

# PROTECTING YOUR HOMES

## FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME FOR MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON



National R  
Informati  
Head Offic  
Class No .....  
thority  
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY  
098709



**NRA**  
*Thames Region*



## PROTECTING YOUR HOMES

### FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME FOR MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON

Over the past six years we have been working on a scheme to protect Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton from flooding. Our proposals are the result of many years study of flood records, local geography, land development and the capacity of the area's rivers and streams. Throughout the study stage we

have listened to the views of the district and county councils as well as those of local residents and interest groups and we intend to continue discussions with everyone who will benefit from and be affected by the scheme.

It is clear that the scheme will have a major impact on the area, during construction and thereafter. We have taken this opportunity to explain how and why the scheme originated, its development so far and our future plans.



## WHO ARE WE?

Responsibility for the area's flood defence passed to the Thames Region of the National Rivers Authority on 1st September 1989. The NRA is an independent public body charged with safeguarding and improving the natural water environment. Alongside flood defence, we are responsible for regulating rivers and groundwaters, protecting and improving fish stocks and promoting water based recreation of all types. We are committed to improving wildlife habitats and conserving the natural environment in everything we do.

## THE FLOOD RISK

The area around Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton has suffered severe flooding for generations and back in 1947 it experienced some of the worst flooding ever recorded. The towns of Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton were inundated with flood water for over a fortnight. The flood scheme proposed by the NRA Thames Region is designed to protect the area from similar disruption and disaster.

Floods tend to be cyclical in nature and although impossible to predict, the likelihood of similar events can be estimated. Our records show that a flood similar in scale to the one of 1947 has a 1 in 56 chance of occurring in any one year.

At the height of the 1947 flood, the Thames had to cope with two and a half times its capacity. The resulting floods affected 6200 acres and approximately 2000 homes. If a similar flood happened today, the damage would be far worse, given the vast amount of development in the intervening years.

Communication links such as roads, railway lines and phone lines, locally and nationally would be disrupted; some might be put out of action for days. An estimated five and a half thousand properties and over twelve thousand people would be affected.

Experts put the cost of the likely flood damage at over £40 million. But damage to local residents' well-being is incalculable. Who can put a price on lost wedding photos and other memorabilia or on the stress and strain suffered by those living through the event?



## THE PROPOSAL

Once the size of the flood risk had been calculated, independent engineering and environmental consultants were brought in to work alongside our engineers and environmental experts in devising a flood protection scheme. Their brief had to meet these aims:-

*\* Protect Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton from a flood on a similar scale to that of 1947 (and, of course, floods of lesser intensity).*

*\* Be in keeping with the local environment.*

*\* Be practical and cost effective in engineering terms.*

## THE SCHEME

Throughout the study, our engineers, conservation, fisheries and recreation experts discussed a variety of proposals with local councils, residents and specialist interest groups. A number of alternatives were considered. These included raising the banks of the Thames and major dredging of the river bed, but most importantly, the construction of a

