



Milton Keynes
City Council

Road Gullies and Flooding

Mini guide



Version 3
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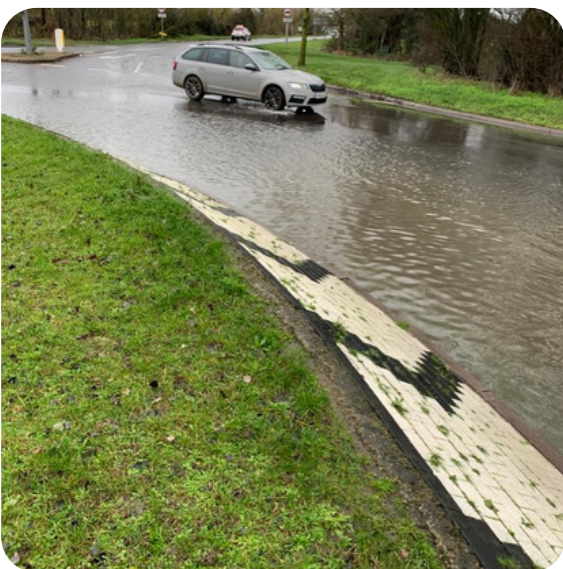
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What are road gullies?

They are basins in the ground that collect the road surface water through a grate. This water is then sent through a pipe network to the sewer system.

On rural roads the excess surface water may be channelled into a drainage ditch or occasionally into a watercourse such as a brook or stream.

MK Council look after all the road gullies on the public highways. For more information about who is responsible for drains, gullies and flooding see the section called 'Who is responsible?'



Flooded road during heavy rainfall



Dead leaves blocking a drain

Blocked gullies

Before reporting a blocked gully to us please consider if there has been any recent heavy rainfall and give the gully enough time to deal with the surface water.

Gullies can become blocked by leaves, rubbish, tree roots or other debris. We often find lots of strange items that people put down the drains including engine or cooking oil and litter. If the gully has litter, leaves or other items on the top, please report it to our Street Cleansing team through the MKCC website.

During heavy or prolonged periods of rainfall the gullies will not be able to drain all the surface water away, even completely clean ones. This may mean temporary localised flooding. However when the rain stops, the gullies will normally drain away the water.

MK has a large number of trees and this can cause problems for our drainage system. Firstly the large number of leaves can collect over drains causing blockages and certain types of trees in MK have leaves which don't break down as easily as other tree species. This means they stay on the surface for longer.

Secondly, tree roots can grow through the pipes, reducing the capacity for surface water to move through the space. Removing tree roots inside a pipe requires specialist equipment which can be very costly and we don't always have budget for this. Large root systems can damage the pipes too which can lead to other problems with drainage.

Gully maintenance and cleaning

We follow a risk-based approach to gully cleansing. This is in line with our Codes of Practice which sets out how we will carry out the maintenance of our 75,000+ gullies and drainage infrastructure.

We can't do everything, so we use a method of prioritising maintenance actions so that areas with recorded flooding issues are done more frequently.

We assess requests for gully cleaning based on:

- flood risk;
- photographic evidence or site visits;
- when we last visited or if there is planned visit
- last recorded silt level.

After this assessment has been made, the enquiry will be either Critical, High, Moderate or Low Risk.

- Critical areas will be visited twice a year to make sure all the roadside gullies are working to capacity.
- High Risk will be done once every two years.
- Medium Risk, will be done every four years.
- For Low Risk, we will attend once within a six year period.

Our gully tankers are in constant use and so if we attend a site as part of our cleaning programme and cannot access the gully due to parked vehicles, it is likely that we will be unable to attend again until the next planned cleaning date.

Please park vehicles in another location if the gully tanker is scheduled to clean the gullies in your street as we might not be able to return there afterwards.

During a gully clean, we'll remove the grate and any debris like silt, leaves or litter will be removed either by hand or it is sucked out by a special hose. This waste is collected at Bleak Hall depot for disposal in a purpose-built area which separates the content as there are regulations around how this type of waste may be disposed of.

The tanker will then shoot water at high pressure through the drain and into the pipe to dislodge any obstacles. If there are obstacles that cannot be removed in this way then it will be reported as specialist equipment will be required.

The tanker will need access to the road gully to be able to carry out this process with a 2 metre space on either side of the grate. If access is unavailable due to vehicles being parked over the area, this will be recorded and the gully tanker will continue to the next location on the route without being cleaned.



A roadside gully being cleaned in Shenley Brook End, Milton Keynes.

Who is responsible?

