

Debenham flood risk management project

Project update 1, Summer 2014

Introduction

Debenham is in the headwaters of the River Deben and a number of tributaries meet in the village. There are no raised defences through the village and the village has experienced flooding on a number of occasions. The most notable recent event was in 1993 when approximately 33 properties were recorded as having been flooded, but there have been a number of events recorded between 1912 and the present day. Residents have suffered as a result, property and roads have been damaged and highway routes have been closed. As a result the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership is exploring flood risk management options for the village.

What have we done so far?

The Environment Agency and Suffolk County Council, under the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Partnership are investigating ways of reducing the flood risk in the village of Debenham. A baseline computer model of the river system has been built which has enabled us to better understand the current flood risk in the village. Historic photos and information you have provided have been used to ensure the model reflects what happens on the ground as closely as possible. We have also undertaken additional topographical (ground level) surveys.

During the higher river flows experienced in February and May this year you may have seen us in the village collecting river flow data from the Gulls and Cherry Tree watercourses to help calibrate the model and ensure it reflects how the river behaves during flood events.

The feedback and information gathered at the public drop-in event held in November 2013 has been very useful to help us refine the computer model of the river system through the village. This will ensure the model that is used to see the benefit offered by any future ways of reducing the risk is as representative as we can make it.

These draft outputs of the model have been made available to Mid Suffolk District Council to help them make planning decisions, as it is the best information we have available to us. The results of the model show larger flood extents than currently shown on our Flood Map. We will be updating our Flood Map this autumn and sharing our findings with residents and the local authority.

We are also working closely with the River Deben Holistic Water Management Project which is trying to develop new ways of delivering flood alleviation, to provide more reliable water resources for all users, and to improve water based ecosystems and water quality.

What is being considered?

The main message from the feedback we received at public event in November was that the concept of creating an upstream storage area (area to store flood water before it reaches Debenham) and the creation of a two-stage downstream channel were most popular. In addition, and as a result of this public event, we also commissioned an additional scenario which modelled the removal of the bank at the rear of the properties at the southern end of the High Street to allow flows onto the Cross Bank floodplain.

We have run the model with the above information and scenarios, as well as for the other possible ways of reducing flood risk in the village that were discussed at the public event, including additional culverts under the Market Square bridge, removal of redundant weirs downstream of Fen Street, and a downstream alleviation channel. This modelling of engineered solutions will show what benefit each scenario may have, as well as looking at the cost of the works. For any scheme we consider, the benefit it provides has to be greater than the cost of delivering it. Public consultation will help us reach a sustainable outcome.

Next steps

We will continue to look at the outputs of this work, and are starting discussions with landowners, regarding how we can work with them to deliver potential solutions. These discussions will continue this summer and have already resulted in an extension of the computer model in the village of Aspall to ensure we understand flood risk better in this location.

We also hope to start investigating potential sources of funding this summer. To progress with any proposal that reduces the flood risk in the village, funding will be required from other sources to supplement Government funding. We will therefore want to work with communities and partners to develop schemes that include funding from local sources.

At this stage there is no guarantee of when any proposal that could be progressed can be delivered. However, the more contributions obtained, the greater the chances of Government funding. Examples of funding from local sources include funds from the Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (as local levy), contributions from local authorities and private contributions from individuals, organisations and businesses. We are also keen to investigate whether there are funding sources available that enhance the environment.

Once we have had discussions with partners about funding we will be able to come back to you with an update on progress this autumn.

How do I get further information?

For more information or to discuss the project, please contact:

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