

Summer floods 2007

Updated June 2009

Extensive work has been carried out following widespread flooding across England and Wales in the summer 2007. Since, we have inspected our flood defences and completed investigations and maintenance along main rivers. This is a summary of our work in this area.

Upton and surrounding area

Upton was affected by heavy rain falling between 24 and 25 June, and a higher impact period of rain on 20 July. In July, the River Severn rose to the highest recorded level and about 70 properties flooded.

What have we done since then?

- we assessed all affected areas to see what work was needed to be done;
- we repaired flood-damaged walls outside the Swan public house and by the Plough public house;
- we have reviewed our temporary barrier deployment procedures in light of this flood. We are currently working on designs for a potential permanent flood alleviation scheme along the Waterfront and New Street sections of Upton. We held a meeting on 31 January 2008 to listen to residents' views about such a scheme;
- working closely with the Town Council, Local Planning and Severn Trent, we are also evaluating the possibility of permanent works on the ground which, we hope, will reduce the frequency of deployment of the barriers by providing some protection against low level floods. This will also give more time for the erection of the barriers in the higher level floods;
- We continue to erect the temporary flood barriers as required;

What else are we planning to do?

- We had a very successful drop-in session in January. Overwhelming 90% support was received. Many feedback forms were received and we are listening to what people have told us and are now looking at ways in which we can improve our proposals and make them more appealing to the community.
- A lot of effort has gone into developing our **proposals** and in raising the profile of the flooding problems at Upton upon Severn such that we have obtained an allocation of funding that will allow a scheme to be constructed, subject to obtaining the relevant approvals and consents. (i.e. planning consent). If we are unable to take this opportunity now, it may be very difficult to promote a scheme in the future.

- Upton upon Severn is currently only partially protected by a temporary flood defence, which was introduced in 2006 as a trial of that system. The Environment Agency wishes to move away from using the temporary system and instead offer a much more resilient permanent defence, formed by walls and earth embankments. Passive flood defence systems are far more reliable and reassuring than those that can be removed or opened.
- The Environment Agency wishes to offer the best possible standard of protection against flooding for Upton upon Severn, now and into the future. With Climate Change predicted to increase flood risk across the UK, it is essential that any new flood defences continue to offer a reliable standard of protection for future generations, who will not thank us if we build too low, or build not at all.
- We intend to promote a standard of protection that would protect against flooding up to the extreme level experienced in July 2007.
- For the Waterfront section, we see the main issues being the physical and visual intrusion of the flood defence, access to the riverside moorings and disruption to access during the construction work. Whatever structure we propose to build will have an impact and it will be difficult to gain planning consent, due to the conservation area status and numerous listed buildings. We have reviewed our strategy and we are now aiming to maximise the standard of protection whilst softening the appearance, and are working with others to promote a vision for a regenerated Waterfront.
- We are now working hard with Advantage West Midlands to develop proposals for enhancement of the waterfront area, which was something that many people have asked for in addition to the flood defences. Enhancements could include a combination of pedestrianisation work, minor road raising, street furniture and planting. The aim is to blend the flood defence into a wider regeneration of the Waterfront area, which would allow us to offer the maximum standard of protection that we can justify economically. In this aim we need the support of the community and local authorities.
- We are targeting property owners and riverside businesses along Waterfront to see what we can do, within reason, to minimise the impact of our proposals on them both during and after construction of the proposed flood defences.
- For the New Street section we see the main issues being the interaction between activities on the sports pitches and construction work related to our proposed flood defence scheme. We are therefore commencing detailed discussions with the rugby club and Sport England with a view to agreeing a suitable re-alignment of the pitches which we would plan to complete before we commence any construction work. In doing so we would hope to avoid conflict. We would also aim to divert some overhead power lines underground prior to construction, which will also benefit the playing fields.

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- We see the New Street section as being less complex a proposal than Waterfront and we are therefore intending to accelerate detailed design work and move that section forward at a quicker pace, as we require additional time to develop the proposals for Waterfront. We now intend to split the scheme into two planning applications, although the construction of both sections would be expected to overlap into one continuous construction stage.
- Moving forward with the New Street section at a quicker pace will allow us to be in a position to start work on-site sooner, as if we waited for the Waterfront proposals to be ready the start date would be delayed. It is our expectation that Waterfront will follow on from the New Street section with some overlap in the programme.
- Our current plans are to be ready to submit a planning application for New Street in the summer of 2009. An application for Waterfront would follow in the Autumn. Should all go well we could start construction at New Street before the end of 2009.

The summer 2007 floods in Upton upon Severn

Upton was affected by heavy rain between 24 and 25 June, which resulted in the issuing of a Flood Watch and Flood Warning on the 25 June and a Flood Warning Update on 27 June for this area.

There was a higher impact period of rain on 20 July when, across Upton, around 90mm of rain was recorded. This equated to almost two months' rain in one day. At 1228, we issued a Flood Watch for the River Severn in Worcestershire. That same evening we issued a Flood Warning at 1910, an updated Flood Warning at 2120 and a Severe Flood Warning at 2225.

The combination of exceptional flows in the River Teme and heavy rainfall across Worcestershire resulted in record flood levels in Upton. River levels at the Saxons Lode gauge near Upton reached a peak of 5.93m at 1615 on 22 July. Previously, the highest recorded level was 5.76m in March 1947.

The temporary flood barriers that were being trialled along the Waterside at Upton are erected on a 'best endeavours' basis. They were deployed during the June 2007 flood, when they held back 1.15m of water. They had previously been used in December 2006, January 2007 and March 2007.

On Thursday 19 July 2007, an early forecast indicated the potential need to deploy Upton temporary defences. We started discussion with our external partners and preliminary arrangements in case the defences were required. This also included liaising with the Upton Blues Festival team about moving caravans from the barrier site.

On the morning of Friday 20 July, river level forecasts indicated that the temporary barriers would be required at Upton. They are stored at Kidderminster, only 23 miles from Upton and less than an hour away. Our workforce, plant and materials were mobilised in plenty of time to enable the erection of the defences prior to property flooding at Waterside. However,

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despite our best efforts and help from the Police, we could not get there in time because of severe traffic disruption due to the extreme weather and surface water flooding. Had the barriers been deployed, they would have been overtopped due to the severity of the flood.

At 2200 hours the first property began to flood. At 0400 hours on Sunday 22 July the barrier would have overtopped. The River Severn peaked at 5.92m, its highest recorded level, at Saxons Lode on 1600 hours on Sunday 22 July. Eighty-five households in the Malvern Hills area are still not back in their homes.

The barriers have been erected successfully three times this year (2008) - 11 January, 28 January & 16 March.

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