

Westonzoyland

Update on the new defences

09 September 2014

During the winter flooding of 2013/14 some homes in Westonzoyland were at risk of flooding as a result of high water levels in the surrounding moors. The Environment Agency installed temporary defences adjacent to these properties, consisting of sand filled bastions, sandbags and a trench sheet dam across the ditch immediately behind properties on Grays Avenue. The temporary defences were successful in reducing flood risk to these properties and the properties didn't flood, although gardens and the roads were affected.

What's happening?

As you are aware, we have funding for a project to formalise this flood defence ahead of the winter. It has always been our intention, as presented at our drop-in session in August, to construct a permanent defence by means of a sheet pile wall.

In developing this as the preferred option, recent investigation work has revealed that the ground conditions are unsuitable for the construction of a piled wall using traditional methods as planned. To alter the design to work in these conditions would require the need to drill into the ground and use other intrusive methods. This would be both time consuming and likely to cause disruption locally, particularly in relation to the noise and vibration of the ground. The ground is too soft and the piling would become unstable over time. We therefore no longer consider this to be the most suitable option.

Instead, we would like to hear your thoughts on a couple of alternatives. As the existing defences are starting to look untidy and restrict access to the land behind houses for a number of residents, we are still keen to replace these with a more suitable solution.

The main objective for this scheme is to protect properties in Westonzoyland which may be at risk if we were to experience similar conditions in the future. This can be achieved by installing a temporary defence as required in advance of a flood event.



Temporary, demountable defence on existing ground

What would a demountable defence look like?

This option would involve minimal disruption to you during construction, and the visual appearance would be less obtrusive than other options. It is a solution which has been used to good effect across Somerset

for a number of years, and the impact on your day to day life would be kept to a minimum. We would use the funding available for this project to buy a demountable defence specifically for use at Westonzoyland.

A small raised bank would be constructed, up to 0.5 metres high, which would provide a level surface on which to install the demountable defence. In addition we would construct a new structure across the ditch to replace the existing one. This would stop water moving up the ditch towards Westonzoyland, and offers a good location to install a temporary pump.

The demountable defence would be stored at our local depot, ready for deployment within hours of instruction to do so. At the same time, we would install a pump behind the defence to help remove surface water.

We can install this defence in less than a day, and would be given plenty of time to do so before Westonzoyland is at risk of flooding.

We would carry out a demonstration before winter, so you can see how it works and have the opportunity to ask questions about the defence.

What about a permanent defence?

We appreciate that many residents believe that a permanent defence would offer more security. You may remember that at the drop-in session held last month we discussed the option of the construction of a raised bank. This option would comprise a new raised bank adjacent to the ditch. It would vary in height between 1 and 1.5 metres, and would remain in place permanently.

This would obviously be more obtrusive visually and due to the ground conditions the bank would also settle over time. This means the ground beneath would compress under the weight of the new bank, much like what has happened to the road nearby. Because of this, it is likely that the bank would need to be topped up periodically to maintain the same level of defence.

Both during construction, and to top up the bank in the future, a lot of earth would need to be moved to site and it is likely that this would require numerous vehicle movements every day for a few weeks.

Your opinion matters

We are keen to hear your views on this. It is important to us that you feel safe, particularly after such a devastating winter. We also want you to continue to enjoy your property as normal.

We feel the demountable defence is the most suitable option for the local residents, as it enables us to reduce the flood risk to your property without reducing the aesthetics of your property. However we would really like to discuss this option with you in more detail.

We would like to start constructing this defence by the end of the month to reduce flood risk ahead of the winter, so need to work quickly to agree a preferred option.

How can I get in touch?

You can get in touch with us to let us know your thoughts in a number of ways.

We are holding a Community Engagement Event for our Asset Recovery Programme on Monday 15 September at the Willows & Wetlands Centre, Stoke St Gregory, TA3 6HY. We will be here from 3pm until 7pm.

We are also holding another drop-in session at Westonzoyland Village Hall on Thursday 18th September from 4pm - 6pm. This is specifically to discuss the Westonzoyland defences.

You can also call either Pat Hall on 01392 354193 or Chris Smith on 01278 484865, to let us know what you think or find out a bit more about the options.

Alternatively you can contact us via email at chris.smith03@environment-agency.gov.uk.

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