



**Somerset  
Council**

# **Flood Investigation Report**

*Section 19 Flood and Water  
Management Act 2010*

**Pitt Valley**

**9-10<sup>th</sup> May 2023**

<b>Organisation</b>	Somerset Council
<b>Title</b>	Section 19 Report: Pitt Valley
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<b>Primary Legislation</b>	Flood & Water Management Act 2010: Section 19

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## Executive summary

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023, a severe rainfall event resulted in an extraordinary level of surface water and river flooding in Hadspen, Pitcombe and Shepton Montague.

Rainfall levels on this date exceeding historical norms. The exceptional rainfall overwhelmed existing drainage systems, which were unable to fully accommodate the volume and velocity. Homes were damaged, roads destroyed, and even road infrastructure has been permanently damaged. Blocked drains exacerbated the situation, leaving residents stranded and disconnected from electricity. The community's response includes the creation of emergency plans and flood risk improvements.

This report recommends that Risk Management Authorities must address drainage issues, culvert management, and water retention. Future developments in this area should be carefully considered, and the impact of recent development must be considered.

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# Introduction

## 2010 Flood and Water Management Act

Legislated within the Flood & Water Management Act 2010, the Lead Local Flood Authority (in this locality, Somerset Council) is required to investigate flood events within their jurisdiction. This function and responsibility was inherited from Somerset County Council under whom this policy was first adopted.

Somerset Council has set a threshold of ten internally flooded properties within a locality, this threshold having been exceeded in several instances throughout the throughout the county in 2023.

Flood investigation and reporting are often known as 'Section 19 reports' as under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act. Lead Local Flood Authorities have a responsibility, to the extent it deems necessary, to investigate flood incidents under this item of legislation. The function of a Section 19 report is to gather information on the happenings during a particular flood event. The legislation states:

1. On becoming aware of a flooding in its area, a Lead Local Flood Authority must, to the extent that it considers necessary or appropriate, investigate:
  - a) Which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and
  - b) Whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.
2. Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must:
  - a) Publish the results of its investigation, and
  - b) Notify any relevant risk management authorities.

In addition, a Section 19 report will often detail any ongoing work with regards to flooding in the area, and will signpost additional work that should be considered, usually in the form of recommendations.

It is not the function of a Section 19 to provide firm solutions to flooding, this requiring far more detailed technical analysis, liaison with landowners, and decision making about schemes in concert with the public and other stakeholders. A Section 19 report can help in demonstrating the need for this work and act as evidence in any future funding bids.

## Scope of the Investigation

The Pitt Valley is a region in east Somerset, including the both the parish of Shepton Montague, and of Pitcombe, Hadspen and Cole. Shepton Montague and Pitcombe sit within the Valley of the River Pitt, in the south-east area of Somerset, and share a catchment with Hadspen to the west. Between them, these villages consist around 740 inhabitants. This report covers the heavy rainfall incident on 9<sup>th</sup> May affecting Shepton Montague, Pitcombe and Hadspen. While many areas in Somerset were heavily affected by the flooding on this date, these areas have been grouped together for the purpose of this report because they share a river catchment.

The village of Pitcombe lies at the bottom of a valley, surrounded by fields with steep roads into and out of it. The River Pitt runs through the village, downstream from Shepton Montague and joins the River Brue at Cole. Shepton Montague is situated on the River Pitt, which turns west through Lower Shepton with a stream originating in Shepton Montague joining the river. Hadspen sits in an adjoining valley to the west.

This report covers the combination of surface water (pluvial) and river (fluvial) flooding which was experienced by these communities in May 2023. The report will give an overview of the flooding that occurred, describe the conditions which led to the flooding, consider the response to the flooding thus far and make technical recommendations for the flood risk authorities concerned.

<b>Location</b>	<b>No. properties reported internal flooding</b>	<b>Property type</b>
Hadspen	2 /4	Residential
Pitcombe	4 /7	Residential
Shepton Montague	8 /10	Residential
Shepton Montague	2	Business
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	

*Figure 1 Table showing breakdown of flooding on 9th May in Pitt Valley*

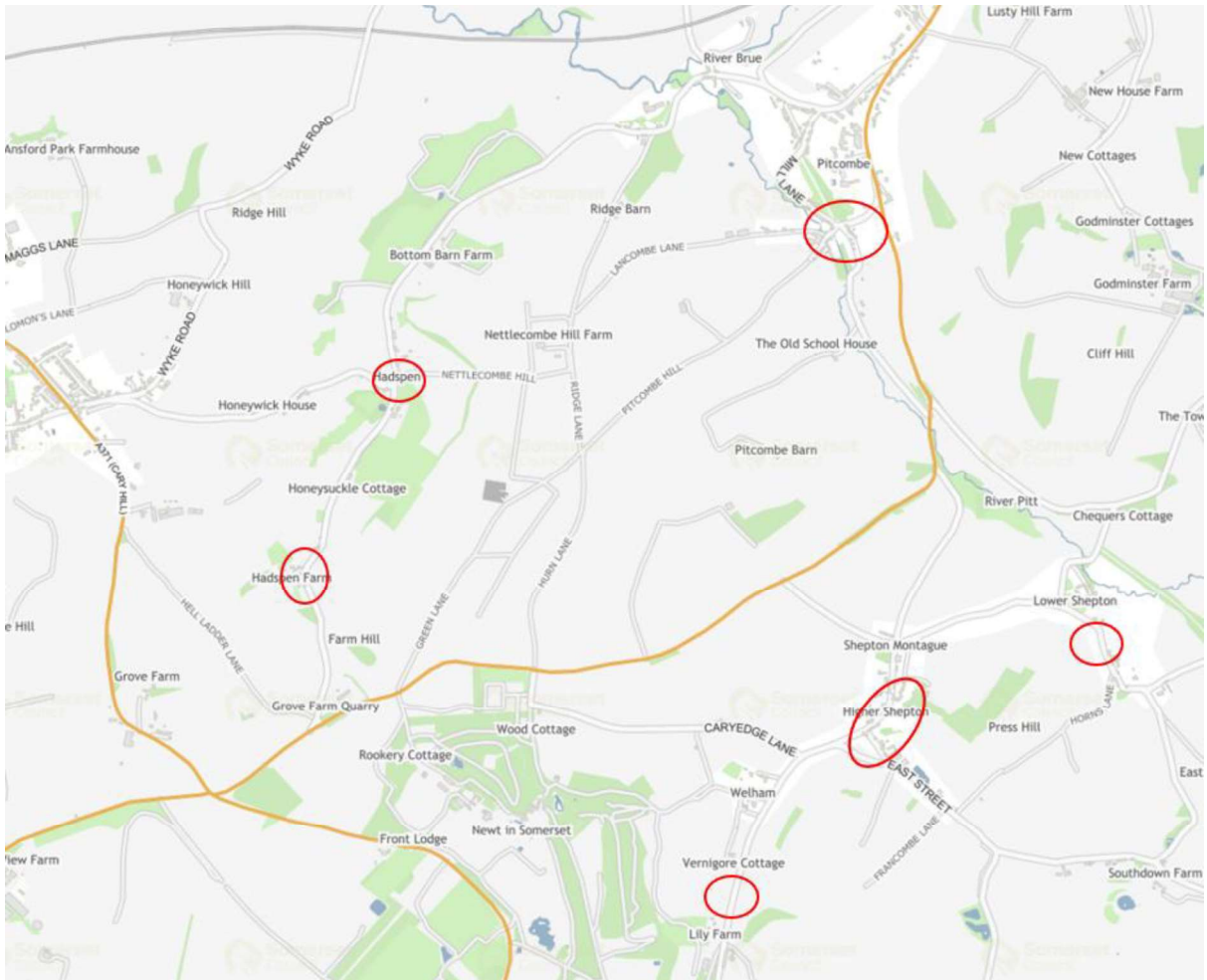


Figure 2 Map of flooded areas in Pitt Valley on 9th May 2023.

## Data Collection

Much information has been received from residents and stakeholders, providing a thorough picture of the events that occurred and some indication as to potential causes. This data has been scrutinised, filtered and analysed to support the conclusions in this report. Maps in this report assume north at the top, unless a north arrow is otherwise placed.

### Community Engagement Officers

The SRA funds Community Engagement Officers, hosted by the Emergency Planning, Response and Recovery team in Somerset Council. Their role is to support communities to build resilience to flooding. This includes attending community drop-in events following a flooding event to obtain information and provide advice on immediate recovery activity.

### Flooding inbox ([flooding@somerset.gov.uk](mailto:flooding@somerset.gov.uk))

Members of the Flooding and Coastal Team manage this council-owned email inbox, which receives many enquiries from residents, parishes, and internal communications regarding flooding events, as well as testimonials and evidence of flooding from residents. The inbox often receives images and videos of an event (both during and after), which helps to influence the content of a Section 19 report.

### Flood Online Reporting Tool (FORT)

This system allows property owners, flood risk authorities and volunteers to share details of flood reports and observations to assist with flood risk planning. Participants can record current flooding for information or record recent flooding in the last five years. The system is hosted by Dorset Council and is strictly for information, rather than triggering an immediate response from agencies.

FORT reports are the simplest and most suitable way for residents to inform Section 19 investigations. This is how the council will recognise the minimum threshold of internally flooded properties, triggering a Section 19 investigation. The data is recorded automatically and will therefore systematically feed into any report that may be written.

### LLFA data

As the LLFA receives reports of flooding via the abovementioned channels, each piece of correspondence is categorised, logged and captured on a shared council-owned drive.

### EPRR Reports

The Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery Team (EPRR) is responsible for coordinating the front-line local authority response to an emergency in Somerset. This

includes developing emergency plans, processes, and training to ensure that the local authority can respond promptly and effectively to emergencies to support residents and communities. EPRR debriefs after a flooding event will feed into a Section 19 investigation to help agencies learn how to better respond to future events.

### Rainfall data

Both the Met Office and the Environment Agency have provided rainfall data, imagery, and meteorological insight into the event, as well as topographical data, river catchments, information about local flood zones and a detailed river network. The Environment Agency holds data on recorded river levels, which helps form an understanding of the level of water passing through the area on this date. The data is limited, however, due to the geographical constraints of these rainfall gauges. Nonetheless, it has been used to construct a rough picture of the rainfall and water levels during this event.

### Flood Estimation Handbook

The Flood Estimation Handbook (FEH) Web Service delivers catchment descriptors and rainfall data to support the methods outlined in the Flood Estimation Handbook, and implemented in the FEH software, for estimating floods and site runoff rates across the UK.

### Resilience Direct

Resilience Direct is a secure on-line file sharing platform for use by agencies with an emergency responder function. It includes mapping capabilities.

### iShare GIS

This application provides a geographical overview of an affected area, including natural data such as river data, topographical information, and river catchments, as well as structural data on potholes, drains, culverts and other mechanical flood defences.

### Engineering analysis

The collated data has been analysed by flood engineering experts to gain insight into the mechanisms, possible solutions and recommendations in this report. This includes a hydraulic and topographical analysis of catchments and desktop studies of surface water sensitivities.

### Missing data

Due to the time delay between the flooding events and writing this report, there is a risk that some data could be missing in the final investigation. This is due to a number of factors, including the development of systems for logging flooding reports, data archiving, and a lack of reporting from the community.

There may be more numbers of flooded properties than are reported for a Section 19 investigation. This can be due to the perceived impact on insurance or saleability, as well as a lack of awareness of how to report flooding, or even the necessity of reporting to trigger an investigation.

It must therefore be stressed that a Section 19 investigation may not give a complete picture of all the properties flooded in a major event. Despite this challenge, the report should still provide thorough recommendations based on the available information.

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## Stakeholder Engagement

The following describes relevant flood risk management authorities, sources of data and affected parties, whose feedback is essential in creating the full picture of a flooding event, feeding into the Section 19 report.

