



# Conwy Valley Flood News

**Join Conwy County Borough Council, Natural Resources Wales, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Dŵr Cymru/Welsh Water at a drop-in session at Glasdir, Llanrwst on the 25th April between 3pm and 7pm to discuss the recent flooding in March. We would welcome your views.**

## Conwy valley floods March 2019

The river Conwy reached its highest ever recorded level at Cwmlanerch on Saturday 16 March. This newsletter explains what all the agencies involved did to prepare, react to and are now doing to learn from the event.

## Natural Resources Wales

It's encouraging to note that the Conwy valley flood scheme once again successfully defended properties in Llanrwst and Trefriw from flooding.

Despite what some people say, it works by allowing water to flow onto the valley floor at Pont Gower, using the natural floodplain. This means the water in the river does not rise any higher, which would mean properties in Llanrwst and Trefriw being flooded.

At Capel Curig, 122 millimetres of rain fell in just 15 hours. This is 75% of the monthly average for March and is the most amount of rain that has fallen in 15 hours since records began in 1997.

Significant rainfall was also recorded at many other gauges in the area such as Cwm Dyli, Llanrwst, Betws y Coed and Ysbyty Ifan.

At its peak, the same amount of water as in an Olympic-sized swimming pool was passing Llanrwst every four seconds. In 24 hours the equivalent of around half the water stored in Llyn Celyn ran through the valley.

Unfortunately a few properties did suffer flooding and we obviously sympathise with those people affected. Conwy Council will be leading a review of the event to see if anything can be done better the next time floods threaten.

### Learnings so far

A recent exercise showed that we needed temporary barriers at Llanrwst because the "Dutch Dam" was broken. These temporary barriers were successfully put up during the weekend of 16 March. Conwy County Borough Council are investigating the cause of



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flooding to homes in Conwy Terrace. A new permanent system to replace the Dutch Dam will be in place by the autumn.

Some flood banks and other assets have been damaged during this event and we will be repairing these as part of our routine maintenance programme.

We had a number of pumps outside Cartref y Borth and are reviewing how they were used to see if the system could have been even more effective.

You may have heard by now that the National Eisteddfod is reviewing its plans for this summer's event and we are working closely with them to ensure a safe and successful festival.

# Mythbusting

A number of incorrect statements have been circulating in the wake of the floods. These are some of the ones that we have picked up on.

*Floods happen because the river hasn't been "dredged".* Dredging often does not work and can often make matters worse by undermining defences. We did recently remove some gravel at Bont Fawr to help us improve our flood monitoring and flood warning systems, but this would not have reduced flood levels in the valley.

*The key to the temporary barriers was in Cardiff.* We don't need a key to put up the temporary barriers. All the equipment we needed was easily accessible at our Tan Lan depot.

*The scheme to protect houses in Llanrwst increases flooding at Gwydir castle.* The opposite is true. The scheme allows floodwater onto the floodplain by Pont Gower, rather than "backing up" and rising upstream. This means that the depth of floodwater upstream of Pont Gower (including the garden at Gwydir castle) is lower than what it would have been prior to building the flood defence scheme.

*Why won't you build a scheme to protect Gwydir castle?* We recognise the historical significance of Gwydir Castle and its value to the Welsh cultural and physical landscapes. However, the risk of flooding is to the castle's gardens and an uninhabited cellar. This means there are insufficient benefits to justify investing in a flood alleviation scheme at Gwydir Castle. Flood risk management funding in Wales is provided by Welsh Government and prioritised towards communities where flooding could pose a risk to life, as per the Government's policy.

*Flooding can be prevented if ditches are blocked in the uplands and more trees grown.* This can help reduce the risk of flooding but will not prevent it. The National Trust has already done a lot of this kind of work to block old land drains on the Migneint and we are working with them on other measures in Cwm Penmachno.

# Welsh Water

As well as providing a continuous, high quality supply of drinking water, Welsh Water – your not for profit water company – is also responsible for taking away, treating and properly disposing of the wastewater that is produced.

This is managed through a vast network of sewers, some of which carry only foul waste, others carry foul and surface water while others carry just surface water.

Villages in the Conwy Valley have a combination of all three and it's our responsibility to ensure they are maintained and kept free of blockages so flows can pass through them. During periods of heavy rain, they can reach capacity if too much surface water enters them.

During the bad weather, we received a small number of calls from the Conwy Valley area reporting sewers overflowing. Our teams attended at the time in response and further investigations are now taking place to determine if the overflowing was linked to operational issues on the system or to the extreme weather conditions.

