

## **Report of the Cabinet Member for Community, Public Health, Transportation and Environmental Services**

### **Exeter Flood Defence Scheme: Update**

#### **1. Introduction**

I have been asked to report by Councillor Hannaford as follows:

*“Update on ongoing work to Exeter’s flood defences with particular reference to the concerns of local residents and businesses that at some locations work seems to have stopped and there is an absence of activity to work toward the completion date. I have also received a formal request from residents to organise a public meeting with the Environment Agency to update local communities.”*

This report provides an update on progress with the implementation of the Exeter Flood Defence Scheme (FDS), which is being led by the Environment Agency through its contractor, the BMM Joint Venture, in partnership with Devon County Council and Exeter City Council.

#### **2. Background**

This major flood defence scheme has been designed to improve the standard of protection along the corridor of the River Exe as it passes through Exeter to the level of a 1 in 100 year event for approximately 3,000 residential and commercial properties. It has been implemented in two main phases. Phase 1 commenced in June 2014 and was substantially complete by October 2016, based largely on the installation of flood banks and other riverside structures using permitted development rights. Phase 2 started in June 2016, following the receipt of planning consent and covers a range of more complicated works and flood structures in six zones extending from Cowley Bridge in the north to Countess Wear in the south. It was originally anticipated that the scheme would be complete by Summer 2018 but has been subject to delays and increased costs due to exceptionally difficult ground conditions in some areas, complications associated with historic features and utilities around The Quay and problems in obtaining timely agreement for works affecting Network Rail land.

#### **3. Current Progress**

The work in most zones is now well advanced or nearing completion, particularly along the right bank of the river from Exwick through to Exe Bridges. Although work is continuing elsewhere at pace, the focus of much of the present effort is in areas of lower public visibility, particularly at the Sidings Field north of St. David’s Station,

around Eagle Cottages just upstream of the Mill on the Exe and at Mill Lane and adjoining areas in Higher Wear. In contrast, significant works are continuing in two very public locations: firstly, adjoining the Samuel Jones public house at The Quay, where a new headwall structure is being created across the lowest section of the Cricklepit Leat; secondly, on the opposite side of the river, alongside the Malthouse, where the re-constructed riverside wall, steps and new path surfacing are nearing completion.

A small selection of photographs of works taking place during September 2018 is provided as Appendix 1.

#### **4. Future Planned Activity**

The ongoing programme of works for October and beyond includes activity across all six zones of the scheme. The most significant and difficult of these will be in the northern-most area, which will include some night working linked to Network Rail 'track possessions' in order to minimise disruption and ensure public safety. These works won't be complete until spring 2019, or possibly beyond. However, as these are largely on private land, they are unlikely to cause any significant concerns for the public.

Significant lengths of glazed flood defences will be installed, shortly, on the right bank at the Royal Oak public house and on the opposite side of the river adjoining Eagle Cottages and Princess Alexandra Court. New flood gates will be installed at various locations, including at Gervase Avenue and Mill Road (Higher Wear), with final remedial works to the new Station Road flood gates. The installation of further flood structures and demountable defences will be ongoing in the area around The Quay and alongside the Canal. Remedial and reinstatement work will also be undertaken at several locations, such as around Flowerpots, at Bonhay Road park and gardens and at Higher Wear. All of these works should be complete by the end of this coming winter period.

#### **5. Communications and Community Engagement**

Throughout both scheme phases, the Environment Agency and their contractor have put significant efforts into communication and engagement with community and business interests, with this necessary due to the scale and nature of the construction process, with so much of it within the heart of the City. This has included press releases and media work, face to face sessions with those most significantly affected, presentations and group meetings and ongoing promotion through social media, including a dedicated Facebook page. All interactions are closely monitored by the Project Team to deal with issues as they arise.

One issue which has caused recent public concern is the increased public access restrictions and diversions on the riverside and underpasses around Exe Bridges since the late summer. However, this is linked to gas main activities being undertaken by Wales and West, rather than the flood defence scheme works.

The complication and delay experienced by the scheme, particularly around The Quay, has been one of the most contentious issues for visitors, local residents and

businesses alike. Significant efforts have been put into minimising such conflict, especially through seasonal constraints on working. However, it will be a great relief for all when these works are completed over the coming few months.

The project team is responsive to requests for meetings, which can be directed through the contractor or the Environment Agency.

**Councillor Roger Croad**  
**Cabinet Member for Communities, Public Health, Transportation and**  
**Environmental Services**

## **Appendix 1 – Photographs of Progress in the Exeter Flood Scheme (September 2018)**



Extensive riverside wall work on Network Rail land to the north of St. David's Station.

Work on balcony wall at Eagle Cottages, upstream of The Mill on the Exe, prior to installation of glazed flood barrier.







Deck being laid on structure across Cricklepit Leat at The Quay



Mill Road flood gates under construction at Higher Wear (with new surfacing laid to the north)