### Residents

Many households flooded internally during this event, with varying levels of recovery.

The community impacted by this flooding have participated in local community drop-in events, which have helped local response authorities to understand what support is required and have also been a source of data for the report, through providing testimonies and images.

Some residents and Flood Wardens have contributed significantly to the Section 19 investigation by providing comprehensive reports into the flooding event.

### Local Flood Wardens and Flood Groups

Many communities have designated Flood Wardens, who are volunteers responsible for supporting a cluster of homes and linking with local authority co-ordinators on the ground during a flood event. Flood Wardens may also provide information on the flooding event and collate information from residents to support a Section 19 investigation.

Flood Groups lead on community resilience by working with Parish Councils to create Community Flood Resilience Plans that aim to reduce the severity of future events and aid residents in improving their property flood resilience.

### Parish and Town Councils

Local councils play an important role in managing flood risk at the community level, through the preparation of community flood plans and Flood Warden schemes. The Parish Council has been invaluable in gathering information on the flooding and reporting on the flood incident.

### Somerset Council

Somerset Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) responsible for managing flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses, development of a Local Flood Risk Strategy, Asset Plans and investigations under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. Somerset Council also has responsibility for some coastal erosion risk management. The LLFA is not a response team but has several

statutory roles including the following responsibilities in helping to manage a flood event.

As Highways Authority, the council is responsible for helping to manage flooding through planning, investigation and supporting community recovery by maintaining and effectively draining the public highway.

Within the council, the Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery Team (EPRR) is responsible for coordinating the front-line local authority response to an emergency in Somerset. This includes developing emergency plans, processes, and training to ensure that the local authority can respond promptly and effectively to emergencies to support residents and communities.

Shortly after the event, officers from Somerset Council visited the site to speak to residents and listen to their experiences of the flood and their impressions of possible causes, as well as to understand the impact of the event on the community.

#### [Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group \(FWAG\)](#)

This charity supports farmers and landowners by providing environmental advice, conducting research into Natural Flood Management (NFM) and “Slow the Flow”. They aim to help improve land management and soil husbandry in order to manage flooding.

#### [Environment Agency](#)

The Environment Agency are responsible for managing the flood risk from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs including coastal erosion risk management, permissive powers to maintain main rivers, strategic overview over all forms of flooding and development of a national Flood Risk Strategy.

#### [Water & Sewerage Companies](#)

Water supply and sanitation in Somerset is provided by companies including Wessex Water, Southwest Water and Bristol Water, who deliver many of the water services across the southwest of England. They also provide funding for projects which safeguard homes and businesses from flooding. Sewer flooding from public sewers is also managed by water companies.

#### [Emergency response](#)

Within the Avon and Somerset police force area, agencies with emergency response responsibilities come together for planning and emergency response under the banner of the Avon and Somerset Local Resilience Forum

Under the *Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004*, English and Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) have a power to respond to floods. However, they do not have a

statutory duty to do so. [Part 2](#) of the Act contains statutory duties to provide for fire safety, fire-fighting and dealing with road traffic accidents.

### Riparian landowners

Riparian landowners are those who own land adjoining a watercourse and have certain responsibilities, including the following:

- They must maintain the bed and banks of an open watercourse, and the trees and shrubs growing on the banks.
- They must clear any debris, even if it did not originate from their land. This debris may be natural or man-made.
- They must keep any structures that they own clear of debris. These structures include culverts, trash screens, weirs and mill gates.

If they do not carry out their responsibilities, they could face legal action under the Land Drainage Act 1991. Details of a riparian landowners' responsibilities can be found on the Environmental Agency website: [www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/owning-a-watercourse)



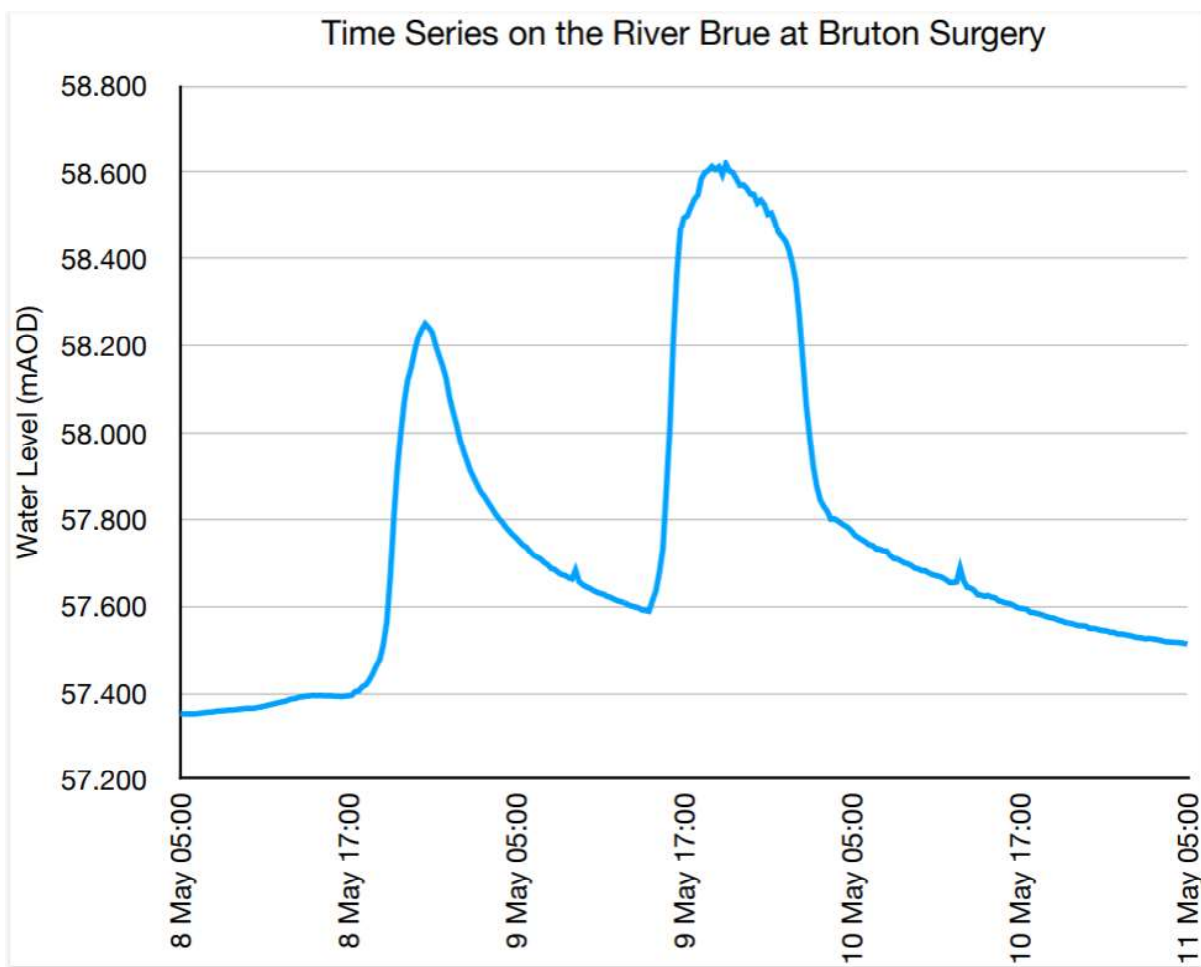


Figure 5 Environment Agency rainfall data for River Brue at Bruton Surgery on 9th May 2023

Environment Agency Wessex Area Monthly Water situation report:

“May was drier than the previous two months with 54mm of rain which is 88% of the long term average (LTA). There was a wet start to the month with 47mm of rain falling in the first 9 days however the rest of May was predominantly dry. Overall rainfall was normal for the time of year but the exceptionally high rainfall in March and above normal rainfall in April make it the wettest for this March to May period since 2000. Soil moisture deficit (SMD) increased by around 60mm due to the dry weather, so by the end of May it was higher than the LTA and similar to the SMD observed last year.”

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“Wessex received 54mm of rainfall in May (88% LTA) which is normal for the time of year. The majority of the month’s rain (47mm) fell from 1 to 9 May. No other day received more than 2mm and the second half of the month was predominantly dry.”

“Soil moisture deficit decreased early in May before increasing by around 60mm in the last few weeks of the month. At the end of the month the deficit was higher than the LTA but similar to May last year.”

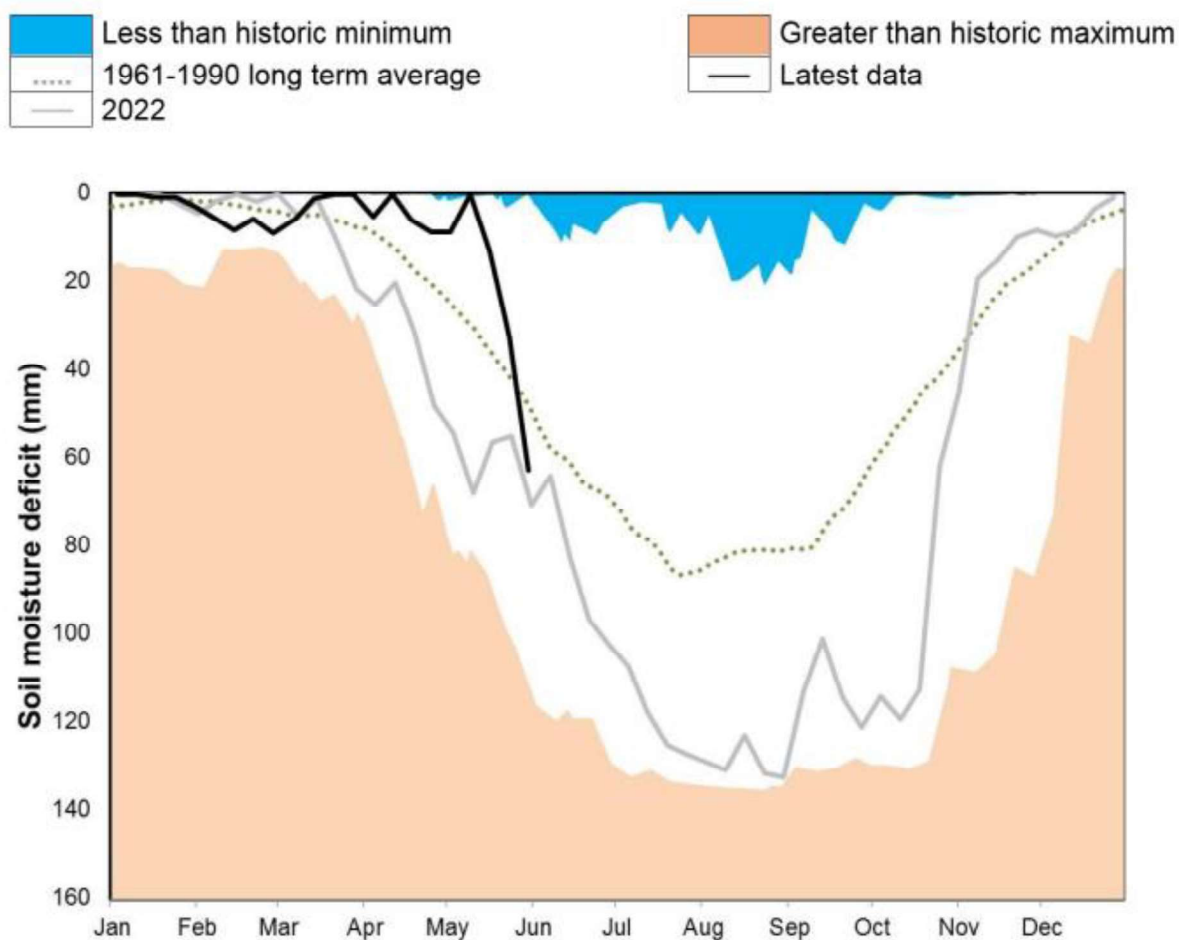


Figure 6 Latest soil moisture deficit compared to previous year, maximum, minimum, and 1961 to 1990 long term average. Weekly MORECS data for real land use (Met Office) [\[SP1\]](#) [\[JM2\]](#) [\[AF3\]](#) Source: Met Office. Crown copyright, 2023). All rights reserved. Environment Agency, 100024198, 2023)