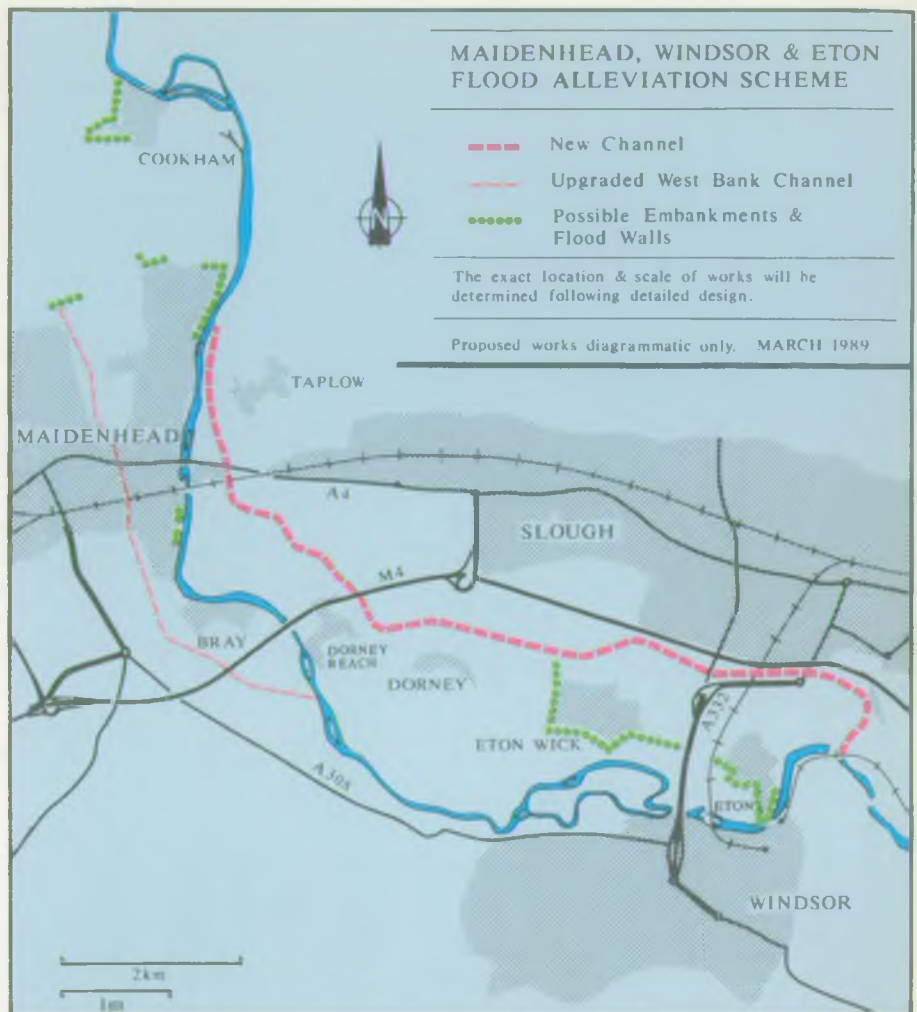
new channel to carry the excess flood water either along the east or along the west bank of the Thames.

As the proposals developed, it became clear that a combination of measures was needed and that to gain a satisfactory level of flood protection, these must include the new channel, similar in size to the river itself. Engineering and environmental constraints, land availability and cost all contributed to the decision to build a channel to the east of Maidenhead.

## WHAT WILL IT LOOK LIKE?

The seven mile channel will link Taplow and Romney Weir. It will leave the Thames at Boulters Lock, run to the north of Dorney and Eton Wick close to the M4 motorway, pass around the north and east sides of Eton College playing fields at Agars Plough and rejoin the Thames near the Black Potts railway bridge.

The width and depth of the channel will alter according to the areas through which it passes but it is our intention to make it as natural-looking as possible, with small islands, trees, bankside plants and reed beds and to take the opportunity to recreate wildlife habitats which have been lost as a result of the area's development. Alongside working on the channel, we will need to build low level embankments, designed to blend in with the local environment, around parts of Cookham and Eton Wick to protect the north side of Maidenhead, along parts of the Thames at Maidenhead and possibly Eton and Windsor as well.



## THE NEXT STEP

No plans can go ahead without the approval of the local people through their elected representatives on local councils who grant planning permission. We have already spent and will continue to spend time refining the scheme, carrying out further studies and going into greater detail on design and the exact location of the channel. We will continue discussing the project with everyone affected by or interested in it, through public meetings and at our project office in Maidenhead.

Please direct all enquiries to:-  
**Colin Martin, Project Manager,**  
**NRA Project Office,**  
**Taplow House, Clivemont Road,**  
**Maidenhead, Berks.**  
**Tel: (0628) 777533**



NEWSLETTER 1.

Project Office  
Clivemont Road  
Maidenhead  
SL6 7BU

Tel 0628 777533

MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Dear Householder,

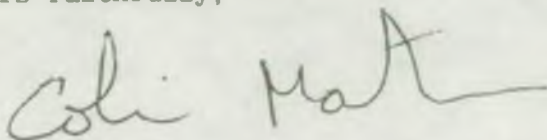
You may have heard or read in the local press recently about the National Rivers Authority, Thames Region's proposal to construct a flood alleviation scheme in the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton area. One of the NRA's first duties is to protect land and property from flooding and we believe this project is of crucial importance for all who live and work in this area. We have consulted many members of the public at various stages for their views and this process will continue over the next few months when we meet with the five local authorities involved.

