

Environment Agency continuing its flood defence work

Work is continuing on the £40M Radcliffe and Redvales Flood Alleviation Scheme which, once completed, will better protect over 870 properties from the effects of flooding, the Environment Agency has said.

The organisation has, however, confirmed due to COVID-19 and Government advice it is postponing public meetings, including the regular drop-in sessions held in Radcliffe, until it is safe to hold them again.

Currently, work on Phase 1 of the flood defences, focused on Close Park and Morris Street will continue in line with Public Health England advice. The temporary defences that were constructed during the February 2020 floods have been reconstructed to provide the same level of protection to properties.

Once completed, this phase of the scheme, will see a permanent 2.5m flood wall built at the rear of properties in Parkside Close, and a 3m-high earth embankment on the far side of the park with football pitches acting as a natural floodplain. Work in Close Park will also include the creation of new wildlife habitat and increased amenity areas for the public including a £150,000 extension to the junior football club building which is coming out of the £2m contribution to the scheme from Bury Council.

Peter Costello, Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager said: "We are doing all we can to ensure work continues as much as is safe to do so and that delays caused by the knock-on effects of this pandemic are kept to an absolute minimum. Our contractors on site, BMM JV have continued to construct Phase 1 of the Radcliffe and Redvales scheme. The team is working in line with Public Health England advice, and have had to reassess the work they can do safely without putting their workforce at any increased risk of Covid-19.

"As government advice changes daily, the construction process must alter to allow for safe practice, the pace may slow and the number of workforce on the site may be reduced and as such, the effects on the programme are continuously changing. Our priority in these difficult times is the health, safety and wellbeing of residents, staff and construction workers. Unfortunately, due to the number of unknown factors we are unable to provide a revised end date to Phase 1 at this time and we hope residents will understand and appreciate that we are continuing to do what we can in these unusual circumstances.

"The effect which the Coronavirus situation will have on the scheme is still unclear and will depend on developments over the next days and weeks. If our plans change significantly due to the situation we will keep the community informed. As an organisation we are doing everything we can to support our community, our government and the NHS by abiding by these measures."

In light of the Coronavirus situation, the project team are reviewing the

planned start of construction works for Phase 2 of the scheme. Work was due to start on site this month. The Environment Agency is working together with the scheme contractors to understand what operations can safely be progressed in light of the current Government restrictions. If it is deemed a safety risk to be starting new construction works, then affected works will be postponed.

Mr Costello said the project team are moving ahead with other tasks that will ensure a swift site setup when the time comes to restart construction. Including working to discharge planning application conditions, agreeing entry arrangements with landowners, tree removal and reviewing and approving detailed designs. The dates for when construction will begin are being reviewed as the situation with regards COVID-19 changes.

He also confirmed that while the project team are currently going through a period of readjustment to widespread home working, systems are being put in place to support this. Residents can still contact FloodResilienceGMMC@environment-agency.gov.uk with any questions they may have around the scheme's progress.

Bury Council's Cabinet Member for the Environment, Cllr Alan Quinn said "We were hoping to see the start of Phase 2 of the scheme start especially in light of the floods that affected Redvales in February, however I'm sure local residents will understand that construction cannot continue as normal due to the Covid 19 pandemic. Residents can be assured though that we will be doing all we can, working in conjunction with the Environment Agency and residents to get the flood defences finished."

The Environment Agency encourage people to ensure they are prepared prior to flooding taking place. People can sign up sign up the Agency's free flood warning service www.flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk or call Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Regular updates can also be found by following the Environment Agency's local Twitter page @EnvAgencyNW