

TadcasterFAS

Tadcaster Flood Alleviation Scheme

Tadcaster Flood Alleviation Scheme & Fish Pass

Consultation Summary

July 2023



Introduction

The purpose of this report is to outline the findings from our recent public engagement which displayed the Environment Agency's proposals to reduce flood risk to properties and businesses in Tadcaster. We have analysed all responses and identified a number of key themes that emerged, and this report provides our responses and next steps.

Thank you to everyone who took part in our consultation, those who came to see us, and the Town Council who helped us run the drop ins. The community's views are important to us as we move forward with the scheme, and we are pleased so many of you shared your thoughts with us.

Contents

Introduction.....	Page 1
The project	Page 1
A new flood alleviation scheme.....	Page 2
The consultation.....	Page 2
Our objectives.....	Page 4
The results.....	Page 5
Key themes.....	Page 11
Additional comments and feedback.....	Page 14
What happens next?.....	Page 15

The project

The brewery town of Tadcaster is scenically located on the River Wharfe, however Tadcaster has a history of flooding which is often devastating for the residents and businesses in the community. The River Wharfe catchment is large, covering an area of approximately 1000 km². High rainfall further up this large catchment area can have a significant impact on Tadcaster as it eventually finds its way into the River Wharfe and straight through the town.

Tadcaster benefits from existing flood defences, consisting of raised earth embankments and flood walls, as well as a number of 'Ings' designed to assist with river management during high water levels. Whilst these defences continue to offer some protection to Tadcaster, climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of heavy rainfall; the town has suffered several flooding events, the most recent in February 2022 and flooding on Boxing Day 2015 which contributed to the bridge connecting both sides of the town failing.

A new flood alleviation scheme

In 2017 a review was conducted to help identify a potential new flood alleviation scheme that could reduce flood risk whilst being acceptable to the local community, after a previous scheme was unsuccessful in obtaining planning permission in 2005. The review at the time identified the cost of a suitable scheme to be in the region of £11 million which the Environment Agency was unable to fund.

Since then, we have been allocated £2.3 million from Flood Defence Grant in Aid, £25,000 from North Yorkshire County Council, £1.02 million from the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership and, in September 2019, a further £9 million of booster funding from government to better protect communities from flooding. It is now estimated the new scheme will cost in the region £14million.

We have now developed a scheme to reduce flood risk in Tadcaster, based on a detailed appraisal of environmental, technical and sociological opportunities and constraints. We have also produced updated flood modelling to help us evaluate the effectiveness of these options. In addition, we have also identified an opportunity to bring forward plans to install a new fish pass on the weir. This means that we can work more efficiently, increase biodiversity, and reduce the amount of disruption during construction.

We wanted to consult the local community on these plans, to understand what is best for Tadcaster. Between 6th March and 14th April, we held a public consultation detailing our plans for the scheme and the fish pass. This was run online and a series of ten drop-in events were held in The Ark, Tadcaster. **The comments you shared with us will help shape the project as we progress.**

The consultation

The purpose of a consultation is to engage with communities and obtain valuable feedback to help shape the project. After a consultation we gather together all of the responses received and work out what about the project you do like, what you don't like, and what further information would benefit you. We also consider additional feedback or ideas which we may not have thought about.

We created an online webpage at Citizen Space (the EA's choice of consultation platform) which detailed the background to the project, the plans for the flood alleviation scheme, and the fish pass. It was titled 'Tadcaster Flood Alleviation Scheme Proposals' and sat alongside the 'Tadcaster FAS Information Page'. Both linked to each other to try capture as many interested people as possible. There was a survey which asked eleven questions and was designed to allow users to respond freely using 'free text' boxes to give us their thoughts or ask us questions. This was available from 6th March 2023 to 14th April 2023.

We wanted to ensure a variety of methods were in place to enable the community to respond as easily as possible; through our online consultation portal, by paper, through the post, by email to our dedicated email address, and in-person.

The online consultation was run alongside a series of ten drop in's held at The Ark at Tadcaster Town Council. To advertise the consultation and drop-in events, we distributed our newsletter to everyone who had signed up to our mailing list, and also to the Tadcaster Community Client Group. We also put-up posters in local shops and businesses and advertised through social media (our Tadcaster FAS Facebook page and Twitter). In addition, we issued several press releases to promote the consultation and drop in events.



We ensured that for each drop in we had a variety of technical specialists and EA representatives available to speak to people. This included our internal project team including project managers, senior users, heritage specialists, and our specialised design and construction partners. Together we were able to provide the best breadth of knowledge to answer questions on the project.

