AUTUMN LEAVES: Blocked drains and flooding

As we enter the autumn months, it is important to be aware that there is an increased risk of surface water drains becoming blocked with fallen leaves, which increases the likelihood of surface water, or 'pluvial', flooding.

Our drainage systems are designed to transport surface water runoff to nearby rivers, streams and sewers. If drains become blocked with leaves, the water cannot be drained away and it can lead to a localised flash flood.

Surface water flooding is often amplified by the increase in impermeable surfaces from urban developments and infrastructure in towns and cities. These surfaces increase surface water runoff at times of heavy rainfall, contributing to flood risk.

With climate change becoming more and more apparent, extreme weather events are likely to become more common. This can lead to more incidents of drainage systems becoming overwhelmed and surface water flash flooding.

If residents and business owners are proactive and regularly clear leaves from drains outside their properties, they can reduce the likelihood of flooding in their local area.

What should you do?

It is the responsibility of your highways authority to keep road gullies clear and free from blockages. Your highways authority will either be your district council (providing it is a unitary authority), or the County Council.

Image: The Flood Hub

Whilst drainage departments often clear drains and gullies, in reality, a cleared drain could be blocked with leaves again in a matter of hours.

Therefore, if you can easily clear leaves from a drain yourself, it may be best to do so as this will be quicker than waiting for help from the council.

If you cannot clear a blocked drain yourself, report it to the council. You can find your local council to report the blockage to here: **www.gov.uk/report-blocked-drain**

If everyone spends some time clearing leaves from drains during the autumn months, it will be of huge benefit to your local area and will help to reduce the risk of flooding.

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