

River Thames
Scheme



Public Consultation

8 November – 20 December 2022

Foreword



Cllr Tim Oliver, Leader,
Surrey County Council



This consultation on the River Thames Scheme (RTS) marks an opportunity for local communities, businesses and other groups to comment on this vital scheme. The RTS will reduce the risk for residents and businesses from the devastating impact of flooding, as well as a number of other important benefits such as supporting sustainable travel, increasing green space and biodiversity;

and creating connections with wildlife. That's why I am delighted Surrey County Council is partnering with the Environment Agency to deliver this scheme for the benefit of our communities.

Residents will know only too well the devastation flooding can cause to their homes and businesses, as well as the disruption to road, rail and utility infrastructure. The RTS, which has evolved over several years, represents the best way of reducing the risk of flooding in those at-risk communities as well as protecting the local economy. Additionally, it also supports the county council's climate change strategy through the creation of greener, more sustainable walking and cycling routes.

The RTS will therefore provide a positive legacy beyond flood risk reduction and water management for our communities. It provides an opportunity for us to deliver on our climate change strategy by enhancing our environment through increasing accessible green space and supporting efforts to increase biodiversity. The scheme also supports our strategy through increasing and promoting a reliable, accessible, and sustainable active transport system, that helps reduce vehicle journeys and improves air quality for improved health and wellbeing of our residents.

I do hope you will participate in this consultation and share your thoughts and suggestions.



John Curtin,
Executive Director
for Local Operations,
Environment Agency



I am delighted that a consultation on the River Thames Scheme has now launched. The scheme is a great opportunity to deliver more open green space, connections to wildlife, sustainable travel and a reduced risk from flooding to dwellings, businesses and infrastructure. I am pleased that the Environment Agency is a joint partner with Surrey County Council in the development and delivery of the River Thames Scheme and fully supports the benefits it will deliver for our communities.

The River Thames between Egham and Teddington is the largest area of undefended, developed flood plain in England, which is why the River Thames Scheme is so crucial. In 2014, 2003 and in 1947, for those of you with long memories, we saw first-hand the devastation flooding had on communities and infrastructure, and why taking action is so important to prevent the same thing happening again.

As a country we already face major challenges from the more extreme weather which our changing climate is causing. More frequent and more extreme flooding are becoming the new normal and are already posing greater risks to lives, infrastructure and property. The River Thames Scheme reduces the risk of flooding, but the scheme also addresses a number of other important subjects that can enhance people's lives and support our climate change goals.

The River Thames Scheme is being developed with climate change adaptation at its heart. This includes the goal of increasing biodiversity and habitat and is a hugely positive step to ensuring our environments are diverse and full of natural life. I am particularly pleased that the River Thames Scheme is helping to deliver Surrey's Climate Change Strategy including the ambitions relating to sustainable travel, improving health and wellbeing, increasing accessible green spaces and woodland cover.

Your considerations of the scheme are a vital part of this process, and I would encourage you to respond to this consultation to ensure it continues to be developed with the needs of communities and businesses in mind.

 River Thames, Chertsey



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1. Introduction

The purpose of this brochure

This brochure provides the latest information about the River Thames Scheme and sets out a series of questions for you to provide your feedback.

1.1 What is the River Thames Scheme?

The River Thames Scheme is designed to unlock the economic, health and environmental benefits of the river between Egham and Teddington.

It will respond to the challenges of flooding, provide access to green open spaces and sustainable travel routes, encourage inclusive economic growth, and increase biodiversity.

Each element of the River Thames Scheme will work together to deliver benefits for communities to help them live more sustainably.

A new flood channel will reduce the risk of flooding to homes, businesses, and infrastructure, while also providing a habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape. The channel will be flanked by new areas of public green open space, for recreation and spending time with nature.

New footpaths and cycleways will run along the channel and through the new public spaces, linking different elements of the scheme with communities and providing better connections within and across the area.

Areas of new and improved habitat for wildlife will connect with existing nature sites and wildlife corridors to further support biodiversity.

It is the first flood and climate mitigation project which is described as nationally significant, reflecting the scope and ambition of the scheme.

The Environment Agency and Surrey County Council are working together to deliver the River Thames Scheme in partnership with other local authorities and interested parties.

The scheme is made up of national and local government funding and investment provided through partners.

OUR VISION

“The River Thames Scheme will reduce flood risk to people living and working near the Thames, enhance the resilience of nationally important infrastructure, contribute to a vibrant local economy and maximise the social and environmental value of the river”

OUR GOALS

A landscape-based approach to creating a healthier, more sustainable, and more resilient community.

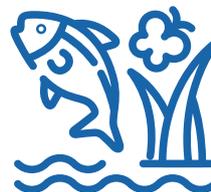
We will:



Reduce the risk of flooding for dwellings, businesses and infrastructure.



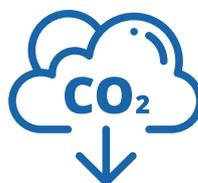
Improve access to quality green open spaces, connection with wildlife and more sustainable travel network.



Create a network of high quality habitat and achieve biodiversity gain.



Facilitate sustainable and inclusive economic growth.



Enable delivery and design that contribute to EA, SCC and Partner climate goals relating to carbon use.



River Thames, from Richmond Hill



1.2 Scheme overview

The River Thames Scheme is an integrated scheme made up of three parts.



Flood alleviation

The scheme will see the creation of a new river channel in two sections through Runnymede and Spelthorne, totalling over 5 miles (8.5km) long. These will act as new flow routes for excess water when water levels in the River Thames rise too high.

We will be lowering the river bed downstream of the Desborough Cut. Additionally, improvements will be made to the Sunbury, Molesey, and Teddington weirs. This includes installing more gates that can be opened when river levels rise.



Community spaces

Alongside the channel there will be opportunities to create recreational spaces for the community. This could include new foot and cycle paths, and play and picnic areas. There will also be new ways to access the river and take part in activities such as fishing, canoeing and boating.



Habitat creation areas to increase biodiversity

We will also be improving and creating high quality natural habitats (also known as habitat creation areas). This will help to preserve and encourage wildlife in the area.

1.3 Need for the scheme

The River Thames is enjoyed by thousands of residents, tourists and businesses every day. People come to sail, swim and exercise. They connect with nature and benefit from improved mental health and feelings of wellbeing.

The stretch of river and the floodplain between Egham and Teddington offers miles of open-space opportunity. But it is currently constrained by flood risk, lack of access and poor-quality natural habitats.

