

Sankey Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme – Newsletter 3

July 2023

Background

Welcome to our latest newsletter which provides an update of progress on the Sankey Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme.

The Sankey Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme (FRMS) aims to reduce the flood risk to homes and businesses from Sankey Brook, Dallam Brook and Longford Brook in Warrington. There are more than 1,700 residential properties currently at risk of flooding during a 1 in 100 year flooding event (1% chance of occurring in any given year). The onset of flooding for some of these properties is as frequent as once every 10 to 20 years. Key areas include Sankey Bridges, Dallam, Bewsey and Callands.

The Environment Agency (EA) is working in partnership with Warrington Borough Council, United Utilities, the Department for Education, and the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee on the Sankey Brook FRMS.

This project is a recommendation from the Warrington Flood Risk Management Strategy (dated 2010). Linking to this strategy, to date, the Environment Agency has delivered the River Mersey Flood Risk Scheme in Warrington, which provides flood protection to over 2,000 properties and businesses. The Penketh and Whittle Flood Risk Scheme, which will better protect over 220 properties from flooding from Penketh Brook and Whittle Brook, is currently under construction and due to be completed in Autumn 2023.

What has been done so far?

The EA has completed the Strategic Outline Case (SOC) for the Sankey Brook Flood Risk Management Scheme. This provided a high-level assessment of what could be looked at to reduce the risk of flooding. It also supports the economics and benefits to progress the project.

We are now working towards the Outline Business Case (OBC) and the ongoing activities include:

- Modelling flooding scenarios - understanding all flood risk sources and different flood mitigation measures, to establish a preferred option to protect the community. This includes the following measures:
 - Flood water attenuation and storage
 - Flood defence and embankments
 - Improved river channel conveyance
 - Surface water mitigation measures
- Looking at wider environmental improvements that can also be delivered as part of this project

- Working with our partners to identify a preferred scheme option
- Keeping MPs, Councillors and the local communities updated by newsletters, online consultations via the Flood hub and public community drop-ins.

Where we are now

Since the last public community drop-in sessions and newsletters, we have been working with our consultants and partners on the appraisal of the scheme. The appraisal stage of a Flood Risk Management project can be a complicated process and often involves a lot of re-thinking and re-working as we get a better understanding of the flooding problem and the implications of the solutions being considered.

To date, our focus for the Sankey Brook FRMS has been looking at a combination of upstream flood storage and defences to mitigate flooding risk. We are also looking at additional measures to address residual surface water flood risk. This is what was presented at the public displays held in late 2022.

Following the public displays, we have continued to progress our assessment with the aim of establishing a preferred scheme option. However, as this assessment has progressed, it has become apparent that to develop an appropriate scheme option which provides an adequate standard of flood protection (to at least defend against an event comparable to that experienced during Storm Christoph in Jan 2021) there is a need for excessively high flood defences (walls in excess of 3m above ground level at some locations).

Furthermore, the volumes of water being impounded at some locations, as a consequence of these new flood walls, would fall into the domain of a formal flood storage reservoir. This would need to comply with the Reservoirs Act, and this, as well as the other associated risks, including public safety, would have to be addressed.

With this challenge, we are now reviewing and looking to improve river flow conveyance in the vicinity of Liverpool Road in Sankey Bridges. The Liverpool Road bridges over Sankey Brook and Sankey Canal cause a significant bottleneck to river flows during high flow events. If we can improve river flow at this location, then the required heights of flood defences upstream can be significantly reduced.

It is likely that the most cost-effective and technically feasible solution will include conveyance improvements at Liverpool Road alongside the already considered upstream storage, linear flood defences and residual surface water mitigation measures.

Improving river flow conveyance will be technically challenging but could be achieved by raising the bridges, installing bypass culverts or undertaking modifications to the existing bridges to allow flows to weir over them during storm events (including the operation of flood gates or demountable defences across Liverpool Road to contain the river flows during these flood events).

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incident hotline
0800 80 70 60

floodline
03459 88 11 88

Because of this further appraisal work, our planned date for the approval of our Outline Business Case (approval of preferred scheme option) is now autumn 2024.

We recognise that this revised programme date will be disappointing news for many of you, particularly those who have experienced flooding during Storm Christoph.

It is imperative that we take the time now to ensure that we identify the best solution to mitigate flood risk, demonstrate value for money and ultimately deliver the best outcome for the local community.

Wider environmental benefits we are looking to promote

As well as protecting homes and businesses from flood risk, the EA is also looking to promote wider scheme benefits and improvement opportunities. This could be by creating or improving environmental habitats in the area, improving recreational and amenity areas, promoting local heritage or delivering tree planting and other similar opportunities which will develop and enhance the character of the scheme area.

To ensure that we deliver the best outcomes and maximise these opportunities, we will continue to engage with the community, local groups and key stakeholders in the area.

Current programme of works

Due to additional appraisal work mentioned above the current programme is:

- Preferred Scheme Identified – End of 2023
- Outline Business Case approved – end of 2024
- Detailed Design and Funding for Construction Approved – 2026
- Construction Start – 2027

Funding

We must acknowledge there has been significant cost increases across all sectors of the construction industry. Both the scale of this project and the costs have to be monitored and managed effectively. Whilst the primary source of funding for this project will be from central government ('Flood Defence Grant in Aid') we are actively working with our key partners including the Department of Education, the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, and other bodies to identify potential funding streams to strengthen our funding strategy to enable us to progress to the next project stage.

Other Interim Works

Since Storm Christoph, we have worked closely with our partners, including Warrington Borough Council and United Utilities, to deliver interim measures which will reduce the risk of flooding in the communities. More information on this is available at the Flood Hub website: thefloodhub.co.uk

Highlights from this include:

- **Rostherne Close, Sankey Bridges** - A sandbag wall was constructed as an interim contingency measure and has since been strengthened to prevent flood flow route from Sankey Brook channel

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- **Higham Avenue** – Warrington Borough Council is working in collaboration with United Utilities and a project is nearing completion to upgrade two pumps, install new electrics and to raise the electric cabinet to a higher level to prevent failure in the event of flooding.
- **Charter Avenue** - New valves have now been installed, successfully protecting multiple properties from flooding.
- **Densham Avenue** - Due to repeated flooding events, Warrington Borough Council, in collaboration with partners United Utilities and the Environment Agency, designed and implemented a new pump station to reduce the risk of future flooding to Densham Avenue. The project involved the demolition of the previous drainage system outfall into Dallam Brook and the construction of a new pumping station. Three new pumps were installed to help discharge water from the drainage system into Dallam Brook.

We will continue to keep you updated on other works delivered within the Area.

Public engagement – keeping in touch

We are planning further public community drop-in sessions this Autumn – invitations with dates and venues will be distributed nearer the time.

However, if you have any queries or concerns and would like to speak to a member of the project team, please email FloodResilienceGMMC@environment-agency.gov.uk or if you do not have access to email, please call 02030 250495

Information regarding the proposed scheme is available on the flood hub at the following link thefloodhub.co.uk/sankeybrookfrmswarrington

If you would like to share any other thoughts or comments please get in touch with us at FloodResilienceGMMC@environment-agency.gov.uk

Environment Agency flood alerts / warnings

We encourage residents who are at risk of flooding to sign up to the Environment Agency's free by calling Floodline, on 0345 988 1188, or by going online: gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings. For further information on flood warnings and how to prepare for flooding please visit thefloodhub.co.uk/am-i-at-risk/

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