At the drop in events, we presented similar information to that available online. We were limited by space but also utilised the large screen to enlarge any plans as needed. We had a selection of information available to take away, allowing people to consider the information at their own pace.

We also had a space for people to write down their immediate thoughts using post it notes or pen to paper. We gathered these comments at the end of the drop ins and have summarised them in the section below.

Over 250 people attended our drop in events, and 80 people responded to our online consultation. We also had 4 responses submitted by paper, and these have been manually added to the responses.

The response to our consultation and drop ins has been excellent, and we want to thank everyone who took the time to share their views or come find out more.

Our Objectives

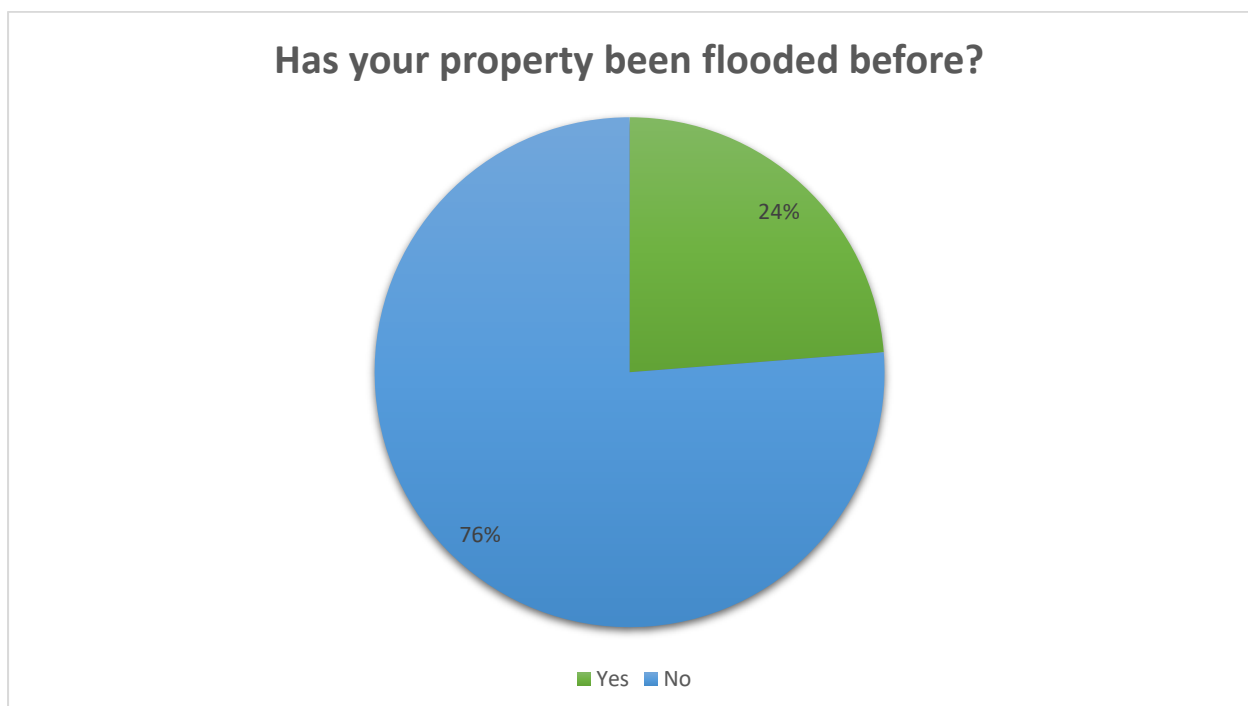
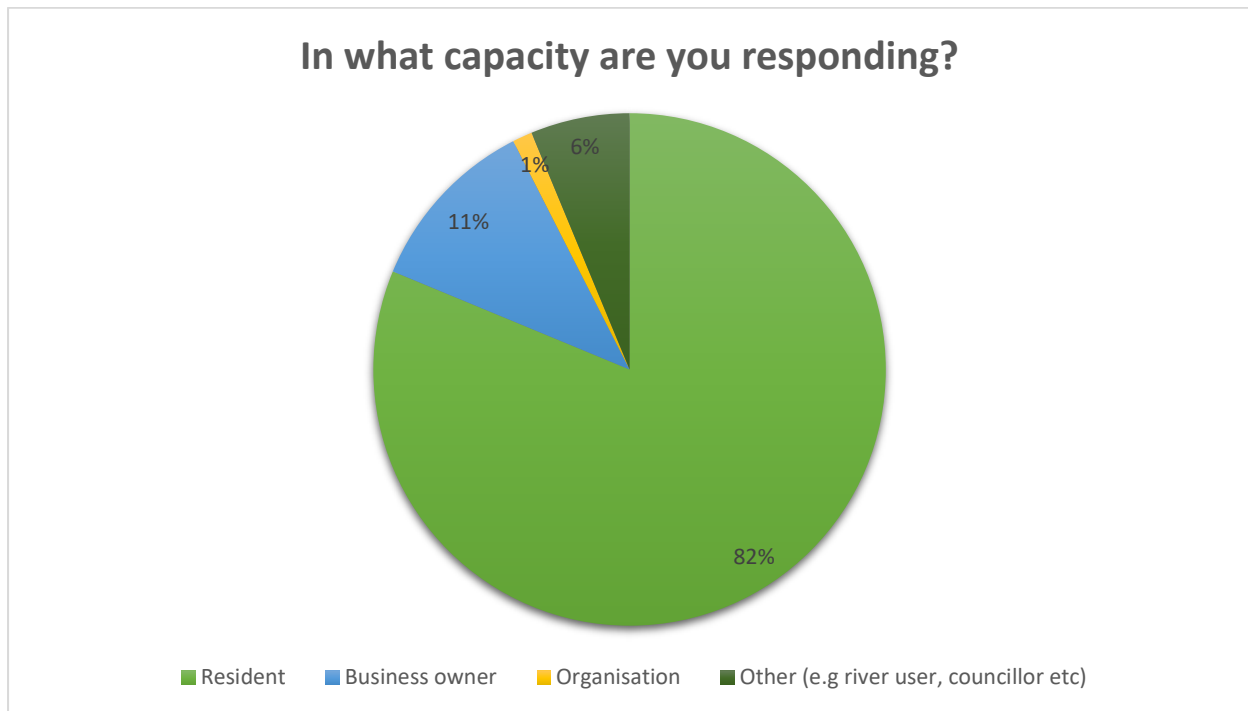
We had six key objectives as part of this consultation.

