

# Temporary flood barrier review: Walton Lane, Weybridge

December 2022

## Why are we reviewing our temporary flood barrier plans?

We have been carrying out a review of the safety of our temporary flood barrier plans throughout the country. The review focuses on ensuring safety both for the public and those involved in barrier deployment. Our highest priority is the safety of the public, our partners, our contractors and our staff.

We are focussing on how we deploy our temporary flood barriers following learning from deployments in previous flooding throughout the country. We are using the latest engineering good practice and accounting for the impact of more extreme weather due to climate change.

We must ensure that our barriers have an appropriate level of stability, designed to suit each location, and are safe for our contractors and staff to deploy and manage. We must be able to deploy them within the time provided by flood forecasts.

As part of the review, we are also analysing the latest flood risk information for each location to make sure that we only deploy them in locations where we have confidence that people and property will benefit from a reduction in the risk and impacts of flooding.

This briefing describes the changes we need to make to our temporary flood barrier plan at **Walton Lane Weybridge** because of the review, and what this means for the community.

If you would like support and advice on how to prepare and plan for flooding, including improving flood resilience in the community, this can be provided by our local Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor, Mat Lloyd.

We continue to provide our 24/7/365 incident response and flood warning service for the community.

## Temporary flood barriers: what are they and our approach



Temporary barriers can be deployed when flooding is forecast and are removed once flooding has subsided. They require 24/7 security, maintenance and seepage pumping, so they are only appropriate as a short-term measure whilst floods are ongoing. They are appropriate for use in minor to moderate flooding, which happens more frequently than extreme or severe floods. The barriers are not suitable for severe flooding where water levels will outflank the barriers or exceed their height.

Temporary barriers can be a useful tool to mitigate flood damage in some locations, but we cannot guarantee communities the level of flood protection provided by them.

We consider deploying our temporary flood barriers when; it is technically and economically viable, where it is safe to do so, where resources allow, and where forecasts provide sufficient notice of flooding. It is not possible to guarantee that temporary barriers will always be deployed, either before or during a flood and to any particular location, as this depends on the circumstances at the time.

### **Temporary flood barrier at Walton Lane Weybridge**

The review has concluded that the temporary barrier plan for Walton Lane is not viable or safe for the public, our partners and our staff. Therefore, we cannot deploy a barrier at Walton Lane Weybridge in the future.

Our highest priority is the safety of the public, our partners, our contractors and our staff, which is why it is important that we only deploy barriers when we know that it is safe.

The safety review has highlighted the need for additional stability measures behind the barrier to ensure that it is safe and that the risk of the barrier moving or breaching because of the pressure of water against it is managed. The consequences of the barrier moving, or breaching, would have significant impacts on the safety of the public, our staff and contractors. This is because there are greater risks and impacts associated with a sudden breach of floodwaters behind a barrier compared with slow rising floodwaters where there is no barrier.

We are not able to install the required stability measures to make the barrier at Walton Lane safe because there is insufficient space on the towpath.

At present there are no other barriers on the market that have been independently tested that we can consider as an alternative.

In addition, given the close proximity of the barrier alignment to the river, we have identified that there would be an unacceptable risk to our staff and contractors who would be deploying and maintaining a barrier located near to fast flowing water.

Whilst we deployed barriers here during high river levels in February 2021, the Thames did not come out of bank at this location so has not been tested with floodwater against it. As part of the post deployment review, we had already highlighted the risk to our staff and contractors who were working close to the river.

We have considered whether there are any adjustments we could make to the plan that would offer the same flood risk reduction benefits to people and property. The only other potential alternative alignment is one along Walton Lane itself. This route would cut off property access, including access for emergency vehicles for a prolonged period. A barrier alignment on Walton Lane would also prevent our own staff and contractors from having vehicle access to service seepage pumps and inspect and maintain the barrier. Additionally, a barrier alignment on Walton Lane would not offer the same flood risk reduction benefits as the alignment along the tow path, as a number of properties closest to the riverside would no longer be behind the barrier. Therefore, this alignment has also been assessed as not viable.

### **What else can we do to support those at risk of flooding in Walton Lane?**

- We have briefed our emergency response partners so they are aware of the position with the barrier plan at Walton Lane and can update their emergency plans accordingly.
- We will continue to discuss with our partners at the local council and the local resilience forum what the changes mean for emergency response.

- We have a dedicated member of staff available to offer advice and support to the community. If you would like support and advice on how to prepare and plan for flooding, including improving community and property flood resilience, this can be provided by our local Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor, Mat Lloyd.
- We monitor rainfall forecasts and river levels 24/7 and remain ready to warn partners and communities of any increases in flood risk.
- We provide an operational response in advance of and during floods to reduce the impacts as far as possible. This includes deploying teams on the ground to clear rivers and streams, enabling water to flow freely, operating weirs and flood defences to protect homes, and deploying pumps and sandbags where they can make a difference.
- We continue our annual river maintenance plan activities to reduce flood risk. Activities include weed cutting, channel maintenance, obstruction removal, grass cutting by hand/machine, vermin control, tree/bush work and structure maintenance. Our river maintenance programme can be viewed online at Asset Information and Maintenance Programme
- We provide a flood warning service to those at risk of flooding from rivers and the sea. Community members can visit <https://www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings>. The service is free and users can choose to receive notifications of flood warnings by email, text, or both.
- We strongly advise people to check whether they are at risk of flooding, and that they take action to protect themselves and their properties, by visiting our [plan ahead for flooding](#) webpage and to download our '[Prepare. Act. Survive.](#)' [simple flood plan](#).
- The Environment Agency and Surrey County Council are working in partnership to deliver the River Thames Scheme (RTS). The River Thames scheme will reduce flood risk to people living and working near the Thames between Egham and Teddington while also providing habitat for wildlife and a new feature in the landscape for recreation. The final scope and design of the project is yet to be fully determined. It will be shaped by technical, environmental and economic factors alongside consultation feedback. A public consultation for the Scheme is runs until 20 December, with a further consultation planned for 2023. Further information on the scheme and the consultation can be found at <https://www.riverthamesscheme.org.uk/>

**For further information or to make contact with our dedicated Flood Resilience Engagement Advisor please contact: [Enquiries\\_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries_thm@environment-agency.gov.uk)**