It needs investment to help. This will also unlock the economic, health and environmental benefits that this stretch of river currently offers.



Chertsey, Surrey



Flood risk

The River Thames between Egham and Teddington runs through the largest area of populated but undefended floodplain in England. In addition to the towns and villages in this area, the landscape has been heavily shaped by major infrastructure and extensive mineral workings. This has resulted in an area in which many homes and businesses are at risk of flooding, within a landscape which suffers from physical constraints meaning that the open space isn't used to its full potential.

The River Thames has a long history of flooding. In 2014, over 900 homes flooded, with major impacts on families, roads and supply of services. People were forced to leave their homes for months and years in some cases due to the severity of damage. With climate change, the risk of flooding is only going to grow. Our new flood channel will reduce the risk of flooding to homes, businesses, and infrastructure.



Open space opportunity

Finding more ways for people to enjoy the great outdoors and get around sustainably is becoming increasingly important. It helps to keep us healthy and it helps to protect the environment too.

That's why providing and maintaining access to open spaces along the River Thames is a high priority in Surrey.

In some parts of the river between Egham and Teddington it is difficult to access the river, and in others there is no easy way for people to walk or cycle alongside it. The county is home to one of the busiest road networks in the country. Car ownership is high and air quality is poor. The River Thames Scheme will enable linking communities in a more sustainable way.



Natural habitats

The river and its surrounding area have rich and diverse natural habitats which are essential for biodiversity, helping to support countless fish, animals and birds. We will extend and improve this network of varied habitats.

1.4 History of the scheme

In 2009 the Environment Agency developed and held a consultation on the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Strategy was agreed in 2011 and included a recommendation for the River Thames Scheme.

Planning and design work on the River Thames Scheme has been ongoing since 2014 and the first public consultation on the scheme proposals was held in 2016.

The consultation focused on the proposed routes of three river channel sections and improvements to allow more water to flow along the Thames.

Discussion groups were held to get feedback on suggested designs and public meetings were held. Over 300 meetings and briefings were held for key stakeholders, including local authorities, landowners and community groups.

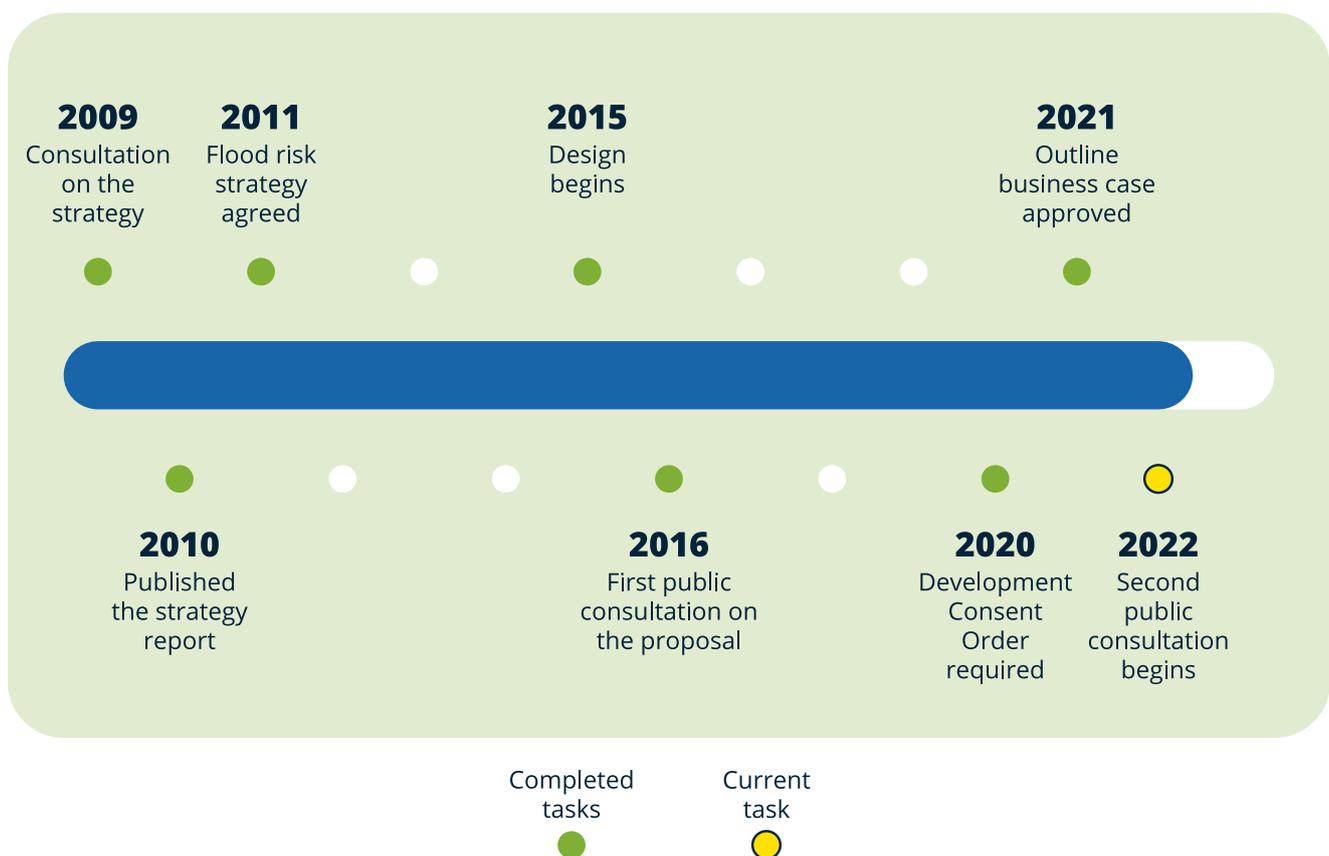
We used the feedback to help us develop the design of the River Thames Scheme. Later in this document **[p.16]** you'll see where this informed decisions about some of the options for the scheme which have not been taken forward. You'll also see the latest proposals for our chosen solution.

One of the changes to the River Thames Scheme since the 2016 consultation is the evolution of the scheme design, from using three channel sections to two. Originally, the scheme was considering a channel between Datchet and Hythe End, which is no longer being taken forward due to lack of funding. You can read more about this in Chapter 2 **[p.16]**. Another change in the scheme since 2016 is that we are no longer widening the Desborough Cut. Our new alternative proposal is explained in detail later in the brochure.