1. We wanted to hear the community's thoughts and opinions on the proposed flood alleviation scheme and fish pass, and also your own suggestions for possible further enhancements.
2. We wanted to provide the community with plans and visualisations to help them understand what the proposals may look like.
3. We wanted to answer as many questions as possible that you may have and provide assurance that we are listening to the community.
4. We aimed to engage with members of the community who may not already receive our updates, and ensure they had the opportunity to share their views.
5. We also wanted to build relationships with community groups and other organisations who would like to work with us as the schemes progress.
6. We wanted to understand how best to reach the community for further engagement work, and gain feedback from the online consultation and drop-in sessions.

The results

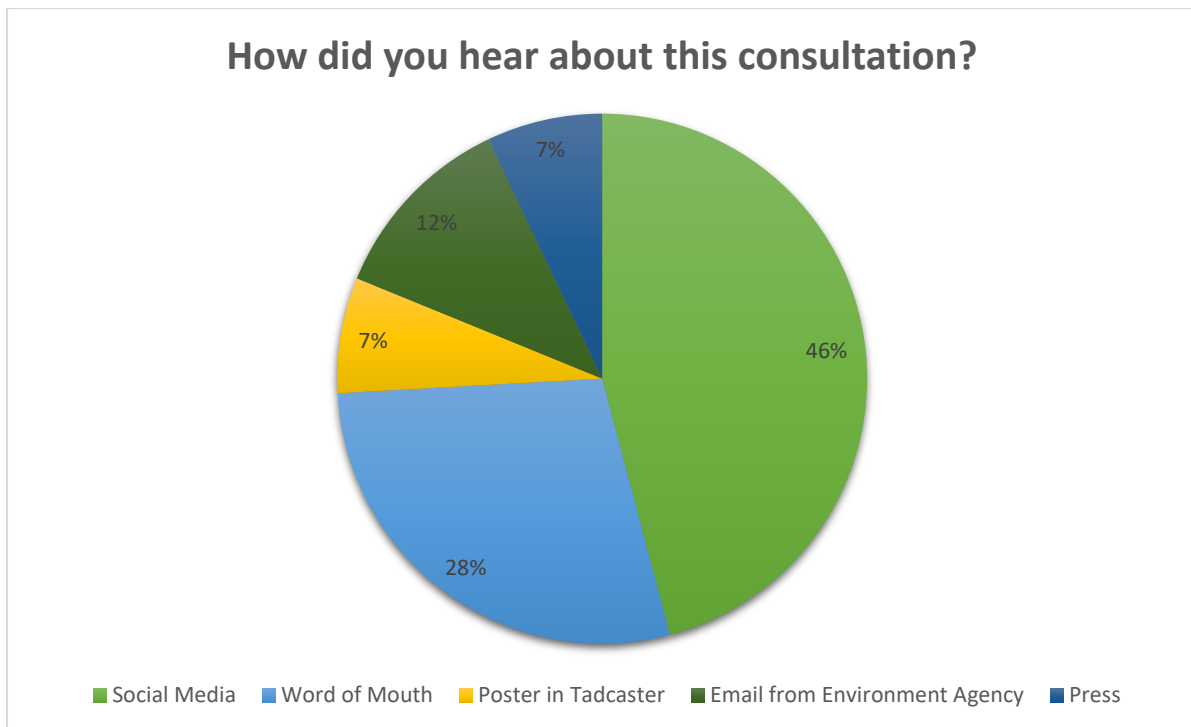
Who took part?

