

To: Councillor Cross (Chair)
Councillors Hornsby-Smith, Ballsdon, Ennis,
Goss, Griffith, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni,
Leng, Magon, McCann, McElroy,
McGrother, O'Connell, Rowland and
Stevens

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4 March 2025

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**NOTICE OF MEETING - STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT
COMMITTEE 12 MARCH 2025**

A meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee will be held on Wednesday, 12 March 2025 at 6.30 pm in the Council Chamber **, Civic Offices, Reading. The Agenda for the meeting is set out below.

*** please see information about access to the Civic Offices at the end of the agenda.*

	<u>WARDS AFFECTED</u>	<u>Page No</u>
1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST		
2. DELEGATED DECISIONS		
3. MINUTES		5 - 12
	To confirm the Minutes of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee held on 20 November 2024.	
4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE		13 - 20
	To receive the Minutes for the meeting of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 27 November 2024.	

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5. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES**21 - 62**

To receive the Minutes for meetings of the:

- Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Local Liaison Committee on 7 November 2024.
- Clearer Air, Safer Transport (CAST) Forum on 28 November 2024.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 17 October 2024

6. PETITIONS

Petitions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's powers and duties which have been received by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services by no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the day of the meeting.

7. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Questions submitted pursuant to Standing Order 36 in relation to matters falling within the Committee's powers and duties which have been submitted in writing and have been received by the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services by no later than 12 noon, four clear working days before the day of the meeting.

8. JANUARY 2024 FLOOD UPDATE REPORT**BOROUGH WIDE 63 - 136**

A report updating on progress towards the delivery of recommended actions and flood reduction measures as set out in the 'January 2024 Flood Event Options Report' endorsed by Policy Committee on 8 July 2024. The report also seeks approval of the Council's revised Sandbag Policy.

9. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE**BOROUGH WIDE 137 - 146**

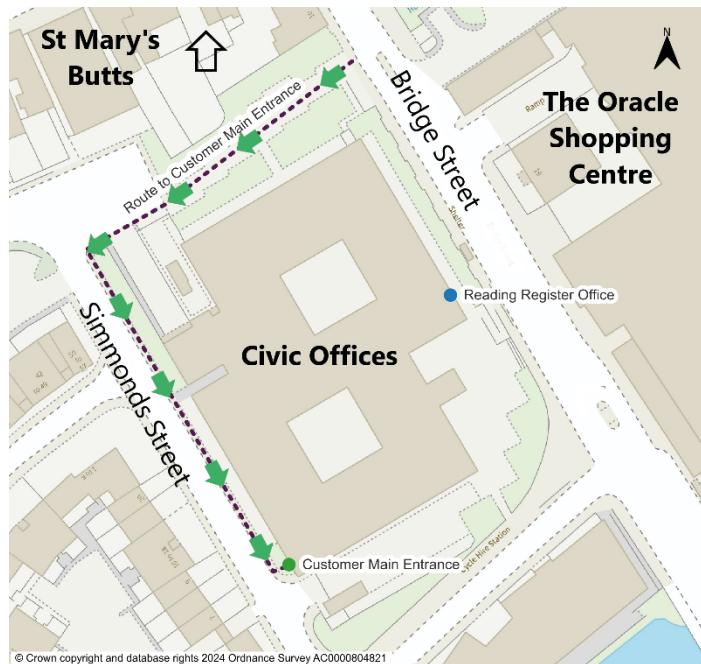
A report updating on progress towards the delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading.

10. FORMATION OF A TASK-AND-FINISH GROUP TO SCRUTINISE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL'S ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY**BOROUGH WIDE 147 - 152**

A report to establish a task-and-finish group to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.

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Agenda Item 3

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

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Present: Councillors Cross (Chair), Hornsby-Smith (Vice-Chair), Ballsdon, Ennis, Griffith, Juthani, Keeping, Lanzoni, McCann, McElroy, McGrother, O'Connell and Stevens.

In attendance: Councillor Magon (remotely via Teams).

Apologies: Councillors Goss, Leng and Rowland.

11. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

12. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of meetings of the Traffic Management Sub-Committee held on 13 June 2024 and 11 September 2024 were received.

13. MINUTES OF OTHER BODIES

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- Joint Waste Disposal Board on 13 June 2024 and 19 September 2024.
- Reading Climate Change Partnership Board on 18 January 2024, 18 April 2024 and 18 July 2024.

14. QUESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A question on the following matter was asked in accordance with Standing Order 36.

Questioner	Subject
Councillor McElroy	Local freeze on the bus fare cap in Reading.

(The full text of the question and reply was made available on the Reading Borough Council website).

15. ADOPTION OF THE CHRISTCHURCH CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Further to Minute 25 of the meeting held on 13 March 2024, the Committee considered a report that recommended the adoption of a final version of the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal covering the area of Christchurch within Redlands and Katesgrove wards, following the completion of a public consultation. The following documents were appended to the report:

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- Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix 2 - Statement of Consultation on the Draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal
- Appendix 3 - Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal (adoption version)

The Appraisal had been carried out as a community project led by the Reading Conservation Areas Advisory Committee (CAAC) with assistance from Council planning officers and interested local community representatives. At the meeting held on 13 March 2024 the Committee had agreed for a public consultation to be carried out on a draft version of the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal to replace the previous Appraisal which dated from 2010.

The Appraisal recommended that a number of boundary changes be made to significantly extend the conservation area to include properties on Whitley Street, Basingstoke Road, Milman Road, Glebe Road, Christchurch Gardens, Christchurch Road and Cintra Avenue. The consultation had taken place between 5 April and 31 May 2024 and a total of 14 responses had been received. The main points arising following the consultation process were summarised in the report. A summary of each consultation response was provided in the Statement of Consultation (attached at Appendix 2) which also highlighted the changes that had been made to the Appraisal following the consultation process.

The report explained should the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal be adopted it would result in the recommended extensions to the conservation area being confirmed. This would have implications for the operation of planning powers in the area and would alter the permitted development rights that would apply. The Appraisal would also become a material consideration in the determination of planning applications in the area.

At the invitation of the Chair, Evelyn Williams, Chair of the Reading CAAC, gave a presentation on the work that had been carried out by the CAAC to conduct the Appraisal review and to prepare the Appraisal document.

Following a discussion of the item the Committee thanked Evelyn Williams and other volunteer members of the CAAC for the work they had done on the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the responses received during the consultation on the Draft Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal, as attached at Appendix 2, be noted;**
- (2) **That the Christchurch Conservation Area Appraisal, as attached at Appendix 3, be adopted.**

16. PROJECT SKYWAY

The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection on the Council's involvement as a stakeholder with Project Skyway, a

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collaborative partnership project funded by a £15 million bid to Innovate UK and led by Reading based company Altitude Angel to create the UK's first "drone superhighway". A copy of the presentation slides had been circulated with the agenda.

The Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection explained that participation in the project had allowed the Council to be involved with the introduction of a new piece of technology from the start and had afforded the opportunity to understand and influence how that new technology and associated infrastructure might impact the town, residents and the Council itself. The Council's involvement also helped to give it and the public a voice in shaping how the industry worked and interacted with local government and with the public. At the same time the Council was also able to provide support as a partner to a Reading based local business thereby supporting economic growth in the town.

The presentation outlined the project's vision to enable drones to safely share the skies with all other aviation, even when out of sight of the pilot, thereby unlocking the societal and commercial benefits of drones. The Committee heard that the project had been designed to expand what drones could do by allowing them to fly long distances without the pilot maintaining visual line of sight. Project Skyway was a "drone superhighway" and utilised masts on the ground equipped with sensors. Masts were placed along the route to track drones and to monitor airspace to allow the drones to fly safely alongside other air traffic. It was noted that the erection of masts would potentially have implications in terms of planning but that, where possible, mast infrastructure would utilise existing masts and structures.

The Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection explained that the Council had worked together with Connected Places Catapult to support public engagement and had helped to facilitate access to residents. A public engagement exercise had connected a broad range of stakeholders to identify potential users and their requirements and to assess public perspectives. Approximately 20 Reading residents had participated in focus group sessions that looked at positive use cases and the societal, environmental and economic growth benefits of drones. The focus groups also looked at the potential negatives such as the impact on wildlife, noise and visual amenity, sustainability and energy use, local jobs, infrastructure (i.e the erection of more masts), safety and privacy.

The focus group sessions had also asked participants to identify who they thought would be responsible for addressing issues arising from the introduction of drone technology. Participants said that local authorities would need to play an enforcement type role in regulating the use of drones in areas such as preventing environmental harm (e.g. addressing noise and visual pollution), enforcement of unauthorised drone usage and privacy. The focus groups recognised that the regulation of the industry would require the involvement of government agencies, as well as the industry itself, and would require further development and thought in terms of establishing how regulations would be put into place and which agencies would be responsible for them.

The focus group sessions looked how best to engage with public and covered a range of topics that included: current drone regulations; the specific usage and purposes of the Skyway drone highway (including its route, volume of traffic and hours of operation);

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provided a balanced view of drone use cases (that included exploring the public sector and commercial usage of drones); looked at the issue of transparency and accountability, and considered the importance of sharing environmental research relating to drone use (for example investigating the impact drone usage could have on wildlife). The sessions recommended that that the drone industry should build trust by collaborating with the public and with local authorities.

The Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection explained that the project had been granted a six-month extension to enable further testing and collaboration with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). During that period live testing had continued to gather the data needed in order to demonstrate safety and to progress the project through the CAA's certification and award processes. Subject to the outcome of CAA's safety and commercial viability approval processes, it was anticipated that a trial period of flights would commence in the spring of 2025 with commercial operations to follow in the winter of 2025.

The Committee discussed the content of the presentation and asked several questions. Some of the points discussed included:

- That drone technology had many benefits to the public sector - for example drones were already being used by the Police to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour and by the Council to survey buildings and areas affected by flooding;
- That it was important not to conflate the commercial ambitions of Project Skyway with the wider benefits of drones.
- That there were concerns about the noise and general disturbance caused by drones flying overhead.
- That it was not clear how noise and pollution would be affected as the scale of drone operations increased.
- That there were legitimate concerns relating to the safety of objects being transported overhead.
- That there were concerns regarding the superhighway's proximity to a number of locally sensitive sites.
- That there were legitimate concerns regarding drones intruding on people's privacy.
- That there were concerns relating to the impact of drones on pets, livestock and wildlife.
- That, whilst it was recognised that residents' concerns had been identified and discussed during the public engagement exercises, had those concerns been addressed to the satisfaction of the people who had raised them?

In response to some of the points raised by the Committee the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection advised that, for safety reasons, the route proposed by Project Skyway avoided built-up urban areas, and so the impact in terms of general safety and noise nuisance at this stage of the project was anticipated to be minimal. He noted however that further research was required to establish the impact on wildlife and that this research would need to continue whilst the technology was being developed. In relation to privacy concerns, the Assistant Director noted that, for Project Skyway, the public needed to be educated in terms of being aware that the drones did not carry

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cameras on them and that the cameras and sensors located on masts pointed at the horizon and not down or into people's property. The Assistant Director noted that if the project launched commercially further public communication and engagement would be needed to ensure that the wider public were kept informed. The Assistant Director also noted that the Council had been involved in a separate piece of research by the University of Reading regarding the impacts of drones on people as well as the involvement of local authorities in regulating drone usage.

Resolved – That presentation on Project Skyway be noted.

17. CLIMATE ADAPTATION FRAMEWORK

The Committee considered a report on the production and approval of the Climate Change Adaptation Framework for the Council. A copy of the Climate Change Adaptation Framework was appended at Appendix 1. A copy of the Reading Climate Risk Assessment spreadsheet was attached to the report at Appendix 2.

The report set out the global context concerning climate change and global warming and explained the worsening impacts, risks and costs, both nationally and internationally, that included environmental events such as floods, heatwaves, storms and wildfires. The report explained that the UK faced warmer and wetter winters, hotter and drier summers, and would be susceptible to more frequent and extreme weather events and that this would continue to be the case for the foreseeable future. The report explained that climate change would have a significant impact on the economy and that the most vulnerable in society would be the most exposed to its risks as they had the least resources available to them to allow them to adapt. The report explained that the Council, its partners and the wider community needed to plan for and adapt to the effects of climate change and that the Climate Change Adaptation Framework had been developed to allow the Council and the communities it served to become more resilient to its impacts.

The report explained that the Council had long recognised the need to adapt to climate change and that this had been outlined in the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25, the vision statement of which was to achieve a "net zero, *resilient* Reading by 2030". The report explained that, whilst the Climate Emergency Strategy did identify and plan to manage climate risks, it was more focused on climate mitigations (reducing emissions) than on climate adaptation (preparing for the impacts) and that it did not address climate adaptation comprehensively enough from the perspective of the Council's own services and responsibilities. Therefore, there was still a need for the Council to develop a more bespoke climate adaptation framework.

The report explained that the Climate Change Adaptation Framework had been prepared to fill the gap that had been identified in terms of giving the Council a clear framework to build on the foundations that had been laid in the Climate Emergency Strategy by setting out in more detail the key risks, issues and objectives for the Council to pursue to make itself, and the communities it served, more resilient to the impacts of climate change. It also provided a framework within which individual Council services could develop their approach to managing climate risk as they became more climate risk aware.

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The structure of the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Framework was set out in the report which stated that it was important to understand that climate adaptation was a process not an event, and that dynamic assessment of climate related risk would be required to continually update the response of individual services and the Council as a whole. Hence the approach had been to develop a framework which could evolve over time and be updated in real time. The outputs from which could then be fully integrated into the Council's risk management corporate/service planning and performance management frameworks, rather than sitting in a separate plan which attempted to capture every possible action but, which would quickly become dated.

The report proposed that, as a first step, the Committee should endorse the proposed Adaptation Framework (attached at Appendix 1 to the report). Following this, individual Council services would need to apply the principles, objectives and risks identified in the Framework to their own contexts, thereby enabling the Framework to be developed more fully. As work progressed, and given the wide-ranging nature of climate risk, the report proposed that the Adaptation Framework should also be considered by other Committees and be adopted as Council policy.

Resolved –

- (1) That the proposed Climate Change Adaptation Framework for Reading Borough Council included at Appendix 1 be approved;**
- (2) That it be noted that work needed to be done by all services to identify specific actions to make services and communities more resilient to climate impacts, within the context of the Climate Adaptation Framework;**
- (3) That the Climate Adaptation Framework be considered by other relevant Committees prior to submission to Policy Committee for adoption as Council policy.**

18. ANNUAL REPORTS FOR 2023/24 ON (I) THE READING CLIMATE EMERGENCY STRATEGY 2020-25 AND (II) CORPORATE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The Committee received a report presenting two Annual Reports for 2023/24 on key elements of Reading's response to the Climate Emergency.

The 2023/24 Annual Report on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy 2020-25 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. The report had been prepared by the Reading Climate Change Partnership (RCCP) and reflected the activity by a range of partners across Reading, not just the Council. The headline message from the report was that, in common with the rest of the UK, emissions for 2022 (the latest year for which data was available) had fallen compared to 2021. This followed an increase in emissions in the year after the pandemic. The long-term trend remained positive with Borough emissions having fallen 54% since 2005. This represented a further reduction on the 51% reduction reported in 2021. The report stated that Reading had seen the 12th largest reduction in emissions out of 374 UK local authority areas. Reading's per capita emissions also remained the lowest in Berkshire. The report also explained that the pace of emissions reduction would need to

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increase significantly to get back on track to achieve the Strategy target of 'net zero by 2030'. A summary of the key conclusions drawn from the Annual Report 2023/24 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy were set out in section 3 of the report.

The 2023/24 Annual Report on the Council's corporate greenhouse gas emissions was attached to the report at Appendix 2. The report tracked the progress made towards the implementation of the Council's Carbon Plan and the targets within it. The headline conclusion of the Annual Report was that the Council's carbon footprint for the 2023/24 business year had been cut by 72.7% since 2008-09. This represented a slight increase in emissions from 2022/23 and meant that the Council's emissions had risen by 1.2% against the baseline. The slight rise in emissions put the Council above its benchmark target of meeting an 85% cut in corporate emissions by 2025. As had been concluded in the previous year, which had seen modest reductions, further action and investment would be needed to achieve the 85% target, and to make progress towards the ultimate target of becoming a net zero organisation by 2030. The report noted that some factors affecting emissions, in particular the increase in the carbon intensity of electricity, were beyond the Council's control. A summary of the key conclusions drawn from the Annual Report 2023/24 on the Reading Climate Emergency Strategy were set out in section 4 of the report.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress in reducing Reading Borough's carbon emissions, which had fallen by 54% since 2005 be noted;**
- (2) That the progress in reducing Reading Borough Council's corporate emissions, which had fallen by 72.7% since 2008/09 be noted;**
- (3) That it be noted that, while progress was being made, the Council and other partners needed to increase the pace of emissions reduction to meet the targets for a net zero Reading, and a net zero Council, by 2030.**

19. STRATEGIC TRANSPORT SCHEMES UPDATE

The Committee received a report that updated on the progress that had been made towards the delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The programme included major enhancements to public transport and active travel facilities and was aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles, helping to address the Climate Emergency and improve air quality in the borough. The current programme included the following schemes and initiatives:

- Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme (BSIP)
- South Reading Bus Rapid Transit
- Reading West Station Upgrade
- Tilehurst Station Upgrade
- Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme
- Bath Road Active Travel Scheme
- School Streets Programme
- Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme

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Updates for each of the schemes listed above were set out in the report. Each strategic transport scheme had been aligned with the Council's Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, with the delivery of each individual scheme playing a key part in achieving the overall vision and objectives of the LTP.

At the meeting the Strategic Transport Manager also updated on the Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) fund scheme and on the £4.7m of funding that had been secured for the provision of 24 electric buses. The Committee heard that work had started to install charging infrastructure at the bus depot which was expected to be completed by spring 2025 and that electric buses were expected to start to run in summer 2025. Updates on the ZEBRA fund scheme would be included in future Strategic Transport Scheme Update reports.

Resolved - That the progress made on delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes, as summarised in the report, be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.44 pm)

Present: Councillors Lanzoni (Chair), Ayub, Barnett-Ward, Cross, Eden, Ennis, Gittings, Griffiths, Hacker, Hornsby-Smith, Keeping, McGrother and White.

Also Present via Microsoft Teams: Councillors Nikulina and R Singh.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ayub declared an interest in item 22 on the grounds that he owned a hackney carriage.

22. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of 11 September 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

23. PETITION RESPONSE - READING HACKNEY CARRIAGE VEHICLE ACCESS TO A33 BUS LANES

Further to Minute 4(b) of the meeting held on 13 June 2024, the Sub-Committee received a report that provided them with an update and response to a petition that had requested the Council grant licensed hackney carriage vehicles access to use the A33 bus lanes.

The report explained that the south Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme had delivered a series of bus priority measures on the A33 Relief Road between Mereoak Park and Ride and the town centre since the first section had opened in 2018. The latest phase of delivery was currently between Rose Kiln Lane (south) and Rose Kiln Lane (north). The BRT lanes on the A33 were characterised by the provision of an additional lane for buses to the current dual carriageway and therefore did not result in any loss of capacity for regular vehicles. The scheme had been designed as a BRT scheme to mirror the priority afforded to either a light tram or guided bus way system whilst also enabling the flexibility that the use of regular bus vehicles provided. Therefore, in order to maintain this characteristic, the BRT lanes did not provide permanent access for any vehicles other than bus services and therefore excluded use by taxis, motorcycles or cyclists who were able to use the dedicated cycle path along the A33.

The design of the south Reading BRT was that there were bus stops within the BRT lanes without any lay-bys meaning buses would, from time to time, be stopping at these bus stops to pick up and drop off passengers. By allowing use of the bus lanes by other vehicles, such as hackney carriage vehicles, this would result in these vehicles looking to merge into the regular traffic lane where vehicles could be travelling at up to 40 mph to pass the buses. This would represent a safety hazard should vehicles look to leave the bus lane, which would also be an illegal manoeuvre, as it would involve vehicles crossing the solid bus lane road markings. The speed limit on the highway at all other bus lanes in Reading which did allow access for licensed hackney carriages, was either 20 mph or 30 mph.

Since its introduction the south Reading BRT had delivered faster journey times and passenger growth on this important corridor into central Reading. Journey times for buses using the

corridor had reduced by 24% from 2015 making these services among the most reliable in the Reading area and average passenger numbers had increased by 62% between 2015 to 2019.

In addition, the bus lane, and particularly where it merged with general traffic, had been designed on the basis of only buses being permitted to use these lanes. For locations where the merge was supported by traffic signals, it was very likely that the timings would need to be altered to support the additional vehicles in the lane, to the detriment of traffic flow on the A33. A full review of the bus lane would also be required, as well as a new Road Safety Audit to ensure that the highway remained safe for all road users. It was likely that physical works would be required to address the potential risks that would be created by this proposal. The report therefore proposed that the requested alterations to access along the A33 Bus Lanes by licensed hackney carriage vehicles should not be agreed.

At the invitation of the Chair, Asif Rashid, Chair of the Reading Taxi Association, addressed the Sub-Committee in favour of Reading licensed hackney carriage vehicles being granted access to use the A33 bus lanes. Peter Seymour, also addressed the Sub-Committee on behalf of the Reading Motorcycle Action Group.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and agreed by a majority that Reading Borough Council licenced hackney carriage vehicles should not be given access to the A33 bus lanes at this time.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That access to the A33 bus lanes by Reading Borough Council licenced hackney carriage vehicles not be implemented due to the reasons set out in the report;**
- (3) That the lead petitioner be informed of the decision following publication of the minutes.**

(Councillor Ayub declared an interest in the above item on the grounds that he owned a hackney carriage. He left the room and took no part in the discussion or decision making.)

24. WOODLEY ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME – PALMER PARK AVENUE PARALLEL CROSSING

The Sub-Committee received a report that set out the details of the Palmer Park Avenue Parallel Crossing that formed part of the Woodley Active Travel Scheme. A plan that set out the Palmer Park Avenue and Wykeham Road crossing facilities was attached the report at Appendix 1.

The report explained that in November 2020 Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) had secured funding through the Department for Transport's Active Travel Fund Tranche 2 and 3 to improve walking and cycling provisions within the Borough and to develop and deliver such schemes. WBC had agreed to use this funding to improve the cycling and walking connection between Woodley town centre and the Reading Borough boundary at Palmer Park with the final section being within the Reading Borough boundary on Culver Lane and Palmer Park Avenue. The overall scheme consisted of the provision of a new cycle route connecting Woodley town

centre and Palmer Park including an upgrade to the existing shared footway/cycleway sections, junction upgrades and priority crossing points. Part of Woodlands Avenue was to be reduced to 20 mph as part of the proposal, with Palmerstone Road and Culver Lane proposed to form part of a wider 20 mph zone which was being delivered as a separate scheme. Church Road was to remain 30 mph.

A section of this scheme fell within Reading Borough and consisted of the provision of a new Parallel crossing over Palmer Park Avenue at the entrance to Palmer Park and improved crossing facilities, including raised table/crossing, at the Wykeham Road junction with Palmer Park Avenue. The pavement was also to be converted to shared space on the south side of Culver Lane between its junction with Wykeham Road and the Borough boundary. The introduction of a raised table at the Wykeham Road junction would be implemented under Section 90C of the Highways Act 1980, subject to consultation and the section of the scheme within the Borough had been developed with the engagement and feedback from the Council's Transport officers.

The report stated that this was one of the key routes which had been identified in the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP). The proposed link would create a safe, inclusive and direct access to Woodley town centre while connecting it to several schools and leisure facilities.

An independent combined stage 1 and 2 road safety audit (RSA) had been carried out in accordance with the principles of the National Highways document GG 119 Road Safety Audit and had raised an observation regarding the width of the shared crossing as it was below the minimum recommended width of three metres. Officers from the Council had agreed with WBC's response to this, being that "where feasible crossings would be increased to three metres, however, in the majority of locations due to local constraints, such as driveways and widths of proposed cycle track it was not possible to meet the minimum recommended widths". At Palmer Park Avenue crossing due to these constraints it had not been possible to increase the width. The RSA had not raised any other safety issues regarding the section within Reading Borough.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and Councillor Ennis paid his respects to Councillor Paul Fishwick, Executive Member for Active Travel, Transport and Highways at Wokingham Borough Council who had recently passed away. Officers also confirmed than an updated and properly annotated plan would be worked on for the consultation.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to undertake statutory consultation/notification processes for the proposed changes on Palmer Park Avenue and Wykeham Road junction;**
- (3) That the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Sub Committee be granted authority to make minor amendments to the agreed proposals if required, prior to implementation;**

- (4) **That subject to no objections being received the scheme be considered as approved for implementation;**
- (5) **That should any objections be received during the statutory consultation period, they be reported to a future meeting for consideration and decision regarding scheme implementation.**

25. BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN (BSIP) UPDATE REPORT

Further to Minute 39 of the meeting held on 11 January 2024, the Sub-Committee received a report that informed them of the progress that had been made on the delivery of a number of BSIP schemes and sought approval to consult on a number of items set out in the report. The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 Oxford Road (Bedford Road) – Changes to Parking Restrictions;
- Appendix 2 Oxford Road (Norcot Road) – Final Road Layout;
- Appendix 3 Oracle Roundabout – Alternative General Arrangement;
- Appendix 4 A33 Bus Lane General Arrangement.

The report set out the progress that had been made to date on each of the schemes, alongside any outstanding actions that were required to close out each project.

Oxford Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Zinzan Street and George Street – This scheme had reached practical completion on 9 October 2024, from which point the new lane had become operational. The report sought approval to carry out a statutory consultation to capture Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) changes in this location which included the following:

- (a) The relocation of the pay and display parking bays (approximately 86 metres east of their previous location);
- (b) The relocation of the loading bay (approximately five metres east of its previous location);
- (c) Updating the red route restriction to reflect the changes in (a) and (b) above;
- (d) Any other updates (restricted to this location) that were identified in consultation with Legal Services and subject to resolution (3) below.

Oxford Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Pangbourne Street and Norcot Road – This scheme had reached practical completion on 2 November 2024, from which point the new lane had become operational. The report sought approval for the amendments that had been made to the advisory cycling road markings, which were necessary to safely implement the Oxford Road Bus Lane (Norcot Road).

Bath Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Circuit Lane and Granville Road – The delivery of this scheme had been delayed and it was not currently expected to be delivered as part of the current programme of BSIP works. Therefore, the report sought approval for the scheme to be removed from the current BSIP Programme of works and for the funding to be reallocated to support the delivery of the remaining programme and the revocation of the Bath Road (A4) bus lane and the making of the TRO associated with the revocation.

Southampton Street (Oracle Roundabout) – This new bus lane had been put on hold pending the conclusion of the remainder of the BSIP programme in order to establish the budget available for this scheme. Following the initial design of the scheme, officers learnt that due

to the age and condition of the traffic signals at the roundabout, it was not possible to reposition them as planned without upgrading the entire signal system. As this had not originally been budgeted for, officers were not able to currently commit to the delivery of this scheme as had initially been set out in the statutory consultation. In response to this officers had carried out a design review of the roundabout to identify other suitable solutions to improve bus priority and following this a further proposal had been included. This additional proposal would see the reallocation of an existing general traffic lane to be converted to a bus lane. As part of the design review, officers had commissioned additional traffic modelling to understand how the junction would perform and any impacts that would be experienced at each arm of the junction. The report therefore sought approval to carry out a statutory consultation for the alternative design proposals for the Oracle Roundabout and for the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services to be granted authority to proceed with either the original or new designs proposed, subject to the budget available.

London Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Sidmouth Street and London Street – This scheme was pending the conclusion of a formal procurement exercise, which was due to commence in 2025, subject to legal resources, with delivery of the scheme due to commence in Spring 2025. The DfT had been informed of the delays and a formal extension had been agreed with them.

London Road Bus Lane (westbound) between Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction - The westbound bus lane had been completed on 14 August 2024, from which point the new lane had become operational.

A33 BRT (southbound) – Delivery of the scheme had commenced on site in March 2024. Construction works for this phase of the scheme were anticipated to be completed in Spring 2025. The report sought approval to carry out a statutory consultation for new/amended TRO for the extension to the existing bus lane facilities on the A33.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted;**
- (2) That the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be granted authority to undertake statutory consultation/notification processes for items 3.6, 3.20, 3.25 and 3.35 proposed in the report, in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996;**
- (3) That the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services, the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport and the Chair of the Sub Committee be granted authority to make minor amendments to any of the proposals if required prior to the implementation of any of the traffic regulation orders;**
- (4) That that subject to no objections being received the Assistant Director of Legal and Democratic Services be authorised to make the Traffic Regulation Orders in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders Procedure (England and Wales) Regulations 1996, and no public inquiry be held into the proposal;**

- (5) That that should any of the proposals receive objections during the statutory consultation period, they be reported to a future meeting for consideration and decision;
- (6) That that subject to the outcome of the Southampton Street (Oracle roundabout) statutory consultation, the Executive Director of Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services be granted authority to proceed with either of the designs proposed, subject to the budget available;
- (7) That the minor amendments made to the advisory cycling road markings, which were necessary to safely implement the Oxford Road Bus Lane (Norcot Road) as explained in sections 3.7 to 3.14 of the report be approved;
- (8) That the Bath Road bus lane be removed from the current BSIP Programme of works, and this funding reallocated to support the delivery of the remaining programme;
- (9) That the revocation of the Bath Road (A4) bus lane and the making of the Traffic Regulation Order associated with the revocation be approved.

26. REQUESTS FOR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The Sub-Committee received a report providing information on the requests for traffic management measures that had been raised with officers. These were measures that had either been previously reported or those that would not typically be addressed in other programmes, where funding was yet to be identified. The following appendices were attached to the report:

- Appendix 1 List of requests that were new to this update report with initial officer comments and recommendations;
- Appendix 2 List of requests that had been previously reported, where significant amendments were proposed, with officer comments and recommendations;
- Appendix 3 The principal list of requests, as updated following the previous report to the Sub-Committee in March 2024. It also contained the prioritised list of cycling and walking measures from the LCWIP.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted;
- (2) That having considered the officer recommendations for each request set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report the entries be retained on the primary list of requests, as set out in Appendix 3 attached to the report, subject to;
- (3) That having considered the officer recommendation for amendments to each request set out in Appendix 2, attached to the report, they be retained

on the primary list of requests subject to, the wording in respect of the alterations to existing, and additional traffic calming features on Redlands Road, Morgan Road and Alexandra Road in Redlands Ward being amended to state that the contents of the entry would only be adjusted once the CIL funded schemes had been developed and the deliverables agreed.

27. TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDER RECTIFICATION - UPDATE

The Sub-Committee received a report that informed them of progress and decision making in respect of the TRO rectification process. A drawings pack to highlight the locations and restrictions affected was appended to the report.

The report explained that at Council on 15 October 2024 a summary of issues that related to certain TROs had been reported which meant that there were restrictions on the Highway that could not be enforced. A rectification process had been agreed (Minutes 19 and 20 refer) that involved advertising new, permanent TROs to address the issues that had been identified.

The report included a table that detailed the TROs affected and stated that to ensure the restrictions presented on street were compliant with national signing regulations and that they were enforceable, valid TROs needed to be in place. The consultation process was a regulatory process and officers would follow a standard approach for each TRO, as set out in the report.

The launch of the statutory consultations would be staggered and a table that showed the progress of each TRO through the rectification project was included in the report. The table would be updated and submitted to future meetings until the processes were concluded for all effected TROs. The report stated that the timelines might be subject to change and would be influenced by the feedback that would be received during the statutory consultation, currently it had been assumed that there would be no objections and a decision taken to implement the resultant TROs.

It was expected that enforcement would commence following the making of each TRO and as part of the rectification scheme, officers were also identifying areas where signing and lining relating to the restrictions required improvement. These works would be carried out following statutory consultation, subject to a decision to make the TRO.

At Council on 15 October 2024, officers had reported that motorists had been wrongly issued Penalty Charge Notices for alleged breaches of the restrictions in TROs with known issues and had submitted a proposed scheme of restitution. A dedicated webpage had been set up for affected motorists to claim a refund and a list of frequently asked questions and details of the TRO areas where claims could be made had been set up on the Council's website. The report included a table that provided some headline data for claims that had been made through the scheme of restitution as at 14 November 2024. The report also included a table that provided details of the media communications that had been carried out and had been planned, to date.

The Sub-Committee discussed the report and officers confirmed that more detailed reports setting out for example, a breakdown of the reasons why claims were not verified, would be submitted to future meetings of the Sub-Committee and other Council Committees.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

28. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved –

That, pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) members of the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item, as it was likely that there would be disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

29. APPLICATIONS FOR DISCRETIONARY PARKING PERMITS

The Sub-Committee received a report giving details of the background to the decisions to refuse applications for Discretionary Parking Permits from 2 applicants, who had subsequently appealed against these decisions.

Resolved -

- (1) That with regard to application 2, a second discretionary resident permit be issued, for one year only, personal to the applicant and charged at the standard rate;**
- (2) That the Executive Director for Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services' decision to refuse application 1 be upheld.**

(Exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 2).

(The meeting started at 6.30 pm and finished at 8.10 pm).