We appreciate that you may be concerned about the proposed flood scheme because it will inevitably have a considerable impact on the area. We are anxious therefore that you should be kept fully informed of progress at all times. There are a number of ways in which we can keep you in the picture and make sure you get all the information you need:

1. NEWSLETTERS like this one will be sent periodically to your home when we have something of specific interest to tell you.
2. A PROJECT OFFICE will open officially to the public on Wednesday 6 December, at Taplow House, Clivemont Road, Maidenhead. An extensive exhibition giving full details of the scheme can be viewed and staff will be on hand from 9am - 5pm on weekdays, to answer your questions.
3. The PROJECT LEAFLET, "Protecting your Homes" gives the background to the scheme, why it is necessary, how it will be constructed etc. Copies have been mailed to most homes in the area and additional ones will be available from the project office and your local library.
4. LOCAL PRESS will be kept informed and will no doubt carry the latest information on the project.

I do hope that you will take advantage of these methods to find out more about such an important scheme. In particular, I hope you will contact us if you have any personal worry or concern about the project.

Yours faithfully,



Colin Martin  
Project Manager



NRA

Thames Region

## NEWSLETTER 2

August 1990



# NRA

*National Rivers Authority  
Thames Region*

### MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME

Dear Householder,

This is the second newsletter sent to residents in the Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton area, concerning the flood alleviation scheme proposed by the National Rivers Authority. Since I wrote to you last, parts of Maidenhead have experienced the worst flooding for many years. In February of this year over five hundred properties were affected when the Thames over-topped its banks and forty houses were actually entered by flood water.

The damage and distress caused were of course considerable but even so this was not a major flood event. Statistically it will happen once in six or seven years. The flow in the River was similar to that experienced in 1974 but, due to the pattern of rainfall, flooding persisted for two weeks and some houses were uninhabitable even one month after the flood waters receded. Had the scheme been completed the River would not have over-topped its banks and there would not have been any flooding.

Over the past five months, we in the project office have continued our policy of public consultation. After February's floods over one hundred and twenty householders who had been most seriously affected were invited along to the Project Office to discuss their experiences and give us their views on how the flood was handled. The project team have attended meetings of all local councils involved and have also spoken to many local interest groups, residents, societies and parish councils.

At the same time we have been developing and refining our plan for the scheme itself. We have now produced and published drawings showing how the channel will look. It will be as natural as possible and will blend in with and enhance the local environment. The plan includes such features as reed beds, wetland habitats, extensive tree planting and small islands, and will create wildlife habitats that over the years have been lost from the main river.

The matter which gives gravest concern to people, particularly those not gaining direct benefit from the scheme, is the construction process generally and the removal of gravel in particular. We must stress that the objective of the scheme is to produce a flood alleviation channel and not to win gravel. Indeed even if the gravel were to realise its maximum financial potential it would yield only some four million pounds towards a total cost of forty one millions.

But because of the concern raised during the consultations we are looking carefully at methods of gravel disposal. It is hoped to remove the gravel by barge along the river from the top and bottom ends of the channel and to process the remainder and transport it off-site via junction 6 onto the M4 during off-peak periods. A top priority is to avoid using lorries on local roads wherever possible.

Over the next few months we shall continue our consultations with local authorities with a view to seeking planning permission later in the year. In the meantime the project team will be more than happy to show you current drawings and discuss any particular query with you and will be pleased to see you at the Project Office.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Martin  
Project Manager

Maidenhead Project Office  
Taplow House  
Clivemont Road  
Maidenhead  
Berks  
SL6 7BU  
Tel: (0628) 777553



**NRA**

*National Rivers Authority  
Thames Region*

Dear Householder,

**MAIDENHEAD, WINDSOR AND ETON FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME**

The Planning Application for this Scheme has been under consideration by the Royal County of Berkshire and Buckinghamshire County Council since January 1991 and a decision is not expected before February 1992 at the earliest. It may be considerably later since there is pressure from those who are opposed to the Scheme for the Application to be called in by the Secretary of State for the Environment for determination following a Public Inquiry.