In total 84 people completed survey; the chart below shows that the majority of respondents (82%) were residents.



How did we reach you?

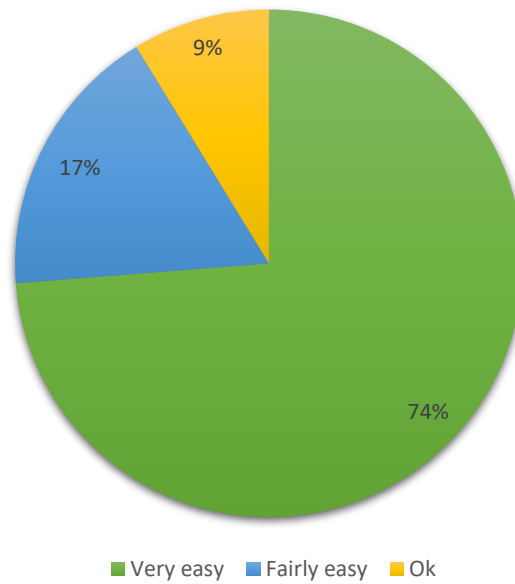
From the chart you can see that social media was the most effective way of reaching most people (46%). We will make more use of this in future as we communicate updates, but we will also continue with more traditional methods to ensure we reach as much of the community as possible. It is clear that the community also helped spread the word; 28% of respondents found out about the consultation via word of mouth.



How easy was it to share your views with us?

We wanted to review how easily you were able to share your thoughts with us using the consultation. The majority of respondents said the consultation was very easy to use. No one said it was tricky or difficult to use which gives us confidence that you were able to share your views easily.

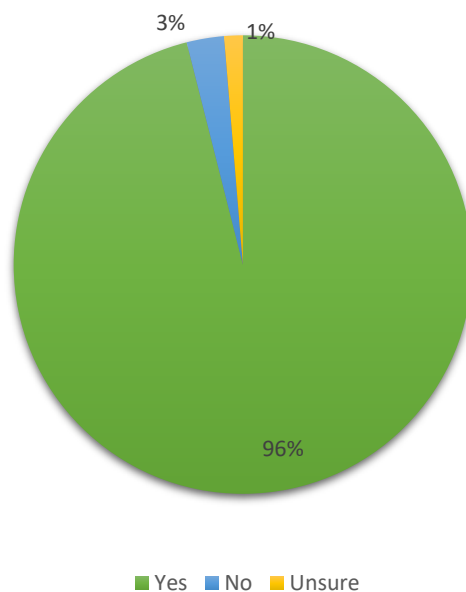
How easy was it to use this online consultation?



Does the community support the proposal of a flood scheme in Tadcaster?

