Witney Flood Group

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Press Release

Witney Flood Group claims new 'River Windrush Island'
A Community Acts Over Poor River Maintenance

Witney, Oxfordshire 6 September 2026 - In a symbolic act of community protest, members of Witney Flood Group (WFG) have officially taken ownership of a newly formed silt island (shoal) in the River Windrush, downstream of the town bridge. Overnight, local campaigners planted a banner directly into the riverbed shoal reading: "Welcome to Witney beach! This island was created by poor river maintenance. It is now the property of Witney's residents. No developers allowed to build here."

The action aims to highlight ongoing frustration with the lack of river maintenance, specifically silt accumulation, fallen trees, and unaddressed riverbed obstructions which severely restrict flow capacity and increases severe flood risks for homes and businesses across central Witney.

"This new 'island' isn't a natural feature to celebrate—it's a physical symptom of neglect," said William Wareing, Chairman of WFG. "Unmaintained silt deposits choke the river channel and turn the Windrush into a bottleneck during heavy rainfall. We and our local residents have seen this shoal build up year on year. By declaring this shoal the property of local residents, we are calling on authorities and riparian landowners to step up, clear obstructions, and take proactive flood mitigation seriously before next winter approaches."

Key Demands from Witney Flood Group

1 Routine Maintenance: Immediate action on clearing silt deposits, debris, and fallen trees along critical sections of the River Windrush.

2 Infrastructure Review: Evaluation of river structures and obstructions, such as the town bridge and local footpaths, which act as dams during high-flow events.

3 Stop All Additional Development: The local area cannot take any more development until flooding issues have an engineering solution. Surface water drainage, the capacity of the sewer network and Witney Sewage Treatment Works all must be upgraded first.

4 Proactive Upstream Mitigation: Implementation of long-term Natural Flood Management and attenuation schemes upstream to protect Witney's downstream properties.

Witney Flood Group, a registered local charity dedicated to reducing flood risk through community action, data collection and agency engagement, invites local residents to support their ongoing campaign for proper watercourse management.

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Imagery: https://witneyfloodgroup.co.uk/previous-events/

Sincerely,
WFG Trustees and Volunteers

WFG Trustees and Volunteers: William, Keith, Tony, Mike F, Mike T, Chris, Darren, Dean, Steve, Terry, Bob

Witney Flood Group is a registered charity, number 1204457