

Town Clerk
Witney Town Council
Town Hall
Market Square
WITNEY
OX28 6AG

Our ref: EM2220.000
Your ref: W 01/1026
Date: 29 February 2024

Dear Witney Town Council

Thames Valley Flood Scheme

Your Property: Witney Lake & Country Park

Land Registry title no(s): ON123730

I am writing to let you know about a project the Environment Agency is leading to reduce flood risk throughout the Thames Valley. The project, called Thames Valley Flood Scheme, is investigating flood storage options in the vicinity of land or property that you own.

We wish to ensure those who own land or use property in these locations are aware of our work, so they can engage with us and share local knowledge to help shape the project. Your above-named property is within the vicinity of one of these areas.

What could the Thames Valley Flood Scheme do?

One of the Environment Agency's functions is to manage the risk of flooding from main rivers. As the climate changes we are expecting more intense rainfall with more frequent and severe flooding. We need to look at how we can better slow the flow of water and create more space for water upstream of communities at risk of flooding. This will reduce flood risk downstream of these areas.

With support from a range of organisations, we are in the early stages of developing the Thames Valley Flood Scheme. We have found formal flood storage supported by natural flood management could work at a large scale to reduce flood risk and improve the environment across the Thames Valley. To date we have identified 17 locations that might be suitable to store flood water to reduce flooding to communities.

These locations are all centred around areas of existing floodplain. We would look to hold water back by temporarily increasing the depth, duration, extent and/or frequency of flooding in these areas, to reduce flooding downstream.

How can I find out more?

I enclose our latest newsletter about the Thames Valley Flood Scheme, which provides further details. This includes an explanation of how we have identified the locations for further investigation and maps of these areas. You can also find out more about the project

by visiting <https://engageenvironmentagency.uk.engagementhq.com/hub-page/thames-valley> and view our short videos explaining the scheme.

When can I give my view?

We will be asking for your input later this year, after we have carried out some more studies into the suitability of these 17 locations. During the next phase of work, we will be refining the precise extent of these locations. It is also likely that we will reduce the number that we are investigating.

What happens next?

The project is at an early stage. As with any large project, it will go through a series of approvals and will need funding from government and partners for each stage. We expect this stage of the project to take about 2 years. At the end of this, the project would require further funding and approvals to proceed. Beyond this, project timescales are difficult to predict as our findings will influence the direction of the project.

Stay in touch

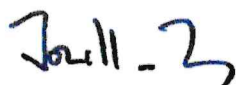
I would be grateful if you would provide an email address which we can use to keep you informed about this project as it develops by emailing us at **TVFS@environment-agency.gov.uk**, or by writing to: **Thames Valley Flood Scheme, Environment Agency, Kings Meadow House, Kings Meadow Road, Reading, RG1 8DQ**. If you would like to receive our electronic newsletter, please state this when you contact us, and we will add you to our mailing list. This will give you an opportunity to keep up to date and help shape the future of the project.

Please use these contact details if you have any questions that are not answered on the enclosed newsletter or on the project website. If your neighbours or tenants would like to be kept informed, please ask them to contact us so we can update them directly.

We are also keeping a range of organisations informed, including the National Farmers Union (NFU), Country Land and Business Association (CLA), and farmer cluster groups (Ock catchment and North-East Cotswold Farmer Cluster). They would welcome any questions or discussions around the scheme.

Finally, I would like to reassure you that we will not share any personal information with anyone else without your explicit consent, unless we are required to do so by law. Please see our enclosed privacy notice.

Yours sincerely



Jonathan Young FRICS FAAV

Senior Estates Surveyor (South-West & Thames Hub)

Privacy notice

Controller and Data Protection Officer contact details:

The Environment Agency is the controller for the personal data we process under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). Our contact details are available on GOV.UK. Our personal information charter explains:

- how to contact our Data Protection Officer
- what we do with your personal information (personal data) in general
- your rights and how to complain to the Information Commissioner's Office

Why we may process your personal data:

Our purpose for processing your personal data is to be able to inform you about any work relating to investigating land for flood storage in or near a property or land that you own. The lawful basis we rely on to process your personal data is article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary to exercise our official authority.

What personal data we process and how we use it:

We have used Land Registry and other investigations to obtain your name and address. We use your personal data to provide you with updates where they relate to any investigations into potential for floodwater storage for Thames Valley Flood Scheme in the vicinity of land that you own or have an interest in. We do not share your personal data with any other party without your consent unless we are required or permitted to do so by law.