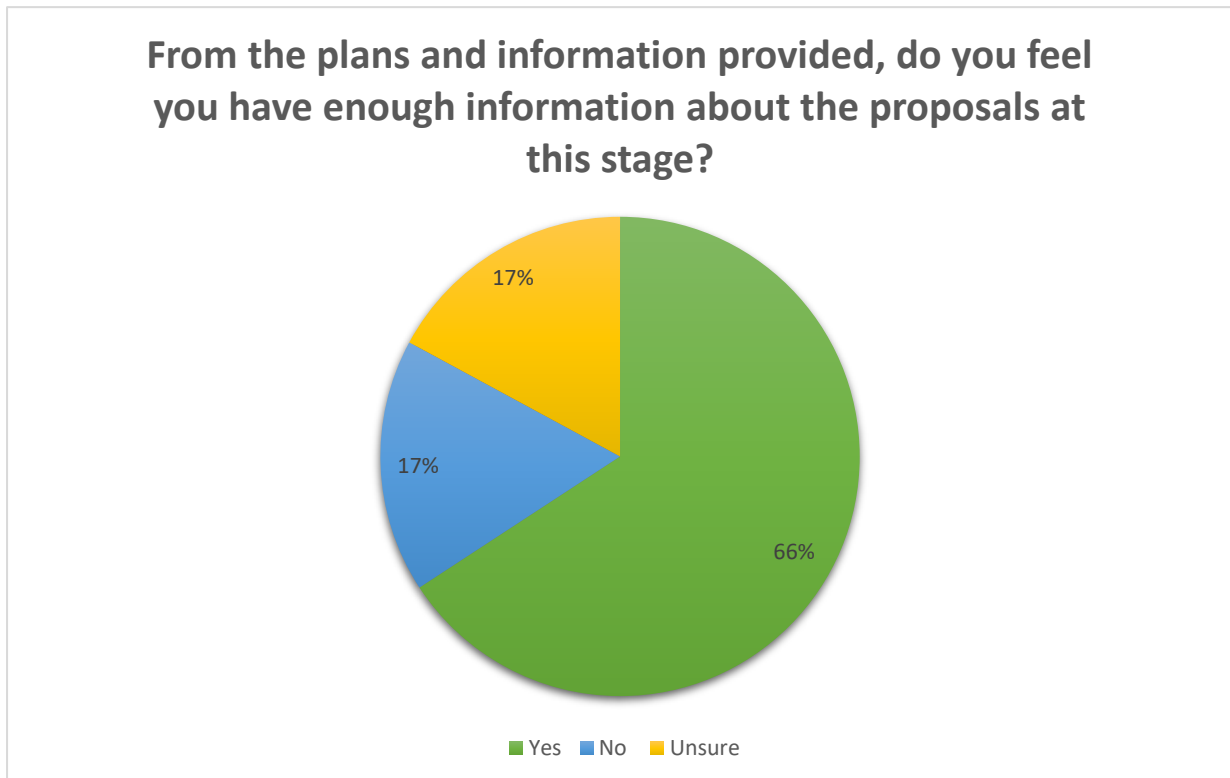
When asked, do you support in principle a scheme to reduce flood risk, **96%** of respondents said they did. You have sent a clear message that the majority would like to see a flood alleviation scheme in some form.

Do you support in principle a scheme to reduce flood risk?



Did we provide enough information?

This was an important element of the consultation; we wanted to ensure we weren't making the consultation inaccessible with technical information whilst still providing key points we thought you may want to see. 80 people responded to this question and the chart below shows how we did.



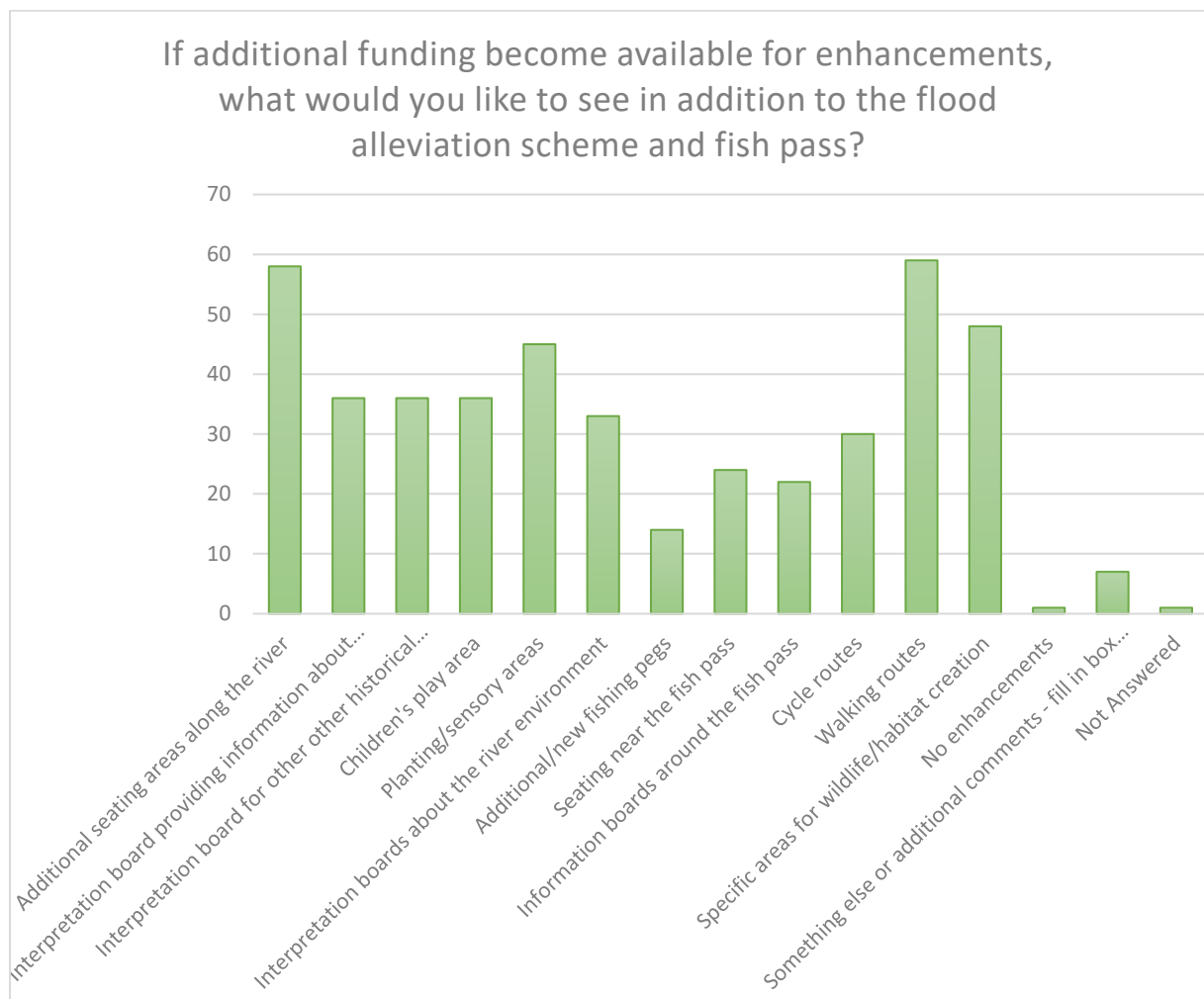
We are pleased that the majority of respondents felt they had enough information about the proposals, but we have taken note that 17% said it was not enough, and 17% said they were unsure. No one said there was too much information, so this is something we will consider during further engagement. We also run a dedicated email address where people can contact us with specific queries, and we are also available in person in The Ark, Tadcaster Town Council Buildings every Tuesday between 09:30 – 12:30.