In addition to changes to our proposal for the river channel, the wider scheme itself has also evolved. It is now using the opportunity of developing flood reduction solutions into a wider focus. It will create better access to the river for exercise and recreation, preserve and encourage natural habitats and support local business growth.

In December 2020, the government directed that due to its large scale, the River Thames Scheme should be treated as a project of national significance. These projects require a type of consent known as a 'Development Consent Order' (DCO). The DCO process removes the need to obtain many separate consents, including planning permission and is designed to be a quicker process than applying for these separately.

In June 2021 the scheme took an important step when Defra and HM Treasury approved the outline business case, which sets out the approach and budget for the Scheme.





1.5 Why are we consulting you?

We have been developing ideas for the River Thames Scheme since 2009.

Our ideas build on information and feedback that we have gathered through consultations in 2009 and 2016, technical studies, and ongoing engagement with stakeholders.

We are now starting to think about how the scheme will look and we want to hear your views again. We have developed a set of questions that we would like your feedback on. They include what you think about our proposals for:

- green open spaces
- wildlife and their habitats in the area
- how to get involved as we develop our plans

We are consulting a diverse range of people about our plans. These include the general public, landowners, local authorities, community groups and environmental and regulatory organisations. We will use the comments and information we receive to help us to keep developing the scheme.

Your feedback is important and valuable to the development of our proposals.

You can let us know your views by completing our questionnaire online **www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk/questionnaire**. You can also pick up a paper copy and send it in to our Freepost address. If you would prefer, you can email us or send us a letter. There is more information on this in the Get involved chapter of this brochure **[p.44]**.

Following this consultation stage, and in accordance with the Planning Act 2008, there will be a further consultation, focusing on the design proposals for the scheme. This is likely to be in late 2023.



Fill in our questionnaire at
www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk/questionnaire
or pick up a paper copy.

2. Considered so far

In a scheme of this size there will naturally be different ideas to deliver the end result. We looked at many options to manage flood risk between Egham and Teddington. In this chapter we will be explaining why some options previously presented to you have not been included in the current proposed scheme. The current proposal that we are consulting on was found to be best suited to meet the Scheme goals you can read more about this in Chapter 3.

Datchet to Hythe End Channel section

A third channel section from Datchet to Hythe End was previously included in the River Thames Scheme. The Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead were unable to raise the funding required to deliver the channel section and as such this cannot be taken forward by the River Thames Scheme.

Removing this section of channel does not change the existing flood risk in this area. The Environment Agency continues to work with the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead to look at flood management solutions in the area. More details can be found at www.gov.uk/government/publications/datchet-to-hythe-end-flood-improvement-measures.

Dredging

Dredging is the removal of sediment and debris from the bottom of rivers, lakes and other water bodies.

It is an important part of general maintenance for the River Thames. It is often done at a shallow depth to remove obstructions in the water to provide depth for boat navigation and keep the river flowing.

Dredging along the entire length of the River Thames Scheme area would not reduce flood risk as the river is too wide and too deep for this to be effective. It would also be costly, disruptive and environmentally damaging, and would require frequent re-dredging.

The impact of mass dredging on this scale to ecosystems and wildlife can be significant. Silt can become suspended in the water instead of sitting on the bed, which lowers oxygen levels and harms wildlife. Spawning grounds can also be disturbed by this process.

Desborough Cut

We looked at many different options to help manage water flow and volume in the Desborough Cut. These included widening and lowering the riverbed.

In 2016 we consulted on an option to widen the river. Following your feedback, we have now re-evaluated our proposal for changes to the Desborough Cut. Below are some of the alternative options that were of most interest, along with why they are not being taking forward.

Alternative option	Reason for rejection
<p>Widening the Desborough Cut</p>	<p>Widening the cut either side of the bank would bring a variety of issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the removal of mature riverside trees (north bank) • the disruption of habitats and adverse impact on biodiversity (both) • negative impact on pedestrian environment, including the Thames Path (south bank) • health and safety concerns with reducing pathway width along the Desborough Cut (south bank).
<p>Construction of a new channel cut through the northwest of Desborough Island, with dredging in Desborough Loop to just downstream of Walton Bridge.</p>	<p>This option came from a residents group proposal but was discounted due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cost implications including land purchase requirements for the new channel • costs to excavate the channel and ongoing dredging maintenance requirements • removal of established vegetation for the construction of the new channel • high traffic volumes to Desborough Island during construction phases.
<p>Bed lowering within Desborough Cut. (This is a technique of excavating and reprofiling the riverbed in a localised area and to a greater depth than dredging.)</p>	<p>Although an effective technique, bed lowering at the Desborough Cut would have more of an environmental impact than at our proposed location – downstream of the Cut.</p> <p>It would also require more frequent maintenance in the River Thames Loop than at our proposed location.</p>

The options in the previous table were not taken forward because they carried a higher cost, greater disruption to local communities, and more impact on the natural environment than our preferred option.

Local flood defences

Flood defences will be part of the scheme in certain areas where necessary. They may be raised embankments or walls, small barriers in ditches or protection of individual properties which are designed to reduce flood risk to the areas behind them.

The widespread use of local flood defences in the River Thames Scheme area was considered during the 2009 Flood Risk Strategy consultation but was discounted. This is because flood defences do not achieve the goals of the scheme, would not prevent flooding from occurring, would only provide protection to a limited number of homes and businesses and can be very costly.



3. Integrated scheme

3.1 The River Thames Scheme – in more detail

The River Thames Scheme will reduce the risk of flooding to thousands of homes, businesses and vital infrastructure. It will create new areas of green open space with recreational facilities and connections to wildlife. It will also provide sustainable travel connections to link communities together.

The River Thames Scheme covers an area from Egham to Teddington. The area surrounding this stretch of river and its lakes is diverse. It has been shaped by large construction works including major roads and extensive mineral working. It includes flood plain, heritage landscape, rich natural habitats, housing and businesses and historical and active landfill.

This chapter explores the different elements of the scheme in more detail.

The River Thames Scheme Channel

The River Thames Scheme will create a river channel in two sections. They are called Runnymede Channel Section and Spelthorne Channel Section. Together, they total over 5 miles (8.5km) long. Working together, the two sections will act as new flow routes for excess water when water levels in the River Thames rise too high.

The channels will flow through lakes, intersect existing watercourses such as streams, and cross under major roads.

