



Welcome to the second edition of Looe Flood Defence News

Sign up for our future newsletter editions emailing us:

📧 LooeFloodDefence@cornwall.gov.uk

You can also find out more information at :

🌐 www.letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/looe-flood-defence

Our new newsletter will keep you in touch with what is happening with the development of the Looe Tidal Flood Defence project by providing the latest information about events, activities and key milestones.

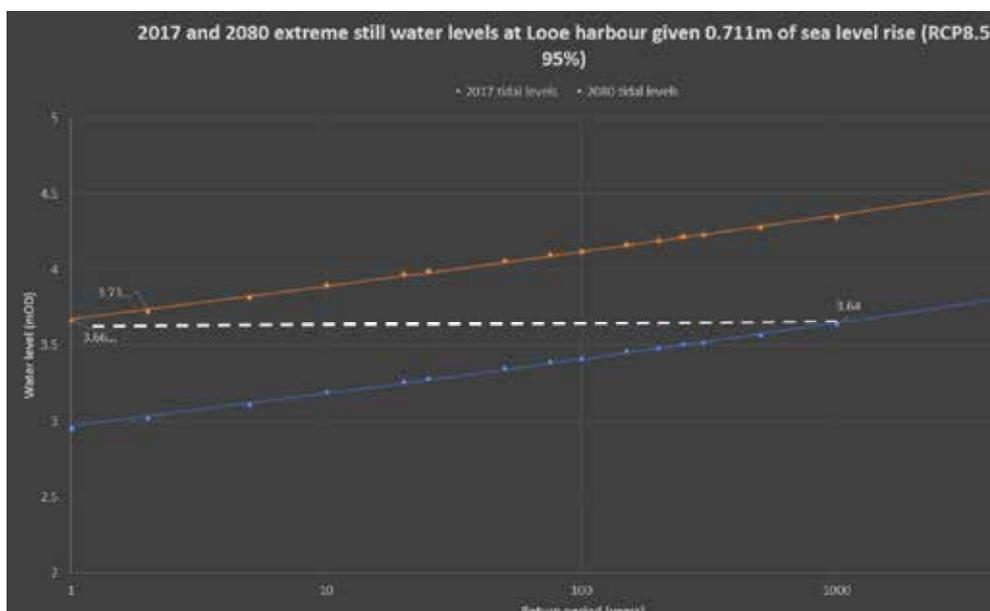
The last few weeks have been extremely busy as we have been working with partners and stakeholders to carry out tests and surveys and developing the design based on feedback received. We have also reviewed the overall objectives of the scheme so we can ensure that it will deliver our key aims.

While Looe currently experiences numerous incidents of significant flooding each year, we know that the frequency and severity of the floods will increase as a result of climate change. The current research suggests that

flood depths of over 900mm, which are relatively rare now, would be expected to occur annually by 2080 if nothing is done. Less extreme flooding would also increase in frequency, making it far more difficult for people to clean up between flood events and, as a consequence, to live and work in the town.

With more extreme flood depths experienced more regularly, we would expect to see regular damage to property and infrastructure, affecting access to road and rail links and an increased risk of injury to the people living or visiting Looe.

We are carrying out additional research to gather evidence on the dates and extent of historical flooding over the past 20 years and of the problems currently caused by flooding in the town.



We are very keen to hear from local residents and businesses about their experiences so we can use the details to strengthen our case for Government funding.

Please email any information including dates and photographs if possible to

LooeFloodDefence@cornwall.gov.uk

What we want to achieve:

While our main priority remains to prevent Looe from flooding, we also want the scheme to help increase the economic prosperity of both the town and the wider South East Cornwall area, at the same time as protecting the special environment.

Following detailed discussions with our partners and stakeholders we have amended the overall objectives to reflect these aims:

- Protect Looe from frequent and severe flooding and damage over the next 100 years, giving time for the community to adapt to a changing climate.
- Enhance the overall environmental integrity of designated sites and water bodies.
- Work to promote economic growth in East Cornwall by :
 - o Protecting key transport links
 - o Protecting and enhancing the visitor and marine economy.

How will the scheme reduce the risk of flooding?

