

Managing Flood Risk in Northwich

Newsletter 2 – June 2013

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

The funding of over £4 million secured by the Environment Agency and Cheshire West & Chester Council remains firmly in place to deliver a sustainable flood risk management scheme in Northwich. The scheme will seek to reduce the risk of flooding from the Rivers Dane and Weaver to around 700 local homes and businesses.

As a reminder, half of the money was secured from a special growth fund set up by the government following extensive flooding across the UK in 2012. This 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. To allow this scheme to progress, an approved business case will need to be presented that details the economic, environmental, technical and social benefits and impacts that will be provided by the construction of flood defences. Because the deadlines are so tight, we need to get feedback from the community as soon as possible so that we can address any concerns and incorporate good ideas into the final designs.

Progress Update

Since the last newsletter was issued in March we have been reviewing existing data and speaking with the community at various meetings and drop-in sessions. This review has concentrated on updating our river models and confirming that our estimates of the hydrology are correct – or in simple terms, we have been checking river levels and ground levels in Northwich so we can predict what would happen if there was a significant flood.. This information is very important as it aids our understanding of flood risk and helps us work out the best way of reducing flood risk in the town.

To further understand the issues, we have been talking to people who already have a good knowledge of the Weaver and its operation, which includes talking to the Weaver Navigation Society and the Canal & River Trust. Understanding the way the existing navigation control gates on the River Weaver operate and the impact this has on water levels in the town centre is an important part of the study. We are currently analysing whether different scenarios of gate operation can be beneficial in reducing flood water levels in the town centre. We will report more fully on this as we collate all the information. However, our initial findings show that these control structures have less of an influence during larger floods because the river levels in these cases would be deeper than the gates.

We have also been exploring the possibility of storing flood water upstream of the town. To work out whether this is feasible we have been looking at how much water we would have to store upstream to

avoid the need for building any flood defence structures in the town centre itself. While this evaluation is still ongoing, our initial figures suggest that there is not enough storage available upstream to avoid building any defences in the town centre.

A long list of options has been investigated to reduce flood risk in Northwich town centre, and the most effective solutions we have found so far would involve building flood defences (such as walls and embankments) in the town centre and/or upstream storage. To ensure that our designs compliment the existing landscape, we are looking at innovative ways we can maintain the connection between the river and the town, within the budget available. We took members of the Northwich Town Council and Cheshire West & Chester to see a self-closing barrier in Cockermouth, a glass panel defence in Keswick and upstream storage in Penrith, all of which maintain views and access to rivers at the same time as reducing flood risk to local homes and businesses.



Aerial view showing Town Bridge, Bull Ring and Dane Street flooded, 1946.

Development and investment in Northwich town centre continues, with a variety of projects led by Cheshire West and Chester Council under way, such as Barons Quay, Hayhurst Quay, the Memorial Hall and the Gyrotory. We are talking with those involved with these projects to ensure that we maximise any opportunities of working together and look to minimise any disruption during construction.

customer service line
03708 506 506

incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
0845 988 1188

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

What next?

We are hosting a drop-in session in the town centre on the 28th/29th June where people can ask us questions about the scheme. We have also recently talked about the scheme to the Local Authority, to the Northwich Rotary, at the Northwich Forum and to the Navigation Society.

Our next step is to determine what the options may involve at specific locations. Once we know these details, we will then be in a position to consult directly with those directly involved.

Before we finalise designs, we will continue to talk with the local community to give people the opportunity to review our plans and speak to us about any ideas, questions or concerns they may have. We will arrange further community drop-in sessions, 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 is 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:

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 and consult on these details.

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

Summer 2014: Submit final designs for planning approval.

Autumn 2014: Construction begins.

Spring 2016: Construction complete.

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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 designs. 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:

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