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River Lowther Catchment Flood Survey Report May 2026

Acknowledgements

- Bampton Flood Resilience Group (BFRG) would like to thank everyone in the Bampton Parish and River Lowther catchment who took the time to respond to the survey, the results of which are shown in this report. The stoicism and resilience of our community in the face of the regular flood events we face shone through. We hope this report accurately reflects the experiences, knowledge and opinions of our community.
- Thanks to Di Jiang (group member), data analyst and lead author of this report for the considerable time she has spent pulling all the data and information together into a digestible and informative format.
- And thank you to Colin Rigg at the Environment Agency and Cllr Nicki Vecqueray (group member) for putting the survey together in the first place and to Nicki for distributing across the catchment.
- If you would like more information or to comment on the report please email info@bamptonfloodresilience.org

Iain Williamson, Chair BFRG, May 2026

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Overview

- Introduction to Survey
- Summary of Data
- In-depth Data: Flooding Hotspots
  - Key features and issues
  - Observed changes that may affect flooding
  - Thoughts & advice from residents
- Conclusions & Potential Areas for Action

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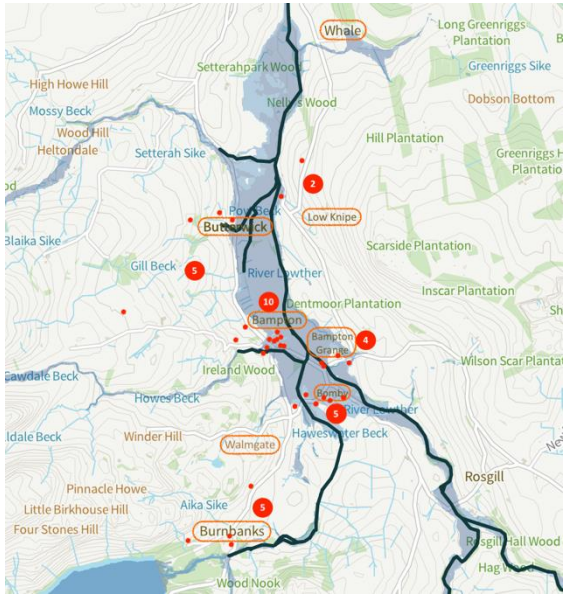
Introduction to Survey

- Commissioned by the Bampton Flood Resilience Group (**BFRG**) and the Environment Agency (**EA**) in the Bampton Parish and River Lowther catchment to help inform the understanding of local flooding, surface water flow and near-miss events, and to support flood modelling, monitoring and future mitigation work by the EA and BFRG.
- Return rate: **130** households (all the permanent residencies in the catchment) were provided with a survey to complete. **31** responses were received (**24%**). *(Unsurprisingly the response rate was highest in those locations most prone to flooding)*.
- Duration of survey: questionnaires were disseminated during **March 2026** with data consolidation and analysis undertaken in **May 2026**.
- **Outline of questionnaire**:
  - Experience with flooding
  - Problematic areas locally
  - Impact of flood
  - Changes & Observations
  - Advice & Ideas



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Flood zone 2 Flood zone 3 Main Rivers

Surveys returned by Area

- . Number of surveys returned

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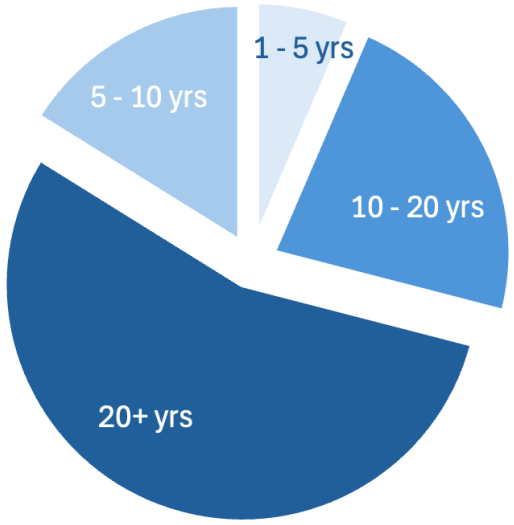

Demography: years of living in the locality from responses

Observed severe floods / storms over the years

- Years of **severe floods**:
  - 2009
  - 2015-16, 2019
  - 2021, 2023-24, 2024-25

- **Storms** that caused severe floods:
  - Storm Desmond (2015)
  - Storm Amy (Oct 2025)
  - Storm Claudia (Nov 2025)
  - 2009 – before the naming of storms
  - “many”; “**annual events**”; “**more frequent** since early 2000s”;

Type of flooding observed

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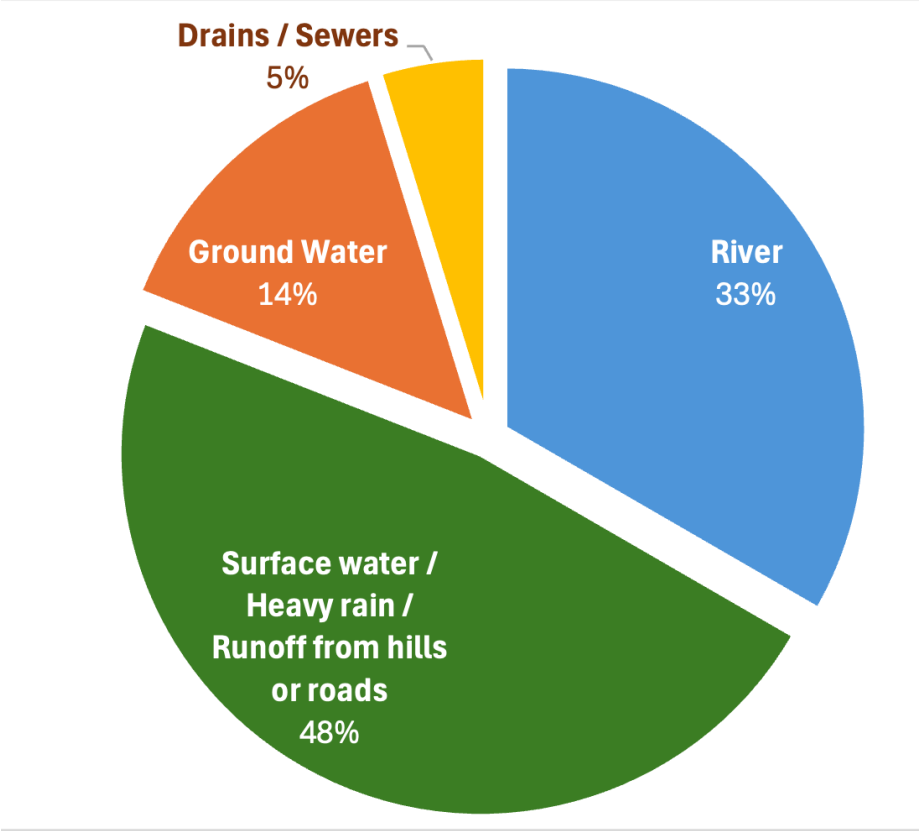

