

## North 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 topics relevant for the meeting on 06 December 2024 in Moreton-in-Marsh.*

### Autumn 2024

- **September** - parts of England experienced the wettest September on record ([Record-breaking rainfall for some this September - Met Office](#)). The North Cotswolds constituency covers the Upper River Thames and the River Severn drainage catchments. For this area, the rainfall in September was three times the long-term average. Our Water Situation Reports for [Midlands](#) and [Thames](#) provide further information.
- The prolonged heavy rainfall on the 23 September 2024 resulted in extensive flooding across Gloucestershire (and neighbouring Oxfordshire). Many reports indicated localised flooding impacts to roads, infrastructure and properties. There are several rainfall gauges, river level, flow and groundwater level gauges in the North Cotswolds area which are available via the [Hydrology Data Explorer](#). Local observed rainfall accumulation recorded on 23 September ranged from 40.00mm to 93.01mm across the area and rainfall on this one day was equivalent to 1-1.5 times the monthly average rainfall.
- **November** – Storm Bert over the weekend of 23 & 24 November brought more rain and high winds resulting in further flooding. Roads, infrastructure and properties were impacted again, and some places and properties were flooded for a second time.

### Bledington

- We continue to collaborate with Gloucestershire County Council, the Bledington Flood Group and partners on the various interventions being considered to improve resilience and reduce flood risk in Bledington. Flooding to properties in the village was experienced in September – and again, and more extensively, in November – which has brought a sharp focus to progressing with flood alleviation measures along the Westcote Brook.
- Last financial year, we provided funding through the Water Environment Improvement Fund for the environmental improvement/natural flood management work (NFM) delivered by the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on the Gawcombe and Idbury tributaries of the Westcote Brook catchment. Further funding has been obtained through the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) for the Evenlode Catchment Partnership to deliver an extra scheme on the Westcote Brook. The aim is to deliver this in summer 2025. There is another bid for further NFM work which has been submitted by the Evenlode Catchment Partnership working collaboratively with Gloucestershire County Council & the Environment Agency. We will find out the result of this bid early next year.
- Main river maintenance;
  - **Westcote Brook** – No works were undertaken on the Westcote Brook this year. We are awaiting a decision on funding for the 2025-2026 financial year.
  - **Bledington Brook** – Works on the Bledington Brook took place in early November 2024, after being delayed by poor ground conditions, incident response and staff shortages. We are awaiting a decision on funding for the 2025-2026 financial year however we expect the Bledington Brook to feature on the programme.



## Moreton-in-Marsh

- Maintenance works on the River Evenlode are expected to take place early to mid-December. Works have been delayed by incident response and staff shortages. We are awaiting a decision on funding for the 2025-2026 financial year however we expect the River Evenlode to feature on the programme.
- Alongside partners, we have been attending and are contributing to the Moreton-in-Marsh Flood Action Group meetings. We joined the Community Information Day in October and shared information about our Flood Warnings System and Natural Flood Management to those who attended.
- Forming from the Flood Action Group, we have helped set up a community led NFM & Biodiversity group along with the Evenlode Catchment Partnership. In November, the group held a volunteer tree maintenance day to engage the community in natural flood management. Another is planned for January. As part of this group, the Evenlode Catchment Partnership is leading on a potential channel rewiggling project in Blenheim meadows.
- We continue to work with Gloucestershire County Council and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on natural flood management interventions in Moreton-in-Marsh;
  - We have some Thames RFCC funding in place for NFM work on Old Farm on the Batsford Estate, which is planned to be delivered by the Evenlode Catchment Partnership, subject to landowner consent.
  - We have also been working with Gloucestershire County Council and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on a proposal to Thames Water to widen the pinch point in the river by the pumping station.

## Longney

- Following tidal flooding in 2020, we explored providing better protection to 18 properties in Longney and have recently secured funding approval from the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to progress Property Flood Resilience measures. We will be meeting with the community early next year to discuss what options are available and confirm the next steps.

## Dowdeswell Reservoir

- Dowdeswell is located at the head of the River Chelt and is a former Severn Trent Water asset, which the Environment Agency purchased in 1998 for upstream flood attenuation for the River Chelt flood alleviation scheme.
- We are reviewing our management of the site to ensure we are making the most of it as a flood defence asset and working with our neighbours, Dowdeswell Conservation Ltd and other stakeholders, to explore its ecological value.

## Catchment-wide Natural Flood Management

- We continue to work with Gloucestershire County Council on the Natural Flood Management (NFM) Project, to identify nature-based opportunities across Gloucestershire.
- The Severn Vale Catchment Partnership, which we are part of, has developed a flagship project called the Wilder Frome, with the upper tributaries in the North Cotswolds

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constituency. The project aims to improve fish migration, restore instream habitat, promote sustainable farming practice and deliver natural flood management opportunities.

- We're also working with the Evenlode Landscape Recovery project which should start delivering catchment wide NFM from next year.

### A417 Missing Link Highway Project

- The A417 Missing Link road scheme is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project being delivered by National Highways, costing £0.5bn. The site crosses both West Midlands and Thames Environment Agency areas and we are playing a major role in its delivery.
- We advised on the project during the pre-application stage, and throughout the formal Development Consent Order process. Key environmental issues are groundwater protection, drainage and ecology.
- We advised on the deep cutting part of the development to ensure it will not impact upon groundwater or spring flows supporting the Bushley Muzzard Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and local watercourses.
- Environmental benefits associated with the project include a re-designed and diverted watercourse (Crickly Hill Stream), and replacement Tufa (limestone) habitat creation.
- We are in the process of advising National Highways on their monitoring of groundwater and surface water, ensuring careful data and analysis throughout the construction phase.
- We recently met with National Highways and their consultants Kier, to ensure that site drainage does not risk sediment pollution during heavy rain.
- We have been working with Kier Highways and their consultant RPS to ensure the environment is adequately protected, including the diversion of the Crickley Hill stream (1km in length and some 30m into the foot of the Cotswold scarp).

### Flood Risk Mapping

- In 2025, we will be publishing new national risk information for flooding and coastal erosion. This includes future scenarios accounting for climate change. We will be updating our key flood mapping products as follows;
  - **Early 2025:** the 'Risk of flooding from rivers and sea' map and 'Risk of flooding from surface water' map will be available via the 'Check your long term flood risk' on [data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk)
  - **Spring 2025:** 'Flood zone' data on the 'Flood map for planning' will be updated and available on [data.gov.uk](https://data.gov.uk)
  - Further information is available at [Updates to national flood and coastal erosion risk information - GOV.UK](#)
- Subject to funding, we plan to carry out hydraulic river modelling for the tidal River Severn, River Chelt, Horsbere Brook and River Frome. This will provide updated data and evidence on projected flood impacts to local authorities, other developers, and inform our flood warning system work and the potential need for future flood schemes.

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**Approved by:** Maddy Adams, Thames Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager and Martin Quine, Place Manager - Gloucestershire and Herefordshire, Environment Agency

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