Minutes of 110 AWE Local Liaison Committee Meeting

Thursday 7 November 2024

Aldermaston

Present:

Ian Rogers	Chair, AWE Chief Nuclear Officer
Cllr Adrian Betteridge	Wokingham Borough Council
Cllr Mike Bound	Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council
Cllr Graham Bridgman	Stratfield Mortimer Parish Council
Cllr Avril Burdett	Tadley Town Council
Cllr Jonathan Chishick	Sulhamstead Parish Council
Cllr Colin Cooper	Baughurst Parish Council
Cllr Sophie Crawford	Aldermaston Parish Council
Cllr Kevin Cross	Mortimer West End Parish Council
Cllr Robert Jones	Padworth Parish Council
Cllr Mark Keeping	Reading Borough Council
Cllr David Leeks	Tadley Town Council
Cllr George McGarvie	Pamber Parish Council
Cllr Ian Montgomery	Shinfield Parish Council
Cllr Susan Mullan	Tadley Town Council
Cllr Vicky Poole	West Berkshire Council
Cllr David Shirt	Aldermaston Parish Council
Cllr Jo Slimin	Tadley and Pamber Parish Council
Cllr Jim Thompson	Wokefield Parish Council
Cllr Tim Whitaker	Mapledurham Parish Council
Cllr Paul Woodley	Wasing Parish Council

Nick Bolton	AWE
Andy Burnett-Dale	AWE
Chris Daniels	AWE
Scott Davies-Hearn	AWE
Richard Doe	AWE

Sam Earl	AWE
Doug Greenway	AWE
Kadri Hamit	AWE
Richard Hare	AWE
Matt King	AWE
Bryan Lyttle	AWE
Hannah Marsh	AWE
Sharif Narouz	AWE
Ian Rogers	AWE
Sarah Sharpe	AWE
Nicole Targett	AWE
Kavita Thandi	AWE
Piran Borlase-Hendry	AWE
James Platt	AWE
Tom Stevens-Light	AWE

Regulators:

Rob Green	Environment Agency
Gareth Lock	Office for Nuclear Regulation
Karl Pallester	Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator

Local Authority:

Carolyn Richardson	West Berkshire Council
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Introduction:

Ian Rogers, Chief Nuclear Officer, chaired the meeting and welcomed members to the 110 LLC meeting.

Membership changes

- John Seto appointed as Theale Parish Council LLC representative, replacing Stuart Coker.
- Adrian Betteridge appointed as Wokingham Borough Council LLC representative replacing Chris Johnson.
- Lyndon Austin appointed as Silchester Parish Council LLC representative, replacing John Durrant.
- Michael Bound re-appointed as Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council representative.
- Jo Slimin re-appointed as Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council representative.

Apologies

Apologies were received from: Philip Bassil, Clive Littlewood, Jonah Maddocks, John Seto.

Ian Rogers gave a collective thanks to Janine Mantle, the previous chair of the Local Liaison Committee, who is now Director of Corporate Affairs for London Fire Brigade.

Ian Rogers introduced himself as the Chief Nuclear Officer at AWE, who has been specifically asked to chair the LLC for appropriate representation as a member of the Executive Committee.

Colin Cooper: What is the Chief Nuclear Officer responsible for?

Ian Rogers: I am here to hold the Executive Committee to account for all matters to do with nuclear safety and nuclear security. I ensure nuclear safety and nuclear security are given due consideration within the executive decision-making discussions. I am also there to hold them to account and act as their point of veto should I consider that anything invalidates our legal duties over safety, security and environmental legislation.

Approval of 109th LLC minutes

Questions arising from 109th LLC minutes

David Shirt: 26 pages is rather excessive. Rather than record the comments of each individual it would be better if you just put decision made?

George McGarvie: Since I missed the last meeting, I find it useful to see what people said.

Graham Bridgman: If you weren't in the meeting, it's useful to see how the conversation developed.

Ian Rogers: We put these minutes on our website so that members of the public can also have access to them.

Sophie Crawford: It could have been a summary of issues and then actions.

Actions from 109th LLC Meeting – 29th April 2024

Action 109/01: AWE to find a way for Cllr Jo Slimin to share the video she has created.

Response – a member of the Communications Team has contacted the Councillor regarding how this could be incorporated into the travel plan as part of travel options and our Liftshare scheme.

Closed

Action 109/02: AWE to share a postcode map at the next meeting of where all employees travel from.

Response – Postcode maps will be part of the Development Update presentation at LLC 110.

Closed

Action 109/03: Graham to share the traffic data he has with AWE so that it can be included in the wider travel and transport communication plan.

Response – Thank you – this has been very useful and will support our current work on the wider travel and transportation plan.

Closed

Action 109/04: LLC members to feedback, via the feedback form to be sent out post meeting, about the community drop-in sessions.

Response – Sent out with LLC 109 minutes. Two responses received.

Closed

Action 109/05: AWE to consider including a myth busting segment in an issue of The Connect magazine.

Response – Connect Magazine is currently under review for content and delivery.
Closed

Action 109/06: AWE to follow up on the school contact numbers on the emergency list in the event of an incident.

Response – an update on this will be given as part of the Emergency Planning and Response Update
Ongoing

Questions arising:

Avril Burdett: Are you doing myth busting (109/05) at the community engagement events?

Ian Rogers: We are taking the opportunity to address concerns that the community have about our site.

Chair's Update

Organisation update including site operations – Ian Rogers

A new Government

Over the summer, the Labour party was elected to form a new government. The Labour party was running a pro nuclear deterrent campaign, with Sir Keir Starmer having some newspaper coverage about his unequivocal support for the UK's nuclear deterrent. Although it is early days for this Government, AWE is not expecting any fundamental changes to the UK Government's defence policy.

A New Brand

AWE have a new brand and a new strapline: AWE Nuclear Security Technologies.

In 2023 AWE conducted comprehensive research into their brand and company perception. The insights were clear: the brand was either unknown or misunderstood and at times detracting. The impact of this was affecting perceptions, recruitment efforts and partner relationships.

This new brand will help AWE with talent attraction and also marks a step change of AWE being more of a public presence.

Nuclear Test Veterans

There is currently a public campaign on nuclear test veterans, which seeks to deliver greater recognition and compensation for veterans who participated in Britain's nuclear testing programme.

AWE has been connected to the campaign in relation to some historical documents that it holds on behalf of the Ministry of Defence, some of which remain classified. The Ministry of Defence has already made many of these documents publicly available, with AWE's support.

An individual can also make a Subject Access Request to AWE or the relevant military service to have sight of what records are held that may relate to them.

Community Engagement Events

AWE has started community engagement events to tell their neighbours and the broader public about their infrastructure activities. Thank you to those LLC members who have attended and for your continued community support.

The Fire at Barrow

Recently, there was a fire at BAE Systems' nuclear submarine shipyard at Barrow-in-Furness. BAE has confirmed that those taken to hospital with smoke inhalation have since been released. Those visiting from AWE have been accounted for and are safe. Cumbria Police have said there was "no nuclear risk".

AWE has a close relationship with BAE Systems and will be kept informed.

Questions arising:

Avril Burdett: It would be interesting to know how the undercover worked at BAE. Did people go undercover? How easy was it to get the message out? What was people's responses?

110/01 ACTION: Ian Rogers to give an update on the site undercover as a result of the fire at Barrow.

Questions since the last meeting:

QUESTION: Councillor Sophie Crawford – Aldermaston Parish

Sophie had heard through Tadley Town Council that Nick Elliott, our CEO was in favour of loosening AWE's position on objecting to new development within the DEPZ.

Nick has confirmed that is not the case.

Sophie also asked about the planning application for Aldermaston Recycling. AWE's current view is that it would not pose an unacceptable adverse impact. Andy Burnett-Dale will cover this further in his update.

QUESTION: Councillor Avril Burdett – Tadley Town Council

Avril pointed out the traffic issues on the A340 and asked if we could work with our staff to push car sharing and traffic calming measures.

Our travel and transport efforts are being covered as part of the agenda today, including car sharing.

Avril also asked about if there was anything AWE could do to push improved broadband access in the area. Unfortunately, this is not something AWE is able to influence.

QUESTION: Councillor Vicky Poole

Vicky passed on a concern she saw on social media of locals borrowing our grass maintenance equipment from site. We do not comment on security matters. However, we have a full range of security measures that robustly protect our people, information, assets and sites.

110/02 ACTION: Vicky Poole to give update on broadband access in West Berkshire parishes.

QUESTION: Chris Gunnell Clerk on behalf of Silchester Parish Council

Chris Gunnell shared insights from their Speedwatch Team after completing some speed calming activities. We are including this information in communications we send out to our people. Thank you to Chris and Silchester Parish Council.

Communications Update

Nicole Targett

Media and PR Manager

Due to significant uplift in External Communications activity, the AWE Press Office wanted to share insight into the types of issues, queries and communications that it faces and how AWE can work with the LLC to ensure that it is delivering a good service and meeting the expectations of all its stakeholders.

There has been an increase in communication activity across many areas of the business including recruitment, community engagement and charity work. The role of the AWE Press Office is to act as a gateway and a gatekeeper to ensure that people can have information as required, but also to ensure the security and integrity of AWE and its colleagues. It works closely with regulators and colleagues in our local authorities. The AWE Press Office receives press queries regarding: planning, freedom of information, nuclear test veterans campaign, traffic, science and supply chain work.

It not only focuses on the national press and broadcasts, but also at a local scale as its communities are key. Any impact AWE has on its communities is something it needs to be mindful of and accountable for.

Social media is something that AWE has no control over outside of its own corporate channels. Everyone in External Communications receives a daily press summary so that they can be best prepared to support with external queries and those from the community.

When guidance is sent to LLC members, they are given security instructions on whether it is for sharing in the public domain or for their awareness only (in the case of queries from constituents).

Questions arising

George McGarvie: It is normal for a LLC at other nuclear sites to have the press attend. Is that something you have looked at yet?

Nicole Targett: I am very much in favour of transparency and accountability, however this would be a matter for the Chairman.

Ian Rogers: It is something that the Executive are now looking at.

Development Update

Main topics of discussion: future planning, external planning, travel and transport update and postcode map update to close action 109/02

Piran Borlase-Hendry

Senior Environment Specialist

110/03 ACTION: Reformat future planning slide into black and white (slide 7) and send to all LLC members

Piran presented on all the actions that AWE is taking to avoid, mitigate and compensate (which is the hierarchy within the National Planning Policy framework) to protect all of AWE's wildlife assets within the estate, particularly bearing in mind the future capital new build.

Avoiding, mitigating and compensating impacts of all the work that is happening

AWE undertake ecology and heritage surveys in advance of all construction and demolition work. This covers all levels of development, from large capital new builds, to taking down small bus shelters and smoking sheds on site. The ecologists will visit everything before work starts. The direct and indirect impacts of lighting and noise are also taken into consideration. Ecologists recently supported the upgrade of the perimeter lights to ensure the impact on commuting bats was reduced. AWE has great examples of Habitats of Principal Importance (UK biodiversity action plan habitats) such as: lowland heath and deciduous woodland on the estate.

AWE works with new build contractors and delivery partners to make sure that biodiversity is built in at an early stage using biophilic design as well as nature-based solutions. Any unavoidable losses are compensated. For example adding a peregrine falcon nesting box to a new building to replace the demolished building that was once used by the birds. This was all completed outside of the nesting season. In advance of the next nesting season, three bird boxes were placed around the estate and subsequently, two generations of peregrine falcons have used these boxes successfully.

Enhancement – Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain became a legal requirement in February 2024. AWE was well prepared as this was introduced internally in 2019 and has subsequently been part of all of AWE's new major builds. AWE ecologists are always keen to use native species, however to maintain a climate resilient landscape may mean that non-native species are introduced to cope with climate change.

Piran is part of the landowner working group of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy- which covers all of Berkshire. This is to make sure that their priorities on habitats are reflected in AWE's own planting and landscaping schemes.

AWE's ecologists are working alongside the Estates team to improve ecological connectivity across the site, rather than just creating isolated pockets of habitat.

Enhancement – Nature Recovery Plan

Nature Recovery Plan is part of AWE's Environmental Sustainability Strategy. We are discussing using nature-based solutions such as using tree planting to capture carbon, or tree planting for passive cooling on buildings, which can reduce the energy used to cool those buildings. Enhancing and protecting tree planting is in line with the Greening Government Commitments, which are an increase of ten percent across the whole country. AWE is contributing to that by planting a traditional style orchard of two and a half hectares near our Burghfield site. Increasing pollinator habitats, primarily through creating 250,000 square metres of reduced mown grassland has been achieved this year. AWE is increasingly taking a natural capital approach where they put financial and other values on the benefits they get from nature as an organisation. This includes ecosystem services, so that this can be built into their decision making and financial planning.

AWE shares best practice with the local Nature Recovery Strategy, as well as other ecologists from across the nuclear sector, with similar size organisations, to learn from each other. AWE is undertaking an increasing number of conservation surveys so that they can really understand what they have on their estate, and then start looking at the impact of all the new work on those species. AWE has had positive feedback from the Environment Agency when they presented Nature Recovery Plans to them this year.

Questions arising:

George McGarvie: Biodiversity Net Gain – is it all internal on site or can AWE pay somebody else to do something?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: AWE follow the biodiversity gain hierarchy which is in the legislation. AWE will look first at the opportunities within the red line boundary. Then, AWE would look at the rest of the estate and

then the rest of the defence estate before going to a third party. AWE won't buy credits as this is against MOD policy.

Jo Slimin: There has been some discussion about renewables and getting solar farms that may supply some electricity. Is that under your brief or is somebody else going to discuss it?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: Andy Burnett-Dale to discuss in his presentation.

Avril Burdett: You obviously have strong links with West Berkshire with what you are doing as part of your planning, but you have two SSSIs (Site of Special Scientific Interest) yards away from your gates that are in Hampshire. Are you having any talks with Basingstoke or Hampshire Councils about all the biodiversity out there and the SSSIs?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: The closest SSSIs to AWE are still in Berkshire, including Decoy Pits, Pools and Ponds. AWE do speak to Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon Wildlife Trust particularly about those issues and through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. AWE does interact with landowners throughout all of Berkshire. AWE does have less contact with Hampshire as a district, but through the Local Nature Recovery Strategy we do talk to their chair who is in contact with the chair of the Hampshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. There is future work to develop that connectivity across our estate.

Avril Burdett: There are several areas of common land right on the border including Pamber Forest, Tadley Common and Longmores Meadow. There is an awful lot out there that you could be affecting.

Piran Borlase-Hendry: Any development AWE does will take account of the environment through the planning process regardless of which county or unitary authority it is in. AWE is trying to build connectivity so where there are really good habitats outside the fence, they can start introducing it within the fence line and creating a connection across the estate wherever possible.

Ian Rogers: Does everyone understand what a SSSI is?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: A Site of Special Scientific Interest. Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are areas for birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for terrestrial species.

Vicky Poole: You have lots of unique landscape and habitats – I am curious about ground moving animals such as deer, badgers, foxes. How do those animals navigate your biodiversity areas especially if you are looking to bring more of the outside of the fence inside of the fence. How are you going to be able to support animal travel?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: AWE do get deer, foxes, hedgehogs and badgers all within the estate. The security fence must be maintained for security and AWE is unable to make holes in it to create wildlife passes.

George McGarvie: I believe the wire has a positive impact on your animals because they are protected from hunting and pollution. For your Biodiversity Net Gain, are you scoring yourself on a normal level, for a protected status or are you already a step above on the biodiversity counts?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: Some of the terrestrial species are less able to transit across into the site. Insects, birds and some of the other animals such as snakes and reptiles really benefit from the site because dog walkers are kept out. One of the biggest impacts on all the common land is people walking their dogs and recreation. In terms of Biodiversity and Net Gain, there is a statutory metric that will take account for habitat quality, so there is no way for AWE to change that metric.

Susan Mullan: Are there any plans to try and keep an eye on the number of species inside the wire to ensure that there is a balance and prevent damage to the ecosystem?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: AWE has already surveyed for great crested newts on a biennial basis. We also do annual breeding bird surveys, winter wetland bird surveys and reptile surveys. AWE would like to do more survey work on pollinator species because they have created 250,000 square metres of reduced mow grassland. The next step is to see what impact this is having.

Susan Mullan: Would you put beehives on site and then check the honey for pollutants?

Piran Borlase-Hendry: Beehives are essentially livestock and they are mostly non-native bred. AWE has looked at introducing beehives multiple times. It also ~~has~~ ^{is} in health and safety concerns in explosive

areas. As a general rule, beehives take pollen away from native species, so AWE would much rather have native species there than introduce beehives.

Bryan Lyttle

Estate Planning and Development Lead

Recently, it has been quiet on planning applications being submitted. However, AWE has attended hearings on the new West Berkshire Local Plan. The Inspector has yet to make their final conclusions on this future Plan. The Wokingham Local Plan is also out for consultation. There are a number of policies directly relating to AWE and the DEPZ and, like the new West Berkshire Local Plan, no new proposals for development inside the DEPZ is proposed in the Wokingham Plan. For Basingstoke and Deane – they held a call for sites for the new Local Plan and the submission draft is due to be published in the Winter of 2024/2025.

We had a planning appeal and decision over the Summer for a development inside the AWE B DEPZ. The Planning Inspectorate refused the appeal for development in August 2024. The Hollies planning appeal public inquiry was held in September for 32 residential properties. AWE is still awaiting the decision on this appeal from the Planning Inspectorate. We are expecting more planning appeals in the New Year.

Questions arising

Sophie Crawford: West Berkshire local plan – we had the examination hearings over the Summer and although there are no proposals for development, they did change the wording as a result of those hearings. Is the change in wording because of the change of emphasis or just a simplification of the way they described it?

Bryan Lyttle: The Inspector requested that the Council together with the Office for Nuclear Regulation and AWE come up with a form of words that would clarify the AWE policy without changing what was in the policy at Regulation 19. That, in due course, may come out as an Inspector's recommended proposed change which will then go out to consultation before the final decision.

Sophie Crawford: The Aldermaston Recycling development, will significantly increase HGV movements within the area. AWE, in the past has objected to developments because it is necessary to have a low congestion road on the external perimeter, the A340 particularly, in the event that emergency services need to access it. That has been an official response to refusals for example at Youngs last year for nine new industrial units. The site, has a current capacity for 25,000 tonnes a year and want to increase it to 175,000 tonnes. If you live locally, it is a significant increase and a worry for our residents that live along that road.

Bryan Lyttle: It's nuanced and each application is looked at on a case by case basis.

110/04 ACTION: Bryan Lyttle to investigate AWE's possible reasoning from Sophie Crawford's statement

Andy Burnett-Dale

Head of Estate, Strategy and Planning

Data shared to show the results of the Mobilityways AWE Travel Survey 2024.

Postcode data infographics shared as requested by action 109/02 from the 109 LLC meeting. AWE analysed this data and then looked at bus routes, train routes and options for employees to car share to reduce traffic and promote sustainability. The transport route differences between Aldermaston and Burghfield are significant, due to the location of the Burghfield site, however AWE is trying to promote and reward employees for car sharing.

Travel Plan short term activity includes:

- Promoting existing travel initiatives to staff
- Relaunch the car share in November 2024
- Promote active travel in Spring 2025
- Looking at a pilot bus route from Aldermaston railway station to Aldermaston site. AWE did look at a bus route from Newbury and Thatcham, although there are some complexities associated with being a Non Departmental Public Body which include financial restrictions.

Questions arising

David Leeks: Are there buses inside the site to move employees from one area to another?

Andy Burnett Dale: AWE has in the past had shuttle buses that move around the sites, so there is the opportunity to reinstate this should there be the need or demand for it.

Jo Slimin: The Labour Government is bringing in some new legislation to allow councils to run bus services. There may be a future opportunity there.

Sophie Crawford: The 44 bus that did use to run very infrequently from Aldermaston Station up to AWE stopped at the beginning of November and it has been replaced with a mobility bus service. It is no longer a scheduled service.

Avril Burdett: What option is there to get people through Tadley on bikes?

Andy Burnett Dale: As part of AWE's planning conditions associated with the Hub development, AWE had to carry out some studies. One of those was for more cycle ways in the South West and East of Aldermaston as well as bus routes, the time of bus routes and the duration of journeys. AWE is looking towards Basingstoke and Andover as well as Reading and Newbury.

Infrastructure Investment Update

Sharif Narouz

Programme Director for Future Materials Campus (FMC)

Since Andrew McNaughton last presented to the LLC, AWE has continued building work on the Hub at Aldermaston and on the MMF and MENSA at Burghfield. With regard to the Future Materials Campus (FMC), AWE is still doing a lot of design work at the moment and also capitalising from learnings from other builds to bring a single programmatic view to all of the projects that sit within the Future Materials Campus. Four weeks ago, AWE launched the new programme delivery organisation which allows them to get a single view on everything that sits within FMC. There will also be a significant recruitment campaign going out in the future to support this. AWE continues to engage with local authorities and have already run several local community engagement drop ins on the benefits that the FMC programme can bring but also generally around AWE, what they do and how they do it.

Hannah Marsh

Head of Communications for FMC

Working in conjunction with many local parishes and parish councillors, since 17 October, AWE has started a more proactive approach, aiming to deliver six in-person events with two online events. It is the start of AWE getting out into the community and explaining who they are because the communities generally know very little about the work at AWE and there are a lot of myths to be busted. AWE has already run three events to date, with one hundred people in attendance across those events – 32 at Aldermaston, 18 at Reading and 46 at Burghfield. Because of the pandemic and many changes that have been made, the way that was traditionally used to engage with the community has had to flex, so we are also going to offer online webinar events as well, which will help us reach a wider population and varying demographics. All of these community events will involve subject matter experts from across the business.

Areas of interest from the initial feedback from the three community events hosted so far have been: myth busting, recruitment, apprenticeship training schemes, graduate training schemes, individuals wanting to change careers, ex-military wanting to work at AWE, individuals wanting to learn about our STEM approach and engagement in schools.

An AWE community website has been set up: [Atomic Weapons Establishment \(AWE\) - Citizen Space](#). The point of this is for transparency. AWE is asking the public and their communities to engage with them through the website, record any questions that they may have about AWE and in return, will be offered an answer.

Questions arising

George McGarvie: The online community sessions – will they be interactive or one way?

Hannah Marsh: The online session will be a twenty-minute presentation. AWE is asking the public to pre-register and as part of this they are asking them to submit their questions, which will then be answered throughout the presentation.

Sophie Crawford: We were very grateful that you included all of us in the Aldermaston community drop in event. The kick-off event was very impressive and I would encourage anyone to go along because of the sheer number of specialist staff who are able to answer your questions.

Vicky Poole: I would encourage you to think about university seminars, workshops, meet the employers. I am sure a lot of us here have connections, so if you want to reach out for our support, please do.

Graham Bridgman: One of the things to think about would be attendance at annual parish meetings.

Ian Rogers: If you ever want someone from AWE to support your meeting, please get in touch.

David Leeks: How is the Hub coming along?

Ian Rogers: Very well. Shell and cores are almost complete on two of the four wings. The other two are going up to steelwork. Still a full construction site, but is progressing.

Jim Thompson: Where will I find a link to publicise to people about the online community engagement events?

Hannah Marsh: We will make sure that you have it. It is on our website. We will also get it sent out to all Local Liaison Councillors today after the meeting.

110/05 ACTION: Send out details of how to join the online community drop-in sessions to all members of the Local Liaison Committee on 7 November 2024.

Estates and Liabilities update

Richard Doe

Head of Nuclear Services

Updates for current demolition and decommissioning programmes.

Demolition: Removal of a stack from a laboratory last used twenty years ago. This is from one of the older facilities on site that stopped operation. This is now the fourth example of a safe stack demolition in a high hazard area. The second demolition is ahead of schedule and should be cleared by March 2025, which would then be useful for AWE in terms of footprint for the new build.

Decommissioning: AWE have re-started decommissioning which is the first stage. They have removed the first glove box in over thirty years. It is a complex, slow, safe process that takes time. The glove box material was size reduced and sealed into drums. AWE has now started work on decommissioning a second glove box.

An overview of Community Concerns.

There were six registered calls to the community concerns line. Four of them were not directly associated with AWE and in those cases they were redirected if possible to those that could help.

AWE has received multiple emails from one person relating to traffic.

AWE also received a report of a long sounding alarm which was investigated by AWE Shift Managers. It was found to be a faulty storm warning. The issue was resolved and the caller was informed.

Protestor activity – there are no upcoming planned events that AWE is aware of. AWE has a good relationship with those types of groups and, if they choose to protest, AWE do their best to make it as safe and accessible as possible.

Questions arising

David Shirt: I am struggling to read the current slide on the presentation.

110/06 ACTION: Triage slide pack for any future LLC meetings to ensure colour contrast and size of text is appropriate.

Robert Jones: How many of the demolitions require special disposal in terms of radiological contamination and how much is regular demolition?

Ian Rogers: The vast majority of demolition is in non-radiological areas.

Mark Keeping: Why was there a pause between 2015 and now?

Richard Doe: AWE has to get the facility right before decommissioning. It has to be made safe first. This may mean that a new ventilation system is required, paperwork, permissions to carry out the work, checking and testing supplies to the building – it is a long process.

Jo Slimin: I watched a programme and there was mention of using artificial intelligence and robots to do some of this work which is obviously very dangerous. Will these new technologies help you on this site?

Richard Doe: Wherever possible AWE will use that type of equipment and there is already a significant amount of this in place as part of the demolition and decommissioning processes.

Graham Bridgman: What do you do with the drums filled with decommissioned material?

Richard Doe: They are processed through the next stage. The material will go through various techniques, characterisation and then there will be a suitable disposal route.

Ian Rogers: All waste has to be characterised, there has to be an approved waste stream for the various categories of waste that we have. Part of AWE's sustainability programme is to try and reduce the amount of waste produced and when produced it is managed in accordance with the waste hierarchy.

Vicky Poole: Where are these drums stored and is there any impact on the immediate environment that you may be concerned about?

Richard Doe: AWE is regulated and work with the regulator throughout the process. The drums are stored currently at AWE. Further monitoring is carried out and they are then sent to a waste repository.

Ian Rogers: AWE is also held to account by the Regulators for the amount of waste that they allow to accumulate on the site at any point in time. AWE have to demonstrate a commitment to moving them offsite when it is safe and appropriate to do so.

Tim Whitaker: What is a glove box?

Richard Doe: A glovebox is a controlled environment that protects the operator from the radiation hazard or the toxic hazard from the materials that are being operated.

Avril Burdett: How much of a problem is asbestos on site?

Richard Doe: AWE know where asbestos is throughout the site and this is taken into account with every job that they do. It is part of the deconstruction process.

Community Update

Kavita Thandi

Responsible Business Manager

Update on what we are doing in the community and schools. Highlighted new events and activities that have been put in place. AWE now has a new charity partner – the organisation is supporting Parents and Children Together (PACT). AWE selected PACT through employee votes.

AWE has had around 850 volunteering activities take place, which is an increase from last year.

AWE has their annual gift collections happening to collect gifts for PACT, The Trussell Trust , Barnados and also second hand clothes and new toiletries for the Cowshed and SWAT.

West Berkshire Museum in Newbury will be having an exhibition of some of AWE's on site collection. It opens on 4 December 2024 and will be open to the public to view. It includes video, games, artefacts and information about AWE's future as well as a celebration of 75 years of AWE next year.

AWE has invited PACT on site to talk to employees and have discussed how we can work together through the partnership. AWE is organising a charity science show where all proceeds go directly to PACT. AWE is also supporting PACT through volunteering opportunities using their 27 hours of employee volunteering time.

Questions arising

Jo Slimin: What date is the West Berkshire Museum AWE exhibition opening?

Kavita Thandi: 4 December 2024

Sophie Crawford: Will you be creating a flyer that we can promote through our social media?

Kavita Thandi: It will be on the museum communications as well as AWE's communications.

David Leek: Where abouts is it in Newbury?

Kavita Thandi: It is right in the centre of Newbury, opposite the Town Hall in Newbury Museum.

Samantha Earl

Responsible Business Specialist

Part of AWE's community engagement work is working with primary schools and secondary schools in the local area. AWE work in approximately a 20 mile radius from Aldermaston with any school that would like their STEM support. This zone encompasses 65 secondary schools and 200 primary schools. To help deliver this work in schools, AWE has over 250 STEM Ambassadors – an employee at AWE who chooses to give up some of their time to support the work that we do in primary and secondary schools, focusing on the STEM subjects of Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths. Last academic year, AWE reached 60,005 students in their local communities. AWE's main focus last year was secondary schools, delivering careers fairs and apprenticeship presentations to raise an awareness of their apprenticeship programme and early careers opportunities at AWE.

To develop their work in primary schools, AWE wanted to increase the reach that we have. This year AWE has created self-service STEM kits for STEM Ambassadors to take into schools and deliver exciting and

engaging workshop activity for the students. The STEM kits are linked to the Primary National Curriculum to support the learning of the students for year 3 – 6.

AWE will continue with their Primary Science Challenge which will be launched in 2025 and be open to all primary schools in the local area. The details are currently being finalised, with the prize being a live workshop delivered by the Royal Institution.

AWE will continue their work with Queen Mary's College in Basingstoke, by continuing to sponsor the Primary Science Centre. Schools in the local area are able to visit for free and receive science lessons linked to the National Curriculum. They also provide free transport to and from the centre for primary schools.

AWE also work with other partners such as Enterprise Business Partnership (EBP) who help AWE to extend their reach in Primary Schools through activities such as Guess My Job and People Like Me.

Questions arising

Vicky Poole: What are you doing to support students that are home schooled or independently schooled?

Sam Earl: At the moment, AWE work mostly with state and private schools within the community. In the future, AWE may provide online materials and resources to support all students, including those that are home schooled.

Ian Rogers opened the afternoon session by confirming AWE will invite Doug Greenway to share AWE's environment strategy with the LLC members at the next meeting.

110/07 Action: Doug Greenway to have an agenda item at the next LLC meeting

Regulators Update

Rob Green

Environment Agency (EA)

The Environment Agency report was circulated to the LLC members prior to the meeting for the period 12 April to 17 October 2024.

The Environment Agency do a number of engagements with AWE each month which varies between compliance assessments or meetings and routine and non-routine engagements. They have been taking part in a regulatory piece of work with Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) and Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator (DNSR) looking at organisational capability (not just for AWE but across the whole Defence Nuclear Enterprise) and this is an ongoing piece of work - looking at nuclear safety and environmental controls.

This was a very good engagement with AWE executive team and phase two of this will be completed next year.

Last meeting, the Environment Agency mentioned there were some non-compliances which resulted in a warning letter being issued to AWE. Tied to this, they have raised a regulatory issue on the organisation to improve the shortfalls being identified. Since, there have been monthly engagements to track progress against the remedies. This is ongoing, however, AWE is progressing in accordance with the Environment Agency's expectations.

A formal compliance inspection will take place in quarter one of 2025.

A climate change inspection took place working with ONR specifically on external hazards that ONR has identified and touched on wider work undertaken by AWE. This was a positive intervention and was good to draw all information together in the findings.

There have been three compliance activities in the reporting period looking at AWE's radioactive waste in the waste stores and some of the legacy facilities at Aldermaston. There were two minor environmental non-compliances for which actions have been placed on AWE and are looking to agree dates for completion of those actions soon.

A separate activity was completed at Burghfield site looking at the radioactive permits and there were no non-compliances noted. The most recent inspection was of the uranium facilities at Aldermaston and again no non-compliances were raised, although a few recommendations and observations were raised which AWE will be taking forward.

A water abstraction licence inspection was carried out in Burghfield and Aldermaston. Issues were found with both, which resulted in non-compliance. AWE will be taking this forward and working to rectify.

Questions arising

Vicky Poole: Will any of the non-compliances have an impact on the community with regards to the water etc. or is it purely governance?

Rob Green: The water abstraction non-compliance was due to the meters being placed in a location where they shouldn't have been, so there is no direct impact on the water services. With the radioactive substances, these are relating to procedural compliance, so again, no impact on the community and environment.

Regulators Update

Karl Pallester

Defence Nuclear Safety Regulator

DNSR only pick up where there are Disapplications, Exemptions or Derogations (DED) from Statute. Their focus on AWE sites is when explosives and radioactive come together, through life safety so interested in the product and the quality of the product rather than the facility itself.

The touch points in Aldermaston and Burghfield are currently Assembly Technology Centre (ATC) at Burghfield, the Explosives Technology Centre (XTC) at Aldermaston and EPURE which is a joint UK and France facility based in France.

The DNSR outlined the enforcement outstanding on AWE from the hierarchy of enforcement which ranges from 'stop' or 'prohibit notices at the top down to an 'observation'. Currently, there are no prohibit notices and no improvement notices on AWE. There are corrective action requirements on each of the areas shown on slide 36 of the PowerPoint slides.

The Suitably Qualified Experienced Personnel (SQEP) of the AWE board is down due to a few new appointments to the AWE board, so the action is to get them up to speed with what AWE does in each of the areas. This can be closed out soon, DNSR are just gathering the evidence to do it.

There were three interventions carried out since the last report. These included a themed inspection with design colleagues on the specifications used for the design, manufacture and testing of the explosive components. This inspection was rated a yellow as there is a little work to be done on the specifications.