Observed problems during flood events

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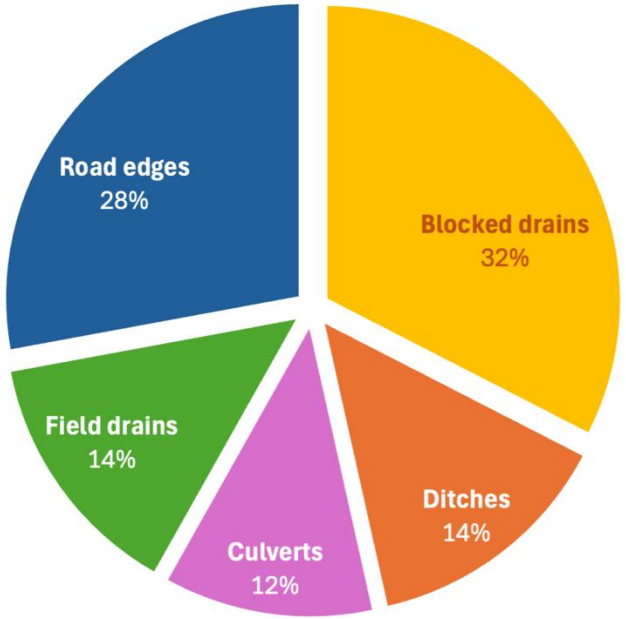
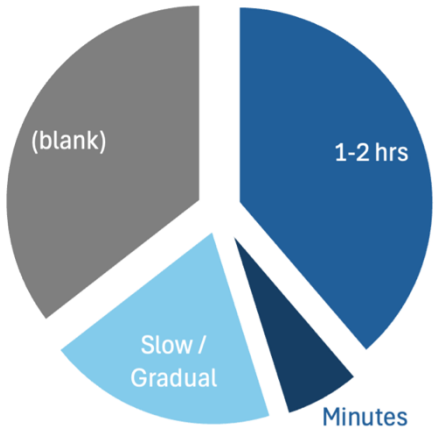
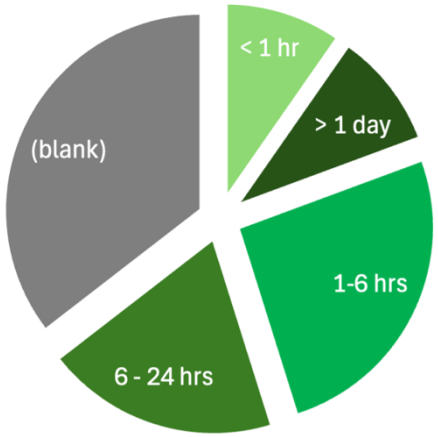


Observed flooding and draining speed

Speed of flooding



Speed of draining



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Flooding of properties

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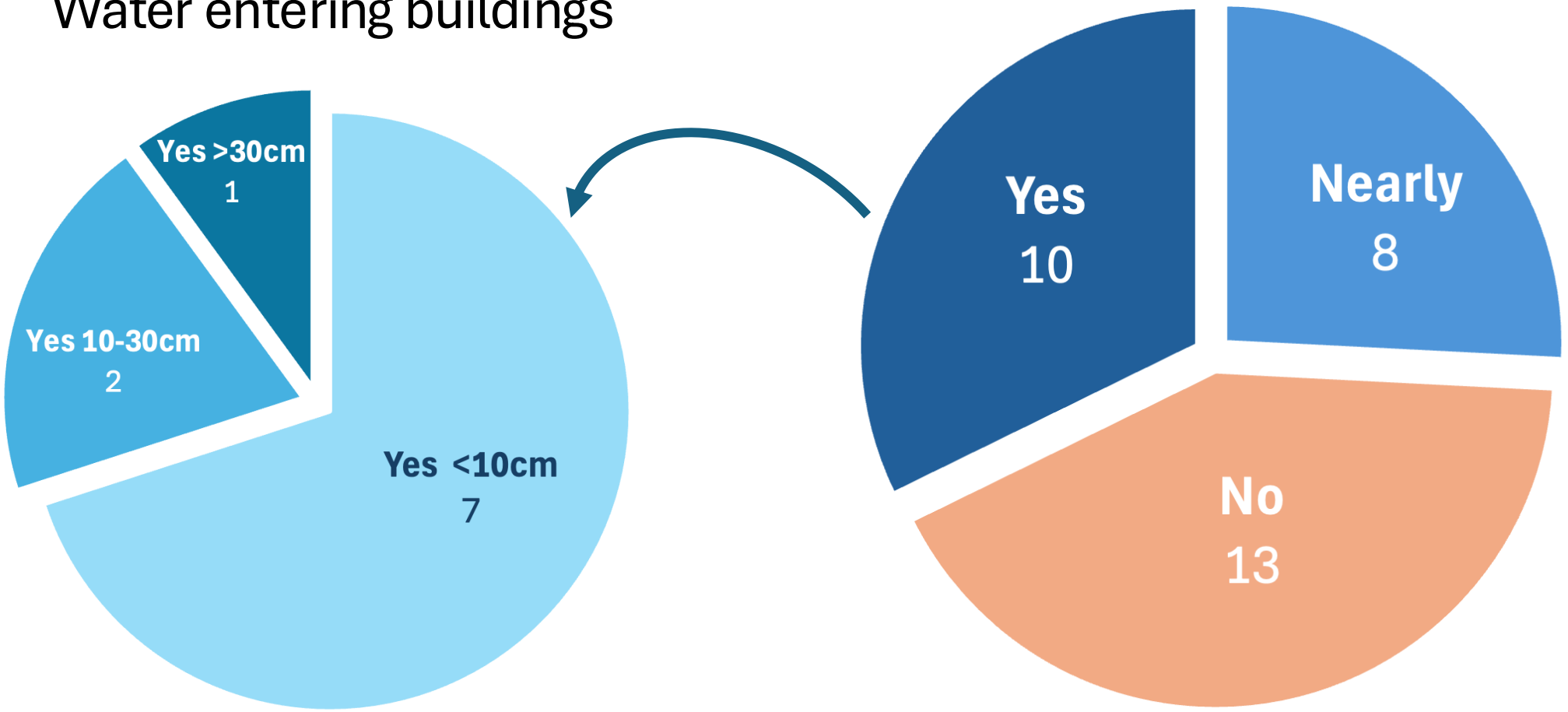
Water entering buildings



Flood Defence measures

- 8 out of 31 responded “Yes” when asked if they had taken flood resilience measures.
- 6 out of those 8 have had previous incidents of flood water entering their residences.
- Typical defence measures:
    - Installation of storm drains, submersible pump, tanking of walls, raising of ground floor, installation of flood gates/barriers, flood doors and walls, pumps, sandbags, removal of furniture “upstairs”, installation of concrete layer to 6” below ground level to prevent ingress from stone walls, installation of wooden floors at a level above previous flood levels, field drains and ditches, split drainage channels and raised tarmac driveway.
- Most respondents who had taken measures had done so after experiencing flooding in their property. Only two respondents who reported near-misses had taken action to guard against future flood events.

