

Plans for a flood storage area in York approved by planning chiefs

Proposals to create a flood storage area on the River Foss north of Strensall were approved by York City Council's planning committee today (Thursday).

The new flood storage area will better protect 490 vulnerable homes between Strensall and The Groves area of York from flooding. This scheme, in the rural area 2km north of Strensall, will also reduce flood risk to key transport routes and result in benefits to the environment including tree planting, wetland creation and improvements to river bank habitat.

The purpose of the storage area is to help reduce peak flows in the river, therefore reducing flooding downstream. During heavy rain, the structure fills with water, temporarily holding back flood water and reducing the flood risk to properties along the Foss Corridor, towards York city centre. Once the flood has passed the water in the storage area will subside. For the vast majority of time the structure will not need to be used in this way which means that farming practices will be able to continue in the area.

Project manager Richard Lever, from the Environment Agency, said:

These areas are not like reservoirs and do not store water permanently. They are designed to be dry in normal weather conditions and only fill up for short periods during large flood events.

Unlike other physical flood defences, a flood storage area can be built at some distance from the communities they protect and therefore have less impact than building formal defences.

During a flood event, the level of the River Foss can rise rapidly exposing properties, roads and land to the risk of severe flooding. This is likely to increase with more extreme weather conditions predicted due to climate change. Currently there are no flood defences along the Foss Corridor and a flood storage area is the only viable option.

Out of all the projects included in the Yorks Flood Alleviation Scheme, this proposal will deliver the largest benefits in terms of numbers of properties protected.

Mr Lever said:

As well as reducing flood risk, the storage area will also have environmental benefits. This scheme will facilitate the growth of

valuable wetland habitat, create space for local wildlife and help improve water quality downstream.

Materials for building the embankment for the storage area will be taken from within the site, creating pits which fill with water and act as permanent shallow ponds.

Discussions about the proposals have been held at parish council meetings, public events and with landowners, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, the Foss Internal Drainage Board and Natural England.

The planning application for the flood storage area will also need to be approved by Ryedale District Council as it falls within the boundary of both councils.

Following the severe flooding in York in Dec 2015, where over 600 properties were flooded, central Government committed £45m to fund projects to better protect properties in the city.

Environment Agency flood schemes protected almost 130,000 properties during the winter 2019/20 flooding, even though water levels were higher in some places than the floods of 2007 when 55,000 properties flooded.

Since 2015, the Government has invested £496m flood defences in Yorkshire – more than any other region – better protecting more than 66,000 properties

For more information about York's Flood Alleviation Scheme [visit](#)

Make sure you are prepared for a flood event and find out if you are at risk [visit](#)