Reservoir inspection

An external supervising engineer inspects Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir annually as part of Section 12 of the Reservoirs Act 1975. The inspection checks if the reservoir is in good working condition and ensures any issues are picked up. The latest annual inspection for Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir was carried out on 5 November 2025 and the reservoir was assessed as in good condition.

Maintenance delivered by Environment Agency Field Teams and contractors

Environment Agency Field Teams and contractors have an ongoing programme of routine maintenance in Horncastle and the surrounding area. Environment Agency Field Teams cut the grass at the Flood Storage Reservoir up to eight times a year (see pictures below). They also complete monthly maintenance and operational checks on several assets at the reservoir. Assets including flap valves, weirs, syphons and penstocks on the River Bain, Horncastle Canal and River Waring also receive maintenance and operational checks. Environment Agency Field Teams complete debris and obstruction checks six times a year on parts of the River Waring, Thunker Drain and the River Bain downstream of Jubilee Way.



Grass cutting at Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir in August and October this year.

Environment Agency contractors have been cutting the raised embankments on the River Bain both upstream of Tesco and downstream of Horncastle three times a year. They deliver one river weed cut between August and October upstream of Tesco and downstream of Swimming Bath Sluice. Grass and weed hand cuts are completed on the River Bain downstream of Tesco up to A158 and on Thunker Drain in June and September/October. A section of the River Bain is also sprayed to keep weeds under control downstream of A158 to downstream of Swimming Bath Sluice.

All of the maintenance delivered by Environment Agency Field Teams, contractors and partners is designed to provide the greatest flood risk reduction within the limited funding available. This year the Environment Agency has also identified some areas for additional maintenance. The planned work is largely weed removal through Horncastle to improve the passage of water through the town and should be complete by the end of the financial year. Below are two examples of where work is planned.



Locations identified for additional Environment Agency maintenance this year. River Bain (left) and River Waring (right).

Tilting gate

The Environment Agency annual maintenance of the tilting gate downstream of Horncastle is planned for December. They will continue to inspect and maintain this asset in line with their asset maintenance schedule.

Flood risk reduction

Flood risk asset review

The Environment Agency is planning to review all of the flood risk management assets on the River Bain downstream of Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir. The review will look at what each of the assets does and whether it provides flood risk benefit. There are no further details to share about the review at the moment.

River restoration and natural flood management

The Environment Agency are working collaboratively with the Lincolnshire Chalk Stream Project (LCSP) and local landowners to look at opportunities for river and wetland restoration in the headwaters of the River Bain, upstream of Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir. They are also

supporting LCSP on a small-scale natural flood management project on the River Waring just downstream of Belchford.

As well as the partnership described earlier in this update between Lincolnshire County Council and the East Mercia Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency is aware of ongoing efforts by other organisations to deliver River Restoration projects in and throughout Horncastle. The Environment Agency will continue to work with them closely and have open dialogue to discuss flood risk throughout Horncastle itself and where it can be managed or reduced. One such example can be read about here: [Wetlands nature reserve planned for Horncastle in Lincolnshire - BBC News](#).

Swimming Bath Sluice

Earlier this year the Environment Agency completed work to automate Swimming Bath Sluice. The sluice operates the same as it did in the past, except it now moves automatically and does not require manual intervention on site to move the gate. Following the work, the automation was tested and fine-tuned. The sluice will continue to provide some localised flood risk benefit to the area around the confluence of the River Waring and River Bain.

Storm Claudia 14/11/2025

Storm Claudia brought a band of slow-moving heavy rainfall across the country on Friday 14 November. We saw widespread rainfall totals of 50-70mm, with some places receiving up to 90mm. Hemingby Bridge rain gauge just downstream of Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir, recorded 35mm. The Environment Agency carried out checks in the Horncastle area before Storm Claudia, including at Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir, and had additional resource on standby to respond to any issues. They appropriately scaled up their incident response and successfully operated flood risk assets in the Horncastle area, including Horncastle Flood Storage Reservoir and Swimming Bath Sluice. The operation of the penstock at the flood storage reservoir was monitored to ensure it operated correctly as river levels rose. However, there was an issue with the automatic weed screen cleaner at the flood storage reservoir on the evening of 14 November. This issue was identified quickly, monitored and resolved the following morning and the reservoir emptied over the next two days.

Flood Alerts & Warnings

Horncastle is covered by both a flood alert and flood warnings. The Environment Agency aims to issue the flood alerts two to three days in advance of river flooding on low lying land and roads, and to issue flood warnings with two hours' notice of river flooding affecting properties. You can sign up for flood alerts and warnings for free by calling Floodline on **0345 988 1188** or do it online at www.gov.uk/get-flood-warnings. Improvements were made to the flood warning service following updated modelling and information received after Storm Babet in November 2024. There are 626 properties at risk of river flooding in Horncastle. Currently only 46% have signed up to receive flood alerts and warnings.

You can view which flood alerts and warnings have been issued, current river levels and the forecast here: www.gov.uk/check-flooding. The river level gauges relevant for Horncastle are: River Bain level at Horncastle Victoria Mill and River Waring level at Horncastle Banks Road. You

can also visit www.bluepages.org.uk and www.floodmary.com to learn more about flood products that can increase your flood resilience.

How you can keep in touch

Environment Agency

You can expect to keep hearing from the Environment Agency, via the Town Council, quarterly about the maintenance going on in your parish, and monthly on a different topic related to flood risk – December's topic is "How do our assets work?". You can also continue to view the post Storm Babet reports and some of the previous Environment Agency correspondence on [Horncastle Town Council's website](#).

If you would like further information about Environment Agency work in Horncastle, please contact them at lnenquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Use our 24/7 incident hotline on **0800 80 70 60** to report flooding or blockages.

Lincolnshire County Council

If you would like further information about Lincolnshire County Council work in Horncastle, please [visit their website](#) to contact them.