We will continue to work with all agencies involved to help understand the impact of the weather on the area and identify any lessons that can be learned.

If anyone has any issues relating to their sewer network we would encourage them to call us on 0800 085 3968.



Photo Natural Resources Wales

# Conwy County Borough Council



## What we did during the flood

The extreme weather events of the weekend of March 16th/17th were very demanding for the Conwy County Borough Council out of hours response teams.

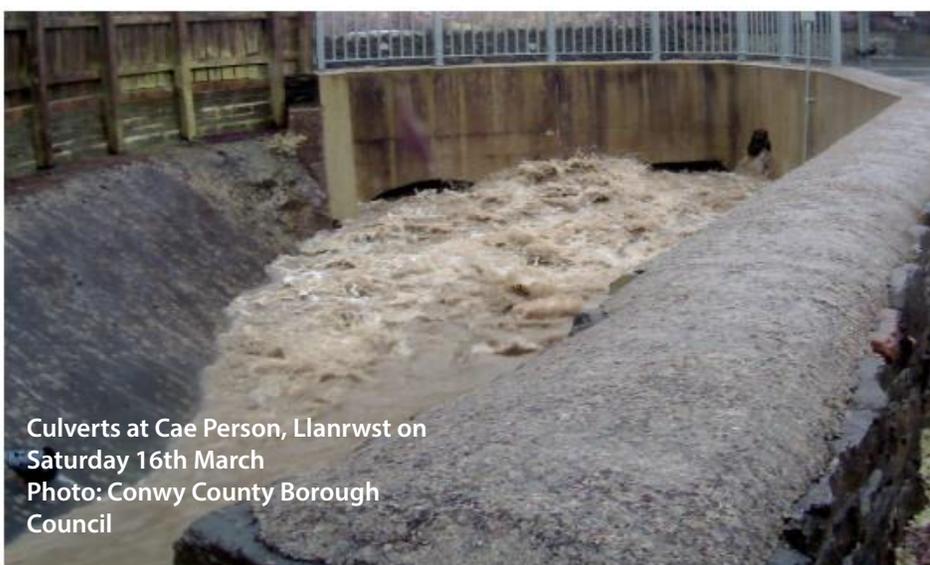
Council staff were working on flooding issues from 7.30am until the last call at 11.45pm on Saturday. This was immediately followed by gritting all priority road routes overnight and on Sunday morning, before returning to flood clean up and investigation works during Sunday.

Work during the weekend included:

- Clearing trash screens and gullies
- Unblocking drains and culverts
- Inspecting and investigating highlighted locations
- Deploying sand bags to divert water flow
- Setting up road signs warning of flooding and/or road closures, and revisiting regularly
- Taking more than 100 calls from affected residents
- Updating residents at immediate risk of flooding
- Visiting and assessing households at immediate risk of flooding
- Liaising with Natural Resources Wales, North Wales Police, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service, emergency planners, RNLI and mountain rescue
- Road sweeping to clear debris
- Repairing damage to road surfaces
- Clearing landslips



Culverts at Cae Person, Llanrwst on Friday 15th March  
Photo: Conwy County Borough Council

