

Storm Darragh 7th – 8th December 2024

Interim report into the flood and power outage events affecting Kirkbymoorside and surrounding areas

[Note: this report is the views of the author and may not reflect the views of Kirkbymoorside Town Council]

1. Introduction- the Perfect Storm

Storm Darragh had been forecasted days before it hit on Saturday 7th December, with the biggest concern being high winds. Wales and the south coast were predicted to get the brunt of the storm, and indeed winds of up to 93mph were recorded in those areas causing devastating damage. Although wind speeds were much lower in North Yorkshire, conditions were very hazardous with a lot of damage across our area, the most dangerous being trees blown down, blocking or obstructing many roads.

In Kirkbymoorside people ‘battened down the hatches’ as the winds increased but there was little concern about flooding.

At 8pm on the 7th December, I put a warning out on the Kirkbymoorside Facebook page about the possibility of flooding in Kirkby Mills (see Appendix 1) which was at that time on an Amber Alert, with areas like Sinnington and Marton being on Red Alert. The River Dove level at Kirkby Mills was at that point shown to be just passing the normal 2m ‘top of range’.

By around 10pm on the 7th December, homes in Kirkby Mills were already flooded and the fire brigade were on site rescuing people from flooded houses. At 11:00pm on 7 December, the Government Flood warning was for a height of 2.42m at Kirkby Mills and still rising; at some point the Amber Alert changed to a Red, but few people had been aware of the growing risk. Those that were, struggled to take precautions in the appalling weather conditions.

I don’t have data on the final height of the River Dove, but my understanding is it went up very rapidly and exceeded past highest levels.

The high winds had already taken down power lines around the area, and many homes were without power: for some this continued for 48 hours or more.

To add to the issues, the mobile phone mast that covered the main service providers (e.g. Vodafone and O₂) had been out for around a week, and continued to be so for another week: between a lack of signal and lack of electricity, many people affected were without any means of communication which seriously hampered information gathering and rescue.

2. Kirkbymoorside Town Council and North Yorkshire Council Response

At around 10pm on 7th December, I received a call to provide a refuge for those being rescued from flooded houses. This call came from Louise Mudd, a local resident who is the sister of a firefighter who was on the scene at Kirkby Mills. I gathered blankets and the makings of hot drinks and opened up the Moorside Room ready. No one arrived there the evening, as all had gone to family, but in the early hours a couple rescued from a flooded car were brought there and looked after by Louise Mudd and Paul Sunderland (Vicar of Kirkbymoorside). When an

ambulance couldn't get through to Kirkbymoorside, the couple were taken home and assisted to bed by Paul and Louise.

Early on Sunday 8th December, I received a call from Matt Robinson, Head of resources and Emergencies at NYCC, asking for the Town Council to provide a base for his teams to work from and it was agreed to continue in the Moorside Room, which I opened up again and prepared for their arrival. Experts in different aspects of emergency response arrived over the next few hours, and I remained to assist and provide local knowledge. The Mayor was kept informed of what was happening, and he and his wife went to Kirkby Mills to give practical assistance to flood victims.

Throughout the following week, working out of the command centre in the Moorside Room, and also using a room at the Library when needed, NYCC specialist teams continued to provide assistance to people affected across the area, covering not just practical aspects like getting skips delivered, but providing counselling to those traumatised, wellbeing support and undertaking care visits. At the same time, they were developing a guidance leaflet (which was delivered to all affected properties) and a package of financial assistance.

Assisting myself and the NYCC team were the Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club members, who have been invaluable 'boots on the ground', able to assist flooded families in clearing out their homes, deliver cleaning packs and leaflets, and bringing back information on what was happening.

I cannot praise the NYCC Teams and the Veterans highly enough for their hard work and dedication over this difficult period.

3. Issues / challenges in the aftermath of the floods

a) Intelligence

Information of what was happening and what areas and individuals were affected was very limited. Across a vast rural area, many homes remained without power and means of communicating, and it was difficult to get a picture of the scale of the problem and who needed urgent assistance.