Additionally, improvements will be made to the weirs at Sunbury, Molesey, and Teddington. We'll also be lowering the riverbed downstream of Desborough Cut.

What is the new channel?

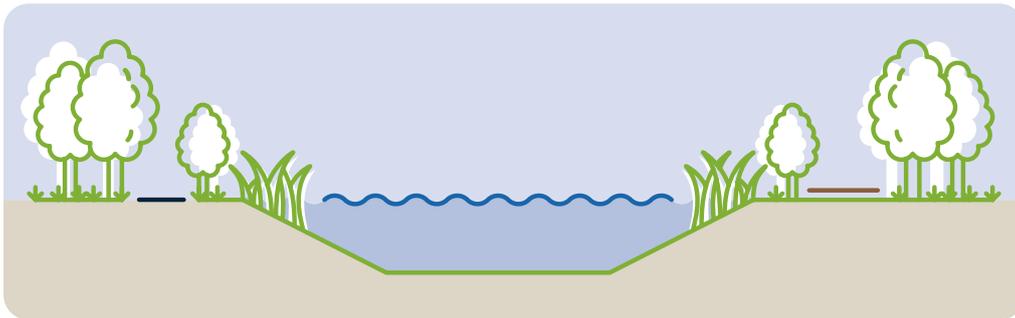
The channel sections are new flow routes which run close to the main river.

As water levels in the River Thames rise, the new flood channel sections will operate by gradually carrying the additional flow, so the water in the River Thames stays within its banks. This continues until the new channel sections are 'full' and no more water can be diverted into them.

At this point, the River Thames will start to flood. However, because the channel sections and additional weir gates provide extra space for the water, the risk of flooding from the River Thames will be greatly reduced.

The channel sections will always have some water in them. They will fit into the landscape so that they look like a normal river that has been there for years.



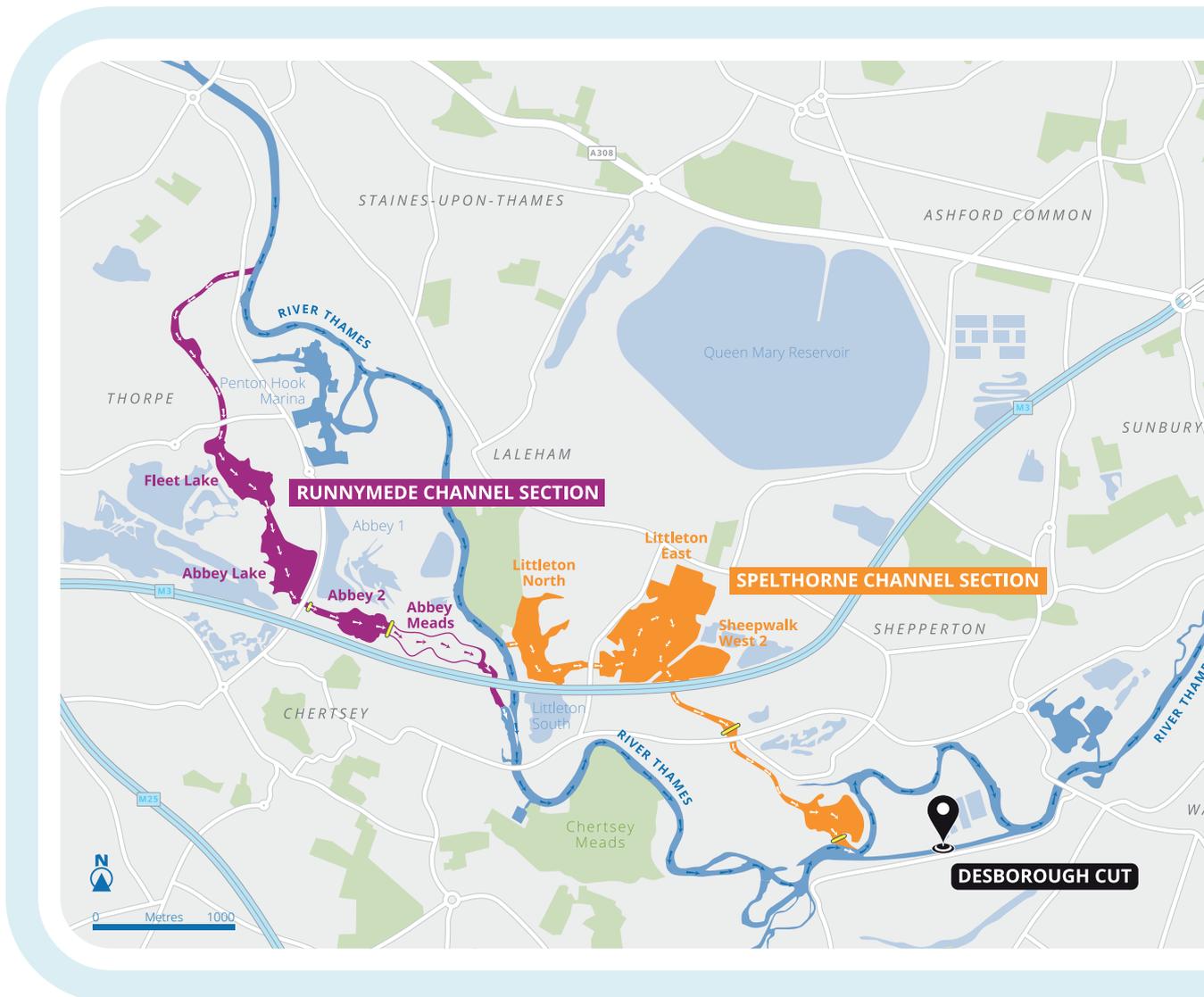


Above: Wherever possible we want the channels to look as much like the natural landscape as possible. In some areas, we may need to use different materials, for example where we need to protect the environment from landfill in the area.

Below: The Jubilee River is example of how a new river channel can blend into the landscape.



Where is the new channel?



RUNNYMEDE CHANNEL SECTION

The Runnymede channel is nearly 3 miles (4.8 km) long and will run from Egham Hythe to Chertsey.

It starts just north of Ferry Avenue where it will cross under the A320 Chertsey Lane. From there, it heads south past Mead Lake and through Fleet Lake. It then joins with Abbey Lake before passing under the A320 Staines Road and joining Abbey 2 Lake.

It will cross new wetlands that will be created at Abbey Meads, before returning to the Thames along the route of the Burway Ditch which passes under the M3, downstream of Chertsey Weir.



