

Dear Sir/Madam

Environment Agency Flood Risk Management – 2018-2019 Thames Tributaries Maintenance Programme

We are contacting you regarding the proposed river maintenance programme for the non-tidal Thames tributaries, due to take place in the 2018-2019 financial year.

In order to comply with the Environment Act (1995) and generally agreed best practice, we are giving you the opportunity to comment upon our proposed works. This consultation spans both the Upper and Lower Thames tributaries designated as “Main River”, associated structures and flood risk management installations, e.g. flood storage reservoirs. Further information on main river designations can be found here:

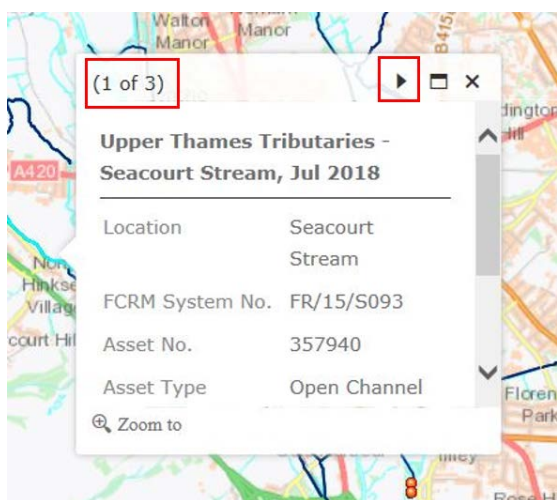
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/designation-of-main-rivers-guidance-to-the-environment-agency>

We would be grateful if you could send us any comments or observations regarding the locations, activities or dates of the proposed maintenance programme.

For an interactive map of the sites where we plan to work, please follow this link:

<https://environment.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=f84cd06a9d7048eb93be35cf265a9c66>

The sites, channels and areas we plan to work within appear as features on the map. You can pan around the map and zoom in to these features. Clicking on a feature will bring up a small pop-up with the location name, planned works and start date. At some sites there will be several activities planned throughout the year. In such instances, a number will appear in the top-left of each pop-up (as shown below). Clicking the arrow in the top-right of each pop-up (as shown below) will allow you to scroll through each activity planned for that location.



Accompanying this e-mail are spreadsheets for each portion of the Thames listing each location, the planned activity, start date and an empty "comments" column. Also included within this e-mail is a guidance document on our maintenance standards.

Please send any comments or questions regarding the **Upper** Thames to james.spicer@environment-agency.gov.uk or:

James Spicer
Environment Agency
Osney Depot
Bridge Street
Oxford
OX2 0AZ

Please also use the above contact details if you have any difficulties with the map or attached documents.

Please send any comments or questions regarding the **Lower** Thames to rachel.hopkins@environment-agency.gov.uk or:

Rachel Hopkins
Environment Agency
Goldcrest House
Alice Holt Lodge
Farnham
Surrey
GU10 4LH

If providing any comments outside of the attached spreadsheets, it would be helpful if you could provide the site name as displayed or AIMS ID No. if your comment relates to a specific location. We would be grateful if you could respond by **11th March 2018**. If we do not hear from you by this date, we will presume you have no comments or objections regarding the maintenance programme.

A drop-in session will be taking place on **Friday 9th March 2018, 1000h to 1600h** at our Reading office:

Environment Agency
Kings Meadow House
Kings Meadow Road
Reading
RG1 8DQ

Please note that there is limited parking at Kings Meadow House. There are public car parks nearby, and the office is easily accessible from Reading station.

If you are considering undertaking your own maintenance work, please be aware that an environmental permit may be required from us for works affecting main rivers. Please contact your local authority for works relating to non-main (“ordinary”) watercourses. We can provide information relating to the environment permit requirements and best practise methodology. Further information regarding environmental permits for flood risk activities can be found here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-activities-environmental-permits>

Yours faithfully,

James Spicer

Further information

What work do we carry out?

We focus our effort on those activities that help us manage flood risk where there are economic and environmental reasons for doing so. The work we do includes:

- clearing grills and removing obstructions from rivers;
- controlling vegetation within rivers;
- managing grass, trees and bushes on our flood embankments;
- inspection, maintenance and repair of flood defence structures.

Each site is different so we choose the most suitable maintenance procedure for each stretch of river or each structure. We aim to provide a sustainable way of managing flood risk, whilst minimising the environmental impact of our maintenance operations.

How do we decide where, and what, work is needed?

We use the following four criteria to decide the level of maintenance for each of our rivers or defences:

1. We will continue to maintain defences where there is an economic case to reduce the risk from flooding to people and property.
2. We will continue to maintain defences that are required to protect internationally designated environmental features from the damaging effect of flooding, for example Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
3. We will consider maintaining defences that do not fit categories 1 and 2 above, but where work is justified due to legal commitments or where stopping maintenance would cause an unacceptable flood risk.
4. We will, following consultation, consider stopping maintenance of defences that do not fit the above three categories. We will work supportively with interested parties to explore options in such circumstances.

All works are undertaken using good practice conservation guidelines to minimise adverse effects on the environment, including the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and other relevant legislation. Dredging works involve removing recent (3-30 years) accumulations of silt and vegetation in watercourses that have, in the majority of cases, been dredged in the recent past. Before beginning, a survey is undertaken to ensure that all features and habitats of ecological value are identified and safeguarded wherever possible. Reinstatement involves spreading and seeding spoil and making good temporary fences, etc. The proposed timings for each job have been stated which are indicative only and may change due to work being re-scheduled where necessary. **If the timing of a particular job is of concern, please include this in your comments.**