

Help us to improve the flood defence in York's Museum Gardens

People are being urged to find out about plans to improve the flood defences in York's Museum Gardens and help to shape how they will look in the future.

The Environment Agency, working with City of York Council, is proposing to raise the existing flood embankment by between 0.3 and 0.6 metres and extend it further out to the River Ouse. The plan is also to extend the flood defence at its eastern end so that it can join up with existing high ground.

Currently the defence is a grass embankment between the river and the Hospitium which was built following the flooding from the River Ouse in 1982 to help protect properties in the area between Scarborough and Lendal Bridges.

It joins the Marygate flood wall and is around 2.5 metres high and 130 metres long. The embankment was designed to provide a defence level 0.46 metres higher than that reached by the floods in 1982.

Following the floods in December 2015, the Government committed £45 million to reduce the risk of flooding and increase the level of protection to 2,000 homes in York, alongside funding to upgrade the Foss Barrier. As part of this work, the Environment Agency is proposing to improve the flood defence in Museum Gardens, which will help protect 48 properties. Work between Scarborough and Lendal Bridges will also include:

- raising the height of existing defences on Earlsborough Terrace by installing glass panels on top of the existing brick walls
- replacing 12 existing flood gates with new ones.
- raising the existing flood wall and gate on Marygate.

These proposals will cost £2.4 million.

Planning permission for the work in Museum Gardens will be sought during Spring 2020 with construction work planned to start in August 2021. The aim is to minimise the impact of the work on the Grade II listed Hospitium, which is regularly used for weddings and conference events, by allowing plenty of time for people to plan ahead and keeping construction out of sight. The work is expected to take up to four months

Some trees will need to be removed as part of the work to allow the embankment to be increased in height and increase its footprint towards the Serpentine footpath and the river. Working with the Yorkshire Museum Trust,

the project team have identified an area along the existing embankment where changes to the landscaping will be made which could mean moving or felling up to 15 trees.

Every effort will be made by the team to limit the loss of trees in the final design of the scheme. The Environment Agency has a policy that for every tree lost, five will be planted. However, discussions are ongoing with the Yorkshire Museum Trust and City of York Council to confirm the landscaping plan – which could include a lower level of tree planting but will allow rare and mature trees to be reinstated within the gardens. Any vegetation clearance will be carried out in the winter of 2021 before the start of the bird breeding season.

As Museum Gardens is a treasured public space, our work will be of interest to the majority of York residents and visitors, said: Victoria McCausland, advisor for the Environment Agency's York Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Properties in the Marygate area of the city have benefitted from flood defences since the mid 1980s. Whilst these have worked successfully, the flooding of winter 2015 saw river levels reaching the top of these defences. We need to ensure these aging defences are fit for purpose both now and in the future as river levels increase.

We have been working very closely with York Museum Trust to fully understand all the implications of our proposal and how it will affect their long-term vision for Museum Gardens.

We have also been liaising with Historic England to reduce any impact on the surrounding landscape as the proposed work is within a Grade II Listed Registered Park and Garden with scheduled monuments nearby and the site has archaeological importance.

The gardens will remain open to the public throughout construction work.

From Monday 12 August until Friday 6 September there will be an exhibition with information about the proposals for improving the flood defence in Museum Gardens in the foyer of the Yorkshire Museum.

There will also be an information stand in the gardens and a chance to have a tour of the site, ask questions and discuss any concerns with staff between 11am and 2pm on Tuesday 20 August and Tuesday 3 September. Information about

the proposals will also be on display in The Community Hub, Wellington Row, York YO1 6FZ on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 10am – 4pm.

Ward councillors were given a tour of the site this week to help them understand the proposals.

Emily Collins, engagement officer with the Environment Agency, said:

We are really keen to find out what the people of York think of our proposals and how best to keep them informed about our future plans.

During the busy summer months we are seeking feedback from residents and visitors to help inform our planning application.

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