SPELTHORNE CHANNEL SECTION

The Spelthorne channel is almost 2 miles (3.2 km) long and runs from Laleham to Weybridge.

It starts between Laleham Sports Ground and the M3 at Thames Side where it enters Littleton North Lake. From there it heads east to join Littleton East Lake and Sheepwalk West 2 Lake before passing under the M3.

From there it flows south under Chertsey Road/Renfree Way before joining Ferry Lane Lake. It then rejoins the Thames opposite D'Oyly Carte Island, upstream of Desborough Island and downstream of Shepperton Weir.

Sunbury, Molesey, and Teddington weirs

The River Thames Scheme is designed to manage both the volume and flow of water. To enable us to manage flood risk downstream of the channels, we will be increasing the amount of water that can flow through Sunbury, Molesey, and Teddington weirs. We're planning to do this by building additional gates at each of them.

At Sunbury there will be three extra gates built on the lock island. At Molesey there will be two extra gates replacing the current fixed weir between Ash Island and Hampton Court Road. At Teddington there will be five new gates built on the lock island. The new gates will only be used during high flows when the channel sections are operating.

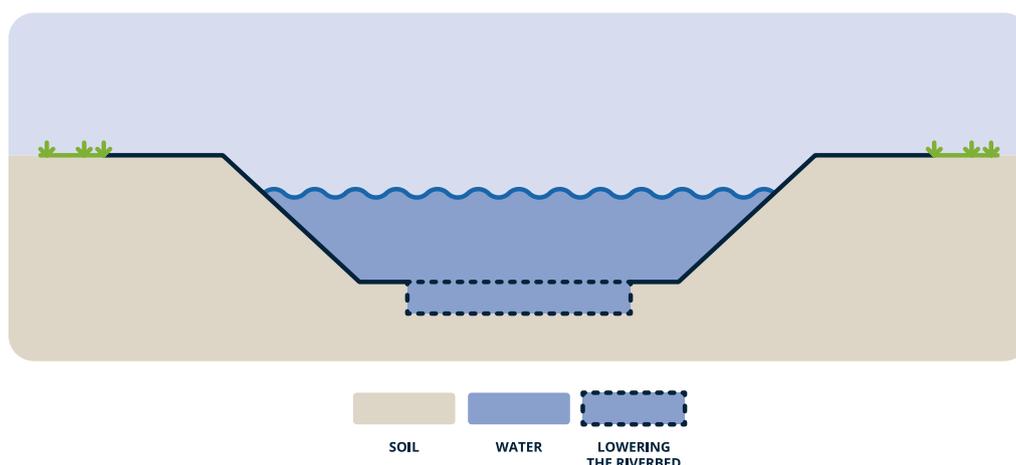
Lowering the riverbed downstream from Desborough Cut

Downstream from an existing River Thames channel called the Desborough Cut, we are proposing lowering the riverbed. Bed lowering is a technique which excavates and reprofiles the river bed in a localised area. Because it works to a greater depth than dredging, which only removes material from the top of the riverbed, it is a longer term solution. We plan to deepen the middle of the riverbed from Desborough Island waterworks to just past Walton Marina by an average of 0.7m. Lowering the riverbed here offsets the impact the channel sections would



otherwise have downstream. By doing this we will allow more water to pass through, reducing the amount that enters the floodplain.

Our plans are based on hydraulic modelling which compared the effectiveness of different options. It was clear from feedback received from the last consultation that there was strong opposition to widening the Desborough Cut. Lowering the riverbed in this location is the alternative option to achieve the required outcomes.



Above: Artistic impression to illustrate bed lowering.



 The weir at Teddington Lock

3.2 Viability

In developing any large project, it is vital to ensure that it will deliver what it sets out to do and that it provides value for money.

The new river channel sections

The routes of the proposed two river channel sections, and improvements to allow more water to flow along the Thames, have been designed to reduce the risk of flooding as much as possible.

The proposals set out in this consultation will provide a significantly reduced risk of flooding in order to better protect residents, properties and vital transport links across the whole area of the River Thames Scheme.

We use extensive design and technical software to help develop our plans and to keep them under review. This work includes a process called hydraulic modelling which helps us to see how the scheme would perform under a wide range of flood conditions.

Our modelling work has also shown that the two proposed channel sections will provide the same protection along the river between Egham and Weybridge as the three channel sections that were previously considered.

Additionally, there will be no increase in flood risk to communities either upstream or downstream of the channel sections. We will ensure this by increasing the amount of water that can flow through

Sunbury, Molesey, and Teddington weirs. We'll do this by building additional gates at each of the weirs. Bed lowering is also being planned downstream of Desborough Cut.

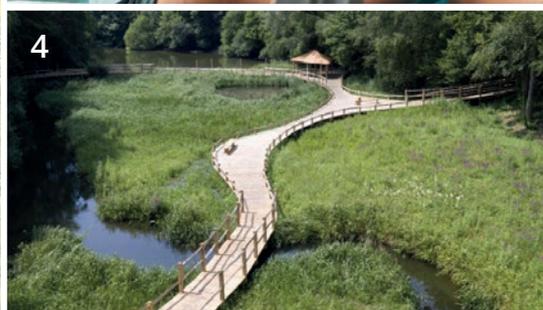
Economic viability

The potential economic benefits of the flood alleviation proposals far exceed the estimated cost of building and maintenance.

Residents and businesses in the River Thames Scheme area suffered in 2014 when flooding devastated local homes and businesses.

The estimated economic impact of a major flood is currently around £1 billion but damage could be twice as great by 2055 because of the impact of climate change.

Additionally, thanks to the work to develop more green open spaces and opportunities for recreation and active travel, there will also be wider economic benefits. Riverside businesses and the local economy will receive a boost as more people come to, and use, the river and surrounding area.



3.3 New public areas of green open space

A key aim of the River Thames Scheme is to provide better access to green open spaces, connect people with wildlife and deliver a more sustainable travel network. We'll deliver these improvements by creating new public areas with new footpaths and cycleways.

Areas will be as accessible as possible, allowing people to connect with nature and so contribute to their health and wellbeing.



Providing more green space along the river will open up opportunities for leisure activities such as jogging, walking, cycling, sports and games, paddleboarding, canoeing and fishing. These green spaces can provide social, mental, and physical health benefits for our community.

New visitor facilities will welcome a diverse range of people of all ages. These could include sports pitches, bike tracks, sculpture trails, and spaces for play and performance.