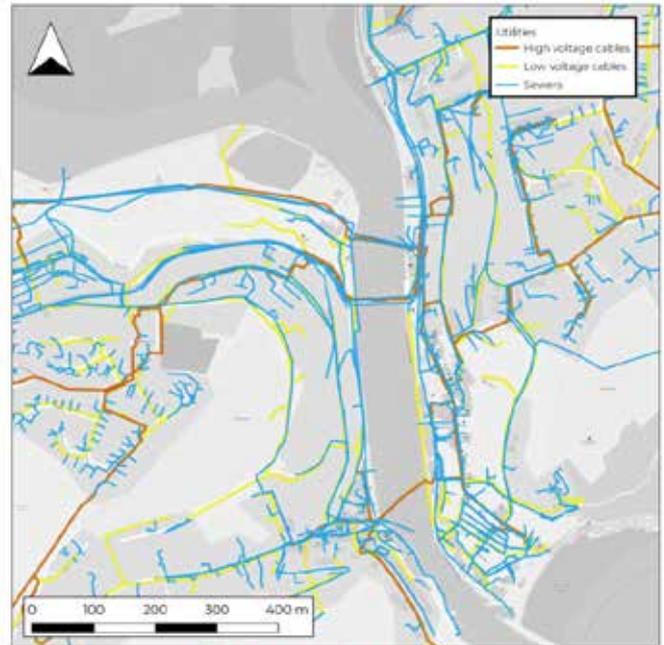
Flooding currently affects hundreds of houses and businesses in the town each year, costing millions of pounds worth of damage over the years.

The predicted increase in the severity of flooding in future years, caused by the impact of climate change, means that, without a flood defence scheme, there will be a significant threat to major transport links such as the A387 which crosses the Looe River joining West and East Looe together, and the railway station which connects the town to the mainline at Liskeard, as well as to the harbour itself.

There is also likely to be damage caused to utilities in the town, including gas, electricity and water, as well as other key infrastructure.

As well as the physical damage, the risk of flooding is also likely to affect the future prosperity of the town, with both new and existing businesses unwilling to invest in an area which is prone to flood damage.

The scheme currently being designed will need to deliver a number of key requirements to address these issues and prevent the town from flooding both now, and in the future.



These include:

- Preventing tide and storm surge entering the town from the river
- Reducing wave heights & provide safe haven and deep water access at all tidal states
- Preventing groundwater entering Looe beneath the beach
- Stopping waves overtopping the seafront
- Reducing sewer & surface water flooding risk
- Avoiding creating a bigger problem by blocking river flow
- Making sure all existing and proposed structures are suitable for next 100 years or can be raised as the impacts of climate change and rising sea levels become better known.

What has been happening since the last newsletter?

During the past few weeks we have been meeting with representatives of the Environment Agency and other partners to confirm the range of information we need to further develop the design and reinforce the economic case for the scheme.

We have also provided a briefing on the latest stage of the scheme for the Secretary of State for the Environment George Eustice and South East Cornwall MP Sheryll Murray. Both were very interested in the work which is being done to develop the design and the business case and we will be providing them with further updates as the scheme progresses.

We have also received a letter of support for the scheme from South West Water.

A detailed assessment of the harbour was carried out earlier this year. This found that the harbour was in very good condition for its age – in fact it was described by the team carrying out the work as “one of the best harbours we have come across for a long time”

This is very good news for the proposed flood defence scheme as it means we will be starting from a strong foundation.

Work has also been taking place to develop a 3D model to support the development of the design.

We are currently developing a number of wave models so we can look in detail at the impact of different wave conditions on different breakwater layouts. We are also studying the effects on water quality and on levels of sediment and impacts on the protected species. This includes assessing potential locations for the flood gates which could be positioned either upstream or downstream of the RNLI building.

We are aware that East Looe Town Trust currently maintains the beach, cleaning it of seaweed and reducing its level as the sand builds up. This has resulted in Looe having a very stable beach with little fluctuation in beach levels. While we do not expect this to change as a result of the scheme, we need to look at all the potential outcomes carefully as part of the design process.

We are also looking at the different types of flood gates which are available for this type of scheme. The current options include rising sector gates (similar to the type used at the Thames Barrier) or the more traditional mitre gate. Both options come with benefits and drawbacks which need to be considered carefully before a final decision is made. The team are also considering whether there should be one or two gates – again there are benefits and drawbacks for both options.

