

How Newent is working together to hold back the water

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When serious flooding hit Newent in December 2020, local residents responded by taking action. With early guidance from the National Flood Forum, they formed the Newent Neighbourhood Flood Association (NNFA) and began working directly with the agencies responsible for managing flood risk.



That spirit of partnership still drives the NNFA today. Known locally by some as the “Flood Club”, it brings residents together with Gloucestershire County Council, the Environment Agency, Severn Trent and local councils. Their shared goal is simple: reduce flood risk and help Newent face future rainfall events with greater resilience.

Slowing the flow—before it reaches the town

Much of Newent’s flood resilience begins upstream, on privately owned land. Natural Flood Management (NFM) relies on landowners who are willing to work with nature and make space for carefully planned changes. Newent is fortunate to have landowners who recognise that slowing water across the landscape can help protect the town—and who are ready to play their part.

By working across neighbouring properties, they can follow the way water naturally moves instead of stopping at a boundary line. The result is a joined-up system of measures along the watercourse, each one reinforcing the next.

Some of Newent’s watercourses are now being given more room to meander. Strategically placed trees and brash interrupt fast-moving water and create wet areas where it can collect instead of surging towards the town. At the same time, the brash filters sandy soil from the flow, limiting erosion and helping to keep downstream urban culverts clear of silt.

Holding ponds provide another valuable line of defence. Landowners maintain them to stop silt from eating into their capacity. When heavy rain arrives, well-maintained ponds can store significant volumes of water, releasing pressure on the areas downstream.

Keeping Newent's drainage network moving

The work does not end where the fields meet the town. Gloucestershire County Council's Highways teams jet culverts and drains to keep water moving, while residents act as extra eyes on the ground by reporting blockages and other problems through the council's "Fix My Street" service. Severn Trent is also surveying its network and developing a programme to repair and clear pipes found to be faulty or in need of attention.

Scraggs Bank: creating space for stormwater

In 2019, a local landowner made it possible to build Newent's only hard-engineering flood structure on his land. The bund at Scraggs Bank forms a holding pond within the urban area. When rainfall is intense, it gives stormwater somewhere to go—temporarily storing it, slowing the flow and easing pressure on downstream watercourses and drainage systems.



Many measures, one shared purpose

Meandering watercourses, woody debris, holding ponds, maintained drainage infrastructure and the Scraggs Bank bund all have a role to play. No single measure can prevent flooding by itself. Used together and placed where they can make the greatest difference, they hold water back, slow it down and reduce the volume reaching Newent at any one time.

Newent's story shows that flood resilience is about more than bigger drains or higher barriers. It starts with understanding how water travels through the landscape—and with people choosing to act together. By combining Natural Flood Management, targeted engineering and well-maintained infrastructure, the NNFA and its partners are building a more resilient Newent, one field, watercourse, drain and rainfall event at a time.

