



Welcome to the third 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.

During the past few months we have been working with our partners to build the strong economic case for the scheme needed to help secure Government and other sources of funding.

Last month Cornwall Council and Looe Harbour Commissioners submitted the Strategic Outline Case (the first of three business case stages which Government projects are required to meet) to the Environment Agency for consideration.

The strategic outline case is a very important element of the project as without Government support and funding for the final business case, it will not be possible to deliver this much needed flood defence and regeneration scheme.

On 14 July the South East Cornwall MP Sheryll Murray raised the issue of flooding in Looe during Prime Minister's Questions. Responding to her question, the Prime Minister said that the Environment Secretary, Camborne MP, George Eustice had already been in talks with Cornwall Council and other partners and promised to do "everything we can" to prevent more flooding in the town.

Further discussions on securing funding for the outline business case are taking place with key partners. Following the Prime Minister's commitment and with the support of the local MP, we are optimistic that these will be successful, enabling the second stage of the project (delivery of the Outline Business case) to be completed in the Autumn of 2022.



At the same time, we are continuing to gather evidence on the dates and extent of historical flooding over the past 20 years to support this economic case.

Thank you to everyone who has already given us information and pictures about previous flooding incidents in the town and please contact us if you have any further evidence which could help to strengthen our case for funding. Please email information to:

LooeFloodDefence@cornwall.gov.uk

Because of the proactive approach of all partners, we are also continuing to work on developing the design of the flood defence scheme. Specialist engineers in the project team have been assessing the impact of different wave conditions on different breakwater layouts. Work is also continuing on assessing potential locations for the flood gates and the different types of flood gates which could be used.

We have also been working with Cornwall Council planners and the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) to scope the extent of the EIA

(Environmental Impact Assessment). A number of surveys and studies of East and West Looe rivers have now been carried out to support this work.

The over-wintering bird survey has been successfully completed and we have begun the breeding bird surveys. Work is continuing on the studies into areas of environmentally important sea grass and the reef within the Marine Conservation Zone.

Meetings have also been held with the Crown Estate and the Duchy to introduce the scheme and discuss access for marine surveys.

Building a tide gauge

Knowing the height of the tide is important for nearly every beach visitor, boat user and fisherman in Looe.

Looking over the edge of the river wall, knowing the phase of the moon or using a tide table has been sufficient for hundreds of years. To build a good flood management scheme, however, we need to have reliable and consistent measurements of the tide height.

Earlier this month we made another small but very important step towards protecting Looe from flooding by installing a tide gauge to measure the water level in the harbour 24 hours a day, every day.

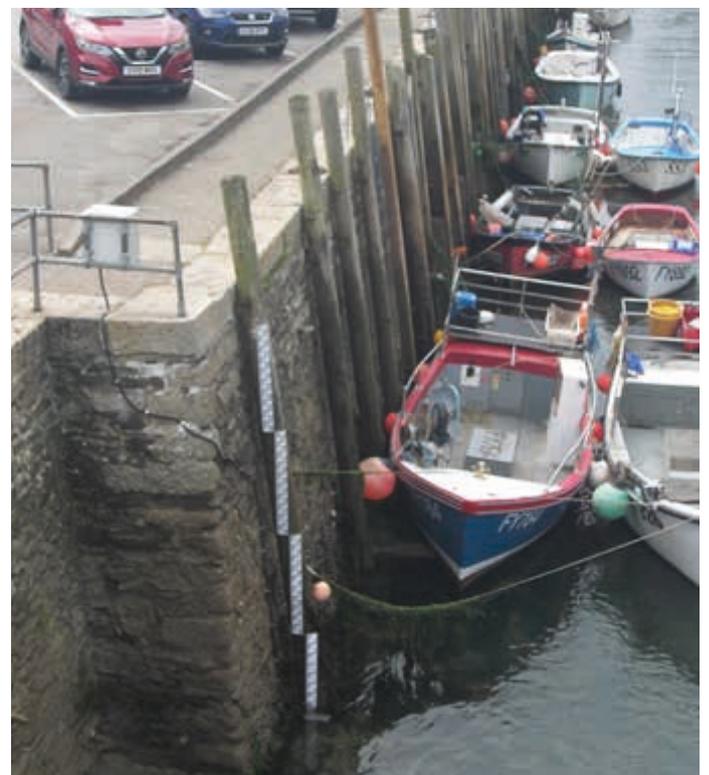
This will help us to show how severe the risk of flooding is and how often Looe floods which is vital to securing the funding we need to deliver the scheme.