We wanted to ensure that anyone who felt there was not enough information provided, had the ability to tell us what else they would like to see, so we provided a free text box where respondents could tell us what that was.

There were 30 responses to this part of the survey, the key themes are detailed in the section 'key themes' on pages 11-14 along with our response.

What additional enhancements would you like to see in Tadcaster, subject to funding?

We want to provide much more than a flood alleviation scheme and provide enhancements to the environment where we can, either as part of the scheme or in collaboration with others. Much of this element of the scheme is reliant on external funding, but we wanted to know what types of enhancements would be welcome in your community, to help us seek partnership and funding in the future as the scheme progresses. We asked, 'if additional funding became available for enhancements, what would you like to see in addition to the flood alleviation scheme and fish pass?'



You can see from the chart above, the top three suggestions chosen by most respondents were walking routes, very closely followed by additional seating, followed by areas for habitat and wildlife creation. However, as this was a multiple-choice selection, we can see that all of these suggestions were popular. This was a multiple-choice section where we provided a list of suggestions, but we also wanted to ensure you had space to give us your own suggestions about your town which we may not have thought about so a choice of 'something else' or additional comments allowed free text submission.

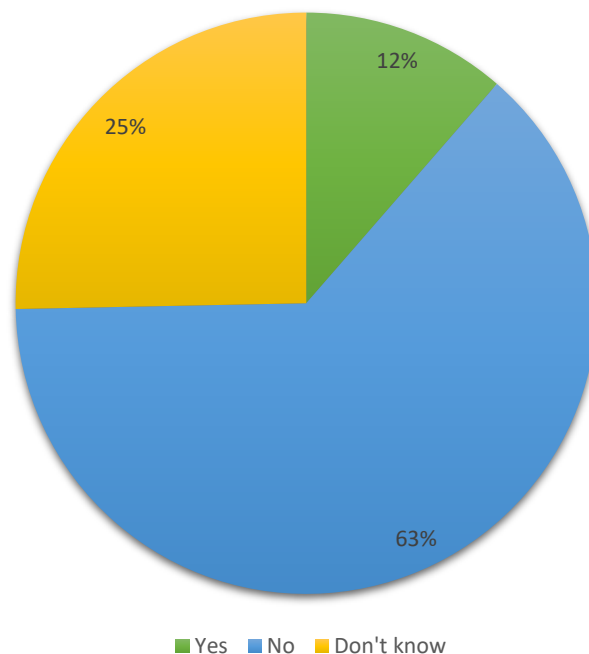
Something else or additional comments

There were 24 responses to this part of the question in the free text box, showing us that you wanted to share your ideas. Some of the unique suggestions here included artwork, sculptures, and fitness equipment; we will consider these suggestions as we move forward on the scheme.