### Drainage Features

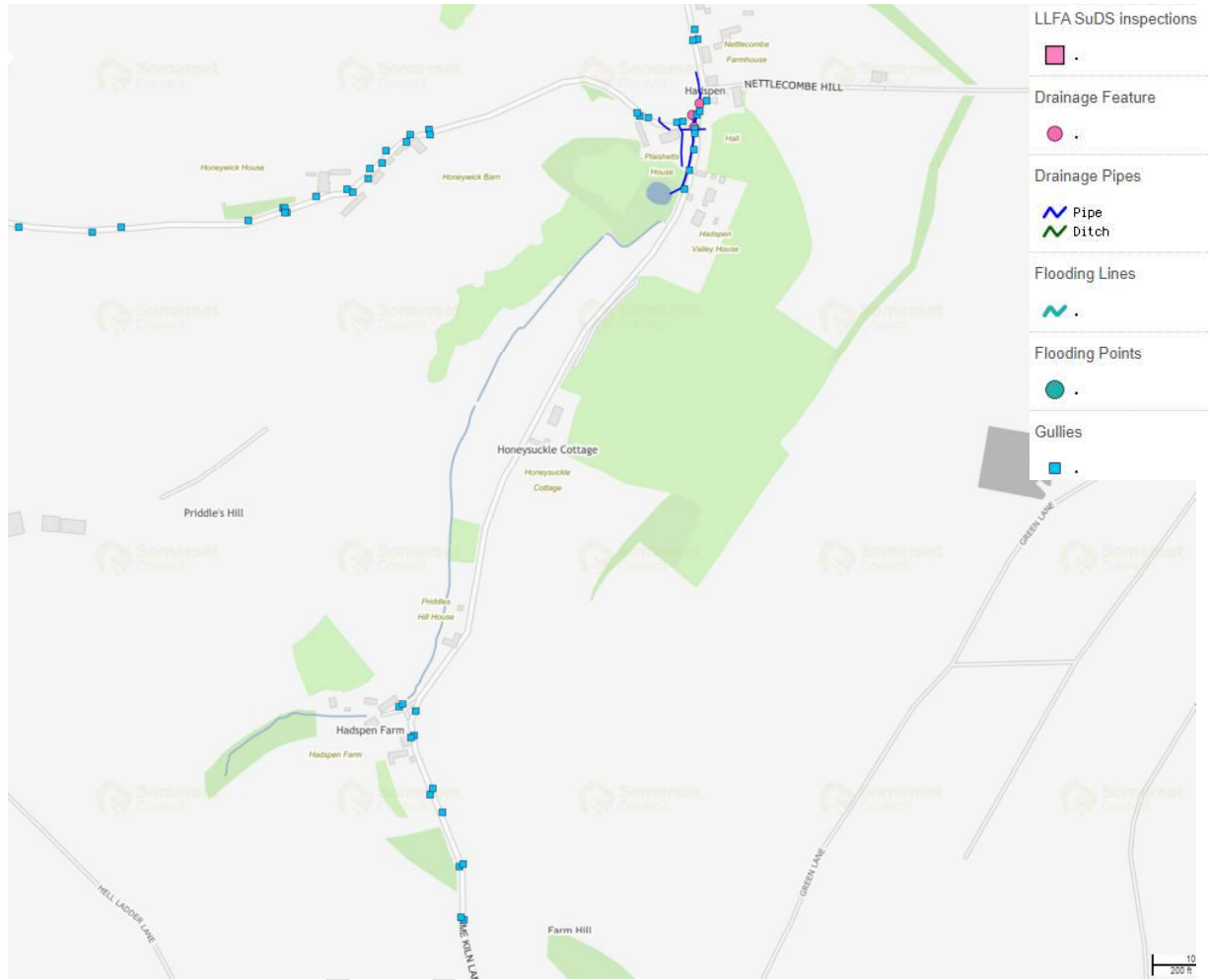


Figure 7 Map showing drainage features within Hadspen (iShare)

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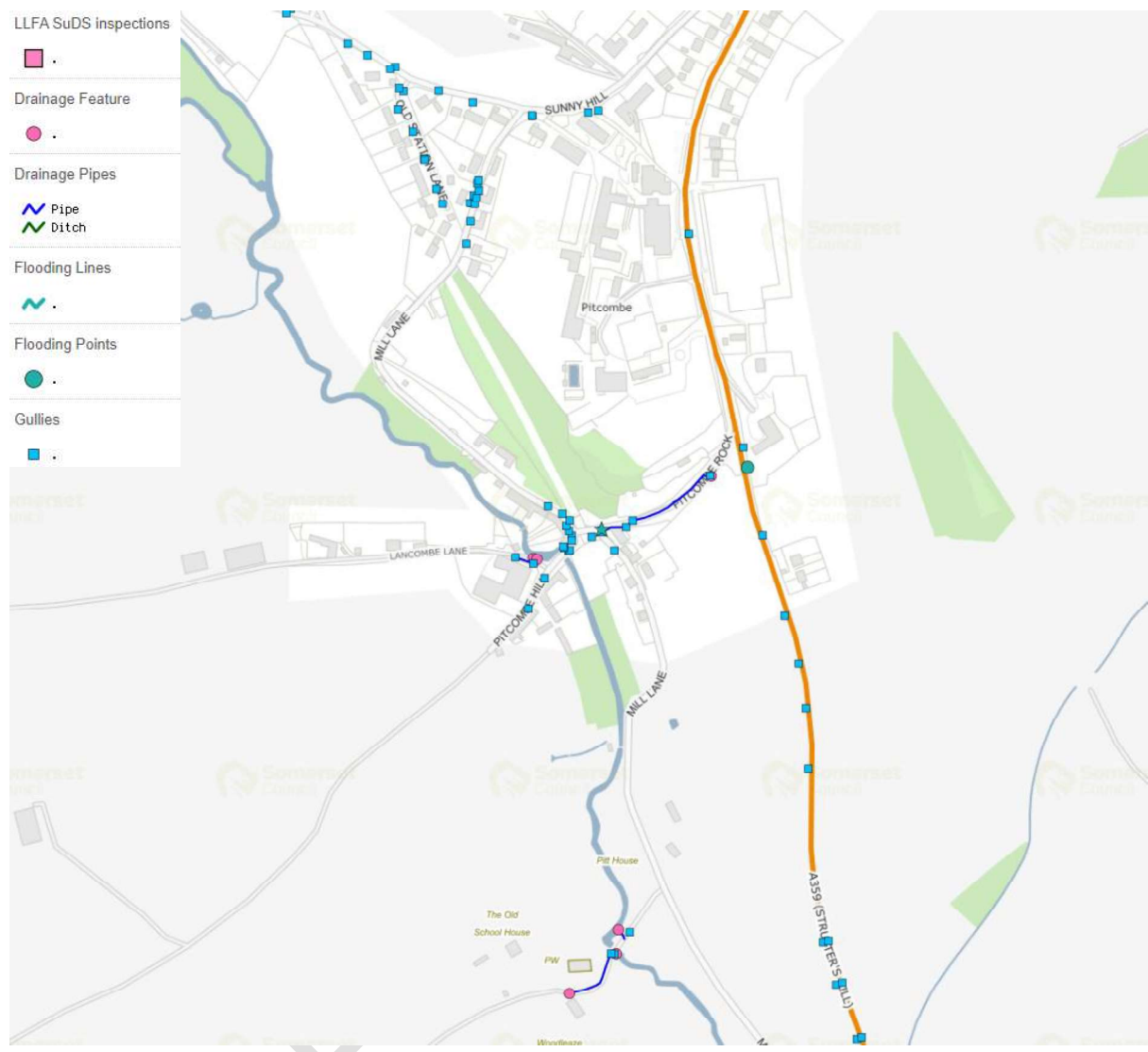


Figure 8 Map showing drainage features within Pitcombe (iShare)

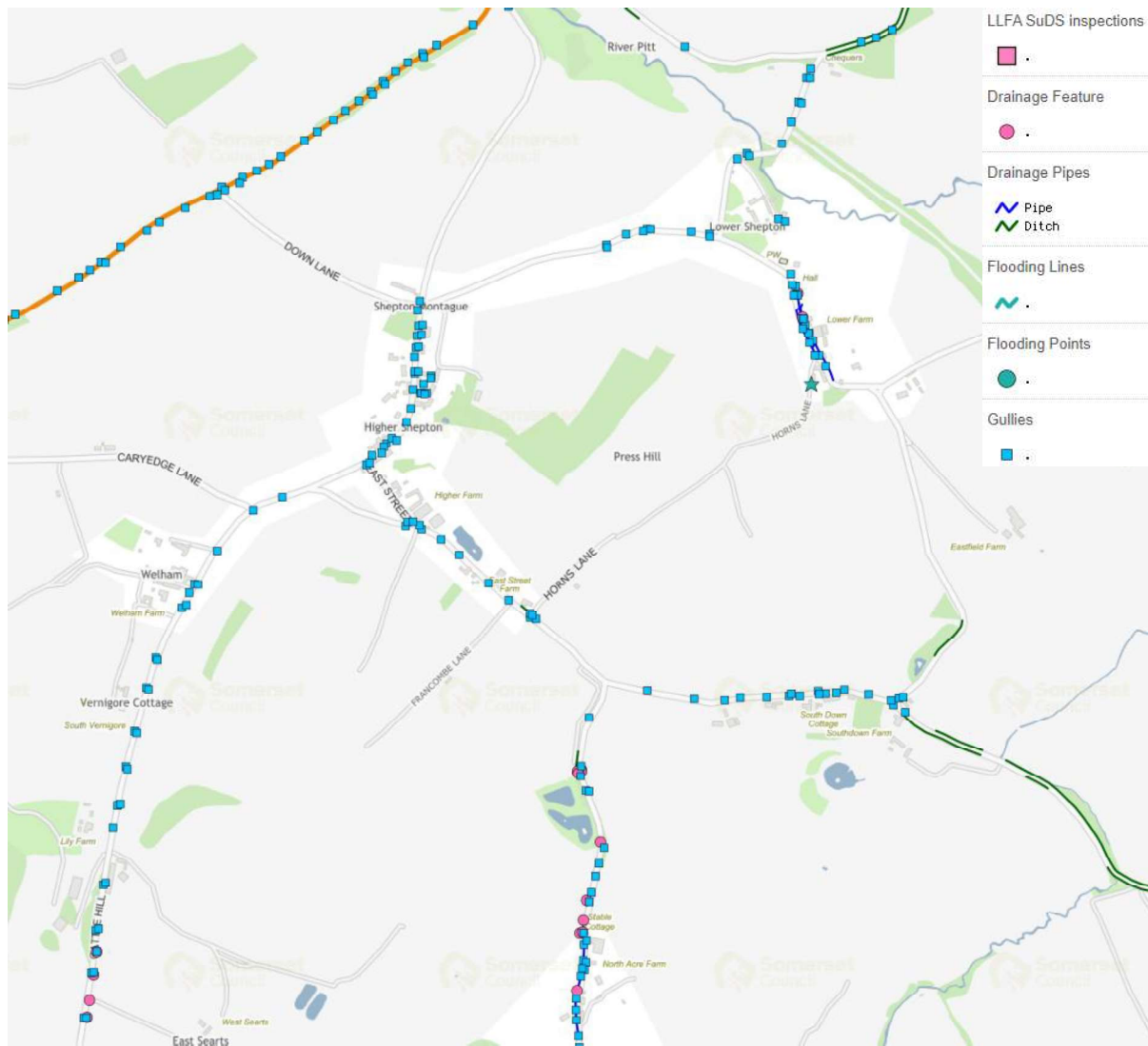


Figure 9 Map showing drainage features within Shepton Montague (iShare)