In several cases, the Veterans driving out to survey areas of concern were the only reliable information sources.

b) Communications

The Moorside Room has no landline, and with the power outages and mobile phone mast issues, people were unable to 'ring in' to report problems. [Note: with the move toward phasing out traditional landlines, using the mobile networks instead, a permanent phone in the Moorside room probably would not have been working if it were on one of the affected networks].

The NYCC 'emergency number' took people to the NYCC switchboard, where it was reported they were often on hold or had difficulties getting through to the right department.

On Day one and Two (Sunday and Monday) following the storm, the majority of incoming information was via the Kirkbymoorside Facebook page and by Direct Messaging to myself. People feel they have 'reported' if they have put it on Facebook, and it was a big challenge to keep up with information (especially when it was a comment on someone's else post) in order to report concerns to the NYCC team for appropriate action. In many cases I needed to direct message people who had posted on Facebook, to gauge the scale of the issue and what help was needed; although in most case, people replied quickly, in some cases there was a long delay waiting for a response: some of these were situations that were becoming critical.

On Monday, all fellow Kirkbymoorside Councillors were informed of the situation by the Mayor and some directly by myself (asking for assistance), but it appears that not all receive / see emails sent via their town council email address (this has been reported as an issue previously).

The Town Clerk is uncontactable at weekends, and whilst this is very sensible in normal circumstances, it is not helpful if a local emergency arises over a weekend when her invaluable knowledge of council arrangements and local contacts would have been very helpful.

Individuals can sign up to flood alerts, but even for those, the change from Amber to Red came very late. Some residents had already gone to bed and were unaware of the unfolding events. There is no general means of raising the alarm.

c) Emergency Plans

The Kirkbymoorside Community Resilience Plan (CRP) was last updated in 2019, however contact details were updated and the plan reissued to relevant authorities this year. The box containing the plan and other useful items was kept in the Town Council Office: I was unaware of its location and had no access to the office anyway. The box was brought to the Moorside Room at some point, but I was not informed it had, and it was not obvious what it was (amongst a growing number of boxes of emergency supplies arriving).

Although contact details were up to date, I was 'called out' not via the phone tree (on which I am not the first contact) which NYCC may or may not have access to at the weekend, but due to the fact I was the contact used the night before by the emergency services (via a residents' brother).

The plan is out of date and not practical in many aspects, and did not assist me whilst in the midst of helping to manage the rapidly unfolding emergency situation. One simple but notable item missing was a log sheet, and on day one I didn't even have a piece of paper or pen. Dealing with incoming information via Facebook, telephone, direct messaging and increasingly in person, was overwhelming for one person and essential record keeping has therefore sketchy.

Training for Town Councillors on the Community Resilience Plan has not occurred in recent years.

d) Insurance

Due to the difficulty in getting insurance and / or the cost of it, several homes affected by flooding did not have insurance, so recovery from the event will be much more difficult. In some rented properties the landlord had building insurance, but the tenants didn't have contents insurance.

Volunteers assisting (the Veterans) were put on the NYCC insurance once this omission was noted.

e) Flood Gates

Some residents attempted to fit flood gates once they realised that they could be flooded. Some of these gates were 20 years old and the seals had gone. The design meant they needed an allen key to fit them, which in high winds, torrential rain and darkness proved almost impossible.

Where gates were fitted, they provided little protection, as the sheer volume of water, driven by the high winds, meant that water came around them, through screw holes and vents, and in many cases, up through the floors and out of toilet bowls.

4. Investigation in past flooding events

This is the 4th time in the last 24 years that flooding has arisen in the Kirkby Mills / Keldholme areas, the worse in the autumn of 2000.

Date	Description	Comment
30 Oct 2000	Flooding of properties and roads. <i>Source: Residents</i>	Flooding in Keldholme and Kirkby Mills. Mill Chase submerged. 26-30 other properties flooded. Roads east and west of Keldholme Bridge affected and five adjacent properties flooded.
1 Nov 2000	Flooding of properties and road. <i>Source: Residents</i>	Flood water returned to Kirkby Mills and Station Cottages. 26-30 properties affected.
2 August 2002	Flooding of properties and road. <i>Source: Residents</i>	Flooding in Keldholme and Kirkby Mills. Mill Chase flooded again. Total 4-6 other properties at Kirkby Mills - exacerbated by storm sewer overflow and high levels in River Dove. Flooding at Keldholme similar to October 2000.