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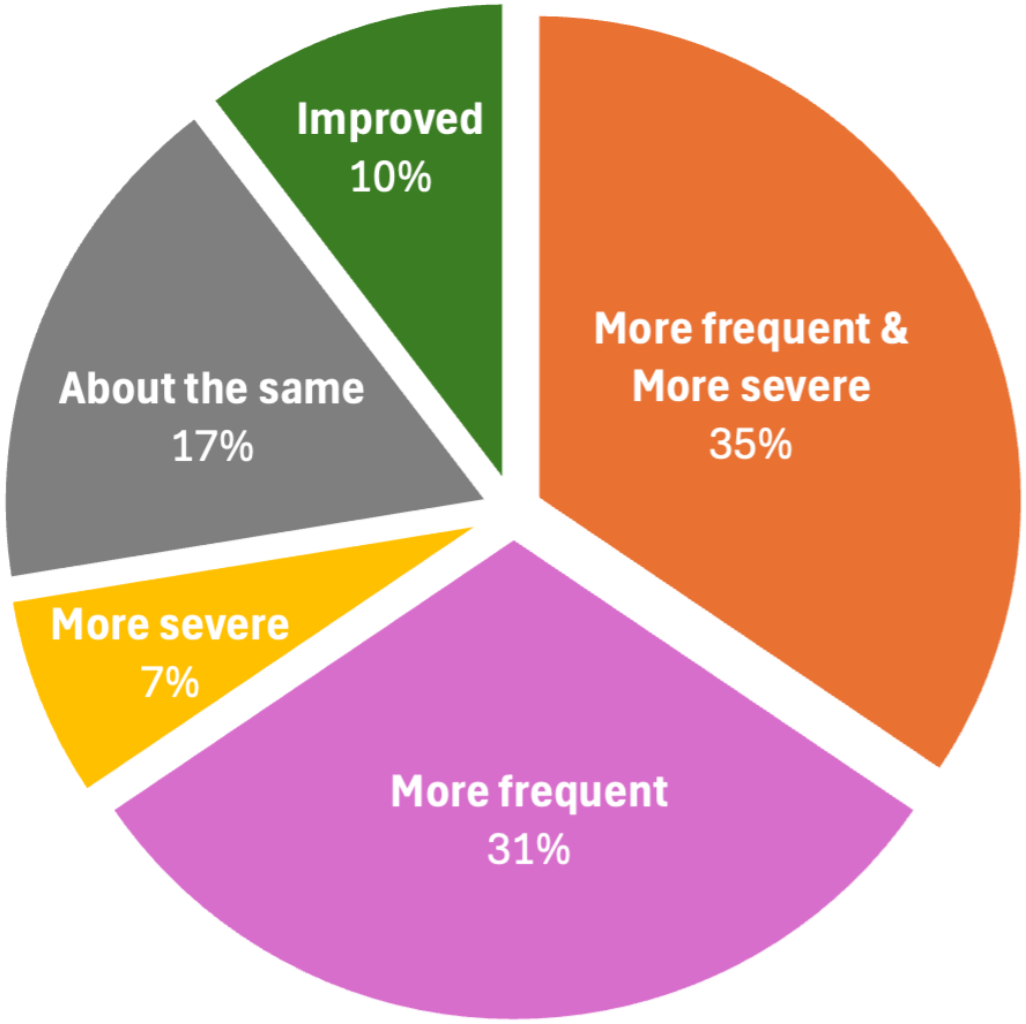
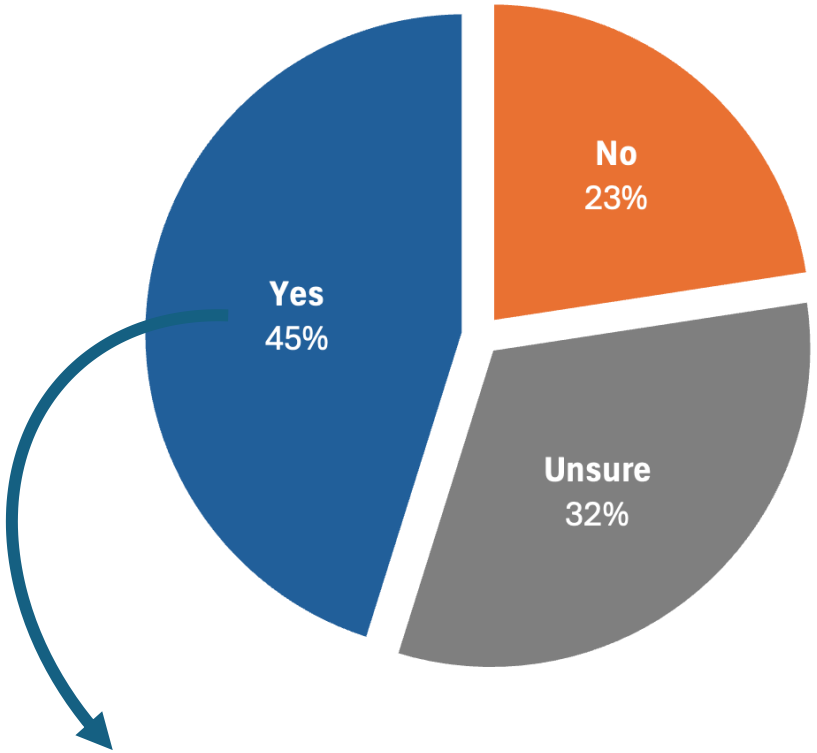
Noticed changes in flooding

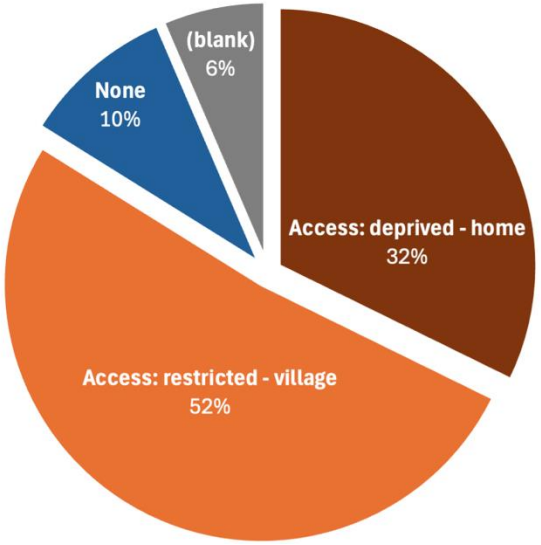


Noticed any changes that may affect flooding?