We have also been working to raise awareness about the flooding issues affecting Looe and the efforts that are being made to defend the town. This has included taking part in a recent podcast: <https://engineeringmatters.reby.media/2021/02/04/92-the-most-flooded-town-in-england-2/>

What we are doing now:

While a number of surveys and tests have already been carried to support the development of the scheme, we need to collect more detailed data over the coming months to inform the final design.

This includes information on tidal levels, tidal flow, and the movement of sediment along the river. To provide this data we will be installing a tide gauge near the Harbour Master's office and temporary meters to measure turbidity and tidal directions in the next few weeks. We will also be completing the topographic survey by assessing the doorstep level of every property that could flood in the future and carrying out detailed ground investigations to add to the information we have already gathered during desk top studies.

One of our key aims is to enhance the overall environmental integrity of designed sites and water bodies. We need to ensure that we manage the impact of the scheme on the environment and it will be necessary to support the scheme with an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

We will be working with Council Planners and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to screen and then scope the extent of the EIA. Currently we are carrying out surveys of over-wintering birds. Studies into the areas of sea grass, and the reef will come next to provide detailed information to help us to understand any potential risks to these protected areas and identify measures to mitigate them.

We have already talked with a number of stakeholders and will be also speaking to environmental stakeholders during the next few weeks, such as the Looe Marine Conservation Group and Cornwall Wildlife Trust. We will also be carrying out work to ensure that there is no detriment to bathing water quality.

Building the economic case

As well as working on the detail of the design, we also need to build a strong economic case if we are to secure Government and other sources of funding for the scheme. This means setting out how our scheme will support the economic regeneration of Looe and the wider economy of South East Cornwall.

Generating more money in the local economy and creating more jobs means looking at the traditional economic model of the town. Providing a range of different offers will help Looe become a place which attracts tourists all year round and encourages local people to visit the town and spend money.

The flood defence scheme is one of a number of projects currently being developed by Cornwall Council in partnership with other stakeholders to support the regeneration of South East Cornwall. These include the creation of a new south east Cornwall cycle hub and the proposed Looe Valley Trails project, which will create approximately 80 kms of trails connecting Looe, Liskeard, Bodmin and Cremyll for residents and visitors to walk, bicycle and ride.

Other projects include a new jetty at Torpoint, the Liskeard to Bodmin Rail Improvements, a new Looe Valley Line Heritage Centre, the exciting Kerdroya Labyrinth, the development of the Forest for Cornwall and the Looe Valley Heritage Trails.

Looe is at the centre of these exciting projects and we need to ensure that we take advantage of this opportunity by boosting investment in the town. Reducing the risk of flooding through this scheme will be a key factor in increasing the confidence of people to develop their existing businesses as well as attracting new businesses to come to Looe.

We are currently working with partners to carry out an economic study which is looking at a number of areas to support regeneration.

These include :

- Harbour Businesses: investigating the potential effect of the flood defence scheme in helping to retain more of the fresh fish caught in the local area by encouraging its use in new and existing restaurants - "fish to plate".
- Commercial zone – reducing the risk of flooding in this area would help to encourage people to invest in existing shops and

businesses as well as attracting new ones to the town, helping to improve the range and quality of the offer.

- Active waterscapes – building on the increased interest in healthy and active living, this would focus on the effect of the scheme on activities based around marine ecology and water sports
- Relocation – the last few years have seen an increase in people wanting to move out of cities, either for a change in life style including setting up businesses or to retire. Providing a range of high quality accommodation and business opportunities protected by the scheme will enable Looe to take advantage of this trend.

Let's talk Looe Flood Defence and Regeneration Scheme

Last month we launched <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/looe-flood-defence>

With the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions still preventing face to face consultation and engagement events, the online community space site provides all the latest information about the scheme, as well as offering a space for people to have their say on the proposals.

The site also includes a discussion forum where people can share their experiences of flooding in Looe. We want to gather information about flooding events in Looe so please send us details of any incidents you or your family have been involved in over the past few years. You can also email details to LooeFloodDefence@cornwall.gov.uk

There has been a very positive response to the new platform, with lots of people using it to make comments about the scheme or ask questions so please check it out if you have not yet visited the site.

The site also includes a FAQ section which includes responses to some of the questions we have been asked. We are adding to this section all the time.