Following the 2000 floods, reports were undertaken, the most notable being commissioned by the Environment Agency undertaken by consultants JBA Consulting. Investigation notes from a town council site meeting in April 2021 cross reference this report.

See Appendix 2 for the recommendations made by JBA Consulting, some of which may no longer be relevant (e.g. refers to Ryedale District Council) / thinking has changed (e.g. 'slow the flow').

5. Flood resistance / flood resilience

I believe measures have been taken over a period of time by the Environment Agency and others, to improve flood resistance in the affected area, but I currently have no details of what

measures have been taken and what are still planned. There is a feeling amongst affected residents that 'promised' improvements have not been undertaken.

There is also some evidence that some recent measures have reduced flooding risk in some areas, but this improvement needs to be quantified.

There is also anecdotal evidence of flood prevention measures being not maintained, and of individuals making changes on their own property that at best made the measure less effective, and at worst increased the risk.

In terms of improving flood resilience, some properties previously flooded had been reinstated with flood resilience measures, such as solid floors, no skirting, and sockets higher up the walls. Its important that as other homes are reinstated, that flood resilience measures are included.

I understand that the Lead Local Flood Authority team commissioned a survey of properties in Kirkby Mills and Keldholme earlier this year to determine their flood resilience and to make recommendations for improvements. There is some confusion amongst local residents that thought they would be provided with relevant upgrades (e.g. storm doors) and some anger that this hasn't happened before the recent flood.

The reality, I understand, is that the results of the survey were intended to be released in January 2025, however, the Lead Local Flood Authority team plan to visit the area on 18th December and to follow up with drop-in sessions for residents to talk to them about suitable resilience measures.

6. Interim Recommendations

In the short term, action by Kirkbymoorside Town Council is to continue to support the teams from NYCC in their work supporting local residents: this is likely to continue in the town (in the Moorside Room and Library) at least up until the end of w/c 16th December.

In the medium / longer term, the following recommends are made to the Town Council:

- a) Join the NYCC team, the emergency service and the veterans in a review of the incident as soon as possible.
- b) Review and update the Kirkbymoorside Community Resilience Plan. Making it much more practical. [In my professional capacity I have written such plans before, so I am happy to make the first draft for Council consultation.] The view of the Veterans who have a wealth of experience in delivering on such plans should also be sought.
 - i. Ensure that Town Councillors know what is in the plan and what role they need to fulfil in an emergency situation in the town.
 - ii. Provide emergency preparedness training to Councillors who have not had any.
 - iii. Ensure that the means of internal communication work
 - iv. The plan to include the role, and identity of, a dedicated 'Log keeper'.
 - v. The Moorside Room proved to be a perfect base in relation to size and location: consideration could be given to making it the designated

Emergency Response Centre for the town, and to look at what grants are available under that designation to fund the planned improvements to heating etc.

- c) Meet with the Environment Agency to review flood prevention measures: those already undertaken and those planned, considering their effectiveness in light of recent events and possible new information and knowledge.
 - i. Identify locations which need flood prevention measures improving / maintaining and that are the responsibility of landowners and open dialogue with them.
 - ii. Consider how / who will enforce action on breaches of flood protection measures perpetrated by individuals.
- d) Work with the Lead Local Flood Authority team in identifying appropriate flood resilience measures and identify if any funding is available to assist homeowners in upgrading their properties.
- e) Arrange a public meeting with residents, as soon as practical after Christmas, to hear their concerns, and to give information on what is being done.
- f) Investigate if a general flood alarm / siren could be installed in areas likely to flood.
- g) Investigate if any insurance companies would provide a blanket insurance scheme for previously flooded properties, supported / part funded by the Council.
- h) Consider how details of residents living in the affected areas could be made available at short notice without breaching data protection rules.
- i) Consider if it is practical and possible to have a store of emergency equipment ready for any such emergency.
- j) Consider the purchase of a satellite phone for the Emergency Room and walkie-talkies to contact volunteers in the field.
- k) Reimburse the Veterans for fuel used and supplies purchased and publicly thank them for their essential assistance.
- l) Develop a list of volunteers / organisations that could be called upon in an emergency and provide training (e.g. first aid) as appropriate.
 - i. Ensure that there is insurance and suitable PPE available for volunteers.