The next investigation was AC17 compliance, which is management arrangements inspection carried out at Burghfield looking at the adequacy of the document arrangements of the assembly and disassembly which was rated a green with no enforcement coming out from this.

There was a reactive inspection in September at ATC with limited notice given to AWE in conjunction with the convoy and looking at the cooperation between the two teams. This is an ongoing inspection and therefore there are no conclusions yet.

The final one is of a recent emergency response exercise at Aldermaston carried out in October. This was assessed as adequate by the joint regulators. There are two assessment grades 'adequate' or 'inadequate'.

Questions arising

George McGarvie: I wasn't aware of DNSR until recently when a representative started to join and present at LLC meetings.

Ian Rogers: This is because they were recently invited by me and they will be a regular occurrence as one of our regulators.

Regulators Update

Gareth Lock

Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR)

The ONR report was circulated to the LLC members prior to the meeting for the period 1 April to 30 September 2024.

ONR completed several assessments in the reporting period including the level one exercise carried out at Aldermaston mentioned by DNSR. They have done a lot of work with the nuclear liability team this year and they have a level two issue around decommissioning which is quite high in ONR. They will be closing this down next month as they are happy that AWE is doing a very good job.

The other focus this year has been to gather evidence to see if Aldermaston can be moved to routine regulatory attention (from enhanced). Some of the areas being looked at are around maintenance, learning, RADOR reporting and leadership capability. Gareth Lock is happy that AWE moves to Routine attention. All the evidence will be put together into a briefing to take to the leadership team.

The other item to mention is The Hollies. This was discussed at the last meeting and the most recent update we have is that we're still waiting on a decision from our objection.

The other thing to pick up is Artificial Intelligence (AI). The ONR are looking at AI as something new to them as well. They are looking into the resources they need and how they can regulate AI. There is an internal team looking into this and next year. There will be a line in the report to cover AI and how ONR and AWE can work together.

These are the routine matters. With regards to non-routine matters, ONR know on 6 July 2023 there was a fatality at the Hub at Aldermaston. The investigation is very close to being concluded and the findings will be shared early in 2025. Nothing more can be shared with regard to this at the moment.

An event in April 2024 required intervention and the decision was made to have a 'holding to account' meeting with AWE executive team. This was to inform them of the event, and to give them a chance to make improvements. The meeting was held in July 2024 with Ross Powlesland the Chief Operating Officer and a number of commitments were made which ONR were happy with. Another event occurred not long after the meeting which is still being investigated, however it is good to understand that actions were agreed just days prior to the second event meaning there was no time to put the actions in place. Therefore, ONR will be looking at both events together and think about how to assess the event.

It has been a positive reporting period overall.

Questions arising

Jo Slimin: How did the Hollies case go and did you feel as though you were given a good opportunity to put your case forward?

Gareth Lock: It was the land use planning team who did it, but it is understood that all parties were allowed adequate time to share views and put their case forward.

Jo Slimin: It will be very interesting for those who live locally to hear the outcome as it will set a precedent for future development.

Environment, Safety, Health and Quality Update

Nick Bolton

Senior Manager ESH Services Delivery

Presented slides to cover personal safety performance, process safety performance and AWE's commitment to protecting the environment and people.

In the 12 month period from September 2023 to September 2024, 22 people sustained workplace injuries in AWE. 14 of those were to employees and 17 of those required one or more days away from work to recover. Overall, 454 workdays were lost due to workplace injuries.

AWE measures against an American classification, US Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA), which enables benchmarking against a broader community than just the UK nuclear industry. OSHA also starts from the day after the incident whereas RIDDOR starts after 5 days. The days away from work is used to calculate the OSHA rate which is calculated per 200,000 hours worked. The current rate at AWE is 0.234 which is world class. The AWE target is to be below 0.3.

It was confirmed that none of the 22 injuries were due to hazardous materials.

This year, AWE have launched a large campaign under the banner of 'We Care' and is a campaign around safety, security, health, wellbeing, environment and learning from experience.

There were six process safety events in the period which are all being investigated, some of which include what was shared by the ONR.

The Process Safety team have been looking into the use of virtual reality and bringing the technology into training to improve learning experience.

The table shown at the bottom of slide 41 relates to the number of incidents reported to the regulator and in the year to the end of September 2024 there have been 20 reports which is slightly down on previous years.

The rise in numbers shown from 2020 to 2022 doesn't highlight a rise in incidents but an understanding of what should be reported within the process and around this time and the scope was broadened.

With regards to waste management, AWE continues to divert 99% of waste away from landfill and radiation doses to any member of the community is lower than consuming a bag of brazil nuts.

110/08 Action: Nick Bolton to share more on the 'We Care' campaign at next meeting

110/09 Action: Nick Bolton to share a breakdown of the type of injuries at the next meeting

Questions arising

Vicky Poole: How many of the incidents were due to travelling around the workplace and how many were while performing a work task.

Nick Bolton: Eight occurred while people were moving around site, the remaining 14 were during workplace tasks.

Graham Bridgman: I would like a breakdown of how the 22 injuries resulted in 454 days lost as this sounds a lot.

Nick Bolton: Broken bones would result in longer time off which impacts the numbers.

Adrian Betteridge: Who regulates AWE's health and safety onsite?

Nick Bolton: The ONR regulate the nuclear licence sites and the Health and Safety regulators will regulate the non-nuclear licence parts, although ONR will still take an interest in the non-nuclear areas. The Environment Agency regulates the whole of Aldermaston and Burghfield sites.

Emergency Planning and Response Update

Scott Davies Hearn

Senior Manager Emergency Response

Carolyn Richardson

Service Manager – Joint Emergency Planning Unit, West Berkshire Council

Since the last meeting, there have been two Level 1 exercises. A Level 1 exercise is a major exercise required by the regulators to demonstrate AWE's site emergency response arrangements to address the consequences that could occur from an emergency on our sites. Aldermaston and Burghfield sites are required to run these annually. The latest exercise was on 8 October 2024 and the regulators all touched on the exercise and the 'adequate' rating.

This exercise focused on an emergency in one of AWE's radioactive material facilities and a simulated release of material from that facility.

A wide range of responders participated including the Fire and Rescue Service, Ministry of Defence Police, Paramedics, Safety Shift, Health Physics, RPAs, Emergency Managers, Facility Staff, Security, West Berkshire District Council, Duty Site Manager and a full suite of Subject Matter Experts from across the business. As well as the CEO and Executive team members to observe.

Some of the highlights that came from the exercise included strong command and control in all areas, wider use of Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) and a good understanding of risks and hazards.

The CEO was very interested in why things were done in the way they are and understood the importance and seriousness of the exercise to protect the public and the personnel on site.

AWE is good at analysing exercises and understanding what went well and where improvements lie and is able to have open discussions with regulators and put improvements in place where needed and commended the response teams too.

The Burghfield Level 1 exercise was held on 14 May 2024 and assessed as 'adequate'. This exercise focused on an emergency in one of our radioactive and explosives material handling facilities. Again, a wide range of responders participated including the Fire and Rescue Service, Ministry of Defence Police, Paramedics, Safety Shift, Health Physics, RPAs, Emergency Managers, Facility Staff, Security, Duty Site Manager and a full suite of Subject Matter Experts from across the business.

Highlights from this exercise included strong responder monitoring of contamination and the time this took to assess and continued deployment of JESIP which is something AWE are focussing on across the whole organisation.

The last time the offsite plan was tested was in April 2023. The wording and detail of the communications isn't shared widely so as not to inform hostile groups and countries of our plans. This is run every three years and the next one is due in 2026 in line with our regulation by REPPIR. The exercise takes around a year to plan with around 200 people involved.

AWE and West Berkshire Council work together to co-deliver briefings to schools as part of the awareness program in respect to the Off Site Emergency Plan. And there is an AWE internal REPPIR review in accordance with regulatory renewal periods taking place and new leaflets will be issued next year.

A report has been created following ALDEX 2023 from which actions have come out. These actions have been summarised and a revision of the plan following a workshop has been made. The last step is signoff of the revised plan which should be done soon.

Overall, there are around 20,000 people who live within the DEPZ.

Questions arising

Jo Slimmin: I would like to understand how long each process in the exercise takes. For example: how long it takes to get measurements of the level of contamination.

Scott Davies-Hearn: This can be put down to the evidence and the type of exercise. The level 2 exercise, which is a test of the offsite arrangements, Aldex. It is important to appreciate not all incidents are done in a particular timeframe and in particular circumstances. With the offsite exercise, there are modular bits where elements are run over different time periods to focus on how each would work in conjunction.

Jo Slimmin: How would members of the community know what to do in the case of an emergency and would they know that they may need to support themselves for a period?

Carolyn Richardson: There is a section on the West Berkshire Council website with information on what to do in an emergency.

Avril Burdett: The information vacuum can be the hardest in an emergency as not knowing can scare the community more.

Carolyn Richardson: I agree and confirm that the community will be given the information as soon as the Council has it through the communications group who are stood up within the Council.

Vicky Poole: What alarms can be heard by the community from the AWE sites and when should be any action taken?

Carolyn Richardson and Scott Davies-Hearn: confirmed that the alarms within AWE are not for the community and there should be no action taken. Should there be a requirement for the community to act, there will be a phone call to the members of the community impacted. There is a project to move from landlines to mobile phone systems to pick up the gap where people no longer have a land line. This will be followed by radio and website communications being published.

Susan Mullan: I am concerned about the mobile phone alerting system as some community members, who are facing trouble which could include domestic abuse, may have a second phone which is hidden.

Scott Davies-Hearn: There would be communications, similar to those that the government provided, prior to testing.

Sophie Crawford: Do you feel as though there is enough resourcing within West Berkshire Council to manage the DEPZ?

Carolyn Richardson: There have been additional hires and this is continuously being analysed and other options are being discussed.

Uncrewed Vehicle System Team Update

Richard Hare

Senior Manager, Engineering

Matt King

Maintenance Delivery Manager, Engineering

Kadri Hamit

Warhead Mechanical Engineer, Engineering

Members of AWE's Uncrewed Vehicle System (UVS) team shared a variety of drones they operate at AWE. The team was established in 2018 with the proof of concept and approvals received in 2021 and the team have continuously looked to build their capabilities.

The fleet of drones have previously been used to support the community by providing a view of the top of buildings such as churches with the drones being able to take photographs and videos.

On site, drones are used to find leaks through thermal imaging and to look at the steam network at AWE. There is a drone which is caged and can go into pipes and underground where necessary to provide key intelligence back to the team as well as mapping. The drones have also been an important factor with trials and the footage the team have been able to provide has aided the analysis post trial.

Each time a drone is due to fly, there is a two week lead up time which includes planning, speaking to key stakeholders, sharing plans with employees and sharing plans with the local police. The drones are flown within AWE sites only which is part of the 'safe operating' procedures as no other aircraft will be flying into AWE airspace.

Questions arising

Mark Keeping: What considerations have been made for using electric drones in close proximity to buildings with explosive materials?

Matt King: The drones have been tested within half a meter of the buildings.

David Leeks: Thank you to the UVS Team for supporting St Mary's Church by using a drone to look at the lightning conductor which saved the community a lot of money.

Tim Whitaker: At what point has AWE got to with regard to drone detection systems and dealing with the possible problem of incoming drones to the site?

Ian Rogers: We don't publicly discuss our security arrangements.

Any other business

No other business raised

Meeting closed

Date of Next meeting:

Thursday 24 April 2025

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CLEANER AIR AND SAFER TRANSPORT (CAST) FORUM AGENDA

Date:	Thursday 28 th November 2024	
Location:	Reading Council Chamber), Civic Offices, Reading Borough Council, Bridge Street, Reading	
Time:	6:30pm - 8pm	
Chaired by:	Councillor Lanzoni	
Attendance:	Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni Cllr John Ennis Cllr Adele Barnet-Ward Cllr Karen Rowland Cllr Jenny McGrother Cllr James Moore Ross Jarvis James Turner	Reading Borough Council (RBC) RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC RBC
Non-RBC Attendees Redacted		
Agenda Items:		
No:	Item:	Action:
1.	<p>Introduction and Apologies:</p> <p>Apologies had been received from:</p> <p>Cllr Will Cross Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Kathryn McCann</p>	
2.	<p>Air Quality Update</p> <p>Ross Jarvis (RJ) provided an update on the following AQ items.</p> <p>Clean Air Living Matters (CALM) Project Update</p> <p>As previously presented Reading Borough Council, in collaboration with Design Nature, Stantec and the University of Reading, is offering schools across Reading the opportunity to participate in the CALM - Exploring Reading Air Quality programme.</p> <p>The aims of the wider programme, which will be running until the end of June 2025 are to:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase knowledge around air quality, its causes, impacts and solutions, with pupils and staff in schools • Increase awareness of air quality in the wider community and surrounding schools • Encourage behavioural change in activities that impact on poor air quality, surrounding schools, by enabling pupils, parents and the wider community to take action • Ideal for after or pre-school activities and Eco Clubs • Link with other Reading Borough Council initiatives and school engagement, such as transport and travel and wider climate strategy <p>The work has so far delivered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brochure produced to hand out to parents: Your Guide to Air Quality Education - Reading Borough Council • Poster Competition - https://media.reading.gov.uk/news/pupils-winning-design-used-to-raise-air-pollution-awareness • Animation - https://youtu.be/78ECHEjLGvw • A web page containing material on AQ and the CALM:ER programme has been developed: Clean Air Living Matters: Exploring Reading with Schools - Reading Borough Council • Engagement with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 primary schools out of a target of 24 • 7 secondary schools (4 independent) out of a target of 9 • 650 pupils with an increase in knowledge through attending activities (target is 2,800 pupils - 23%) • 3000 pupils with increased awareness through attending CALM assemblies, careers fairs, community events etc. total ~3,000 (target 16,000 ~23%) • 2,545 parents through activity sheets from primary schools (target 3,000 parents ~85%) • Deployment of 16 indoor (static) and 18 outdoor sensors (static) in schools (target 10 static and 20 mobile). We also have 30 mobile sensors which are taken to the schools when activities are run. <p>A question was asked regarding the monitoring of air quality prior to introduction of the school street scheme at Civitas Academy on Great Knollys Street. RJ updated that we were not able to undertake detailed air quality monitoring prior to this scheme commencing.</p> <p>Electric Vehicle (EV) Strategy and Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) Award Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Electric Vehicle Strategy adopted • Council Awarded £866k LEVI funding • Deliver approx. 1,500 (minimum) on-street EV chargers • Installation of up to 150 pavement gullies <p>The Council is currently awaiting approval from OZEV (Office for Zero Emission Vehicles) to process with the tender process to appoint a charge point operator (CPO).</p> <p>Page 44</p> <p>Questions were raised regarding the tariff rates that would be available to people wanting to make use of the on street charging points and</p>	
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	<p>what mechanisms the Council was proposing to put in the contract to ensure Reading residents were offered good value. RJ confirmed that the Council was aware of this issued and committed to ensure that the contract delivered the best rate possible but this would need to adhere to the terms of the funding body by delivering the volume of charge points that we are projected to require.</p> <p>Boroughwide Smoke Control Area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New borough wide smoke control area comes into force on 1st December 2024. • In a smoke control area you can only burn fuel on the list of authorised fuels, or any of the following ‘smokeless’ fuels, unless you’re using a Defra approved appliance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anthracite • semi-anthracite • gas • low volatile steam coal • Unauthorised fuels, such as wood must be properly seasoned, and can only be burned in exempt appliances. When purchasing wood, look for the ‘Ready to Burn’ logo as a guarantee of good quality dry wood. • You must only use the types of fuel that the manufacturer says can be used in the appliance. 	
3.	<p>Strategic Transport Update</p> <p>James Turner (JT) provided an update on the following Strategic Transport items.</p> <p>Reading Transport Strategy 2040</p> <p>The Reading Transport Strategy (RTS) 2040 was fully adopted at the recent full Council meeting in October. This is the Councils 4th Local Transport Plan for the period 2024-2040 and set out an ambitious vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel options in Reading.</p> <p>The transport strategy can be viewed on the Council’s website here: www.reading.gov.uk/RTS2040</p> <p>Active Travel Schemes Update</p> <p>JT provided an update on Reading’s Active Travel Fund (ATF) Schemes:</p> <p>ATF2 - Shinfield Road</p> <p>Major construction works on the ATF2 Shinfield Road scheme remains on hold due to works to date meeting the scheme budget. This leaves approximately 800m in each direction to deliver south of Cressingham Road and the Council is currently exploring options on additional funding to complete the scheme.</p> <p>Despite the budget constraints there are a number of elements that are still planned to be delivered or issues addressed throughout the current section. This includes lining and signing (signing taking into consideration previous comment received from RCC).</p> <p>The Council is also aware of a number of areas where water pooling occurs during rainfall due to either blocked or broken drains and gully’s (this has also been reported by members as well as RCC). The council’s Highways team is intending to undertake works to address some of this in the new year. Transport Officer will provide further updates on these works once dates are known.</p>	JT

<p>ATF 3 - Bath Road - Castle Hill Cycle Track</p> <p>Following further work on the cost estimates for this scheme, as well as the Council's experience of delivering our Shinfield Road scheme, it is forecast that there will be insufficient funding to deliver the full scheme as originally designed.</p> <p>Transport Officers have paused the tendering process and have put together a series of options that were discussed recently with members. These predominantly relates to the signals on the Castle Hill Roundabout and the design options for cyclists and pedestrians through this junction where there are some distinctly different options.</p> <p>Further details on these options will be discussed with members before being shared with RCC and other stakeholders for comment and agreement on preferred approach. This may be subject to further consultation.</p> <p>ATF 4 - Upper Redlands Road Pedestrian (Zebra) Crossing</p> <p>Reading's ATF 4 scheme, a pedestrian crossing on Upper Redlands Road, was delivered in August 2024 and complete prior to the start of the new academic year. The scheme was supported with a contribution from University of Reading and St Joseph's College as well as the funding from Active Travel England (ATE).</p> <p>The new crossing will provide safer walking environment for children to walk to school as well as linking to the university, via Elmhurst Road, to the active travel scheme on Shinfield Road.</p> <p>ATF 4 extension - Sidmouth Street junction and Christchurch Green junction Scheme Design</p> <p>These two schemes will provide cycle and pedestrian connectivity at major junctions on the network and provide connectivity to previously delivered ATF schemes. Our ATF4ext funding is for development of these schemes rather than construction. We have initiated stakeholder engagement for Christchurch Green and held workshop with members. Discussions will continue with other stakeholders including RCC, The University of Reading and Friends of Christchurch Green.</p> <p>Bus Service Improvement Plan Schemes and ZEBRA Update</p> <p>ZEBRA 2 Fund</p> <p>In spring 2024 Reading Borough Council was awarded £4.7m through the Zero Emission Bus Regional Award (ZEBRA) 2 fund. The details are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total funding: £4.735,514 • Will see delivery of 24 electric buses (for use on routes 17 and 21) • Fund contributes to charging infrastructure to be installed at depot (75% of costs) • All buses due into service in June 2025 <p>BSIP (Bus Service Improvement Plan) Update</p> <p>Reading Borough Council continues on the delivery of its BSIP programme following award of £26million to deliver a mix of revenue and capital schemes.</p>	
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	<p>Capital schemes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 5 of the South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) scheme. • Programme of new bus lanes on key routes in the Borough. • Improvements to passenger facilities at Mereoak Park & Ride site. • Package of town centre public transport enhancements, bus signal priority measures and improvements for passengers at bus stops. <p>Revenue initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of a multi-operator fares discount scheme. • Programme of bus service enhancements including for Route 9 and Buzz 18 services. • Comms and engagement programme to publicise the enhancements delivered through the BSIP programme. • Development of initial proposals for future bus priority measures in the borough. • Management of the EP arrangements and programme delivery support. <p>Regarding the new bus lanes the inbound bus lane on London Road, between the junctions with Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction, was delivered in August 2024. Prior to this the Council worked with Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Buses to reinstate Monday to Friday Park and ride services from Winnersh Triangle into Reading to coincide with the introduction of the new bus lane. The Council is also funding a £1 park & ride ticket through its BSIP grant. The Council is also continuing to work with Wokingham to implement enhancements to the bus lane outside of the borough to improve the situation for both buses and general traffic.</p> <p>A further two new bus lanes have recently been introduced on Oxford Road. In October, the outbound bus between the junctions with Zinzan Street and George Street was delivered, and in November the outbound bus lane between the junctions with Pangbourne Street and Norcot was opened.</p> <p>It is intended that works on the bus lanes on Southampton Street/Oracle Roundabout and London Road (nr Kendrick Road) will start in 2025.</p> <p>RCC Crossings Policy and ‘Wants List’</p> <p>The Reading Cycle Campaign (RCC) previously provided Transport Officers with a list of ‘wants’ in terms of design standard for crossing and junctions in Reading. This needs the input from colleagues in Highways and Network Management as well as Transport Planning Officers and JT agreed to share the document and collect feedback. This action is outstanding, and JT will action prior to the next meeting.</p> <p>The RCC also have supplied a schedule of rates for various interventions and crossings on the highways. The purpose of this is to set RCC’s expectations when various levels of funding is announced as to what is achievable. JT agreed to share this with colleagues in Highways and report back to RCC as to whether these rates are reflective of what is incurred in Reading. It should be noted that the costs did not include traffic management measures which can often exceed the actual construction costs incurred.</p> <p>It was agreed that RCC and Transport Officers would have a separate meeting to discuss these and other general updates. JT to set up meeting.</p>	JT JT JT
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	<p>Network Management Update</p> <p>There was no further Network Management update to the update already provided by Transport Officers</p>	
5.	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>London Road Bus Lane</p> <p>Prior to the meeting a series of questions was submitted regarding the London Road bus lane from Reading Friends of the Earth. With regards to the air quality impact of the scheme RJ confirmed that monitoring was in place, but it was too early to assess the impact of this and data over a longer period would be needed. This would also need to consider other factors that impact air quality such as weather conditions.</p> <p>JT confirmed that there are various traffic and other surveys being undertaken as well as liaison with the bus operators over the impact of the scheme and this would be reported in due course. There has been a steady increase in the use of the Winnersh Park and Ride service since its reintroduction in August.</p>	
	<p>Date of Next Meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday 1st April 2025 - 6:30pm Council Chamber 	All to Note

RCCP Board Meeting - MINUTES

17 October 2024

Attendees: Heather Marshall (meeting chair); Dylan Parkes; Ben Burfoot; Tricia Marcouse; Chris Maddocks; Rachel Spencer; Scott Witchalls; Bryan Puszkar; Gudrun Freese (Minutes); Tracey Rawling Church; Nick West Oram; John Ennis

Apologies: Mike Wadelove; Paul Ducker; Sabine Mayeux; Clara Purnell

Previous meeting's minutes were approved by attendees.

PEOPLE CHANGES

Update on the Council's position on Peter Moore's (PM) role as RBC's Head of Climate Strategy:

- Reading Borough Council is restructuring and is not currently recruiting a replacement for PM, i.e. a Head of Climate Strategy.
- Ben Burfoot (BB) who is Head of Sustainability at RBC will assume some but not all of PM's RCCP responsibilities. BB will update us on Council news related to Head of Climate Strategy role. **(Action for BB.)**
- PM was the most senior RBC representative on the RCCP Board and a key link between the Council and RCCP, often acting as 'arbiter' or helping to influence and connect people or act on complaints and suggestions. As RBC's Head of Climate Strategy, he had a strong interest in the success of the partnership. PM initiated the review of the climate strategy, made the introduction to Dialogue Matters and allocated RBC climate reserve funds for the Year of Climate Engagement Project.
- RBC acts as host of RCCP, providing a legal framework for the employment of the RCCP Co-ordinator. PM guided the Co-ordinator's key projects and helped to manage expectations regarding the Co-ordinator's priorities and time.
- PM was also a 'guardian' of the RCCP Partnership Agreement and helped to steer the partnership members toward priority actions and to keep actions aligned with the RCCP Agreement and Constitution. He often acted to shield volunteers from unrealistic expectations, but also chased Board members for outstanding items which did fall within the agreed remit of the Board members.
- RCCP co-chairs should consider making their own proposal to RBC (in the first instance to Emma Gee) regarding PM's now vacant role and other RBC roles that would best support the work of RCCP. **(Action for co-Chairs.)**

Update on Gudrun Freese (GF):

- Until September 2024 GF was working as RCCP Co-ordinator (2.5 day/week) and also took on a selection of comms and engagement activities related to (1) Reading Climate Festival and (2) the climate strategy review (an additional 1.5 days a week, but this often stretched to 6- or 7-day weeks in the run-up to the Festival, with that extra time reclaimed in lieu).
- From September 2024 GF went back down to 2.5 days/week to allow her to take on external freelance work.
- From 1 December 2024 GF will reduce her RCCP hours to 1.5 days/week to enable her to take on additional external freelance work. Her RCCP work during this period will focus mainly on co-ordinator responsibilities, including:
 - Annual Report 2024
 - Invoicing and visa purchasing admin
 - Project management of Designing a Net Zero Reading meetings
 - Targeted outreach related to Designing a Net Zero Reading process
 - Account management of Dialogue Matters
 - Board Meetings and Ops Meetings
 - RCCP Website and RCCP Newsletter related to Designing a Net Zero Reading process
 - Steering group meetings for key projects
 - Supporting recruitment of new volunteer roles
 - Additional targeted comms as needed
 - Helping to shape the comms elements of the new climate strategy

Comms Theme Lead:

- Co-chairs and GF will manage recruitment for a volunteer Comms Theme Lead role for RCCP.
- They are also exploring other roles that could support delivery of the new climate strategy.
- The priority going forward will be to develop a comms and engagement strategy for the new 2025 – 2030 climate emergency strategy and to recruit someone to oversee delivery of this comms strategy – either a volunteer, or through an expanded Co-ordinator role or other role, or via a partner organisation with the resources to take this on. (Action: Co-chairs to discuss options and agree direction with BB.)

Resources Theme Lead and Nature Theme Lead

- Current Theme Leads for (1) Nature and (2) Resources are planning to step down and are helping to recruit their own replacements. (Actions for PD and TM.)
- TM has not found anyone willing to step into her Nature Theme Lead role and has flagged up her struggles to engage her RBC counterparts in the Nature Action Plan, due to lack of capacity at the Council. TM believes this will need to be resolved

before a volunteer agrees to take on the role, as RBC is the relevant landowner and volunteers will not want to give up their time without clear buy-in from the Council.

- BB has offered to facilitate these conversations and act as RCCP-RBC liaison for Nature-related queries. Rachel Spencer would like to be included in these conversations. (Action for BB.)
- RS suggested we approach local nature and wildlife charities to see if aspects of our action plan goals could be delivered by these organisations – e.g. where there are overlaps. (This would be in keeping with the purpose of RCCP, i.e. to mobilise local delivery partners / encourage adoption of relevant local net zero actions by local organisations.) HM seconded this approach to finding people at large charities to join RCCP to help align activities. (Action for who?)
- Public job descriptions for these roles will need to be developed and promoted. GF will oversee this in consultation with Co-chairs and Theme Leads. (Action for GF.)
- DP: From 1 October 2024 all University of Reading staff will have 2 volunteer days a year so DP will circulate volunteer roles through relevant channels. (Action for DP.)

Other issues related to roles and responsibilities

- Rachel Spencer (RS) asks BB if RCCP can be more closely aligned with relevant RBC roles, to make the most of synergies, e.g. neighbourhood teams and place-based pilots. BB pointed to current lack of capacity to nurture these links but agrees we should aim to foster these links to support delivery of 2025 – 2030 climate emergency strategy. The original intention of the Theme Lead roles was that they would convene a working group for their Theme, which would include key Council people. (Potential action for all Theme Leads: Invite relevant Council staff into reinvigorated theme working groups, which would meet quarterly, in the run-up to each RCCP Board meeting. RCCP Theme Leads would convene a discussion about progress related to theme action plans and other relevant actions, and report back on this at Board Meetings – as per original intentions.)

Reading Climate Festival 2025 – DYLAN PARKES

- DP is leading the Steering Committee for **Reading Climate Festival 2025** and **2026**, which met on 25 September 2024. Results and recommendations from the **Reading Climate Festival 2024** team were discussed at this meeting. Actions and minutes from this meeting will be shared with the Board along with these board meeting minutes.
- DP noted that the Festival began in 2020 as a collection of small online events. There was a big uplift in 2023 when the RBC Arts and Culture team brought the Gaia centrepiece to the Town Hall, which attracted 12,000 visitors. Gaia sat alongside the

smaller, community-led ‘original style’ Festival events such as online talks and presentations. In 2024 we did not have a centrepiece on the same scale as Gaia but did have a stronger programme of community-led events than we’ve had in previous years (e.g. two sold out events for schools, well-attended nature talks, a talk by climate stripes founder Ed Hawkins on Show your Stripes Day and several new RCCP-led events including Big Lunch Reading, a Community Energy Summit and several talks on net zero in Reading linked to specific climate strategy deliverables). RBC also commissioned a very successful multi-day ‘Create a Buzz!’ public installation near the Town Hall as their major contribution to the Festival.

- Based on recommendations discussed by the steering group, the broad proposal for Reading Festival 2025 is to:
 - Retain two-week time slot (**Saturday 7 to Saturday 21 June 2025**), although Water Fest will not coincide with the Festival this year as it is scheduled for 28 June 2025. RCCP
 - Retain the core focus, i.e. to inspire residents to take climate action during a two-week festival of events and activities but also engage key delivery partners of the new climate emergency strategy through targeted events.
 - Allow for open-ended / creative responses to our Call for Proposals but also be more pro-active in shaping some of the events to ensure they align with the climate strategy – e.g. who does the strategy call on to do what, and how can we support them in this or raise awareness of these calls to action?
 - Be clearer on objectives and metrics for success, which will also help when it comes to fundraising. Not just attendee numbers.
 - Get clearer commitments from RCCP members, Festival partners and local organisations to help promote the festival to their audiences. Build a comms alliance.
 - Address gaps, e.g. work with Council and other partners to prepare comms and events that offer clear guidelines and links to support available for households to insulate, change windows, install heat pumps and solar panels, etc.
 - Make a concerted effort to engage a much wider audience, going well beyond the usual suspects we tend to reach. This may include building on the Big Lunch concept which aimed to help residents *experience* a climate-friendly Reading *right now* (via climate-friendly food, low-carbon leisure, grow-your-own activities and music).
 - Launch the 2025 – 2030 Climate Emergency Strategy during Reading Festival 2025.
 - Leverage Festival to help raise the reputation of Reading as a place for proactive and co-ordinated climate action.
 - Start preparing now for a big RBC Arts and Culture centrepiece for 2026. This is also the University’s centenary. We need to start raising funds for this now.

- Map out a timeline that leads to 2026 to help shape working groups related to the Festival. (Action for DP)

Action for ALL – send DP any ideas you have for Reading Climate Festival 2025 and 2026 that you would like us to build into our thinking and planning.

Climate Emergency Strategy Review – GUDRUN FREESE

Workshop 2: 'Designing a Net Zero Reading'

- Held on 20th Sept 2024 in Council Chambers
- 38 participants + 6 facilitators
- Dialogue Matters presented the latest draft of our climate action priorities list, which has emerged from Workshop 1 and Survey 1.
- **Theme areas that emerged were as follows.** These are likely to become working groups for 2025 - 2030:
 1. Heat, power and energy
 2. Travel and transport
 3. Green and blue spaces
 4. Planning and development
 5. Food
 6. Resources and waste
 7. Water

Health did not emerge as a dedicated theme, but that was most likely because we could not attract any health-focused participants into the process. It has (for now) been included as a cross-cutting priority, see below.

- **Cross-cutting themes were identified as:**
 1. Campaigns and communications
 2. Training and capacity building
 3. Health and personal resilience
 4. Adaptation (place and infrastructure)
 5. Funding and resources
 6. Fostering behaviour change for net zero
 7. Smart cities and artificial intelligence
- During Workshop 2, participants added facts and figures related to the size of the challenge and helped to rank items in terms of relative impacts / carbon weighting. We also looked at who's already doing what and what more needs to be done for each priority action.

- We collected offers of support from potential delivery partners and brainstormed potential sources of additional funding and support.

Survey 2: Designing a Net Zero Reading

- Survey will be launched 21 October 2024 and close on 10 November 2024.
- Two versions of Survey 2 will be available: one version for Themed Expert Working Groups (curated by Theme Leads) and one for the general public.
- Survey 2 for the general public will be disseminated via the ReadingCAN newsletter, RCAN social channels, RCCP Board members and via the Council's residents' newsletter and socials; it will not be heavily promoted via any other channels because we need to focus our limited resources on processing working group responses before Workshop 3 in November. **(Actions for GF)**

Workshop 3: Designing a Net Zero Reading / 26 November 2024...and beyond!

