

# South Oxford Flood Action Group (SOFAG)

Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy  
Environment Agency  
Swift House,  
Frimley Business Park  
Frimley GU16 7SQ

13 July 2010

Dear Sirs

## **Oxford Flood Risk Management: Consultation re- proposed Short Term Measures 2 (STM2), July 2010**

Thank you for consulting us on the above. You will recall that SOFAG is one of handful of community groups seeking to improve the resilience of communities living on the Oxford flood plain, in our case some 2000 homes.

We expressed a conditional welcome to the EA's overall strategy (ours of 10 May 2009), and we note that our immediate concern has been partially addressed by the Agency's provision of a demountable bund, to be deployed when water levels pass (provisional) trigger levels in the Eastwyke Stream and Hinksey Lake.

We also recognise benefits from the first round of short term measures (STM1), including new capital contributions and channel maintenance tasks. The effectiveness of these measures has not yet been tested by a winter flood, but we are cautiously optimistic that a repeat of rainfall patterns of the past decade would result in less or even nil flood damage. That is welcome for a few years until silting and vegetation growth undoes the good work.

Turning now to the presently proposed STM2 package, given the predicted national economic climate for the next five years we acknowledge that there was always likely to be a difference between the list of tasks that SOFAG mapped earlier in the year, and what would be fundable. Specifically:

1. **Deferred - Hinksey Lake non-return valve:** this is acceptable in the short term given the availability of the demountable bund protecting vulnerable properties;
2. **Recommended – Redbridge Stream:** Clearance and desilting of the channel above and below the Redbridge arches: a valuable contribution, given the contrast in views up- and down-stream from the bridge (there seem to be no fewer than three species of tree rooted centrally in the channel immediately upstream of the bridge!).
3. **Recommended – culverts under Willow Walk:** this looks like a valuable contribution to getting water away from vulnerable Earl Street properties;

4. **Recommended - Wareham Stream improved access.** This channel was drained dry about 10 years ago in connection with a major building contract. It is unclear how an improved access will help flood plain communities except within the context of a dedicated five year cycle of inspection and management of all Oxford channels, which is not yet committed to.

In summary, we are resigned to the downgrading of STM2 with the loss of the non-return valve. We trust that this will be remedied at some point in the strategic plan, and in that connection we would take this opportunity to remind the Agency that the Hinksey Park Lake demountable bund is proving to be organisationally complex, in addition to its labour intensive assembly and demounting, and is therefore not a long term substitute for a properly landscaped earth bund. Given the Agency's commitment to permanent bunding at Wolvercote we will continue to reiterate our reservation set out in May 2009, until and unless Strategic Option 9 is funded and implemented.

SOFAG's support for the Agency's position remains conditional therefore.

Yours faithfully

David Pepper  
Co-chair, SOFAG

Brian Durham  
Co-chair, SOFAG