

Reducing flood risk in Abingdon

Newsletter

December 2018

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with the Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) to find ways to reduce flood risk in Abingdon.

We have been investigating a number of design options including a flood storage area, property level products and natural flood management measures.

Flood storage area

We have been working on the design of a potential flood storage area at Abingdon Common to help reduce flooding in Abingdon. Abingdon Common is to the west of the A34, between Abingdon and Marcham.

Since our last newsletter we have carried out further ground investigation work, used the latest modelling results and taken on board feedback from our drop-in earlier in the year. With this combined information we have developed a more detailed design for a flood storage area.

Having done this we now know more detail about the works and materials needed. We initially thought we would be able to build the embankment on the existing ground. The results of our surveys have found this would not be possible. Instead we will have to excavate down and build foundations for the embankment. The amount of clay material for the embankment is much more than previously estimated and will have to be brought in.

We have also made modifications to the design to ensure the safety of the scheme such as putting in more flow control structures and access routes for maintenance. These safety requirements are important both for staff and public and are in line with the Reservoirs Safety Act 1975.

Funding

Based on our more detailed design information we are now able to estimate that the cost of the flood storage area would be in the region of £9.7 million. The government and local funding available for the project at the moment is approximately £4 million.

To be able to continue with our plans to build the flood storage area the partnership would need to secure the remaining £5.7 million from local partners, businesses and other organisations. For this reason we will not be able to progress the project design work further until the additional funding can be found.

Our partnership do not feel there is a realistic prospect of securing this amount of funding in the short term, so we have decided not to continue our work on the flood storage area at this time. We will keep this under review and check the scheme's viability in future as new information becomes available or if government funding rules change.

We will continue to investigate Natural Flood management options.

Leader of Vale of White Horse District Council, Cllr Roger Cox, said: "We know the impact of flooding on residents in this area, which is why we funded the flood wall at St Helen's Mill in 2017 and why we have invested in further research into how to reduce that risk. The Environment Agency and our other partners have identified suitable methods to help protect people's properties, such as temporary flood barriers which can be deployed where and when they are needed and are also investigating the use of natural flood management techniques."

Natural Flood Management

We have found that Natural Flood Management measures may be able to help reduce flood risk in Abingdon. Natural Flood Management works by using natural techniques to hold back or slow down water and reduce flooding downstream. Examples include woody dams, replanting hedges to slow river flow and managing woodland to maintain soil porosity.

In order to develop the potential Natural Flood Management measures we have employed a project manager to look at the opportunities which could benefit Abingdon.

The project manager is meeting landowners in potential areas to see what may be possible.

We will keep you updated with our findings of this work.

Temporary Flood Barriers

We have identified 3 communities in Abingdon where Temporary Flood Barriers could be used to reduce the impact of flooding. These locations are in the Tower Close, Meadowside, Hermitage Road, Healey Close, Potenger Way and Chaunterell Way areas of Abingdon.

Temporary Flood Barriers include pumps and barriers that are stored elsewhere and delivered to a location before flooding occurs.

Temporary Flood Barriers work by creating an artificial wall to block the flow of water across the floodplain, reducing it from reaching those properties at risk.

We are still developing these plans. There is no guarantee that Temporary Flood Barriers can be deployed during every flood because each flood is different and Temporary Flood Barriers do not work in all situations.



Example of what natural flood management can look like, a woody dam at Eye Brook in the Midlands.

Forward look

- We will continue to develop Natural Flood Management options in the Ock catchment to reduce flooding in Abingdon.
- We will meet with landowners to investigate where we could create natural flood management features.
- We will continue to engage with the community on any work we do to reduce flooding in Abingdon.

To contact the project team, or to request to be added to the mailing list email enquiries_THM@environment-agency.gov.uk

View updates online at <https://www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/contacts/abingdon-flood-alleviation-scheme/>