

River Thames Scheme

Consultation event 9th August 2023

Background

If you are not familiar with this scheme, it is essentially designed to reduce the risk of flooding for around 11,000 businesses and properties alongside the Thames from Egham to Teddington. The key principle is to build two channels to extract water from the Thames at times of flood and provide additional routes for the excess water to travel around flood risk areas and then back into the Thames at points where the water can flow more freely downstream with less risk of flooding surrounding areas. The water flow routes will follow the course of the new channels but also pass through a number of existing lakes along the route.

To help improve flow once the diverted water is passed back into the Thames, the scheme also proposes expanding capacity at Desborough Cut, and the Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington Weirs.

Alongside the reduction in flood risk, the scheme is designed to enhance biodiversity, access, amenity value and economic opportunities in the affected areas. More details and a map of the areas involved can be found on the scheme web site at [About the scheme | River Thames Scheme](#)

The scheme has been around for over a decade and has undergone extensive consultation and subsequent amendments, the latest being towards the end of 2022. The organisers of the scheme are working towards formal planning application in 2024 and as part of the path towards that have a new consultation programme to ensure that those affected by or with a view on the scheme can input into the design and potential implementation of the scheme. This is essentially through engagement with a Community Stakeholder Working Group (CSWG) made up of representatives from Community Residents Associations and residents who need or want to access the scheme area, including river users, walkers, cyclists and people with disabilities. The group has been designed to ensure people with shared interest can communicate their concerns and thoughts with the scheme organisers and with each other.

Notes on the first meeting of the CSWG

The first meeting of the group was held as a virtual MS Teams meeting on 9th August, with around 30 people logging into and contributing to the meeting. This was essentially a progress report on the scheme to date following the previous round of consultation as well as an opportunity for the organisers to gain feedback on their consultation process and what the group required in the future from the consultation process. The meeting also gave attendants the opportunity to raise or reiterate existing concerns and queries about the scheme and its impact on their particular areas of interest.

Minutes of the meeting, of the points raised and responses to those points will be released shortly but key topics raised included:

- Can the information on the scheme include maps showing the impact on potential flood locations and depth in the scheme area before and after the implementation of the scheme.
- The impact on river flows and levels and the impact of that on current uses, eg rowing canoeing, swimming.
- The nature of the design of the new channels and how safe they would be for people accessing the newly created green spaces alongside them.
- How will the new channels and green spaces be maintained and by whom.

- Is funding in place.
- How releasing additional water into the Tidal Thames at times of high river flow will be affected by or affect measures taken in the tidal Thames to counter flood risk in Central London.
- The proposed route of the Spelthorne channel is through Littleton Lake. Currently the lake is fed by ground water, not river water and hence has a high degree of purity, beneficial for both the people who use it for sailing and other water borne activities as well as for wildlife. Leading the channel into the lake will then mean that any pollutants in the Thames, including sewage release, will then flow into the lake and reduce its purity.
- Is there any liaison with Thames Water over their need to extract more water from the Thames to supply an increasing demand for business and residential use.
- Will there be any impact on silt deposition, particularly at the points where water is diverted from and then back into the Thames.

Future meetings

The second meeting will be held in **October 2023** and will again provide a progress report on the scheme but will also provide more details of the technical aspects of the scheme include flood modelling and the landscaping.

The third meeting will be held in **December 2023** and will again contain a project update as well as be a forum to discuss the build up to statutory consultation for the planning application.