Where your personal information is stored and processed:

We store and process your personal data in the UK.

How long we keep your personal data:

We keep your personal data for as long as we need to contact you in relation to the Thames Valley Flood Scheme.

Changes to this notice:

We may change this privacy notice. Any changes to this privacy notice will apply to you and your data immediately. If these changes affect how your personal data is processed, we will take reasonable steps to let you know.



Thames Valley Flood Scheme

February 2024 project update

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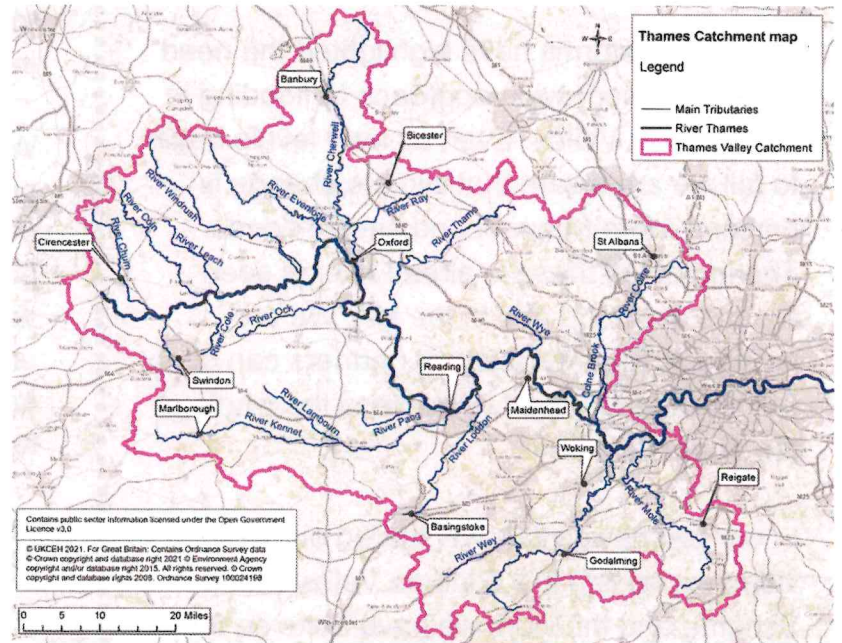
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The Thames Valley Flood Scheme is investigating ways to manage flood risk on a large scale across the Thames Valley. It aims to reduce flood risk and build climate resilience for communities, businesses and infrastructure. We aim to work in partnership to deliver a wide range of environmental and other benefits, supporting people and wildlife in the Thames Valley to thrive throughout the rest of this century and beyond. The project remains in its early stages, and will need to pass approvals and gain further funding to continue to progress.



Catchment map of the Thames Valley Flood Scheme area

Reducing flood risk and enhancing the Thames Valley



Welcome to the Thames Valley Flood Scheme newsletter



I would like to welcome both new and existing readers to the first Thames Valley Flood Scheme newsletter of 2024.

At the Environment Agency we work alongside partners to support communities to manage their flood risk. Our role is to manage the risk of flooding from main rivers. We achieve this in a range of ways, including developing flood alleviation schemes to reduce the likelihood and impact of flooding for thousands of people throughout the Thames Valley. Despite this work, many communities remain at risk of flooding. Whilst it's not possible to protect all properties from flooding, we are looking at ways to reduce it further in the coming years.

The recent storms have highlighted the need for a catchment-wide approach to flooding in the Thames Valley. Even as river levels begin to fall we are aware that climate change is bringing more frequent and severe floods. The impact of these is already being seen around the world and in the UK. We are looking at what we and our partners can do to further manage flood risk across the whole of the Thames Valley.

In our last newsletter, we shared our new video explaining the Thames Valley Flood Scheme and the work we have done so far. I hope you have enjoyed the video, and if you haven't had a chance to watch it yet you can find it on our website.

In this edition, I am happy to share updates from our recent work to identify flood storage areas for further investigation. We began the search with over 700 potential areas, carefully considering a range of factors to narrow down the locations. We have now identified 17 areas for further investigation to establish if they could be used to store floodwater.

In this newsletter, you can read more about how we narrowed down the number of sites and look at maps showing the locations we identified at each step.