New wetlands introduced along the river or the new channel sections will attract a wide range of fish, birds, and other wildlife. Improvements to grassland and vegetation will increase the variety of plants and animals. Tree planting and woodland improvement will capture carbon and restore the natural landscape.

There is an opportunity to create education areas too, by installing descriptive boards with facts on local wildlife and heritage.



We have the opportunity to create a new and exciting landscape. There is a need to balance the priorities of creating high quality wildlife habitats, providing leisure facilities, and an active travel network. The three things must support each other.

We want to hear your views on what you would like to see and how you would use the new areas of green open space. This will help us to develop designs that will deliver what you want and need.

Once we've developed our options, we'll be asking for your feedback again during the next consultation.



Photo Credits

1. LUC landuse.co.uk, 2. Broxap Ltd /Sunshine Gym, 3. POD Design, 4. Visual Air/Wild Deck Company

3.4 Habitat creation



Creating, restoring and improving habitats, the places where local wildlife live, is extremely important. They support a wide range of different species, including those that are rare or protected by law. They also help to maintain local biodiversity, which is the variety of living organisms in an area.

The River Thames Scheme will work closely with communities and local wildlife and environmental groups to maximise the environmental benefit of the scheme in order to protect and improve the local environment.

We will provide new high quality habitats. We will replace habitats where they are unavoidably lost or changed when the scheme is built. We will also improve and enhance existing areas to leave more areas for wildlife than before. Our habitat work could include wetlands, grasslands, woodlands, rivers, ponds and hedgerows.

Work is ongoing to understand the habitats and species within the scheme area. You may have seen surveyors on site gathering this information. This allows us to plan how we can improve, restore and extend wildlife habitats.



THE DESIGN PROCESS



SURVEY

Ongoing surveys by our ecologists to understand the existing habitats and what species are present



DESIGN

Options for creating and maintaining new and existing habitats. Plans to safely re-locate species during construction and recreate some habitats that will be unavoidably lost, as well as create new and existing habitat areas



DIALOGUE

Continuous conversations with interested people, in particular with landowners and wildlife groups



CREATION

Careful implementation of our plans

We want to hear your views on our plans to create and maintain habitats.

Once we've developed our options, we'll be asking for your feedback again during the next consultation.



Fill in our questionnaire at www.riverthamescheme.org.uk/questionnaire or pick up a paper copy.

4. Environmental considerations

In developing a scheme of this size, we have to consider many different factors. This includes the environmental impact of our proposals. To do this we undertake surveys and modelling work which are currently ongoing. The results of this work will go into producing a Preliminary Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) which will identify any environmental effects (good and bad) and provide possible solutions.

The PEIR will be based on the information we have at the time. This information will be available in more detail at our next consultation once the work has been completed.

After the next consultation, we will complete an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

The EIA will look at the current environment along the route of the scheme and assess what impact construction and operation will have. It will look at ways to reduce any significant impact and how the scheme can improve the local environment.

The results of this will be provided in an Environmental Statement. This will likely look at the impact of the scheme on landscape, cultural heritage, ecology, noise, water environment, people, natural resources, soils and geology, waste, traffic and transport, and air quality. The Statement will be provided as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to inform the planning decision.

In this chapter we will introduce some of the most important environmental considerations.

4.1 Water quality and flow

Thousands of people enjoy boating, swimming or fishing, in The River Thames and its nearby lakes each year. It is home to important bird populations, over 100 species of fish and more than 400 invertebrate species.

As we develop The River Thames Scheme proposals, very careful consideration will be given to managing water quality.

That's why we have been monitoring rivers, lakes, and groundwater within the River Thames Scheme area for the past decade.

Throughout each season, we frequently take water samples from the river and nearby streams, lakes, and groundwater. The findings help us to better understand water quality and the different things that are in the river, such as sediment, pesticides, and nutrient levels.

We also monitor the river flow, along with groundwater and lake levels across the study area. This helps us to understand how they interact with each other. We also learn about fish swimming routes.

All this data feeds into our environmental assessments so that any potential impact on water quality and flow can be understood and, where possible, measures incorporated into the scheme design to limit impacts.



4.2 The importance of the floodplain

The proposed river channel for the River Thames Scheme will be built through a diverse environment, including floodplains.

A floodplain is an important area of land next to a river which gets submerged in water when the river floods. It is a rich natural habitat for wildlife and provides an important natural flood management function by storing flood water. It also helps regulate the passage of water downstream and manage water flows. Without floodplains, more flooding would occur elsewhere, such as in built up areas.

The special function that floodplains provide means that there are legal requirements which must be considered before building on them.

Over the years in the River Thames Scheme area, many homes and businesses have been built within and near the floodplain. This puts them at risk of flooding. We also anticipate that climate change will increase pressure on our rivers and the Thames is more likely to flood in the future. This is why our proposed new river channel sections are so important.

Any building we undertake in the floodplain will be considered very carefully. Our plans for the channel sections have been developed using hydraulic modelling and are designed to work with the natural processes of the floodplain.

This consideration will ensure that we minimise losses to the floodplain, do not increase the flood risk, and minimise any impact to natural habitats.

4.3 Materials management

The River Thames Scheme is committed to responsible and sustainable construction.

This approach includes following the Waste Hierarchy which ranks waste management options according to what is best for the environment. It gives top priority to preventing waste in the first place. When waste is created, it gives priority to preparing it for re-use, then recycling, then recovery, and last of all disposal (e.g. landfill).

Building the new river channel sections will unavoidably mean excavating a lot of material. Our proposal will try to reduce this material by routing the channel sections through existing lakes and rivers where possible.

We will also seek to deliver other elements of the scheme, such as the green open spaces, by reusing material gained from within the scheme where appropriate.

We will always look to recycle materials.

By applying the hierarchy, we will minimise the amount of material that needs to come on-site, as well as materials that need to be taken off-site to landfill. This will help to reduce construction traffic, air quality and noise impact, and reduce our carbon footprint.

- Planning to avoid waste
- Reducing waste that would otherwise go to landfill
- Reusing materials where appropriate
- Recycling anything we can't use, where we can.



We will provide you with more information about how we will manage material in the next consultation. This will include more detail about reducing construction traffic as well as air quality and noise impacts.