- This will be the final meeting of the core deliberative group.
- After Workshop 3, Dialogue Matters will produce (1) a Workshop 3 Outputs Report and (2) a final report which sets out priorities for our Climate Emergency Strategy. This will be handed over to RCCP in late December or early January.
- Between January 2025 – June 2025 RCCP will shape inputs from our Year of Climate Engagement into a final Climate Emergency Strategy for 2025 – 2030. RCCP will hire someone to 'hold the pen' as this represents significant additional work. During this period there will be some additional, targeted stakeholder engagement needed to fill gaps and to bring additional delivery partners and resources on board.
- During this period, we will also need to develop a communications and engagement strategy and alliance / team to support the delivery of the new climate emergency strategy over the full 2025 – 2030 period.
- We aim to launch the new strategy during Reading Climate Festival 2025 – 2030.
- Questions:
 - How are we going to engage RBC in the finalisation and delivery of the strategy? How does RCCP benefit RBC and vice versa?
 - Who is going to write and design the final strategy? What funds are available for this?
 - Who is going to convene, write and deliver the comms and engagement strategy for the climate strategy? What funds are available for this?
 - What funds and other resources are available to help us land the strategy effectively, and manage / support ongoing engagement with it?
 - How can we support Theme Leads during this delivery period?

Action: Co-Chairs, BB and GF to discuss these questions.

Transparency

- We have been communicating with the general public about this Year of Climate Engagement via our own website, socials and newsletter and via partner newsletters and socials, including University of Reading, REDA, Reading Borough Council and others. We have posted outputs of both surveys and all three workshops on our website: www.readingcan.org.uk/priorities

BB: In the past, RBC has adopted the RCCP climate emergency strategies as policy. This happens via the Policy Committee, usually in November. (Action: GF and BB to develop a timeline for 'formal consultation period' and adoption as policy by RBC)

Cllr JE: The consultation process gives the strategy a useful 'public airing'. A launch event could act as a showcase for the partnership itself, to underline the message that 'no single organisation can address climate change effectively'.

HM: We will need the right list of people to engage during the consultation – especially those that may unlock funding for us. (Action: GF to gather names from Board and other stakeholders for this engagement list.)

Revisiting RCCP's purpose and scope – HEATHER MARSHALL

Heather Marshall:

- DP, HM, TRC, BB and GF have started a conversation about whether the partnership as it is currently formed is fit for the purpose of helping Reading get to net zero by 2030, and whether there is a clearer purpose we should be articulating at this point, with clearer boundaries.
- We aim to engage the Board in this question at the next Board meeting in January. With the new strategy in development this is an appropriate time to clarify roles and responsibilities, organisational intent, objectives, and purpose, and how we measure progress.
- We may invite you to propose some KPIs to help us all focus our limited time.

There are some challenges we might want to address, e.g.

- Many partners who signed up to be delivery partners for the 2020 – 2025 strategy have faded away. Some have said they don't know what it means, in practice, to be a delivery partner. How do we reconnect and reinvigorate those partners / the partnership, perhaps looking to Manchester's climate group as a good example of a group that has really clear accountability from a wide group of partners.
- How do we tap into funding streams?
- How can we encourage non-Board Members – e.g. members of working groups – to take on more of the project and public engagement work?

- When Board Members make suggestions for things 'we' should do, who do we mean by 'we'?

Annual Report – BB and GF

Ben Burfoot:

- The Annual Report headline question is 'what progress has the Borough of Reading made towards achieving net zero'?
- In a nutshell: Our downward emissions reduction trajectory returns this year after a slight post-pandemic uptick in emissions the year before. (Note: The government figures we use have an 18- to 24-month lag.) Effectively the last three of four years have been a plateau.
- The carbon intensity of the electricity grid went up in 2023, so we can expect to see upward pressure on our emissions for the 2023 data set.
- The overall message is: It's clear we need to steepen our curve and work out a plan to decarbonise further.
- We have continued to outperform most other local authority areas in terms of the drop in emissions relative to our own 1995 baseline figures.
- The previous government froze potential policy changes related to facilitating improvements in domestic emissions, but it seems likely the new government will re-open these.
- In terms of RAG ratings for our own climate action plans, which were adopted in 2020, the majority of actions are green or amber but we have a significant number of reds indicating we've had significant issues with delivery, which is likely due in part to some of our delivery partners fading away and in part to lack of resource in partner institutions and at RCCP. In some cases, reality has simply overtaken previous thinking and planning, and the actions are no longer relevant.

GF: Because of time and resource constraints (including no Comms Lead) we have placed the new Annual Report content into the previous Annual Report format, except for slight improvements to formatting of the RAG ratings and Case Studies. We did not have the resource to reshape the content supplied by RCCP members into a more public-friendly version, as the Annual Report preparation period coincided with the final workshop of the climate strategy review process, which took priority. This is in keeping with previous RCCP Annual Reports, which were developed more as a formality than a comms opportunity, but not in keeping with what we would like to be able to do with the Annual Report, with additional resources.

JE: The Annual Report is an opportunity to build allyship for the policies the Council is moving forward with, e.g. putting in bus and cycle lanes, which are attracting negative attention from people who don't want to change, but not enough vocal support from

people who do support these changes. We can use it as an opportunity to win hearts and minds for the policies that address climate change.

RS: Should we develop a public-facing Annual Report that helps to draw the link between improvements in public health and the policies related to changes in bus and cycle lanes, and other positive correlations? (Action: RS to ask the RVA comms manager to distill the Annual Report – especially the case studies – into a few pages.)

HM: We will assume the Annual Report has been approved by Board Members unless we hear from you before this time next week.

Theme updates – THEME LEADS

Paul Ducker – RESOURCES (supplied by email)

- RE3 is running a Recycle Week campaign and also offering virtual tours of their recycling facilities.
- Reading Food Partnership has been formed and is led by Sabine Mayeux. We hope Sabine will join the Partnership as Food Theme Lead and help us to finalise actions, which a future Food Theme Working Group could take forward.
- The Green Events Code of Practise pilot initiative is underway, which aims to support the outdoor festival community to achieve a 50% reduction in emissions by 2030. In Reading, we have Reading Festival, Readipop, Water Fest and East Reading Festival participating in the pilot project. ([More info.](#)) A national evaluation report is due to be published January 2025.

Chris Maddocks – TRANSPORT

- Reading's new local transport plan was adopted by full Council on Tuesday 15 October 2024. Much of this will overlap with the transport actions for the Climate Emergency Strategy.
- Updates: Bus discount scheme continues; Park and Ride offer was launched to coincide with the London Road bus lane and we are working with colleagues in Wokingham to optimise this; introduced new bus lane on Oxford Road with another to follow; electric buses project will see results next summer; pedestrian crossings have gone in on Upper Redlands Rd, which the University helped to co-fund and one on Richford Ave for the new secondary school; future schemes include more secure cycle parking in the town centre and SchoolStreet schemes.

JE:

- Noted that CM is working all hours to bring all these projects to completion and thanked him for this.
- Reading has the third lowest car ownership in the country, one of the best bus services in the country and we're building up our cycle offer. It's all coming together.
- There are new plans to build a cycle route from Woodley to Reading.
- A challenge is that we are surrounded by areas of high car ownership who use Reading as a car park. We are working with partners to address this.
- Locally, sticks are going to be needed; electric or not, you can't drive your way to net zero. There is a vocal minority who oppose changes (even potential charges) linked to net-zero transport, but we have to push on despite this, and without apology.

HM: Noted that many of our climate challenges have upstream components – as JE described with cars coming from outside the borough.

Tricia Marcouse - NATURE

- Wild Tilehurst, a new nature group, has been started. A big event in January aims to rally interest.
- St Johns on Oxford Road has achieved Gold Award Eco Church status. We are advising on planting there.
- We will plant more hedge this winter at Emmer Green shops.
- Hope to start a Nature Nurture scheme in South Whitley, dependent on funds coming through.
- An action to increase carbon storage in the town is not progressing as well as hoped. Because Reading does not have vast amounts of spare space for planting trees, it is important for us to store more carbon in the soil. The University has been working on carbon storage through biochar and RE3 is looking at this too. I'm struggling to get information out of Reading Borough Council about what happens to tree maintenance offcuts. In principle, we should be able to make biochar out of RBC tree maintenance waste and scatter that on the ground. Results from the University show that scattering does an enormous amount of good – it is not necessary to bury it. They report that it is 70% more efficient than tree planting. There is huge potential impact to be had via gardens and open spaces that could take this material.

Action: BB volunteered to liaise with Tricia about biochar projects.

Ben Burfoot - ENERGY

- Good news is it seems (from news report) that there's been a shift at SSEN around the Fleet and Bramley project for reinforcement, which could ease the pathway for connections going forward, related to heat pumps and EV charging projects. In Reading, we have been experiencing bottlenecks and some of our big development projects are at risk of not getting connections for heat pumps.

- Our heat network project is moving quite quickly, via a team of consultants funded primarily by the government from their heat network delivery unit. We will apply for government funding to support the next phased of this that programme.
- Boreholes project: Not sure yet if we will get our licences to move this project forward.
- Retrofit: We are not going to see the scale of work needed in this area, to get us to net zero, due to supply chain, skills / workforce and funding issues. There are new government policies related to the Warm Homes programme. We are looking at whether we are eligible for this funding, but criteria are very narrow. We need a local retrofit taskforce to address these issues. **(Action for BB)**
- Solar pays for itself nowadays.
- More work needs to be done on flexibility, e.g. with smart metres, to remove peaks and create more space for renewables. This would optimise the system we already have before customer money is spent on reinforcements.

Discussion related to Theme updates

Several members highlighted the need for closer relationships with relevant Council staff, in particular a closer link to planning team with regard to the Local Plan update.

HM reiterated that it is a good time to:

- Revisit our remit as a partnership to ensure we are engaging the right people at the right time, and focusing on areas where we can add value
- Help our society understand the links between different elements of local life and plans – especially health and active travel; health and food; health and air quality, etc. – and bring people together to shape joined-up approaches

CM: We in the RBC Transport team are definitely working to highlight links between transport and health benefits and are keen to have RCCP's support in this regard

SW: REDA will launch a business survey to discover what is important to local businesses and what attracted them to Reading. It will include questions on ESG and the business's climate targets and actions.

HM: Noted that Manchester uses surveyed business insights in their climate emergency strategy and also works from a baseline e.g. how many businesses measure x or do y and how is that changing year on year.

HM asked if RCCP could help shape the survey and SW said yes. **(Action for SW: Help RCCP contribute to the survey questions.)**

SW noted the vastly different budgets Reading and Manchester have for both surveys (which are expensive) and all the follow-up work.

BB noted that RCCP is lacking insights into supply chains and could the survey facilitate some of these insights to help Reading understand these sources of emissions a bit better.

NWO noted that the Berkshire Growth Hub is running supply chain workshops for local businesses, which advocate for change ahead of expected regulations related to supply chains and public sector purchasing as well as policies initiated by big private sector employers and businesses. NOW suggests we engage BGH in becoming a delivery partner / influencer for the 2025 – 2030 Climate Strategy to help shift business mindsets and to underline the financial benefits of change.

HM: Agreed that we need a mechanism for capturing and convening these initiatives for the collective good. We need a database of initiatives that are making an effort in our communities. **(Action for who?)**

BB: The LEP does still exist and is involved in EV charging and in skills development, so we do need to engage them.

Berkshire Prosperity Board (BPB) – DYLAN PARKES

A new body called the Berkshire Prosperity Board brings together the leadership of all six unitary authorities in Berkshire. It is tasked with fostering greater collaboration and joined-up work across the county.

It aims to drive and deliver economic prosperity across Berkshire and sets out to secure more funding, create more jobs and enable more affordable housing for residents. The councils will work together to promote Berkshire to investors, businesses and Central Government.

Net zero is a key theme.

- The UoR has hosted an initial gathering of the Council leaders (who form the Board), as well as a climate working group (with Ben Burfoot representing Reading).
- The 6 participating Councils all have their own versions of a climate emergency strategy and a variety of timetables and definitions related to net zero. Reading seems to be the only borough on the BPB where the climate emergency strategy is not driven by the Council. These strategies have varying degrees of external (including volunteer) support and input.

- The Board is not aiming for uniformity but rather to cooperate on cross-cutting issues where there is potential to do so.
- Carbon literacy and climate buy-in amongst council leaders was identified as a good first step, which would then be expanded to wider council staff body. Ben Burfoot is leading on this in Reading. The group is looking at opportunities to compare approaches to carbon literacy and to scale this more quickly. They are also exploring options to extend this to residents.
- Another area for cooperation is around joint efforts to secure government funding for retrofit.
- A third area discussed was adaptation. Reading's adaptation plan is based on a Met Office City Pack / Report.
- Met Office has launched a new climate support website for local authorities, which offers a bespoke city pack for every local authority in the country, providing a local summary and planning tool for potential climate impacts for that area.
- The new site provides an opportunity for BPB to consider joint actions around common risks.
- BB noted that there is no additional resource at RBC to support this work but we may find efficiencies in joint approaches to public engagement and other climate actions. He also noted that all other councils are experiencing the same challenges with retrofit.
- HM suggested we encourage mortgage and insurance companies to offer lower rates if 'able-to-pay' homeowners undertake retrofit.

Finance Report – BEN BURFOOT

BB will circulate a finance report via email before the next board meeting. (ACTION for BB.)

DP: Please do this asap as we need to budget for additional support to finalise the strategy and to also need to plan finances for Reading Climate Festival 2025.

AOB

TM: Draughtbusters is having great difficulty getting referrals. Could Board members help get the word out via their comms channels? We have already sent announcements via schools and that has never generated any responses.

JE asked TM to email him relevant details.

BB: Councillors are a good source of publicity for this.

BP offered to spread the word via SSEN's community engagement channels.

GF suggested they send messages via RBC's residents' email, which is sent by David Millward.

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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

12 March 2025

Title	January 2024 Flood Update Report
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Sam Shean, Highways & Traffic Services Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr Karen Rowland, Lead Councillor for Environmental Services & Community Safety.
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> That the Committee notes the progress of the recommended actions set out in the 'January 2024 Flood Event Options Report' presented and approved at Policy Committee on 8th July 2024. That the Committee approves the updated Sandbag Policy set out in section 3.15 and Appendix 3.

1. Executive Summary

- The Council is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) as set out in the Flood & Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) and has a duty to investigate and report all flood events findings using a Section 19 report.
- Section 19 of the FWMA states that on becoming aware of a flood in their area, the LLFA must investigate (to the extent that it considers to be necessary or appropriate), which Flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have relevant flood risk management functions and whether each RMA has exercised, or plans to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.
- Schedule 2 of the FWMA amends other Acts and under the amended Section 14A of the Land Drainage Act 1991, LLFAs have the power to carry out works to manage flood risk from surface water runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses, where the work is desirable having regard to the 'Local Flood Risk Management Strategy'.
- The Council responded to a flood event in January 2024 and reported to Policy Committee in July 2024 with recommended actions. This report sets out the progress on the agreed actions by the Council, as well as the options to reduce flooding, and the 'lessons learned' following a review of the incident.
- The Council has reviewed and updated the Sandbag Policy following the January 2024 Flood Event and made amendments, as set out in 3.15. The revised Sandbag Policy is recommended by officers for approval, (Appendix 3 refers).

2. Policy Context

- The Council Plan, 'Investing in Reading's Future', reflects the Council's priorities for Reading and provides direction for staff in delivering services to meet the needs of the communities within the Borough whilst working within allocated budgets. Relevant Council Plan priorities include;

- To secure the most effective use of resources in the delivery of high quality, best value public service.
- To make travel more secure, safe and comfortable for all users of the public highway.
- To provide a public highway network as safe as reasonably practical having due regard to financial constraints and statutory duties.

3. The Proposal

Background to January 2024 Flood Event

- 3.1. The Reading area was impacted by flooding in January 2024 arising from the River Thames, River Kennet and Holy Brook, and associated ditches and tributaries of these watercourses.
- 3.2. The main contributing factor to the flood event was above average rainfall levels in the three months prior to January 2024 (up to 150% above the long-term average), in combination with a period of intense rainfall in early January 2024 caused by Storm Henk.
- 3.3. High rainfall levels on a saturated catchment led river levels at the River Thames at Reading gauge to rise to their highest recorded level since the major flood event of 1947.
- 3.4. During a period of 6 days, commencing 6th January 2024 the main river and ordinary watercourses capacity was exceeded from natural flood, saturated ground conditions and extreme prolonged rainfall, resulting in low-lying land and property being flooded within the RBC administrative boundary. 21 residential properties, three commercial properties and one static residential caravan were flooded, due to rising water levels in the River Thames, River Kennet and tributaries.
- 3.5. Of the flooded properties reported to the Council, 10 residential properties were impacted internally by flooding from the Christchurch Ditch, (known locally as the Gos Brook or Danall Brook), 4 residential properties from the Holybrook which was exacerbated by localised surface water drainage problems and a further 4 residential properties from the River Thames including 2 properties at The Warren, Caversham.
- 3.6. The Council commissioned Stantec to investigate and produce a Flood Options Report, (**Appendix 2 –Reading Flood Investigation - January 2024** refers) and a list of recommended actions was agreed.
- 3.7. It should be noted that Danall Ditch runs along the southern border of private properties in Queens Road Caversham and the Council own and managed land on the southern side of the ditch. Responsibility for the Danall Ditch falls on the frontages (the adjacent properties) who are responsible for their entire boundary frontage to the centre of the Danall Ditch, (this includes the multiple properties on the North side and the Council for the length of the south side. Where the Danall runs into the Culvert under Heron Island the responsibility for the culvert lies with the landowner, although the Council remains responsible for ensuring it is flowing.
- 3.8. The responsibility for flooding from main rivers cuts across several agencies and private landowners. The Environment Agency have the ultimate responsibility for Main Rivers including the Thames and Holybrook, although property owners also have a responsibility to protect their own property.

Actions agreed following the January 2024 Flood Event Options Report

3.9 Lower Caversham area:

Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Carry out CCTV survey of the closed section of Christchurch Ditch from the footbridge at the eastern end of Hills Meadow to the Heron Island outfall point, to investigate its state of repair and capacity (under Heron Island private ownership).	Survey Completed Jan 2025	No further action. The culvert was cleaned and all debris removed, the CCTV found the culvert to be in good condition.
Review if there is any requirement for localised repairs to the footbridge at the eastern end of Hills Meadow and/or wingwalls following removal of the tree and review the need for localised repairs to damaged banks	Completed October 2024	Added to bridge inspection programme. Principal Inspection programmed in for 2025/26 financial year.
Installation of a trash screen to the culvert at the eastern end of Hills Meadow, to capture debris before it enters the closed section of the culvert and improve the ease of future clearance works	Agreed to install / In progress	EA consent underway, works to deliver April 2025
Establishment of a checking/maintenance schedule for the ditch.	Completed October 2025	On Annual inspection
Installation of a level gauge board at the eastern end of Christchurch Ditch to provide a visual indicator of water levels and potential flood risk to residents.	Agreed to install / In progress	EA consent underway, works from April 2025
After the water levels in Christchurch Ditch had returned to normal post-flood levels, local residents noted some fallen blocks in the ditch close to the footbridge at the eastern end. This should be reviewed, and repair works carried out as necessary.	Agreed to remove / In progress	Removal of loose blocks / boulders Programmed for April 2025 when the trash screen is being installed to the Culvert running under Heron Island

Additional works included the following:

- A 'Deep Clean' of Queens Roads and a parking suspension to clear parked cars in November 2024 so that all road gullies could be inspected and tested and any necessary maintenance works, and road sweeping was carried out. All road gullies found to be clear and in good working order.
- The cleaning of the Culvert running under Heron Island was completed in early January 2025 and was found to be in good working order once the silt & debris was removed.

3.10 **Southcote / Kennet Meadows area:**

Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Investigate the potential for permanent raising of the access road level under Briscoe's Bridge. This could potentially be achieved by installing a full-width speed bump with the top-level set at the flood level for a 1 in 2-year return period. This would prevent backflow of water in the floodplain south of the railway bridge towards Circuit Lane, and the temporary clay bund which has been installed has already been established to be effective in reducing backflows. The most appropriate method of ground-raising will need to be discussed and agreed with all stakeholders.	Works Completed November 2024	To monitor effectiveness during flood events
Further bank and footpath work to the Holy Brook and associated ditches will require consultation with and consent from the EA.	Bank raised & repairs completed Oct 2024	Unable to obtain EA consent to extend embankment raising works. To monitor and repair any damaged section when they occur
Further investigation of requirements for ditch and culvert clearance, in consultation with relevant landowners, and providing reminders to riparian owners of their repair and maintenance responsibilities.	Letter to go to residents Feb 2025	To share with affected residents in February 2025
Discussion of the removal of sheet piling from the culvert south of Circuit Lane with the landowner and suitable replacement material, to re-establish flow through the culvert to the designed levels.	Removal of sheet piling not required / culvert partially cleared Oct 2024	Investigations found that the culvert split into 2 No. smaller pipes which have been partly cleared. Further clearing arranged for April 2025.
Establishment of a checking/maintenance schedule for the ditch network connected to the Holy Brook.	Completed October 2025	Added to the annual ditch inspection programme
Installation of a level gauge in the Holy Brook to provide a visual indicator of water levels and potential flood risk to residents.	In progress	EA consent underway, works due in April 2025
Continue to explore the potential for 're-wetting' Kennet Meadows to deliver multi-functional benefits for biodiversity, flood risk management, public access and other benefits.	Project is in progress	Long term project, land ownership remains a challenge

3.11 Scours Lane:

Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Limited information is available about the flooding of park homes at Scours Lane during the January 2024 flood event and any longer-term impacts. Further advice to be provided to residents about temporary flood protection measures for the site to be implemented when flood warnings are issued, if required.	On-going requirement for inspection during flood events	On-going long term to monitor. Residents are required to sign up to the EA flood alerts. Information will be shared with affected residents when we hold the residents open day event to coincide with the annual Waterfest event in June 2025

3.12 RBC Administrative Actions:

Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Review and update the flood-related information and advice on the Council's website and make this easier for residents to find.	In progress	Under continual review
Review the Council's 'Sandbag Policy'.	Updated January 2025	Complete, awaiting approval.
To engage the University of Reading to jointly prepare a 'Communication Plan' to better inform the public of what the Council can offer during a flood event and to help inform and educate private property owners of their responsibility to protect their property if located within a flood plain and vulnerable to future flooding events.	In progress to engage EA to hold a residents open day to provide information and advice to vulnerable properties	Proposal to hold the residents open day event to coincide with the annual Waterfest event in June 2025. Going forward to review when required
Review the Flood Action Plan for Council owned properties	In progress review taking place Feb 2025	Reviewed every two years (it is currently being reviewed) or after a significant flood event,

3.13 Environment Agency – Administrative Actions:

Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Review the text/email/phone call flood alert system in the Thames/Lower Caversham area to ensure that all roads adjacent to and north of Christchurch Ditch are included in	In progress to engage EA to hold a residents	Residents are required to sign up to the EA flood alerts. Information will be

any relevant River Thames flood alert messages for the areas both upstream and downstream of Caversham Lock.	open day to provide information and advice to vulnerable properties	shared with affected residents when we hold the residents open day event to coincide with the annual Waterfest event in June 2025
Provide an update on the alternate proposals announced following the withdraw of the Lower Caversham Flood Alleviation Scheme.	September 2024	No further action

3.14 Lessons Learned:

Council to be able to respond in a timely manner.	Review completed Oct 2024	On-going and to review following each Flood event
Recommended Action	Date completed	Further Action
Activate specific action plans for each of these vulnerable areas	Completed July 2024	The Council will continue to work with local communities and resident's associations, as appropriate, to develop local flood response plans, which will be under the control of local flood wardens (or other responsible individuals).
Affected residents to be made aware of the flood response action plans	In progress/ Letter to go to residents March 2025	To share with affected residents in February / March 2025 To work with local communities & residential associations, as appropriate, to develop flood response plans, which will be under the control of local flood wardens (or other responsible individuals)
Residents are provided with a clear route to contact the Council should assistance be required.	In progress/ Letter to go to residents Feb / March 2025	To share with affected residents in February / March 2025

That cyclical inspections and maintenance regimes are carried out on the watercourse ditches and recorded.	Completed July 2024	Added to the annual ditch inspections programme.
That the Council 'Flood Response Plan' is stored on a centrally accessible SharePoint site that all Emergency Response teams can access when required.	Completed March 2024	Completed no further action.
That the review and update of the response plan is completed, and new data and information added and or amended accordingly.	March / April 2025	The Council's single 'Flood Response Plan' is reviewed every two years (it is currently being reviewed) or after a significant flood event, as necessary.

3.15 Sandbag Policy

The Council has carried out a review of its sandbag policy which reiterates that the Council will provide sandbags to Council owned properties and that private property owners are responsible for resourcing / storing their own sandbags. The Council recognises that during extreme events there are a limited number of vulnerable properties that may flood and, in this respect, has amended the Policy to allow deployment to these sites. The decision to deploy sandbags is as stated in the Policy. Refer to Appendix 3.

4 Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1 Full details of the Council's Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the Council's website - [Corporate plan - Reading Borough Council](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.
- 4.2 The recommended actions carried out section 3.9 to 3.15 will contribute to the Council's Strategic Aims of providing a safe and healthy environment for all residents by reducing the flood risk as far as reasonably practicable while taking due regard to climate change and the location of vulnerable properties.

5 Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1 The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26th February 2019 (Minute 48 refers).
- 5.2 A Climate Impact Assessment has been completed which suggests a 'net medium positive' impact arising from proposed works to reduce the risk of flooding to protect properties within the flood plain.
- 5.3 Contractors were required to submit an Environmental Implications proposal which formed part of the quality element of the tender evaluation. A social value quality submission was also be included.
- 5.4 Contractors were required to submit Carbon reduction and improved sustainability targets. The intent is to reduce the amount of carbon used to produce the materials at source, using recycled materials, lower temperature materials, reducing the uncontrolled waste in the environment to reduce pollution of the natural environment, use of electric vehicles and plant, use of cold applied materials with lower carbon emission, as well as how they will achieve their carbon reduction targets.
- 5.5 The Council remains committed to a tree planting programme to increase canopy cover, improve biodiversity and reduce localised flooding. The Council is committing up to 1% of the value of the highway capital programmes towards this initiative.

5.6 The Reading Climate Emergency Strategy, which was endorsed by the Council in November 2020, highlights the importance of adapting to climate impacts as well as reducing the emissions which are driving climate change. The Council will regularly review design standards, in conjunction with industry bodies, to take into account the extreme weather events (both extreme heat and extreme cold) to ensure sustainability of the public highway network.

6 Community Engagement

6.1 The public can report flooding incidents to the Council via the Council's Web Page [Report a road or street problem - Reading Borough Council](#), the 'Love Clean Reading App', or by email Highways@reading.gov.uk. These include blocked road gullies, and drains, overgrown watercourses, flood defence assets, road and structures condition concerns, which are assessed, and repairs actioned. Proposed flood reduction schemes will be brought to Committee for consideration and approval should they meet the assessment criteria.

6.2 This report will be available on the Council's website following Housing Neighbourhoods and Leisure Committee approval processes.

6.3 Communities and properties that are potentially vulnerable to fluvial (river) flooding can sign-up to receive Flood Alerts/Warnings from the Environment Agency which the Council's Emergency Planning Team will assist residents with.

6.4 The Council's Emergency Planning Officers are committed to working with local community groups to establish Local Flood Warden Schemes and Flood Plans.

7 Equality Implications

7.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2 The Flood Reduction and Maintenance programmes consists of improvement work to the Council's existing public highway network and watercourses that the Council are responsible for and will be making improvements to existing highway assets. There is no overall change to service delivery at this time and all users will have a safe public highway environment. Should any future updates/amendments be required, which result in service delivery changes, an equality impact assessment will be carried out.

8 Other Relevant Considerations

8.1 There are none.

9 Legal Implications

9.1 The Borough Council, as Highway Authority, has a duty under the Highways Act 1980 to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, the safe passage along a highway.

9.2 The Council as Lead Local Flood Authority, has a duty under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to reduce the risk of flooding.

10 Financial Implications

10.1 The Flood Reduction programme will be funded by the following:

- Existing Highway Maintenance Revenue budgets

- Successful funding from Thames Regional Flood & Coastal Committee (TRFCC) Local Levy

11 Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1 Maintenance works set out in the Options Report commenced at the end of bird nesting season in 2024 and in advance of the autumn and will be completed by Autumn 2025.
- 11.2 Capital works will complete in Autumn 2025.

12 Background Papers

- 12.1 There are none.

Appendices

1. January 2024 Section 19 Report
2. January 2024 Options Report
3. Updated Sandbag Policy
4. Flood Risk Roles & Responsibility

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Reading Flood Investigation- January 2024

Section 19 Flood Investigation Report

On behalf of **Reading Borough Council**



Document Control Sheet

Project Name: Reading Flood Investigation 2024

Project Ref: 332611243

Report Title: Section 19 Flood Investigation Report – Summary Version

Doc Ref:

Date: March 2024

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Reviewed by:	Serena Grant	Assistant Engineer		11/02/2024
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For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved
final	28/3/24	Updated following client comment	VK	AH	AH

This report has been prepared by Stantec UK Limited ('Stantec') on behalf of its client to whom this report is addressed ('Client') in connection with the project described in this report and takes into account the Client's particular instructions and requirements. This report was prepared in accordance with the professional services appointment under which Stantec was appointed by its Client. This report is not intended for and should not be relied on by any third party (i.e. parties other than the Client). Stantec accepts no duty or responsibility (including in negligence) to any party other than the Client and disclaims all liability of any nature whatsoever to any such party in respect of this report.

1 Section 19 Flood Investigation Report

1.1 Purpose of report

- 1.1.1 This Flood Investigation Report Summary has been prepared by Stantec UK Ltd (Stantec) on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC) in relation to flooding which occurred in early January 2024 within the RBC administrative boundary.
- 1.1.2 Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) states that on becoming aware of a flood in their area, the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) must investigate (to the extent that it considers to be necessary or appropriate), which Flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have relevant flood risk management functions and whether each RMA has exercised, or plans to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.
- 1.1.3 Table 1 shows the RMAs responsible for managing flood risk from different sources of flooding within the RBC administrative boundary.

Table 1: Responsible RMAs for different sources of flooding

Source of Flooding	Environment Agency	LLFA [RBC]	Water Company [Thames Water]	Highways Authority [RBC]
Main River	X			
Ordinary Watercourse		X		
Surface Water		X		
Surface water on or coming from the highway				X
Sewer			X	
Groundwater		X		
Reservoirs	X			

2 January 2024 Flood Event

2.1 Contributing Factors

- 2.1.1 The Reading area was impacted by flooding in January 2024 arising from the River Thames, River Kennet and Holy Brook, and associated ditches and tributaries of these watercourses.
- 2.1.2 The main contributing factor to the flood event was above average rainfall levels in the 3 months prior to January 2024 (up to 150% above the long term average), in combination with a period of intense rainfall in early January 2024 caused by Storm Henk.
- 2.1.3 Sixty-five percent of the total recorded rainfall for January 2024 in the Thames catchment (74mm) fell between 1st - 4th January, with 38% of the monthly total (28.4mm) falling within a 12-hour period between 15:00 hours on 4th January and 03:00 on 5th January, associated with Storm Henk. In the 8 days prior to Storm Henk, 54.6mm of rainfall was recorded.

2.1.4 High rainfall levels on a saturated catchment led river levels at the River Thames at Reading gauge to rise to their highest recorded level since the major flood event of 1947. The river level rose above flood warning trigger levels (7.25m AOD) on 5th January 2024, peaking at 7.54m AOD at 15:45 on 7th January, and returning to a level within its 'typical range' of below 7.00m AOD on 11th January.

2.2 Flood Alerts and Warnings

2.2.1 In England, the Environment Agency provides 3 types of flood warning:

- Flood alert – flooding is possible, issued between 2 to 12 hours before flooding.
- Flood warning – flooding is expected, issued between 30 minutes to 2 hours before flooding.
- Severe flood warning – flooding could be a risk to life and significant disruption to communities.

2.2.2 The state of the flood alerts and flood warnings, the date, and their sequence issued by EA, is not available at the time of writing this report. A request will be made to EA for the historical flood alert records to be provided for future references.

2.3 Flood Event Summary

2.3.1 Internal flooding to residential properties occurred between 5th – 7th January 2024. **Table 2** summarises key information relating to the flood event in January 2024.

Table 2: Summary of key information for January 2024 flood event.

Start Date	5 January 2024
Duration	6 days
Probability	Between a 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 year event (2% - 3.3% annual probability)
Main Source	Main River and Ordinary Watercourses
Main Mechanism	Natural exceedance
Main Characteristics	Natural flood - saturated ground conditions and extreme prolonged rainfall
Significant Consequences	17 residential properties and 3 commercial property and one static caravan were flooded internally from RBC records.

2.4 Consequences of Flooding

2.4.1 Reports of flooding from residents to the EA and/or RBC identified 17 residential properties, one static caravan, and 3 commercial properties which experienced internal flooding from this flood event. 10 residential properties impacted internally by Christchurch Ditch flooding and 4 by flooding from the Holy Brook. 4 properties experienced flooding originating from the River Thames. Table 3 shows a summary of reports to RBC of the impacts of flooding from the River Thames/Christchurch Ditch and the Holy Brook.

2.4.2 **Table 3** shows a summary of reports to RBC of the impacts of flooding from the River Thames/Christchurch Ditch and the Holy Brook.