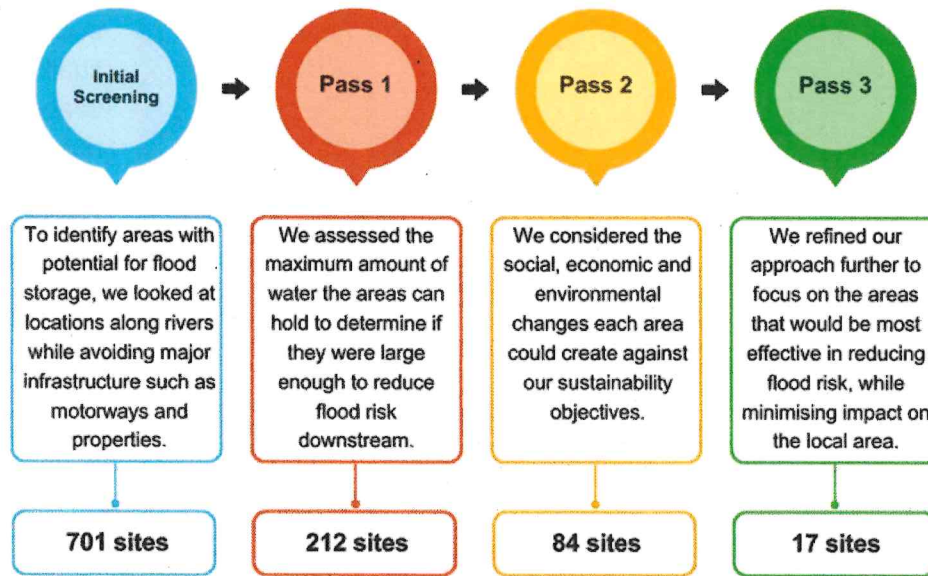
I would like to stress that we are in an early stage of investigation. We expect to continue to reduce the number of locations we are investigating as we identify site constraints.

We are keen to include local knowledge in our plans. When we have greater certainty over which locations have the technical potential to reduce flood risk, we will ask for your input. This information will help us understand the risks and opportunities for each location as we progress the project further.

