

Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme

We are working with 9 partners on a major new flood scheme for Oxford, which will reduce flood risk to homes, businesses and vital transport routes into the city. The scheme will provide a long term solution to flooding in Oxford, helping protect the city in coming decades as flood risk increases with climate change.

September 2026

Introduction



It's been a busy summer for the scheme, and I'm pleased to share that we are making major progress. Most notably, our Full Business Case (FBC) has been approved by the Treasury. The FBC is essentially our case for why the scheme is needed, why it will work and why it should be funded. It's a big moment for the team and brings Oxford one step closer to benefiting from greater flood resilience for decades to come. With this approval secured, we've set out more information on our next steps below.

We have recently appointed our construction partner to build the scheme. This appointment follows a rigorous procurement process, and I'm confident we've found a partner who shares our commitment to providing long-term flood protection for Oxford while minimising disruption during construction.

Another important part of our work in the past few months has been to plan our community engagement for when we move on site. I'm delighted to confirm the launch of our Local Liaison Group. This will bring together members of the local community to help us keep you informed and get your feedback. The group will play a key role in shaping how we communicate with you throughout construction. We'll be running a campaign to recruit additional members before construction starts.

We're also preparing to roll out our Hello Lamp Post signage across the scheme area in the coming weeks. For those unfamiliar, Hello Lamp Post allows you to access information about the scheme on your phone via a QR code. This offers a new and accessible way to ask questions, from general ones about the project to more specific questions, such as footpath diversions. We hope this will become an easy way to stay informed and connected as work progresses.

Elsewhere, our environmental survey work continues at pace. This essential groundwork will confirm our understanding of, and safeguard, the local environment as we finalise our plans. There's much more going on behind the scenes and we're working hard to get our final approvals in place.

Finally, you may be aware that the Environment Agency has declared that the Thames area is in drought. While this may seem at odds with the flooding we experienced earlier in the year, and recent rainfall, it's a timely reminder of just how variable and extreme our weather is becoming, and shows why building resilience matters more than ever. You can learn more on what this means in the article below.

Thank you for reading.

Robbie Williams
Project Director

Major funding milestone achieved

Our scheme has reached an important milestone with the approval of its Full Business Case (FBC) by HM Treasury.

The FBC is an important stage in the government's approval process for major infrastructure projects. It sets out the final case for investment, demonstrating that the scheme is deliverable, affordable and provides value for money.

Approval by HM Treasury confirms that we have successfully met these requirements and can continue to progress towards construction. In our business case we set out that the updated cost of the scheme until the end of construction is £220 million. The cost of this will be met through central government funding and partner contributions which we have already secured.

Next steps

Now that our FBC has been approved, the next milestone is to finalise our planning permission. We are working hard to get this agreed.

We know that you are keen to understand when work will begin on the ground. For a project of this scale, there is not a single 'construction start date'. Instead, it is a process that begins with several important preparatory activities before the main earthworks and excavation can take place.

The scheme will soon move into the pre-commencement phase, during which final approvals, site preparations and other essential activities will be completed. We will then mobilise on site, establishing the facilities, access arrangements and infrastructure needed to carry out the works safely and efficiently.

We will update you with programme timings when we have more information to share.

Construction partner appointed



We're pleased to announce that we've appointed [GRAHAM](#), a leading national construction contractor, to build the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Appointing GRAHAM marks an important step towards construction. They bring extensive experience of delivering complex infrastructure projects, and we're looking forward to working together to make the scheme a success.

Over the coming months, colleagues from GRAHAM and the Environment Agency project team will be out in the local community, meeting residents across the scheme area. There will be opportunities to speak with us, ask questions and find out more about what to expect as construction approaches.

GRAHAM will provide a dedicated point of contact for any construction-related enquiries, so you'll always know who to contact with questions or concerns. We'll share details of this contact in the next edition of our newsletter and online via [Engagement HQ](#).

Local Liaison Group launch

Thank you to those of you who registered your interest in the new Local Liaison Group we are setting up for the scheme. The group is being established to complement our wider communications and engagement strategy, by helping us work closely with local communities and other stakeholders, ensuring people stay informed and have a voice during construction and operation of the scheme.

We have established an initial core group, and we will be widening the membership via a recruitment campaign closer to construction. We want people from different parts of the community to share their views, local knowledge and feedback, to help us to minimise any disruption during construction and to ensure we communicate clearly and effectively about what is happening when. We'll share details of how to apply in a future newsletter.