Table 3: Summary of properties flooded by River Thames and River Kennet/Holy Brook

Location	Number of properties flooded internally	Number of properties flooded externally
Queens Road	9	11
Coldicutt Street	0	9
George Street	0	3
Piggotts Lane	0	1
Mill Green/ Mill Road	1	3
Crendon Court	0	3
Circuit Lane and Sylvan Walk	4	0
Scours Lane	1	1
Commercial properties	3	2
The Warren properties	2	0
Riverside Park Homes	1	0

2.5 Further Actions

2.5.1 RBC along with other relevant RMAs are undertaking an investigation into appropriate flood risk management responses and a further report will be prepared by Stantec to assist and inform the investigation process, which should be read in conjunction with this report, when available.

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Reading Flood Investigation - January 2024

Flood Investigation Report – Full Version

On behalf of **Reading Borough Council**



Project Ref: 332611243/001 | Rev: AA | Date: May 2024

Document Control Sheet

Project Name: Reading Flood Investigation 2024

Project Ref: 332611243

Report Title: Flood Investigation Report – full version

Doc Ref: 332611243/001

Date: 17 May 2024

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Approved by:				
For and on behalf of Stantec UK Limited				

Revision	Date	Description	Prepared	Reviewed	Approved

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1.1 This report has been produced by Stantec UK Ltd ('Stantec') on behalf of Reading Borough Council (RBC) to record the findings of an investigation into flooding which occurred in Reading in January 2024, impacting a number of residential and commercial properties.
- 1.1.2 Flood Investigation Reports (FIR) are completed by RBC under their duties as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA).
- 1.1.3 A Section 19 Flood Investigation Report has been produced by Stantec (dated March 2024) which provides a brief overview of the January 2024 flood event and impacts. It should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 1.1.4 This report supplements the Section 19 report by providing an overview of the source, duration, mechanism, characteristics and consequences of the January 2024 flood event; actions taken by the relevant Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) since the flood event, and recommendations for future actions and interventions.

1.2 Roles and Responsibilities

- 1.2.1 Flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have different responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) dependent on the source of flooding. These responsibilities are summarised in **Table 1-1**.

Table 1-1: Summary of RMA Responsibilities

Source of Flooding	Environment Agency	LLFA [RBC]	Water Company [Thames Water]	Highways Authority [RBC/ National Highways]
Main River	X			
Ordinary Watercourse		X		
Surface Water		X		
Surface water on or coming from the highway				X
Sewer			X	
Groundwater		X		
Reservoirs		X		

1.3 Reading Flooding, January 2024

- 1.3.1 Low-lying land and property was flooded within the RBC administrative boundary during the first week of January 2024 due to rising water levels in the River Thames, River Kennet and tributaries. Internal flooding of residential and commercial properties occurred in the Southcote and Lower Caversham areas of Reading Borough over the weekend of 5th – 7th January 2024.
- 1.3.2 Internal property flooding in the Southcote area was reported by residents to have arisen from the drainage ditch network connected to the Holy Brook. Flooding in Lower Caversham was reported by residents to have arisen from Christchurch Ditch (also known locally as The Gos

Brook and Dannals Brook) exacerbated by localised surface water drainage problems and potentially groundwater within the river gravels.

1.4 Sources of Information

1.4.1 This report has been prepared using information from the following sources.

- British Geological Survey/UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology - Groundwater data and analysis for Stonor Park borehole.
- DEFRA Data Services Platform – River levels, ‘Kennet at Theale’ gauge.
- EA ‘Monthly water situation report: Thames Area, January 2024’.
- EA ‘Monthly water situation report: England, December 2023’.
- RBC ‘Local Flood Risk Management Strategy’ [LFRMS] dated October 2015.
- RBC ‘Strategic Flood Risk Assessment’ [SFRA] dated June 2017.
- River Levels UK – historic river level data, ‘River Thames at Reading’ and ‘River Kennet at Theale’ gauges.
- Thames Water ‘Thames Conservancy Statistics of Rainfall, Flow and Levels on the River Thames Above Teddington, Vol. 1, 1883 – 1964’, dated 1965.
- University of Reading Meteorology Department rainfall data and meteorological summary tables, October 2023 – January 2024.

1.4.2 Reading Borough Council provided copies of their records of properties affected by flooding and relevant communication/consultation with residents.

1.4.3 The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) was contacted but no response has been received to date.

2 Background Information

2.1 Relevant Watercourses and Responsibilities

- 2.1.1 The RBC administrative boundary includes reaches of the River Thames, River Kennet and Holy Brook, which are all designated as Main Rivers for which the EA holds responsibility.
- 2.1.2 Some navigable sections of the River Kennet within the RBC administrative boundary form part of the Kennet and Avon Canal, and maintenance of these sections is the responsibility of CRT.
- 2.1.3 The Holy Brook is a tributary of the River Kennet and flows eastwards from Theale through the floodplains in south Reading, passing through central Reading in open and culverted sections, and rejoining the River Kennet close to Reading Abbey ruins. Responsibility for the watercourse is held by the EA.
- 2.1.4 The designated floodplains to the south of Reading include a network of drainage ditches running between and flowing into the River Kennet and/or Holy Brook. The majority of this ditch network is designated as part of the Main River network, but some ditches are classified as Ordinary Watercourses, which are the responsibility of RBC.
- 2.1.5 Christchurch Ditch (also known locally as Gos Brook or Dannalls Brook) runs eastwards through Christchurch Meadows and Hills Meadow between Reading Bridge and Heron Island. It conveys surface water drainage from the adjacent urban area to the River Thames and has a secondary function to act as a drainage route for the floodplain after a flood event. It is classified as a Main River but is primarily located within RBC's land ownership, so RBC has maintenance responsibilities as the riparian owner.
- 2.1.6 Local residents whose properties adjoin the ditch also have riparian ownership responsibilities, with ownership of private land adjacent to a watercourse usually extending to include the adjacent watercourse bank and 50% of the width of the watercourse, unless otherwise specified in property deeds or by the relevant management authority. The landowner is responsible for maintenance of areas within their riparian ownership.

2.2 Fluvial Flood History

- 2.2.1 The most significant flooding of the 20th Century in Reading (and throughout the Thames Valley) occurred in March 1947, where runoff from rain and rapid snowmelt was a major contributing factor to extremely high-water levels in the River Thames and the River Kennet, causing extensive flood damage. The water level in the River Thames at Caversham during this flood event was recorded as 37.83m AOD. Significant changes were made throughout the Thames Valley to provide flood alleviation and increase the capacity of the Thames following this flood event.
- 2.2.2 More recent significant flood events in Reading have occurred approximately once every 10 years. The winters of 2002/3 and 2013/14 were the most recent flood events where properties were impacted by internal flooding. The flood event of early 2003 was estimated to be a 1 in 20 year (5% annual probability) flood event and the recorded water level on the River Thames reached 37.48m AOD. The probability of the 2013/14 event has not been estimated but was a double peak flood event where water levels rose to a maximum of 37.35m AOD twice within a 4 week period in January and February 2014.

2.3 Flood Defences and Controls

- 2.3.1 Water levels in the River Thames as it flows through Reading are controlled by the EA via a series of adjustable weirs located within and outside the RBC administrative boundary. The

primary control structure within Reading is Caversham Weir; however, the primary purpose of the weir is to maintain upstream navigability and not for flood protection.

- 2.3.2 A series of sluice gates and weirs are present on the River Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal as it flows to the south of Reading. The sluice gates can be opened to release water into the surrounding floodplain when water levels are high. Again, the primary purpose of the control structures is to maintain navigable water levels. This process is managed by the CRT.
- 2.3.3 Water levels in the downstream section of the River Kennet are managed via the adjustable weir at Blake's Lock, just prior to the confluence with the River Thames. This is managed by the EA.
- 2.3.4 There are no formal flood defences or flood alleviation schemes within the RBC administrative area. Green spaces adjacent to the River Thames and River Kennet provide additional capacity to hold floodwater in urban areas; however if this capacity is exceeded then property flooding in the urban areas closest to the main watercourses and tributaries may occur.
- 2.3.5 Areas of artificially raised ground have been created in parts of Lower Caversham to provide informal protection from rising water levels in the River Thames channel. One such area lies between the eastern end of Christchurch Ditch and the River Thames.
- 2.3.6 Between 2018-2020 an investigation was undertaken by the EA into the potential for installation of flood defences and/or flood alleviation measures in Lower Caversham. The outcome of the investigation was that the cost of installing the shortlisted measures would be disproportionate to the number of properties protected, so the potential scheme did not proceed.

2.4 January 2024 Event - Antecedent Rainfall

- 2.4.1 EA Water Situation reports and data from the University of Reading Meteorology Department indicate that rainfall levels in November 2023, both in the wider Thames catchment and within Reading, were well above the long term average. December 2023 was the wettest December since 2012, with total rainfall in Reading recorded at 145% of the long term average rainfall total for December.
- 2.4.2 In the 8 days prior to Storm Henk on 4th January 2024, 54.6mm of rain was recorded at Cleeve rainfall gauge, located upstream of Reading at Goring. The Thames area received 65% of the total recorded rainfall in January 2024 between 1st - 4th January. River flows and river levels responded rapidly to the high rainfall levels due to surface water runoff and high recharge rates into underlying aquifers, which is further discussed in Section 2.5 and 2.6.
- 2.4.3 On the 4th January 2024, Storm Henk caused exceptionally heavy rainfall which began at 15:00, peaked at 17:00 and continued until 03:00 on the 5th January. In total, 31.5mm of rain fell on 4th and 5th January (42.5% of the recorded monthly rainfall for January).

2.5 January 2024 Event - Surface Water – Runoff from Catchment

- 2.5.1 Saturated ground conditions due to the above average rainfall between November – December 2023 are likely to have reduced or removed the capacity for infiltration of subsequent rainfall in January 2024 into the Thames catchment.
- 2.5.2 Soil Moisture Deficit (SMD) is an indicator of the capacity of soil to hold rainfall via infiltration, and the Water Situation Reports indicate that SMD at all sites monitored by the EA was well above the expected levels in the late autumn/early winter months, with soils considered to be fully saturated (i.e. with no possibility of further infiltration) by the end of December 2023.
- 2.5.3 Therefore, the rainfall preceding, during and immediately after Storm Henk led to high volumes of surface water runoff directly into rivers and associated watercourses because this water was unable to infiltrate into soils. This contributed to river flows rising and water passing downstream

more rapidly would usually be expected for the time of year, leading to an increase in flow volumes and velocities which exceeded the capacity of the river channels.

2.6 Groundwater Levels

2.6.1 EA Water Situation reports indicate that groundwater levels at all indicator sites rose in response to the high recharge rates from rainfall between December - early January 2024. Groundwater levels were already higher than average at most indicator sites due to high rainfall levels since October 2023. Saturated ground conditions and a high water table increase the speed at which water returns to watercourses within the catchment because deeper level infiltration to the aquifer can no longer occur, and also directly increases river baseflows where these are groundwater fed. Ephemeral streams are also present in the Thames and Kennet catchments (including the source of the Thames) which only flow when groundwater levels are sufficiently high.

2.6.2 These natural processes are likely to have contributed to the flood event in January 2024 with more water than usual for the time of year passing directly or indirectly into rivers and streams in the Upper Thames catchment, and also passing more rapidly down the catchment than usual.

2.6.3 The groundwater monitoring borehole at Rockley (ID: SU17/57) is located in a chalk valley north-west of Marlborough, within the upper Kennet catchment. Groundwater levels are recorded by the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (UKCEH) and reported by the British Geological Survey (BGS). BGS records note significant evidence of surface water - groundwater interaction at this borehole location and provide a graphical representation of groundwater levels per decade, where the grey area represents the area between the highest and lowest levels ever recorded, and the black dotted line represents an average level. **Figure 2-1** shows data from the 2020s thus far.

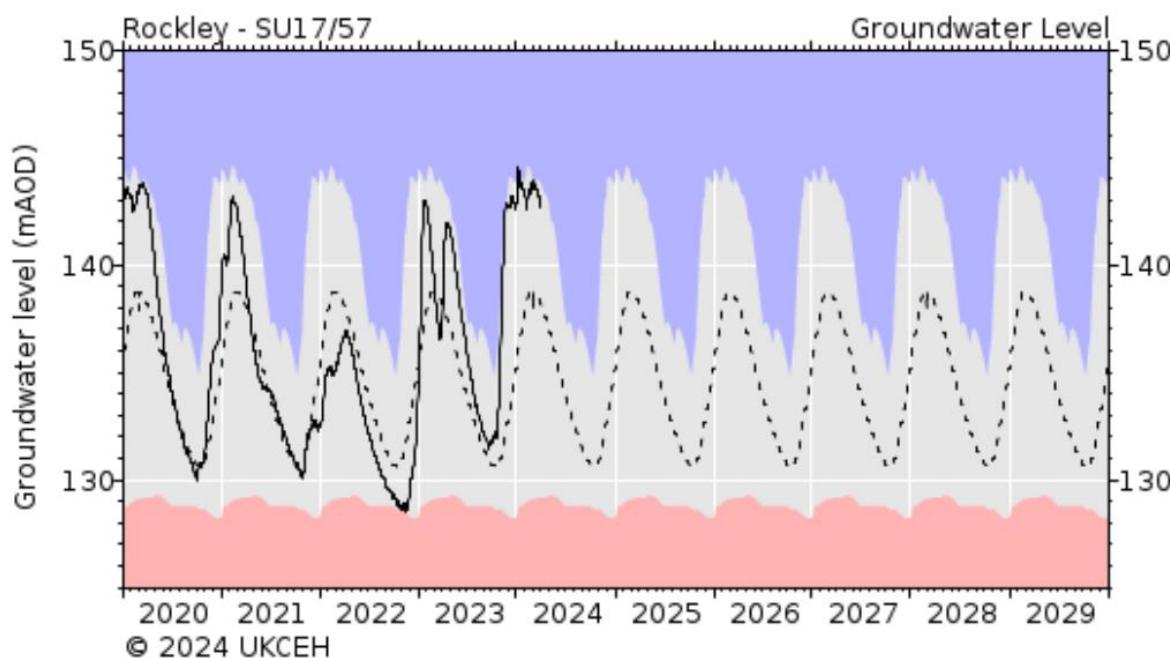


Figure 2-1: BGS/UKCEH graphical representation of groundwater levels at Rockley borehole, 2020-2024

2.6.4 Groundwater levels are expected to rise between autumn and spring as part of normal seasonal variations, but it is notable that groundwater levels rose particularly steeply from a just above average level in October 2023 to almost the maximum level ever recorded (purple area) in late December/early January 2024. Data from previous decades shows a similar rapid peaking of groundwater levels in December/January 2002/3 and 2013/14, which coincides with previous significant flood events in the region.

2.6.5 Within Reading Borough, direct groundwater flooding to properties is considered less likely to occur even at times of high groundwater due to the presence of a confining London Clay or Lambeth Group clay layer above the Chalk aquifer across much of the urban area. Perched groundwater may still be present within superficial deposits and some historic groundwater flooding has been noted in the RBC SFRA within low-lying areas, including Lower Caversham. Residents in this area reported flooding of basement areas (described in Section 3) which may be indicative of groundwater flooding through river gravels. However, because this occurred concurrently with flooding from other sources, it is difficult to ascertain if there was any direct contribution of groundwater flooding to the January 2024 event.

3 Flood Event Description and Analysis

3.1 Overview of Flood Event

3.1.1 In early January 2024, river levels in Reading reached their highest level since 1947 and exceeded the levels reached during the significant flood events in 2002/3 and 2013/14.

3.1.2 The water level at the 'River Thames at Reading' river level gauge has a normal range of up to 7.00m above local datum (AD), with flooding of low lying land considered to be possible above this level, and property flooding possible when levels exceed 7.25m AD. This level was exceeded on 5th January 2024 with a recorded level of 7.26m AD, peaking at 7.54m AD on the 7th January, and returning to a level consistently below 7.00m AD on the 11th January, as shown in **Figure 3-1**.

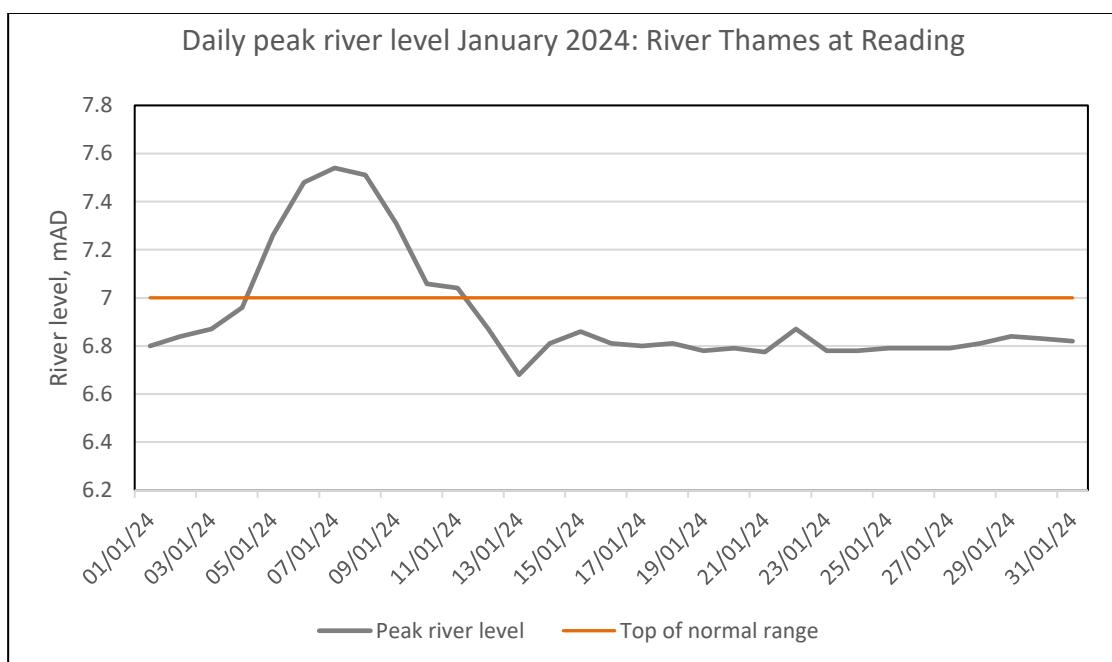


Figure 3-1: River levels in Central Reading recorded at River Thames at Reading gauge, January 2024

3.1.3 The previous highest ever recorded river level at this gauge was 7.41m AD, which was recorded on 4th January 2003. This level was exceeded from 6th – 8th January 2024.

3.1.4 Water levels on the River Kennet through Reading are currently only logged at the downstream end of the watercourse, just before the confluence with the River Thames at Blake's Lock. A water level monitoring gauge at Theale was formerly used to record water levels upstream of Reading but is now disused. However, river level data from the Theale gauge is still available via the DEFRA data services platform.

3.1.5 The water level at 'River Kennet at Theale' gauge has a normal range of up to 1.05m AD. **Figure 3-2** shows that this level was exceeded on 1st January 2024 and rose to a maximum level of 1.78m AD on 6th January 2024, a notable level rise of 0.33m from the previous day's peak level. Water levels in the River Kennet remained consistently above the normal range from 1st - 27th January 2024, other than a brief fall to levels of just over 1.00m AD from 20th - 21st January.

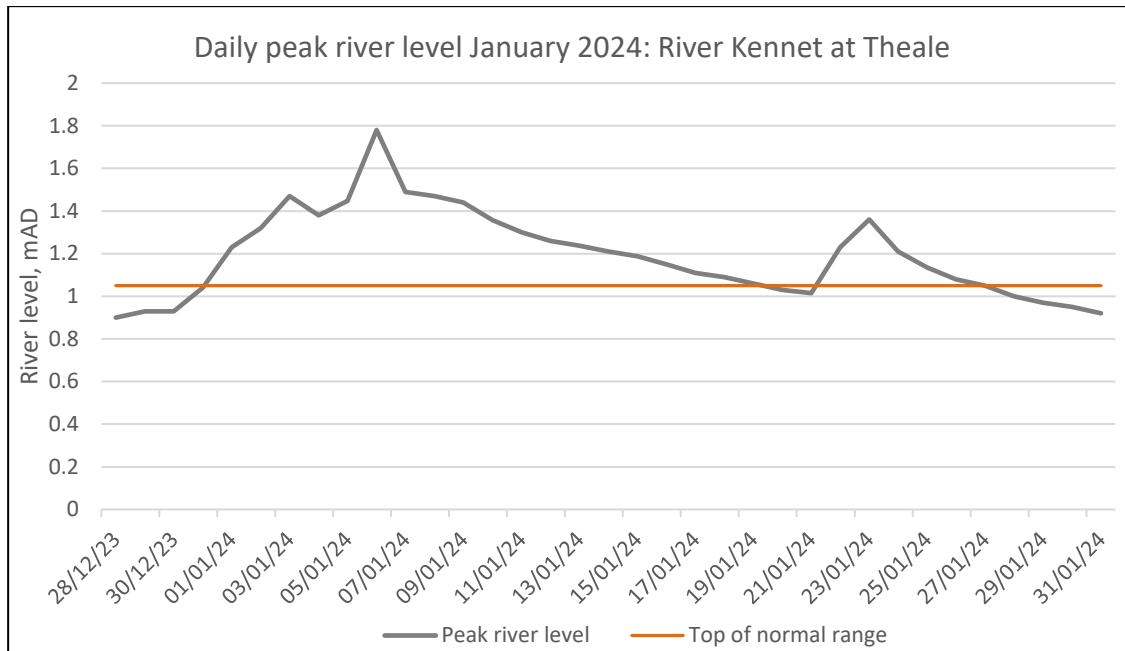


Figure 3-2: River levels upstream of Reading recorded at River Kennet at Theale gauge, January 2024

- 3.1.6 The previous highest ever recorded river level at the River Kennet at Theale gauge was 1.65m AD on 15th February 2014. This level was exceeded on 6th January 2024.
- 3.1.7 River levels and flood extents in the January 2024 flood event were compared to previous major flood events and available flood mapping and modelling data, to establish the probability of the flood event. This was estimated to be between a 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 year (2% – 3.3% annual probability) flood event and it is represented in **Figure 3-3**.

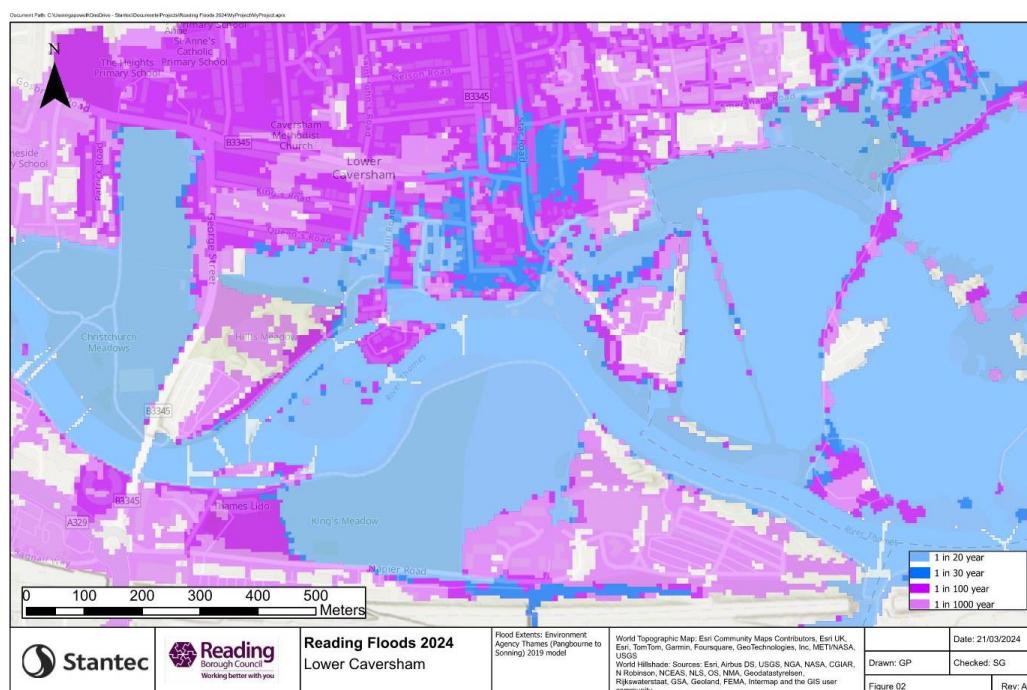


Figure 3-3: Flood map with estimated 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 year (2% – 3.3% annual probability) flood event probability

3.2 Information Provided Via Public Consultations

Event Details

- 3.2.1 Public consultation events for affected residents took place on 2nd February 2024 in Lower Caversham and Southcote, which were attended by representatives from RBC and Stantec. Representatives from the EA were also present at the Lower Caversham consultation event.
- 3.2.2 RBC also invited residents affected by flooding to make contact via their website, and residents have also provided details and feedback via emails to RBC, contact with the EA, and contact with local councillors.

Feedback from Residents

- 3.2.3 At the consultation events, local residents provided feedback, photographs and notes about the details, extents and possible causes of flooding in January 2024, which have been reviewed and incorporated into the overview and analysis of the flood event which follows. Anonymised data provided by residents is included in [Appendix A](#) .
- 3.2.4 Specific concerns reported by residents either at the public consultation events, via email or via the RBC website are noted below:
 - Residents in both Southcote and Lower Caversham noted that the speed of flooding was unusually fast compared to previous flood events, giving little time to prepare and put temporary protection measures in place. In Southcote, residents had heard anecdotally that sluice gates along the River Kennet [which have been installed to facilitate a more rapid release of water into the adjacent floodplain, when required] may have been deployed.
 - Residents in Southcote noted that several ditches and culverts in the area around Circuit Lane did not appear to have been maintained for some time prior to the flood event, and that some banks and paths had been damaged/lowered by previous flood events. Residents reported that accumulated debris reduced the capacity of the local ditch network to hold and transport floodwater, leading to overtopping.
 - Late or no flood warnings were received by some residents in Lower Caversham via the Government's flood warning messaging system, which provides notification of flood warnings via email, phone or text.
 - Sandbags were provided on 7th January 2024 to residents in Lower Caversham, which helped to prevent flooding via the front of properties but was too late to mitigate against flooding of gardens/outbuildings which had already begun to occur at this time.
 - Debris carried by the floodwaters accumulated in Christchurch Ditch and partly blocked the culverts, leading to concerns that further flooding may occur in the immediate future.
 - Residents reported that the side channel/pond area at Heron Island, where Christchurch Ditch outfalls, had become choked with trees and vegetation since it was constructed. Concerns were also raised about silt build-up in the marina area to the west of Heron Island.
 - Surface water drainage capacity in parts of Lower Caversham seems to have been exceeded and may have been exacerbated by existing blockages.
 - The raised ground/bunded area to the south of Christchurch Ditch protected the area from direct flooding from the River Thames, but also slowed down the rate at which floodwaters could drain back towards the Thames when river levels started to recede.

- It was not clear to those residents who checked flooding-related information on the RBC website where to find relevant information or how to request help via the website.
- Residents in Lower Caversham reported that there was a boat stuck on the Caversham weir downstream of Heron Island which was not removed for several weeks after the flood, and may have impeded flows through the weir during the flood event.

3.3 Lower Caversham Flooding - Christchurch Ditch/River Thames

Flood Alerts and Warnings Issued

3.3.1 A Flood Alert was issued on 31st December 2023 for the 'River Thames between Mapledurham and Sonning' area. A Flood Warning was issued on 5th January 2024 for the 'Properties closest to the River Thames from Scours Lane, Reading to Caversham Lakes' area.

Date, Location and Duration of Flooding

3.3.2 Residential properties at the eastern end of Queens Road reported exterior and basement flooding commencing in the late evening of 5th January, with internal flooding of the ground floor of several properties in Queens Road occurring on 7th January. Basement water levels were reported to have fully receded by 15th January providing a total flood duration of 10 days.

Sources and Mechanism of Flooding

3.3.3 Residents at the eastern end of Queens Road reported flooding from multiple sources. The flooding to the rear of these properties was reported to arise from exceedance of the capacity of Christchurch Ditch, and debris causing blockages of culverts within the ditch. The flood pathway from Christchurch Ditch was recorded by a local resident as flowing via residential gardens, public footpaths and public roads into Queens Road, then extending northwards and eastwards to Mill Road, Coldicutt Street, Champion Road, Piggott's Road and Mill Green.

3.3.4 **Appendix A** contains a sketch of the flood flow path described above, provided by a resident of Queens Road. Stantec flood modelling, which was undertaken using the EA Thames (Pangbourne to Reading) 2019 hydraulic model for a 1 in 30 year event, confirms the resident's description of the flood flow path during the event and is shown in **Figure 3-4**. The area of Lower Caversham primarily affected by internal flooding is highlighted within the red box in this figure. A larger version of the figure is available in **Appendix F**

3.3.5

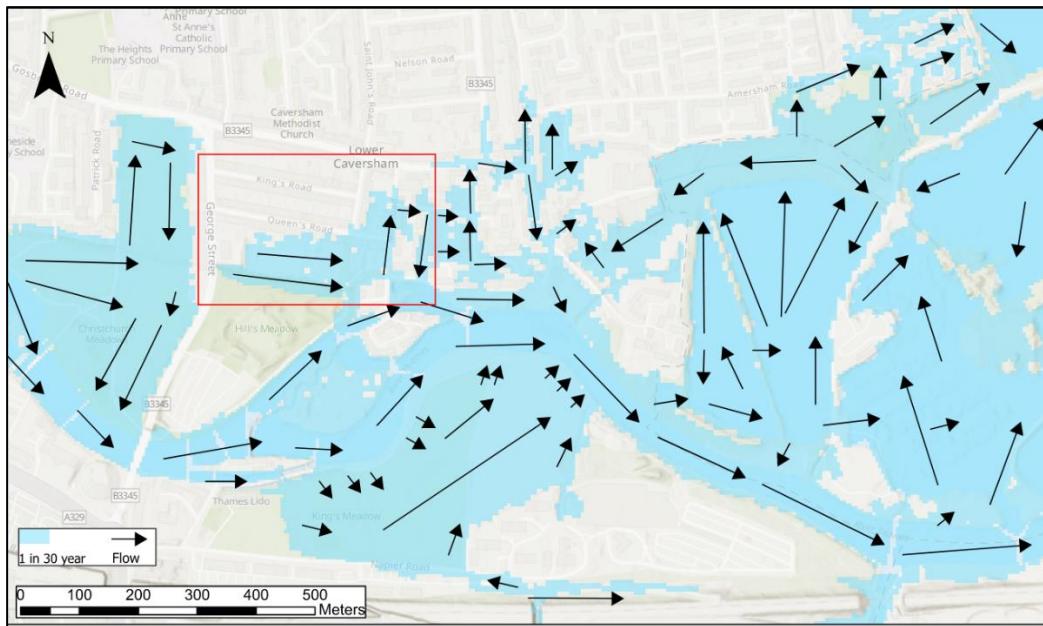


Figure 3-4: Modelled flood flow paths for a 1 in 30 year flood event in Lower Caversham: EA River Thames (Pangbourne to Sonning) flood model

- 3.3.6 Residents of Queens Road reported flooding to basements, potentially linked to rising groundwater through the river gravels.
- 3.3.7 Residents of Queens Road also recorded flooding to the front of their properties which appears to have arisen from the exceedance of surface water drainage capacity, causing pooling of floodwater in the street. Sandbags and airbrick covers were provided by RBC on 7th January 2024 to provide some mitigation against rising water levels.
- 3.3.8 The artificially raised area of ground at the eastern end of Christchurch Ditch appears to have prevented the direct ingress of fluvial floodwater flowing northwards out of the River Thames into this part of Lower Caversham.

Significant Consequences

- 3.3.9 Sixteen residential properties in Lower Caversham and three commercial properties in Amersham Road reported internal flooding (basement and/or ground floor) which occurred on 7th January 2024.
- 3.3.10 An additional thirty-three residential properties on Queens Road, Mill Green, Coldicutt Street, George Street and Piggott's Road reported significant flooding to gardens and/or outbuildings. One additional commercial property on Amersham Road reported external flooding.
- 3.3.11 Two properties on Queens Road reported loss of electricity supply with no visible internal flooding.

3.4 Southcote Flooding - Holy Brook/River Kennet

Flood Alerts and Warnings Issued

- 3.4.1 A Flood Alert was issued on 31st December 2023 for the 'River Kennet from Thatcham down to Reading' area and was upgraded to a Flood Warning on 2nd January 2024 for 'Properties closest to the River Kennet at the Burghfield, Southcote, Coley and Holybrook areas'. The Flood Warning was updated and reissued on 5th January 2024.

Date, Location and Duration of Flooding

3.4.2 Flooding of residential properties at the south end of Circuit Lane and Sylvan Walk was reported to RBC on 6th January 2024. The duration of internal flooding is unknown.

Sources and Mechanism of Flooding

3.4.3 Flooding was reported by residents in this area to have arisen from exceedance of the capacity of the local network of ditches connected to the Holy Brook (designated as part of the Main River network), and from culverted and open channels located within Linear Park which are located on land owned by RBC. Water accumulating in the River Kennet floodplain was reported to flow back in a northerly direction towards Circuit Lane via the area under the railway bridge; and local residents reported that backflows had occurred since November 2023, which meant that flood storage capacity north of the railway line was already full prior to the flood event in January 2024.