Report prepared by Cllr Jean Illingworth CMIOSH

15th December 2024

Appendix 1

7.30 7th December .gov.uk Floodline information

4 flood warnings

Flooding is expected



[River Seven at Great Barugh](#)

Updated 6:48pm on 7 December 2024



[River Seven at Marton](#)

Updated 5:01pm on 7 December 2024



[River Seven at Normanby](#)

Updated 5:01pm on 7 December 2024



[River Seven at Sinnington](#)

Updated 7:32pm on 7 December 2024

5 flood alerts

Flooding is possible



[Pickering Beck and Costa Beck catchments](#)

Updated 5:26pm on 7 December 2024



[River Dove catchment](#)

Updated 4:00pm on 7 December 2024



[River Riccal catchment](#)

Updated 3:40pm on 7 December 2024



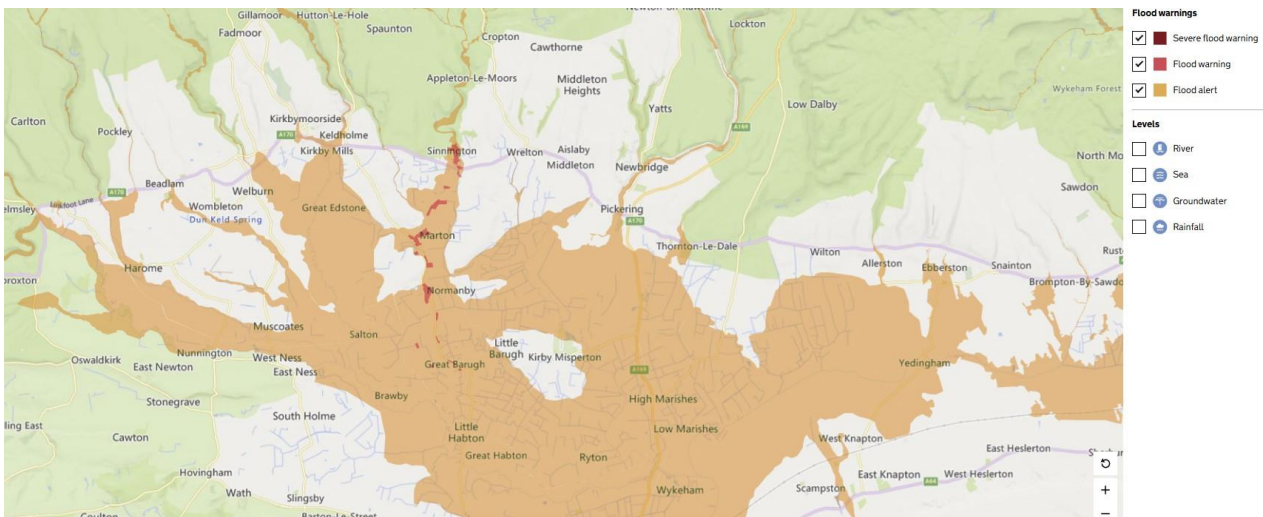
[River Rye catchment](#)

Updated 8:19am on 7 December 2024



[River Seven catchment](#)

