

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2024



Our work supporting flood recovery

One of the wettest winters on record left many people across the UK suffering from the trauma of flooding and the anxiety attached to high water levels.

The NFF helpline has been busy advising and supporting those who flooded. Each call is different, and our team works incredibly hard to give people the tailored help they need.

We have also been out on the road in Gloucestershire helping people deal with the aftermath of flooding. There at the invitation of Gloucestershire County Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, the NFF trailer visited areas hit by flooding to give valuable in-person advice and support.



The trailer was on the ground in Tewkesbury and surrounding villages also hit by January's floods including Tirley, Longford, Sandhurst and Minsterworth.

Many readers will be all too familiar with trauma and inconvenience living in temporary accommodation and the exhausting process of dealing with insurance companies, loss adjusters and contractors.

Taking the NFF's expertise to areas that flood is important to us and allows us to give people the bespoke help they need, working alongside other relevant agencies.

Campaigning for better outcomes

The NFF works hard to influence Government and secure better outcomes for flood risk communities. Our current focus includes campaigning for fairer funding criteria that better meets the needs of people who flood.

We are pushing the Government look again at the current Flood Defence Grant in Aid criteria, making it fairer for people who flood frequently and those that live in rural areas. Many of these people will never be able to access financial help under the current regime.

This month we speak to Bridgnorth resident Anne Dingley about the physical, emotional and financial impact of flooding. It's the experiences of Anne and the thousands of other victims of frequent flooding nationwide that inspire our campaigning work. Anne is part of the Bridgnorth Flood Action Group who are currently working in partnership with the Risk Management Authorities.

RECOVERY

Local Authorities and Environment Agency - do you know the NFF can provide local recovery services to support your flooded community.

FLOOD ACTION GROUPS

We have worked with more than 450 Flood Action Groups, each enabling better outcomes for communities.

HELPLINE

Our helpline is available 365 days a year for all your flood queries.
Tel: 01299 403055 or
Email: info@floodforum.org.uk

Abandoned to cope alone



Flooding was not an issue for Anne Dingley and her 100-year-old Bridgnorth home until 2020. Knowing the area well and having rented her home for some time before buying, she could not have begun to imagine what lay ahead when she bought the property 15 years ago.

But in February 2020, everything changed. With her home decimated by flooding, Anne and her husband were forced to move out the day before lockdown, a particularly difficult and stressful time to find somewhere to rent.

Moving back into her home that autumn, Anne felt confident that extensive new resilience measures - including pumps, water resistant plasterboard, raised sockets and new raised flooring - would protect her from the stress, physical upheaval and emotional exhaustion of future flooding.

Sadly, she was wrong. Since then, the Severn has risen higher, faster and stronger than ever before, breaching her flood resilience measures and leaving Anne to deal with the trauma of flooding every single year. Her ordeal includes being forced to move out her home for a second time in January 2024.

Exhausted by repeat grant applications, insurance claims and the emotional and physical upheaval of recovering from flooding, Anne feels badly let down by a system that too often shows little regard for those who flood and abandons people to cope by themselves. Like so many people who flood, Anne feels that the minute the water recedes everyone else loses interest. But the fact of the matter is that recovery takes months or even years, and the trauma of past floods and the fear of flooding again are constant companions.

Problems with Environment Agency (EA) forecasting have been a particular issue for Anne. In her experience, warnings can be inadequate and inaccurate. The reliance on automated warnings during a strike period without the human element to back it up, judging gauges and estimating levels, meant that those given could not be relied upon.

Anne also gives an example where forecasts were revised upwards at the last minute. By then it is simply too late to protect your property from significantly increased water levels.

Anne was hit hard by flooding again in January this year, when she feels forecasting was particularly poor, with actual meter readings much higher than EA data. And despite having multiple resilience measures in place, Anne's home remains vulnerable.

"It is not nice, nor fair, not right and not humane to be left like this," says Anne. "My home and I are as resilient as we can be but it's just not enough."

"The powers that be don't realise what it's like - physically, emotionally or financially - to flood frequently. Resilience measures are simply not enough. We need the Environment Agency and Government to stop talking about it and get on and manage water better."

Anne's is one of six homes sitting together near the River Severn in Bridgnorth and her story echoes that of her neighbours who suffer similarly.



Flood and Coast Exhibition 2024

The NFF team will be representing flooded communities at the annual Flood and Coast Conference and Exhibition next week. The event takes place at the Telford International Centre. Both engagement managers, Sanjay and Katia, will be speaking and representing flooded people's experiences.



The event sees the Flood and Water industry come together over three days. It's planned that the event will focus on all aspects of water and water management, including sustainable drainage, nature-based solutions, and much more.

Help us to give flooded people the support they need

As anyone who has experienced flooding will tell you, it is a devastating and traumatic experience. People are forced to leave their homes, possessions are destroyed and the struggle to get back to normal is all-consuming.

It can take years to get back home and return to some semblance of normality. And even then, the memory of the trauma of the flood and anxiety about the future can be constant companions. That's why the NFF is here. We stand side by side with flooded people, giving them vital advice and support when they need it most.

We help them navigate dealing with agencies and authorities, and to avoid potential stumbling blocks. Importantly, we understand just what it's like to flood and every step of the recovery process.

To keep on offering this vital support, we need your help.

Donations can be made via our website. Or you can send a donation by post to National Flood Forum, PO Box 7643, Bewdley DY12 9BL.

Every donation makes a real difference.

