

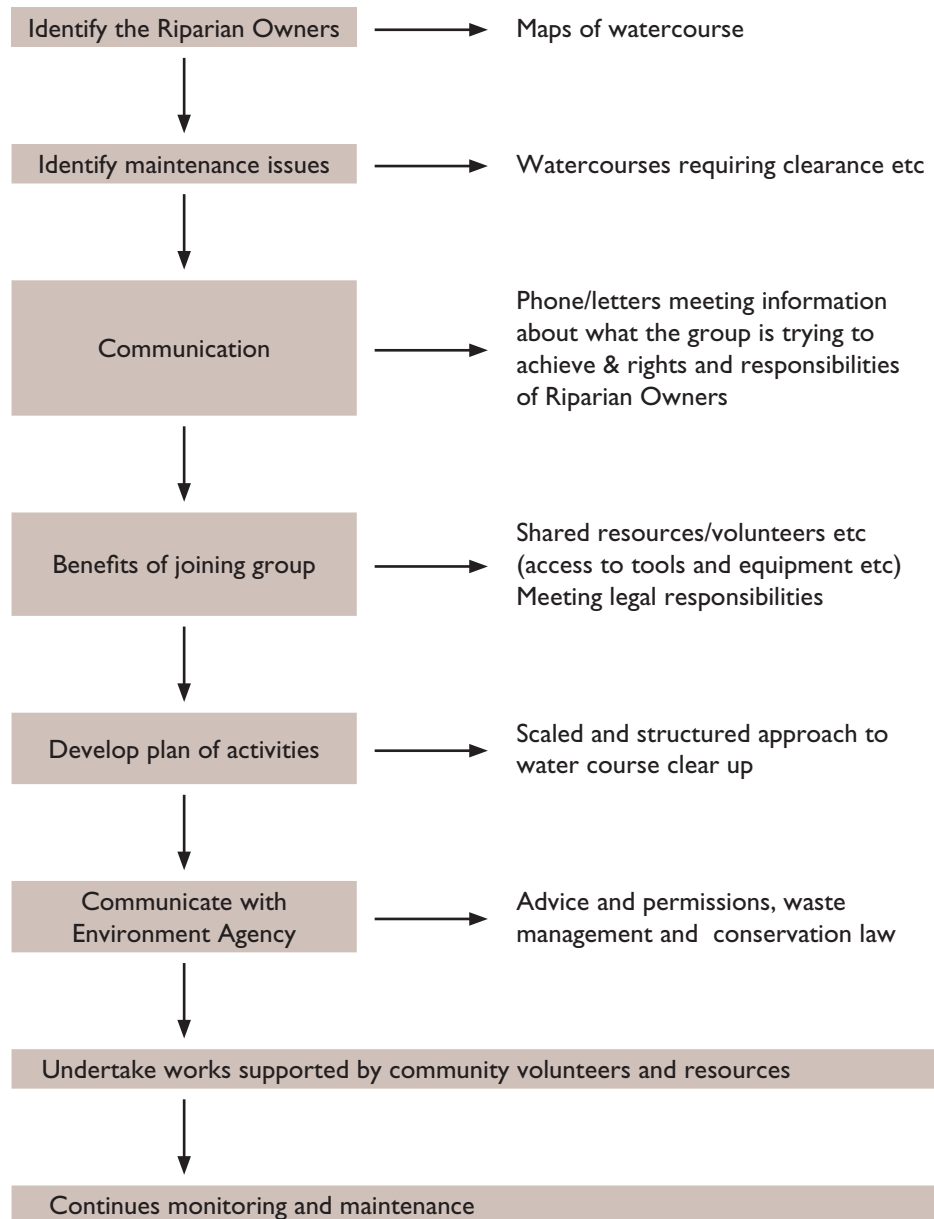
# RIPARIAN OWNERS ACTION GROUP A POSITIVE RESPONSE

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## Simple Stages to developing a Riparian Action group



## A brief summary of Riparian owner responsibilities

Must maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, and also the trees and shrubs growing on the banks. Clear any debris, even if it did not originate from your land. Debris may be natural or manmade includes litter & animal carcasses.

Watercourses can become blocked or restricted by a number of factors including:

- Vegetation in and around the watercourse.
- Natural debris – fallen branches, collapsed banks etc.
- Introduced debris – grass cuttings, rubbish dumped on banks.
- Sediment – swept from upstream collecting at bends etc.
- Blockages or collapse of enclosed culverts – under roads etc.

*Communities that take charge of the watercourses in and around their area, and keep those watercourses flowing in an efficient manner can have a major impact on flood risk and or severity.*

Riparian owner responsibilities are based on legislation. Summarised below:

- The Public Health Act 1936.
- The Land Drainage Acts of 1991 & 1994.
- Water Resources Act 1991.
- Environment Agency Land Drainage Byelaws 1981.

## The value of working together

Many people think of Riparian Ownership as being restricted to large landowners, farmers etc. This however is not the case and many individual residents and householders have watercourses adjacent to their properties for which they are responsible. For some people the physical and or financial responsibility for watercourse maintenance can seem overwhelming.

Working together with other Riparian Owners can not only reduce the risk of flooding to a community, but also reduce the burden on individuals by sharing:

- Knowledge and information
- Resources – equipment etc
- Manpower/labour
- Skills – organisation etc

It is also the opportunity for the community to support the combined work of Riparian Owners to maximise the impact and benefit of the work by:

- Communication – developing a database of Riparian Owners
- Coordinating and providing a structure for the group.
- Helping identify resources to support the activities (resilience grants etc)
- Communication with the Environment Agency (permissions etc)
- Contacting Conservation Officers – advice on habitat protection etc
- Helping with the task (volunteers)

Before undertaking any work on a watercourse it is important to contact the environment agency for advice on how best to progress and also for information about what permissions may be necessary.

Remember that dredgings and other materials removed from watercourses is currently categorised as medium risk waste and a license or certificate of exemption will be required.

It is also important to make sure that appropriate consideration and risk assessments are given to the welfare of volunteers undertaking the work.



## Riparian Owners Action Group – a positive response

In response to recent flooding events, many communities have recognised the value of developing a self help philosophy to future resilience. Increasing the efficiency with which water flows through and away from a settlement plays a very important part of reducing the likelihood and severity of flooding events.

### Who is a Riparian Owner?

- Under common law you are the riparian owner of any watercourse within or adjacent to the boundaries of your property.
- Where a watercourse is sited between two or more property boundaries each owner may be equally responsible.

### What is a watercourse?

A watercourse is a river, stream, ditch (whether dry or not), pond, drain, culvert or pipe through which water may flow.

### The types of watercourse are:

- Main river
- Ordinary Watercourse - All other rivers, streams and ditches fall under this category.

### The roles of Authorities

- The Environment Agency has permissive powers to maintain main rivers, but not responsibility; this still lies with the Riparian Owners.
- The District Council has permissive powers to maintain ordinary watercourses, but not responsibility; this still lies with the Riparian Owners.

*The Environment Agency has an excellent document called “Living on the Edge” which explains the practicalities of this legislation in some detail.*

Exceptions to this are:

- Highway drains
- Culverts under public roads
- Piped roadside ditches.
- Other drainage which has been specifically built to drain the highway.

These are maintained by the Highway Authority.