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Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy

Summary of comments and responses
to consultation

July 2010

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Summary

The Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy (LTFRMS) proposes measures to reduce the risk of flooding to the 15,000 properties which are currently at risk from a 1% flood event in the area from Datchet to Teddington. These measures include the construction of three flood diversion channels, the widening of Desborough Cut and improvements to Sunbury and Molesey Weirs and Teddington Lock. It also includes community based measures for improving resistance and resilience to flooding for smaller groups of properties and improving mapping information for emergency evacuation plans.

The proposed LTFRMS was launched for public consultation from 21st September 2009 to 18th December 2009. Public exhibitions and meetings were held during this period with the main aim being to present the Strategy and to ask people living and working in the area what they thought about it. We received over 800 responses from individuals and organisations, and over 1400 people attended the public exhibitions and meetings. There was widespread support for the proposed Strategy.

Many people who commented on the LTFRMS were keen to see all elements of the Strategy implemented. Concern was raised about the potential for Channel 1 to be constructed at a later date from the rest of the Strategy's proposals. We have taken these concerns on board and have included all three channels in the final version of the LTFRMS which we presented to the Environment Agency's National Review Group. We anticipate that this Group will recommend the Strategy for approval imminently.

1 The consultation for the Lower Thames Strategy

The Consultation period for the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy was open to the public from 21st September to 18th December 2009. The main elements of this consultation were:

- 10 public exhibitions (attended by more than 1310)
- 1 large meeting with Thorpe Ward Residents Association (over 90 attended)
- 16 meetings with Councillors, land owners, residents association, fisheries representatives
- Letters and flyers sent to 15,000 residents in the LTS study area
- More than 800 responses received (over 120 emails, over 40 letters and over 600 comments forms, 69 online consultation responses)
- 30 articles in local press
- 4 radio interviews
- Coverage on ITV Meridian

2 Feedback on the Strategy and Exhibitions

Exhibitions

10 public exhibitions and one large meeting were held through out the flood plain area. The events are listed in the table below.

Public exhibition	Number attended (minimum)	% finding public exhibition useful (from feedback forms)	Number of feedback forms received on event
Staines	200	No data	No data
Molesey	40	100%	12
Egham Hythe	200	95%	38
Teddington	46	100%	22
Kingston	42	100%	23
Datchet	177	95%	22
Wraysbury	250	96%	54
Shepperton/Charlton	85	100%	14
Molesey (2 nd event)	200	95%	61

Teddington (2 nd event)	74	90%	29
Thorpe residents Association (included in this table as more than 90 attended)	90	No data	No data
Total	1404	97% average	265

