

# All you need to know about...

## The Somerset Levels

### Location



The Somerset levels are located in the South-West of England

Somerset Moors form an extensive area of low-lying farmland and wetlands bordered by the Bristol Channel

### Causes of the floods



Wettest January since records began – a succession of depressions (low pressure) driven across the Atlantic Ocean brought a period of wet weather lasting several weeks. 350mm of rain fell in January and February (about 100mm above the average)

High tides and storm surges swept water up the rivers from the Bristol channel.

Rivers had not been dredged for at least 20 years.

### Social impacts

Over 600 houses flooded  
16 farms evacuated



Residents evacuated to temporary accommodation

Villages such as Moorland cut off. This affected people's daily lives – for example attending school and power supplies cut off

### Economic impacts

Somerset County Council estimated the cost of flood damage to be more than £10 million



Over 14,000 ha of agricultural land under water for 3-4 weeks

Over 1000 livestock evacuated  
Local roads cut off by floods



### Environmental impacts

Floodwaters were heavily contaminated with sewage and other pollutants including oil and chemicals



A huge amount of debris had to be cleared



Stagnant water that had collected for months had to be reoxygenated before being pumped back into the rivers

### Immediate responses



Homeowners coped as best as they could. Villagers cut off by the floods used boats to go shopping or attend school. Local community groups and volunteers in Burrow bridge gave invaluable support

Many pumps were used to get water off the Levels and back into the rivers. These pumps were pumping 10 tonnes of water per second.

### Long term responses

The Somerset Contingencies Partnership improved their website and set up a social media site to give people detailed and easy access to information on how to reduce their flood risk and prepare for a flood.

By 2015, some of the temporary pumping stations such as those at Northmoor and the Bridgewater Taunton Canal were to be made permanent so they could be used again in times of flooding

Increasing the capacity of Sowey/King Sedgemoor drain. The Sowey channel was to be

widened to increase its capacity 8km of the Rivers Tone and Parrett were dredged making

both rivers deeper limiting the risk of damage by floods