The core group will meet for the first time in October, where they will visit the scheme area, followed by a workshop to agree how the group will work together.



Hinksey Meadow

Hello Lamp Post launch

Look out for Hello Lamp Post signs appearing across the scheme area and other parts of Oxford. These signs provide an interactive tool allowing you to ask questions and find out information about the scheme.

By scanning the QR code you will be able to ask us anything, from what stage the project is at, to what work we're doing with our partners or what temporary impacts the scheme will have during construction. All messages are anonymous.

When you use the tool, you'll help us understand what matters most to local people by showing us what your key issues and concerns are.

To date, Hello Lamp Post projects with the Environment Agency have enabled over 40,000 conversations and helped avoid 90 tonnes of carbon emissions. With 24/7 access, we hope it can act as a first port of call as we head into construction.



An example of signage



Protecting wildlife as we prepare for construction

Before construction begins, we need a clear understanding of the wildlife and habitats across the scheme area. This year, specialist ecologists have been surveying the site, building on our history of survey data to provide a detailed current picture of the habitats and species that call it home. Updated surveys for badgers, bats, red kites and kingfishers are already complete, while surveys on otters, water voles, reptiles and invertebrates are underway.

The surveys are carefully designed to minimise disturbance. Our ecologists, using remote monitoring equipment, observe wildlife and record evidence of protected habitats and species.

The evidence we've collected throughout the scheme's development has helped us understand how construction could affect wildlife and the natural environment, and in turn, helped shape how we deliver the scheme.

We have used the findings to avoid impacts on biodiversity wherever possible, minimise them where we cannot, and protect valuable existing habitats before creating new ones.

It also helps us improve and increase biodiversity, ensuring nature is left in a stronger position than before the scheme was in place.

By understanding what is here today, we can protect nature during construction and help create a richer, more resilient landscape where wildlife can thrive for generations to come.

Help us monitor butterfly populations!

We are continuing to monitor butterfly populations across the scheme area. Volunteers (thanks to Simon Collings from the [Oxford Flood Alliance](#)) carry out regular butterfly surveys along a fixed route registered with the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme. This data is helping identify opportunities for new hedgerows, tree planting and other habitat improvements that can support butterfly populations and wider biodiversity.

You can also get involved too! Visit:

<https://bigbutterflycount.butterfly-conservation.org/> where you can download a butterfly ID chart or a free app to identify and record the butterflies you spot. You then choose a place to watch for butterflies and moths for 15 minutes, before then recording which species you saw on the website or via the app.



Butterfly in the scheme area

School visit

We visited Phil and Jim School in Oxford to give a whole school assembly at the end of their summer term. The 360 pupils listened to our presentation on the dangers of flooding and how the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme will help reduce flood risk. The assistant head teacher said that it was “powerful for the children to see that they live and learn next to a flood plain” and “children need to understand the ever-evolving world in which they live”. We couldn’t agree more!

We offer free lessons and assemblies to primary schools in Oxford. If you would like to hear more, you can contact us at oxfordscheme@environment-agency.gov.uk.



Visiting Phil and Jim School



Drought

In July the Environment Agency declared a drought across half of England, including the Thames area. We did this because dry weather has continued, little significant rainfall was forecast, and the negative impacts on people, wildlife and the environment were growing.

Hot, dry weather and low river flows put greater pressure on our rivers and the wildlife that depends on them. We saw low water levels and river flows on the River Thames. In some areas, river flows are the lowest ever recorded for this time of year.

You may notice in and around Oxford that we are limiting lock usage during the day and are closing them between 6:00pm – 9:30am, to preserve water. We are also inspecting our weirs and carrying out emergency repairs where needed to reduce water loss. As drought conditions continue, we encourage everyone to be mindful of water use where possible and follow the temporary use/hosepipe ban.

How you can help

Hot, dry weather increases the sensitivity of our rivers, as lower river flows mean reduced dilution of any pollutants, making wildlife more vulnerable. We urge you to report any signs of low flow, pollution or other environmental incidents via the incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60, so our officers can assess and respond quickly.

Find out more



Online: <https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engage-menthq.com/oxfordfloodalleviationscheme>



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Email: OxfordScheme@environment-agency.gov.uk

