

Major River Thames flood alleviation project passes key milestone

Thousands of homes across Surrey and the surrounding area are set to be better protected from flooding, after the government approved the latest stage of the River Thames Scheme.

The Environment Agency and Surrey County Council are leading the partnership which will deliver the River Thames Scheme. The scheme will reduce the flood risk for 11,000 homes and 1,600 businesses in communities along the river.

Today's announcement means that Defra and HM Treasury have approved the outline business case (OBC) for the scheme. The OBC lays out why the scheme is needed, how it will be built and its value for money. This approval unlocks the first £60m of the scheme's funding so that detailed design and planning work can begin.

Floods Minister Rebecca Pow said:

As a vital part of the government's record investment in flood risk management schemes across the country, the River Thames Scheme will provide better protection for thousands of properties, including many which suffered the devastation of flooding in 2014.

In addition to providing £285m in funding, by treating the scheme as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project we aim to streamline the planning and authorisation process and ensure that communities along the river can get the protection they need as quickly as possible.

The £501m River Thames Scheme will see two new flood relief channels constructed at Runnymede and Spelthorne, together with capacity increases at Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington weirs and the Desborough Cut. The scheme's wider benefits will include new walking and cycle paths, parks and wildlife habitats.

Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd said:

The River Thames Scheme will help to protect people and give businesses greater confidence in the resilience of the local economy in response to climate change.

The scheme will also enable community access to green space, enhance nature and, by creating new walking and cycle paths, it will increase connectivity and promote active travel. It's a fantastic example of organisations working in partnership to help communities adapt and thrive.

Surrey County Council is supporting the scheme through the £270m Surrey Flood Alleviation Programme. Other local authorities are also delivery and financial partners.

Tim Oliver, Leader of Surrey County Council, said:

This is great news for Surrey and its neighbours. The scheme means communities along the River Thames can look forward to a brighter future knowing that Surrey County Council, the Environment Agency, their partners and the project's team of expert engineers are working hard to reduce the likelihood of their homes and businesses flooding.

Detailed planning and design work is starting. The large scale of the project means the [government has directed](#) that it be treated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). NSIPs require a type of consent known as 'development consent order' (DCO). A DCO removes the need to obtain several separate consents, including planning permission and is designed to be a quicker process than applying for these separately. The DCO must be granted before full funding is approved and construction can begin.