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## Geography

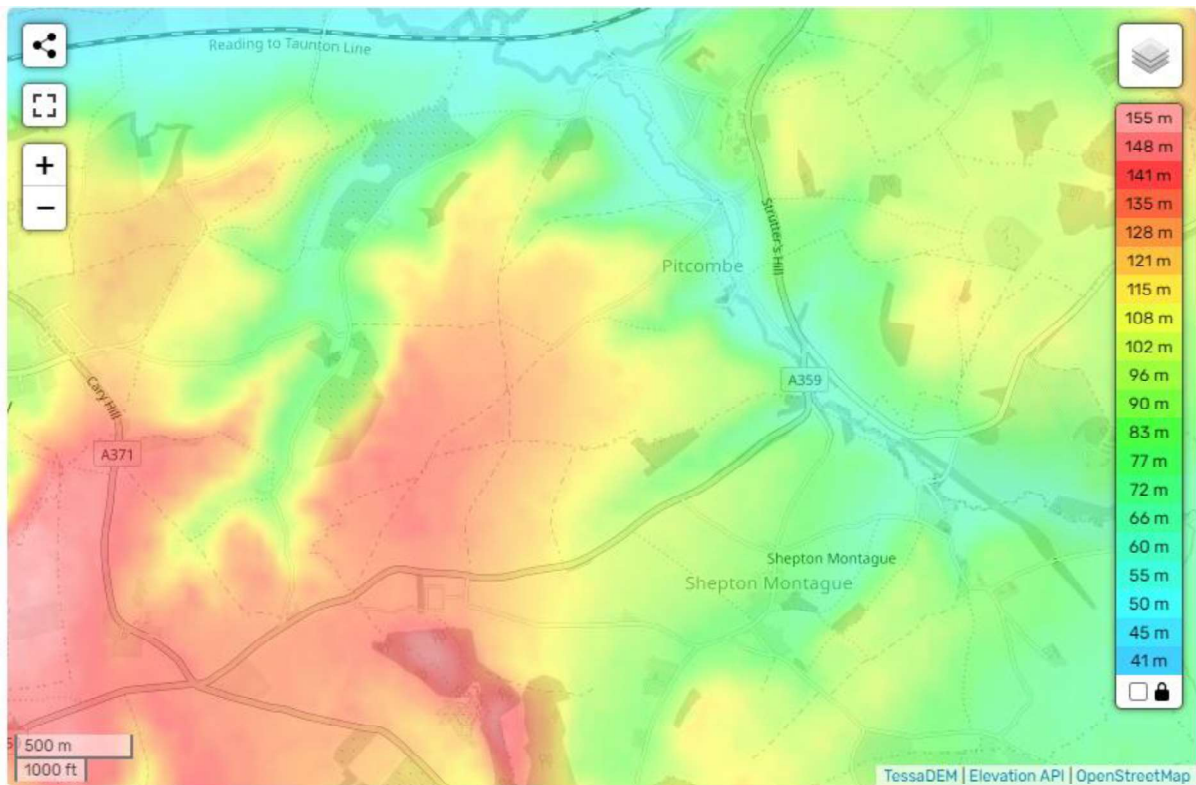


Figure 10 Topological Map of Shepton Montague, Pitcombe, Hadspen (Topographic-Map.com)

### Shepton Montague:

Average elevation: 104 m  
 Minimum elevation: 41 m  
 Maximum elevation: 186 m

### Pitcombe:

Average elevation: 96 m  
 Minimum elevation: 37 m  
 Maximum elevation: 186 m

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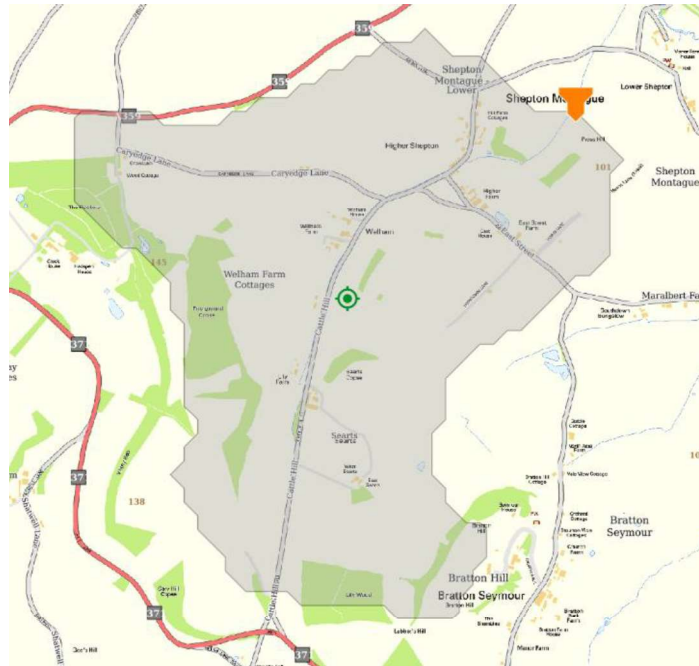


Figure 11 Flood Estimating Handbook: catchment boundary for Shepton Montague

According to the flood Estimating Handbook, the catchment drainage area for site is 2.49 km<sup>2</sup>, based on National Grid Reference ST 67850 31550. (Derived using an Integrated Hydrology Digital Terrain Model (GDTM) developed at UKCEH Wallingford).

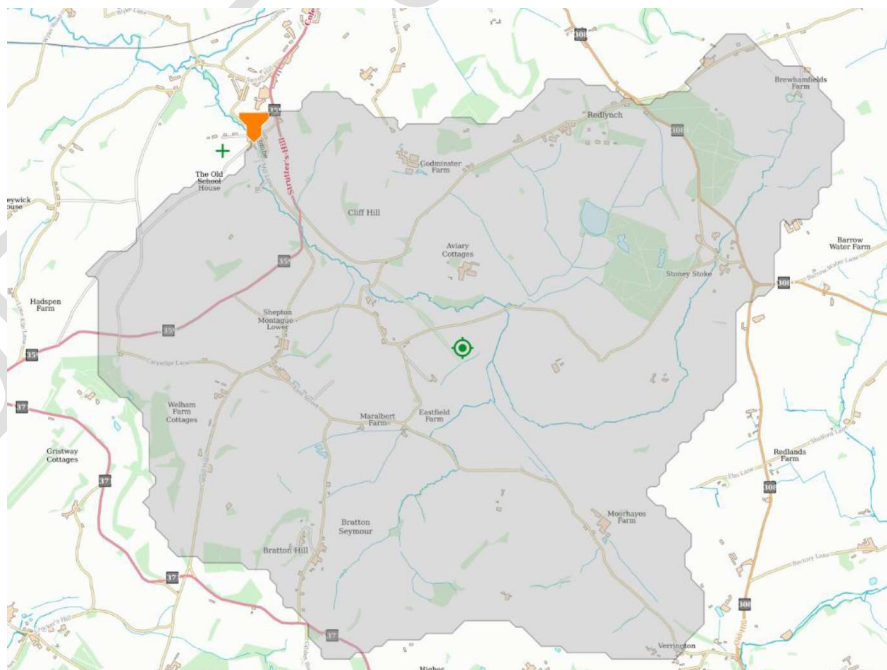


Figure 12 Flood Estimating Handbook: catchment boundary for Pitcombe

According to the flood Estimating Handbook, the catchment drainage area for site is 19.23 km<sup>2</sup>, based on National Grid Reference ST 67250 33100. (Derived using an Integrated Hydrology Digital Terrain Model (GDTM) developed at UKCEH Wallingford).



Figure 13 Flood Estimating Handbook: catchment boundary for Hadspen

According to the flood Estimating Handbook, the catchment drainage area for site is 1.7 km<sup>2</sup>, based on National Grid Reference ST 65650 32600. (Derived using an Integrated Hydrology Digital Terrain Model (GDTM) developed at UKCEH Wallingford).

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Figure 14 Map showing flood risk to Shepton Montague and surrounding area. Flood map for planning – gov.uk – OS data Crown Copyright and database rights 2024

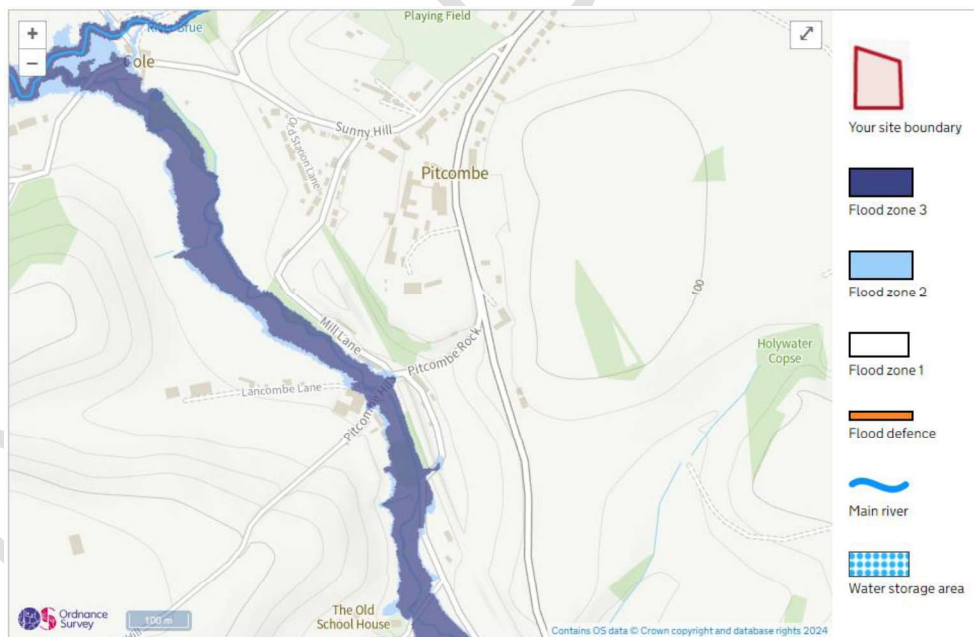


Figure 15 Map showing flood risk to Pitcombe and surrounding area. Flood map for planning – gov.uk – OS data Crown Copyright and database rights 2024

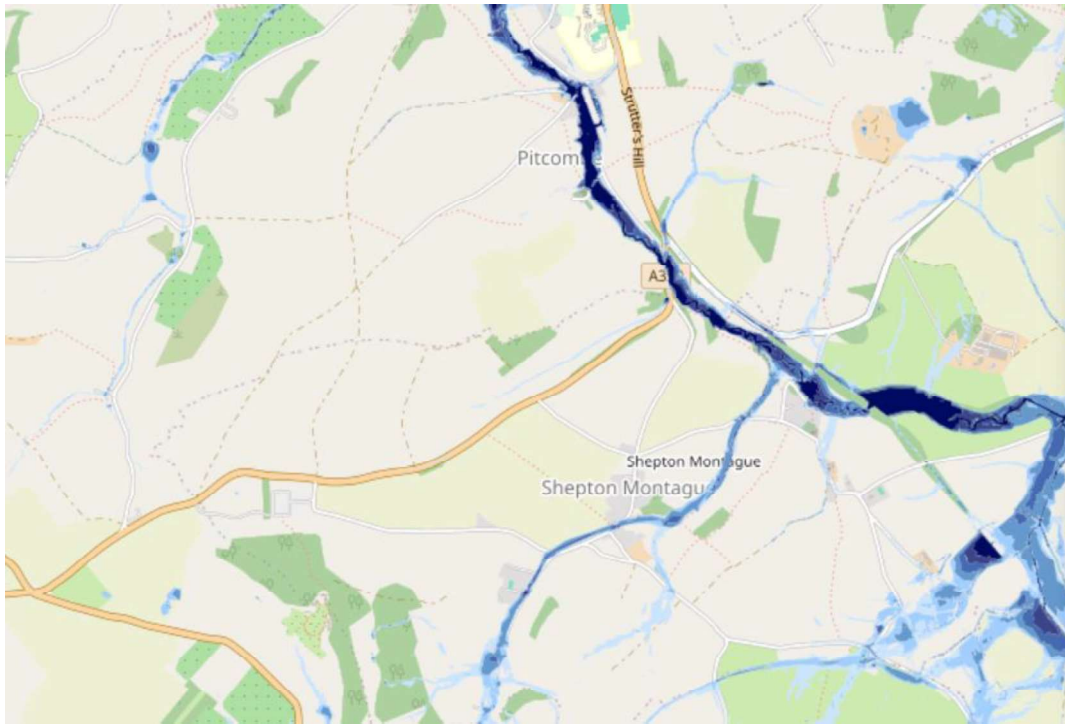


Figure 16 Defra OGC map of Pitt Valley - Risk of Flooding from Surface Water Depth: 0.1% annual chance