Community Involvement

One of our objectives throughout this consultation was to reach out to community groups and other organisations who would like to work with us as the schemes progresses. 12% of respondents suggested groups and organisations that we could work with; this is invaluable as the scheme progresses and we have contacted these groups to explore how we can work together to enhance Tadcaster as the scheme moves forward.

Are you part of, or are you aware of, any groups that would be interested in exploring funding possibilities or working with us to provide additional enhancements?



Key themes emerging from the consultation responses

- **Support for the scheme and the fish pass. 96% of respondents support a scheme in principle. A number of people expressed a strong desire for the scheme to be constructed as soon as possible.**

Our response

- We are committed to exploring ways to accelerating the scheme wherever possible. One of our key decisions as a project team has been to try and expedite the programme by moving to the use of a 'Design & Construct' contract. This helps us to progress a number of activities at once, particularly surrounding approvals, which we are confident has accelerated the original programme. You will also see an increased EA and contractor presence on site later this summer as we carry out further site preparation and investigation work, which is a predecessor to full site mobilisation in spring 2024. As we continue to progress, we are working closely with our contractor to explore suitable methods for acceleration where possible.

Transfer of Risk

- **A number of questions were received about how we will prevent transferring the risk of flooding from Tadcaster, to further up or downstream.**

Our Response

- Like with any work within a flood zone, the proposed Tadcaster FAS must be able to demonstrate it does not have a detrimental impact to the flood risk of others. This evidence is gathered using hydraulic modelling, comparing the impacts of building the scheme against the present-day baseline. The hydraulic model includes a range of climate change uplifts to the input flows for both the baseline and 'do something' scenarios which are modelled. We have run the model to define a baseline and a number of 'do something' scenarios for different proposal alignments of the new scheme. Once we are in the detailed design phase we will run the model with the proposed alignment and new defence heights to evidence that there is no or negligible transfer of flood risk due to the construction of the Tadcaster FAS.

Access to banks and views

- **Many respondents stated they would like to see access maintained or improved to areas of the riverbank, and also wanted to retain the pleasant views.**

Our Response

- As a project team we understand how important the picturesque views of Tadcaster are to the community, particularly from the bridge looking towards Saint Mary's Reach and the viaduct; we also understand the importance of river connectivity to local residents. From your comments following the consultation, we are aware that the community would like to see as much access as possible provided to the riverside. Our approach will be to provide the greatest amount of access we can; this will need to be carefully balanced against the need to provide the correct amount of protection against high water levels. We plan to retain as much access as possible, for example in areas such as St Mary's Reach, where access to the bank is currently available, we aim to maintain this access whilst still providing flood protection through the use of bunds and other methods which will form part of the flood defences but still allow access to the bank. For the stretch along the front of the football pitch we hope to keep the flood wall as close to the edge of the embankment as possible, to keep the walkway as wide and open as we can whilst allowing for the engineering requirements of construction. We are also ensuring there will be access available for prams, wheelchairs etc, further details of which will form part of the planning submission for the scheme.

Access for fishing

- **A number of comments were received regarding access for fishing at various points along this stretch of the river.**

Our response

- We will work with local fishing clubs and anglers to understand where suitable access points can be retained, or additional or alternative places included. These preferences can then be considered in detail, in balance with the scheme, as we move into the detailed design stage.

The Fish Pass

Although the fish pass project was initially separate to the flood alleviation scheme, we brought the two projects together to maximise efficiency, minimise disruption and costs, and ensure the two aspects of the scheme are considered together as a whole. The fish pass was overall a welcome part of the scheme, and below is a small example of feedback on this part of the project. As well as working with members of the community regarding access to the banks of the river, we will also seek to work with groups to secure funding for additional enhancements specifically around the fish pass, such as possible viewing platforms and interpretation boards for example.

- *“Good that the fish pass and ecology has been considered”*
“The fish pass is something most of us hadn’t even thought about, so proves that nature and it’s habitat has been taken into consideration”
“I fully support the fish pass installation, well done for finding an efficient way to do this as part of the scheme build!”

Preserving and enhancing the historical importance of Tadcaster

- **Many of you told us that the history of Tadcaster was an important feature, and that you wanted this to be retained or enhanced wherever possible.**

Our response

- We recognise that Tadcaster has a long and fascinating history, with many historically important buildings and features. We will continue to work closely with our own internal Heritage Specialists, with Local Authority planners and with Historic England to ensure that wherever possible, our project does not detract from these special points of interest such as the motte and bailey, but also looks to enhance these features where it can.

Carbon Reduction

- Some people had questions and comments about carbon reduction throughout the scheme.