3.4.4 Stantec modelling of flood flow paths undertaken using the EA Lower Kennet (Tyle Mill to Thames Confluence) 2018 hydraulic model for the 1 in 30 year flood event (**Figure 3-5**) indicates a potential for backflows from the floodplain towards residential areas, which supports the reports of local residents about flood mechanisms in this area.

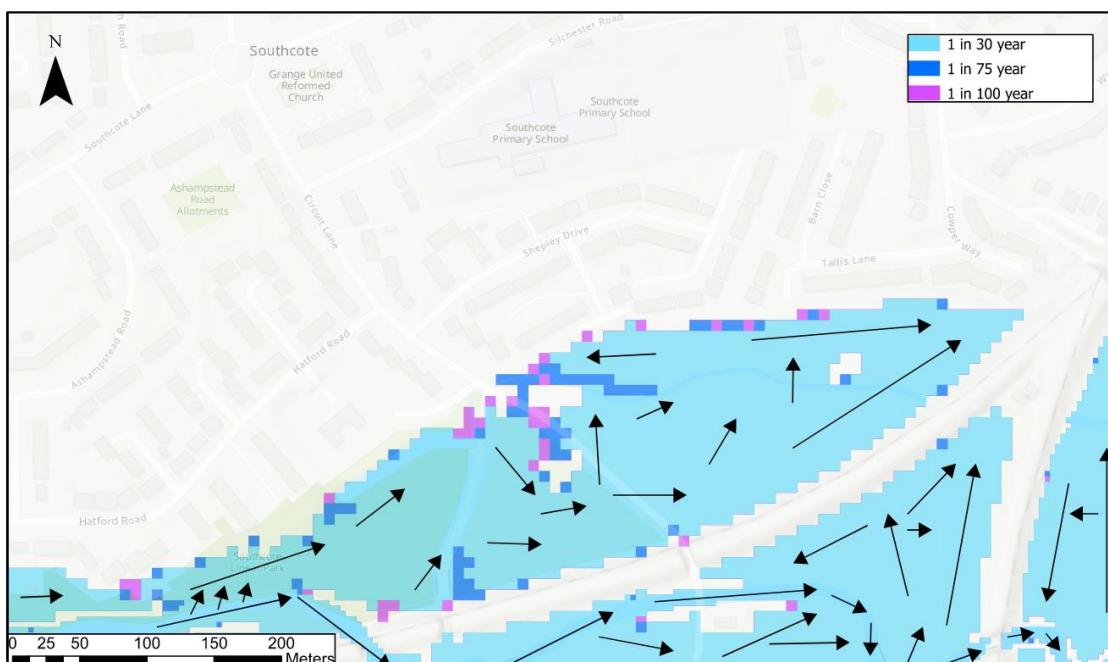


Figure 3-5: Modelled flood flow paths for a 1 in 30 year flood event in Southcote: EA Lower Kennet Tyle Mill to Thames Confluence flood model

3.4.5 Residents reported that the drainage ditch located immediately south of Circuit Lane was blocked by woody debris which had accumulated over many years, reducing the capacity of the ditch during the flood event.

3.4.6 Subsequent to the flood event, it was discovered that a culvert at the northern end of the ditch was blocked by sheet piling. There are reports that the culvert partially collapsed causing a hole in the road historically; it is not known who carried out the repairs but the blockage may have occurred then. These works have caused significant reduction of flows through the culvert.

Significant Consequences

- 3.4.7 Four residential properties on Circuit Lane and Sylvan Walk reported internal flooding (ground floor) on 6th January 2024.
- 3.4.8 Collapse of bank and footpath damage to an area of the Holy Brook north of the railway line.
- 3.4.9 Flooding occurred at the allotment site south of Brunel Road, impacting on allotment holders.

3.5 Flooding Impacts in Other Areas

- 3.5.1 Flooding was recorded at the park homes site at Scours Lane, impacting one residential property internally. No further details are available of the specific flood impacts at this site or property.
- 3.5.2 Residents in Katesgrove reported damage to banks/footpaths on the River Kennet [responsibility for repairs in this location lies with CRT].

3.6 Summary of Significant Consequences and Other Impacts – All Areas

- 3.6.1 In total, the owners/occupiers of twenty-one residential properties and three commercial properties reported to RBC and/or the EA that they had experienced internal flooding during the January 2024 flood event. The duration of internal flooding (including basement areas) was up to 8 days.
- 3.6.2 An additional thirty-three owners/occupiers of residential properties and one commercial property reported significant flooding to gardens, hard-standing areas and/or outbuildings to RBC.
- 3.6.3 RBC staff visited affected residents living in park homes at Scours Lane. The entire site was observed to be flooded. One property at the site reported internal flooding and this is included in the total in paragraph 3.10.1.
- 3.6.4 Several other properties in flooded areas were observed to be affected by significant external flooding during visits to affected areas by RBC or EA staff, and may have been impacted by internal flooding, but the owner/occupiers did not formally report this to any of the RMAs so it has not been possible to include specific data in this report.
- 3.6.5 Recreational facilities for local residents (Thames Path, public green spaces, play areas) were temporarily unavailable due to flooding of land adjacent to the River Thames and River Kennet/Holy Brook.
- 3.6.6 Allotment holders in areas adjacent to the Holy Brook were unable to access their plots and the extended presence of flood water may have future impacts on growth/edibility of produce at the site.
- 3.6.7 Flood damage to ditch and river banks, and adjacent footpaths, was recorded in several areas including around the Holy Brook and the River Kennet in Katesgrove.
- 3.6.8 Photographs of the flood event are included in [Appendix B](#) .

4 Actions Taken to Address Flood Risk

4.1 Actions Taken by RBC

- 4.1.1 Following the flood event, the following actions have been taken by RBC in February/March 2024 to address factors which are known or considered most likely to be linked to the flood event.
- 4.1.2 Photographs of areas identified for the priority post-flood interventions described below are included in [Appendix D](#), and photographs of actions taken are included in [Appendix E](#).

Lower Caversham

- 4.1.3 The open section of Christchurch Ditch between George Street and the public footpath adjacent to residential properties at Heron Island was cleared of accumulated debris within the channel and on the RBC-owned bank. A tree creating a partial blockage in the channel was also removed.
- 4.1.4 A further tree has been felled which was growing adjacent to and through the wingwall of the culvert located at the eastern end of Hills Meadow.
- 4.1.5 The local surface water drainage network in Queens Road has been checked and cleared by RBC Highways Team.
- 4.1.6 A preliminary meeting was held with the Heron Island Residents Association (HIRA) to discuss potential culvert clearance works..

Southcote

- 4.1.7 The ditch immediately south of Circuit Lane has been cleared of debris. During clearance works, sheet piling was discovered in the channel (located on private land), which is believed to have potentially been used to support ground previously affected by a sinkhole, and which is now blocking the downstream face of the culvert impacting on the capacity of the ditch to convey flood flows. Onsite investigations revealed the culvert is also blocked by material upstream of the sheet piling. This requires further investigation.
- 4.1.8 A temporary clay bund has been constructed across the footpath under Briscoe's Bridge [railway bridge] to hold back floodwater within the floodplain and prevent backflows towards Circuit Lane.
- 4.1.9 Bank and footpath repairs have been undertaken to the Holy Brook to the east of Briscoe's Bridge.

4.2 Actions Taken or Planned by Other RMAs

- 4.2.1 Residents who reported bank and footpath damage in the Katesgrove area, adjacent to the River Kennet, were encouraged by RBC to report this to the CRT as this section is designated as part of the Kennet and Avon Canal and falls within CRT responsibility for maintenance.
- 4.2.2 CRT have been contacted to request information about their actions during the flood event and subsequently, but no response has been received to date.

5 Further Actions Recommended

5.1 Joint actions for RBC/EA - Lower Caversham

- CCTV drainage survey of the closed section of the Christchurch Ditch culvert from the footbridge at the eastern end of Hills Meadow to the Heron Island outfall point, to investigate its state of repair and capacity. The outfall structure at Heron Island is overgrown with vegetation and cannot be viewed at present. This will be subject to the agreement of the private landowners. There are also ecological constraints due to nesting swans in this area.
- Review if there is any requirement for localised repairs to the footbridge at the eastern end of Hills Meadow and/or wingwalls following removal of the tree and review the need for localised repairs to damaged banks.
- Installation of a trash screen to the culvert at the eastern end of Hills Meadow, to capture debris before it enters the closed section of the culvert and improve the ease of future clearance works.
- Establishment of a checking/maintenance schedule for the ditch and trash screen.
- Installation of a level gauge board at the eastern end of Christchurch Ditch to provide a visual indicator of water levels and potential flood risk to residents.
- After the water levels in Christchurch Ditch had returned to normal post-flood levels, local residents noted some fallen blocks in the ditch close to the footbridge at the eastern end. This should be reviewed and repair works carried out as necessary.

5.2 Joint actions for RBC/EA - Southcote

- Investigate the potential for permanent raising of the access road level under Briscoe's Bridge. This could potentially be achieved by installing a full-width speed bump with the top level set at the flood level for a 1 in 2 year return period. This would prevent backflow of water in the floodplain south of the railway bridge towards Circuit Lane, and the temporary clay bund which has been installed has already been established to be effective in reducing backflows. The most appropriate method of ground-raising will need to be discussed and agreed with all stakeholders.
- Further bank and footpath works to the Holy Brook and associated ditches will require consultation with and consent from the EA.
- Further investigation of requirements for ditch and culvert clearance, in consultation with relevant landowners, and providing reminders to riparian owners of their repair and maintenance responsibilities.
- Discussion of the removal of sheet piling from the culvert south of Circuit Lane with the landowner and suitable replacement material, to re-establish flow through the culvert to the designed levels.
- Establishment of a checking/maintenance schedule for the ditch network connected to the Holy Brook.
- Installation of a level gauge in the Holy Brook to provide a visual indicator of water levels and potential flood risk to residents.

5.3 Scours Lane

- Limited information is available about the flooding of park homes at Scours Lane during the January 2024 flood event and any longer-term impacts. Further advice could be provided about temporary flood protection measures for the site to be implemented when flood warnings are issued, if required.

5.4 RBC – Administrative Actions

- Review website to make information about flooding easier to find, in particular what to do and who to contact when residents are impacted by or concerned about flooding.
- Review timing of sandbag distribution during flood events.

5.5 EA - Administrative Actions

- Review the text/email/phone call flood alert system in the Thames/Lower Caversham area to ensure that all roads adjacent to and north of Christchurch Ditch are included in any relevant River Thames flood alert messages for the areas both upstream and downstream of Caversham Lock.

6 Summary and Conclusions

6.1 Summary of Flood Event

- 6.1.1 A flood event arising from the River Thames and River Kennet, and associated watercourses, affected residents of Reading borough in the first two weeks of January 2024. The flood event caused internal flooding to 21 residential properties, triggering RBC's requirement for investigation and reporting under Section 19 of the FWMA.
- 6.1.2 The primary cause of the flood event was high levels of antecedent rainfall in the weeks and months prior to the flood event, leading to fully saturated ground conditions and high groundwater levels.
- 6.1.3 Subsequent heavy rainfall in late December 2023 and early January 2024 was unable to infiltrate into soil or deeper levels of the aquifer, causing a large amount of run-off from the upper catchment and accumulating throughout the catchment as floodwaters passed downstream. This led to the highest recorded river levels in Reading since 1947 which exceeded the capacity of the rivers and local floodplains, causing property flooding in low-lying areas.
- 6.1.4 The estimated probability of the flood event lies between a 1 in 30 and 1 in 50 year event (2 – 3.3% annual probability).

6.2 Summary of Consequences

- 6.2.1 Internal flooding of 21 residential properties and 3 commercial properties was reported to RBC. Internal flooding was reported by residents between 5th – 7th January 2024 and persisted for up to 10 days.
- 6.2.2 Public consultation with residents who had been impacted by the flood event identified a series of immediate and longer-term actions for consideration by RBC.

6.3 Actions Taken by RBC

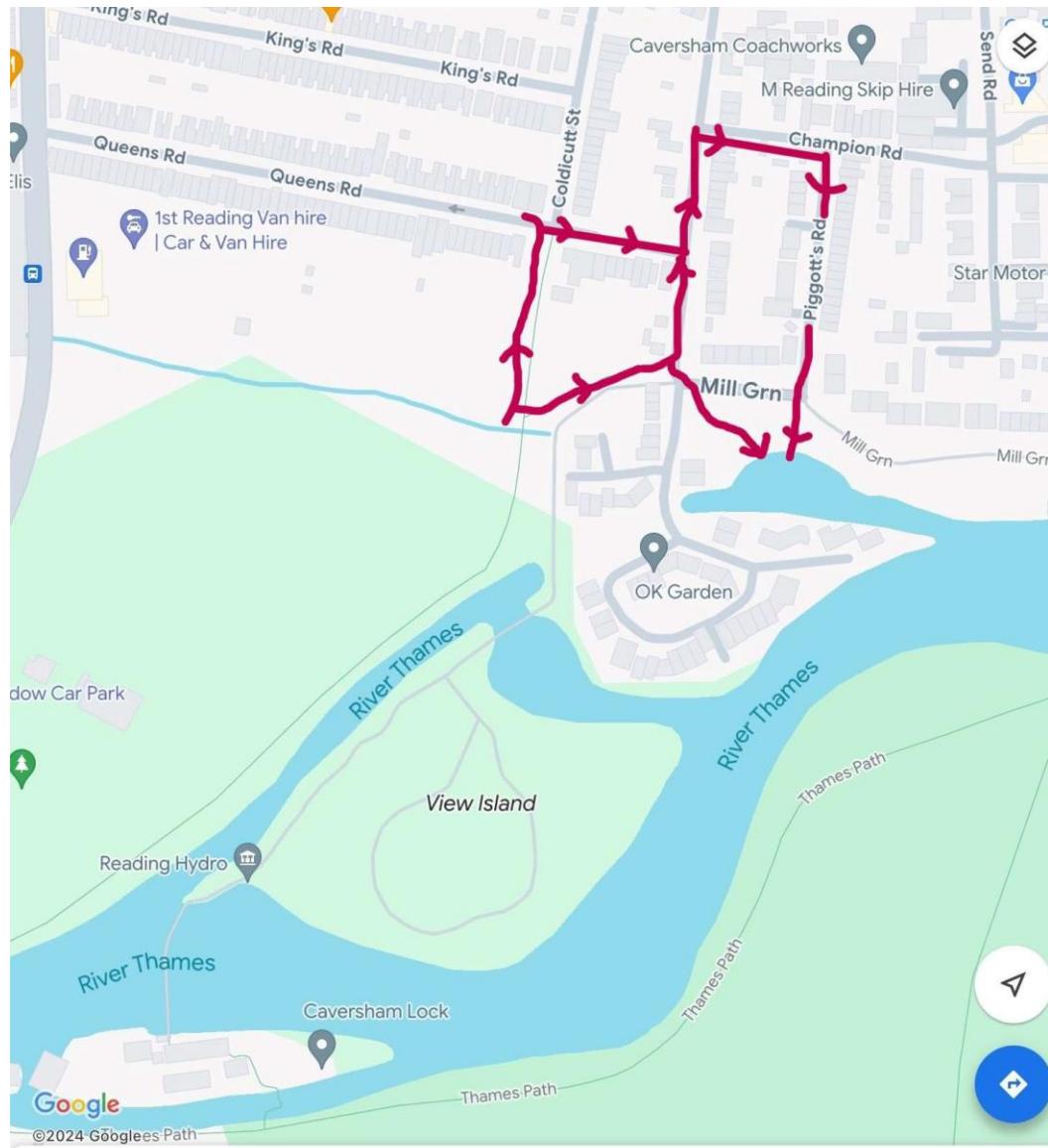
- 6.3.1 Clearance of accumulated debris and blockages in ditches which fall within RBC's riparian ownership in Lower Caversham and Southcote has been undertaken.
- 6.3.2 Temporary bank repairs and a temporary clay bund have been implemented in Southcote. Permanent bank repairs and other potential solutions to mitigate flood risk in these areas (raising of the access road at Briscoe's Bridge, further ditch clearance/remediation works) require discussion with and the consent of other RMAs and private landowners.

6.4 Next Steps

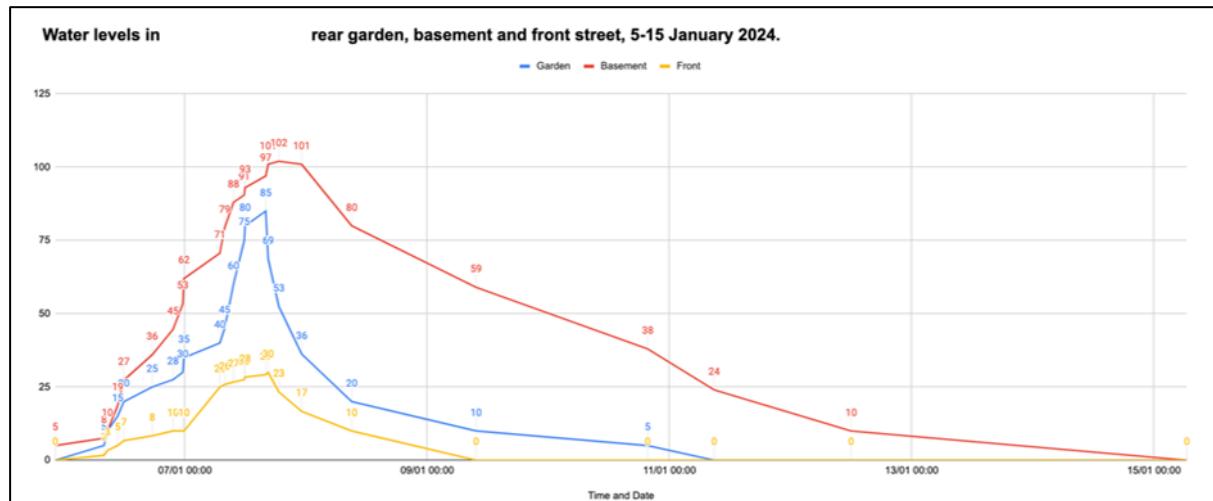
- 6.4.1 Recommendations for further actions, which are subject to landowner consent, include surveys to identify the need for further ditch and channel clearance works, installation of water level gauges to Christchurch Ditch and the Holy Brook, installation of a trash screen to Christchurch Ditch, removal of existing sheet piling works and replacement with a suitable alternative, and establishment of a checking and maintenance schedule for ditches within RBC ownership. Consideration of these actions will be taken forward by RBC, and other RMAs as required.
- 6.4.2 The information within this report can be used to inform future policies and decisions regarding flood management strategies in the low-lying areas of Reading.

Appendix A Flood Information Provided by Residents

Information provided by a Queen's Road resident regarding the observed flow path of floodwater from Christchurch Ditch northwards into Lower Caversham:



Information provided by a Queen's Road resident regarding water levels in and around their property between 5th – 15th January 2024, and a timeline of flooding to their property and adjacent properties:



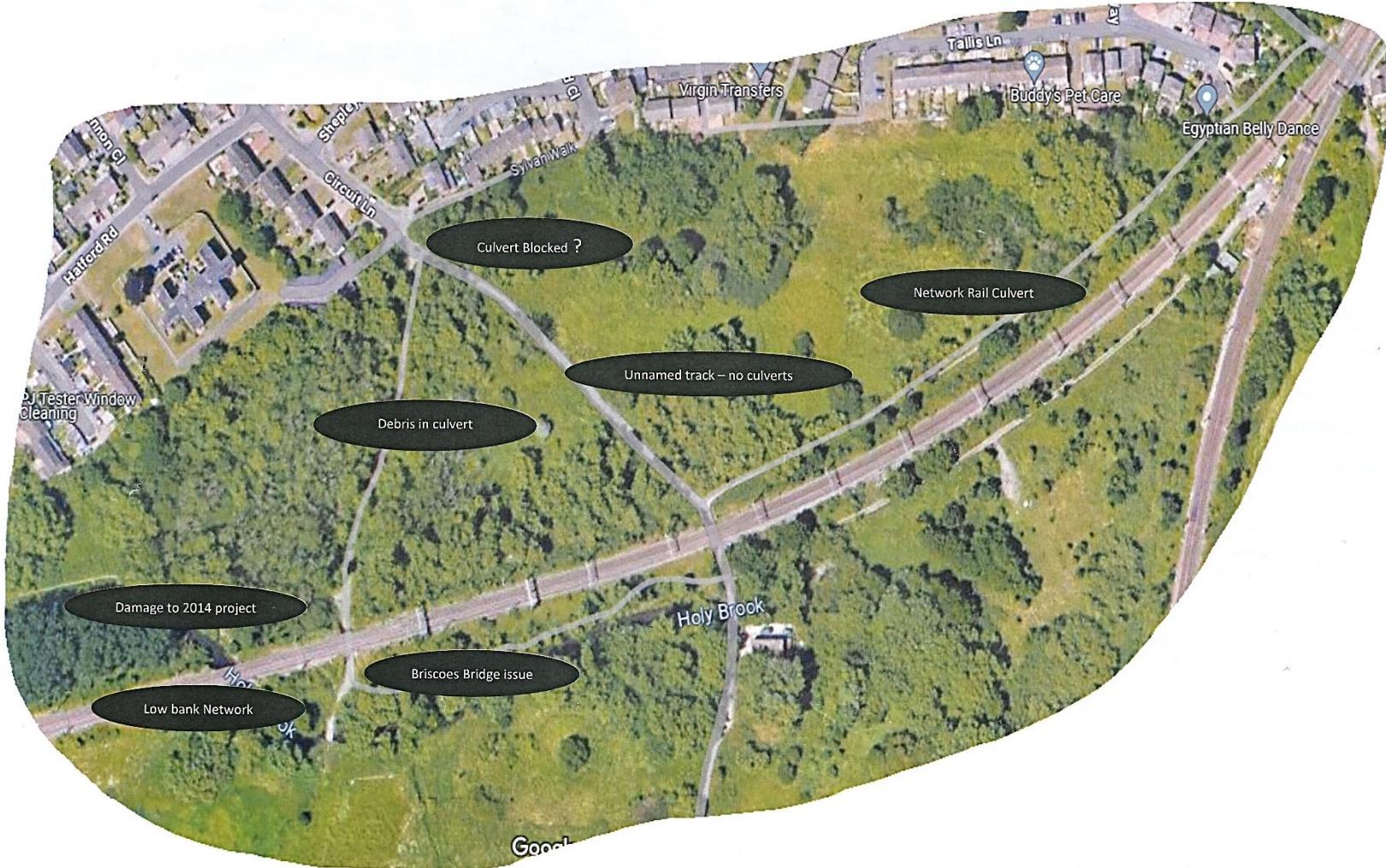
Date	Time	Description of Flooding	Additional comments
Friday 5 January 2024	1610-1629	Metal path under Reading Bridge seen to have flooded alongside areas of Thames Path and Christchurch Meadow.	
	2125-2140	Reading river level seen to be rising over 7.2m with possible flood warnings at 7.25m. Christchurch Ditch filling but some clearance under brick arch by footpath remains.	Queen's Road beyond Coldicutt St not in "Act" only "Prepare" area on flood warning map.
	2218	Flood water in basement.	
	2306	Reading river level still not at 7.25m.	
Saturday 6 January 2024	0754-0758	Water observed in back gardens of properties in Queens Road. Wellies needed to access shed.	
	0806-0828	Water seen on grass beside cycle path opposite Coldicutt St. Christchurch Ditch brick arch and space under concrete bridge now underwater. Queen's Road gardens backing onto the Ditch now beginning to flood. Some flooding on ditch-adjacent footpath.	
	0957	Water seen to be collecting in access path.	
	1040	Water in back gardens continuing to rise but manageable with wellies.	
	1041	Ditch continuing to rise with debris building against brick arch with flow being impeded by the concrete bridge.	
	1109	Reading river level now 7.38m.	

	1153-1226	Back gardens, access path and Ditch water levels continue to rise.	
	1519	Water from gardens of houses begins to flood the cycle path. Path adjacent to Ditch now flooded. Debris building against brick arch.	
	1721	Cycle path flood increasing. Ditch overflowing onto footpaths behind Queen's Road (eastern end). Back garden water passable with wellies, water level against brickwork of outbuilding.	
	1820	Reading river level observed exceeding record (7.41m) reaching 7.44m.	
	1946	Outbuilding surrounded by water up to brick below its damp course.	
	2138-2141	Water flowing down cycle path and across front of houses at eastern end of Queen's Road. Water on the pavement in lower sections. Flow impeded by debris blocking gutters and raised curb around bollards. Footpaths behind Queen's Road increasingly full of Ditch overflow.	
	2334	Outbuilding has water at its damp course.	
	2348	Drain at end of Queen's Road observed reaching full capacity.	
Sunday 7 January 2024	0008	Basement flooding (6 inches depth) and backflow of water into toilet at one property.	
	0043	Water has risen to gate level of one property.	
	0655-0700	Queens Road flooded beyond parking bay lines with water on front paths, almost at front doors.	
	0700	Partial loss of electricity to one property.	
	0723-0734	Ditch overflowing into back gardens over footpaths. Ditch also overflowing from adjacent path to blue benches by Hills Meadow and into Thames. Cycle path water flowing fast, over ankle deep.	
	0739	Water reaches front doors of houses.	
	0751-0756	Water in garden over height of wellies. Outbuilding has flooded during the night. Water over the level of the skirting board.	
	0828	RBC person says they are making our road a "priority area" and sandbags will be delivered.	Several properties call and tweet RBC for assistance.
	0911	RBC informs resident that they are sending someone this morning.	
	0937	25cm gap between floodwater and ground floor	

		level in basement of one property.	
	0940	Water from apartment block car park starts overflowing into a Queen's Road garden. QR gardens fill up rapidly from this point.	
	0958	RBC provides sandbags at eastern end of Queens Road.	
	1008	Electrical issues at several properties at eastern end of Queens Road.	
	1040	One property has 30cm gap from top of floodwater to ground floor level in basement.	
	1117	RBC sandbags in position at front of houses and airbrick covers applied.	
	1145	Outbuilding flood water up to seat level.	
	1153	Back garden flood approx. 1m from house.	
	1155	20cm gap from top of floodwater to ground floor in basement.	
	1347	One property has flood water seeping into kitchen.	
	1417	Pumping commences at one property to mitigate rising levels under the house.	
	1501	Car park and gardens along Mill Road are flooded.	
	1526	Two properties begin bailing water out of basement.	
	1600	Flood reaches back door sandbags.	
	1622	Pumping at two properties to mitigate rising levels under the house.	
	1629-1657	Approx. 1cm gap from ground floor to basement flood water.	
	1710	Another property has 16cm gap from basement flood to floor. Kitchen floodwater levels steady at 2-3cm.	
	1836	Basement flood reaches ground floor level.	
	1953	Fire Brigade come to check on no. XX after kitchen begins to flood. Residents ask for basements to be pumped but Senior Company Officer says it would be ineffective given the amount flowing across front of the houses. Advice to turn off ground floor electricity where possible.	

	2309-2311	Water is receding in front of eastern end of Queens Road followed by evidence that basement flood levels are dropping. Approx 1cm clearance under ground floor.	
Monday 8 January 2024	0903	Water level at front of property is within the gutter. Back garden water level is approx 3m away from house.	
	1138	Another property garden shed is in 50cm of water, after level begins receding.	
	1511	Ditch no longer overflowing but debris still present at brick arch which is full.	
Tuesday 9 January 2023	0941	Garden flood water now passable with wellies. Outbuilding no longer flooded.	
Wednesday 10 January	1941	Water still present in basement approx 38cm deep. Two properties which were pumping out basements stop pumping.	
Thursday 11 January 2024	0851	No standing water in garden.	
Friday 15 January 2024	0630	No water in basement.	

Information provided by a Southcote resident about ditches and watercourses impacted by recent and previous flood events to the south of Circuit Lane.



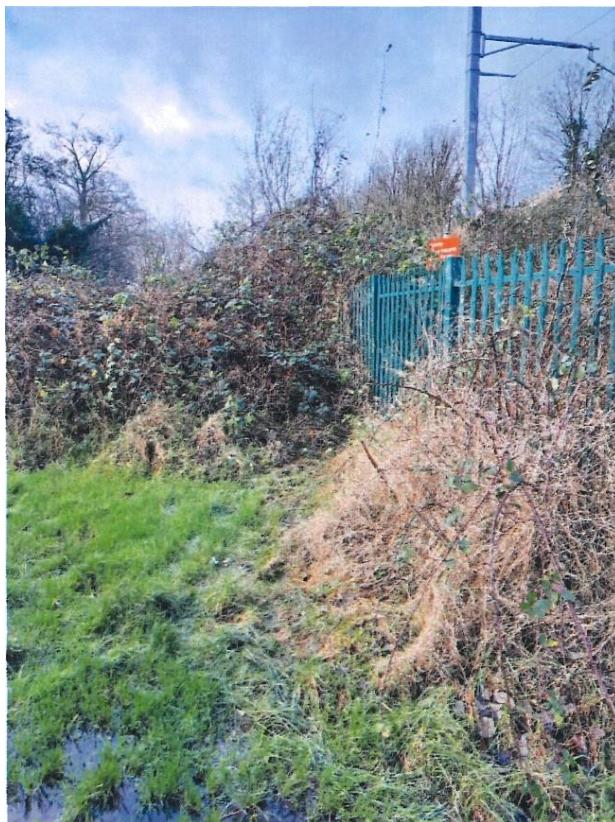


Debris build up north of railway bridge (Briscoe's Bridge), Southcote – 5th January 2024



Flooding at southern end of Circuit Lane

Photos provided by Southcote resident.

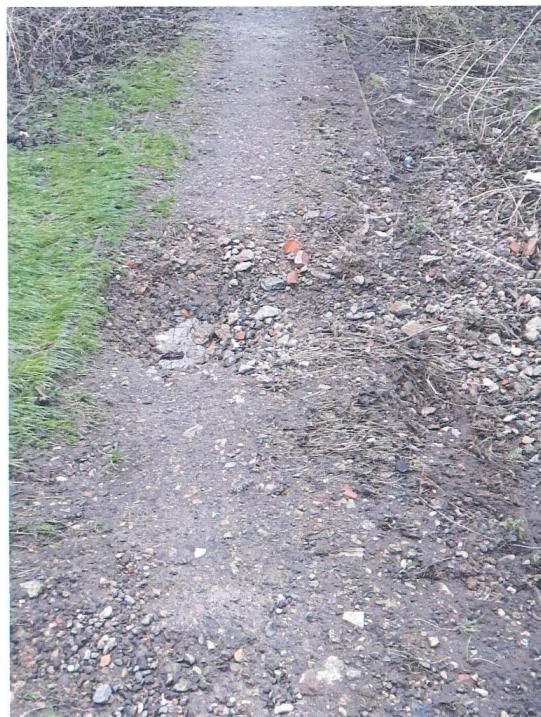


Network Rail low bank at Briscoe's Bridge.



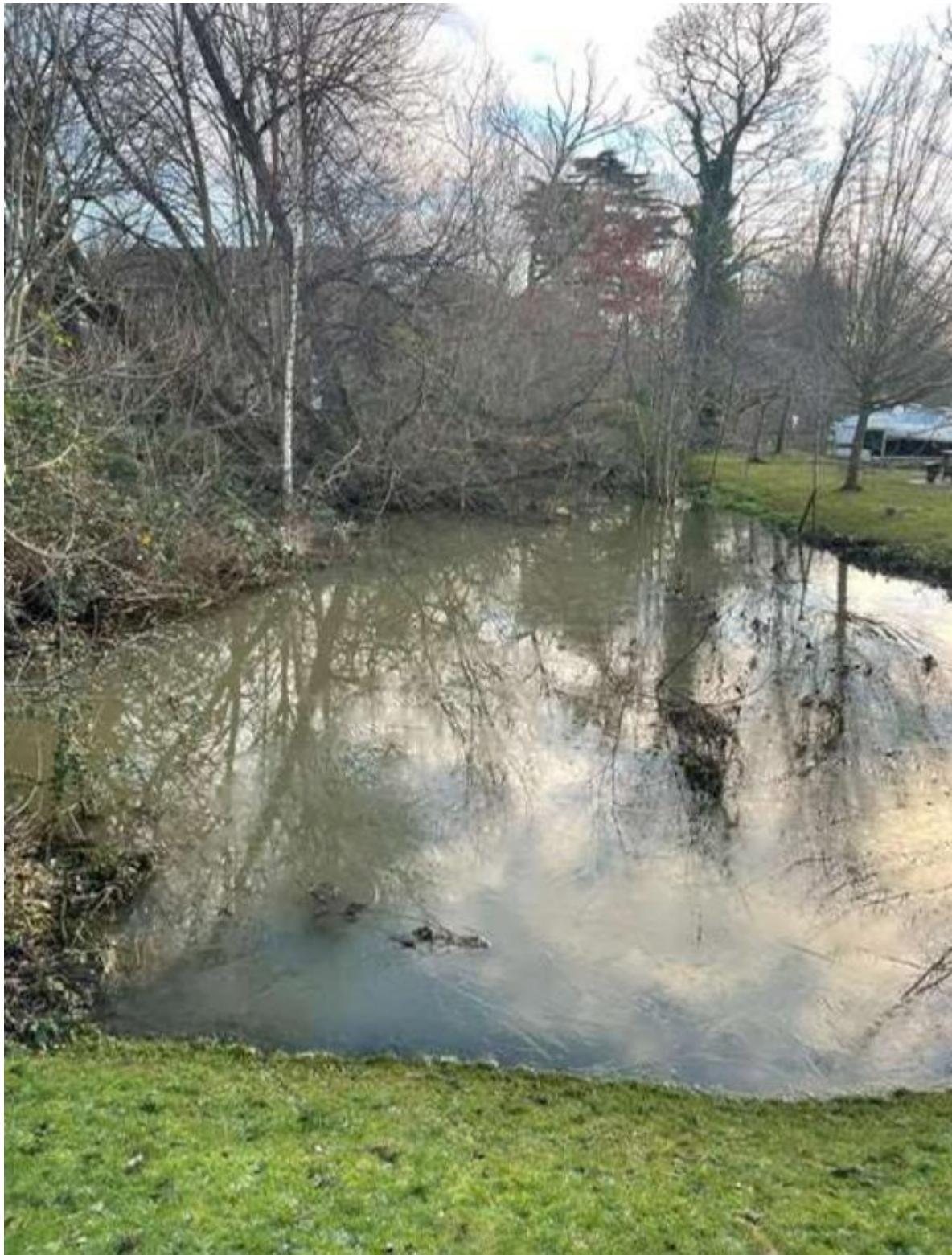
Water flowing from River Kennet flood plain northwards under Briscoe's Bridge.