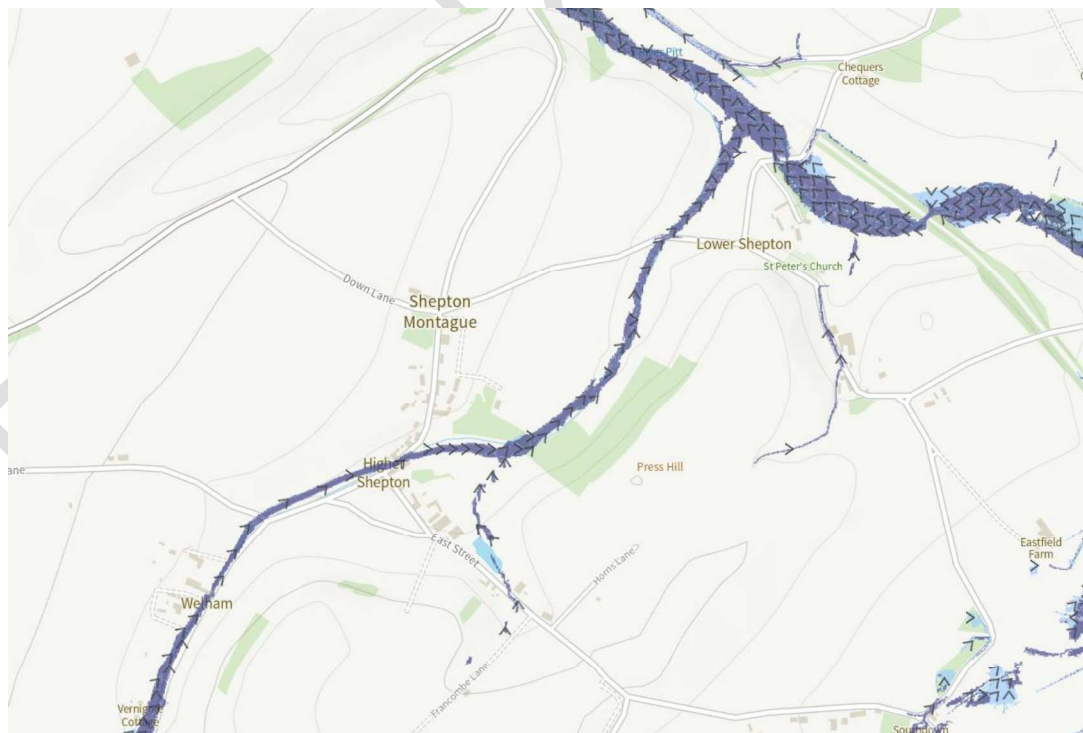


Figure 17 Surface water velocity for Shepton Montague ([Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk](http://Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk))

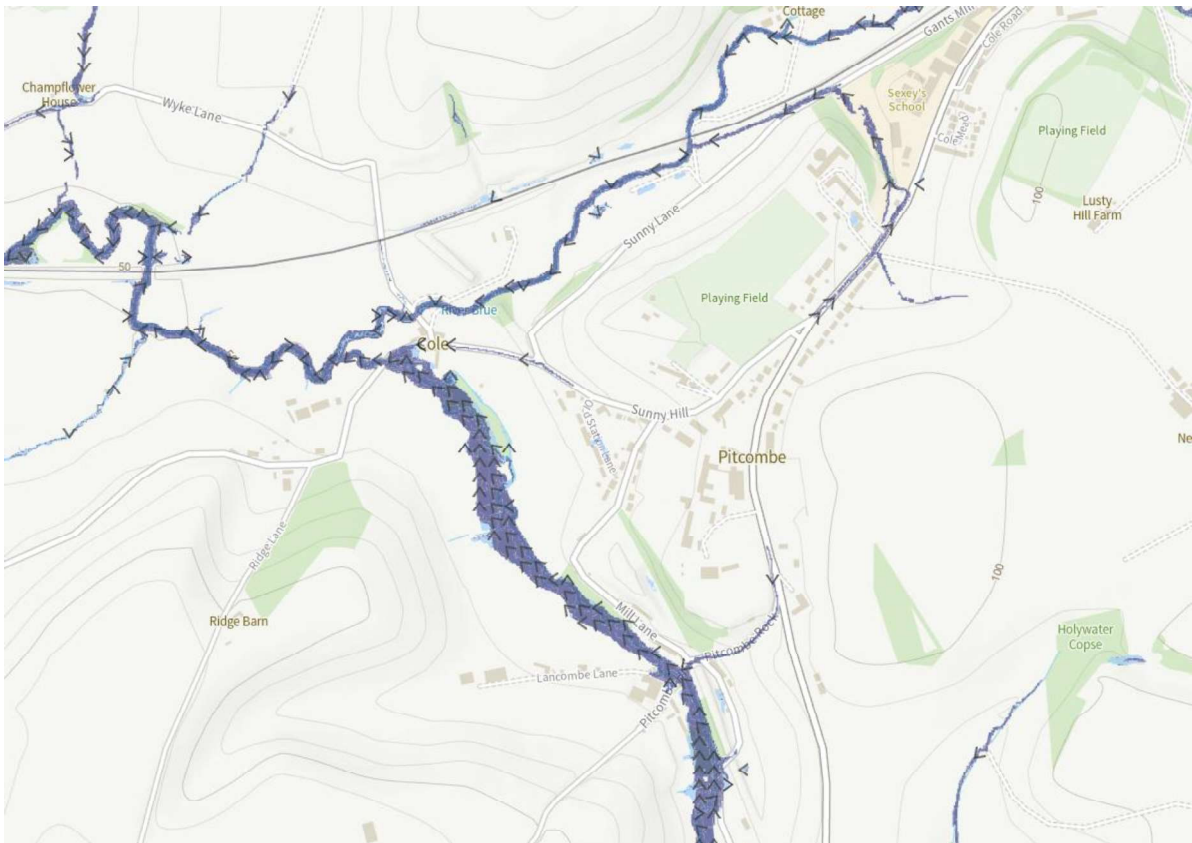


Figure 18 Surface water velocity for Pitcombe ([Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk](http://Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk))

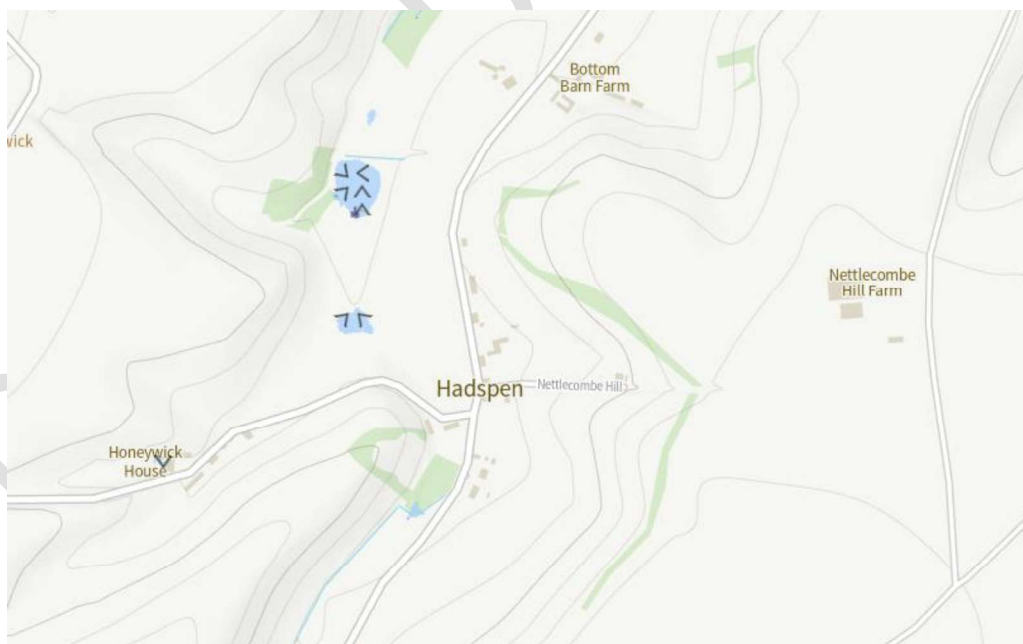


Figure 19 Surface water velocity for Hadspen ([Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk](http://Check-long-term-flood-risk.gov.uk))

## Flooding extent & impact

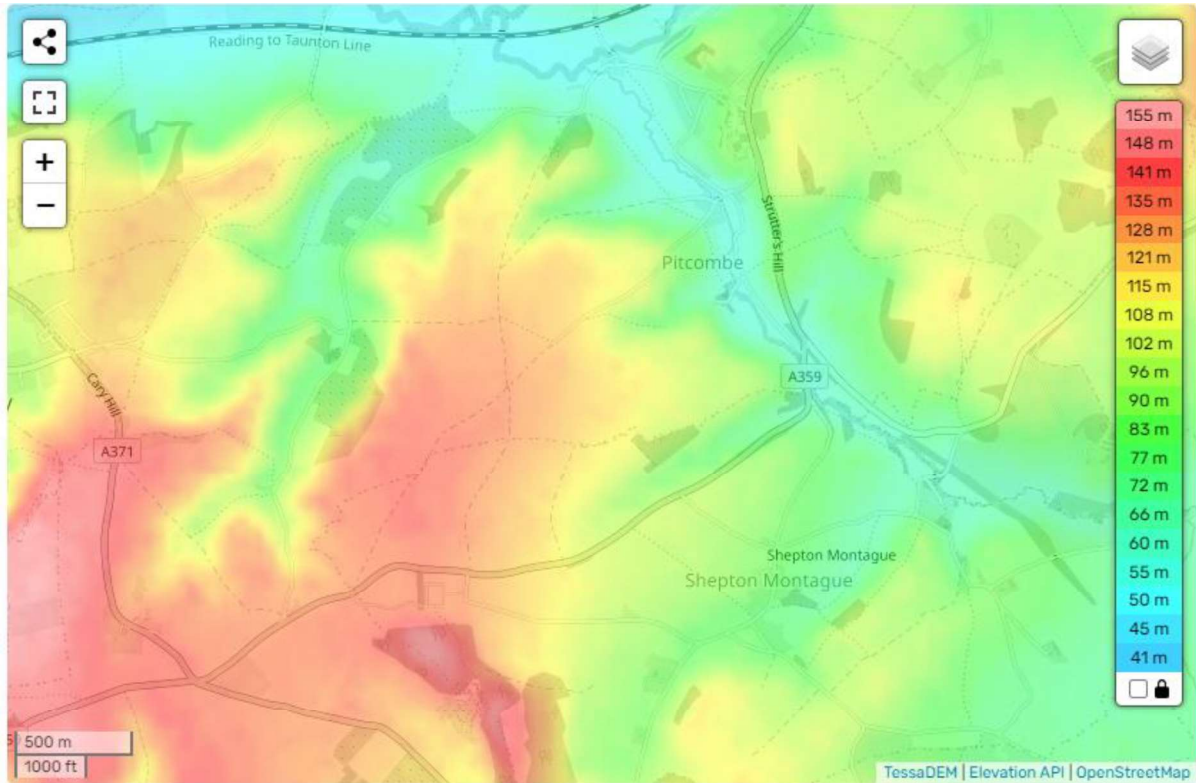


Figure 20 Topological Map of Shepton Montague, Pitcombe, Hadspen (Topographic-Map.com)

### Pitcombe

#### Summary

On the afternoon of 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023, Pitcombe experienced a prolonged thunderstorm, though Pitcombe itself was not in the eye of the storm.