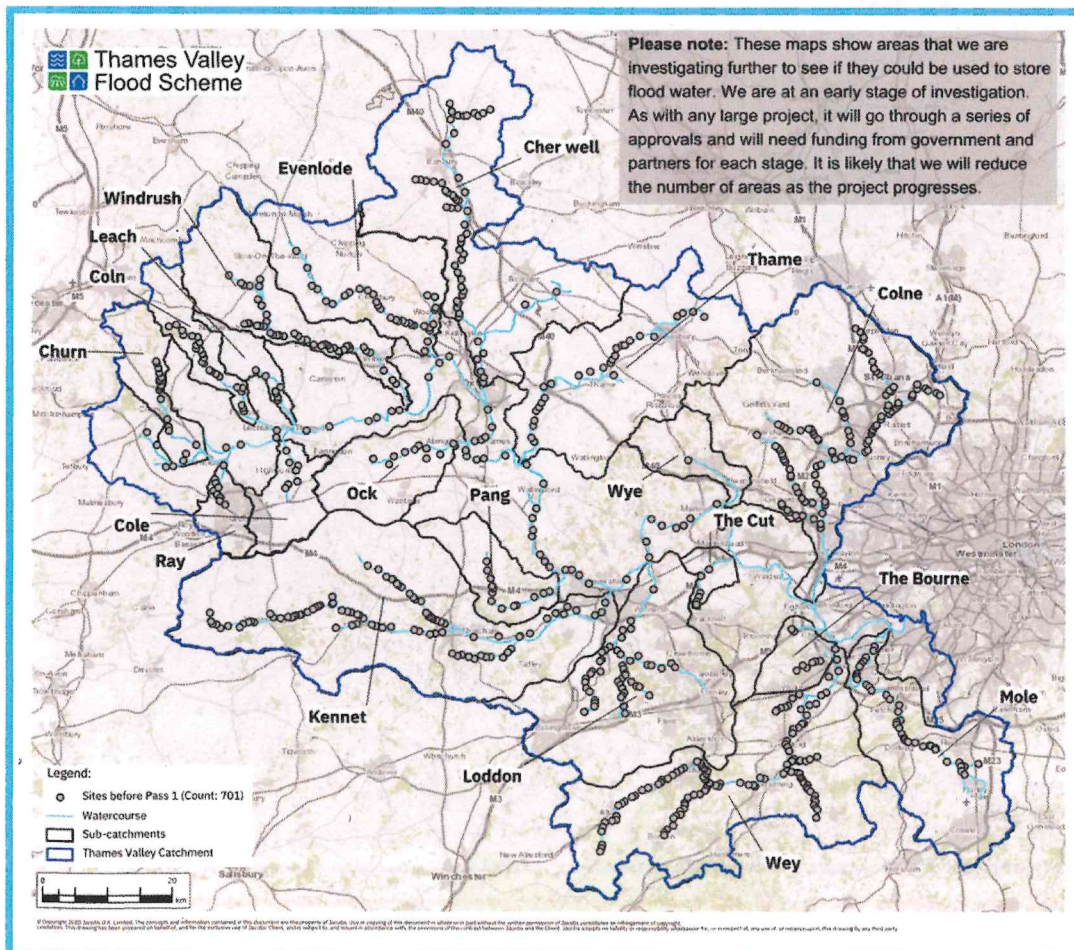
Joe Cuthbertson
Project Director

Flood storage progress

As part of the Thames Valley Flood Scheme, the project team has been identifying areas that could be used to store floodwater to reduce flood risk across the Thames Valley. We have looked at the whole catchment of the non-tidal section of the River Thames. This area is shown on the map on Page 1. We used a 3 pass approach to assess over 700 potential locations for flood storage, narrowing down the locations to 17 for further investigation. Our 3 pass approach is illustrated below, and you can read our report for more information on the process of site selection on our website.

