



River Medway Flood Storage Areas

Newsletter 1 - June 2015

Welcome to the first River Medway Flood Storage Area newsletter. We are keen to keep the local community updated on the progress of our work to reduce flood risk from the Rivers Medway, Beult and Teise and will be issuing regular newsletters throughout the development of the project to help do this.

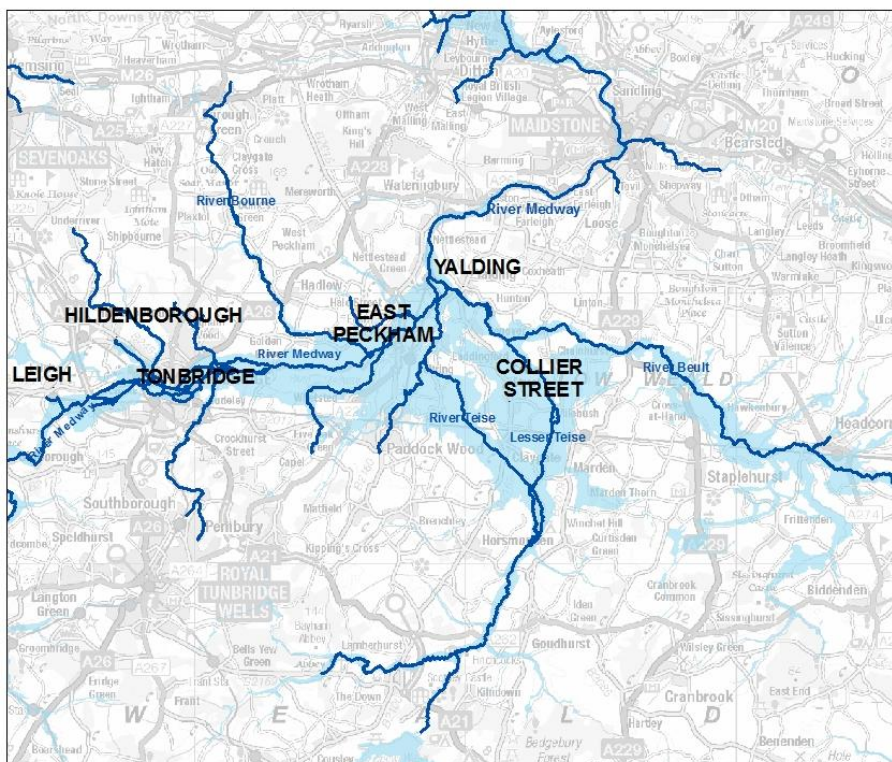
This first newsletter describes the background to the Medway Flood Storage Areas (FSAs) project and the timetable for its delivery.

Background

Over 3,000 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Hildenborough, Yalding and Collier Street are at risk of flooding from the River Medway, the River Beult, and the River Teise. 2,060 of these properties are at significant risk of flooding. Communities in these areas have been affected by flooding in 1960, 1963, 1968, 1974, 1979, 2000/01 and Winter 2013/14.

The Leigh Flood Storage Area (FSA) was built following the flood in 1968 to reduce the risk of flooding to 1,200 homes and businesses in Tonbridge. Whilst the Leigh FSA helps to reduce the flows downstream, many communities are at risk of flooding as they do not have flood defences of their own.

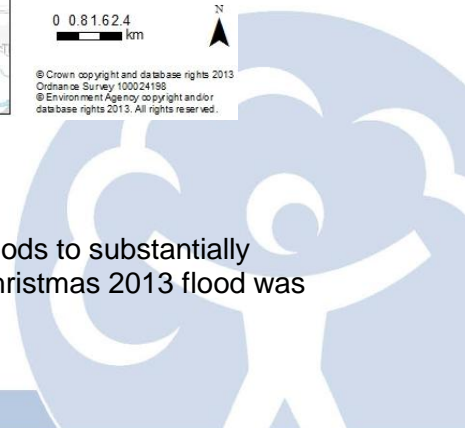
During the Winter 2013-14 floods, over 900 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Yalding, East Peckham and other smaller communities were flooded from the River Medway and its tributaries. This flood was the largest ever measured in many parts of the catchment of the River Medway.



Flood risk from the River Medway and its tributaries

Managing flood risk

The Environment Agency operated the Leigh FSA during the winter 2013/14 floods to substantially reduce the flows in the River Medway and protect 938 homes. However, the Christmas 2013 flood was bigger than the Leigh FSA was designed to manage and properties flooded.



The Environment Agency is working with Kent County Council (KCC), Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) to develop options to reduce the risk of flooding to communities. The scheme is known as the River Medway Flood Storage Areas (FSAs) project.

In 2010, we updated the Middle Medway Strategy, which sets out options to manage flood risk across these rivers. These options include enlarging the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area from 5.5 million m³ to 8.8 million m³ which would improve the standard of protection to homes and businesses in Tonbridge. The Strategy also recommended a second scheme on the River Beult which will reduce the risk of flooding to homes and businesses in Yalding and the surrounding communities.

What are we doing?

The costs of these options are currently estimated to be £34 million. In the 2014 Autumn Statement the government committed approximately 50 per cent of these costs, subject to a viable business case. However the remaining costs must be found before we can construct the scheme. Following the Christmas floods, KCC agreed to find 50 per cent of the costs. KCC is currently exploring ways to raise this funding.

The Environment Agency has used the information gathered during the Christmas 2013 flood to update their flood model of the catchment. This is being used by engineering consultants to further develop the options in the Middle Medway Strategy. Although the Strategy recommended increasing the flood storage at Leigh FSA and further flood storage on the River Beult, we are considering a wide range of options to ensure that we deliver the best solution for these areas.

In order to secure the government's funding contribution to construct a scheme we must prepare a business case that demonstrates the reduction in flood risk that it will provide, how the defences could be constructed and how we will make best use of public money. Government, TMBC, MBC and KCC have contributed approximately £1 million to develop the business case. During the first phase we will:

- investigate the possible options to understand whether they are technically, environmentally, socially, and financially possible. This will help us to select a preferred option.
- develop an outline design for the preferred option.
- talk to local landowners and the wider public about the impact of any works and how this can be mitigated.
- gain planning permission and environmental permits for the final scheme.

Future work

The business case will be considered by Defra in 2018. Once the business case is approved, we will then move to the detailed design phase in 2018-2019. Currently, our indicative funding programme shows construction between 2019 and 2022. However, future funding is allocated each year and projects are prioritised nationally based on the reduction in flood risk they provide, and how much external funding they have sourced.

The timeframes for the project are set out below:

When	Activity
Now	Early investigations into potential options
May 2016	Start outline design
February 2017	Complete outline design
May 2017	Submit business case to Defra
2018	Detailed design
2019 - 2022	Construction

Find out more

If you want any more information on the project or have any questions, please call Neil Gunn on 03708 506 506 or email us at: MedwayFSA@environment-agency.gov.uk