

# Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

We are working with 9 partners on a major new flood scheme for Oxford, which will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses and vital transport routes into the city. The scheme will provide a long term solution to flooding in Oxford, helping protect the city in coming decades as flood risk increases with climate change.

March 2024

# Introduction

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2024. Before giving an update on the scheme, I would like to express my sympathies to those affected by recent flooding.

This winter we have experienced the largest flood event in Oxford since winter 2013/14. The Environment Agency worked closely with our partners to respond quickly. Community Information Officers visited many areas to help assess impacts and reassure communities. Temporary flood barriers and pumps were deployed in South Hinksey, Osney and Vicarage Lane, which helped protect over 100 properties from internal flooding. At the peak of the flooding, 42 roads throughout Oxfordshire were closed including Abingdon Road and Ferry Hinksey Road.

Flooding can be devastating and that is why we are working with communities to deliver a permanent scheme. Many of you have urged us to begin building the scheme soon, and the recent floods underline why we believe it's more vital than ever that the scheme goes ahead.

In our last newsletter we shared that we were about to begin the public inquiry to consider our Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). This is standard procedure when objections to a CPO are received, and this allows an independent inspector to hear the cases for and against a scheme.



The public inquiry came to a close on 26 January 2024. The Inspector is now preparing her report for the Secretary of State. Once the report is complete, the Inspector will submit her recommendations to the Secretary of State, who will either confirm, modify or not confirm the CPO. We don't have a date for the decision but hope it will be later this year.

Separately, our planning application for the scheme is with Oxfordshire County Council and we hope it can go to the Planning and Regulatory Committee soon.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all who have shown their support for the scheme through letters and speaking at the inquiry. I look forward to updating you throughout 2024.

**Robbie Williams**  
**Project Director**



# Public inquiry into the CPO

Throughout November and December 2023, an independent inspector heard evidence for and against the scheme. Our project team, objectors and legal representatives gave their evidence. Our partners and members of the public spoke in support of the scheme during the opening week and some shared moving accounts of their personal experiences of being flooded. Over 50 members of the public, businesses and our partners sent in letters of support to the Inspector.

Our 12 expert witnesses addressed the objectors' concerns in their opening statements and outlined to the inquiry why Oxford needs this scheme now. They were cross examined throughout the 5 weeks the public inquiry sat for. Our evidence and our rebuttals were clear, consistent and comprehensive.

The public inquiry sat virtually in January and heard specifically about our Section 19 application relating to open space and exchange land.

Closing statements were heard on the final day of the public inquiry on 26 January, by objectors and our team.

The inspector conducted a site visit over 2 days, on Friday 1 December and Monday 4 December. Members of the project team accompanied the inspector along with a number of objectors. This allowed us and the objectors to point out specific parts of the scheme.



# Relevant Documents



## Closing Statements

Our closing statement at the end of the inquiry explained the need for the scheme. We emphasised that this is the best scheme for Oxford, it is essential given the future risk of flooding and that without the CPO it cannot be delivered. The full statement, along with objector closing statements can be found here under ‘closing submissions’:

<https://www.hwa.uk.com/projects/oxford-flood-alleviation-scheme-cpo-inquiry/>.



## Witness Evidence

Our expert witnesses gave evidence on matters including scheme design, landowner negotiations, landscape, cultural heritage, and maintenance. All of our witnesses proofs of evidence are available here under ‘Proofs of Evidence – Environment Agency’: <https://www.hwa.uk.com/site/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Inquiry-Documents-List-3-2-2024.pdf>.



## Other Documents

All other documents used during the public inquiry are available on the Programme Officer’s website. This includes legislation and guidance, objector evidence, and the inquiry programme.

<https://www.hwa.uk.com/projects/oxford-flood-alleviation-scheme-cpo-inquiry/>.

# Next Steps

1

The Inspector is now preparing her report for the Secretary of State. A huge amount of written evidence and witness testimony has been taken during the inquiry.

2

Once the report is complete, the Inspector will submit her recommendations to the Secretary of State, who will either confirm, modify or not confirm the CPO. We don't have a date for the decision but hope it will be later this year.

3

Separately, our planning application for the scheme is with Oxfordshire County Council as the relevant planning authority. We hope it can go to the Planning and Regulatory Committee for a decision soon.



# Find out more



Online: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/thames/oxfordscheme/>



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