

Reducing Flood Risk in Oxford

End of year update

Following the successful completion of our Short Term Measures programme to reduce flood risk to residents in and around Oxford, the Environment Agency is planning a second programme to start in autumn 2010.

We have the go-ahead to draw up a further series of measures that will make a real difference to residents and businesses at risk of flooding in the Oxford floodplain. We are calling it: "Short Term Measures 2."

We will be building on what we have achieved in the past year. Our first programme of Short Term Measures was completed three weeks ago with the installation of large culverts on the Hinksey Drain at Redbridge. These replaced a railway access bridge that was causing a major bottleneck on the Oxford river system. The new culverts will reduce flood risk to properties in south and west Oxford, as well as in South Hinksey, Botley and Wytham. We have also carried out desilting and the removal of overgrown vegetation on the Bulstake and Seacourt Streams: this work will further help the river system flow efficiently. In addition, we have provided demountable flood barriers for Hinksey Park in south Oxford to give a little extra help to residents in Vicarage Lane and Lake Street.



New culverts increase the flow on the Hinksey Drain at Redbridge

Turning to our long-term plans, internal assessment continues on our Oxford Flood Risk Management Strategy. We hope to have our Strategy complete by the summer of 2010. It will identify the most effective way that we can afford of managing flood risk in Oxford over the next 100 years. It also has to consider the implications of climate change.

We have carried out more work on the options since the public consultation earlier this year. Disappointingly, it has shown that the economic case for a new channel is not as strong as it needs to be to progress as soon as we would like. The economics of the Strategy are paramount. If climate change were to increase the risk of flooding in Oxford, that would make a stronger case for bringing forward the start of this work. The new channel is still very much an option for the Oxford Strategy but, in the shorter term, we will be looking to non-structural measures, such as local schemes and property resilience. What can be achieved by flood resilience has already been demonstrated by two leading members of the Oxford Flood Alliance. We need to help others follow their example.



Residents inspect the new Hinksey Park demountable flood barriers, September 2009

In the meantime, we will be talking to elected representatives and residents' groups about our Short Term Measures 2 programme. We already have a long list of ideas: many of them have been suggested by local people. We will be looking for measures that offer the most benefit and can be carried out sooner rather than later.

If, in the New Year, you would like the opportunity to discuss progress on the Short Term Measures 2 programme or our long-term Strategy, please contact our Oxford Communications Manager, Keith Hutchence at keith.hutchence@environment-agency.gov.uk

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