Refer to each flood hotspot area

Impact of flooding



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- Deprived access:

  Home-bound – unable or having extreme difficulties to get out of or back into house / driveway

- Restricted access:

  Difficulties and inconveniences to get out of the village and/or local area to get to work, school and run life errands. This often causes delays and diversions that entails route planning

- See each flooding hotspot for details

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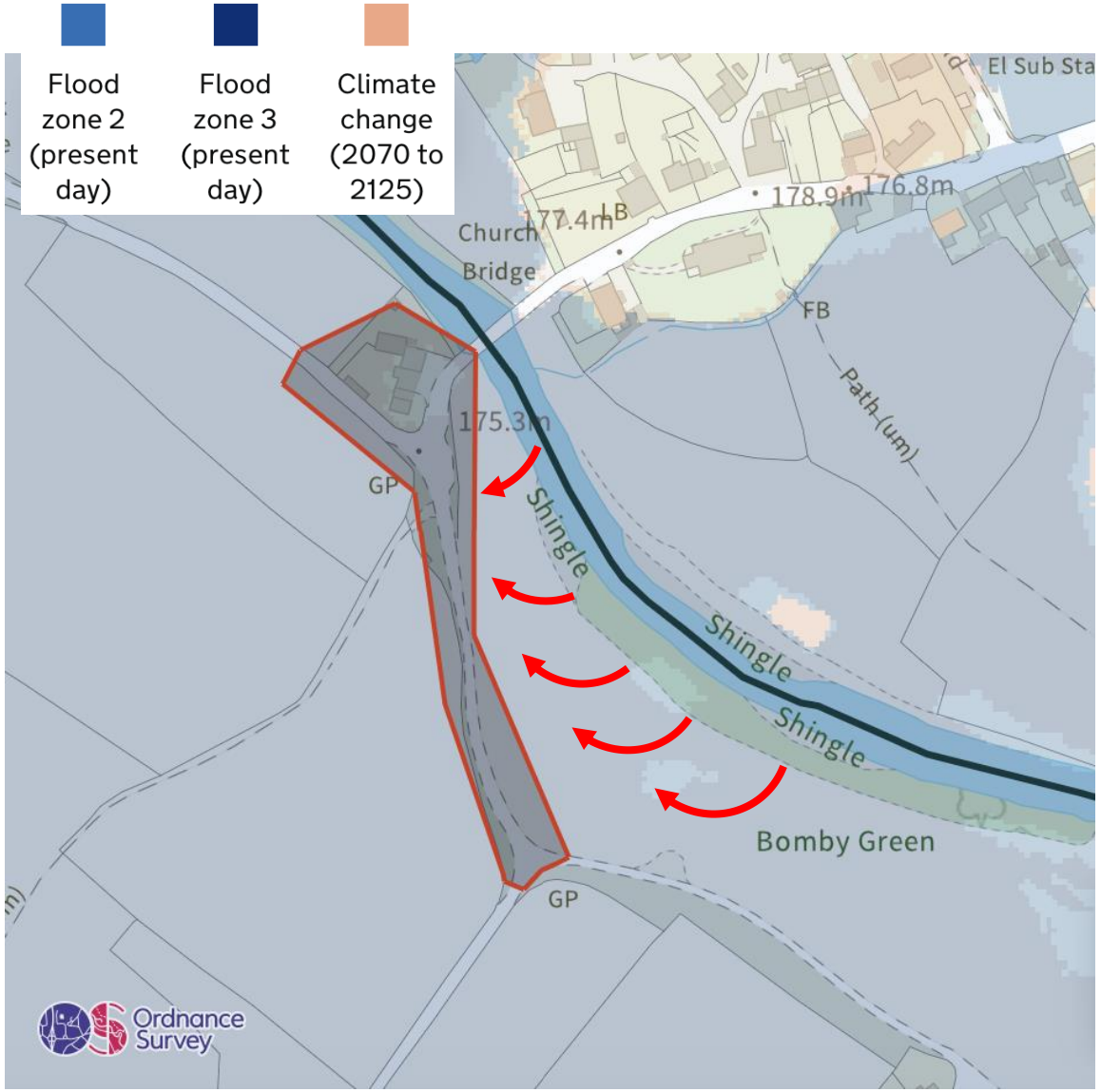
In-depth Data

Hotspots of flooding events observed by locals
Village, Roads, Fields/Fells

Observed Hotspot 1: Bampton Grange Bridge - Bomby Green



- **Flood type:** River – flood from River Lowther and overflow from Bomby Green
- **Noticeable issues:** ditches, road edge damages, water level at reservoirs
- **Observed changes:**
  - Water usage and collection in upland reservoirs: when they over-tops in heavy rain the rivers would become uncontrolled very quickly
  - Stones installed in River Lowther at Setterah Park caused water to back up
  - Heavier rainfall and bigger storms; water table rises
  - No management of riverbanks

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Observed Hotspot 1: Bampton Grange Bridge - Bomby Green cont.

- **Impact on locals:**
  - Restricted & deprived access: people can't travel out of village towards Shap & Knipe directions, or access adjacent areas on foot or driving; homebound in severe floods
  - "impossible to walk or drive because water is too deep"; "unable to get out of my house during significant flood"; "unable to leave farm during heavy flooding"; "mentally scary to see village and fields all in flood water";

- **Thoughts & Advice from locals:**
  - Walls to the roads act as a channel that keeps water in. Farmers should consider removing some walls to redirect water into fields and enlarge field soak-aways.
  - Review management practices regarding water level at upland reservoirs.
  - Increase wetlands in up-steam of River Lowther and in upland areas instead of at valley bottoms.
  - Repair and maintain embankment along Haweswater Beck before its joining at River Lowther to hold back run-offs.
  - Keep old concreate road open and accessible for locals as crucial alternative access.

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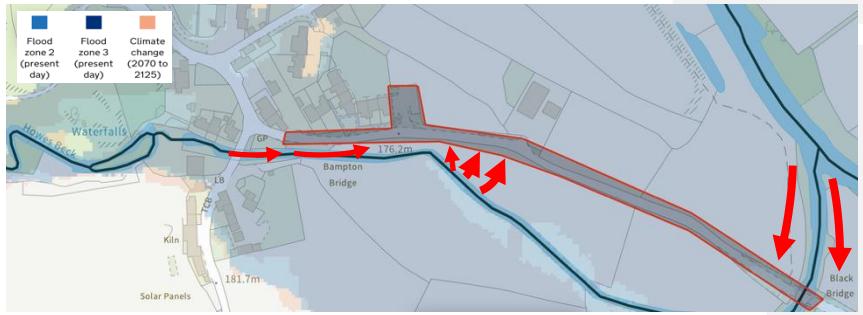

Observed Hotspot 2: Croft End - Village Hall - Black Bridge

- **Flood type:**
  - River, Drains / Sewers, Surface water / Heavy rain / Runoff from hills or roads
  - Water overrun from Howes Beck and embankment
  - Three rivers (River Lowther, Haweswater Beck & Howes Beck) meet close by causing water back-up
- **Noticeable issues:**
  - Blocked drains
  - Gutters point off the highway
  - Collapsing embankment

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Observed Hotspot 2: Croft End - Village Hall - Black Bridge cont.

