

Committee(s)	Dated:
Epping Forest and Commons	12 September 2016
Subject: Public Consultation on River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy SEF 44/16	Public
Report of: Superintendent of Epping Forest	For Information
Report author: Paul Thomson – Open Spaces, Epping Forest	

Summary

The Environment Agency will commence public consultation in September 2016 on proposals contained within its June 2015 Update to the River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy, which was originally published in 2012. This report is necessary to advise your Committee that there are two proposals within the Strategy which directly affect the Epping Forest landholding.

Firstly, the Environment Agency has indicated that it intends to withdraw maintenance support for the flood embankments which it constructed along the banks of the River Roding, most recently in the 1980s. The responsibility is intended to be transferred to riparian landowners including the City of London. It is expected that the City will be held to be responsible for 1.9 km of the river's western embankments adjacent to Wanstead Park and the contiguous Exchange Land.

Secondly, the public consultation will also seek public support for the construction of a proposed £5.2 Million Flood Alleviation Scheme at Shonks Mill, Chipping Ongar, designed to protect 900 properties in Loughton, Woodford, South Woodford and Wanstead. The scheme has been awarded Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid of £2.4 Million with Local Authorities and Riparian landowners expected to provide the balance of £2.8 Million. The Environment Agency has assessed the City of London's outline contribution at up to £500,000.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Receive this report

Main Report

Background

1. The River Roding is a small lowland clay river, approximately 45 km in length from its source at Molehill Green, near Great Dunmow to the River Thames at Creekmouth, Beckton. The River is classified by the Environment Agency (EA) as a main river which gives EA the legal power to carry out flood risk management work in preference to Internal Drainage Boards.

2. This river also forms the eastern boundary of the Epping Forest perambulation of 1642 which establishes the area from which Epping Forest commoners can be drawn.
3. The winter of 2000 saw major flooding caused by the River Roding breaking its banks across Chigwell and South Woodford which resulted in 40 house evacuations and widespread flood damage. In response the EA reviewed its flood risk management strategy for the River.
4. The Mayor of London's London Regional Flood Risk Appraisal published in October 2009 also made recommendations for the London reaches of the River Roding. The Appraisal process recommended further action to sustain the current scale of flood risk into the future, to address potential increases in flood risk from urban development, land use change and climate change.
5. The River Roding Flood Risk Management Strategy (RRFRMS) was adopted by EA in 2012 with the aim of managing flood risk over the next 100 years. The strategy identifies 1,580 properties in the Roding catchment at risk from flooding in a flood event with a 1% (1 in 100) chance of occurring each year.
6. The RRFRMS splits the River Roding catchment into 18 flood 'cells' dependent on their individual characteristics. The cells are arranged between Molehill Green and the Romford Road (A118) - the tidal limit of the Roding. Preferred options for each cell were developed by the EA on a strict cost-benefit analysis.
7. Cell 14 covers an area between the Redbridge A12 Roundabout and the Long Canal, part of the Ornamental Water Large Raised Reservoir on Forest Land at Wanstead Park. Cell 16 covers Ornamental Water below Long Canal and the Exchange Land as far as the northern section of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium. The Exchange land was provided to compensate for the loss of Forest Land during the construction of the A406 Relief Road from Redbridge to Barking which opened in 1987.
8. The June 2015 update to the RRFRMS gave notice, which is yet to be served, that the EA will no longer maintain the flood embankments in Cells 13 to 17 > which border the River Roding. The decision was taken on the grounds that the continuing cost of the work outweighs the financial benefit to the assets protected.
9. The EA expects the riparian owners i.e. those landowners whose property borders the watercourse to become responsible for the embankments. This may oblige the City of London to become liable for 1.874 km of embankments where the River Roding adjoins Forest Land at Wanstead Park and the Exchange Lands.
10. Wanstead Park has been on the Historic England *Heritage at Risk* Register (HARR) since 2009. A key component of the HARR score is the deteriorating quality and condition of the built waterscape. The waterscape's largest lake -

Ornamental Water - was constructed on the original course of the River Roding at Wanstead.

