

RIPARIAN OWNERSHIP



Your Rights and Responsibilities

Do you own land or a property next to a watercourse?

If so, this guide sets out your rights and responsibilities and provides advice on how to maintain the watercourse to reduce the risk of flooding for you and the community.

Ordinary watercourse or main river?

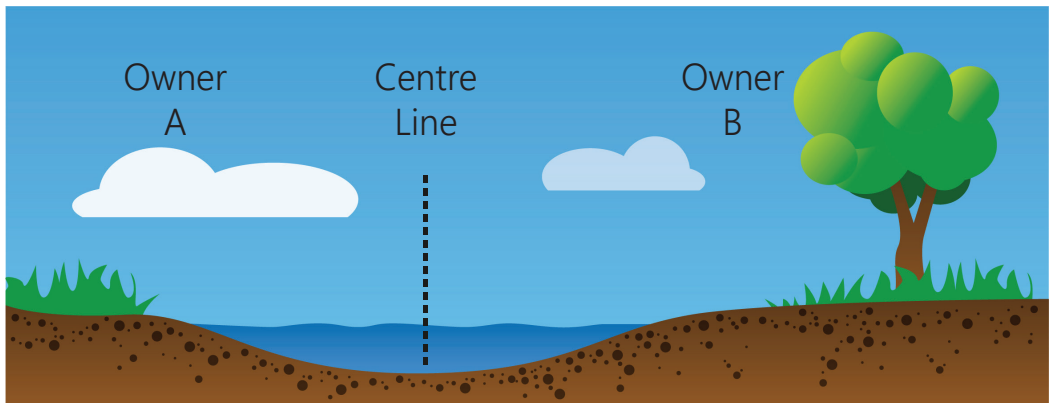
An ordinary watercourse is any natural or artificial channel above or below ground through which water flows, such as a river, brook, ditch, stream or culvert (not canals). It does not have to contain water all year round. A main river is usually a larger river or stream and is shown on the Environment Agency Main River Map.

What is a riparian owner?

A riparian owner is someone with watercourses on, within, next to or under their land / property boundary. Riparian owners have the responsibility for maintenance of these watercourses.

Riparian responsibilities usually lie with the person who owns the land or property (sometimes it is the tenant depending upon the agreement in place).

Where a watercourse forms a boundary between you and your neighbour, the riparian ownership responsibilities are shared equally with the owners of the land on the opposite bank up to the centre line of the watercourse (see diagram below). This is unless property deeds or land registry show other arrangements.



Rights of a riparian owner

You have the right to protect your property from flooding and erosion, but you must:

- get permissions to build anything within 5m of the watercourse (see permits). Land Drainage Byelaws may also apply
- not build anything which could divert water and increase flood risk to other people's property.

Responsibilities of a riparian owner

Your responsibilities are to:



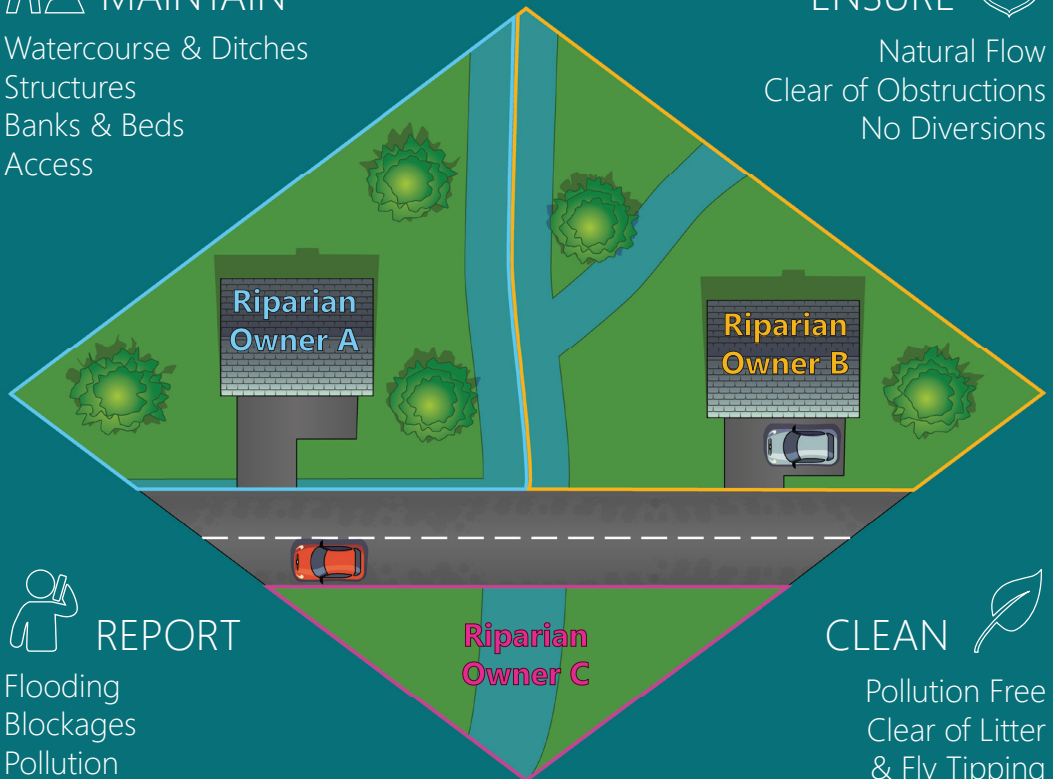
MAINTAIN

Watercourse & Ditches
Structures
Banks & Beds
Access

ENSURE



Natural Flow
Clear of Obstructions
No Diversions



REPORT

Flooding
Blockages
Pollution

CLEAN



Pollution Free
Clear of Litter
& Fly Tipping

Failure to carry out your duties may result legal action.

Permits

To carry out work on or near to a main river / flood defence you must seek permission from the Environment Agency.

Your Council as Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) (under Section 23 of Land Drainage Act 1991) are responsible for permitting works that:

- propose any changes to an ordinary watercourse
- alter or obstruct the flow in the watercourse.

You must apply to the LLFA for a permit before you carry out work.

Links to further information

Please see the Environment Agency document 'Living on the Edge'

Find further information on flood defence locations, land drainage byelaws and riparian ownership at Flood Advice – Harrow Council.

To report incidents please contact:

Main river (regulated by the Environment Agency) incident hotline:
0800 80 70 60.

Ordinary watercourse (regulated by the LLFA):

Harrow Council infrastructure@harrow.gov.uk

Sewer flooding to Thames Water: 0800 316 9800.



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