

River Mersey Embankments Briefing Note

October 2025

This briefing note provides an update on the River Mersey embankment repairs in Didsbury and Northenden, following the New Year 2025 flooding. It supersedes the briefing issued in January.

Background

The River Mersey in South Manchester flows through communities from the confluence of the River Goyt and Tame in Stockport, through Didsbury and Sale. The Environment Agency operates and maintains a flood risk management scheme comprising of two flood storage reservoirs (Sale Ees and Didsbury), flood embankments / walls, and other assets such as debris screens and penstocks. Originally constructed in the 1960s and 70s, the scheme was upgraded in Northenden in the early 2000s.

What happened?

Over New Year, significant rainfall led to the Environment Agency issuing 55 flood warnings and alerts across Wigan and Greater Manchester. The region experienced 70mm of rainfall in 18 hours, resulting in record river levels (highest ever recorded on the River Mersey). Approximately 11,974 properties were protected by flood defences, while 99 properties were unfortunately flooded.

Reducing flood risk is the Environment Agency's top priority. All flood defences, including the Didsbury and Sale Ees flood storage reservoirs, were operated as is standard practice. However, the volume of rainfall exceeded the design standard of many defences, causing widespread overtopping and breaches in some embankments.

What did this mean?

Numerous properties, infrastructure, and amenities were at increased risk of flooding whilst there were breaches in the flood embankments, until repairs were made.

What have we done?

We immediately amended flood warning thresholds to ensure people at risk of flooding are warned appropriately. This would give people time to act and stay safe when flooding is likely.

A rapid inspection programme was implemented to ensure the extent of damage was fully understood and a programme of emergency works was completed. We completed emergency works at all breach locations using a helicopter to ensure an improved standard of protection was provided in the interim whilst full repair details were developed and implemented.



Emergency works completed at Ford Lane (Didsbury Sports Ground)

We have now completed the works to reinstate the embankment breaches. Two breaches at Northenden Golf Club were completed in early August, with works to repair the breach at the rear of Britannia Hotel being completed in early September.



Reinstated Embankments at Northenden Golf Club and to rear of Britannia Hotel

The largest breach and associated 400m stretch of embankment damage near Ford Lane at Didsbury Sports Ground was completed in September, with reinstatement works continuing in October & November.



Reinstated Embankment at Ford Lane (Didsbury Sports Ground) with landscaping works ongoing

What is the current situation?

Following reinstatement of the embankments we have now reinstated and updated the flood warning and flood alert thresholds for the area as the scheme is operating back to the original design standard.

Working together with our partners

Environment Agency partners are being updated via the Local Resilience Forum, and we have worked closely with Manchester City Council and other professional partners throughout the works

What about future plans to manage flood risk?

The River Mersey South Manchester Strategy is currently reviewing how flood risk is managed in this area in the future. Further information is available from the Flood Hub at [River Mersey \(South Manchester Catchments\) Strategy Project | The Flood Hub](#)

Where can I get further information?

If you have any questions or queries, please email the Environment Agency's local flood resilience team at FloodResilienceGMMC@environment-agency.gov.uk or via the Flood Hub at [River Mersey Embankments at Didsbury and Northenden | The Flood Hub](#)

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