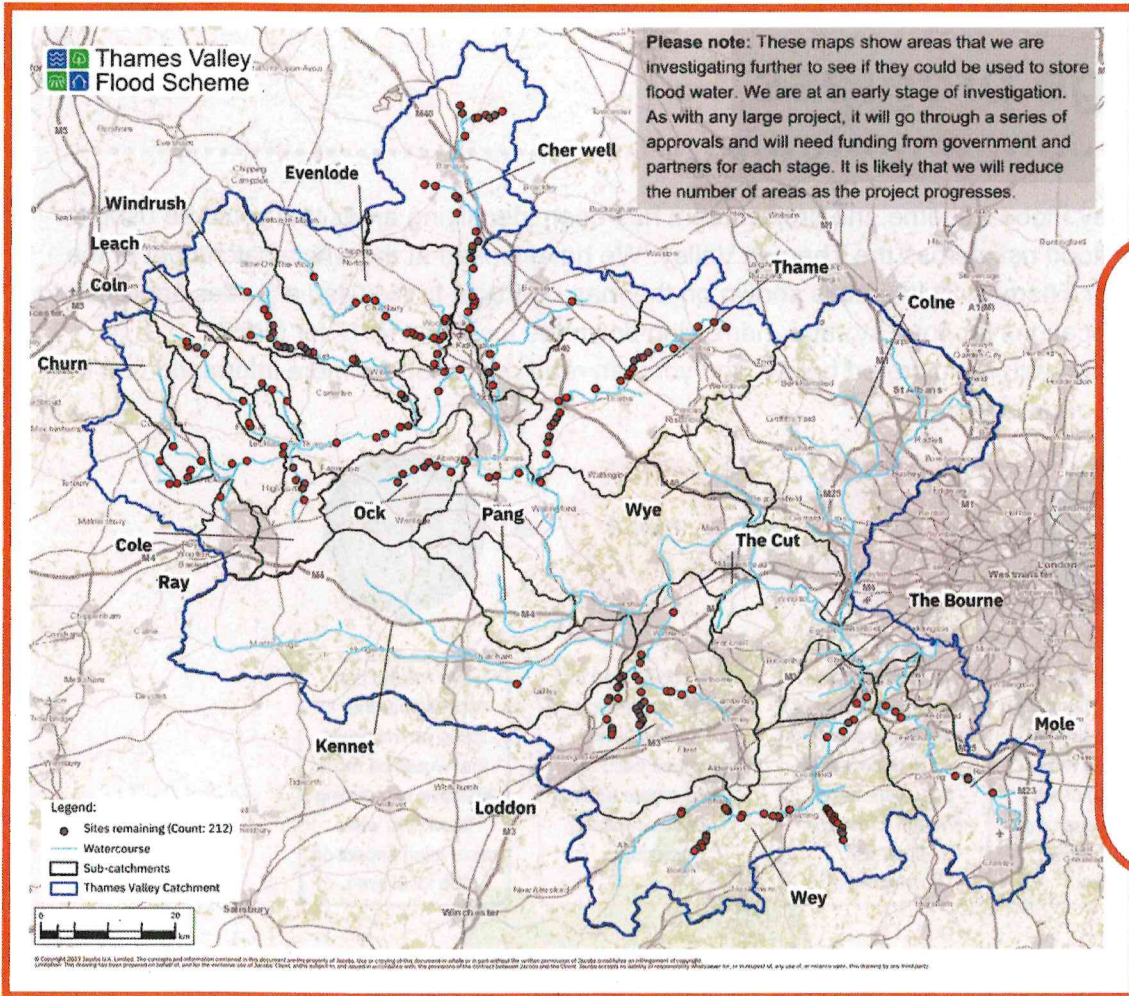


Flood storage areas for further investigation



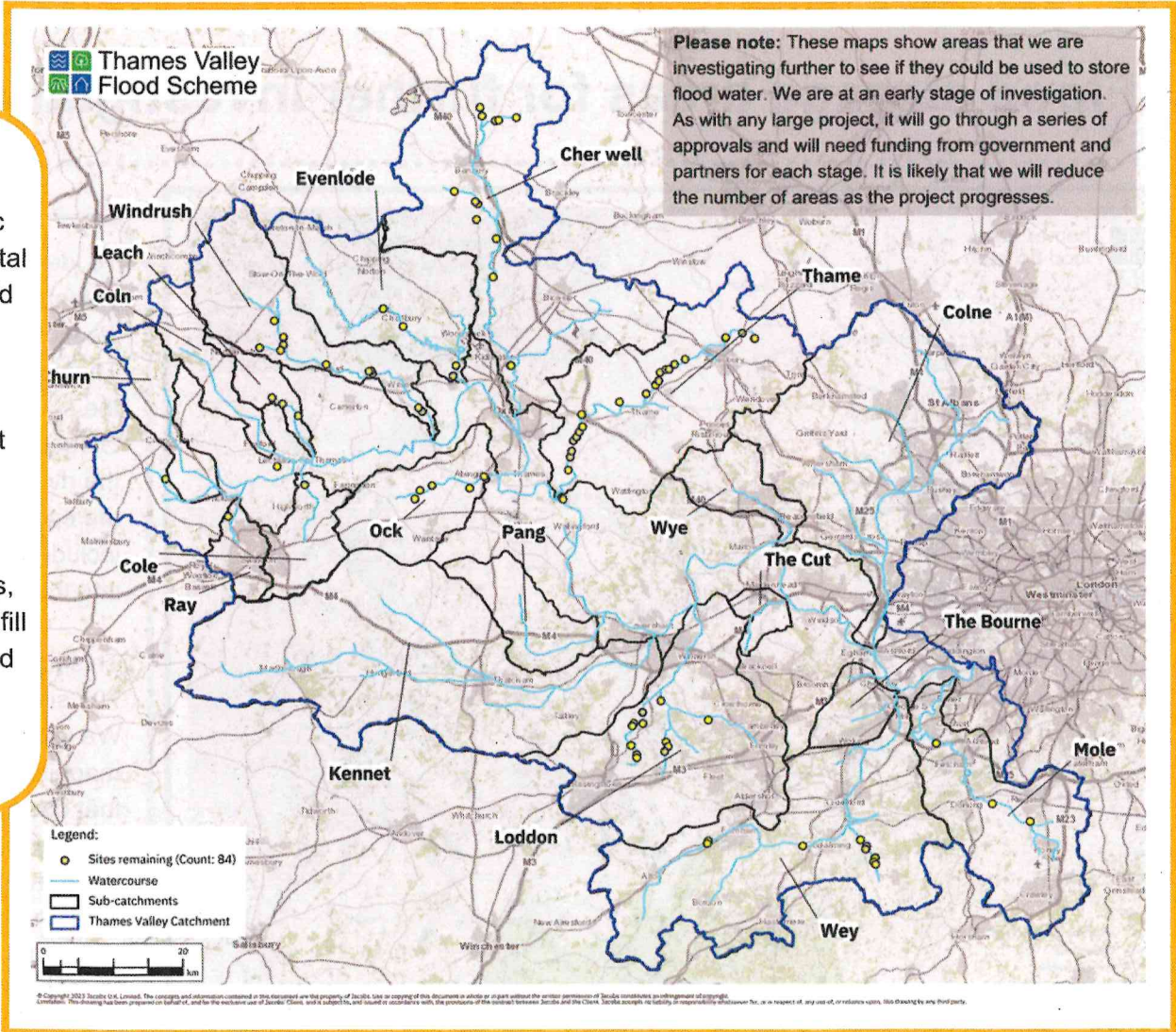
To identify areas with potential for flood storage, we looked across the River Thames catchment from the source of the river in Gloucestershire to where the river becomes tidal on the edge of London. This includes all rivers that flow into the Thames.