By 4:00pm there was thunder, lightning and heavy rainfall, which remained for several hours. There was a large mass of rainwater run-off from surrounding fields and roads, resulting in the River Pitt rising exceptionally quickly, breaking its banks and flooding four houses, two garages and a studio. Residents reported that the river rose suddenly – flooding into gardens within around 20 minutes. Water ran down Lancombe Lane as a torrent, flowing against the tide to augment the gathering flood.

By around 5:30pm, water was entering residential properties. On Church Ln, the river broke its banks and the road surface was ripped up. Water pouring off the hills contributed to a wall being blown out. Water detoured around Pitcombe Bridge, creating rapids at the bottom of Lancombe Ln. In one garden, the torrent was strong enough swept away a flagstone which had been cemented into the ground depositing it 12ft downstream.

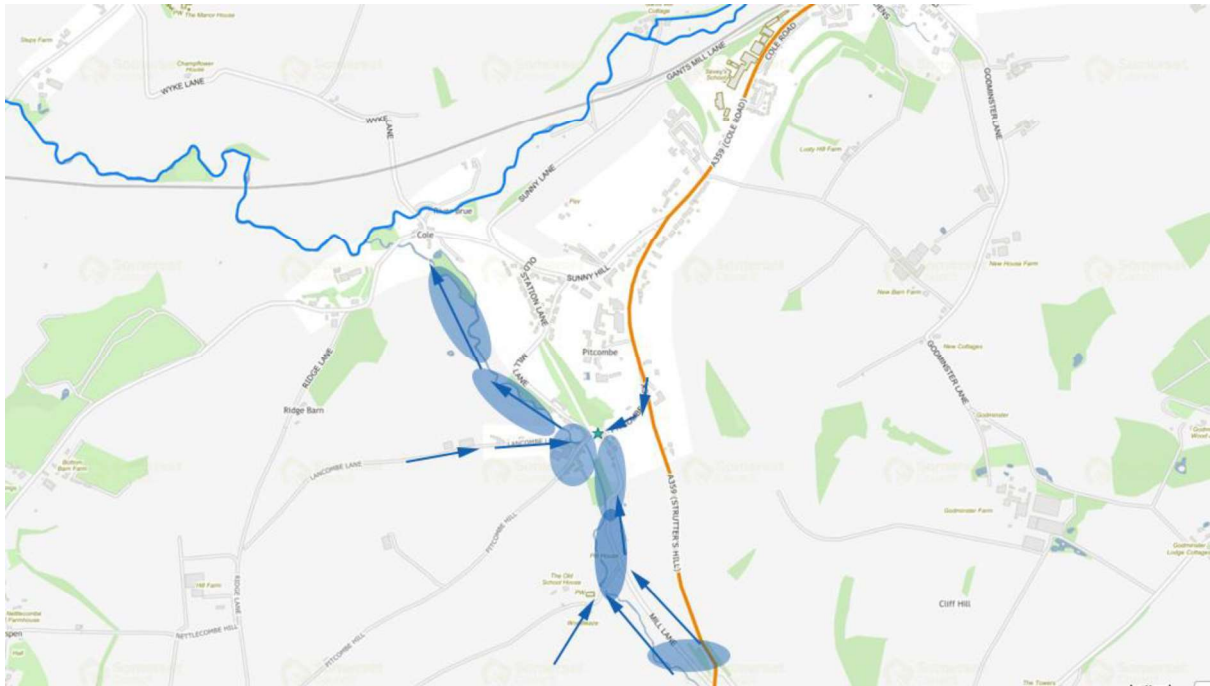


Figure 21 Map showing flow of water in Pitcombe on 9th May 2023

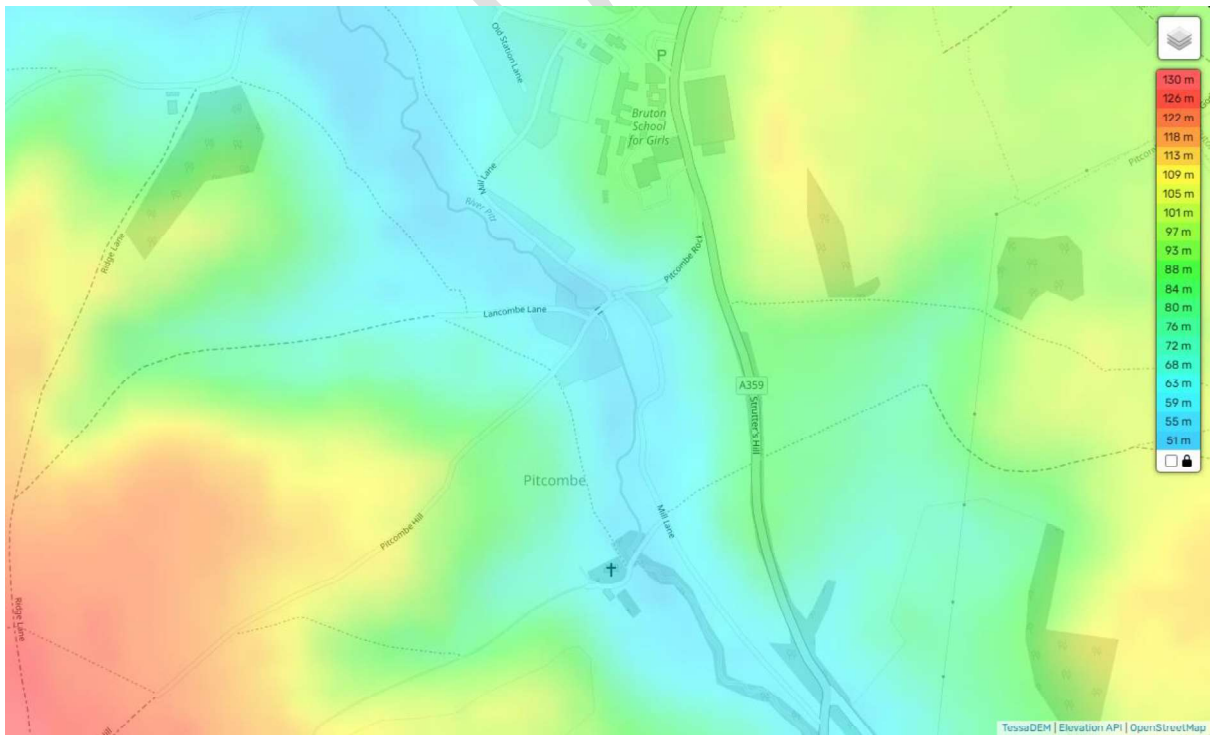


Figure 22 Topographic map of Pitcombe (topographic-map.com)

### Probable causes

The cause of the flooding is likely the exceptional levels of rainfall experienced on this particular day. Residents reported that this level of rainfall had not previously occurred, with this level of severity of flooding. Rainfall data confirms the exceptional nature of this severe storm event. It is likely that existing drainage features were not able to manage the amount of water that fell during this event, in such a short space of time. Residents also reported that drains were blocked in several areas. It is also possible that the flooding was exacerbated by drains backing up near homes on Mill Ln, which is also accounted for in the recommended actions. The recommendations of this report will reflect these findings.

### Impact

One elderly resident was helped when their son was taken through the flood on his tractor. They were then retrieved by the fire service. Detritus was stuck in copses, including rubbish bins and garden furniture. Mill Lane was impassable. Homes were disconnected from electricity, artwork in a studio was damaged and roads were destroyed.

A recent inspection of Pitcombe Village Bridge shows it is sinking into river on one side. It is likely that water and debris coming against bridge has had a significant impact. There is concern that further high-water events are likely to accelerate the problem.

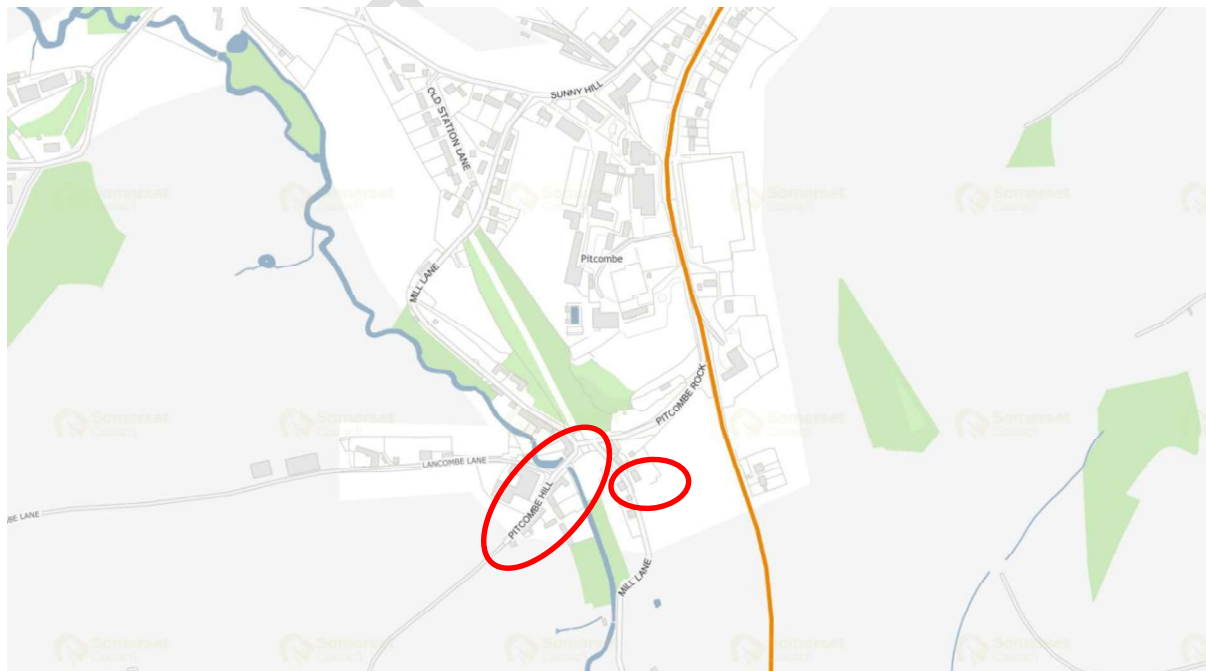


Figure 23 Impacted areas in Pitcombe by flooding on 9th May 2023

### History

There have been nine previous events since 1978, the worst of which residents note as occurring in December 2008. Since the May 2023 flooding, there was a significant event on 8<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023, during which the river broke its banks once more in two places. Villagers helped to clear roads in the aftermath. Additionally, river levels to similarly high levels on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, during Storm Ciaran. Residents noted regular road flooding at the Wessex Water pump station, where the road usually floods before other areas.

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## Response

The fire service was in attendance on the night of 9th May 2023. The emergency services reportedly set off down Mill Lane from the viaduct towards the church but could not gain access. Since the flooding, the community has developed Pitcombe Emergency Flood Plan 2024 and Pitcombe Flood Improvement Plan 2024.