- **Observed changes:**
  - Roadside and field drains are no longer cleared
  - Increasing amounts of debris left in Howes Beck uncleared
  - No management of riverbanks

- **Impact on locals:**
  - Restricted & deprived access: people can't travel out of village for work and homebound in severe floods
  - "can't move from house until water subsides"; "unable to drop children to school safely"; "Croft End car park often under water"; "our car was written off as a result of flood damage";

- **Thoughts & Advice from locals:**
  - Clear roadside drains fully and regularly
  - Repair embankment of Howes as the beck will rise to top; remove swaying trees on embankment that sway too much which loosens the bank.
  - Increase river dredging efforts and keep flood walls clear and usable
  - Keep Haweswater reservoir levels low

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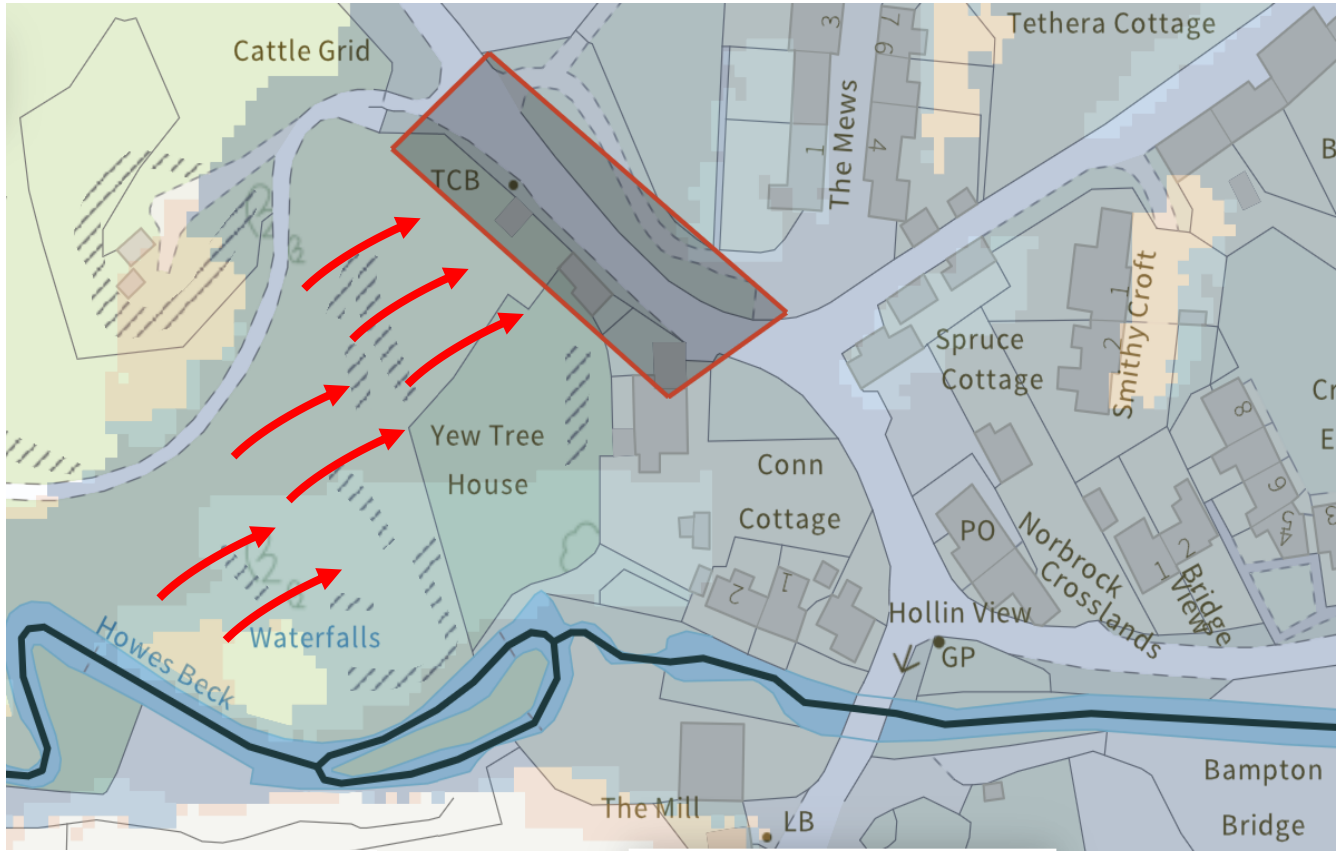
Observed Hotspot 3: Howes Beck – Phonebooth



Flood zone 2 (present day)

Flood zone 3 (present day)

Climate change (2070 to 2125)

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Flood type:

- Surface water / Heavy rain / Runoff from hills or roads
- Drains / Sewers
- High volume of water runs down hill from Howes Beck

Noticeable issues:

- Blocked drains

Observed changes:

- Stopped few years ago due to drainage works but issue has reappeared in the last 1-2 years
- Incorrect council records: still blocked

Impact, Thoughts & Advice: Similar to Hotspot 2

Flood zone 2 Flood zone 3 Main Rivers

Flooding hotspots on **roads**

According to the survey results:

There are flooding hotspots existing on **ALL** routes in and out of the local area, compounding access issues during flood events and negatively impacting life and livelihood for residents.

