

# The Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme

March 2022

This document provides an update on the progress of the Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme.

The Environment Agency is working with Kent County Council, Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and the South East Local Enterprise Partnership to further reduce flood risk to over 1,400 homes and businesses in Tonbridge and Hildenborough and downstream communities.

The scheme aims to increase the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area (FSA) and includes a new embankment to protect homes in Hildenborough. The two parts of the scheme are linked, technically and financially and neither can proceed without the other.

You can find background information about the Leigh FSA expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme here:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankments-scheme)

## Leigh Flood Storage Area expansion

In September 2021, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs **approved** the Environment Agency's application to increase the maximum allowable stored water level within the Leigh FSA from 28.05m AOD to 28.6m AOD. This decision was essential to enable the Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme to proceed. You can find out more about this decision and the scheme here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/leigh-flood-storage-area-expansion-scheme>

We received planning permission for this work in January 2021 and expect to appoint contractors in spring 2022. Enabling works are programmed to begin in autumn/winter 2022.

We will be modifying the 3 gates at the Leigh control structure to enable water to be stored to the higher level when necessary. We will need to manufacture bespoke parts which will take time. As a result works to the first gate will take place from spring 2023. The 3 gates will be modified over 3 consecutive summers to ensure that the structure is still able to operate over the higher risk winter periods.

Alongside replacing the gates, upgrades to northwest section of the FSA will include a new small flood embankment with hard-standing for temporary pumps near Ensfield Road, and some works to raise the embankment around the existing screw-pump within the FSA.

## Hildenborough embankment

At Hildenborough, our priority was to design a scheme which reduces flood risk to as many homes as possible with as little impact on the local community as possible. Following this work, we are confident that the final Hildenborough embankment design is the best one we can achieve, technically, economically, and environmentally.

We presented the design at the Hildenborough virtual event we held on 9 December 2021. Thank you to everyone who joined us, and to those who submitted questions. We are currently updating our webpage to include answers to many of the frequently asked questions: [Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-expansion-and-hildenborough-embankment-scheme)



The Environment Agency submitted the planning application for the Hildenborough embankment works to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council in February 2022. We know that people will be interested in seeing the details. You can view and comment on the application through the online planning portal at:

<https://publicaccess2.tmbc.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?keyVal=R8232GQHMT300&activeTab=summary>

## Scheme programme

The detail of the construction programme is dependent on the Hildenborough embankment planning decision. Below is our current programme. We will provide an update on timescales once we have received a decision on the planning application.

- Hildenborough planning application submitted: February 2022
- Award contract for construction works: spring 2022
- Hildenborough planning decision expected: summer 2022
- Preconstruction works begin at Leigh FSA: spring 2022
- Work begins to Leigh FSA control structure gates: summer 2023
- Construction begins at Hildenborough: 2024 (to be confirmed)
- Construction of full scheme complete: autumn 2025

## Leigh Flood Storage Area Reservoirs Act works

In addition to the expansion scheme, the Environment Agency is carrying out works to maintain the Leigh FSA. These works will ensure that the structure remains compliant with the Reservoirs Act 1975. These works are expected to be completed in autumn 2023 and will ensure the Leigh FSA continues to safely reduce flood risk to Tonbridge and Hildenborough and other downstream communities into the future.

In autumn 2021 we completed the works in the first working area and laid a temporary haul road on the existing Mud Lane to our next working area between the A21 and the main control structure at Leigh. Our working compound has now moved from Lower Haysden to Powdermill Lane, and both car parks are now open for normal use.

During spring and summer 2022 we be working on the Leigh FSA embankment between the A21 and the main control structure at Leigh. To carry out the works safely we will need to close some of the footpaths in the area temporarily. We have worked with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Kent County Council to consider where we can put in footpath diversions but unfortunately the options are limited. We understand the impact and inconvenience these closures will cause but everyone's safety must take priority. We will do our best to re-open the footpaths as soon as possible. The closures will be signposted but you can plan ahead by finding out which footpaths will be closed at: [Public Rights of Way - Public Rights of Way Map \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

## More information

If you'd like to find out more about how the Leigh FSA works to reduce downstream flood risk, take a look at our You Tube animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9FVsi0WNa50> or search for "Leigh Flood Storage Area".

You can find out more about the history of the Leigh FSA and the Reservoirs Act works here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/leigh-flood-storage-area>

If you have any questions about any of the works described in this newsletter, or would like to join our electronic distribution list for future updates, please email the project team at: [LEHES@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:LEHES@environment-agency.gov.uk)