The Secretary of State has issued a direction saying that the County Councils should not approve the Scheme until he has decided whether or not to order a Public Inquiry. Buckinghamshire County Council consider that the matter is of such major importance that it should not be decided by the Counties but examined at a Public Inquiry. Those who are opposed to the Scheme are pleased with these developments. In general they are people who will not benefit directly from the Flood Alleviation Scheme but who will suffer temporary disturbance during construction.

The NRA understands this view point but is concerned that the 12,500 people who are at risk from flooding should make their voices heard in support of the Scheme. Contrary to some beliefs these people live not only in Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton but in the parishes of Dorney and Taplow also.

The Scheme developed by the NRA is the outcome of many years of study which have seen the examination of some 492 environmentally acceptable options. These include 108 options on the Western, Maidenhead side of the River Thames, as well as schemes put forward by opponents of the current proposals. These have all been examined to the same detail and measured against the same criteria.

The selected proposal is for a flood relief channel running from Boulters Lock to Black Potts Bridge, on the Eastern side of the River Thames, which will provide total protection for Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton and the parishes and villages along the route, for floods of an equivalent magnitude to the great flood of 1947. It will also provide substantial alleviation for events of greater magnitude. Whilst only a small part of the area downstream of Black Potts Bridge will benefit, no area will be more at risk from flooding after the scheme is built than it is now.

Maidenhead Project Office  
Taplow House  
Clivemont Road  
Maidenhead  
Berks  
SL6 7BU  
Tel: (0628) 777553

This is an environmentally sensitive design, enhancing the landscape and replacing many wildlife habitats lost from the River Thames over many years. It will be of similar size to the Thames and will always contain water to a depth of two or more metres. There will be opportunities for quiet recreation but there will not be any right of navigation.

Opponents of the Scheme claim it is too big, too expensive, too disruptive and that there are better alternatives. The NRA has made a policy decision that flood protection should be related to the intensity of development and in this area that generates protection against a flood likely to occur once in fifty years. Given the size of the problem, the cost of flood damage, and the route of the channel, the construction cost of £58M is not excessive. The total cost is partly offset by the value of gravel removed but there are many expensive structures to build.

Inevitably there will be some disruption during the construction period but the construction methods are designed to minimise this to the greatest possible extent. Because of pressure from local organisations, following consultations, we have ensured that there will be no gravel traffic using local roads and there will be no interruption of traffic on the M4 or the Western Region railway. Where the channel is carried under roads, diversions of equal capacity will be provided during the construction of bridges. Noise protection will be provided where required.

If the Scheme goes to a Public Inquiry, the total cost of the Inquiry is likely to exceed £3M and work will probably be delayed by two years or, worse, three flood seasons, thus continuing the risk to those affected. There can be no new facts produced, merely the recycling of information which has been public for some six years. There has been extensive public consultation and wherever possible your views have been taken into account in developing the design.

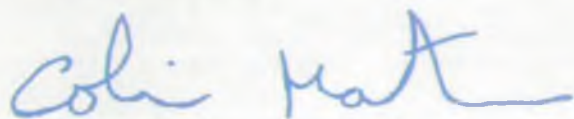
Now is the time for a positive decision. Flooding can occur at any time with a severity that cannot be predicted, causing misery to those flooded and distress and disruption to the whole area with the financial and economic losses that entails.

If you are at risk from flooding and you share our view that the time for talking is over and the Scheme should be constructed without delay, let us know.  
Write to:

Colin Martin  
Project Manager  
Maidenhead, Windsor and Eton Flood Alleviation Scheme  
Taplow House, Clivemont Road  
MAIDENHEAD, Berkshire SL6 7BU.

If you are not sure whether or not you are at risk from flooding, or you want further information, please contact the same address.

Yours sincerely



Colin Martin  
Project Manager



NRA