Our response

- The Environment Agency aim to be a leading organisation in carbon reduction and therefore we are always looking at ways of reducing the carbon impact of our projects. As part of the option development process, as well as consideration of cost, we have also assessed the carbon impact of our proposals. Due to the available footprint, in some areas we are proposing walls, and to help reduce the carbon impact of this, our contractors are already looking at innovative solutions, such as low carbon concrete and pre-cast methods. We are also considering the use of local plant, equipment and materials to reduce the carbon footprint associated with our construction operations. As part of the project, we also consider Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG); this means that construction activities do not leave the environment in a worse state than preconstruction. Our project aims to provide 20% Biodiversity Net Gain through planting and the creation of new habitats in and around Tadcaster. Due to the small footprint available, we will also be considering Natural Flood Management methods, and working closely with land holders both large and small, to ensure we can maximise the available use of land allowable to enhance the biodiversity in and around Tadcaster.

What additional comments and feedback did we receive?

We wanted to ensure respondents had space to give us their thoughts on the proposals in an open way. Question 8 provided space to give us additional comments or feedback about the proposed scheme and/or the fish pass; this proved to be a key part of the consultation. There were 79 responses to this section: 31 of these were positive comments of support. 1 person objected to the scheme, whilst the remainder submitted, we believe to be neutral comments, opinions and suggestions. A small example of feedback can be reviewed below, however all comments are available to view on Citizen Space (<https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/yorkshire/tadcaster-flood-alleviation-scheme-proposals>) where publication agreement was selected.

“Very welcome and impressive scheme to protect and enhance the area”

“I think that this is a brilliant proposal. It enhances the beauty of the riverbank and gives Tadcaster a much needed shot in the arm. Well done to everyone involved in this design”

“100% support this whole scheme it will save our town and bring relief to long suffering homeowners and businesses”

“This will help regenerate the town centre and the river side area”

“It is clear that the plans have been fully thought through and well researched. I feel that the proposed scheme strikes the right balance between providing necessary flood defences to keep our town thriving but remains in keeping with the aesthetics of the riverbank and surrounding area”

“I object to this scheme; it is very engineering-led and completely cuts off the town from the river. It does its job at preventing flooding but that is all”

“West Bank defences already block view of river, people walk along the top of the defences as a path. Access to the top of the defences (path) should be improved and the benches relocated to the top so you can once again see the river from them”

“Has removal of the weir been considered?”

What happens next?

Now that the consultation period has come to an end, we have reviewed the responses and are using your comments to help explore how we can improve the area should our proposals gain planning permission.

It is important to note that planning conditions may impose certain restrictions or require us to change the design in order to be approved. We are now working with the North Yorkshire Council Planning team; a pre-planning application will be submitted over the summer allowing us a better understanding of requirements needed prior to the full planning application being submitted around late Autumn. We are working closely with the planning team and local statutory bodies to ensure these essential steps, wherever possible, do not hinder progress with the scheme.

We will also need to secure additional funding for the flood alleviation works. Flood risk management projects are funded under Defra’s Partnership Funding arrangements. This means that projects receive a proportion of funding from central government dependent on the benefits they bring in reducing flood risk. Projects are then required to make up the remaining funding through contributions from those benefitting from the scheme, which may include local councils, organisations or individuals, who benefit directly from a reduced flood risk or indirectly from reduced flood impacts.

Although the Government has granted £9m there is a shortfall in the cost of delivering the scheme and already granted funding. The project team is making every effort to seek additional funding to ensure we are able to progress with the outlined plans where possible.

Timescale

We are currently working towards a commencement on site of early 2024 through our specialist design and construction partners BAM Nuttall and JBA Consulting, pending legal approvals with all parties involved within this scheme. We estimate a build time of approximately 2 years to ensure Tadcaster will be greater protected from river flooding. We are presently working with our construction partners to identify areas of work that are better suited to the varying seasons, meaning that it may not be possible to work on the defences in a continuous line. Further information relating to our program of works will be shared with the public once reviewed and accepted by all parties.

Keeping you up to date

We intend to keep you informed with updates on the project. If you have provided contact details to us previously, or through the consultation event, then you will be on our mailing list and will receive regular updates. If you have not done so and wish to be kept updated, please email us at tadcasterfas@environment-agency.gov.uk or drop into the Ark, Tadcaster Town Council Offices, we are there every Tuesday morning 09:30-12:30 and are happy to discuss the project with you in person.

Once again, to the residents and businesses of Tadcaster and beyond who took part in our consultation - thank you. We are dedicated to better protecting Tadcaster from the risk of flooding, with your input.

The Tadcaster FAS and Fish Pass Team



We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

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