

## Cotswolds Flood Forum – Environment Agency update

*As requested by Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP, the following provides a summary of progress the Environment Agency has made with respect to the topics covered at the Cotswolds Flood Forum since the last meeting in Moreton-in-Marsh on 24 November 2023.*

### Winter 2023/2024

- Rainfall for England over the last 6 months has been the wettest on record.
- Our flood defences and operational activities protected approximately 11,000 homes in the Thames Valley (over 100,000 across England) from flooding during early January alone.
- Unfortunately, several hundred homes and businesses were flooded from the river in the Thames catchment. Alongside the impacts to homes and the financial costs and distress this caused, many areas of floodplain land were submerged in flood water for significant periods of the winter.
- We delivered our 24/7 flood warning and incident response service throughout the winter. This involved issuing flood alerts and warnings, clearing debris/blockages from rivers, deploying staff to engage with flooded communities, and working closely with partners and the emergency services. It has been a prolonged and intensive period of incident response for us which we have prioritised, and we continue to put time and resource into flood recovery work.
- Across the Thames Valley in March, exceptionally high river flows were recorded at all our indicator sites and groundwater levels were exceptionally high at the majority of our indicator sites for the time of the year  
[Thames water situation report: March 2024 summary - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)  
[Hydrology Data Explorer - Explore](#)

### Bledington

- We continue to collaborate with Gloucestershire County Council, the Bledington Flood Group and partners on the various interventions being considered to improve resilience and reduce flood risk in Bledington.
- We have provided funding through the Water Environment Improvement Fund for the environmental improvement/natural flood management work (NFM) delivered by the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on the Gawcombe and Idbury tributaries of the Westcote Brook catchment. Local residents have fed back that they consider the measures in place have helped this winter. There is more to do which we will continue to contribute to.
- Efforts to remove a fallen tree blocking the Bledington Brook in autumn 2023 were hindered by our resources being used for incident response work. Should the tree still need removing, we will endeavour to do so when resources and conditions make it possible.
- Main river maintenance;
  - **Westcote Brook** - The Westcote Brook will feature on our maintenance programme for 2024, with works expected to commence in August provided we can obtain access from the landowners.
  - **Bledington Brook** – The Bledington Brook will feature on our maintenance programme for 2024, with works expected to commence in August.

### Moreton-in-Marsh

- The River Evenlode features on our maintenance programme for 2024, with works expected to commence in September.
- Alongside partners, we attended the first meeting with the newly formed Moreton-in-Marsh Flood Group.
- We are working with Gloucestershire County Council and the Evenlode Catchment Partnership on natural flood management interventions in Moreton-in-Marsh. Delivery of the project on the Batsford Estate is not possible at this time but we are identifying further NFM ideas which will be taken to the newly formed Flood Group.

### Cornwell Wetland

- We have part funded the creation of a series of three wetlands on the Cornwell Estate near Chipping Norton.
- The project, which was devised and delivered by the Evenlode Catchment Partnership, has created a total of 4.5 hectares of wetland habitats adjacent to the Cornwell Brook.
- Natural connection between a river and its floodplain provides multi benefits such as slowing the speed of water moving downstream providing flood risk benefits to the valley below, the ability of the floodplain to naturally filter sediments and nutrients, refuge for fish from high flows, carbon storage and the creation of a species rich wetland habitat.

**Approved by:** Joe Cuthbertson, Thames Area Flood and Coastal Risk Manager,  
Environment Agency

**19 April 2024**