It will also help to improve predictions of storm surges, to see the effect of heavy rainfall on river levels and help in the design of the flood management structures.

It may not look very exciting at first glance, but we hope the harbour users, harbour commissioners and the Environment Agency will all benefit from the gauge.

The gauge records water level automatically and supplies the information over the internet but we have also installed a physical gauge board so anyone can see the level of the water above the river bed.

Here are some images of the tide gauge in place:

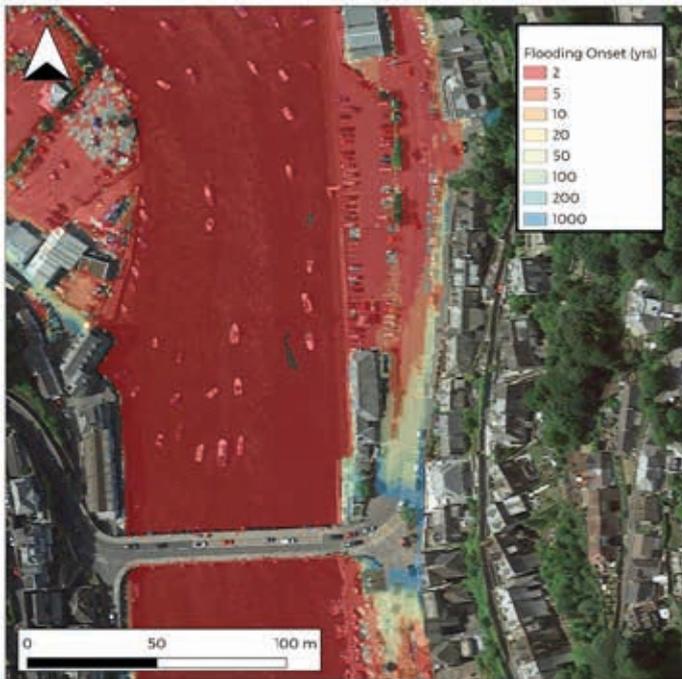


Adapting Looe for the future

Up to this point the project team have focused on what engineering solutions could offer flood protection to the town over the next 100 years. These include the tidal barrier, the southern breakwater, the extension to the Banjo pier and the cut off wall below East Looe beach which is designed to prevent tidal flooding bypassing the tidal barrier.

Work is continuing on developing these structural elements of the scheme and will offer a high level of protection (0.5% Annual Exceedance Probability) up to 2080. The barrier will be capable of being raised, if necessary, to protect to the same standard up to 2120.

However, as climate scientists forecast that sea levels will continue to rise well past this period, we also need to look at how this project can help the community to adapt in the longer term.



A number of people already live and work within the flood risk area in Looe. Future rises in sea levels could potentially threaten even more parts of the town. These include the health centre, the police and fire stations, main food stores and cafes and the fish market, as well as major transport links such as the A387 and the railway station.

While building sea defences higher and higher is certainly one option, and our scheme could lay the structural foundations to enable this to happen, this could lead to visual intrusion which may not be acceptable to the local community. It will also be extremely expensive to build and maintain in the long term, and have severe environmental impacts.

Other options could include preventing future development in the areas most at risk of future flooding, relocating key assets outside the flood risk zone, and accepting the risk of some flooding by adapting the design of buildings to minimise the damage caused by floods. This could include using tiles and increasing the height of electrical sockets on ground floors.

A Flood Adaptation Plan will need to be developed for Looe with local residents and businesses which, alongside providing protection for the town from severe flooding over the coming years, also includes plans for adaptation which go well beyond 100 years from now so that future generations are protected. This will need to be led by local bodies within Looe working with a range of partners.

Adaptation is not required immediately, it is very important to start thinking about potential adaptation pathways now so we can ensure that the local community has the opportunity to shape these plans. The issue in Looe is also shared with many other coastal communities in Cornwall and beyond, so we can look to see how adaptation is being delivered in other communities to help us in Looe.

Some of this work is already underway as part of the development of the [Looe Neighbourhood Development Plan](#). This includes draft policies specifically designed to support the adaptation of Looe against rising sea levels due to climate change; ensure that current land instability issues are avoided and future land stability issues are minimised and mitigated against, and to reduce the likelihood of sea/river water flooding at times of high tide combined with storm weather conditions.

