

Plan to improve flood and drought resilience in Severn Valley

Climate change is happening now; extreme weather is bringing an increase in flooding and a need to create climate resilient places that can adapt.

To rise to the challenge of flooding along the River Severn, the Environment Agency is seeking ways to better protect up to 3,000 homes and over 1,000 businesses along the length of the River Severn.

Flooding over the last 12 months, where some of the highest ever river levels have been recorded, has highlighted the need for a number of wide ranging solutions that mitigate the extreme weather communities here are beginning to see. Last year the government committed £30 million towards developing such a programme.

The Environment Agency is engaging on a much more holistic approach, working with partners to find interventions that work together to provide better protection against flooding across a wide area.

Environment Agency Area Environment Manager, Adam Lines said:

Climate change is happening now and we're starting to see the real impacts, we need to think differently about how we're going to protect homes, businesses and infrastructure for the coming decades.

We have a real opportunity here to make the Severn Valley more resilient for the future and we want to hear from everyone. We've started discussions with partners and are planning a series of community engagement events. We are asking local authorities, landowners and communities to work alongside us and help to develop the best possible solutions.

The Environment Agency aims to do more than improve protection from flooding. In recent years measures have also had to be put in place to manage the effects of dry weather and water shortages. The aim is to deliver projects that work to conserve water supplies in dry weather as well as providing better protection for communities in wet weather.

The initial phase of the Severn Valley Water Management Scheme considered the possibility of combining a water management scheme with Shropshire Council's plans for the North West Relief Road. The Environment Agency found a number of constraints with this approach, and whilst it remains one of the options, other options are now being developed.

The Environment Agency plans to outline a programme of measures by early 2022, following this they will carry out more detailed investigation to

establish a set of preferred options. These options could include:

- engineered solutions such as the construction of flood walls and embankments
- natural flood risk management measures that slow the flow of water upstream such as tree planting or the creation of leaky dams
- alternative farming and land management practices
- operating reservoirs in a different way; and other storage options across the catchment

The project is in its very early stages and the Environment Agency is committed to engaging with local communities and partners at every stage before any final decisions are made. You can read more at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/west-midlands/svwms>.

Notes to editor

- The Environment Agency maintains strategic oversight of flood and coastal erosion risk in England
- The River Severn and its tributaries are a vital source of public water supply for nearly 8 million people and over 100,000 businesses