

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

Newsletter

March 2020

We are working with 9 partners on a major new flood scheme for Oxford, which will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses, and major transport routes into the city. The scheme is designed to provide a long term solution to flooding in Oxford, helping protect the city as flood risk increases with climate change.

The scheme will run through the existing floodplain to the west of Oxford. It will look and behave like a natural river, with new wetland habitat alongside it to create more space for water away from built-up areas.

Oxford Scheme update

The A423 Kennington Railway Bridge owned by Oxfordshire County Council must be replaced. This gives us the opportunity to design and build the scheme and bridge together, reducing disruption and ensuring the best use of public money. Our applications for planning permission, compulsory land purchase, open space changes and footpath changes will need to be amended to capture the new arrangements.

The best way forward is to withdraw and then re-submit our applications, incorporating the necessary changes. The advantages to this will be increased clarity for the public and landowners.

We remain dedicated to bringing the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme to the city. With climate change, flooding will become more frequent and severe and this is the best option to reduce the impact of a major flood for Oxford.

Oxfordshire County Council are confirming a timescale for the design and construction of the bridge. Once we know this, we'll share our revised construction dates for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

You can find our previous newsletters on Oxfordshire County Council's Flood Toolkit website:

www.oxfordshirefloodtoolkit.com/contacts/alleviation-scheme/

What's next?

- We will withdraw our applications and inform people directly affected by this.
- We will add all the information required, and submit our new applications. These will go through the usual consultation processes.
- We will continue to acquire the land we need for the scheme by agreement, where possible.



The view over the scheme from Hinksey Heights 3 years after completion (visualisation from planning application)

Reversing wetland decline

Designing a scheme that provides a green legacy for people, habitat and wildlife has been at the heart of our work from the beginning.

The scheme will link up with existing wetland wildlife sites to the west of Oxford and form part of a wider freshwater network throughout Oxfordshire. This will help to reverse the decline in wetland habitats that has occurred across much of the United Kingdom over the last few decades.

What is being done to reduce your flood risk now?

Our scheme will help protect Oxford from flooding for many decades to come. Until then we continue to reduce your flood risk.

This winter has seen multiple storms tracking across the UK, with heavy rain and flooding in the Oxford area. This high water caused many problems and distress. It had the potential to be worse, and it's not just down to luck that it wasn't. Our river maintenance program reduces the background flood risk, while our system of warnings and incident preparation meant we were ready to respond had rain continued. During these heavy rainfall events, our incident room was open, our staff were out in communities warning residents, and extra staff were on call 24/7.

Temporary defences

We didn't need to deploy temporary defences during Storm Dennis, but it was close. Our emergency plans were activated and we moved temporary defences to site. We monitored the rivers very closely, and they didn't quite reach flood warning level.

River maintenance

Throughout the year our operational staff carry out inspections and clear debris to keep main rivers moving. Our winter preparation in 2019 played a big part in reducing Oxford's flood risk.

You can find out what this involves in this blog: <https://environmentagency.blog.gov.uk/2018/08/02/keeping-the-main-river-network-moving-in-oxford-this-summer/>

To report a blockage that could cause flooding call our 24 incident hotline: **0800 80 70 60**. You can also find out what maintenance is planned in your area here: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/asset-management/index.html>



Temporary barrier test at South Hinksey

Winter flood campaign

We are dedicated to helping people in Oxford prepare for floods. In our last newsletter we highlighted the need to Prepare Act Survive to be ready for floods. Check what you can do to be flood ready here: <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk>



Want to know more?

If you have any questions, or want to be added to our mailing list, please don't hesitate to contact us at: oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk

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