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# Bath & North East Somerset Council

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## BATH QUAYS WATERSIDE PROJECT

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

February 2015

#### **What exactly is happening?**

Bath & North East Somerset Council and the Environment Agency are undertaking a £6.22 million project to transform the riverside in Bath and improve flood defences.

It will reduce flood risk for over 100 residential and commercial properties; reconnect the city centre to its riverside with a new riverside park, and enable the development of Bath Quays, a new office and creative quarter.

The Bath Quays Waterside project involves flood mitigation and defence works to the north and south banks of the River Avon, between Churchill Bridge and Midland Bridge. Reducing the steepness of the river bank alongside Green Park Road will help create a safer river environment.

#### **Why is this work necessary?**

Managing flood risk is a priority for the Council and the Environment Agency.

This project will reduce flood risk for over 100 residential and commercial properties, and is a proactive response to the potential impact of climate change on parts of the city susceptible to flooding.

This investment will significantly enhance the riverside environment, creating a more beautiful, accessible and enjoyable environment for local people and visitors to the city. The new landscaping scheme will provide a greater diversity of plant species and so an enriched environment for wildlife.

It will allow the Council to deliver the Bath City Riverside Enterprise Area Masterplan, which will create up to 30,000 square metres of much-needed modern, office accommodation for the city, alongside improved pedestrian and open spaces.

#### **Will the proposed solution increase flood risk upstream or downstream of the proposed works?**

No, work undertaken by the Council has shown the solution will not affect total flood water volumes through the city, nor will it increase flood risk upstream or downstream of the city centre. This has been set out in a Flood Risk Assessment, which has been approved by the Environment Agency.

#### **How is this being funded?**

The Council and Environment Agency are funding these essential works with a combination of Flood Defence Grant and Revolving Infrastructure funding made available by the West of England Local Enterprise Partnership.

#### **What is the impact on wildlife?**

A full series of surveys have been undertaken looking at the impact on wildlife and ecology, including surveys of trees and bird species using the trees, as well as bat and reptile surveys.

The scheme will improve this length of the river corridor as a habitat for wildlife. The

new landscaping scheme includes greater diversity of plant species, including more fruiting species that will help to attract birds and insects. Removing vegetation on the south bank will create quiet areas along the River for the benefit of creatures such as otters which we know are in the area, and an otter resting place has been incorporated in the design for the south river bank.

### **What is the impact on trees? How many trees will be removed?**

Our aim is to reconnect the River Avon with the heart of city life, whilst also making it safer for everyone. To make way for the construction of the new flood walls and widening of the river to improve flow during times of flood, around 70 trees will need to be removed. 23 will be removed from the riverside at North quay, 14 of which are poplars planted in the 1970s and now reaching the end of their life.

Around 150 trees will be planted as part of the new scheme, many of which will be planted as semi-mature to mature specimens. Native species found elsewhere along the river corridor in Bath have been chosen including willow, field maple, alder, birch and lime. Around 40 on the north river bank will replace the 23 lost in that area. On the south river bank tree planting will be used to soften the appearance of the new flood walls from the north.

### **When will the works be taking place?**

Works are planned to run from early 2015 through to late 2016. The first site activity will be the removal of trees and other vegetation in February 2015. Construction works are expected to commence in mid-2015 starting with the diversion of Green Park Road, followed by the works to the north river bank and Green Park and the works on the south side of the river.

### **Why is the work scheduled in this way?**

We have timed the initial work to coincide with safety improvements along the river during February, including the installation of new river safety railings alongside Broad Quay and from Widcombe Lock to Churchill Bridge.

It was also agreed to carry out work to remove vegetation and trees in February, to minimise impact on wildlife habitats and avoid the nesting season.

We are also working with Avon Fire and Rescue to develop more robust, vandal-proof cabinets for life-saving equipment along the river; a prototype cabinet is under construction and user testing will be taking place in February.

### **How will the diversion of Green Park Road change the Highway network? What are the plans?**

Green Park Road will be diverted through Avon Street coach park, linking to the Avon Street/Corn Street junction. The new road and Corn Street will carry two-way traffic enabling the length of Green Park Road running alongside the river bank opposite Avon St car park to be closed to motor vehicles.

### **Will the works affect access and use of the river during construction?**

Use of the Broad Quays moorings will be restricted during the removal of the trees from the adjacent river bank. It is envisaged that a 100m length of the moorings will be unavailable for a period of two weeks for this work. The remaining length of mooring will remain available for use but with towpath access to/from the west only.

During the construction works to widen the river embankment later in the year, we expect that use of the Broad Quays moorings and the towpath next to it will need to be temporarily suspended during work to the riverbank. Timescales for this and details of alternative mooring arrangements will be communicated later in 2015.

Beyond this, impact on use of the river and access to it is expected to be minimal.

### **What will the impact on the roads and pedestrian/cycle routes during the works?**

We expect the works to require a number of lane closures, mainly affecting Green Park Road, Avon Street, Corn Street, Ambury and Broad Quay. However it's not currently expected that any road closures will be required. Existing pedestrian and cycle routes will also need to be diverted from time to time. Access to existing properties adjoining the development area will be maintained throughout the works period. A traffic management plan will be implemented during the construction period to define detailed requirements for any road lane closures and temporary diversion routes for footways and cycleways.

### **Will Avon Street car park remain in use during the construction works?**

The car park will remain in use but the layout will be changed in order to maintain car parking spaces. In the medium term, an additional 200 surface level car parking spaces will be re-introduced, offering better quality provision which is preferred by visitors to the city. Figures indicate this will have more than twice the turnover than the current multi-storey due to the fact that not all levels of the Avon Street multi-storey are fully used at all times.

### **What consultation has been done around this?**

The Council and the Environment Agency have consulted with a wide range of stakeholders. This has included statutory heritage, environment and conservation bodies; local and ward councillors; local residents' associations and recreational groups; directly affected landowners and businesses, and the wider public. This consultation process was carried out in parallel with development of the project's design proposals from August 2013 through to submission of the planning application in September 2014.

Wider public consultation was undertaken in May 2014 which comprised exhibition of the project proposals at the Guildhall and Green Park Station as well as the opportunity to comment on the proposals online.

### **Who is removing the trees?**

Works will be undertaken by Bath & North East Somerset Council's Parks team supplemented by resources from with a specialist contractor – Greenman Environmental Management.