Gullies and utility covers (manholes)

The Highways team are responsible for cleaning and maintaining the road gullies on the council-owned roads, also called adopted highway. Gullies and surface water systems located on private or unadopted roads and non-council parking areas are the responsibility of the land owner. You can check if a road is adopted highway using the interactive map on our website, www.milton-keynes.gov.uk. Any adopted highway areas are shaded in blue.

We will also maintain, repair or replace broken or missing manhole covers. You can report this via our website or call 01908 252353.

Sewers

Anglian Water are responsible for shared sewers and pipes outside a property boundary. Home owners are responsible for the drains which serve their property within their property boundary. We will only be involved if there is a public health issue such as sewage discharging onto a road or footway.

Flooding on Highway

The Highways team will respond to emergencies where roads, footways or redways are flooded and are a safety issue for the public. You can report a flooded roads, redway or footway including underpasses via our website or call 01908 252353. Please note we do not deliver sandbags to properties at risk of flooding. For advice and information about protecting your home from flooding, visit our section on Flooding www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

Flood Prevention

MK City Council is a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. This means we have a responsibility for managing different types of flooding such as surface water and groundwater flooding through heavy or sustained rainfall. Ordinary watercourses including ditches are usually privately owned and their maintenance is the responsibility of the landowner.

The Highways team deal with the repair and maintenance of the road gullies and manholes that belong to us. We also attend emergencies caused by flooding.

Please note: MK City Council does not have a statutory duty to provide sandbags for private properties at risk of flooding. This is for the owner to source.

The Environment and Planning teams look at flooding issues across Milton Keynes and how they can be prevented through water management. You can find out more about what they do on our website www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

The Environment Agency will issue flood alerts for rivers within our region and are responsible for flood defence for rivers and coastal areas. Visit GOV.uk to find out more about the EA.

Flood Prevention Schemes

Flooding is a natural occurrence and we frequently experience heavy or prolonged periods of rainfall in MK. The balancing lakes throughout MK work effectively to hold large amounts of water and protect residential areas and several underpasses have pumps that remove excess water but no drainage system or flood protection measures can provide total protection from all flooding events.

Where possible we will put in measures to help with excess surface water on our roads. Here's some of the types of flood management measures we've installed over the last few years:

Dag Lane, Stoke Goldington



During heavy rainfall, a large volume of water runs off the steep nearby fields into this watercourse. This leads down to Dag Lane where there are a number of properties which have been flooded several times. We created a series of holding areas that spread the excess water out over nearby lower fields rather than down the brook protecting the nearby houses.



Devil's Dip near Hanslope



As the name suggests, this area is the lowest point of the land which also has a busy road running through it. Water would collect at this point making it unsafe for drivers especially during winter months when it turns to ice. We worked with the landowner to build an additional trench for water coming off the field and improved the trench to the brook to help carry away the water.



Newport Road, New Bradwell



After properties on a nearby road were flooded, the drainage system was checked for problems. We discovered a damaged pipe and tree roots were growing into the pipes too, reducing the capacity to remove water. We removed the tree roots and installed a new pipe and manhole with a headwall. The excess water can also now be discharged into the brook.



Reporting blocked road gullies or flooding

Please note: no gully will be able to remove all surface water during especially heavy or sustained rainfall, due to the sheer volume of water. It will eventually drain away and does not mean the gully is blocked. Before reporting a gully as blocked, wait for the rain to end and give the gully time to cope with the water.

If you do need to report a blocked or damaged gully to use or a flooding issue, please provide the location including the street name and postcode. Photos are great too if you can provide them.

Milton Keynes City Council

Phone 01908 252353 Monday to Friday 9am to 5:15pm.

Email customerservices@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Online Use the Report It section on www.milton-keynes.gov.uk

Emergencies

For an out of hours emergency such as flooded underpass or road, contact the out of hours team on 01908 226699. Any life threatening emergency should be reported to the Police immediately on 999.

Other key contacts

ANGLIAN WATER

24hr Leakline 0800 771 881 (free)

Anglian Water own the public sewers and drains and are responsible for maintaining them. Any blocked sewers, leaks or burst water mains should be reported to them immediately.

NATIONAL FLOODLINE

Call 0345 988 1188

This is a 24 hour helpline available for anyone needing support and advice on flood protection. You can also register for Flood Alerts through this service or visit www.gov.uk

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY (EA)

WWW.GOV.UK

Government department who help to protect areas from flooding, monitor river levels and issue flood alerts. Sign up for flood alerts on their website and check current river levels for your local area.

NATIONAL HIGHWAYS

Call 0300 123 5000

Formerly Highways England, they are responsible for the motorways and A roads across England including the M1 between Junctions 13 and 14 and the A5. Any flooding issues should be reported to them so they can take action.