Photos provided by Southcote resident.



Damage to post-2014 bank and path repairs near Holybrook overbridge, Southcote

Photos provided by Southcote resident.



Outfall location of Christchurch Ditch at Heron Island. Access to outfall blocked by vegetation.

Appendix B Photographs of Flood Event

Photos taken by RBC staff, Sunday 7th January 2024, between 08:00 – 09:00



Scours Lane at junction with Stadium Way, Tilehurst



Queens Road opposite Coldicutt Street (facing south), Lower Caversham



Queens Road opposite Coldicutt Street (facing west), Lower Caversham



Queens Road/Mill Road junction, Lower Caversham



Eastern end of Queens Road (opposite Coldicutt Street, facing east), Lower Caversham



Mill Green, Lower Caversham



Extent of flooding of Caversham Meadow including Christchurch Ditch (from Reading Bridge),
Monday 8th January 2024, 08:15 (photo taken by report author)



Flooding of allotment site south of Brunel Road, Southcote (photo provided by RBC, date/time unknown)

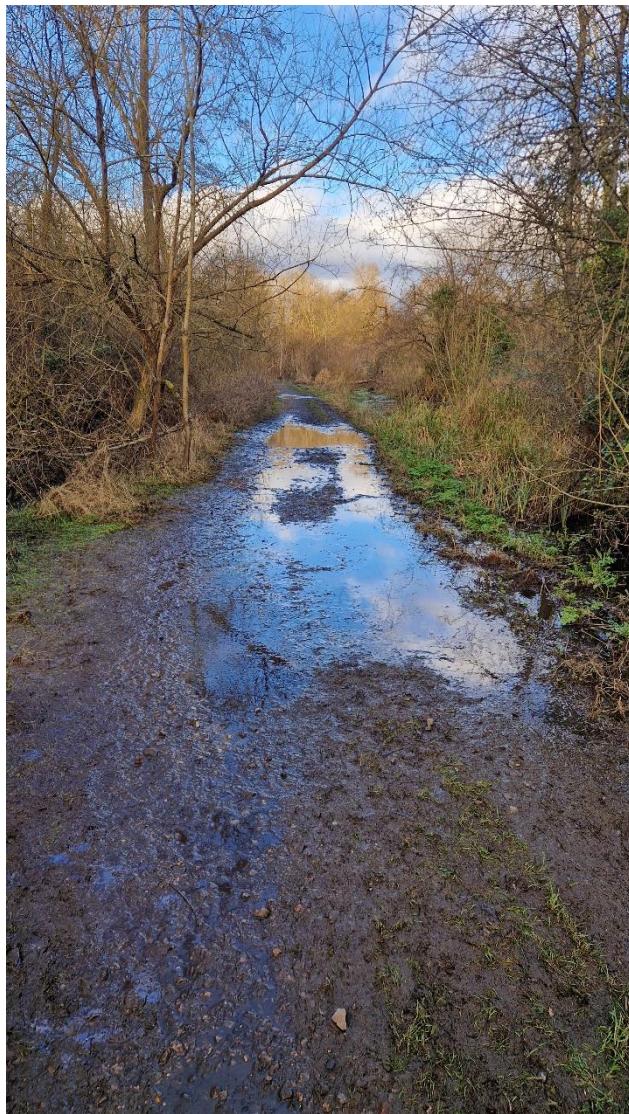


Blockage of culvert by woody debris, eastern end of Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham

Appendix C Photographs From Stantec Site Visit on 02/02/2024



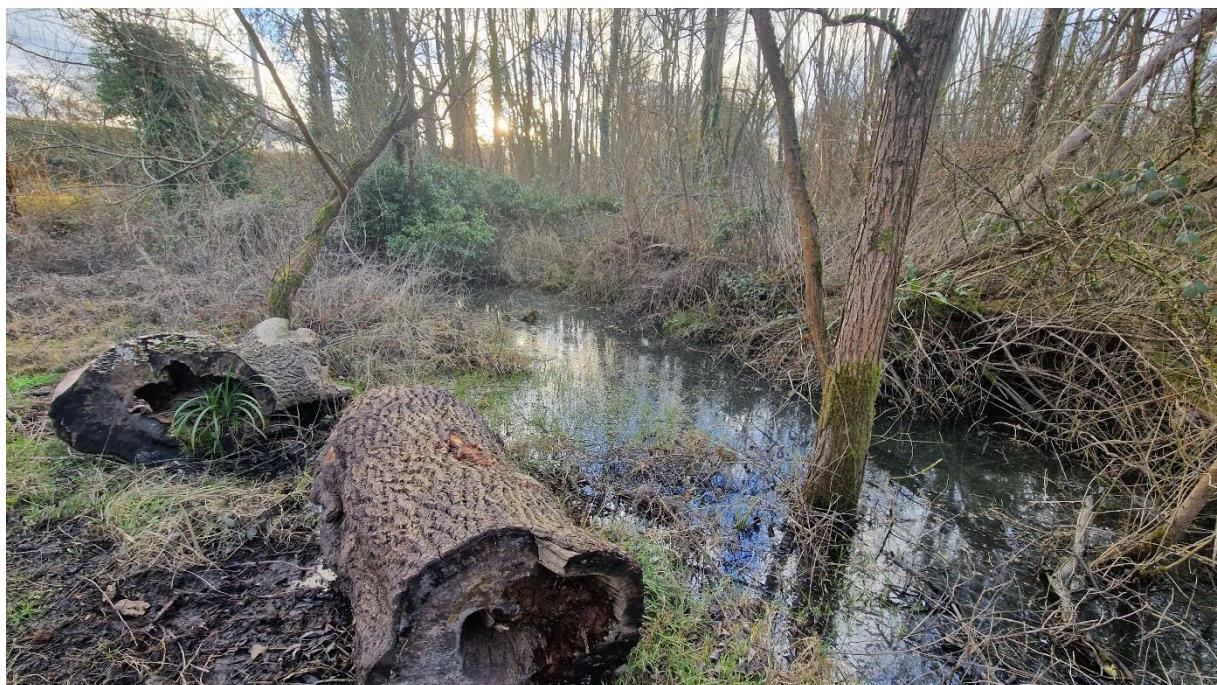
Christchurch Ditch upstream of Heron Island, eastern end of Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Floodwater in the River Kennet floodplain, on the road north of Briscoe's Bridge, Southcote

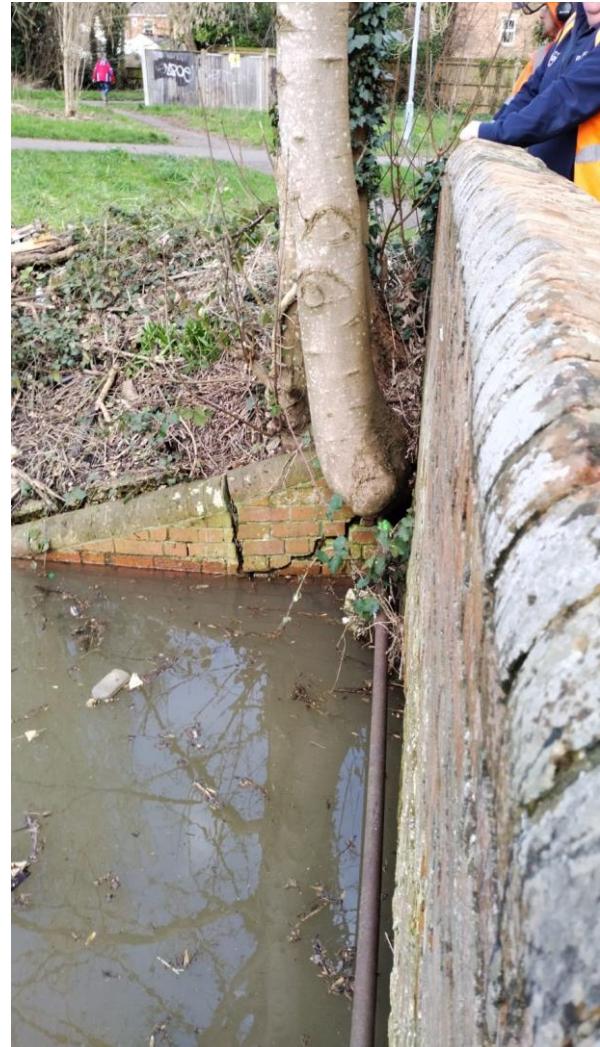


Southern banks of Christchurch Ditch upstream of footbridge, Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Backflow of floodwater from the River Kennet floodplain, north of Briscoe's Bridge, Southcote

Appendix D Photographs of Immediate Works Required, Post-Flooding



Partial blockage of culvert by woody debris and tree growing into footbridge, eastern end of Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Tree, debris and vegetation in Christchurch Ditch, Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Accumulated debris in Christchurch Ditch, Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Evidence of excessive weed and debris covering the banks in Christchurch Ditch, Hills Meadow, Lower Caversham



Christchurch Ditch outlet location showing silt and vegetation accumulation, downstream of the closed section of the culvert at Heron Island.



The accumulation of excessive woody debris along the channel leading to the culvert entry upstream of Heron Island.



Backflow of floodwater from the River Kennet floodplain northwards under Briscoe's Bridge, Southcote

Appendix E Post-Flooding Works Undertaken



Temporary repairs to damaged banks, Holy Brook, west of Briscoe's Bridge



Temporary clay bund under Briscoe's Bridge, Southcote



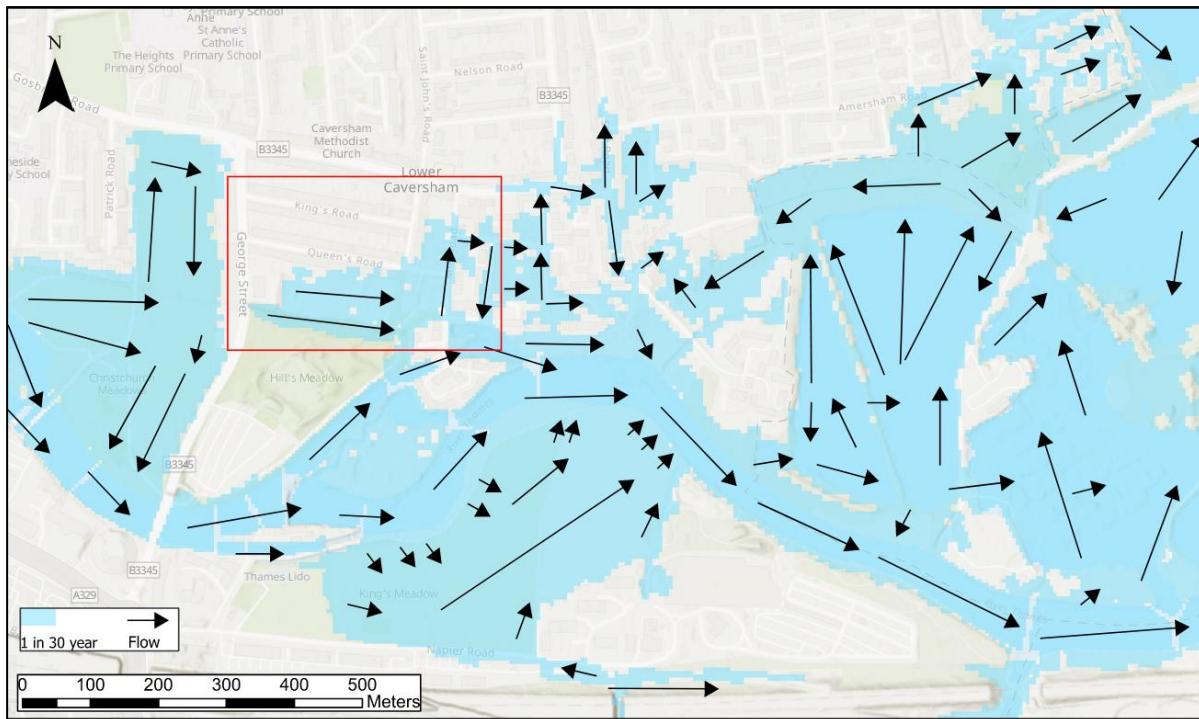
Photo provided by local resident, 8th March 2024, showing effectiveness of temporary bund holding back water from floodplain under Briscoe's Bridge



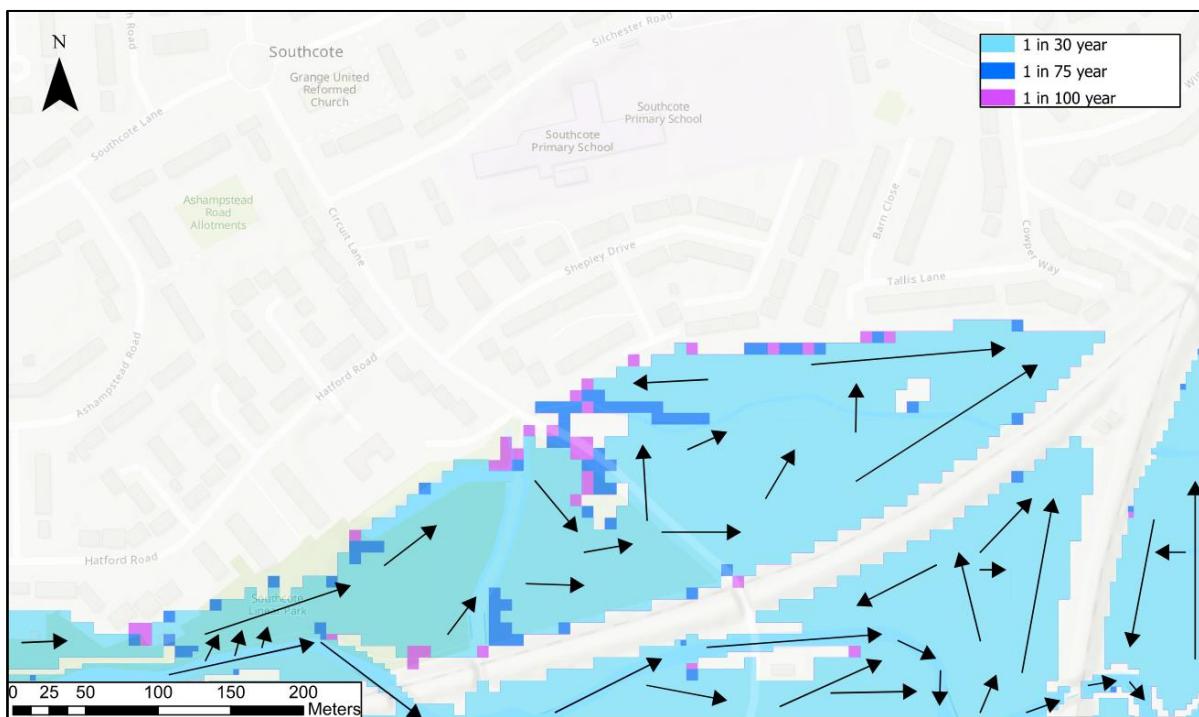
Ditch clearance south of Circuit Lane, Southcote

Appendix F Flood Modelling Outputs

Modelled Flood Flow Paths

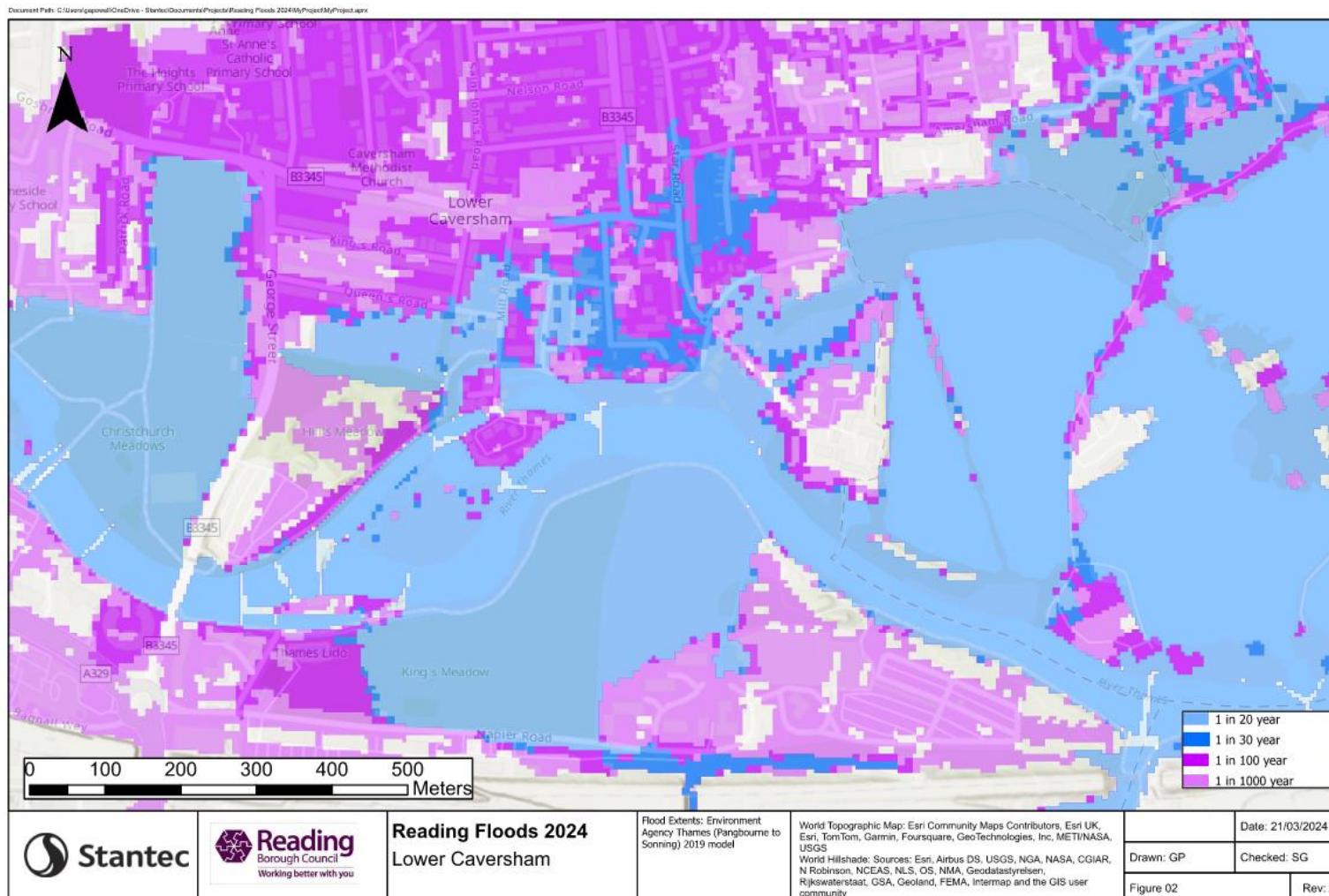


Lower Caversham flood flow direction modelling indicating 1 in 30 year event flood flow paths.

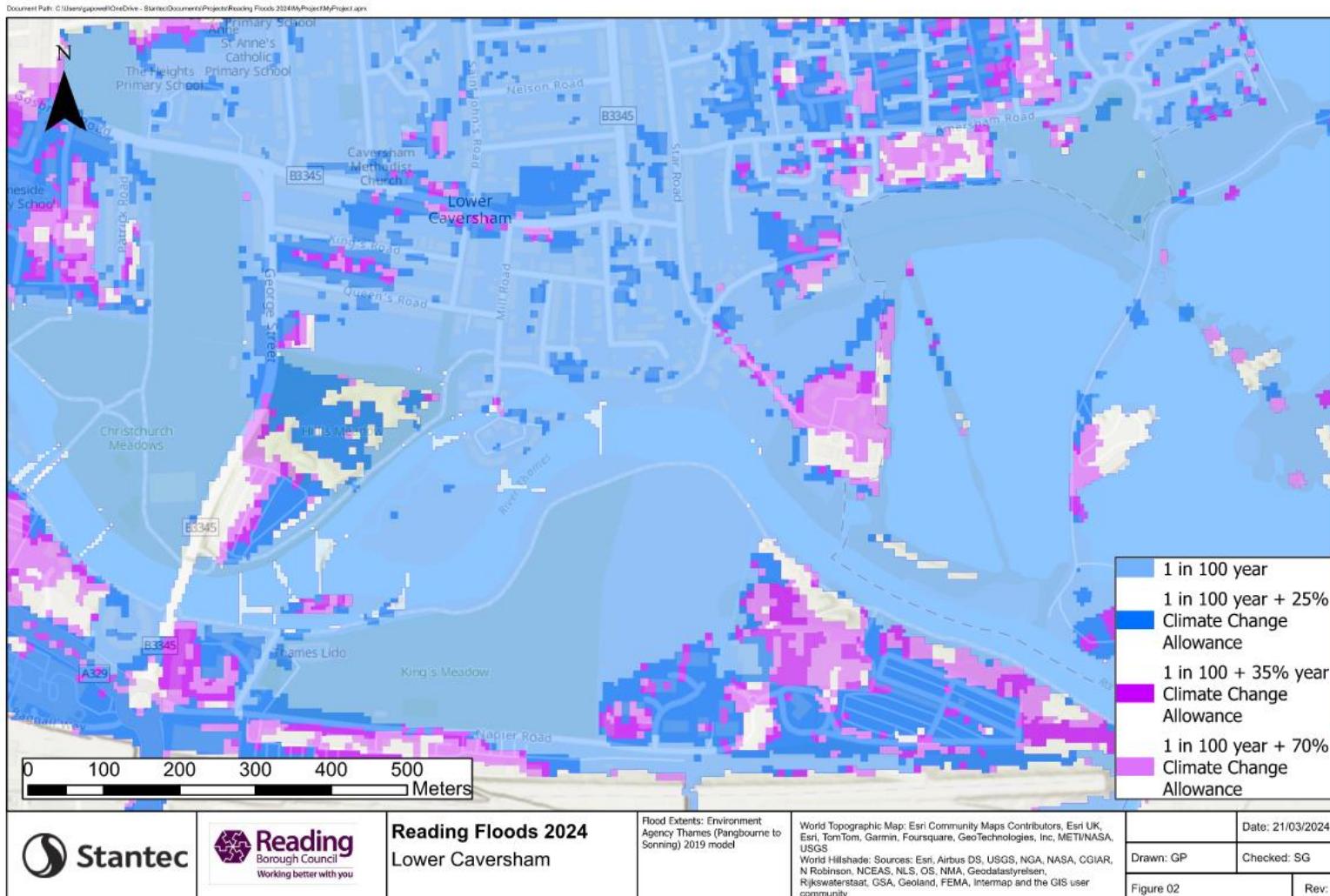


Southcote flood flow direction modelling indicating 1 in 30 year event flood flow paths.

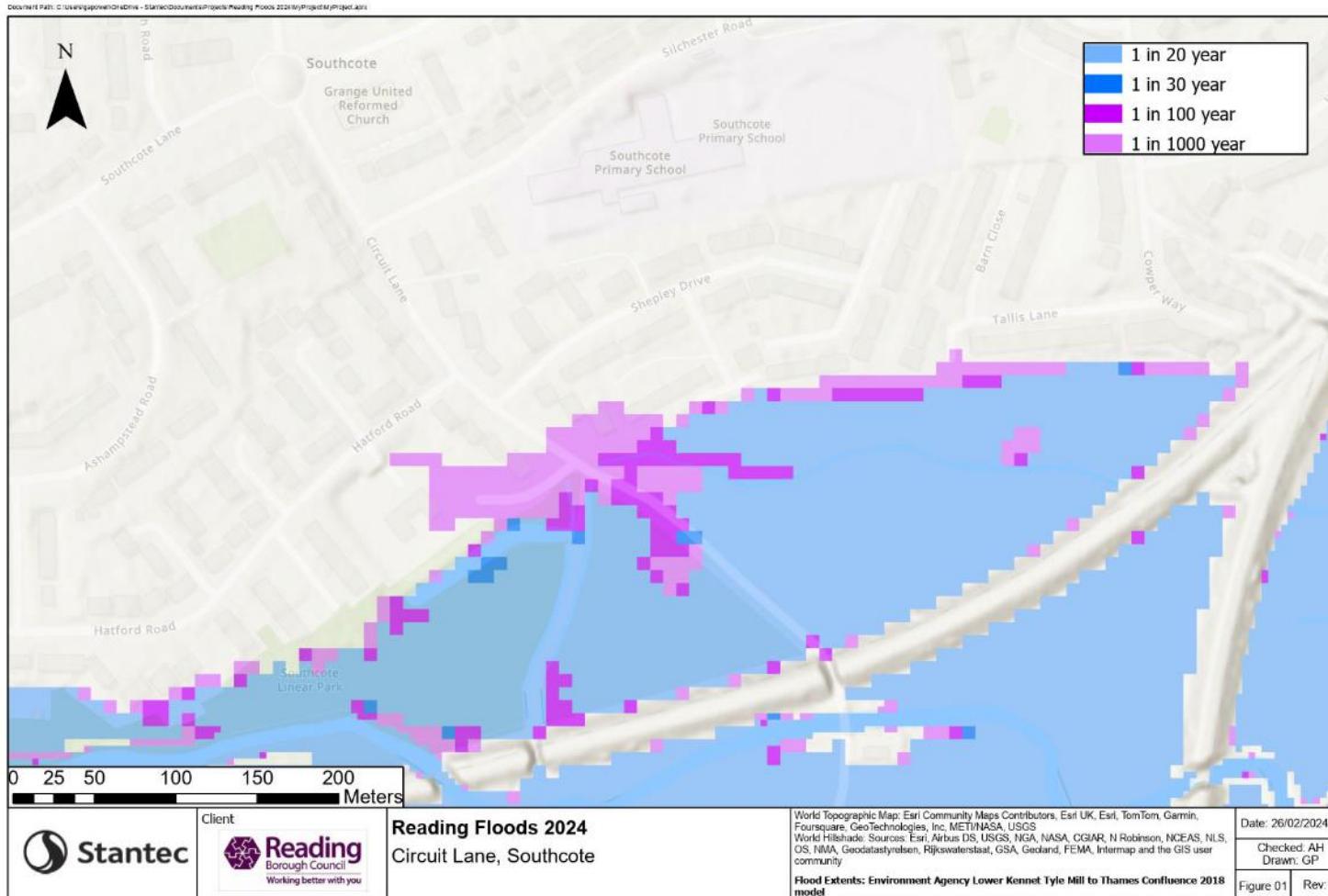
Modelled Flood Extents



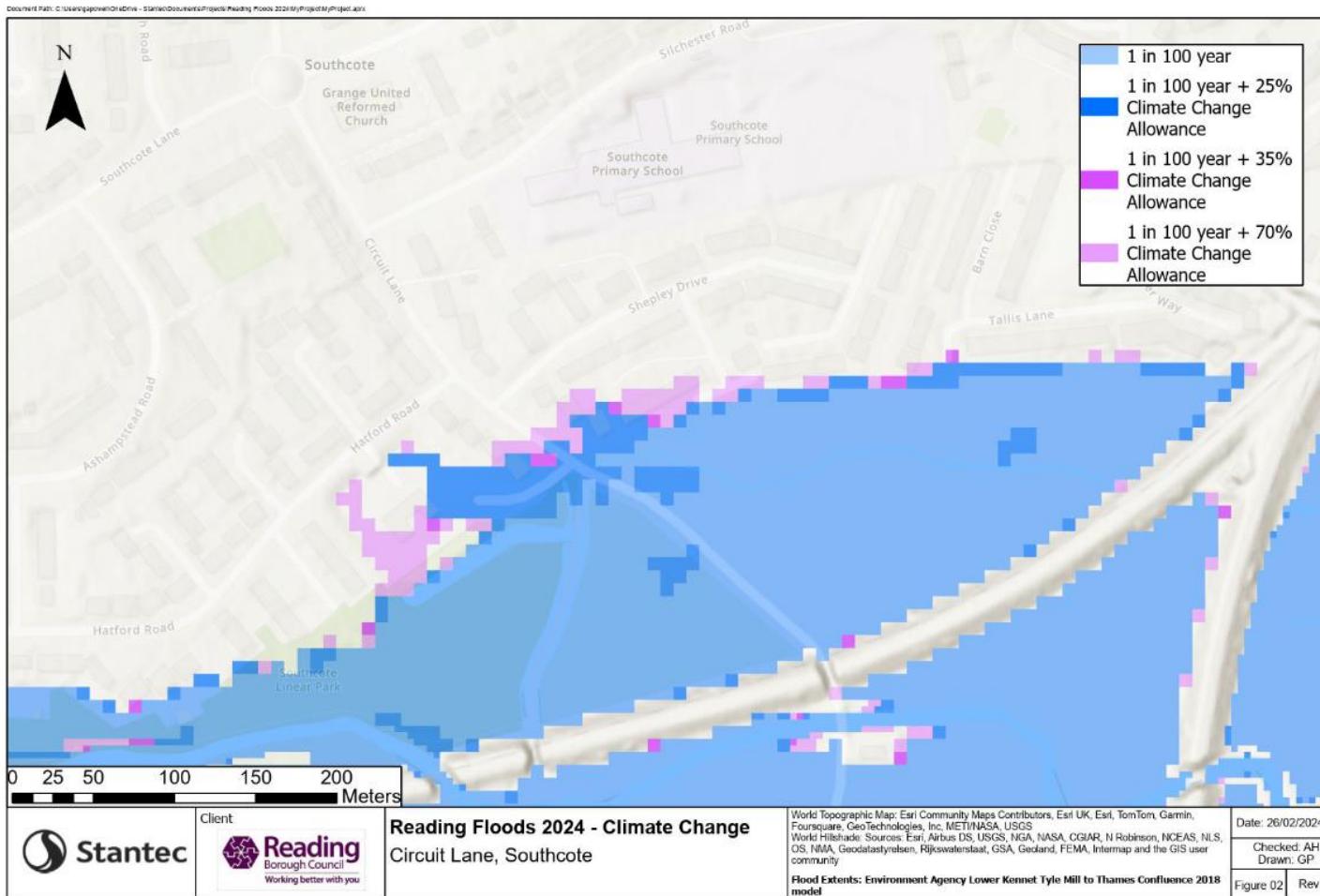
Lower Caversham: Present day flood map showing the modelled 1 in 20 to 1 in 1000 year flood extents



Lower Caversham: Climate change flood map showing flood extents for the 1 in 100 year event with climate change allowances between 25 – 70%



Southcote: Present day flood map showing the modelled 1 in 20 to 1 in 1000 year flood extents



Southcote: Climate change flood map showing flood extents for the 1 in 100 year event with climate change allowances between 25 – 70%

Appendix 3



Sandbag Policy

This document details Reading Borough Council's policy in respect of the deployment of sandbags in its efforts to contain, or minimise the effects of, river – or fluvial – flooding. Flooding caused by an excess of surface-water being unable to drain away – pluvial flooding – is usually much more sporadic and short-lived and, hence, more difficult to anticipate, making the deployment of sandbags much less effective.

When river conditions are such that there is a possibility of flooding, the Council will adopt a risk-based approach and will aim to deploy sandbags, where feasible and practicable, in accordance with the following priorities:

1. To prevent loss of life or serious injury.
2. Maintaining access for the emergency services.
3. Protecting vital facilities within the community.
4. Closure of transportation routes where this is deemed necessary for the safety of road users.
5. Protection of critical Council property and infrastructure.

Note: Reading Borough Council is not responsible for deploying sandbags to residential areas or individual residential properties. Property owners are responsible for taking adequate precautions to protect their property from the risk of flooding. Notwithstanding this, the Council may decide to deploy sandbags to residential locations that are at risk of imminent flooding; however, individual property owners should not rely on the supply of sandbags by the Council and, as above, should make adequate provision for the security of their property as they see fit.

