March 2020: What are we updating you about?

We have continued to work in partnership with Blackwater Aggregates to develop a scheme to reduce the risk of flooding to properties and communities in the villages of Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon. We are currently finalising the design of the scheme.

This newsletter is an update on the design and advertises the public drop-in events which are scheduled for March and April 2020.

What have we been doing since the last update?

We have continued to complete the final design for the flood alleviation scheme to protect the communities of Coggeshall, Feering and Kelvedon. Once the design stage is complete a planning application and supporting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) will be submitted to Essex County Council later this year. This work has involved completing modelling of the River Blackwater upstream of Coggeshall and using the outputs within the final design, including the dam, to see how it will reduce flood risk and benefit the communities.

We have met with the local action group Coggeshall Residents Against Quarrying (CRAQ) and Priti Patel MP to respond to their questions and to update them on our work on the scheme. In addition, we have responded to questions from local residents in the communities as these have been received.

Overview of the scheme

The flood alleviation scheme combines the construction of a dam across the River Blackwater with an extended flood storage area next to the river which will be created in phases as Blackwater Aggregates’ quarrying operations progress.

To limit the impact of these works on local residents, excavation and restoration will progress in an easterly direction from the old Coggeshall Quarry towards the western fringes of Coggeshall. The works will move in a phased and systematic manner across the site, which will incorporate a rolling programme of backfilling and restoration following excavation of mineral, thereby minimising the open/working areas.

At its nearest point, the edge of the quarrying operations will be at least 150m from any residential boundaries on Grange Hill. The works in this area of the site are likely to be carried out during years 15 to 20 of the 20 year construction programme.

What’s happening next?

Before we submit the planning application, we will be holding two further drop-in events:

Monday 23 March, 2pm-7.45pm at Coggeshall Village Hall

Friday 3 April, 2pm-7.45pm at Feering Community Centre

These events will give us an opportunity to present the scheme to the communities and our partners prior to finalising the design and the planning application for submission to Essex County Council’s Minerals and Planning Authority (MPA).

We encourage you to attend the events so that you can discuss the scheme with the Project Team and be fully informed of the proposals before the planning application is made.

Once the application has been submitted, the MPA will consult with the parish councils and ask for their views on the flood alleviation scheme. As local residents you will also have the opportunity to offer your views to the MPA.

If our planning application is unsuccessful, we will not be able to progress this scheme, or any other scheme further.
We have previously considered a range of flood mitigation proposals and we have concluded that there are currently no viable alternatives to the scheme we have finalised.

We understand not everyone living within the local communities is directly affected by flooding and that the proposed quarrying operations will result in changes to the local landscape. However, in working to develop the scheme we have used the opportunities to enhance the existing landscape through the creation of bio-diverse habitats, which can be linked across the site. The final scheme will, where possible, enhance and improve public access.

Ultimately any impacts arising from the scheme need to be balanced against the protection it will offer to 203 properties (some of which are important heritage assets) and 15 local businesses, both in the short-term and for future generations.

Climate change indicates that wetter winters and drier summers are increasingly likely, so areas such as the Blackwater Valley are more vulnerable to these extreme events, reinforcing the need to provide a sustainable, long-term solution.

**Contact**

If you would like to discuss this scheme further please contact our Partnerships & Strategic Overview (Essex) team:

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**Further information**

Further information about the scheme, including our previous updates, is available on the following web page: [https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/coggeshall-flood-alleviation-information-page/](https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/east-anglia-c-e/coggeshall-flood-alleviation-information-page/)

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Map showing the extension to the river’s flood plain. Flood storage area to be formed through Blackwater Aggregates’ quarrying and restoration operations across the site. The purple lines are the public rights of way.