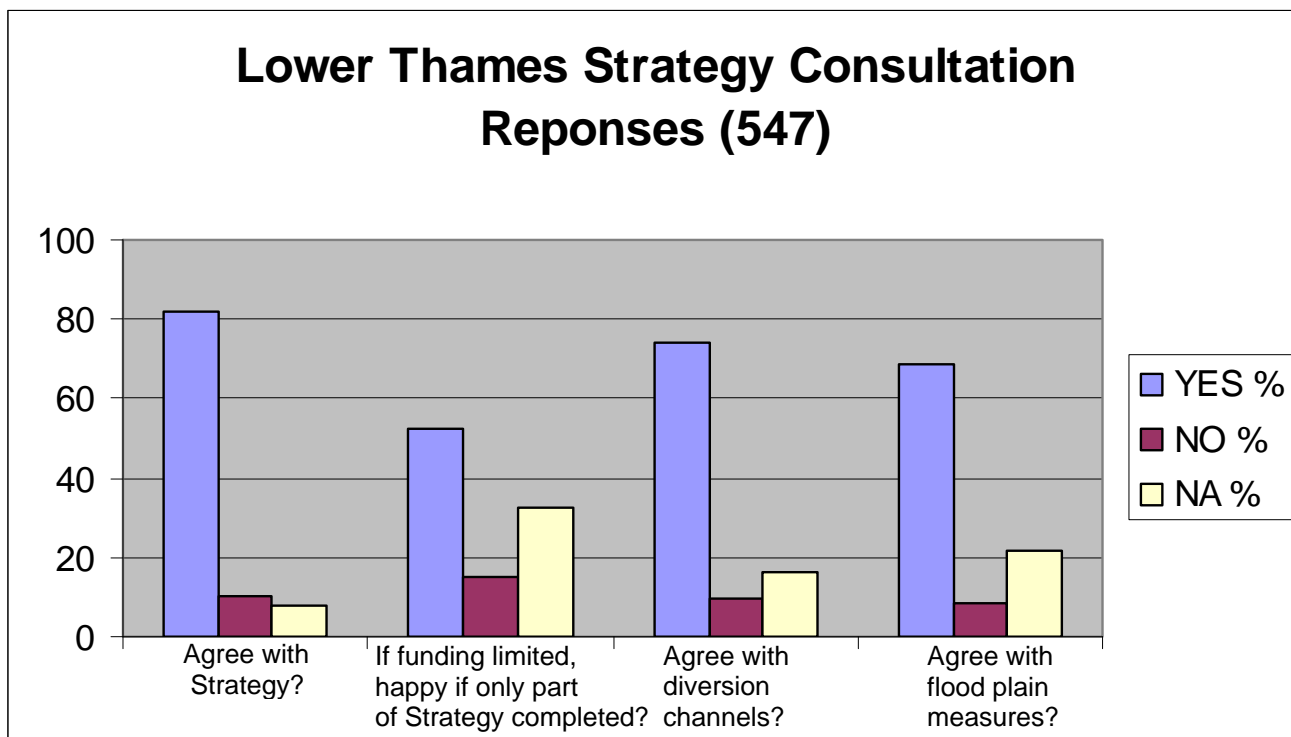
Online

Web pages for the Strategy were included on the Environment Agency's website and the LTRFMS site received over 2,000 hits. We also had a section for comments and 69 people registered their comments with us. Most were from individuals and some were from angling and sailing groups.

Postal comments

We sent out a letter and comments form to every household and business in the area to give everyone an opportunity to comment. These were issued on 4th December 2009.

The results from the main questions asked in the comments form are shown in the graph below (from 547 responses).



NB – 'NA' refers to those who provided no opinion or who stated that they did not know.

Letters and emails

Many people asked us questions about the project via email and we also received many letters from residents, Councils and local groups. One group sent a letter in support of the proposals with 113 signatures from local residents attached. We received over 160 emails and letters.

3 Main issues raised

The responses from consultees have been read with the main issues noted. The following summarise the main recurring issues that consultees have raised:

- **Funding** – concerns at potential lack of if to complete works successfully.
- **Insurance** – queries if house insurance costs will go down as a result.
- **Desborough cut** – concern over loss/effect on footpath on South/right bank.
- **Dredging** – opinion that dredging would solve/reduce flooding.
- **Reducing flood risk** – supportive of reducing flood risk.
- **Channels** – concerns that channels could over top, concern that they will blight adjacent properties, queries about how they will affect groundwater.
- **Area specific** – concerns about flood risk in Datchet, Wraysbury, Staines, Shepperton, Sunbury, Teddington, Island communities.
- **Recreation** – support for channels providing new recreational opportunities for walking, cycling, rowing, canoeing.
- **Increased flows** – concerns that strategy will result in increased flows in River Thames increasing flood risk to residents and causing increased scour to riparian properties. Queries over implications for boating interests.
- **Thames Barrier** - concerns about reduction in Thames Barrier operation to reduce fluvial floods, support for continued Barrier use to manage fluvial flooding.
- **Other sources of flooding** – concerns about how strategy will deal with flooding from groundwater and sewage/from sewerage systems.
- **Construction works** – concerns about disruption for local residents, public keen to see works starting sooner than estimated 2018 start date.
- **Angling** – concerns over affect on fishing in lakes and potential for introducing species from Thames into lakes and vice versa.