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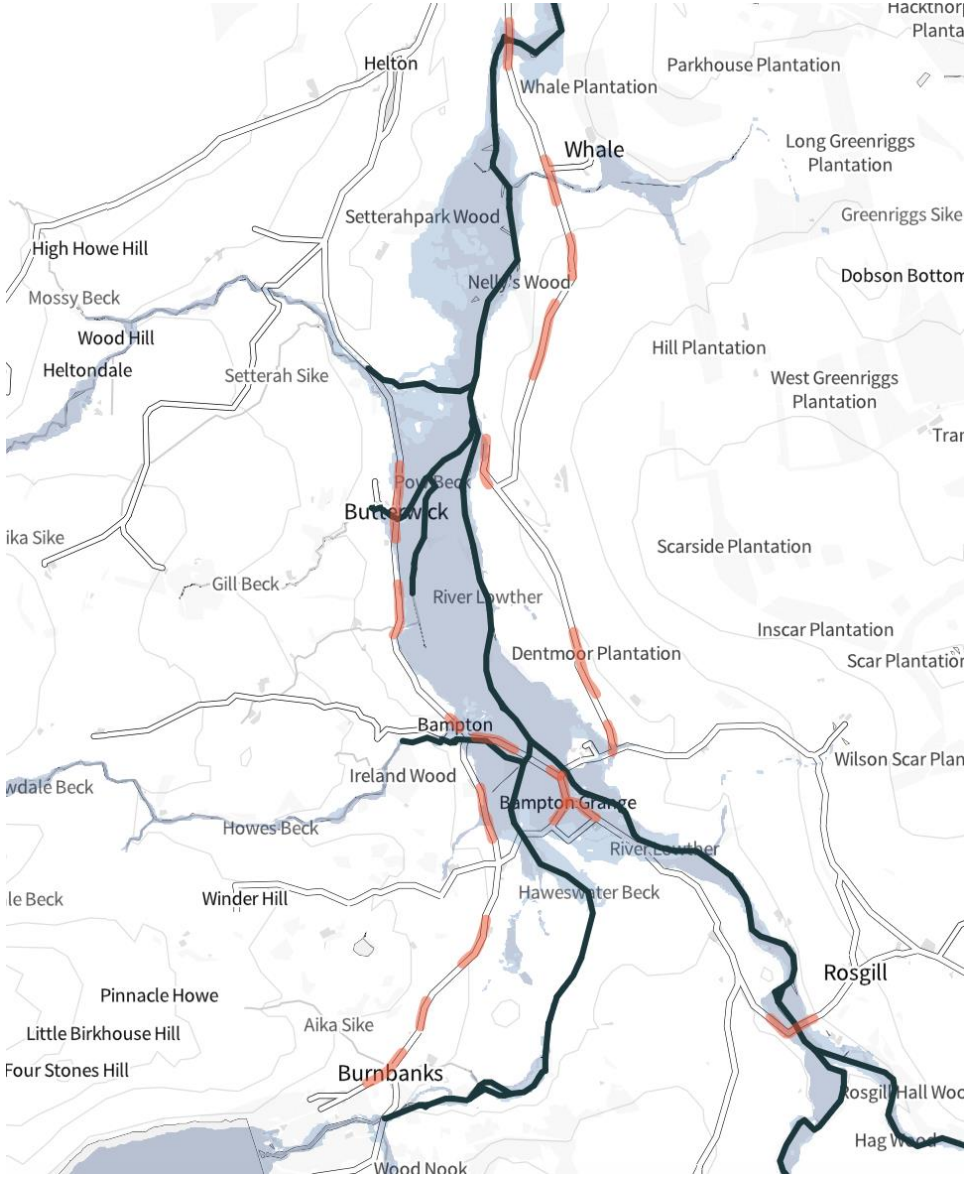
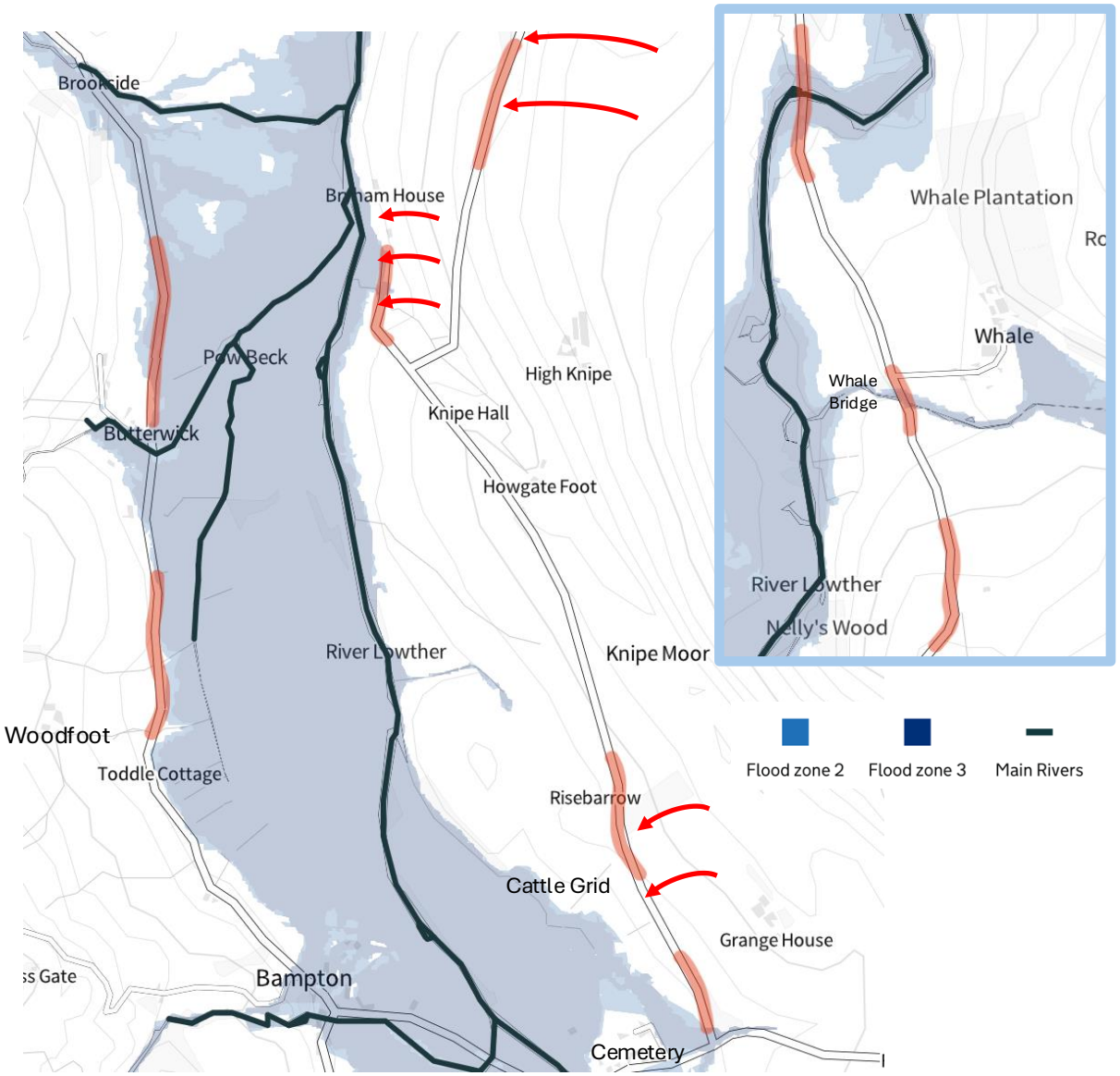
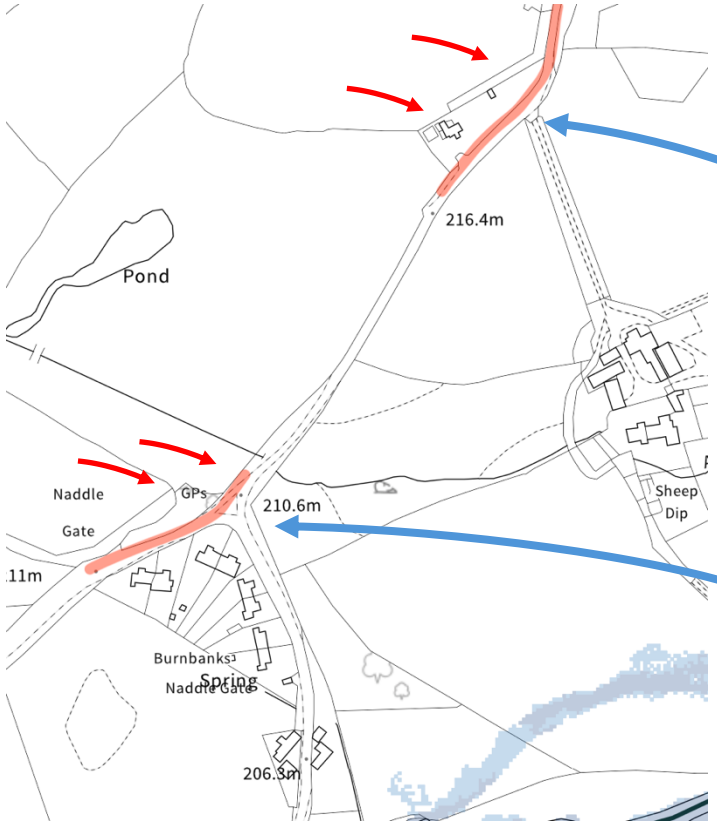