Current Position

11. The City of London is awaiting formal notification from the EA of its intention to transfer responsibility. Structural assessments of the banks and recent repairs will need to be undertaken to develop a maintenance programme for the embankments
12. The EA has also now finalised plans for a Flood Alleviation Scheme at Shonk's Mill, near Chipping Ongar, which will hold, and gently release, flood water at times of high risk preventing flooding at Loughton, Woodford South Redbridge and Ilford.
13. The £5.2 Million Scheme will protect 900 properties and in addition to 'peace-of-mind' will deliver £250 Million of economic benefits, while avoiding future flood damage and clean-up costs. The Scheme has received Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Flood Defence Grant-in-Aid (FDGiA) amounting to £2.4 Million. The balance of £2.8 Million is expected to be provided by beneficiaries of the scheme including the local authorities and riparian land owners. The London Borough of Redbridge has already pledged £0.5 Million towards the FAS.
14. The City of London has been approached by the EA to help fund the FAS's £2.8M shortfall on the understanding that the project will protect the Grade II* Park and Garden of Special Historic Interest; improve public health benefits and raise land values.
15. EA's provisional assessment suggests that the City of London would be asked to provide a similar sum to the London Borough of Redbridge of between £250,000 and £500,000 to meet its obligations as a riparian owner.
16. The EA is only currently able to provide data of flood models using historic data which points to a 1:100 year flood risk. Further climate change modelling will be available which EA has stated will suggest the risk of more extensive flooding in Wanstead Park and possibly parts of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium.
17. The City remains in discussion with other teams within EA awaiting the outcome of the 'Period of Representation' phase of the Flood Risk Assessment of Wanstead Parks' three Large Raised Reservoirs – Ornamental Water; Perch and Heronry Ponds. Ironically the City is also developing proposals to EA for a River abstraction licence to support pumping winter high river flow into Ornamental Water.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

18. Corporate Plan (2015-19) Key policy priorities 3 and 5; 'Engaging with London and national government on key issues of concern to our communities such as transport, housing and public health' and 'Increasing the outreach and impact of the City's cultural, heritage and leisure contribution to the life of London and the nation'.
19. Supporting Flood Management initiatives is in line with Open Spaces Department Objective 1 'Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites'. Protect and conserve the ecology, biodiversity and heritage of our sites.

Implications

20. **Financial** – The extent of the City of London's financial exposure to the transfer of riparian responsibility and the request for a contribution to the cost of the FAS cannot be accurately assessed at this stage. A clearer picture will emerge following the release of further flood mapping and impact assessments to support the public consultation which begins in September 2016.
21. **Property** - The Department for Built Environment's 'Responsible officer' advises that EA's premise that riparian owners should pay if they receive benefit from the Flood defences is only applicable if they suffer from the flooding. It is quite likely the City would not suffer and, in fact, could be in a better position from periodic flooding. The Officer concludes that there should be no reason for us to contribute to these flood defences and the scheme could be better for our land being flooded.
22. Similarly, he states that it is also very likely for any existing defences on our land, that if they are not to be maintained, consideration should be given to their removal at the EA's expense, subject to any qualifying clauses in existing agreements/licences.
23. **Legal** - The EA and the local Highway Authority – the London Borough of Redbridge – have permissive powers under the Land Drainage Act 1991 to encourage remedial action where a watercourse is in need of maintenance.

Conclusions

24. The updated RRFRMS contains proposals which have potential direct impacts on the City of London's Stewardship of Epping Forest land at Wanstead Park and the Exchange Lands. The transfer of responsibility to riparian landowners could expose the City to new liabilities and costs which need to be carefully examined and, where necessary, challenged.
25. The request for a voluntary contribution to the FAS would not be easily met from existing Local Risk resources, especially given the need to invest to remove Wanstead Park from the HARR. The City will need to balance both the current budgetary pressures facing Epping Forest with the need play a wider role as part

of the riparian owner community. The City will need to consider whether the flood defence proposals would benefit Wanstead Park and the Exchange Lands.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – RRFRMS 2015 Figure 9 Cells 13-17

Paul Thomson

Superintendent, Epping Forest

T: 0208 532 1010

E: paul.thomson@cityoflondon.gov.uk