Collecting sediment samples, River Thames at Walton Bridge

4.4 Ground investigations

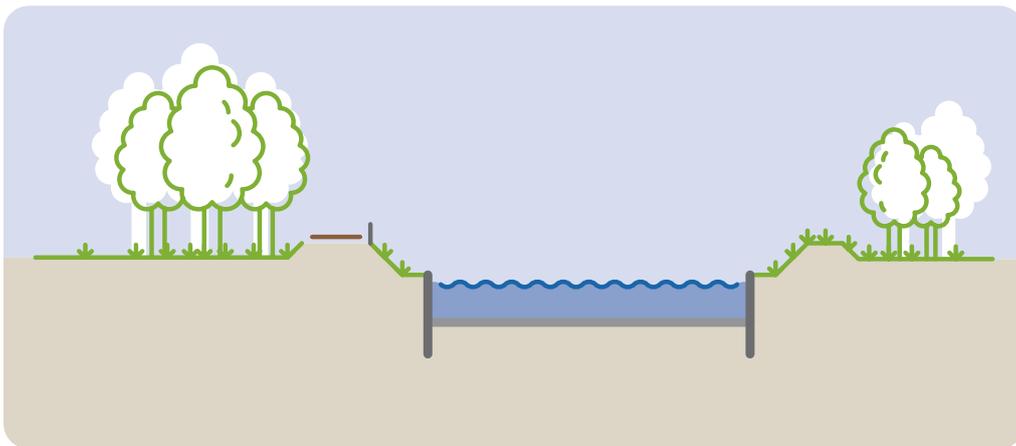
The routes of the channel sections pass through historical and existing landfill sites.

We've been investigating what's inside them since 2015. We use boreholes to test what's there, and also review historical records.

Ground investigation surveys are currently ongoing to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of the material inside these sites.

This will be used to help us understand how much material is suitable for potential re-use on the scheme, and how much will be transported off-site for disposal. It will also provide us with information on contamination within the landfill sites.

We will be using this information to help design a barrier to prevent any potential contamination getting into the new channel sections.



Above: Artistic impression of channel section showing a barrier which will be used in some areas of the channel to prevent contamination.

5. Permission to build the scheme

The River Thames Scheme originally needed permission through the Town and Country Planning process. We are now following a process set out in the Planning Act 2008 for a Development Consent Order (DCO).

The process of applying for a DCO still has lots of opportunities to give your view to help the design of the scheme evolve. Your views are important for this consultation and our next consultation planned for 2023. You will also have the chance to give your feedback to the Planning Inspectorate after we submit our application.

5.1 Development Consent Order (DCO)

Getting a Development Consent Order for the River Thames Scheme

In December 2020 the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs directed that the River Thames Scheme be treated as a project of national significance because of its scope, size, and complexity, as well as the benefits it delivers. Other types of projects that could be categorised in this way include offshore windfarms, major pipelines and new road projects.

This means that the River Thames Scheme will apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO), as set out in the Planning Act 2008.

What is a DCO?

A DCO would give us permission to build and operate the scheme. Unlike other processes it means we would only apply to one place for almost all the different types of consent we need. This ensures that all scheme elements are reviewed and agreed to in one go, making the process simpler and quicker. A DCO also includes the legal power to compulsorily buy land for the scheme.

To successfully develop the scheme for our DCO application we must talk to lots of different people and organisations including the public, local residents and landowners, local councils, and regulatory bodies. We must seek and respond to their views through consultation and ongoing engagement.

There are extensive legal requirements about how consultation should be carried out and reported on. This is so we can show how we have responded to any concerns people have and make changes to the design where appropriate before the DCO application is made.

When the scheme is finalised it will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate. They will consider our application and make a recommendation to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who has the final decision on whether a DCO should be granted.

The DCO process

Once the scheme has been submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, there is a clear and fixed process and timescale for when a decision about awarding a DCO is made.



5.2 Funding and partnerships

Securing funding and ensuring value for money is one of the key considerations when delivering a scheme of this size.

The River Thames Scheme, including the green open spaces, river channel sections and habitat creation areas is fully funded by collaborative partnerships.

This is made up of national and local government funding and investment provided through partners. The majority of the funding has been committed by central government and Surrey County Council.

Additional funding is being contributed by partner organisations. This includes local authorities in the area: Runnymede Borough Council, Elmbridge Borough Council and Spelthorne Borough Council. It also includes Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Thames Water and two Local Enterprise Partnerships: Surrey Enterprise M3 & Thames Valley Berkshire.

The London boroughs of Richmond upon Thames and Kingston upon Thames are partners, but are not responsible for funding the scheme.



6. Get involved

We would like to get your feedback about our proposals for the River Thames Scheme.

That's why we are holding this consultation, which is running from Tuesday 8 November 2022 until 23:59 on Tuesday 20 December 2022.

This consultation is a critical step in the River Thames Scheme. All of your consultation feedback is important to us and will help to shape our proposals going forward.

There are a number of ways that you can find out more about the scheme and then share your feedback.



Find out more

Events

There will be events running throughout the consultation period. This is your opportunity to ask our project team any questions you have about the scheme.

Consultation Events 2022

Location	Date	Time
Staines , Hythe Centre, 36 Thorpe Rd, Staines-upon-Thames, Egham TW18 3HD	Tue 8th Nov	13:00 - 19:00
Sunbury on Thames , Hazelwood Centre, Hazelwood Drive, Sunbury-on-Thames TW16 6QU	Wed 16th Nov	13:00 - 19:00
East Molesey , The Molesey Centre for the Community, 2 Bishop Fox Way, Molesey, West Molesey KT8 2AS	Sat 19th Nov	12:00 - 18:00
Egham , The Easter Centre, Manor Farm Lane, Egham, Surrey TW20 9HR	Tue 22nd Nov	13:00 - 19:00
Walton on Thames , St Johns Parish Church, The Furrows, Walton-on-Thames KT12 3JQ	Wed 23rd Nov	13:00 - 19:00
Wraysbury , Wraysbury Village Hall, The Green, Wraysbury, Staines TW19 5NA	Fri 25th Nov	13:00 - 19:00
Kingston upon Thames , Richard Mayo Centre, Eden St, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1HZ	Sat 26th Nov	10:00 - 16:00
Teddington , Peter and Paul Centre (Church), By Church End, Teddington TW11 8PS	Tue 29th Nov	13:00 - 19:00
Shepperton , Shepperton Village Hall, 58A High St, Shepperton TW17 9AU	Sat 3rd Dec	10:00 - 16:00
Chertsey , St. Peter's Church, Windsor Street, Chertsey, Surrey KT16 8AT	Wed 7th Dec	13:00 - 19:00

Virtual events 2022

Date	Time
Thu 10th Nov	18:00 - 19:30
Sat 12th Nov	10:00 - 11:30
Fri 18th Nov *	18:00 - 19:30
Thu 24th Nov	18:00 - 19:30
Mon 28th Nov	13:00 - 14:30

* This event has content specifically tailored for the Island Communities

Information points

For those who cannot attend an event or access the brochure online, copies of the brochure will be available at different venues in the community.

