

[News story: Environmental impact assessment June 2017: River Thames Scheme](#)

Introduction

The River Thames between Datchet and Teddington has the largest area of undefended, developed floodplain in England. Over 15,000 homes and businesses within the area are at risk from flooding.

The River Thames Scheme will reduce the risk of flooding to homes, businesses and critical infrastructure (roads, sewerage network and power supplies).

We need a range of solutions to manage the risk of flooding in the River Thames Scheme area and so the scheme consists of:

- construction of 17 kilometres of new flood channel built in 3 sections
- capacity improvements to the weirs at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington
- community resilience measures
- major incident planning
- habitat creation.

Environmental impact assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) establishes how things are now (the environmental baseline) and assesses the impacts that the scheme is likely to have on this.

It will consider all the likely significant impacts that could result from the scheme and will look at ways to avoid or minimise these impacts, as well as ways to improve the local environment.

The EIA will be documented in an Environmental Statement, which will be submitted with the planning application to inform the planning decision.

We will capture all the ways to avoid or minimise impacts in an Environmental Action Plan, which will be implemented throughout the construction phase of the project.

Environmental Statement

The first stage of producing an Environmental Statement is to develop an Environmental Scoping Report which will be presented to external consultees for comment in the summer.

The Scoping Report provides a summary of the existing environment, considers how the environment could be effected by the Scheme and whether these effects

are likely to be significant. Such considerations include landscape, cultural heritage, ecology, noise, water environment and human beings.

Scoping opinion

The scoping report is submitted to the Local Authorities as part of the planning process, who will be asked to provide a scoping opinion under the Town and County Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations. They will consider if we have included all the likely significant impacts that could result from the scheme, which will set the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment.

They are likely to consult with other organisations and government departments in order to form this opinion. This is not a formal public consultation at this stage and comments are not requested from members of the public. Comments from the public will be captured during the planning application process in 2018.

Environmental and Ecological Surveys

As part of our work to manage our environmental impact we are carrying out further ecological and environmental surveys this year. A range of species will be targeted in these surveys, including bats (and their roosts), water voles, breeding birds, otter, great crested newts and species of reptiles.

Archaeological surveys are planned to commence in summer 2017, and will involve metal detecting, radar surveys and borehole sampling. The results of these surveys will help us identify targeted locations for trial trenches, in late 2017, to evaluate archaeology.

If you would like more information about the surveys we are conducting please visit our [website](#)

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[News story: Community resilience measures June 2017: River Thames Scheme](#)

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Community Resilience Measures (CRM)

We are progressing initial assessments for Community Resilience Measures across the scheme area. This involves analysing data from flood modelling and surveys to look for areas that could benefit from more localised permanent, temporary or property level solutions.

Types of CRM may include permanent flood defences in the form of flood walls or embankments, temporary flood defences that can be deployed in advance of a flood or property level flood intervention consisting of flood doors and barriers.

Initial assessments

The first stage is to group properties together based on the modelling and survey data into areas that could benefit from CRM. The next stage is to identify what type of measure could be used. This is done by engineers based on the location of the properties, the physical and environmental constraints in the area, the flood modelling, past experience and by looking at the costs and benefits for each option.

Appraisal

Once we have completed initial assessments we will identify areas that can be taken forward for more detailed appraisal and consultation with communities to select a preferred solution.

CRM will not be suitable for all communities and properties. Our assessments will identify those measures that can be taken forward based on how much they cost and the benefit they provide along with engineering decisions.

Those CRMs taken forward for implementation will qualify for partial central government funding. The remaining funding is expected to be provided from partnership contributions as part of the wider River Thames Scheme.

Property level programme

You may also be aware of our Property Level Programme (PLP) which has installed flood protection measures to hundreds of properties within the Lower Thames Area. The PLP programme is now closed with works to the last few remaining properties soon to be completed.

Next Steps

Most of the data we need is collected from an office however you may see RTS representatives visiting areas to understand the location better. We will also be using local knowledge of previous flooding to better understand how we can help.

We understand you will want to know how you will be affected and we would like to talk to communities later in the year once we have reviewed the data from our initial assessments.

In the meantime we will keep you updated on the progress of our assessments and let you know how and when you can get involved via our [River Thames Scheme newsletter](#)

[News story: Archaeology surveys June 2017: River Thames Scheme](#)

Archaeological surveys will start in June 2017 and are expected to finish at the end of the year. They will take place in areas of Chertsey Abbey Meads, Kingsmead Quarry, Thorpe Hay Meadow, Desborough, Datchet, and Shepperton.

We use different survey techniques in different areas to give us a wide range of data. This gives us a better understanding of what is likely to be in the ground. We use this information to plan the construction of the River Thames scheme.