Buttermere / Knipe / Whale Hotspots on **Roads**



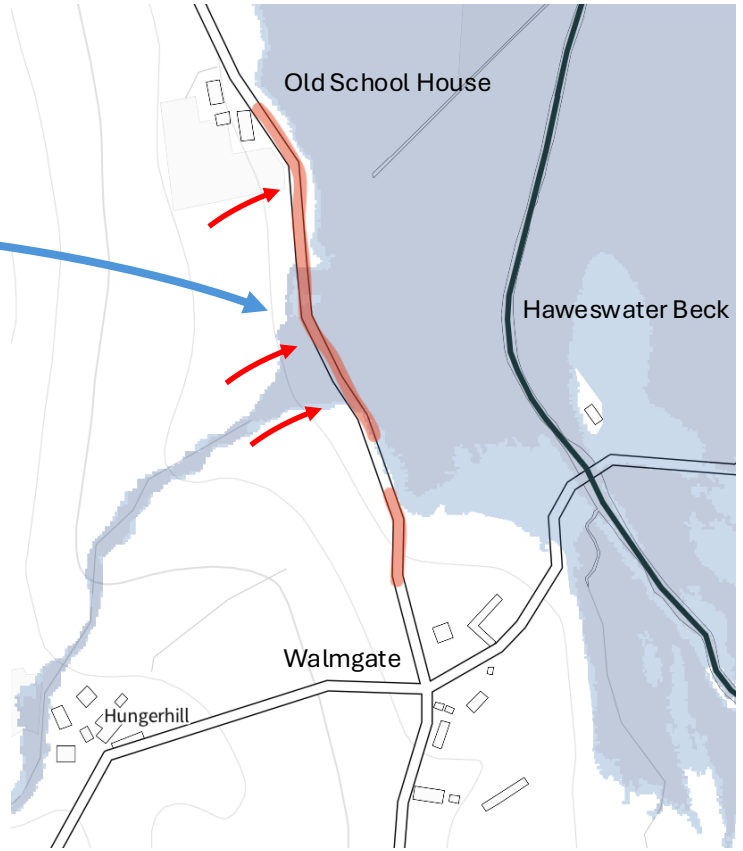
- **Flood type:** Surface water / Heavy rain / Runoff from hills or roads
- **Noticeable issues:**
  - Drains and culverts in poor repair leading to misdirected water down-fell (Low Knipe)
  - Vulnerability: unsustainable for residents to carry out flood defense & mitigation tasks alone
- **Observed changes:**
  - Increase in heavy duty vehicles damaged road on Knipe Fell and left many potholes
  - Poorly serviced road section (Whale to Knipe) and neglected drainage infrastructure leading to road flooding becoming more severe
- **Impact:** restricted access and activities, often need to plan travel routes ahead
- **Thoughts & Advice:**
  - Clear field drains and maintain good use of culvert
  - Re-assess drainages issues on road verges and drainage locations

