



River Medway Flood Storage Areas

Newsletter 2 - December 2015

Welcome to the River Medway Flood Storage Area newsletter. We are keen to keep the local community updated on the progress of our work to reduce flood risk from the Rivers Medway, Beult and Teise and will be issuing regular newsletters throughout the development of the project to help do this. This newsletter will update you on our activities since June 2015.

Background

Over 3,000 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Hildenborough, Yalding and Collier Street are at risk of flooding from the River Medway, the River Beult, and the River Teise. 2,060 of these properties are at significant risk of flooding. Communities in these areas have been affected by flooding in 1960, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1979, 2000/01 and Winter 2013/14.

The Environment Agency is working with Kent County Council (KCC), Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to develop options to reduce the risk of flooding to communities. The scheme is known as the River Medway Flood Storage Areas (FSAs) project.

What are we doing?

In the last newsletter we explained that the Environment Agency is using the information gathered during the Christmas 2013 flood to update their flood model of the catchment.

The complexity of the catchment makes modelling challenging. For example the number and orientation of the tributaries means that the timing of arrival of river flows is convoluted. These challenges have meant there have been some delays to the modelling.

As the model is used to test various options and how they may interact, any errors at an early stage will result in poor design or misallocation of funding, so it is essential that the model is accurate.

We completed the model in August and since then have been using it to test options to reduce risk. These options include:

- flood storage using embankments to store water to reduce water levels to downstream areas.
- walls to keep water away from communities.
- channel improvements which may help carry water safely past or around communities.

The delays to the modelling mean that we won't know whether there are viable options to reduce risk across the catchment until February 2016. We had thought that we would know in early November. This delay has not affected our design and construction completion dates of 2019 and 2022.

The delay in the modelling is regrettable, however, we always allow extra time in our programmes for these type of delays. Given the importance of this scheme, our modelling consultants are putting in extra resource to make up the lost time, at their own expense. We are doing our utmost to complete the project by 2022 as planned, or sooner if possible, and we keep you updated on our progress.

Future work

By the end of December we will understand which of these options are technically feasible and to what degree. We will then assess the economic benefits of the options. The findings of the analysis will be compiled into an initial assessment. A project board consisting of executives from the partner organisations will decide the next steps based on the work completed to date. This will then be shared with Defra and their approval sought.

Approval to progress flood risk management schemes is sought to at three stages through their life. We are currently building the case for the first stage of approval. At each stage the following questions are asked:

1. What is the case for change?
2. Does the preferred option represent value for money?
3. Is the solution feasible and deliverable?
4. Is the project affordable?
5. How will the project be managed and delivered?

As each stage is completed the level of detail required becomes greater. The timeframes for the project are set out below:

December 2015	Outline modelling of options complete. Economic analysis starts
February 2016	Initial assessment complete and presented to project board.
April 2016	Defra approval to spend money on detailed analysis (stage 1 complete)
July 2016	Start Outline Business Case (Stage 2)
October 2017	Present the Outline Business Case to the project board to decide next steps
November 2017	Approval to spend money on the Full Business Case and start Full Business Case (stage 3)
March 2018	Submit Full Business Case to Defra to obtain approval to spend money on the scheme
November 2018	Start detailed design process
2020 - 2022	Construction

We will be carrying out engagement with communities at various stages of the project, this newsletter is intended as a high level guide to our activities. Newsletters will be issued every six months or when there is a significant announcement to make.

Find out more

If you want any more information on the project or have any questions, please call Neil Gunn on 03708 506 506 or email us at: MedwayFSA@environment-agency.gov.uk