

Environment and Sustainability Committee



Date of meeting 14 September 2021

Title	River Thames Scheme update
Purpose of the report	To note
Report Author	Sandy Muirhead Group Head Commissioning and Transformation
Ward(s) Affected	All Wards
Exempt	No
Exemption Reason	N/A
Corporate Priority	Clean and Safe Environment
Recommendations	Committee is asked to: To note
Reason for Recommendation	Not applicable

1. Key issues

- 1.1 The River Thames Scheme (RTS) will reduce flood risk to communities in Surrey and South West London. More than 11,000 homes and 1,600 businesses from Staines to Molesey will benefit from reduced flood risk by the development of the scheme across the area, and road, rail, power, and water networks will be more resilient.

In addition to reducing flood risk, the scheme will:

- contribute to a vibrant local economy by providing greater resilience to flooding of homes, businesses, and key infrastructure.
- enhance the social and environmental value of the river
- create new green spaces and recreation such as fishing, boating, and cycling

The scheme will involve the construction of a new river channel. This will be built in 2 sections at Spelthorne and Runnymede (Appendix 1). The scheme will also include capacity improvements to:

- Desborough Cut
- Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington weirs

- 1.2 A key factor for the River Thames Scheme progressing onto its next stage of development was approval by HM Treasury of the outline business case. This approval was received in spring 2021. The project is now finalising technical design work and is working towards obtaining the final approvals needed for construction, which on the current planned timetable is likely to commence in 2025/26.
- 1.3 In December 2020, the Secretary of State approved a request for the River Thames Scheme to be designated a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). This means that the project team will apply for permission to build through a Development Consent Order (DCO).
- 1.4 Spelthorne Borough Council along with Elmbridge, Runnymede and Surrey CC have invested in the development of the scheme to protect our residents from flooding. Spelthorne contributed £196,000 to the scheme's development over 4 years from 2016 to 2020 (£49k/year). The scheme does not now require any further revenue contributions from ourselves. We have committed in the Capital Programme 2021 – 2025, which was approved by Council in March 2021, to investing £1.3M in the construction of the scheme. Construction is expected, subject to final approvals, to commence around 2025/26.
- 1.5 Surrey County Council (SCC) is investing £270M in increasing flood resilience across the county. This includes a financial contribution of £237 million to the River Thames Scheme. This contribution along with flood scheme grants from Central Government, the Environment Agency, the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee and others, has enabled the scheme to receive HM Treasury approval to proceed to final design and planning stages.
- 1.6 The River Thames Scheme is being delivered by the Environment Agency and Surrey County Council in partnership with: -
 - Elmbridge Borough Council (EBC)
 - Runnymede Borough Council (RBC)
 - Spelthorne Borough Council (SBC)
 - Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
 - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
 - Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership
 - Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership
 - Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
 - Thames Water
 - Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC)
- 1.7 As a result of HM Treasury approval and the agreement that this project has been designated as a NSIP it is progressing at pace to the next stages including planning via a Development Consent Order.
- 1.8 As the planning aspects involve 4 key authorities (SBC, SCC, EBC, RBC) it has been agreed that the scheme will pay for independent consultants to support the planning authorities in assessing the information being submitted by the applicants. Relevant service level agreements and delineation within

authorities is being put in place to ensure an independent planning assessment of the scheme via the DCO process.

- 1.9 The RTS team are also putting together a consultation process to undertake with local communities. Previous consultations were undertaken in 2016 and 2009.
- 1.10 SBC's involvement in the scheme is important to ensure we maximise benefits from the scheme not only in terms of mitigating flood risk to SBC's communities but also to ensure we maximise other leisure and biodiversity opportunities as part of the scheme.
- 1.11 **Appendix 2** is a press release which gives information on the procurement process in terms of finding a construction partner to build the £501m flood alleviation scheme.

2. Options analysis and proposal

- 2.1 The River Thames scheme has been proposed for some years and will provide more protection for residents against major flooding from the Thames. It will also provide communities with more resilience to extreme weather causing increased flooding risk because of climate change. Therefore, it is important Spelthorne continues its commitment to the scheme to maximise benefits to Spelthorne.
- 2.2 Not to be involved would limit our influence on ensuring the scheme is developed to meet our residents needs including reduced flooding and provision of biodiversity and leisure opportunities. It is a very Important project to prevent flooding and not to be involved would not be compatible with our priorities in serving the community.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 In the early stages of development over 4 years (2016-2020) Spelthorne committed £196k of revenue to the scheme and has committed in its capital Programme £1.3M towards the scheme's construction (expected if consents and final Treasury approvals are agreed) around 2025/26.
- 3.2 There is officer time involved in regular meetings and though much of the assessment of the planning implications will be undertaken by consultants working with the planning authorities there will be a time input required but as yet this is not fully known.

4. Other considerations

- 4.1 There will be public consultations on the scheme, and it is expected these will begin in the autumn.

5. Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 The scheme itself will not amplify any equality and diversity issues but there will need to be assessments for any associated activities with the schemes e.g. layout of paths or cycleways along the channels.

6. Sustainability/Climate Change Implications

- 6.1 The scheme itself will assist in mitigating the impact of flooding in the Borough which may be exacerbated by climate change. The scheme will be built as sustainably as possible and increased biodiversity opportunities through the

creation of wetlands and potentially small woodland and grassland habitats will be incorporated into the scheme.

7. Timetable for implementation

- 7.1 Commencement of construction if approvals are received should be 2025/26 with an expected 4-year build period so completion by 2029.

Background papers: There are none.

Appendix 1 River Thames Scheme map

Appendix 2 Construction Partner Procurement