- **Consultation** – concern about the amount of private information that is required for online consultation, opinion that plans not detailed enough, desire for map showing flood risk outline once Strategy implemented (for comparison).
- **Jubilee River** – lack of confidence in strategy due to perceptions about Jubilee River performance/functioning.

4 Summary of responses

4.1 Desborough Cut

Concern was expressed about the potential loss of the footpath due to the widening of Desborough Cut on the South/right bank.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: We have listened to the concerns raised and will consider widening the North/left bank instead if this proves feasible.

4.1 Dredging

Concern was expressed about the absence of river dredging due to a perceived confidence in this method and confusion as to why it was not proposed.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: Bathymetric surveys of the river bed have been carried out over the past few years and have provided evidence of the dynamic erosion and deposition of sediment within the River Thames. These bathymetric surveys have shown that historical dredging only increases channel capacity temporarily as the River Thames silts up again and this is before climate change is taken into account. Dredging does not provide sufficient capacity to reduce flood flows due to the huge volume of water that occurs during a flood. Due to the difficulties and expense of removing and disposing of contaminated dredged material from the River it has been set aside as an option under this Strategy. Bathymetric surveys and modelling will continue to inform our River management.

4.3 Flood risk and the flood diversion channels

Some consultees were concerned that the construction of flood diversion channels would result in an increase in flood risk.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: The flood plain, river and the flood diversion channels have been modelled for different flood event scenarios. Our models show that at a 5% annual probability flood event, there would be a 4% increase in peak flood flows. In order to accommodate this 4% increase in flows, we are proposing to improve the capacity of Sunbury weir, Molesey weir and Teddington weir. The improvements to these weirs have been shown in our models to actually reduce flood risk to areas down stream of the diversion channels from Walton Bridge to Teddington. There will also be some localised protection in Teddington.

4.4 Angling

Concern was expressed by the Angling Trust and local angling groups about the potential mixing of fish species and diseases that could occur if the River Thames was diverted through lakes used for angling.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: We are proposing to build bunds in order to separate the River Thames flood waters from lake waters and therefore prevent the transfer of fish species and their diseases between the waters.

4.5 Thames Barrier

Currently, the Thames Barrier is sometimes operated to assist managing fluvial flood risk in the lower reaches of the Lower Thames Strategy area. However, the Thames Estuary 2100 which looks at the effect of climate change, has recommended the gradual cessation of this operation over the next 25 years in order to adequately manage tidal flood risk to London. Concern was expressed at this statement by TE2100 due to the potential flooding implications in the area.

Lower Thames Strategy Response/TE 2100 response: The primary purpose of the Thames Barrier is to prevent tidal flooding of London and the use of the Barrier to alleviate fluvial flooding is purely a discretionary operation. As the sea rises, the Barrier will need to be used more and more often against higher tides. In order to maintain the high level of reliability of the Barrier for tidal flooding, a commitment to use the Barrier to alleviate frequent fluvial flooding into the future cannot be made.

4.6 Properties adjacent to the proposed flood diversion channels

Some properties lie adjacent to the proposed route of the flood diversion channels. Concern was raised about the potential security risk from people able to walk along channels adjacent to the houses where previously there was no access.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: We will seek to avoid routing footpaths on channels in sensitive locations such as adjacent to properties.

4.7 Surface water drainage

There was some concern expressed about the effect of the channels on surface water drainage.

Lower Thames Strategy Response: The flood diversion channels will be designed to intercept surface water drains that cross the paths of the channels

4.8 Recreation

There was widespread support for the opportunities which the construction of the flood diversion channels provides for recreation in the area (such as walking, canoeing, bird watching etc).

Lower Thames Strategy Response: We intend to design the channels so that they can be used as a recreational resource for the local community where possible.

