River Thames Scheme (Datchet to Teddington)

River Thames Scheme
PROTECTING our communities
SECURING our economy
ENHANCING our Thames

Introduction

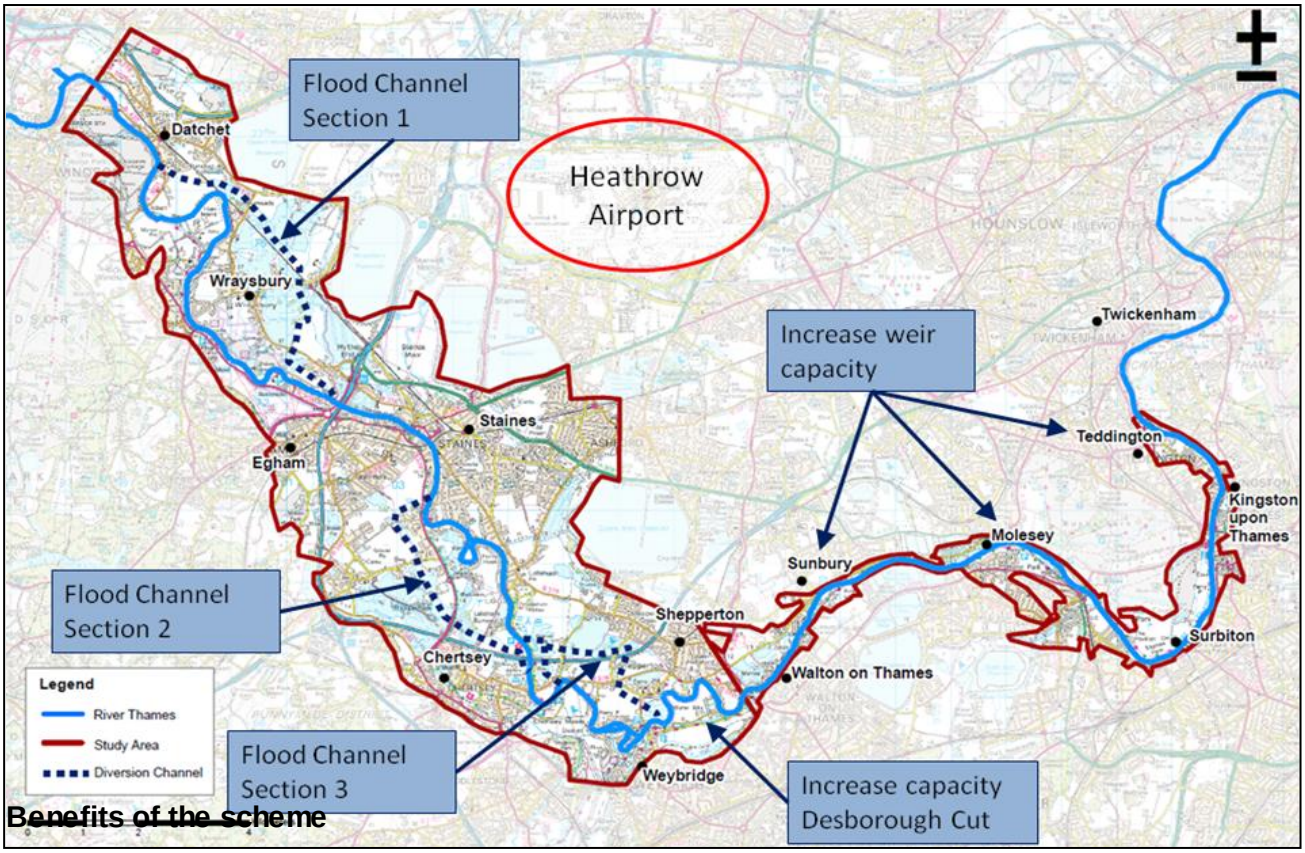
The River Thames Scheme is a proposed programme of projects and investment to reduce flood risk in communities near Heathrow, including: Datchet, Wraysbury, Egham, Staines, Chertsey, Shepperton, Weybridge, Sunbury, Molesey, Thames Ditton, Kingston and Teddington.

The River Thames between Datchet and Teddington has the largest area of developed floodplain in England without flood defences. Over 15,000 homes and businesses within the area are at risk from flooding from a 1 in 100 flood (that is a flood with a 1% chance of occurring in any one year).

Major flooding would cause severe disruption to the local and regional road network. It would suspend several major drinking water abstractions supplying the South East and threaten up to 20 local electricity sub-stations. The Environment Agency has calculated that damages from a major flood could exceed £850 million.

The scheme consists of:

- large scale engineering work to construct a new flood channel between 30 to 60 metres wide and 17 kilometres long, built in three sections (see map below).
- improvements to three of the existing weirs on the River Thames
- installation of property level products for up to 1,200 homes to make them more resistant to flooding
- improved flood incident response plans
- creation of over 40 hectares of biodiversity action plan habitat
- working with communities to raise flood awareness and support them in flood preparedness, response and recovery.



Benefits of the scheme

All communities between Datchet and Teddington will benefit from the River Thames Scheme. This includes the communities downstream of the flood channel, as the weir modifications will reduce water levels between Walton Bridge and Teddington too. The degree of benefit will vary along this 40 kilometre length of the river, and these benefits will be optimised during the design of the scheme.

The design of the channel and integrated habitat creation will open up opportunities for engaging people with nature, potentially providing access for cyclists and walkers to an improved landscape containing a variety of interlinked wetland habitats.

As the flood risk cannot be eliminated completely, some households benefiting from the scheme are also being offered property level products to make their homes more resistant to flooding.

Overall the River Thames Scheme will significantly reduce the likelihood of flooding for the 15,000 homes and businesses at risk at a time when climate change is predicted to increase flooding.

We will be seeking to maximise the gains for people and the environment in partnership with a variety of local councils, wildlife groups and other stakeholders. This build on the strategy aims for 40-60Ha of habitat creation.

What the scheme will involve

The River Thames Scheme will deliver the recommendations set out in the Lower Thames Flood Risk Management Strategy. The Strategy was published in November 2010 after consultation with other public bodies, businesses and residents in 2009.

Subject to funding, the scheme will be carried out in two phases. Phase 1 includes:

- a hydrology and modelling study
- ecological surveys of the River Thames and specific sites
- installation of property level products to improve the flood resistance of homes
- major incident planning to improve preparedness and response to flooding
- developing a funding strategy for the scheme
- securing government assurance and approvals
- obtaining planning consent for the weir improvements
- increasing the flow capacity of Sunbury, Molesey and Teddington weirs.

Phase 2 includes:

- the detailed engineering design for the scheme
- securing full, detailed planning permission and other consents for the flood channel construction work
- building of all three sections of the flood diversion channel and associated structures, and increasing the capacity of the Desborough Cut

Timescales

At this stage the exact timings for construction of the River Thames Scheme are uncertain. The construction of the flood channel is expected to commence in 2020 and take approximately 5 years to complete.

All of this work is subject to securing the full funding for the scheme.