

Keeping you informed

Working to reduce the risk of flooding in York

February 2017

This is the first in a new series of quarterly newsletters to keep you updated about the work that the Environment Agency is doing to reduce flood risk in York. With so much work going on, we want to keep you updated on progress and let you know how you can get involved.

November Public Exhibition

We were overwhelmed by the public response to our public exhibition on 25-26



Residents viewing the exhibition

November. During the 2 day event, over 400 residents came to find out about our work in York. We were really encouraged to see so many people keen to discuss our plans for the next 5 years, and give us their feedback.

Feedback from those who visited the exhibition was overall very positive, with residents happy to see the progress made at the Foss Barrier, and with the publication of the 5 Year Plan.

We received lots of questions over the weekend, and since the exhibition to our new email address. We've provided brief answers to the most frequently asked questions below, for the benefit of those who couldn't attend the exhibition:

- **What is the flood risk in York?**

There are approximately 7197 properties at risk of flooding in York. These are a mixture of residential and business properties. 3680 are at risk of flooding from the River Ouse, with 3517 at risk from the River Foss and other becks.

- **How much is the EA investing in improving York's defences?**

We secured an additional £45 million from government following the December 2015 floods to better protect 2,000 properties in York over the next 5 years. We were already planning to invest £15 million during this period, bringing the budget for works to £60 million. The £17 million for Foss Barrier upgrades is also additional to this.

- **Why aren't you looking at the Ouse catchment as a whole and coming up with strategic options treating the cause rather than treating the symptoms?**

We are also looking at the longer term options for the Ouse catchment. We will be consulting on these in the spring of 2017. These include long term options for managing the flow upstream on the

customer service line

03708 506 506

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

incident hotline

0800 80 70 60

floodline

0345 988 1188

0845 988 1188

Swale, Ure and Nidd which will also benefit all the communities on these rivers and the Ouse. The will focus on natural flood management measures where possible.



Example of a woody debris dam

- **Will the measures outlined stop flooding in York?**

Flood risk can be reduced but we can't totally eliminate the risk of flooding. December 2015 was the wettest December on record, but also the wettest calendar month since records began in 1910. The growing threat from more extreme weather events means we must always be as prepared and as resilient as possible.

- **Will the proposed defences make communities downstream flood more?**

We carry out thorough assessments during the design stage of a flood alleviation scheme to ensure that flood schemes are not protecting one community at the expense of another.

- **When will new schemes start to be built?**

We will be carrying out investigation and design work this year. We are

planning to commence construction work at some sites in spring 2018.

Foss Barrier Upgrade



New pump at Foss Barrier

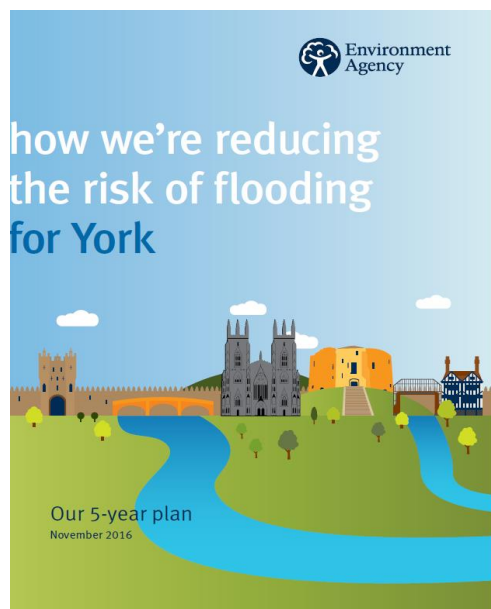
Since December 2015, we have committed to spend £17 million improving the Foss Barrier. We have installed 8 new pumps, with a pumping capacity of approximately 40 cubic metres per second (equivalent to the flow down the Foss on Boxing Day 2015). We are now progressing with the permanent works, including adding an additional storey to the building to house sensitive equipment. These works will improve the power supply to the pumps, increasing the pumping capacity to 50 cubic metres per second by winter 2017.



Artists impression of upgraded Foss Barrier

The Foss Barrier is fully operational and has been used 5 times so far since the winter 2015 floods to protect York. Most recently on 22-23 November 2016.

York 5 Year Plan



The public exhibition in November provided the perfect opportunity to share our 5 Year Plan for York, showing how we could invest the £45 million secured from government to better protect York. Since November we have been busy undertaking more detailed assessments of the options proposed in the plan. It's clear from these assessments, and feedback from local residents, that some schemes will be easier to implement, and some are unlikely to progress further. We are continuously refining these options and hope to begin community-level engagement on the first schemes later this year.

The York 5 Year Plan can be viewed online by clicking [here](#), or contact us directly if you would prefer a paper copy.

One of the most frequent questions that we have been asked is when construction will begin? We understand that residents would like to see work taking place as soon as possible. However, the majority of the work needed to ensure new defences function well takes place long before construction, and is very time consuming. We thought it may be helpful

to give an outline the process here, to give a better understanding of the timescales.

- Autumn 2016**
 We published the 5 Year Plan outlining what could be done to protect York. Taking feedback from the exhibition we began refining the options.
- Winter 2016**
 We have been busy refining the list of options and assessing which should be taken forward first. We would like to prioritise schemes in areas which are currently undefended, and then move on to upgrading existing defences as work progresses. We will discuss this approach with councillors in March to get their views.
- Spring 2017**
 We will appoint contractors and begin community consultation, outline design and investigation work for the first potential schemes.
- Summer/Autumn 2017**
 We need to do extensive ground investigation work to ensure that ground conditions are suitable for building defences, and check for constraints such as archaeology and utilities which may impact how we design schemes. This work is heavily weather dependent and needs to be carried out over summer.
- Winter 2017**
 In consultation with the community, we will design schemes following the findings of the investigation work over the summer.

- **Spring 2018**

We aim to begin construction on the first schemes, and we will go through design and investigation work for the next round of schemes.

York Independent Inquiry

Following the floods of December 2015, City of York Council commissioned an independent investigation into the floods, to determine whether the right decisions were taken, and what changes could be made to make the city more resilient.

The final report has just been published and can be found [here](#).

There are a number of conclusions and recommendations from the investigation which are relevant to the Environment Agency. Some of the points raised are:

- The decision to raise the Foss Barrier was the right one, and reduced the number of properties that flooded.
- There was a lack of awareness amongst the local community about flood warnings around the Foss and what action was needed.
- Improvements could be made to communication between agencies during a flood, and also with residents.

We welcome the panel's report and are considering its recommendations in detail. We are always keen to learn lessons from what happened and will look at where improvements can be made. A great deal has been achieved over the past 12 months, including works to the barrier and improvements to our modelling and flood warning service. We

look forward to working in partnership with City of York Council York to reduce flood risk.

Community Events



Residents and EA staff discussing proposals on Hob Moor

Since the exhibition we have been in contact with many residents keen to know more about how options in the 5 Year Plan may affect them. In most areas residents are in favour of improved defences, but some communities have raised concerns. We have been clear that the 5 Year Plan provided outline options, but we will not pursue schemes where the community is not supportive of this.

Drop-In Centre

In the next 3 months we are hoping to open a dedicated community drop-in centre in the city. This is an exciting development and we will keep you updated as this progresses.

Getting in touch

We'd love to know what you think of our newsletter. If you have any comments, or suggestions for future editions, please let us know at

yorkfloodplan@environment-agency.gov.uk