

River Ivel Project

Fact sheet

July 2015

This fact sheet provides you with some information about the River Ivel Project.

About the River Ivel Project

Historically, the River Ivel has had a variety of uses and continues to provide recreational value to a wide range of people and groups. These uses have led to modifications in the river for navigation, milling, land drainage and flood defence.

Due to this history, there are a number of structures (for example: river banks, sluices and weirs) on and next to the river, that the Environment Agency had a hand in building or maintaining over the years. We are currently reviewing the purpose of the structures that we maintain to see whether they are still required for works within our remit, particularly around managing flood risk to people and property.

We are also looking into any environmental improvements that could be carried out on the river to improve the ecology of the river, for the benefit of wildlife and recreational use.

What are we planning to do?

- Look at each of the structures that we currently maintain and review what, if any, flood risk management purpose they have, both individually and as part of a system. Initially, we will do this using computer modelling.
- Link into the River Basin Management Plan to see what actions could potentially be undertaken to achieve Water Framework Directive objectives. For example: improvements in riverine ecology
- Work with local councils, interested groups and individuals to see whether there are options that could be taken forward.

What is the difference between this project and the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)?

River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) are required under the Water Framework Directive for all river systems in England. The plans describe each river basin district and the pressures that the water environment faces. They also look at actions that could be taken to improve the water environment and restore watercourses to a more natural state. The Anglian RBMP covers a vast area of eastern England, from the South Bank of the Humber to the Thames Estuary.

The Ivel Project is linked to the Anglian RBMP, as each project that we undertake near a watercourse has to take into account any Water Framework Directive requirements. However, the two are not the same thing. The Ivel Project aims to review how we best manage flood risk locally and what should be done with any existing structures that we maintain, alongside looking into options to improve the water environment.

What options are being taken forward?

No actions have been decided upon at this stage. In fact, we have not yet set out any potential options for the project.

We are at an early stage of the project, the first part of which is to gather data about existing structures to understand which are still required to manage flood risk.

When we have confirmed which structures, we would like to maintain in future (subject to available funding), we plan to engage with all interested parties about what could be done with the remaining

structures through a full and planned public consultation. Structures with limited or no flood risk benefit will not automatically be removed. There may be a range of options that would work and it is possible that structures could be:

- Altered
- Removed
- Replaced with an alternative structure
- Maintained by other organisations, groups or landowners.

Key considerations

There are 4 main considerations for the Environment Agency on this project. These are:

1. Funding - We cannot spend public money on works outside of our remit. We have to follow rules associated with all funding that we receive and ensure we spend where there is the greatest benefit. Therefore we may not be able to continue to maintain some existing structures.

Funding is also vital for any new proposals along the River Ivel. At this stage there is no guarantee that funding will be available from central government and it is likely that partnership funding will be needed as part of any works that change the status quo. The type and amount of funding that the project can draw on will depend upon what the project will deliver in terms of the governments environmental or flood risk management targets (outcome measures).

2. Flood risk - We have powers to manage flood risk (from main rivers) to people and property.
3. Water Framework Directive - We cannot carry out actions which would prevent the River Ivel from reaching good ecological potential, as required under the Water Framework Directive.
4. Water Resources - We need to consider the impact any project has on river levels and the availability of water for abstraction.

Working in partnership

This project has the potential to provide some great opportunities to work together with local organisations and people to make improvements to the River Ivel. It is not a piece of work that we can, or want to, produce in isolation and we will be sharing our findings and working with other risk management authorities and local groups to develop options for the project.

We will begin this engagement in earnest when we have gathered and collated our data and have sufficient information to discuss with interested parties. This is unlikely to happen before autumn 2015.

If you are interested in this project and would like to hear more about future engagement events, please use the following contact details to register your interest and let us know how we can contact you.

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