

## Cotswolds Flood Forum – Environment Agency update

*As requested by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, the following provides a summary of progress the Environment Agency has made with respect to the topics covered at the Cotswolds Flood Forum since the last meeting in Cirencester on 24 November 2024.*

### Winter 2023 / 2024

- Rainfall for England over the last 6 months has been the wettest on record.
- Our flood defences and operational activities protected approximately 11,000 homes in the Thames Valley (over 100,000 across England) from flooding during early January alone.
- Unfortunately, several hundred homes and businesses were flooded from the river in the Thames catchment. Alongside the impacts to homes and the financial costs and distress this caused, many areas of floodplain land were submerged in flood water for significant periods of the winter.
- We delivered our 24/7 flood warning and incident response service throughout the winter. This involved issuing flood alerts and warnings, clearing debris/blockages from rivers, deploying staff to engage with flooded communities, and working closely with partners and the emergency services. It has been a prolonged and intensive period of incident response for us which we have prioritised, and we continue to put time and resource into flood recovery work.
- Flood alerts continue to be in force for the River Churn and its tributaries and the River Coln and its tributaries (correct at time of writing)  
[Check for flooding in England - GOV.UK \(check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk\)](https://check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk)
- Across the Thames Valley in March, exceptionally high river flows were recorded at all our indicator sites and groundwater levels were exceptionally high at the majority of our indicator sites for the time of the year  
[Thames water situation report: March 2024 summary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thames-water-situation-report-march-2024-summary)  
[Hydrology Data Explorer - Explore](#)

### Main River Maintenance

- The River Churn, the Daglingworth Stream and the Gumstool Brook continue to feature on our maintenance programme. The programme has commenced, with the first works taking place along the Churn in Cirencester this month.
- Efforts to remove blockages from the Churn above and below Cirencester have been hindered by the long, wet winter and the ground conditions and resource demands that brings. We will endeavour to remove these blockages throughout the year as and when environmental conditions and resources make it possible.

### Hereward Road Temporary Defences

- We have supplied additional kit and materials to Cirencester Town Council to bolster the Hereward Road Temporary Defences and assist with deployment.

### Trash screen & camera improvements

- We remain in the early stages of engagement with our contractor regarding installation of cameras on the trash screens at Powell's School and Somerford Keynes. These works have been slowed due to demands upon our resources this winter.

### Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

- The sluice gates have been operated successfully in accordance with the MoU during the high flow events of this winter.
- We have been regularly engaging with Cirencester Town Council at an operational level during high flow events to ensure everything is working as expected.

### Natural Flood Management (NFM)

- We have provided funding through the Water Environment Improvement Fund to the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, in partnership with Gloucestershire County Council, to identify water quality improvement and NFM opportunities in the Upper Thames catchment. Five sites were identified, with advice provided to landowners on capital works and future funding opportunities, via our partners.
- As part of Gloucestershire County Council's coordination of NFM projects throughout the county, the Environment Agency is represented on the council-led steering committee to ensure join-up and good collaboration.
- Our bid to the [Natural Flood Management Programme](#) to deliver natural flood management measures in the Fairford area, within the wider remit of our Thames Valley Flood Scheme project, was not successful.

### Siddington

- The river channels around and through Siddington Bridge feature on our maintenance programme for 2024.

### Fairford

- We have contributed to the Fairford Water and Sewage Issues Joint Working Group alongside Councillors and partners.

**Approved by:** Joe Cuthbertson, Thames Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager,  
Environment Agency

**19 April 2024**