The decision to deploy sandbags will be made in accordance with:

- The Council's Highways Team in the course of their normal duties will deploy them as necessary, aligned with the above priorities or at the request of the emergency services.
- At the request of any established multi-agency Strategic Co-ordinating Group (SCG) or Tactical Co-ordinating Group (TCG).
- The Council's Emergency Response Team (ERT) can request the deployment of sandbags, usually in accordance with the above priorities and normally with the authorisation of the Council's Incident Co-ordinator ('Silver Manager') or Tactical Advisor/Emergency Planning Officer.

The Council will maintain a stock of sandbags to meet the commitments of this policy in appropriate locations across the Borough.

Further information can be found on the Council's website under 'Emergency Planning'.

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Appendix 4

Appendix 4: Roles & Responsibilities

Flood Risk Management Authorities (RMAs) have different responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (FWMA) dependent on the source of flooding. These responsibilities are summarised in Table 1.

Responsible Risk Management Authorities for various sources of flooding

Table 1:

Flood Source	Environment Agency	Reading Borough Council as Lead Local Flood Authority	Thames Water as Water Company	Highways Authority
Main River	✓			
Surface Water		✓		
Surface water on or coming from the highway				✓
Sewer			✓	
Ordinary Watercourse		✓		
Groundwater		✓		
Reservoirs	✓			

Powers and Responsibility of Lead Local Flood Authorities under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010

The Floods and Water Management Act identifies Reading Borough Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority

As Lead Local Flood Authority the Council has the following powers:

- Power to do works to manage flood risk from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses;
- Powers to designate structures and features that affect flooding;
- Powers to request information from any person in connection with the authority's flood risk management functions;

The Act has also given them new responsibilities which can be divided into the following areas:

- Meeting the Flood Risk Regulations;
- Reporting Flood Incidents;
- Flood Investigation Report;
- Register and Record of Assets;
- Designating Assets; and
- Regulation of Ordinary Watercourses

Riparian Responsibility

Where a watercourse (not main river) abuts / runs along the frontage of a private property the riparian owner (property landowner) has responsibility for the full length along their property frontage to the centreline of the watercourse.

Further advice can be found here:

[Owning a watercourse - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/owning-a-watercourse)

Photos Heron Island Culvert Cleaning



Circuit Lane Flood Protection Works



Raised road area to hold water back



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Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee

12 March 2025



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

Title	Strategic Transport Schemes Update
Purpose of the report	To note the report for information
Report status	Public report
Report author	Chris Maddocks, Strategic Transport Manager
Lead Councillor	Cllr John Ennis, Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<p>The Committee is asked to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Note the progress made on delivery of the current programme of strategic transport schemes as summarised in this report.2. Note the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Fund grant funding allocations from the Department for Transport for 2025/26, subject to the preparation of associated Delivery Plans to be submitted to Government.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the latest progress with the delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes and initiatives in Reading. This programme of approximately £40m over the next 2-3 years includes major enhancements to public transport and active travel facilities; aimed at encouraging more healthy lifestyles, reducing pollution and carbon emissions and supporting sustainable economic growth in the borough.
- 1.2. The current programme includes the following schemes and initiatives:
 - Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) Programme
 - South Reading Bus Rapid Transit
 - Electric Bus Programme
 - Tilehurst Station Upgrade
 - Active Travel Fund (ATF) Programme
 - School Streets Programme
 - Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme
- 1.3. In addition, the report provides an update on the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Fund grant funding allocated by the Department for Transport to Reading for 2025-26, subject to the preparation of associated Delivery Plans to be submitted to Government.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Council adopted its new Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Reading Transport Strategy 2040, at the meeting of full Council on 15 October 2024. The Strategy sets out an ambitious vision to create healthier, greener and more equal communities through the future provision of travel options in Reading. The Strategy is focused on promoting sustainable transport options as a realistic alternative to the private car, setting out how transport facilities and services will be developed to 2040 to help achieve our wider objectives for the town. These include health and wellbeing, economic growth and social inequalities, improved air quality and the Climate Emergency. The strategic transport schemes included within this report are fully aligned with the new Strategy, with the delivery of each individual scheme a key component of achieving the overall vision and objectives.
- 2.2. The LTP sets the context and overarching vision for future transport provision in Reading, with sub-strategies providing more detailed implementation plans for specific topics. These form the basis for preparing funding proposals to deliver key elements of each sub-strategy, including the Bus Service Improvement Plan, Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan, Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Plan and the Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- 2.3. Government has recently announced funding allocations for the Bus Service Improvement Plan and Active Travel Fund for 2025/26. Whilst the competitive bidding process has been removed, it should be noted that criteria regarding the use of this funding and post-allocation approval processes are still required in order to secure the funding. In total, these allocations are £2,463,311 for bus service improvements and £838,609 for active travel schemes and initiatives in Reading.

3. The Schemes

Bus Service Improvement Plan Programme

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Connecting People and Places and Embracing Smart Solutions.

Delivery Timeframe: On-going over the next 2 years.

- 3.1. The Council adopted its Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) in October 2021, setting out plans to enhance services and encourage more people to travel by bus in Reading. The BSIP was aligned with the objectives of the National Bus Strategy 'Bus Back Better'. Following a thorough review and detailed discussions with officials from the Department for Transport (DfT), the Council was awarded £26.263m grant funding in January 2023, which was the third highest funding award (per head of population) in the country.
- 3.2. As required by Government, the Council subsequently developed an Enhanced Partnership (EP) agreement with all local bus operators; and convened an EP Board with the major operators to oversee the development and delivery of the BSIP programme. Essentially the EP agreement sets out our commitment to deliver, in partnership with the operators, the schemes that the Council has been awarded grant funding for from Government.
- 3.3. The BSIP programme includes a range of both capital and revenue measures, with the funding award consisting of £15.939m capital and £10.324m revenue grant funding. The key elements of the programme are set out below:

Capital schemes:

- Phase 5 of the South Reading BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) scheme.
- Programme of new bus lanes on key routes in the Borough.
- Improvements to passenger facilities at Mereoak Park & Ride site.

- Package of town centre public transport enhancements, bus signal priority measures and improvements to passenger facilities at bus stops.

Revenue initiatives:

- Introduction of a multi-operator fares discount scheme.
- Bus service enhancements for Route 9 and 18 services.
- Comms and engagement programme to publicise the enhancements delivered through the BSIP programme.
- Development of initial proposals for future bus priority measures in the borough.
- Management of the EP arrangements and programme delivery support.

Ticketing and Bus Service Enhancements

- 3.4. Delivery of the BSIP programme commenced with the launch of the Reading All-Bus ticket discount scheme in March 2023. This sets a daily cap for travel within Reading to ensure no one pays more than a set fare for unlimited travel undertaken in a day. The offer includes travel on services operated by Reading Buses, Thames Travel, Arriva and Thames Valley Buses. In addition, tap-on tap-off contactless payment on all the main operators was introduced from 1 November 2023, with an introductory offer to encourage the usage of this facility which will speed up boarding times funded by the BSIP grant. The All-Bus ticket scheme has proved extremely popular to date, with over 4 million tickets sold to October 2024, saving residents in Reading around £5 million in fares as a result.
- 3.5. Enhancements to bus services have been progressed, with the new Buzz 9 services commencing in January 2024, including services between the town centre and Whitley Wood as normal, with the additional BSIP funded services to Green Park Station. This will ensure local residents can fully benefit from the new station facility which was delivered by the Council and opened in May 2023. In addition, enhanced Buzz 18 services commenced in April 2024, with the BSIP funded enhancements providing an improved service connecting the significant residential developments at Kenavon Drive, the town centre, new Rivermead leisure centre and the new River Academy secondary school on Richfield Avenue.

Bus Lane Package

- 3.6. Development of the programme of capital schemes is being progressed, including approval being granted from the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in January 2024 to proceed with delivery of new bus lanes in the borough. The inbound bus lane on London Road, between the junctions with Liverpool Road and Cemetery Junction, was delivered in August 2024. The Council worked with Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Buses to reinstate Monday to Friday Park and ride services from Winnersh Triangle into Reading to coincide with the introduction of the new bus lane, alongside the introduction of a £1 park & ride ticket funded by the BSIP grant.
- 3.7. Monitoring of the effectiveness and impacts of the bus lane are on-going, with the removal of one of the two inbound general traffic lanes (which was required to introduce the bus lane) resulting in increased levels of traffic congestion. This congestion has particularly increased during peak times, on the A4 (Shepherds Hill) and A3290 within Wokingham Borough. The introduction of the bus lane coincided with the closure of Church Road in Wokingham for SGN gas main replacement works. There have been notable improvements to congestion levels (albeit still higher than prior to the scheme being implemented) since Church Road was reopened in October 2024.
- 3.8. Bus journey times have been impacted by the increased traffic congestion, with average bus journey times leading to and through the London Road bus lane approximately 36 to

41 seconds slower since its introduction, predominantly due to buses being delayed in traffic congestion before the bus lane. These times are following the reopening of Church Road, which caused additional delays when it was closed due to increased levels of traffic using London Road as an alternative route into Reading.

- 3.9. Despite the journey time impacts, patronage on the Winnersh Triangle park & ride services has grown significantly since the introduction of the bus lane and introduction of Monday to Saturday services, increasing from 6,848 trips in September to 11,600 trips in December 2024. The continued growth in passenger numbers (and therefore modal shift from general traffic) will be key to the overall success of the bus lane scheme.
- 3.10. Monitoring to date has not demonstrated any significant differences in levels of air quality (nitrogen dioxide) in close proximity to the bus lane since its introduction. Whilst there have been some indications of potential air quality improvements, they are inconclusive at this time and further monitoring and work is required to remove the impact of weather conditions from the data.
- 3.11. The Council is continuing to work with Wokingham Borough Council to develop and implement enhancements to the bus lane outside of the borough, both to improve journey times for buses and to make lane arrangements clearer for general traffic. Wokingham are currently undertaking design work for potential enhancements and future progress with this work will be reported to the Committee.
- 3.12. In addition, two new bus lanes have been introduced on Oxford Road. In October 2024, the outbound bus lane between the junctions with Zinzan Street and George Street was delivered, and in November 2024 the outbound bus lane between the junctions with Pangbourne Street and Norcot was introduced. Monitoring of the effectiveness and impacts of the bus lane are on-going, with early feedback indicating positive improvements for bus journeys using the new facilities.

BSIP 2025/26 Grant Funding

- 3.13. The DfT has recently announced BSIP grant funding for 2025/26, including a total allocation of £2,463,311 for Reading (made up of £1,343,619 capital grant and £1,119,692 revenue grant). Funding allocations were calculated by Government on a methodology of population, tendered bus mileage and deprivation - each weighted equally; with an element of adjustment based on previous funding awards.
- 3.14. A condition of the funding is submission of a Delivery Plan to Government setting out how the grant will be utilised for the continued delivery of the bus service improvement programme. This plan is currently being developed and will include on-going delivery of the bus lanes on the A33, a contribution towards the development and delivery of enhancements to the London Road bus lane, subject to agreement with Wokingham; extension of the £1 park and ride fare offer; and to support the continued provision of the enhanced Buzz 9 and 18 services to provide additional time to ascertain the longer-term commercial viability of these service enhancements.

South Reading Bus Rapid Transit

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Connecting People and Places, and Embracing Smart Solutions.

Delivery Timeframe: Current phase due for completion Summer 2025, future phases subject to funding.

- 3.15. The South Reading Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) scheme is a series of bus priority measures on the A33 growth corridor, with the overall vision of creating a dedicated fast-track public transport priority route between Mereoak Park & Ride and Reading town centre. The current scheme which is being delivered in phases as external funding is secured, has

the potential to become a guided-bus, tram or autonomous shared vehicle system in the future.

- 3.16. The first four phases of the scheme have been delivered with over £15m external funding secured from the Local Growth Fund and fettered developer contributions secured through the planning process. Phase 4 was constructed last year, which includes an outbound bus lane between Rose Kiln Lane and Lindisfarne Way (Kennet Island), and the upgrade of the traffic signals to an intelligent Microprocessor Optimised Vehicle Actuation (MOVA) method of control at the Bennet Road gyratory to improve traffic flows on this key corridor.
- 3.17. Funding for phase 5 of the scheme has been secured as part of the overall BSIP grant as set out above. This phase of works will link up existing outbound bus lanes delivered through previous phases through the construction of an additional lane over the River Kennet, between the junctions with Rose Kiln Lane (South) and Kennet Island. This will complete the outbound section of the scheme, which would enable future funding bids to focus on delivery of the remaining inbound sections, which could logically be split into four distinct phases depending on the level of funding available through individual funding opportunities. The future potential adaption of the scheme into a guided bus or tram system would require further investment in the necessary infrastructure and vehicles at that time.
- 3.18. Delivery of the scheme commenced on-site in March 2024, following a competitive procurement process to appoint a contractor to undertake the works. Recent progress has included the successful bridge lift and installation at Rose Kiln Lane South last year for the provision of the new pedestrian and cycle route, with construction works for this phase of the scheme are anticipated to be complete in Summer 2025.

Electric Bus Programme

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, Connecting People and Places, and Embracing Smart Solutions.

Delivery Timeframe: Current phase due for completion Summer 2025, future phases subject to funding.

- 3.19. The Council, in partnership with Reading Buses, successfully secured £4.7m grant funding from the DfT through the ZEBRA (Zero Emission Bus Regional Area) fund for the provision of 24 electric buses in Reading, and the associated installation of charging infrastructure.
- 3.20. The current programme, which includes match funding from Reading Buses, includes the provision of 17 double deck electric buses for Purple Route 17 which runs between Earley and Tilehurst; 7 double deck electric buses for Claret Route 21 which runs between Reading town centre, the University of Reading and Lower Earley; alongside the provision of the required upgraded electricity supply and charging infrastructure at the Great Knollys Street bus depot.
- 3.21. Progress to date includes civils work for the infrastructure now complete and chargers due to be installed shortly, and orders have been placed with the manufacturer of the electric buses. We are currently working with the bus manufacturers, charge point suppliers and the Distribution Network Operator (DNO) to finalise timescales for the new buses to come into operation within the 25/26 financial year, which is a condition of the grant funding.
- 3.22. Our ambition is to continue the roll-out of further electric buses in Reading. Therefore, in response to a request from the DfT, the Council and Reading Buses submitted a scope increase request to the DfT in December seeking an additional £1.3m grant funding for a further 8 electric buses and additional charging points. Timescales for a decision on this request are not currently known.

Tilehurst Station Upgrade

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Enabling Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, and Connecting People and Places.

Delivery Timeframe: Current phase due for completion Summer 2025, future phases subject to funding.

- 3.23. The Council is working with Network Rail and GWR to develop a series of proposals to upgrade passenger facilities at Tilehurst Station, and funding is being sought to develop an agreed Masterplan. This would include enhancements within the station and for the wider interchange, including improved access arrangements to/from the station.
- 3.24. Network Rail has secured £4m funding from Government for the first phase of works to deliver accessibility improvements through the installation of lifts at the station. They will be installed within the existing station footbridge which had been designed with passive provision for lifts. When complete, these works will provide step free access to all platforms at the station.
- 3.25. Network Rail held a public drop-in session at the station in January 2024, prior to construction works commencing. The lift installation process is largely complete, however the electrical supply needs to be upgraded by the DNO prior to the lifts being commissioned, which Network Rail have been advised cannot happen until May. Therefore, the lifts will be opened to the public after this upgrade work has been completed.

Active Travel Fund (ATF) Programme

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Supporting Healthy Lifestyles, and Connecting People and Places.

Delivery Timeframe: Current phase of Shinfield Road scheme substantially complete; construction of the Bath Road scheme subject to design changes and public consultation.

- 3.26. Delivery of the Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) is being undertaken in phases as external funding is secured. The current programme includes delivery of segregated cycle facilities and pedestrian improvements on key routes in the borough.

Shinfield Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.27. The Shinfield Road active travel scheme will provide segregated cycle facilities and pedestrian improvements on a key route between residential areas in south Reading, the University of Reading, the Royal Berkshire Hospital and the town centre.
- 3.28. External funding of £1.4m has been secured to deliver the scheme, including grant funding from Active Travel England. An initial consultation on the concept designs for the scheme was undertaken in autumn 2021, which included a public drop-in event held at the University of Reading. Feedback from this consultation was incorporated into the final detailed designs and the statutory consultation on the required Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) to implement double yellow line parking restrictions along the route was approved by the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2022.
- 3.29. Construction of the scheme commenced at the University / Christchurch Green end of the route in October 2022, initially the outbound section between Chancellor's Way and Pepper Lane junction and then continued on the opposite side to complete the section from Pepper Lane through to Christchurch Green. Following completion of this section, work commenced in the summer of 2023 on the other side of the Pepper Lane junction on the section next to Leighton Park School. This section included the longest continuous and uninterrupted cycle track to the junction with Cressingham Road which was completed in summer 2024. In addition, traffic restrictions in the form of double yellow

lines were installed along the entire route between Christchurch Green and Shinfield Rise to address a longstanding issue of parking on the section next to the University of Reading which was causing obstruction to general traffic, with the required TROs approved in June 2022. The Council is now seeking further funding to deliver the remaining phases of the scheme to Shinfield Rise.

Bath Road Active Travel Scheme

- 3.30. The active travel scheme on Bath Road will provide a segregated cycle route and pedestrian improvements on this key route between residential areas in west Reading and the town centre.
- 3.31. External funding of £2.5m has been secured to deliver the scheme, including grant funding from Active Travel England. An initial consultation on the concept designs for the scheme was undertaken in summer 2022, which included a public drop-in event held at the Reading Association for the Blind on Carey Street. The detailed scheme designs have been prepared to incorporate feedback received through this consultation, including elements of the scheme that require a TRO statutory consultation which was approved by the Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee in March 2023.
- 3.32. Following feedback, a design review of the scheme is currently being undertaken to consider opportunities to focus the scheme on improved cycle measures at the Castle Hill roundabout, following engagement with Councillors and key stakeholders. It should be noted that this option is likely to require significant costs in replacing existing traffic signals at this junction, therefore the full scheme as previously developed will not be able to be delivered in full. Design work is currently being undertaken to develop this scheme, which will be subject to future public consultation and approval if significant changes are proposed to the existing scheme. Timescales for the delivery of the scheme will be developed when the final scheme has been agreed.

ATF 2025/26 Grant Funding

- 3.33. Active Travel England has recently announced £838,609 grant funding for Reading (made up of £206,909 Active Travel Fund 5 grant and £631,700 Consolidated Active Travel Fund 25/26 grant). The funding allocations were calculated on population size and capability ratings. This funding was in addition to the ATF4 Extension allocation for Reading of £558,000 earlier in the year.
- 3.34. A condition of the funding is submission of a Delivery Plan to Government setting out how the grant will be utilised for the continued delivery of the active travel programme. This plan is currently being developed and will include the delivery of the revised Bath Road scheme, subject to the results of the design work and public consultation; enhancements to the Shinfield Road scheme, and design work to develop future schemes for Christchurch Green and Sidmouth Street which are being developed through workshops with Councillors and key stakeholders. The objective of this design work would be to develop an enhanced cycle route linking the Shinfield Road scheme to the town centre via Christchurch Green, Redlands area and Sidmouth Street.

School Streets Programme

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Supporting Healthy Lifestyles, and Connecting People and Places.

Delivery Timeframe: On-going.

- 3.35. The Council launched a School Street application process and guidance in spring 2020, after securing £175k revenue grant funding from Government. To date, School Street schemes have been implemented at Park Lane Primary Junior School (Downing Road and Lambourne Close), Wilson Primary School (Wilson Road), Thameside Primary School (Harley Road) and most recently on Crescent Road in east Reading. The scheme

on Crescent Road is a joint scheme for Maiden Erleigh School in Reading, UTC Reading and Alfred Sutton Primary School.

- 3.36. The School Street schemes have been initially established as trials under an Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO), which includes a 6-month statutory consultation period to provide the opportunity for comments and objections to the scheme to be submitted to the Council. The Council's Traffic Management Sub-Committee provided approval for the schemes at Park Lane Junior, Wilson and Thameside Primary schools to be made permanent in June 2022, and the Crescent Road scheme was approved to be made permanent in June 2023. Most recently, in September 2024 new schemes were introduced for Civitas Academy (Great Knollys Street) and Geoffrey Field Junior, Geoffrey Field Infant and Christ the King (Exbourne Road).
- 3.37. Applications to establish new School Street schemes are being encouraged, alongside monitoring of the existing schemes to identify any improvements which can be made to help encourage walking and cycling for children, parents and carers.

Active Travel Behavioural Change Programme

Supports LTP Objectives: Creating a Clean and Green Reading, Supporting Healthy Lifestyles, Connecting People and Places, and Embracing Smart Solutions.

Delivery Timeframe: On-going, subject to funding.

- 3.38. The Council has secured over £370k revenue grant funding from the DfT to deliver an active travel behavioural change programme, aimed at supporting a shift in travel behaviour to walking, cycling and scooting. This programme complements the segregated cycle routes and enhanced pedestrian facilities being delivered through the Active Travel Fund programme.
- 3.39. Delivery of this programme of initiatives is on-going, including the provision of adult cycle training and cycle maintenance courses in addition to the training being provided to children in schools through the Bikeability programme. The Council is working in partnership with Sustrans to deliver behavioural change initiatives through a dedicated officer as a joint Sustrans resource in partnership with Bracknell Forest Council. Activities undertaken to date include provision of led rides and walks, supporting schools with the delivery of Modeshift STARS travel planning activities, and working with partners to support events including Reading Cycle Festival and the Sustrans Big Walk and Wheel. We are also currently developing a series of 'Wellbeing Walks' which will promote different areas and key features of the town, aimed at encouraging regular exercise with all of the associated health benefits. In addition, we have recently installed more secure 'Streetpod' cycle parking as a trial at key locations in the town centre and at Reading West Station. Subject to the results of this trial, further cycle parking facilities could be installed at key locations in the borough.
- 3.40. In conclusion, this report provides the Committee with an overview of the latest position with the delivery of individual schemes and initiatives which make up the programme of strategic transport schemes in Reading. The Committee will be kept informed of the latest developments through regular progress reports to future meetings.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. The Council's Corporate Plan has established three themes for the years 2022/25. These themes are:
 - Healthy Environment
 - Thriving Communities
 - Inclusive Economy

4.2. These themes are underpinned by “Our Foundations” explaining the ways we work at the Council:

- People first
- Digital transformation
- Building self-reliance
- Getting the best value
- Collaborating with others

4.3. Full details of the Council’s Corporate Plan and the projects which will deliver these priorities are published on the [Council’s website](#). These priorities and the Corporate Plan demonstrate how the Council meets its legal obligation to be efficient, effective and economical.

4.4. The delivery of the programme of strategic transport schemes will help to deliver the three service priorities in the Council’s Corporate Plan of Healthy Environment, Thriving Communities and Inclusive Economy by providing high-quality, affordable transport options which will help to reduce congestion, improve air quality and help to encourage more healthy lifestyles.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

5.1. The Council declared a Climate Emergency at its meeting on 26 February 2019 (Minute 48 refers). Transport is the biggest greenhouse gas emitting sector in the UK accounting for around 27% of total carbon emissions. As set out in our Climate Emergency Strategy this figure is lower in Reading with transport accounting for around 20% of carbon emissions, however significant investment in sustainable transport solutions is vital in order to respond to the Climate Emergency declared by the Council in February 2019.

5.2. The Climate Impact Assessment tool has been used to assess the full programme of works as set out within this report, resulting in an overall Net Medium Positive impact. This is due to the programme being focused on encouraging the use of sustainable transport, walking and cycling as attractive alternatives to the private car. The programme will enhance facilities to encourage more use of sustainable transport and active travel options, and therefore reduce the use of the private car and resulting congestion, carbon emissions and other air quality issues. There are inevitably emissions associated with the construction of these major schemes, however we are working to reduce these short-term impacts in order to achieve the longer-term modal switch benefits.

5.3. In addition, the delivery of the major transport schemes as set out within this report form a vital part of our overall transport and climate emergency strategies, which has achieved considerable success in recent years including bus usage in Reading being the second highest in the country outside of London, having increased by 23% since 2010, and around 35% of trips into Reading town centre being made by pedestrians and cyclists.

6. Community Engagement

6.1. The schemes included within the current major transport scheme programme have and will be communicated to the local community through public exhibitions, consultations and Council meetings.

6.2. Statutory consultation will be conducted in accordance with appropriate legislation, including Traffic Regulation Orders as appropriate. Notices will be advertised in the local printed newspaper and will be erected on lamp columns within the affected area.

7. Equality Implications

7.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

7.2. The Council, and where appropriate partner delivery organisations, have carried out an equality impact assessment scoping exercise on all of the projects included within the current major transport scheme programme.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

9.1. The creation of and changes to existing Traffic Regulation Orders will require advertisement and consultation, under the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and in accordance with the Local Authorities Traffic Orders (Procedure) (England and Wales) Regulations 1996. These procedures have been and will continue to be completed at the relevant time.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. The capital schemes included within the strategic transport schemes programme are included in the Council's Capital Programme which includes the funding profile for each scheme. This programme of works is funded by external grants and funding contributions which have been secured from various external sources as set out within the report. Both the capital and revenue schemes and initiatives within this programme are monitored regularly as part of the Council's internal budget monitoring processes.
- 10.2. Specific grant conditions are attached to the individual external grants which have been secured to fund the delivery of the programme of schemes and initiatives as set out within this report. These conditions relate to both the type of works that the grants can be used to fund and the timescales within which the funding needs to be spent. Failure to meet these conditions may result in the Council being required to repay the grant funding, either in part or in full.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. The latest timetables for implementation of the individual schemes and initiatives which make up the full programme are set out within the report.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee



Reading
Borough Council

Working better with you

12 March 2025

Title	Formation of a Task-and-Finish Group to Scrutinise the Implementation of the Council's Active Travel Strategy
Purpose of the report	To make a decision
Report status	Public report
Report author	Andrew Wood (Principal Committee Administrator)
Lead Councillor	Councillor John Ennis (Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport)
Corporate priority	Healthy Environment
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. That a task-and-finish group be established to scrutinise the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy; 2. That the terms of reference of the task-and-finish group, as set out in Appendix 1, be agreed; 3. That the membership of the task-and-finish group, as set out in section 3 of the report, be agreed; 4. That a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee setting out the task-and-finish group's findings and recommendations;

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report has been prepared following a request made by Councillor Will Cross, Chair of the Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport Committee, to conduct an overview and scrutiny exercise focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.
- 1.2. The purpose of this report is to allow the Committee to consider formally establishing a councillor-led task-and-finish group to conduct an overview and scrutiny exercise focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy and to assess the effectiveness of the delivery of its objectives.
- 1.3. The proposed terms of reference and membership of the task-and-finish group are set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1. The Strategic Environment, Planning and Transport (SEPT) Committee is responsible for the statutory and non-statutory functions relating to transport within the Borough. Under the Constitution, the Committee is also responsible for the overview, service performance and improvement and scrutiny of all functions for which it is responsible.
- 2.2. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, are set out in Part 4 of the Council's Constitution (pages 133-135 refer). They state that Committees may set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake overview and scrutiny exercises and report back to the appointing Committee.
- 2.3. Active travel refers to modes of travel that involve a level of activity such as walking and cycling. On 15 October 2024, following a recommendation from SEPT Committee, the

Council adopted the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 as the Local Transport Plan (LTP) for the Borough (Minute 21 refers). The LTP includes within it the Council's active travel strategy and sub-strategies, including the Local Cycling, Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP).

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. It is proposed that a cross-party, councillor-led, task-and-finish group be established to provide overview and scrutiny focusing on the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.
- 3.2. The proposed terms of reference for the task-and-finish group are set out in Appendix 1.
- 3.3. It is proposed that the membership of the task-and-finish group be on the basis of 4:1:1:1 (Labour: Green: Conservative: Liberal Democrat). Group Leaders have been consulted and were asked to notify the Assistant Director of Legal & Democratic Services of the appointment(s) from their groups.
- 3.4. Group Leaders have proposed that the following councillors be appointed to the task-and-finish group:

Labour	4	Cllr Will Cross (Chair) Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni Cllr Jenny McGrother
Green	1	Cllr Josh Williams
Conservative	1	Cllr Stephen Goss
Liberal Democrat	1	Cllr James Moore

- 3.5. The task-and-finish group will be chaired by Cllr Will Cross.

4. Contribution to Strategic Aims

- 4.1. As set out under the 'Healthy Environment' theme within the Council's Corporate Plan, the Council are working towards a clean, safe town where the need to travel by car is minimised, and where people feel the benefits of clean air and active travel. The formation of a task-and-finish group will help to provide overview and scrutiny of the Council's active travel strategy and will contribute towards this priority being achieved.

5. Environmental and Climate Implications

- 5.1. Active travel measures help to reduce carbon emissions, congestion and help to improve air quality by taking private cars off the road. Scrutinising the implementation of Council's active travel strategy will help to ensure that this goal is met.
- 5.2. There are no specific environmental and climate implications resulting from the recommendations contained in this report.

6. Community Engagement

- 6.1. The task-and-finish group will be Councillor-led and have cross party membership (see section 3 above).

7. Equality Implications

- 7.1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not considered relevant to the report or its recommendations.

8. Other Relevant Considerations

- 8.1. There are none.

9. Legal Implications

Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules

- 9.1. The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules are set out in Part 4 of the [Constitution](#) (pages 133-135 refer).
- 9.2. The Constitution states that Committees may set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake an overview and scrutiny exercise and report back to the appointing Committee.
- 9.3. When establishing a task-and-finish group the appointing Committee is required to determine the specification or terms of reference for the group's scrutiny exercise. In general terms groups will be charged with carrying out an in-depth investigation into a specific service area or policy or any issue of genuine importance to the town.
- 9.4. The appointing Committee is responsible for appointing Members to sit on the task-and-finish group. Councillors may be appointed to the task-and-finish group on the following basis:
 - the group be small, and focused on outcomes;
 - at least two political groups on the Council be represented on the group;
 - to include at least one Member of the appointing Committee, to be appointed to chair the group;
 - other Councillor members to be agreed in consultation with Group Leaders, and need not be members of the Committee.
- 9.5. Task-and-finish groups are not established as Sub-Committees under the Local Government Act 1972, and Committees will not be expected to make the appointments in accordance with the proportionality rules set out in Sections 15-17 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.

10. Financial Implications

- 10.1. There are no quantifiable financial implications as a result of the recommendations at this stage, although the establishment of a task and finish group will have some limited resource implications in terms of staff time to support the process.
- 10.2. Due to budgetary constraints resourcing of the overview and scrutiny exercise will be managed from within existing budgets.
- 10.3. It is intended that task-and-finish group will be councillor-led to minimise the resource implications on staff.

11. Timetable for Implementation

- 11.1. If established the task-and-finish group will conduct its scrutiny exercise and will submit a report containing its findings and recommendations to the meeting of the Strategic Environment and Planning Committee in November 2025.

12. Background Papers

- 12.1. There are none.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Active Travel Task and Finish Group - Terms of Reference.

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Appendix 1 - Active Travel Task & Finish Group - Terms of Reference and Membership

Policy Context:

The Council's Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules (pages 133-135 of the Constitution) allow Committees to set up and appoint task-orientated, time-limited task-and-finish groups to undertake an overview and scrutiny exercise and report back to the appointing Committee.

RBC: Local Cycling Walking and Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Local Transport Plan (LTP).

National context: Active Travel Fund (ATF) funding, recent national changes, Local Transport Note (LTN) 1/20 guidance.

Action:

A Member Task and Finish cross party working group will be set up to provide overview and scrutiny of the implementation of the Council's active travel strategy.

The group will be supported by Committee Services; it will meet on a regular basis and report back to a future meeting of SEPT Committee.

Terms of Reference:

1. To undertake member-led scrutiny of the design, funding and delivery of the Council's cycling and walking network schemes.
2. To enable increased member understanding of the Council's approach to active travel schemes.
3. To take evidence from internal and external stakeholders.
4. To identify areas of best practice and areas for improvement.
5. To assess how the implementation of active travel schemes is meeting the Council's Local Transport Plan objectives.
6. To make recommendations to be considered by a subsequent meeting of the SEPT Committee.

Policy and Financial Considerations:

7. To note the existing process for the allocation of CIL moneys to fund active travel schemes.
8. To note the need to balance the Council's limited resources for Strategic Transport, including active travel, in terms of both funding and staff, alongside the other schemes and initiatives required to deliver the LTP objectives.
9. That acceptance and/or priority given to recommendations will be taken following consultation with the Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and in consultation with the Lead Councillor for Climate Strategy and Transport.
10. To make recommendations that feed into the LCWIP update alongside other consultation input from stakeholders and the Lead Councillor.
11. To note that any recommendations with financial implications would need be reviewed by the Executive Director Economic Growth and Neighbourhood Services and S151 officer.
12. To note that resourcing of the overview and scrutiny exercise will be managed from within existing budgets.

Appendix 1 - Active Travel Task & Finish Group - Terms of Reference and Membership

Membership (7):

Membership of the Task and Finish Group will be on the basis of 4:1:1:1 (Labour: Green: Conservative: Liberal Democrat). Appointments to the Task and Finish Group will be made as follows:

Labour	4	Cllr Will Cross (Chair) Cllr Andrew Hornsby-Smith Cllr Jacopo Lanzoni Cllr Jenny McGrother
Green	1	Cllr Josh Williams
Conservative	1	Cllr Stephen Goss
Liberal Democrat	1	Cllr James Moore