

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

In this issue, you will find...

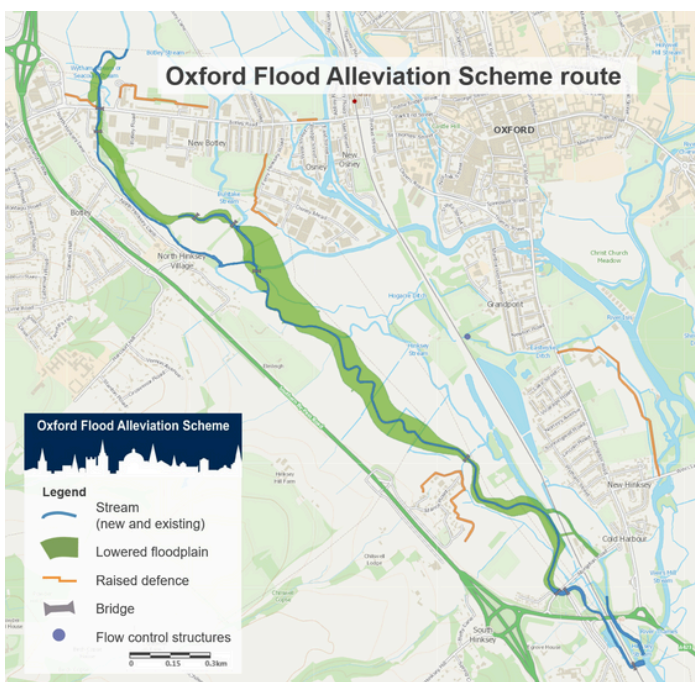
- Planning progress
- Raising the profile of the scheme
- Plans for wetland habitats

December 2024

Introduction



Welcome to another issue of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme newsletter. Since I last wrote, we have experienced flooding twice more this year, and saw a large number of flood warnings and flood alerts in place across Oxfordshire due to the recent Storm Bert. Our teams have been working around the clock to ease and support the effects from this severe weather. This is yet another reminder of the impacts of climate change and the need for a permanent scheme. Whilst we can keep using the temporary defence barriers, these are not a long term solution.



Scheme route map and key.

At present our Compulsory Purchase Order is with the Secretary of State to make a decision. As most of you will know, this is following our public inquiry that ended at the start of the year. We expect to hear the outcome soon.

Communities will feel some flood risk benefits during construction of the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme. Once the scheme is complete, all homes and businesses currently at risk of flooding from the River Thames will see their flood risk reduced. The scheme will not increase flood risk to properties downstream of Oxford, nor will it change flood risk to those not within the scheme area.

Our project team continues to work hard behind the scenes, keep reading to find out more.

Robbie

Robbie Williams
Project Director

Behind the scenes update

Planning application

In our last newsletter we told you about the outcome from the Oxfordshire County Council Planning and Regulation Committee on 15 July 2024. As we outlined at that time, the resolution to grant permission was subject to a couple of standard requirements. One of these requirements was the referral to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government. Oxfordshire County Council planning officers made this referral shortly after the committee meeting and we are pleased that on 9 August 2024 the council received a letter from the Planning Casework Unit, on behalf of the Secretary of State saying, “The Secretary of State has decided not to call in this application. She is content that it should be determined by the local planning authority.”

The other requirement was for a Section 106 Agreement to be prepared and signed by the appropriate parties. This legal agreement relates to the maintenance and management of the biodiversity habitats being provided as part of the scheme. We are currently working on the draft of this legal agreement and hope to have progressed this with Oxfordshire County Council in the near future.

Site visits

The project team hosted a number of site visits over the summer, to show our stakeholders where the new stream will be, the locations for our habitat creation and to highlight some of the challenges we face constructing a 5km long scheme. These gave us the opportunity to explain the plans for the scheme on location, as well as giving people the chance to ask questions of the project team.

Amongst our guests were:

- Our partners from the Sponsoring Group and Project Board, including members from the 3 local councils and Oxford Flood Alliance.
- Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) members, who include representatives from some of the councils across the South East, environmental groups and independent experts.
- The Environment Agency Chair, Alan Lovell and Chief Executive Officer, Philip Duffy.
- Defra policy colleagues.

Everyone who attended left feeling even more confident of the need for the scheme and the benefits it will bring.



3 photos from our site visits. Left and right images: Partners and RFCC members. Middle image: Environment Agency Chair and CEO with our Project Executive.

Behind the scenes update

Biodiversity

We will be creating 28 ponds across the scheme area. These will vary in size and depth so that they attract and support a wide range of plants and animals. This project will help stop and reverse the decline of wetland habitats across the country.



Images left to right: pond and yellow irises, Ragged Robin in bloom, frog in a pond.

We will also create over 16 hectares of floodplain meadow by introducing more wildflowers into the fields south of Osney Mead and managing them as hay meadows.



There aren't many wildflowers in this field at the moment...



... it will be enhanced so that it looks more like this meadow.

We will start this work as soon as we have all the necessary permissions.



Prepare for flooding

Know your flood risk and make a flood plan to keep yourself and your family safe this winter. Use the Gov.uk website to help you [prepare for flooding](https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-flooding) and make a flood plan.



Flood Alert Be prepared

- Prepare a flood kit including documents and medications
- Avoid walking, cycling or driving through any flood water
- Be prepared to act on your flood plan



Flood Warning Take action

- Move your loved ones, pets and valuables to a safe place
- Move to higher ground or the upper floor of a building
- Turn off the utilities if it's safe to do so
- Put flood protection equipment in place



Severe Flood Warning Danger to life

- Stay in a safe place
- Be ready to evacuate your home
- Do as the emergency services tell you
- Call 999 if you are in danger

Sign up for free flood warnings by phone, text or email

Floodline 0345 988 1188 www.gov.uk/floodsdestroy

Keep in touch

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

Email: OxfordScheme@environment-agency.gov.uk

X: <https://x.com/oxfordfas>

Facebook: www.facebook.com/oxfordscheme