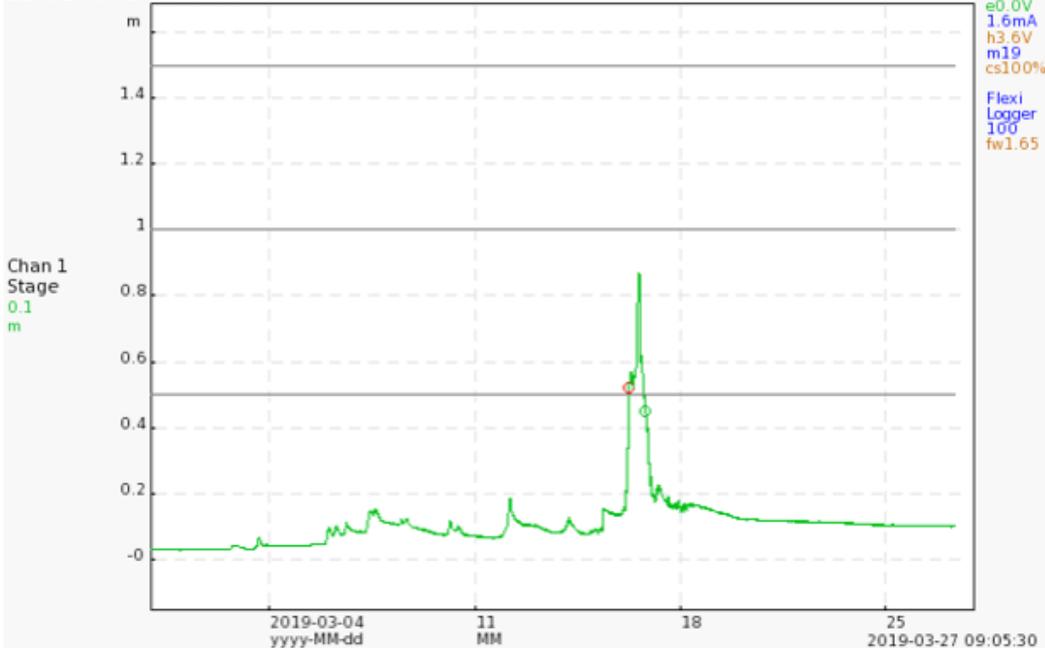


Culverts at Cae Person, Llanrwst on Saturday 16th March  
Photo: Conwy County Borough Council



The Council has telemetry (monitoring hardware) installed as part of flood alleviation schemes. This allowed Flooding Officers to remotely monitor water heights and blockages on watercourses, managing the local flood risk better and using our resources efficiently. Using this information, teams were sent to take action where it was needed, such as clearing a build-up of debris. For example, the trash screen at Plas Isaf in Llanrwst was cleared within 30 minutes of the telemetry alert.

## LD-028 CAE PERSON



Cae Person culvert - peak level at 3pm on March 16th

## What we are doing now

On Monday 18th March after the flooding, Flooding Officers began working across the affected areas, knocking on doors and filling in flood questionnaires with residents to identify the actual extent and number of properties affected.

By Thursday 28th March, our officers had visited Llanrwst, Conwy, Gyffin, Llanddoged, Penmaenmawr, Old Colwyn, Dolwyddelan, Llanfairfechan, Betws y Coed and Trefriw.

We are also following up on all phone calls received during the flooding.

We will use this information, along with inspections of culverts and gullies, to target future investment in flood alleviation works to reduce the risk to the local population.

## What we will do next

Although residents seem to be aware of the flood risk during significant rainfall, the Council wants to make sure residents have information about the things they can do before flooding happens to avoid domestic damage.

## Are you prepared for flooding?

During extreme weather, we'll make every effort to help residents who are at imminent risk of flooding, but this does depend on the resources we have available at the time. We can't guarantee that we can assist with all flood incidents. If you are concerned that you may be at risk of flooding, we strongly recommend that you think about

putting in place your own flood protection. Sandbags help to divert and direct flows of flood water but they are not effective at protecting properties from groundwater flooding or sewer flooding. At best, sandbags only have a 40% chance of keeping water out of a property.

### Sandbag Policy

#### Conwy Council Borough Council...

**WILL** use sandbags to divert the flow of flood water originating from Local Authority assets such as highway gullies, culverts and ditches

**WILL** use sandbags at locations where there is an imminent risk to life or property. This is subject to availability and the decision will be made by responding officers

**WILL** give priority to elderly and vulnerable residents

**WILL** collect sandbags from Council-owned land and public open spaces and dispose of them

#### Conwy Council Borough Council...

**WILL NOT** give out sandbags to private properties before a flood event

**WILL NOT** allow residents to collect sandbags from Council depots

**WILL NOT** give out sandbags to commercial properties at any time before, during or after a flood. In exceptional circumstances, we may do this to protect neighbouring residential properties or essential infrastructure from flood damage

**WILL NOT** collect sandbags from private land, commercial premises or residential properties. We will collect sandbags we have used for elderly or vulnerable residents.



Learn about your flood risk, and what to do during a flood, including how to sign up for flood alerts at [www.naturalresources.wales/flooding](http://www.naturalresources.wales/flooding)

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**Natural Resources Wales**

If you are concerned that your home or business might be at risk of flooding, we recommend that you have your own flood defence measures. This could include specifically designed flood protection products.

You can get advice from The National Flood Forum, or by contacting Conwy Environment, Roads and Facilities Service on (01492) 575337 or [erf@conwy.gov.uk](mailto:erf@conwy.gov.uk)



The latest Conwy County Borough Council Resident Bulletin was delivered to households in February 2019 and contained advice for flood preparation. Our website also has information on flood preparation and protection ([www.conwy.gov.uk/flooding](http://www.conwy.gov.uk/flooding)).

We will be looking at what other ways we can use to make sure

residents have the information they need to be prepared.

We are working on nine separate flood alleviation schemes to further reduce the flood risk to communities within the County, in partnership with the Welsh Government.