

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

Newsletter

November 2018

We are working with local partners to deliver a major new flood scheme for Oxford, which will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses, and major transport routes into the city. The scheme is designed to provide a long term solution to flooding in Oxford for the next 100 years, taking climate change projections into account.

The scheme is not a concrete channel, but rather will enhance the existing floodplain to the west of Oxford, most of which is farmland and flood meadow. We will dig out material to create a natural looking stream which will always carry water, and a wider shallower area to the side of this, which will be planted with vegetation and only carry water in times of higher flows. This creates more space for water away from built-up areas, reducing flood risk in the city whilst fitting with the existing landscape. The design will create over 22 hectares of new habitat for wildlife.

What stage is the scheme at?

Our planning application for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme was submitted earlier this year and is being considered by Oxfordshire County Council. We are currently collating some additional information that has been requested by the County Council planners. They will then carry out consultation on this information for the statutory period of 30 days. We are hoping for a final planning decision in January 2019.

We've now also started the formal process for issuing Compulsory Purchase Order notices. A Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) is a legal process that allows land, property and rights of access to be obtained from a landowner when there is a compelling case that the land is needed in the public interest. We are working hard to reach voluntary agreements with landowners where at all possible, but it is normal practice when planning a scheme of this scale to run a CPO alongside these negotiations. This ensures all land and access to land essential to the working of the scheme can be acquired, even if agreement is not reached.

Building bridges

As part of the scheme, we will be building new bridges where they are needed to keep access across the new two-stage channel. These will include a footbridge at North Hinksey and two larger bridges that can carry occasional

maintenance vehicles at Willow Walk and the Devil's Backbone.

Willow Walk is an important historic route, defined by an avenue of willow trees and forming a key east-west link for pedestrians and cyclists into Oxford City. The new bridge here will replace the existing culverts and their metal railings. It will continue from the existing track, just raised slightly higher, and will span 19 metres. It will provide more space for floodwater underneath and allow the path to cross the channel.



Artist impression of Willow Walk Bridge 15 years after the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme is complete.

We listened to the public about preferences for the bridge design and have designed this as sensitively as possible to the landscape setting, whilst having to work within the constraints for

bridges that are safe for use by cyclists, horses and occasional maintenance vehicles.

The bridge abutments will be clad with local stone. The railings will be made of corten steel with a hardwood handrail and have been designed to allow pedestrians to safely view the surrounding landscape. Asphalt with cobbles will be used on the verges of the bridge to soften the edges but allow safe and easy cycling.



Artist impression of view from Willow Walkbridge, 15 years after the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme is complete.

Working in partnership

Benefits for business

It's not only residents whose homes are at risk of flooding that will benefit from the scheme. Past floods have caused havoc by cutting off main roads and the railway line, affecting commuters and businesses all over Oxford. The scheme is designed to reduce flood risk to major transport routes and services, keeping the city open in times of flood.

As Councillor Alex Hollingsworth, Oxford City Council Executive Board Member for Planning and Transport, says

“The Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme will bring huge benefit to everyone who lives in, works in or visits Oxford. As well as reducing the flood risk to around 1,200 homes in west and south Oxford,

the scheme will also protect the railway line and Botley and Abingdon Roads – keeping Oxford open for business during times of flooding. A project of this scale and scope would not be possible without effective partnership working, and all the partners have now been working together on this scheme for many years to help reduce the risk of devastating flooding for Oxford residents and businesses.”

One of our partners and major contributor to the scheme is the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), who work to drive economic growth in Oxford. Nigel Tipple, Chief Executive of OxLEP is passionate about the need for the scheme to protect Oxford's business community:

“This scheme will help to safeguard Oxford's reputation as a thriving, globally-facing economy that is very much 'open for business'. Oxford is one of the fastest-growing economies of all UK cities and is home to around 5,300 businesses and provides 133,000 jobs. The scheme will help to keep Oxford 'operating' during times of flood and will allow this successful economy to continue to thrive.”

All local businesses will benefit from the reduced flood risk to the roads and railway, and many will see their own flood risk reduced by the scheme. One small business, Denton Holdings, recently made a financial contribution to the scheme. Mr Denton says “I own a property on the Osney Mead Industrial Estate which flooded in the 2007 summer floods. I wanted to make a contribution towards the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme as I see it as a protection of my investment.”

Forward look

We plan to submit the full business case for the scheme to Government later this year. If planning permission and CPO approval are in place, construction will be able to start in 2019 and is expected to take around 3 years.

Keep updated on the scheme – and please share this newsletter

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 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/reducing-flood-risk-in-oxford-and-abingdon>

