

The Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme

Winter 2023

Project overview

The Environment Agency is working with Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to reduce flood risk to over 1,400 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Hildenborough and downstream communities.

The Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme has 2 aspects: increasing the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area (FSA) and constructing a new embankment to protect homes in Hildenborough.

Progress

Leigh FSA expansion

Our plans are progressing well to start works on the first gate of the control structure in spring 2024. Our



New kerbing

specialist supplier is currently building the new specially-made gates. The new winch system that will control the gate has passed its initial testing at the factory and is now moving onto the next testing phase.

The bank raising work at Cattle Arch is progressing well, even with works slowing down due to the recent storms. New kerbing has been installed at the top of the embankment and we are currently placing the material to raise the embankment.

Eel pass

Works have started on the eel pass, situated alongside the control structure, which will allow elvers to travel upstream. Works are due to be completed in the summer 2024.



Eel pass pump lifting socket

Hildenborough

At Hildenborough, Southern Water need to divert a sewer main before we can start constructing the embankment. We have installed the concrete compound area for our works early so Southern Water can also use it while they carry out their works. Southern Water's works are due to be completed in spring 2024, weather and ground conditions permitting.

Footpath closures

For the safety of the public and our staff the footpath at Cattle Arch is currently closed while we raise the embankment.

We will re-open the footpath as soon as possible and will keep you up to date with timescales. You can find out which footpaths are currently closed here:

<https://webapps.kent.gov.uk/countrysideaccesscams/standardmap.aspx>

Next steps

Leigh FSA

Our next step at Leigh FSA is to install a new crane pad. This will allow us to lift the new equipment for the structure into place. These works will start in early 2024.

At Leigh pumping station, we are currently preparing to start building the new concrete retaining wall within the embankment. This will help to reduce the impact of any waves when the reservoir is storing water.

Hildenborough

We will start vegetation clearance at Hildenborough in early 2024 before the bird nesting season starts. Construction work will start on the embankment in the spring.

We know the local community will have questions about the construction works and how we will manage the impact on local residents. We are currently looking to arrange a drop-in event before the start of the works, where you will be able to talk to the project team and ask any questions you have. We expect this event will be in February and we will provide more details closer to the time.

10yr anniversary of the 2013/14 floods

This December marks 10 years since the start of the devastating 2013/14 floods when approximately 940 homes in the Medway catchment experienced flooding.



Leigh Flood Storage Area in 2013

Over the past 10 years, the Environment Agency and its partners have invested more than £28million in reducing flood risk to communities across the Medway catchments. As well as the 500 homes and businesses that have been better protected with this investment, the Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme will better protect a further 1,430 homes and businesses once completed.

Throughout the construction works, the Leigh Flood Storage Area structure will remain operational and ready to reduce flood risk to downstream communities, if needed. But to minimise any risk, we have planned the main construction works to the Leigh FSA between spring and early autumn 2024 when the risk of flooding is lower.

Make sure you're prepared for flooding

Even with the Leigh Flood Storage Area, we can never entirely stop flooding – we all need to be prepared.

The Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team and the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council Emergency Planner met with Hildenborough Parish Council in October to help them update their Community Flood Plan.

The Hildenborough Flood Wardens have been provided with 'Flood Warden backpacks' containing useful items such as a torch and clipboard to help

them in their role. We have also recently trained up several more community volunteers as Flood Wardens.



You can make sure you're prepared for flooding too:

[check your risk](#), [sign up for flood warnings](#), [get prepared](#).

Improving the image of construction

We are aware of the impact that construction activity can have on local communities and on those living, working, or travelling in areas where construction is taking place.



The Considerate Constructors Scheme promotes high standards and accountability within the construction industry. Our site has signed-up to the scheme. If you would like to provide feedback you can do this through the freephone number 0800 737 1423, with our site reference: 134154

How to get in touch or find out more

If you'd like to find out more about how the Leigh FSA works to reduce downstream flood risk, take a look at our You Tube animation:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FVsi0WNa50> or search for "Leigh Flood Storage Area".

You can find out more about the history of the Leigh FSA and the Reservoirs Act works here:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-flood-storage-area>

If you have any questions about the works, or would like to join our electronic distribution list for future updates, please email the project team at: LEHES@environment-agency.gov.uk