5 Stakeholder organisations that responded

Angling Trust
Association of British Insurers
Canoe Camping Club
Canoe England
Chertsey Society
Colne Valley Anglers
Hythe End Action Team (HEAT)
Inland Waterways Association
Local Authorities
Local Parish Councils (including Wraysbury and Old Windsor)
Natural England (via the Habitats Regulations Assessment)
Old Windsor Residents Association
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
Runnymede Angling Association
South East England Partnership Board
Sunbury Court Island Resident's Association
Surrey Fire and Rescue
Sustrans
Thames Awash
Thames Landscape Strategy
Thames Water
Thorpe Park
Thorpe Ward Residents Association
Veolia Water
Weybridge Society
Zurich (Insurance company)

6 Commendations received

The consultation also generated a lot of positive feedback in addition to concerns raised by local residents. Here is a selection of the commendations received:

'This Council congratulates the Environment Agency for its thorough and practical approach to formulating and presenting this much needed Strategy.' Malcolm Beer (Councillor) on behalf of Graham J. Leaver, Clerk to Old Windsor Parish Council.

'Many thanks Clive [LTS Communications Business Partner] and for all your help and support during the consultation process – much appreciated.... We look forward to working with you/Graham and the team and if there is anything specific we need to be doing please let me know.'

Charles Collins, Chairman, Hythe End Action Team (HEAT)

'On behalf of Thorpe Ward Residents' Association I should like to express our appreciation to you, and all the members of your team, for the excellent presentation last night. It was exactly what was required and gave Thorpe residents a much clearer view of the proposals, the reasons for them, and the issues involved.' Ray Walker, Vice Chairman Thorpe Ward Residents' Association

'I think the consultation document is excellent - clear and concise.' Cllr Bob Steed, Kingston upon Thames.

'Firstly congratulations on a very good consultation document. No doubt you are aware that the Regional Flood Defence Committee has discussed this topic at its recent meeting. I am in total agreement with most of what they have incorporated into their report, especially in wishing to see progress being made in reducing and managing flood risk to the communities of the Lower Thames as quickly as is deliverable and efficient.' Cllr Eric Wiles, Old Windsor Ward. Member of the Regional Flood Defence Committee.

7 Selection of responses to the Lower Thames Strategy

(Letters and email)

Trusts, societies and residents' associations

“The potential impacts of this scheme on angling in the lower Colne valley are immense. Anglers travel from across the nation to fish these waters and spend large amounts of money so to do. They have a significant economic impact on the local economy and several tackle shops are dependent on these fisheries for their livelihoods and for creating local employment.”

The Angling Trust

“We strongly support the proposals embodied in the LTFRMS and urge the Government to fully fund this work as a matter of urgency as any delay in the proposed timescales could result in significant flooding problems as experienced recently in Cumbria.”

Old Windsor Residents Association

“We strongly support the proposal to undertake capital expenditure on works to reduce the flood risk but we believe that the project should be progressed with much greater urgency. Possibly as a consequence of excessive emphasis on cost minimization, rather than value for money, we believe the wrong route for Diversion Channel 2 is proposed.”

Thorpe Ward Residents' Association

“We do not agree with the idea of widening South bank of the Desborough Cut as it would be extremely destructive to the embankment and disruptive to users of the river facilities.”

Weybridge Society

“We are most strongly opposed to the scheme as presented. The island is already in the front-line, with no means of improving its defences.”

Sunbury Court Island

“ThamesAwash views on DREDGING of pinch points of the River Thames is essential to provide interim relief from flooding. Heat also believes that there needs to be a change in the terms of accountability for the EA as currently their only legal responsibility is to keep

the waterway navigable.” ... “We should be pushing for the legal responsibility to be changed to that of protecting the river from flooding.”

