

Dataset Documentation

Statutory Main River Map

January 2023

This document will help you understand and use the Statutory Main River Map dataset

Dataset description

The statutory main river map is a spatial (polyline) dataset that defines statutory watercourses designated by the Environment Agency as main rivers. The data is for England only.

'Main rivers' are usually larger streams and rivers, but some of them are small watercourses of significance. They include certain structures that control or regulate the flow of water in, into or out of the channel. We have permissive powers, but not a duty, to carry out maintenance, improvement or construction work on designated main rivers. We have powers to regulate the activities of others affecting these rivers and their flood plains under the Environmental Permitting Regulations, the Water Resources Act 1991 and our land drainage byelaws.

All other watercourses are 'ordinary watercourses'. On these watercourses the Lead Local Flood Authority or, if within an Internal Drainage District, the Internal Drainage Board have similar permissive powers to maintain and improve. They also have powers to regulate works under the provisions of the Land Drainage Act 1991 and local byelaws.

Related datasets

Other datasets you may want to use:

1. AIMS Spatial Flood Defences (including standardised attributes)
2. River and Coastal Maintenance Programme
3. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Zone 2
4. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Zone 3
5. Flood Map for Planning (Rivers and Sea) Flood Storage Areas

Common questions & known issues

- The main river map that we publish from time to time is the definitive map of the watercourses in England that are statutory main rivers, for the purposes of the Water Resources Act 1991. Always check that the map data you are using is our most up to date statutory main river map.
- There are 2 types of change to the statutory main river map. We call these 'factual changes' and 'designation changes'.
- Factual changes may be required to update the map to represent the real position of the watercourse. They do not involve any changes of authority or management. Typical examples of factual changes are when: a watercourse has changed course naturally, a watercourse has been diverted or a survey of a culvert shows a different alignment.
- Designation changes are required when we make a decision to lengthen or shorten the section of a river designated as a statutory main river. These changes will determine which risk management authority may carry out maintenance, improvement or construction work on the watercourse. These changes also result in differing legislation applying to the riparian owner and others with an interest.
- We notify the public and interested parties of our intentions to make a change to the statutory main river map. The consultation period must be long enough to give consultees a reasonable opportunity to make an informed and considered response, typically 30 days.

- The way in which we consult on changes will vary depending on the public interest. As a minimum, all notices will be posted online at [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk)
- Provision of data in a GIS format means that you can overlay this information with your own datasets, such as infrastructure, community facilities and other such information. In this way, you can produce maps tailored to your own needs.

Dataset content

Field name	Description	Data type	Length	Guidance
STATUS	Designation	Text	20	Main River
LENGTH_KM	Length of river stretch	Double	9, 5	Automatically generated