

South Hampstead Flood Action Group

Update September 2024

Overall

We have been developing a South Hampstead Flood Action Plan with Thames, Camden Council, the Environment Agency and the National Flood Forum to help to attract more funds for flood prevention projects for our area.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

With our encouragement and support Camden installed two new SUDS — a small one at the top of Goldhurst and a major one at the Belsize/Priory junction. Thames Water contributed £100k towards the cost of the latter. We have been helping with watering and picking up litter at the Goldhurst one.

We have also been:

- Supporting Camden Council in applying for further funds to implement more local SUDS, including one running down Goldhurst Terrace.
- Investigating possible locations for more SUDS higher up in the catchment area (i.e. above us topologically and in the sewer system), e.g. at the bottom of Netherhall Gardens.

Camden Council

We have been:

- Continuing to report blocked drains to get these cleared both locally and in streets above us in the catchment area (e.g. in the streets leading down to Finchley Road from Hampstead). Also continuing to report blocked drains along Finchley Road to Transport for London — this is particularly important as main sewer runs along it.
- Raising concerns about newly covered over front gardens with Camden enforcement officers.

We have also:

- Inducted Camden's new Resilience Officer, Ashlea Scicluna (as well as her temporary predecessor Chris Winters in 2023).
- Sought to influence Camden's planning decisions, e.g. we:
 - Responded to Camden's Local Plan consultation including their new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2024 (which developers must refer to in setting out their plans for assessing flood risk). It highlights the postcode NW6 3.. as the most at risk of flooding in Camden — but that is probably because we have encouraged people locally to report that they have been flooded.
 - Commented on major planning applications in relation to flood issues suggesting they should do more to hold back flooding — e.g. ones for University College School and 100 Avenue Road.
 - Met two Camden planners to discuss a number of issues in relation to flooding.

Thames Water

We:

- Got Thames to conduct a major investigation into the sewers in Goldhurst Terrace. They have failed to identify any problems so far but have said they will fit a monitoring device in the sewer to see if they can discover more. There is no agreed timeframe for this yet (it's 'in the queue').
- Pressed Thames to tell local residents if a non-return valve has been installed that protects their property. Questioned where Thames have fitted these non-return valves, e.g. they appear to have put 29 in a street where we are only aware of 7 flats being flooded. Also suggested Thames should recognise the need to protect vulnerable properties as well as vulnerable residents, e.g. flats that are completely underground, ones with no secondary exit. Often these have poor tenants who may move on frequently. In some cases we found that landlords had not informed them the flat was previously flooded.
- Continued to press Thames to install additional flood prevention measures in the O2 development, ideally in phase one.

- Supported Belsize Road residents in taking a deputation to a council scrutiny committee in February where Thames Water was reporting on the 2022 Belsize Road burst water main, as well as another smaller burst pipe since then.
- Encouraged by Thames, investigated the possibilities for water butts locally and above us in the catchment area. Unfortunately most properties do not have adjacent run off areas.

Liaison with residents

We:

- Kept local residents updated on issues via occasional emails.
- Encouraged local volunteers to clear the gullies when flooding threatened in Nov 2023.
- Responded to residents' queries on flood protection measures.

External contact

We:

- Sent an email to the new Environment Minister, Steve Reed, about providing more funds for SUDS, ensuring everyone can obtain flood insurance and compelling water companies to do much more to prevent sewer flooding.
- Attended Greater London Assembly meetings on action across London on flooding, including commenting on the new draft London Surface Water Strategy.
- Responded to government consultations e.g. on raising compensation water companies are required to give to those who have been flooded (from £1k to £2k is not enough) and on proposals for revising the planning system (saying it needs to continue to insist developers do all they can to prevent flooding).
- Supported the creation of a new Flood Action Group in South End Green.
- Provided information for a new book being written by the BBC's Ex-Science Editor about preparing for the impact of climate change.

What do we want local residents to do?

1. Continue to report blocked drains, not just in this area but in the areas above us, e.g. Finchley Road, Hampstead.
 - Camden's blocked drains: <https://www.camden.gov.uk/report-street-issue>
 - Transport for London for Finchley Road blocked drains: <https://tfl.gov.uk/help-and-contact/contact-us-about-streets-and-other-road-issues>
2. Don't cover over their front gardens.
3. If they suspect that a garden - front or rear - has been re-surfaced without planning permission contact CRASH, who will, if required, inform Camden Council's enforcement team.
 - Email CRASH on: southhampstead.info@gmail.com
4. Install a water butt to collect the water from their roof if they have space to do so, and somewhere the water can discharge to.
5. Help any elderly or disabled residents in lower ground floor flats to prepare for future floods — and check to make sure they are ok if the area is flooded. Make sure they are registered for Thames Water's 'Priority Services' so they are top priority for support from Thames if there are future floods.
 - Thames Water Priority Services: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/help/get-extra-help/priority-services>