The results of these surveys will help us identify targeted locations for trial trenches, in late 2017, to evaluate the archaeology.

Geophysical Surveys

Different materials below the ground can cause local disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field that are detectable with sensitive equipment. Archaeologists use hand held devices or small hand pulled carts to establish the presence of buried archaeological remains and the potential of the study area.

Earthworks Surveys

Help identify the presence of archaeologically significant earthworks or landscape features. Archaeologists look at the areas and compare what they see with historical maps and aerial photographs.

Borehole Surveys

Archaeologists dig boreholes and hand auger pits to record the composition of the ground. This information enables archaeologists to draw conclusions about how and when the area may have been used. The boreholes are excavated using specialist construction equipment.

Electrical Resistivity

Tomography Surveys Archaeologists insert magnetic probes into the ground to gather more data about the composition of the ground to support the information recorded by the borehole surveys.

Metal Detecting Surveys

Archaeologists use high performance metal detectors to detect different types of metals in the ground. This information is used to identify areas that could contain archaeological remains.

Field Walking Surveys

Archaeologists walk along marked out areas looking at the land for features to identify areas that could contain archaeological remains.

All works are carried out under the supervision of either our consultant engineers or a member of Environment Agency staff, in accordance with an agreed method statement.

If you would like more information about the River Thames Scheme please visit our [website](#)

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[Press release: School visits to talk water safety](#)

The visits to schools around Marston-on-Dove, followed a number of reports over recent weeks of children playing on weirs, which are often used by the Environment Agency to monitor river flows.

During the talks schoolchildren heard about the dangers of the water around weirs, some of which are not always obvious, including strong underwater currents and sudden changes in water depth. They were also given information about how they could avoid these risks by taking note of warning signs, not walking or climbing on weirs and avoiding swimming near weirs, locks, bridges or other structures on rivers.

Emma Smailes, Operations Manager from the Environment Agency said:

We know that children love to explore the outdoors, especially during summer holidays, and we want to help them remain safe whilst doing so. That is why we felt it was important to talk to the children directly to remind them of the potential dangers when playing near structures in rivers.

We would also encourage parents and guardians to speak to their children, teenagers and young adults to warn them about the dangers and basic safety points when out having fun.

David Walker, Leisure Safety Manager from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents said:

At this time of year it's especially important for parents to have a conversation with their family about the risks of open water, particularly in the areas where it's prevalent.

Many of the risks aren't obvious, such as weirs, and the effects of cold water shock. It's important to think about this in advance so that if, on the rare occasion, you see someone in trouble or get into trouble yourself, you know what to do.

If you want to go for an outdoor swim, it's always best to go to supervised sites such as lidos. Programmes such as the Swim Safe scheme give children the experience of swimming in open water, teaching them about how to stay safe in a controlled environment

More information about water safety is available from [The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents](#)

Press release: Illegal waste operation carried out at Harwich

Environment Agency officers from teams across England have conducted an intelligence-gathering operation at Harwich International Port in Essex focussed on the illegal export of waste.

The aim of the operation was to stop and check HGVs carrying waste in a bid to identify any waste materials which could have been being illegally exported to Europe.

Around 30 loads were stopped on the day, with paperwork checked and waste loads examined. Officers were seeking intelligence about waste that could potentially be illegal heading to the continent and assessing the supporting documents.

Field intelligence officers, port officers and members of the illegal waste shipments team were on hand to speak with drivers passing through the port, offering advice and support on transporting waste abroad legally.

The team on site made use of the Environment Agency's Incident Command Unit, enabling them to receive emailed paperwork from waste contractors when it was found to be missing.

Twenty-nine trailers were inspected in total, and 18 were found to be carrying waste. In each instance the paperwork was examined and in 9 cases there were missing or incomplete documents. These were eventually all completed with the support of Environment Agency officers and the vehicles were allowed to continue their journeys.

Chris Smith, National Intelligence Manager, whose team led the operation for the Environment Agency, said:

The sheer volume of material that we found today and prevented from being exported illegally is a big win, but our work isn't finished. Today's action sends a strong message that we will track down those involved in illegal waste activity. We intend to continue our inspections of waste at ports around all of England to ensure waste being exported is done so legally.

The effects of exporting waste illegally is harmful to the environment and the economy. It undercuts legitimate businesses and causes harm to human health and the environment in destination countries.

Waste crime is a serious issue diverting as much as £1 billion per annum from legitimate business and the Treasury. Since April 2011 the Environment Agency has invested £65.2 million in tackling it.

Anyone with information about suspected illegal waste operators

should call Crimestoppers in confidence on 0800 555 111.