Updated 8:23am on 7 December 2024



River Dove level at Kirkby Mills

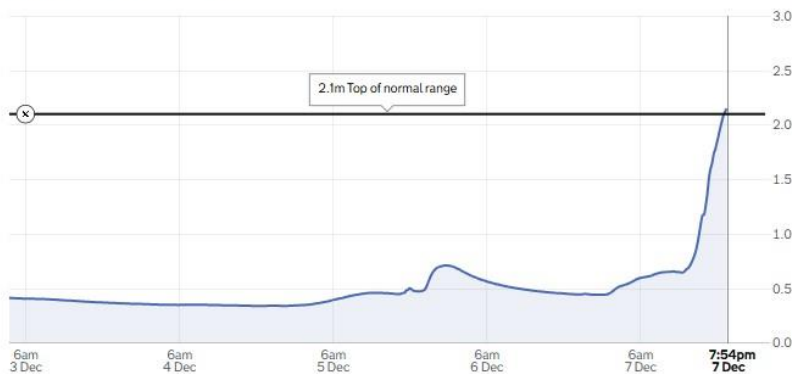
[Map](#) [Nearby Levels](#)

Latest at 7:30pm on 7 December ^①

Height **2.15m** ^① Trend **Rising** ^① State **High** ^①

Normal range 0.20m to 2.10m

Height in metres over the last 5 days



[Download data CSV \(12KB\)](#)

How levels here could affect nearby areas ^①

2.45m	Water reaches the highest level recorded at this measuring station (30 October 2000)	↗
	Property flooding is possible above this level	↗
2.15m	Latest level	
2.10m	Top of normal range	↗
1.55m	Low-lying land flooding possible above this level. One or more flood alerts may be issued.	↗

Flood alert for River Dove catchment

[Get flood warnings by phone, text or email](#)

Updated 4:00pm on 7 December 2024

River levels are rising in response to ongoing rainfall associated with Storm Darragh. Areas most at risk include land around the River Dove and its tributaries, including Fish Beck, Blowworth Slack, Hodge Beck, Ouse Gill, including properties of Kirkby Mills, Keldholme and Kirkbymoorside. Further rainfall is expected tonight, Saturday 07/12/2024 and levels are expected to rise further. We are closely monitoring the situation. Take care and avoid walking, cycling or driving through flood water. This message will be updated by 4:00am on Sunday, 08/12/2024, or as the situation changes.

Appendix 2

Recommendations made by JBA Consulting in 2002:

- Landowners adjacent to the River Dove and Mill Race should be made aware of their rights and responsibilities as riparian owners. They should be aware that there is a medium to high flood risk and need to be aware of the present information and warning systems provided by the Environment Agency. They are advised to make their own contingency plans, in case of flood alerts.
- The Environment Agency should review the planned maintenance activities for the River Dove because of the flood problems. This especially applies to tree management and clearance of gravel shoals.
- The Environment Agency should investigate the possibility of providing flood warnings to Keldholme and Kirkby Mills based on a relationship between the gauge at Cherry Tree Farm, (on Hodge Beck) and the River Dove at Kirkby Mills, or use of warnings triggered from the (downstream) Kirkby Mills Gauging Station.
- The Environment Agency should consider inclusion of a capital flood defence scheme within the Long Term Plan at Keldholme and Kirkby Mills. Other partners in the scheme would probably include North Yorkshire County Council and Yorkshire Water. Discussions should be held with Yorkshire Water regarding possible modifications to the 600mm diameter pipe crossing on the Mill Race, which is currently causing a significant obstruction to flow.*
- The Environment Agency should continue to encourage appropriate use of SUDS to reduce the impact of development and climate change on flood risk. The Ryedale District Council Local Plan robustly addresses the problems of development and flood risk. This is endorsed.
- Ryedale District Council emergency procedures and Major Incident Plans should include the possibility of flooding at Keldholme and Kirkby Mills. The residents should be informed of the services which the Council is able to offer in a flood emergency.
- North Yorkshire County Council (Highways Division) should be encouraged to undertake interception and diversion works to prevent discharge into the Mill Race.
- The detailed survey work and hydraulic modelling involved in further Section 105 survey and improved flood mapping could be used to underpin the maintenance regime and to help make progress towards an improved standard of service at Kirkby Mills and Keldholme. However, it is not recommended that a Phase 2 study be undertaken solely for the purposes of refining the floodplain outline.

* This issue raised by a resident in the recent flood