## Hadspen

### Summary

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023, heavy rainfall in the afternoon resulted in large amounts of water runoff from Grove Farm and Line Kiln Lane, as well as flow from the A317 and the adjacent field, also passing through the quarry, converging into Higher Hadspen. The runoff from Higher Hadspen, together with runoff from the sides of the valley, passed into the flood relief pond opposite Hadspen Valley Farm. Overflow from the pond passed onto the main road, converging with runoff from Nettlecombe Hill, into Hadspen Village. This was unable to discharge through the culverts into Plaichetts field, resulting in water gathering from both the northeast and the south.

Water also flowed from Scarlis Combe to Barn Close through the orchards to the east, round Provender House and with run-off from Ham Hill to Nine Wells. The flow finally ran from Plaichetts field into the stream to the north, past Cole (which was not impacted by flooding).

Residents reported multiple drivers passing through the village despite warning signage, causing bow waves which pushed water into properties.

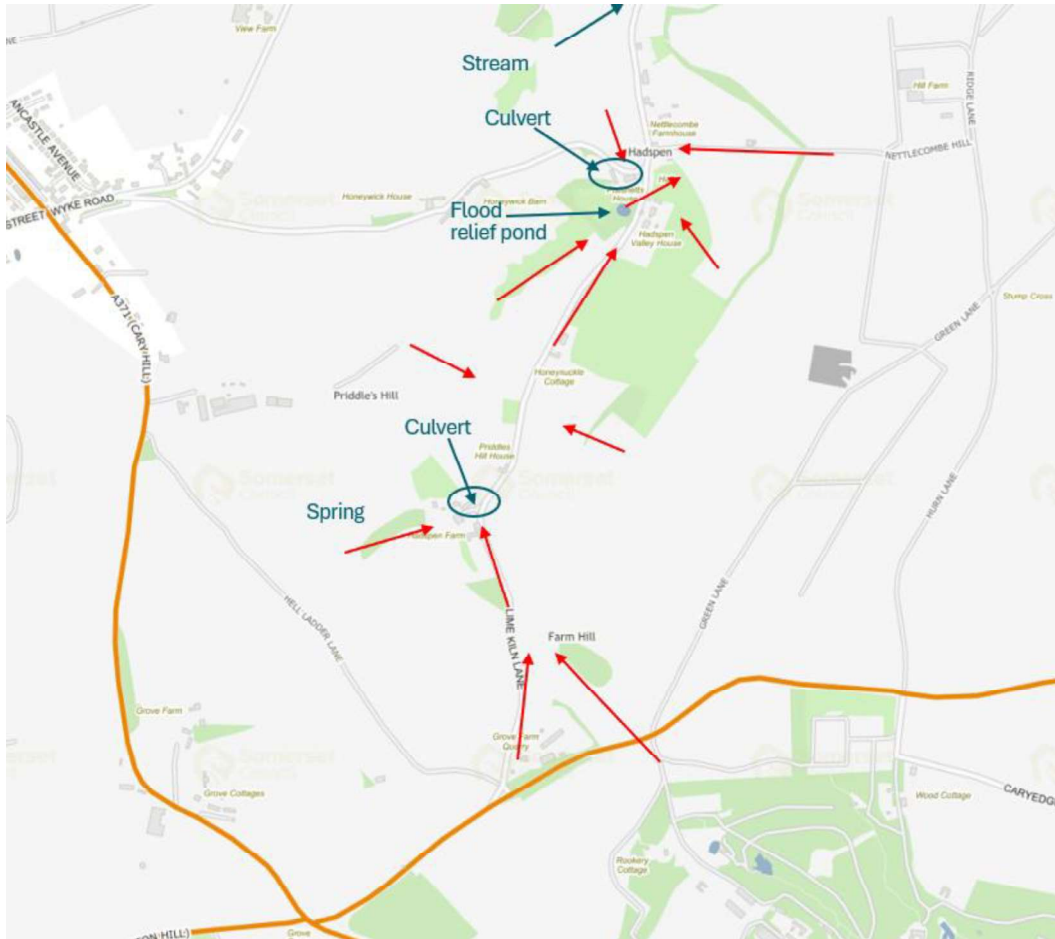


Figure 24 Map of water flow in Hadspen on 9th May 2023

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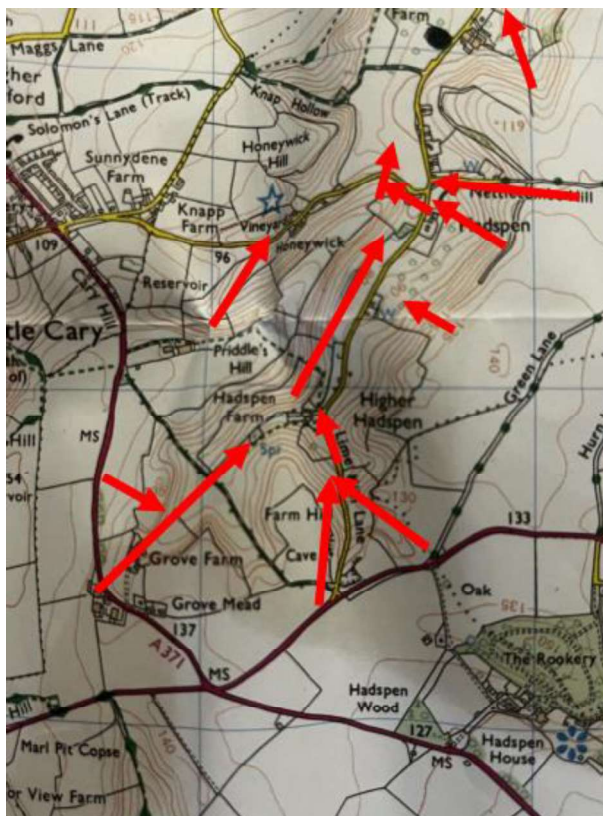


Figure 25 Map showing flow of water through Hadspen on 9th May 2023, drawn by resident



Figure 26 Image showing flow of water down Line Kiln Rd past Priddles Hill Farm on 9th May 2023



*Figure 27 Image showing flow of water past Ring House from Hadspen Farm on 9th May 2023*

#### Impact

Properties sustained damages amounting to tens of thousands of pounds. During the incident, a power blackout occurred, and the lack of reception led to a complete communication blackout. Additionally, the heavy flow of water left residents stranded in their homes.

#### Probable causes

The village of Hadspen faces several critical water management challenges that impact its flood risk. These issues highlight the balance between efficient drainage and retaining water on the land. Residents have reported the following concerns, acknowledging these to be anecdotal in their nature.

- Maize Run-off: Certain fields within Hadspen experience exacerbated run-off, possibly due to maize cultivation and the direction of water flow.
- Pig farming on the steep valley leaving top soil bare
- Drainage Pond Discharge: The discharge from the village's drainage ponds is not consistently managed.

- Insufficient Culverts: In the central area between Hadspen and Plaishetts fields, the lack of adequate culverts hinders water flow during an event as significant as this.
- Blocked Dam Incident: At Hadspen Farm, a dam was blocked with a log, resulting in sudden water release downstream.
- Frequent Drain Blockages: The drains in Hadspen suffer from frequent blockages, disrupting water flow and exacerbating flooding.
- Balancing Water Retention: Residents expressed concern that water is intentionally directed away from the land, particularly towards Lime Kiln Lane.
- Culverts into Plaichetts Field: The functionality of culverts leading into Plaichetts field requires improvement.
- New developments/extensions at valley heads in past ten years.



*Figure 28 Flood relief pond opposite Hadspen Valley Farm, constructed 1984*

## History

Residents reported three major historical floods, all of which occurred in May (1979, 1998, 2023).

## Response

Since the flooding, the community has commenced discussions with local farmers around Slow the Flow. The village has produced the Hadspen Flood Mitigation Improvement Plan, which seeks to:

- Develop a Flood Warning system
- Improve Property Flood Resilience for Properties in Flood Zones
- Inspect, maintain & enhance flood alleviation assets and schemes
- Improve Natural Flood Management
- Enhance scrutiny of environmental assessments associated with planning applications
- Create the Hadspen Community Flood Action plan

The Hadspen Community Flood Action Plan covers:

- Hadspen Community Flood Team
- Communications
- Flood Water runoff routes
- Flood warnings, triggers & actions
- Households in Flood Zones, Emergency contacts & evacuation safe space
- Useful contacts, websites, assets & equipment, FORT, riparian ownership, governance
- Drain monitors, flood buddies

## Shepton Montague

### Summary

On 9<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the storm began at 3:30pm with heavy rainfall in a small area. Between 4:00pm and 4:40pm, the flow descended from Cattle Hill, peaking at c. 900mm depth at Lower Shepton. By 5:30pm, the rain fell to “normal rainfall” level.

Farm tracks and low-lying roads were inundated with water. Several springs broke through the road surface.

Residents reported multiple drivers passing through the village despite warning signage, causing bow waves which pushed water into properties.

Reports describe the sudden rush of water as like a tidal wave, rather than a steady increase of water.

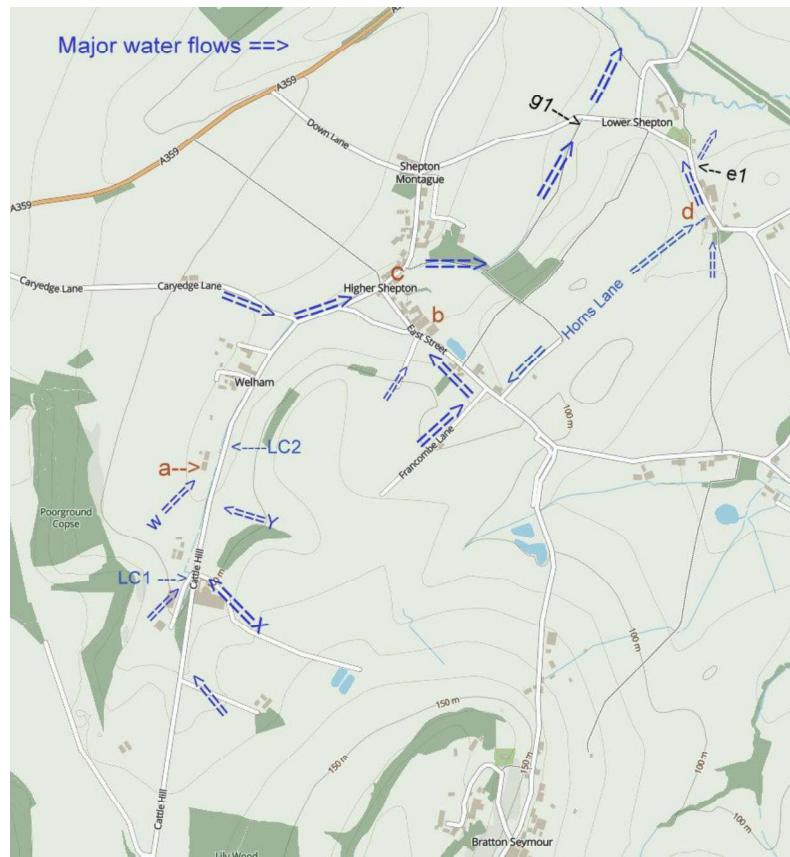


Figure 29 Water flow map of Shepton Montague on 9th May by local resident

### Probable causes

Rainwater runoff overwhelmed the drainage systems, leading to localised flooding. Residents note how existing infrastructure, including driveways and gates, often directs water flow toward residential properties. Notably, recent changes in land use—such as reduced woodland and increased concrete surfaces—may have exacerbated these issues. Additionally, residents reported that the dams at Bratton Seymour are not substantial enough to effectively manage water flow during heavy rainfall events. These concerns are addressed in the following Recommended Actions section of this report.

