

Managing Flood Risk in Northwich

Newsletter 1 - March 2013

Welcome to our first newsletter, keeping you up to date with plans to reduce the risk of flooding from rivers in Northwich.

The Environment Agency and Cheshire West & Chester Council have secured over £4million to construct a sustainable flood risk management scheme in Northwich that will seek to reduce the risk of flooding from the Rivers Dane and Weaver to around 700 local homes and businesses. The funding is subject to the approval of final costs and designs, which are currently under development and will be shared with the community for comment before they are finalised.

Half of the money was secured from a special growth fund set up by the government following extensive flooding across the UK in 2012, which was made available for the construction of flood defences that would encourage economic growth. The bid for funding in Northwich was successful because, by reducing the risk of flooding in the town, we will protect existing investment and encourage further development that will generate employment.

This portion of the funding is time limited and represents a one-off opportunity to secure flood defences for the town, so it is important that we move quickly to get input from the community. It is essential that feedback is constructive and takes account of these tight deadlines.



Pictured: the River Weaver in Northwich by Town Bridge.



Progress Update

Northwich experienced severe flooding in 2000, when 30 properties were affected and main roads were closed. A subsequent study identified that if we were able to build a flood defence scheme in the town, we could reduce the risk of flooding from the Rivers Dane and Weaver from a much bigger flood event. In September and December 2012, flooding occurred again, with seven properties affected, further highlighting the need for a flood risk management scheme.

Unfortunately, the scheme that was suggested several years ago failed to meet the strict criteria needed to attract funding from the government's Flood Defence Grant in Aid budget, as other locations within the UK were deemed to be at greater risk. The money that has been made available from the government's growth fund has now made the project viable – so long as we can finalise the plans, get the necessary approvals and begin construction before autumn 2014.



Pictured: Flooding around the Bullring where the Rivers Dane and Weaver meet in Northwich in September 2012.

The solution is likely to involve building flood defences in the town centre and/or upstream flood storage. We are in the process of finalising the plans and are looking for innovative ways we can maintain the connection between the river and the town, within the budget available.

While we investigated potential sources of funding, Cheshire West & Chester Council continued to encourage redevelopment in the town. This has led to the ongoing development of the Marina site and a forthcoming development at Barons Quay, which demonstrates the development potential in Northwich and highlights the need for a comprehensive flood risk management scheme in the town.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

What next?

Before we finalise the designs, we would like to engage with the local community to give people the opportunity to review our plans and speak to us about any ideas, questions or concerns. We will arrange community drop-in sessions shortly, which we will publicise in newsletters, in local media, on posters and online.

Once finalised, we will submit the plans to Cheshire West and Chester Council for approval. We hope to begin construction in autumn 2014, although it is our intention to work as quickly as we can so that we can meet the tight deadlines set out by the funding rules, and begin building the flood defences as soon as possible.

Project timeline

The following dates are indicative only at this stage, but show the steps we need to take to finalise the plans and begin construction of the flood defences:

Spring 2013: Review options, review flood risk modelling and determine the benefits that will be achieved by the construction of a flood scheme.

Summer 2013: Speak to the local community and partner agencies to give them an opportunity to comment on the plans.

Autumn 2013: Finalise the designs for the proposed flood risk management scheme.

Winter 2013: Submit final designs for planning approval.

Spring 2014: Conduct procurement and tendering process to identify the construction company that will build the scheme.

Autumn 2014: Construction begins.

Winter 2015: Construction complete.

How can I find out more?

We plan to produce regular newsletters to keep the local community updated on progress and will be hosting drop-in sessions and meetings for the local community to attend so they can meet the team, ask questions, raise concerns and have input into the final design. We will publicise dates and venues once they have been arranged.

We will be working closely with various agencies including Cheshire West & Chester Council, Northwich Town Council, United Utilities, The Canal & Rivers Trust, the Northwich Independent Retail Association (NIRA) and the River Weaver Navigation Society, so you will also be able to get in touch with these agencies to represent your views.

If you would like further information, please contact the Environment Agency direct:

- Call David Brown, Senior Environment Agency Flood Advisor, on 01925 542269 or email him at david.j.brown@environment-agency.gov.uk
- Write to the Environment Agency at Richard Fairclough House, Knutsford Road, Warrington, WA4 1HG.
- Follow us on Twitter @EnvAgencyNW

Be prepared for flooding

Even with flood defences in place, you can never entirely remove the risk of flooding. It is important that you prepare for this by phoning our Floodline, on **0845 988 1188**, to find out if you can sign up for free flood warnings. You can also get information on developing a flood plan, putting together a flood kit and other ways of preparing for flooding by visit our website at:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk/floodnorthwest

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