Some of recent questions and responses include:

We know that Looe floods on a regular basis. The community has adapted so why is a tidal flood defence scheme required now?

Looe is a very resilient community and regularly accepts the results of flooding, much of which goes unrecorded. However, sea levels are rising

and the predictions are that a 1:1000yr storm in Looe will become a 1:1yr storm by 2080. This frequency and severity of flooding will be unacceptable and hence work is required now to put a flood defence in place before the problem becomes too great for businesses and homes to remain viable in the town.

What will happen to the sediment from the river?

Sediment from the river will still be discharged to the sea even when the tidal barrier is in place as the barrier will be open in all but flooding events. Any sediment held up due to a gate closure will flush again naturally when the gate opens in the following tide. There are likely to be some local changes to the flow regime and wave climate due to the proposed breakwaters. Work is being carried out to assess the potential impacts of the scheme in more detail.

How will you protect the seagrass beds?

Looe is rightly renowned for its diverse marine environment. As Looe sits within a Marine Conservation Zone, any proposed development in the harbour area will require an Environmental Impact Assessment, as well as potentially a Harbour Revision Order and a Marine Licence. Work is being carried out to assess the potential impacts of the scheme in more detail.

What is the purpose of the cut-off wall?

A cut-off wall is currently included in our flood defence scheme to prevent tidal surge water from passing under the existing coastal defence wall at the back of East Looe beach when the barrier is closed. Much of the ground under Looe is known to be permeable and, even when water levels are below the height of the quay walls, water can still find its way into the town centre by both the drainage system and by permeating through the ground.

The barrier will only be closed when high tides are predicted to coincide with storm surges to the point where flooding of the town is possible. This will be a short-lived and infrequent event when the scheme first opens. However, as time progresses and sea levels continue to rise, then this will be a more frequent but still short-lived event. Hence, under normal circumstances, water will still be able to pass down the Looe River and discharge into the sea with ground water levels under the town unaffected.

How many flood gates will there be and what will they look like ?

We have engaged the leading gate designer in the UK to work with us on developing the scheme and work is underway to review the optimal gate arrangements. Fresh visuals are currently being prepared to aid public understanding on the potential arrangements. We are exploring one or two main navigable gates at the moment.

Will the scheme affect the existing beach and the local tourism industry?

We are very aware of the importance of tourism to Looe and the scheme is being designed to protect and enhance this industry in the long-term. Work is taking place to use the design and landscaping to enhance the character of the town, making the scheme a feature in its own right. The design will be done sensitively and in consultation with local stakeholders, statutory consultees including Heritage England and Cornwall Council's planning department to determine the right choice of materials. Local residents will also be able to have their own say on this issue as part of future consultation and engagement exercises.

How long will it take to complete the scheme and what impact will it have on the town?

Once construction work begins, we expect the scheme to be completed within two years. We are aware of the potential of disruption during the construction and all the partners are working together to reduce the impact on the town - from building in the off-season to bringing in material from the sea. Experience from previous projects has shown that construction activities tend to become an attraction in their own right and we will plan for a good set of viewing areas, local engagement and information as part of the Looe scheme.

Major coastal defence schemes such as this also provide employment opportunities, not just in construction, but also in catering and support services.

Information about the proposals is also available on the scheme's website www.cornwall.gov.uk/LooeFloodDefence where there is a copy of the leaflet which was published in January.

Next steps

During the coming weeks we will be carrying out further work on the design for the flood defence scheme and the wider economic study. This information will support the work which is taking place to produce the strategic outline case and the business case to secure funding for the scheme.

We are also developing a programme of activity to engage with the local community and stakeholders as the plans are developed. This will include face to face events and activities once the Covid restrictions are relaxed later this year.

We want to make sure that residents and businesses understand how the decision making for significant projects such as this takes place and that people have the opportunity to have their say and help to shape the final scheme.

Once the final designs have been developed and the funding has been secured, the scheme will be subject to a significant planning process before any final decision is taken. This will include an application for planning permission, as well as well as application for a harbour revision order and a marine licence.

If the necessary permissions are secured in accordance with the current timetable, construction could begin in 2024, with scheme completed by 2026

Contact:

You can find out more about the project on our website:

www.cornwall.gov.uk/LooeFloodDefence

You can also email us at **LooeFloodDefence@cornwall.gov.uk**