Hythe End Action Team

“Whilst we fully understand that the Environment Agency needs to lead the process, the TLS would remind the Environment Agency that this process could be enhanced through greater use of the Thames Landscape Strategy partnership (which includes the main riparian owners and many of the community groups and resident associations found along the river).”

Thames Landscape Strategy

“The Chertsey Society would wish to see the stretch of Channel 2 from Thorpe Lakes to Chertsey Weir constructed as soon as possible, irrespective of the outcome of funding for the entire Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy so as to provide flood protection to the centre of Chertsey from the regular flooding by the Chertsey River Bourne.”

Chertsey Society

Local authorities

“The Council supports the overall aims of the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy, however, it regrets that on the basis of the information and assurances provided to date, it cannot indicate its support for the works proposed to the Desborough Cut at the present time, and insists that the Environment Agency commits to work closely with the Council.”

Elmbridge Borough Council

“The Council supports the draft strategy in identifying measures to reduce floodrisk in the Borough particularly the package of measures proposed in Reach 4, the engineering works in Reach 4 and the increase in capacity of Teddington weir to convey water during a flood.” ... “However, the Council is concerned over the impact on the Borough of fluvial flooding.”

Royal Borough of Richmond

“The Lower Thames Strategy (LTS) represents a very positive step forward alleviating

flood risk in the parish and is very welcome. There are, however, issues of major concern. The first is the suggestion that the third section of the LTS – Diversion Channel 1 – may not be completed because of insufficient funding. This section is vital to Wraysbury. Failure to build it would mean that the LTS would have little or no beneficial impact on the parish.”

Wraysbury Parish Council

“My colleagues on Old Windsor Parish Council have demanded that the relief channel should not be prejudiced by funding shortfall in favour of those downstream. ... The national press has highlighted that my Council has the 4th highest number of dwelling at risk of flooding in the whole country...Partial implementation must be resisted. Failure to do so would be ill-advised and if work on Channel One was not included it would leave whole communities between the Jubilee River and Channel Two vulnerable and unprotected.”

Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead Council

Public

“I agree in principle with this scheme but when will it be implemented? Ten, 15, 20, 25 years from now? Whatever the time limit is it is too far in the future for the Environment Agency just to sit back and do nothing now. With climate change anticipated and the devastating floods that have engulfed this country in the last few years, it is essential that the Government allocate sufficient funds to help alleviate the massive flooding that is overwhelming the country now.”

Ms B, Old Windsor

“Whilst I understand the desire for alleviating potential flooding I am opposed to the relief channel route as it is currently proposed. The proposed construction work and the resulting relief channel will have a detrimental impact on the existing lakes and their wildlife.”

Mr G, Wraysbury

“We are dismayed that you are considering having flood diversion channels (including widening of the Desborough Cut) to accept greater volumes of water especially after the dramatic floods of 1975 and 2003.”

Mr D, Shepperton

“As a riverside homeowner in Reach 4 downstream from Walton Bridge, my main concern about the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy is that diversion channels in Reach 3 – while they may well reduce flood risk in that area – merely pass the problem onto Reach 4, which will have increased flow levels and an increased flood risk.”

Mr R, Sunbury

“It would not be a disaster for Wraysbury if the channel is built as currently proposed. It will provide essential flood protection, and will be an attractive landscape feature.

Mr J, Wraysbury

“Perhaps there is still a case for dredging at selected points such as this where the width or effective cross-section of the river is especially inadequate. Careful choice could perhaps have a large effect on flow for minimum and disruption.”

Mr A, London

“If this is likely to work, then I'm very pleased. In the past, the only action taken seemed to revolve around notifying us when there is a danger of flooding. That is an important thing, but doesn't in any way solve the problem and most of the notifications I've received have just made me very anxious.”

Ms B, Staines

“I attended both venues of your public exhibition on 30 November and 1 December 2009 and would like to thank you all for your professionalism in the way you handled our concerns.” ... “I am reassured that those of you who are involved will do your best for our local area.”

Ms N, West Molesey

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