One of the key proposals contained in the NDP is to designate the entire coastline and riverside in Looe as a Coastal Change Management Area (CCMA). These are areas considered to be most at risk of coastal erosion caused by climate change, resulting in landslips, flooding and shifting sediment. Being designated as a CCMA means that the risk of coastal erosion needs to be taken into account when planning decisions are made.

Cornwall Council is currently looking at developing these areas across Cornwall, with Looe potentially identified as one of the first areas to be considered.

Other policies in Looe's NDP are designed to help avoid inappropriate development in areas of flood risk.

Work is also required to review and evolve existing transport policies and investigate measures to generate income to support future transformation projects.

This work will require co-operation between various agencies including Cornwall Council, Looe Town Council, Looe Harbour Commissioners, and the Environment Agency to consider potential measures. Delivering these measures will also require the involvement of other stakeholders, including Network Rail, Great Western Railways and South West Water.

Developing adaptive pathways which are both acceptable to and meet the needs of all parts of the local community and can be successfully delivered is vitally important to the future of Looe. The feedback received will then act as a springboard for the shape of future development in Looe.

Adaptation and resilience is a key part of the new strategy for flooding from the Environment Agency. This is an important document to look at as it sets out how flood defence will work in England and importantly, the direction of future funding. Please see here for more details: [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/421112/national_flood_and_coastal_erosion_risk_management_strategy_for_england.pdf)

Supporting economic regeneration

We are continuing to work with partners to ensure that the final scheme will play a key role in helping to promote economic growth in South East Cornwall.

In addition to the work being done to progress the Flood Defence and Economic Regeneration scheme, there are a number of other exciting projects and proposals currently being developed in and around the town. These include the Looe Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Millpool / Polean masterplan, the Looe Kilminorth Hub, Looe Business and Learning Hub, Looe Valley Heritage Trails and the Looe Valley Trails.

At the same time there are a number of challenges facing local businesses. These include economic uncertainty as a result of the global pandemic and Brexit, pressures from changing lifestyles, increased mobility, new competition, greater customer choice and changes in working practices.

After recently securing a £45,000 grant from the Town Vitality Fund to support research in the economic development of the town, Looe's Town Team is working with partners, including the Looe Flood Defence and Regeneration scheme, to help co-ordinate projects to develop a broader economic plan for Looe.

Part of this work also includes providing freely accessible supporting evidence and data which can then be used to support future funding bids for emerging projects from any organisation in Looe and South East Cornwall. As mentioned above our Flood Defence economics team are also sourcing a range of supporting evidence and data to help justify government investment into the scheme.

Keeping people informed

With the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions preventing face to face consultation and engagement events during the past 18 months, we are continuing to provide information via the Looe Flood Defence and Regeneration Scheme site on the Let's Talk platform <https://letstalk.cornwall.gov.uk/looe-flood-defence>

People can also use this site to ask questions and make comments on the scheme.

We are also working with the Environment Agency to investigate the possibilities of setting up a local flood group in Looe. Flood groups are a really good way of helping local communities to prepare for and manage flooding in their area. We will provide further information as these discussions evolve.



Next steps

Over the coming weeks and months, we will be collecting more detailed data to inform the final design. This includes information on tidal levels, tidal flow, and the movement of sediment along the river as well as carrying out detailed ground investigations.

During July and August, we will also be carrying out a range of surveys.

These include using a drop-down camera from a small boat to see where seagrass and other marine habitats are located, as well as a small hovercraft to map the intertidal habitat.

In the middle of August divers will be used to survey the sea grass beds in more detail so we can better understand the health and density of this important ecological substance.



Threshold surveys, which will assess the doorstep level of every property that could flood in the future will also be carried out to help us to understand the operating conditions for the flood gate.



The design team are looking at ways in which we can lower the carbon footprint of the structures and boost marine biodiversity. In September/October, eight reef cubes are being deployed in a trial off Banjo Pier and Hannafore. Each reef cube is made from a special low carbon marine friendly concrete, with nooks and crannies designed to create an ideal home for marine wildlife such as seaweeds, barnacles and limpets, as well as larger species such as lobster and crab. The trial will help us understand the potential for incorporating these habitats into the new structures and give us a better understanding of the species likely to colonise them in Looe.

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.

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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