Please visit our website or call the contact centre for further information **[p.47]**





Share your feedback

Questionnaire

You can provide feedback by completing our questionnaire.

The easiest way to do this is to complete it online www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk/questionnaire. There is plenty of space to make comments and you can take your time, saving it and returning at your convenience.

Alternatively, you can complete a paper copy and send it back to us at no cost, using our Freepost address. All you need is an envelope. Freepost address: **FREEPOST RTUK – RBLY – XUBT, RIVER THAMES SCHEME**

If you are unable to complete the questionnaire, you can email us with your feedback at rts@environment-agency.gov.uk please state clearly that your email is your River Thames Scheme consultation feedback to ensure it is accepted.

All responses should be received by Tuesday 20 December 2022. Any responses received after this date may not be considered as part of the consultation process.

Contact

Please get in touch with us if you have any questions about the River Thames Scheme or the consultation process.

Environment Agency National Customer Contact Centre
03708 506 506
rts@environment-agency.gov.uk

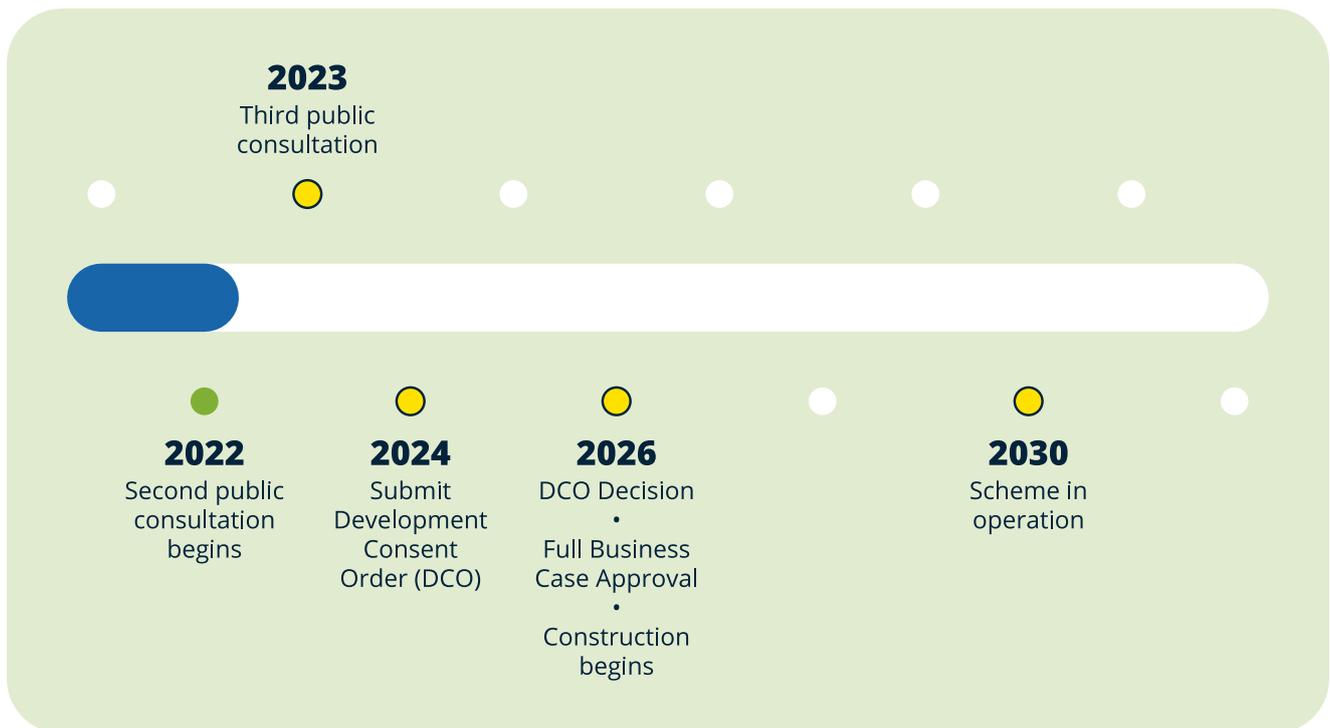
What happens next

All the feedback we receive will be carefully considered by the landscape architects, civil engineers, environmental scientists, water modelling experts and others working on the River Thames Scheme.

It will be helpful in preparing the plans for the scheme which will be shared in our next consultation, planned for 2023.

All comments and suggestions will be logged as a record of feedback received. We will then undertake a programme of analysis and produce a consultation report. This report will summarise and respond to the feedback received and will be made available to the public.

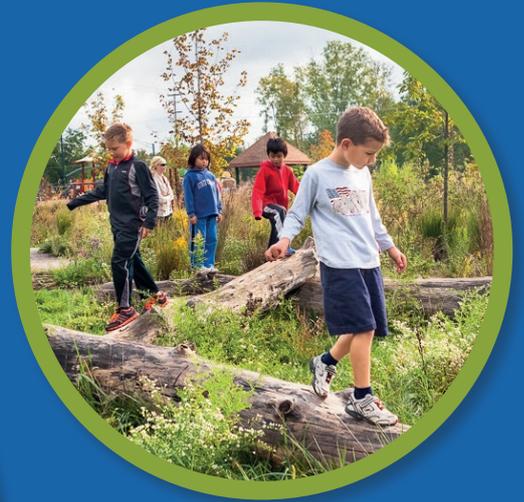
It will show how we have made changes in response to feedback and or why we have been unable to make the changes suggested.



Completed tasks ● Current/future tasks ●



River Thames, from Shepperton countryside



Accessibility

If you would prefer this brochure in a different format or language please email rts@environment-agency.gov.uk and we will do our best to help.

FSC

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Contact

Customer Contact Centre
03708 506 506
rts@environment-agency.gov.uk

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Fill in our questionnaire at
www.riverthamescheme.org.uk/questionnaire
or pick up a paper copy.