### Impact

As a result of the flooding, houses and businesses flooded in Cattle Hill, East St, Higher Shepton, Lower Shepton. Drives and homes were damaged due to rubble deposit. Tarmac was ripped from roads, fences demolished, and numerous cars were written off due to exposure to flood water. Horns Lane was impassable for a period following the flooding. Boundary walls collapsed. Many residents (including some

elderly and vulnerable) were rehomed due to their properties being unliveable following flooding damage. Residents reported a loss of animal life due to fields being inundated with water.

In two instances, residents were trapped in their car due to the water rushing overhead, one including a young child. Both were able to escape and suffered minor injuries. In one case, an ambulance was needed to attend an elderly resident who fell into the floodwater and suffered bruising and hypothermia.

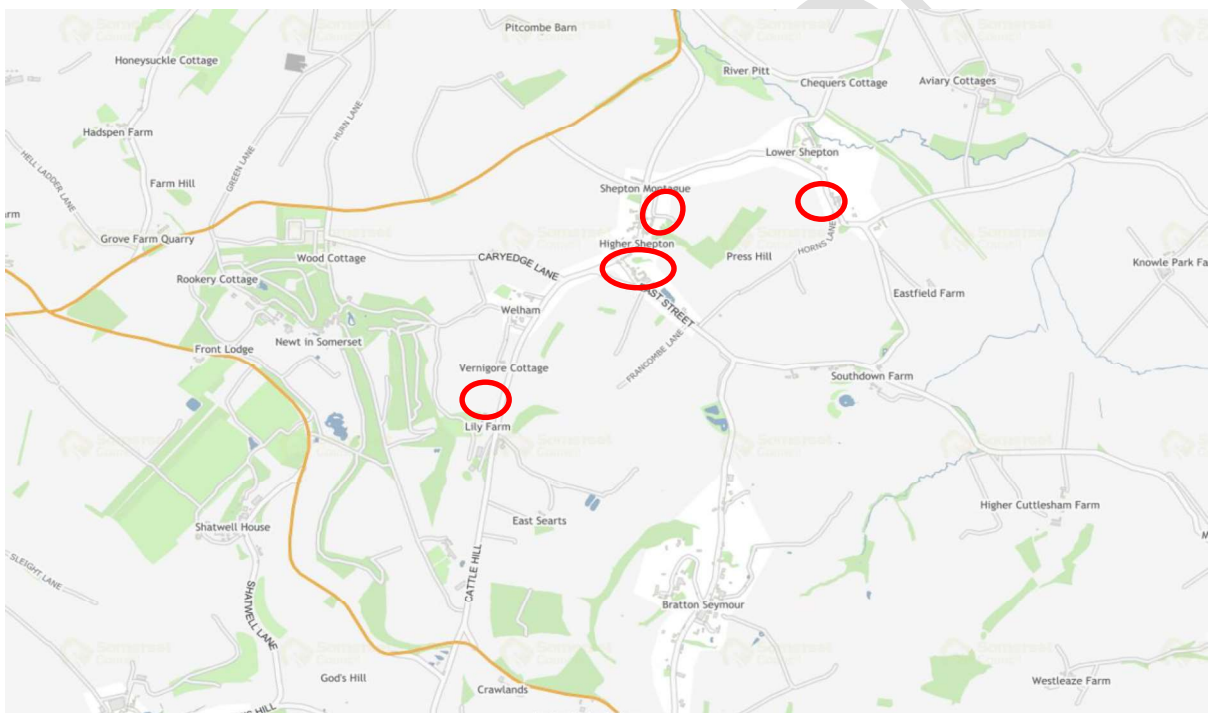


Figure 30 Map showing areas impacted by flooding on 9th May 2023

## Response

Residents recognise that a swale below Lily Farm would benefit the water flow in Lower Shepton. On East Street, plans are in place for the landowner to install a swale. Meanwhile, residents are currently clearing drains but are unable to resolve the issue of blocked pipes.



*Figure 31 Capture from a video of Dick's Cottage flooding on 9th May 2023*

## Risk Management Authorities

Due to the widespread impact of this rainfall event throughout Somerset, Risk Management Authorities were spread thinly throughout the County. Major incidents in some areas of the Cam Valley were raised early in the day, resulting in resource being initially prioritised toward particular areas.

In addition, this flood event occurred shortly after the unification of Somerset's District and County Councils, just over a month after the vesting of the new authority. This resulted in suboptimal emergency procedures for the new authority that at this point were undefined. Local Community Networks were not yet established, resulting in disjointed communication between the new authority and communities. During the 'Lessons Learned' exercise following this response, steps were taken to ensure

improvements could be made, many of which continue to be developed upon and implemented.

There are several lessons learned from the Emergency Planning, Response & Recovery (EPRR) Team in Somerset Council. There is a need for clearer avenues for information collection in communities. Intelligence Gathering during the May flooding event was ad-hoc and undefined. It was found that public awareness of the need to report flooding to the Council was lacking, which meant it took many days for a full sense of the incident scope to be fully self-reported. In addition, some residents were not at home when Council officers attempted to visit, for which EPRR has developed a contact card to be put through letterboxes in future events.

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## Recommended Actions

These recommendations stand alone and are subject to each action holder's ability to resource them

Action by	Recommended Action
<i>General actions for all areas</i>	
Highways	Investigate the drainage network to assess the asset condition status, to ensure that drains meet current standards regarding clearing and maintenance
LLFA	<p>Investigate and implement Natural Flood Management solutions using natural processes to reduce the risk of flooding:</p> <p>Increase storage capacity</p> <p>Channel water from upstream (swale ponds southwest of existing pond)</p> <p>Take a "whole catchment approach"</p> <p>Investigate attenuation where two tributaries come together, further than existing flood plain</p>
LLFA	Ensure investigations commissioned by the Newt (FWAG and Yeovil Community Rivers Trust) are reviewed by relevant Risk Management Authorities once they are published
EA, SRA, Parish Councils	Following the installation by the EA of a number of additional River Level Gauges and Rainfall Gauges in 2024, the SRA and EA are working towards improving community alerts and access to them.
Parish and Town Councils, SRA, Householders	Property owners need to consider their own preparedness for flooding events and potential mitigations through Property-level Flood Resilience (PFR). Parish Councils can help raise awareness of PFR and riparian responsibilities to ensure that the systems are as fit as they can be for any future flood events.

Communities, Residents, Parish and Town Councils	<p>Communities must be prepared for the inevitable increase in frequency and severity of flooding events due to climate change and increasing exposure. Residents can prepare for and adapt to future flooding to prevent them from becoming disasters, like the flooding experienced in 2023.</p> <p>Parish and Town Councils can create a Climate Adaptation Plan with resources available through organisations like the Somerset Wildlife Trust, Somerset Prepared. These plans must remain fresh and understood by residents.</p> <p>Communities can form Flood Warden groups to prepare for future events and reduce the risk of flooding through adopt-a-drain schemes.</p>
Planning authority, LLFA	Investigate whether any Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDs) are effective and whether retrofitting across the community is appropriate
<b>Pitcombe</b>	
Highways	<p>Drainage network:</p> <p>Investigate appropriateness of installing flap valves/non return valves in drains on Mill Ln.</p> <p>Investigate drains on Mill Ln (possibility of bypass drain)</p> <p>Investigate impact of any Highways work completed around Pitcombe Rock</p>
SRA, LLFA, Property owners	<p>Educate communities, landowners and property owners on the responsibilities and rules to follow for watercourses on or near their property:</p> <p>Particularly pertinent to residents whose gardens back onto river</p>
Highways	Investigate concerns around the structure of Pitcombe Bridge – With reference to report from Caufield Construction Engineering

<b>Hadspen</b>	
LLFA	Investigate maintenance reliabilities for the flood relief pond (dredging)  Investigate improvements and development of current attenuation pond
LLFA	Investigate impact development from last 10 years has had on flooding.
<b>Shepton Montague</b>	
LLFA, SRA	Natural Flood Management:  Investigate opportunities to hold water beneath Lower Shepton (such as using a leaky dam)

## Conclusion

This severe flooding resulted from exceptional rainfall levels, overwhelming existing drainage systems. Blocked drains and potential backup near homes exacerbated the situation. Each area faces critical water management challenges, including runoff from maize fields, inconsistent drainage pond discharge, insufficient culverts, and frequent drain blockages. Balancing water retention and addressing recent developments are crucial for mitigating future flood risk. Despite ongoing drain clearing efforts, blocked pipes remain unresolved.

The impact of the flooding on all these communities was significant. Detritus, impassable roads, and power outages disrupted daily life. Properties sustained significant damages, with significant financial losses. Residents were stranded in their homes due to heavy water flow. Infrastructure, including the sinking Pitcombe Village Bridge, suffered damage. Specific areas experienced house and business flooding, and animal life was lost. The fire service was on-site during the flood, but access challenges were encountered.

Communities in the Pitt Valley are already proactive about reducing their own risk for future flooding events. Pitcombe has developed the Pitcombe Emergency Flood Plan 2024 and Pitcombe Flood Improvement Plan 2024. Hadspen has produced the Hadspen Flood Mitigation Improvement Plan, focusing on flood resilience and management. An emergency plan for Shepton Montague is in development. Residents across all areas recognise the need for a Natural Flood Management (NFM) and in some cases are already engaging with local farmers in discussions about “Slow the Flow.”

The unusually severe nature of this flooding serves as a reminder of the importance of proactive flood risk management to protect communities from future extreme weather events. This report recommends a number of actions to help reduce flood risk for these communities in the future. Highways should assess drainage networks and ensure compliance with maintenance standards. LLFAs should explore Natural Flood Management solutions, including increased storage capacity and holistic catchment approaches. Property owners must be educated about riparian responsibilities and Property Flood Resilience (PFR). The impact of recent development on flooding must be considered, especially in future planning applications.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Residents concerns during community visit to Pitcombe

Residents in Pitcombe reported the following concerns, acknowledging these to be anecdotal in their nature:

- Considerable run-off from A359 and top of Pitcombe Rock.
- Unclear where all run-off comes from
- Recent developments: Old Vicarage above 1459, cattle unit Ridge Ln above Pitcombe, The Newt (replacing boggy tracks and hillsides with less permeable surfaces, hardcore). Residents understand these to have increased flood risk. Surface water should be kept on the land or diverted into the river downstream of the village.
- Lancombe Ln construction: now smooth surface, hedges removed so water is channelled down lane. At the same time, concerns around overgrown road edges, rivers not cleared
- Aquafer no longer in use due to track changing – now acts as a funnel down Lancombe Ln.
- Pitcombe Village Bridge – recent inspection shows it is sinking into river on one side. Base of each supporting arch sinking into riverbank. Likely that water and debris coming against bridge has had a significant impact. Further high water events likely to accelerate problem (Caulfield Construction Engineering).
- Maize growing at top of catchment
- Changing land use

### Appendix 2: Residents concerns during community visit to Hadspen

Residents in Hadspen reported the following concerns, acknowledging these to be anecdotal in their nature:

- Four developments/extensions at valley heads in past 10 years:
  - o New Farm along Ridge Ln
  - o New Farm on Wyke Rd
  - o Extended Priddles Hill Farm
  - o Extended Hadspen quarry
- Flood alleviation pond (installed 1984)
  - o Needs more maintenance for drainage into Plaishetts field
  - o Community tried to secure ownership of the pond, were not successful

- Stream from Ring House around Priddles Hill House to flood relief pond opposite Hadspen Valley Farm not able to take water volumes
  - Video footage clearly shows water flowing from flood relief pond rather than Lime Kiln Rd, nothing going down drain. Unclear where drainage goes to/from.
- Culverts into Plaishetts field – only 2 of 4 working
    - Too much vegetation
  - Lip on curb into Plaishetts field too high, insufficient for drainage into Plaishetts
  - New driveways pushing water back onto houses, no drainage or current drainage backs onto road
  - Bare earth due to pig farming north-east of village
  - The Newt
    - Community recognises potential for more flood alleviation at The Newt
    - New wall in front of quarry built with some drainage but acted as barrier to water draining into quarry

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