

## Upstream Flood Storage at Northway and Marston



Climate change has brought about the ever-increasing risk of flooding. According to the Environment Agency the 'best estimated cost' of the 2015/16 floods is £1.6 billion (primarily in the north of the country). During 2005, 2007 and 2012 the Oxford areas around Northway and Marston were subjected to flash flooding due to their close proximity to Peasmoor Brook and the Headington Hill Tributary with the resulting damage to several residential properties and businesses. During periods of flooding local roads and pathways were impossible to use. It can take as little as half an hour of torrential rain to cause flooding of homes in these areas.

In 2016 Oxford City Council started work on the £2.2m Upstream Flood Storage Scheme at Northway and Marston, which included a £600,000 grant from the Local Growth Fund secured by the Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP), with the aim of protecting 108 residential homes and 2 businesses. The plan was to convert 'open green spaces' and recreational provision into dual-use areas. In addition to the protection of the 110 properties a number of other benefits resulted from the project: delivery of ecological improvement to Northway Field, Peasmoor Brook and Court Place Farm Recreational area and enhancement of the recreational provision at Northway and Marston, the new Football Authority-compliant and full-size football pitch in Northway Community Field opened in January 2018. New trees were planted and following consultation with local residents newly created flood banks were planted with a range of wildflowers.



The cost of restoring a flood-hit 3-bedroom home is more than simply the costs involved, there is also the emotional stress that the occupants are subjected to which is impossible to quantify. Estimates for

restoring a home following a flood range from £25,000 per property (Environment Agency) to £30,000 per property (Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors) with an additional sum of £15,000 for the installation of flood-protection measures.

Despite environmental conditions that would have previously led to flooding, since mid-2017, when the project was completed, there have been no reports of flooding affecting the properties, roads and pathways, a clear indication that the flood storage scheme is a success.

A comment from the Environment Agency indicates that, in their view, this has proved to be a successful project. "This work will reduce flood risk to over 100 properties affected by surface water flooding following heavy rainfall and is a great example of delivering a flood alleviation scheme while allowing open space to continue to be used when the storage areas are not holding water."



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