Naddlegate & Walmgate Hotpots on **Roads**



- Surface water / Heavy rain / Runoff from hills
- Water pool on roads

- Water run-off from fields
- Failing culvert
- Gulleys forming outside house

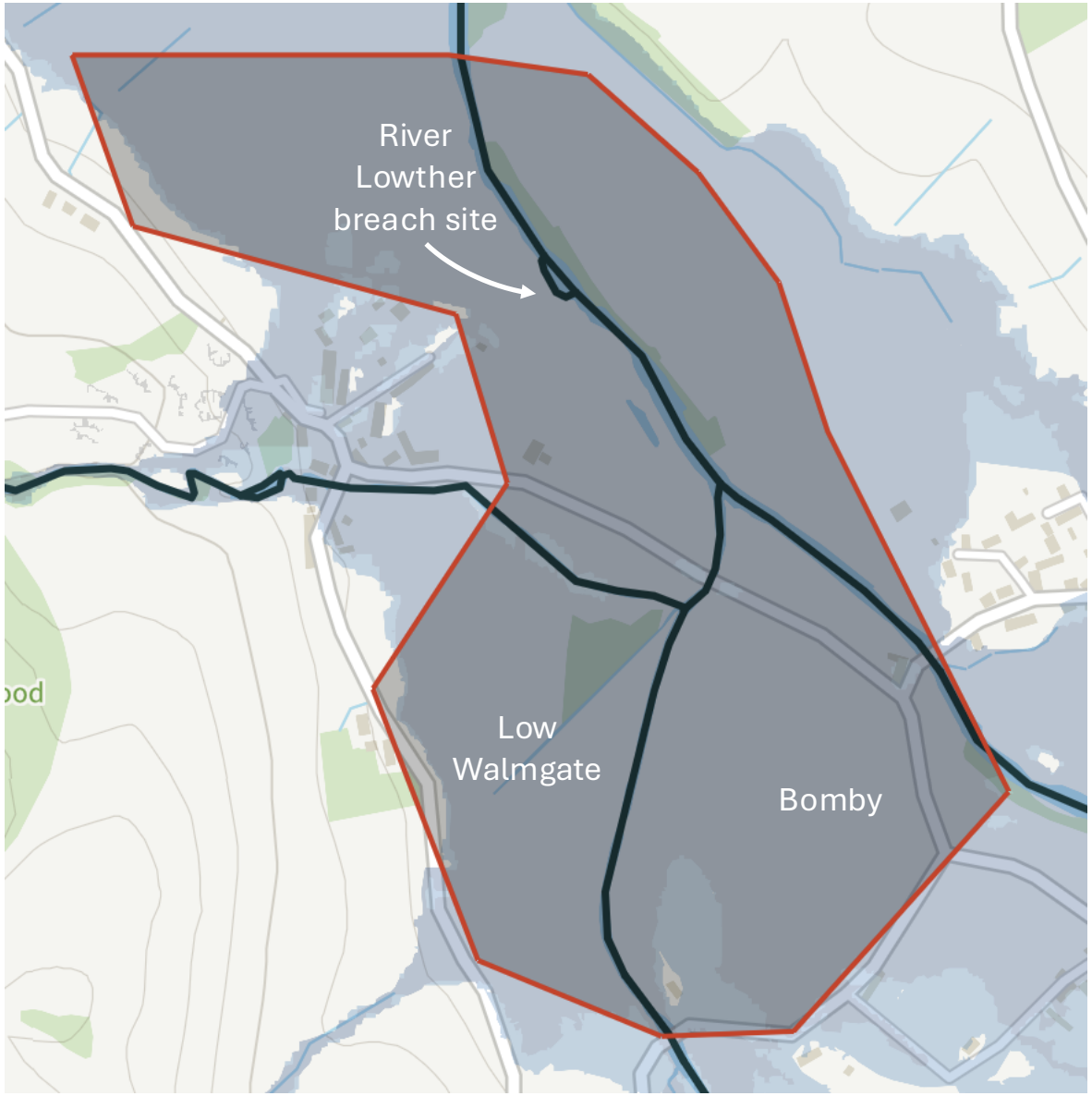


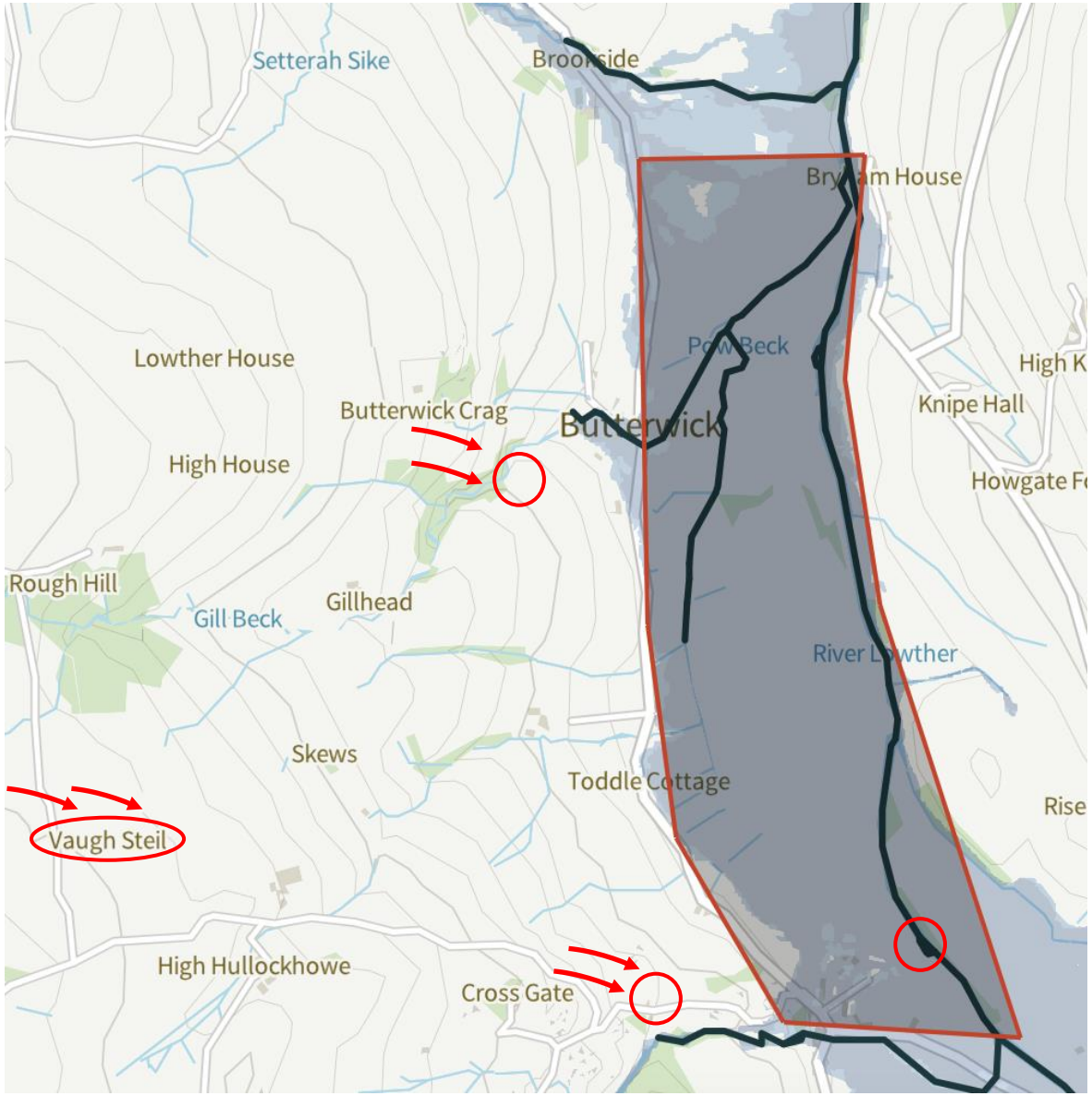
Observed changes: "worse since flood alleviation done in 2018"

Impact: Access – flood can restrict access to local area and can sometimes deprive access to home when gulleys form near property

Thoughts & Advice: need to clear field drains and maintain good use of culvert

Flooding hotspots **in fields & on hills**





Flooding hotspots **in fields & on hills** cont.

Flood type: River, Surface water / Heavy rain / Runoff from hills or roads

Noticeable issues:

Unrepaired riverbank breach (River Lowther) and enlarging breach on embankment (Haweswater Beck)

Eroded road surfaces and washed away tracks

Blocked field drains and culverts

Observed changes:

Breach site

Valley bottom floods more frequently since beaver enclosure trial at Whale/Setterah started

Removed flood defence along River Lowther

Impact:

Fields too flooded for stock animals

Effect on mental well-being and cause isolation: “seeing all the surrounding fields to our home flooded can be quite scary”

Thoughts & Advice:

Install local ponds to attenuate water

Allow flooding in fields to reduce height of River Lower and depth of pooling flood water during heavy rain

Keep field drains and culverts maintained

Repair breach site as soon as possible to prevent further collapse of embankment

Greater use of “bunding” to protect land and property affected by river flooding

Greater use of “slow the flow” techniques upstream of the catchment

Some Recommendations & Areas for Action

- Governance:
  - Blocked drains, unrepaired culverts. The rapid flooding of roads during storm events and subsequent impassibility of those roads is the single most raised problem from the surveys – mentioned by almost all respondents. Residents believe a lack of management and cleaning of drains and culverts is the major cause of this - and addressing it would be the solution.
  - Provide additional support in coordination with private landowners to repair river breaches & consolidate embankments.
- Planning:
  - Greater visibility / transparency of area development plans, nature restoration programmes and landscape recovery schemes.
  - Significantly improve consultation with local residents, and ensure they are involved at planning commencement for any projected agri-environment schemes.
  - Regular updating on progress of any schemes – through the use of the parish newsletter for example.
  - Clarity regarding the impact of upland "water flow" projects - including their monitoring, measuring, and the publication of results.
- Utilities:
  - Transparency over United Utilities management of its upland assets: monitor reservoirs more proactively and share data

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Next Steps

- BFRG will be meeting with and presenting the report to all agencies and organisations both statutory and non-statutory who play a role in shaping the environment and landscape we live in and whose work has the potential to impact the effect of flood events on people living and working in Bampton Parish and the River Lowther catchment.
- Agencies include the Environment Agency, Westmorland & Furness Council, United Utilities, the Lake District National Park Authority, Cumbria Connect, Penrith to Kendal Arc CIC.
- The report will help raise awareness of the risks and dangers faced by our communities, and ensure agencies fully carry out their duties to manage and mitigate those risks and dangers.
- We will seek assurances that during this period of rapid agri-environment land use change and against a backdrop of climate change:

1. There is a commitment to communication, consultation and cooperation with the local community.
2. interventions will be assessed for their impact during flood events, and should demonstrate a benefit to the community through decreased flooding risk, or as a minimum demonstrate they do not increase flooding risk.

References

- Mapping tool: UK government flood map for planning - https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/location

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