This map shows the initial 701 sites that we assessed. We used computer mapping to identify areas that could be used to store large volumes of water while avoiding major infrastructure and communities.

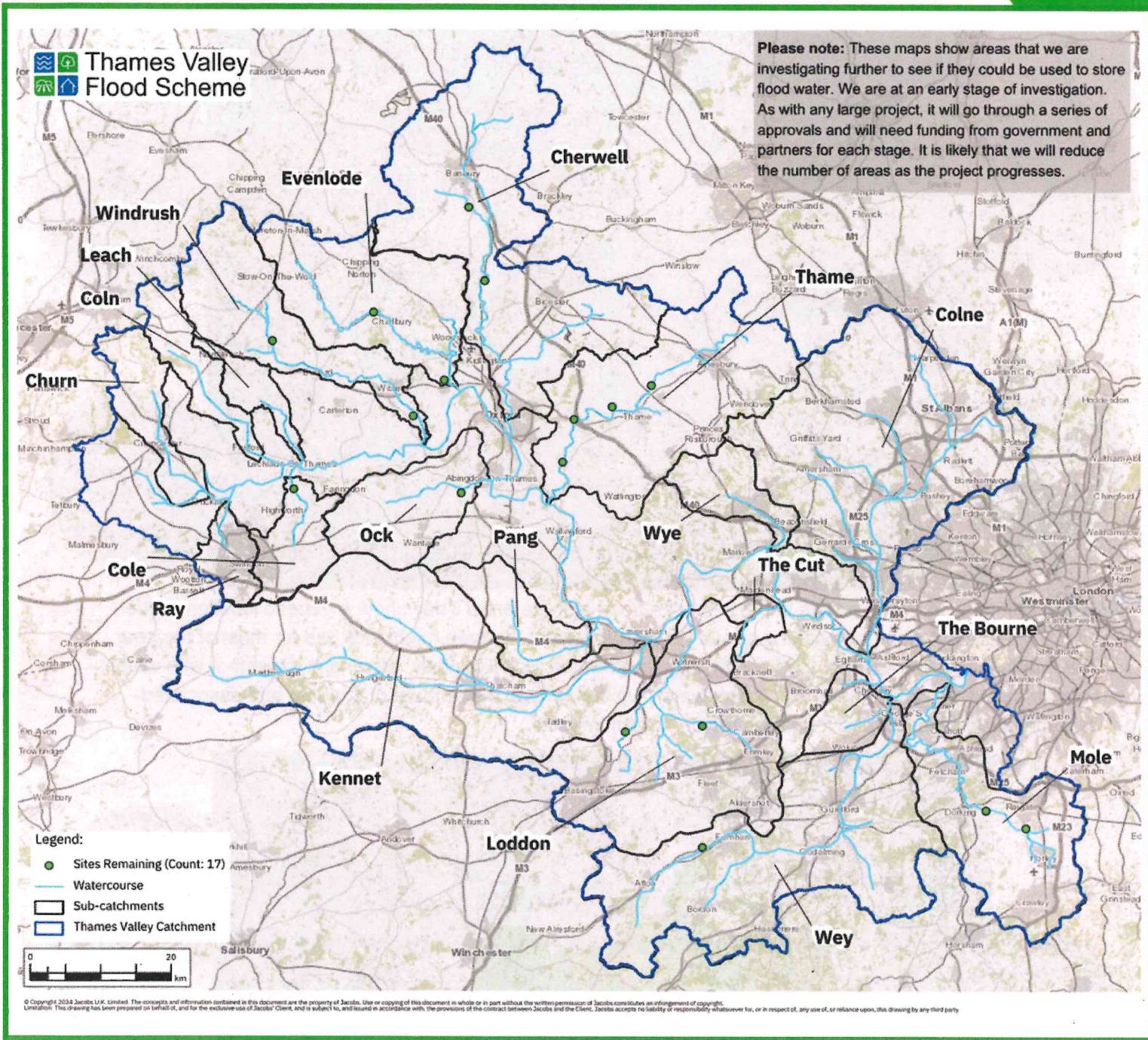


At the Pass 1 stage we removed any locations which were not suitable for storing water, such as areas of chalk outcrop and spaces that were not large enough. This resulted in us removing 489 sites from consideration, leaving us with 212 sites to investigate further.

For Pass 2, we considered the social, economic and environmental benefits we could create in each area. We also assessed the locations against sustainability criteria, such as wildlife habitats, heritage features, and historic landfill sites. This helped us narrow down our list to 84 possible sites.



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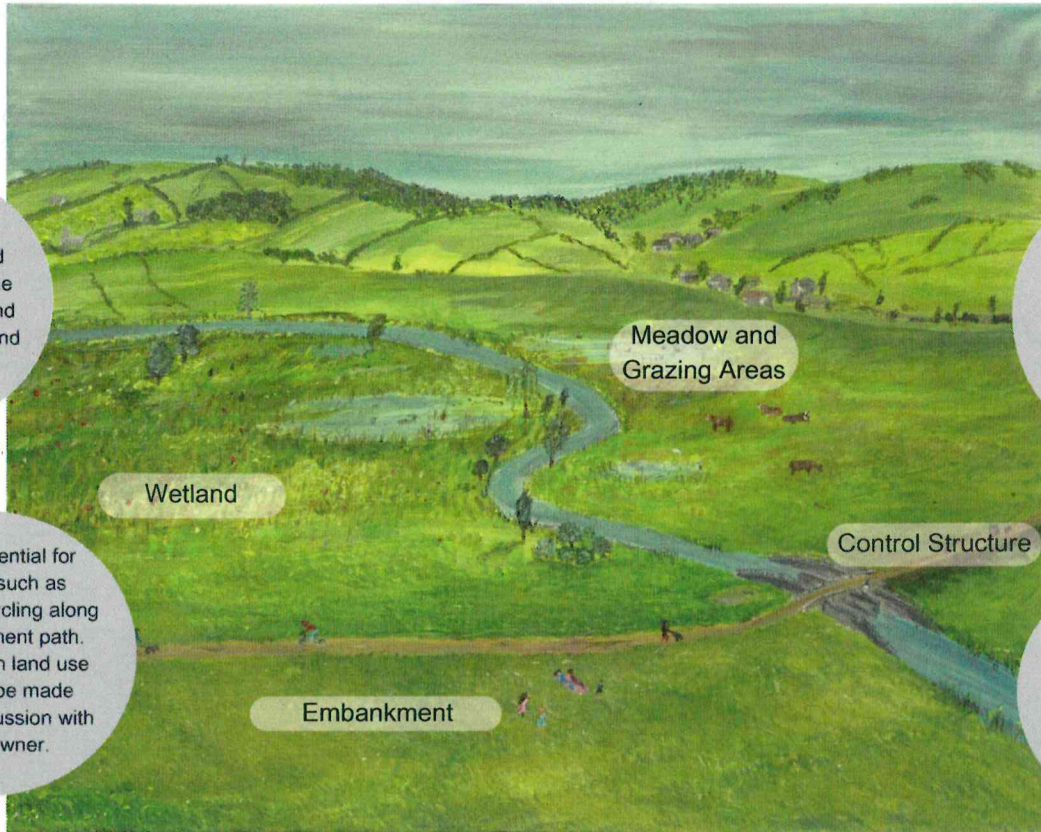


Finally, we looked further at minimising the impact on residential properties. We also reviewed the size of flood storage that would be possible in each location. As each location has different factors impacting them, we carried out a variety of assessments for each site to understand how we could most effectively reduce flood risk. We now have a list of 17 areas for further investigation.

Flood storage artist impressions

This example shows improved connectivity to the floodplain, wetland habitat creation and recreation.

Existing agricultural use could be maintained or adapted, depending on landowner requirements.



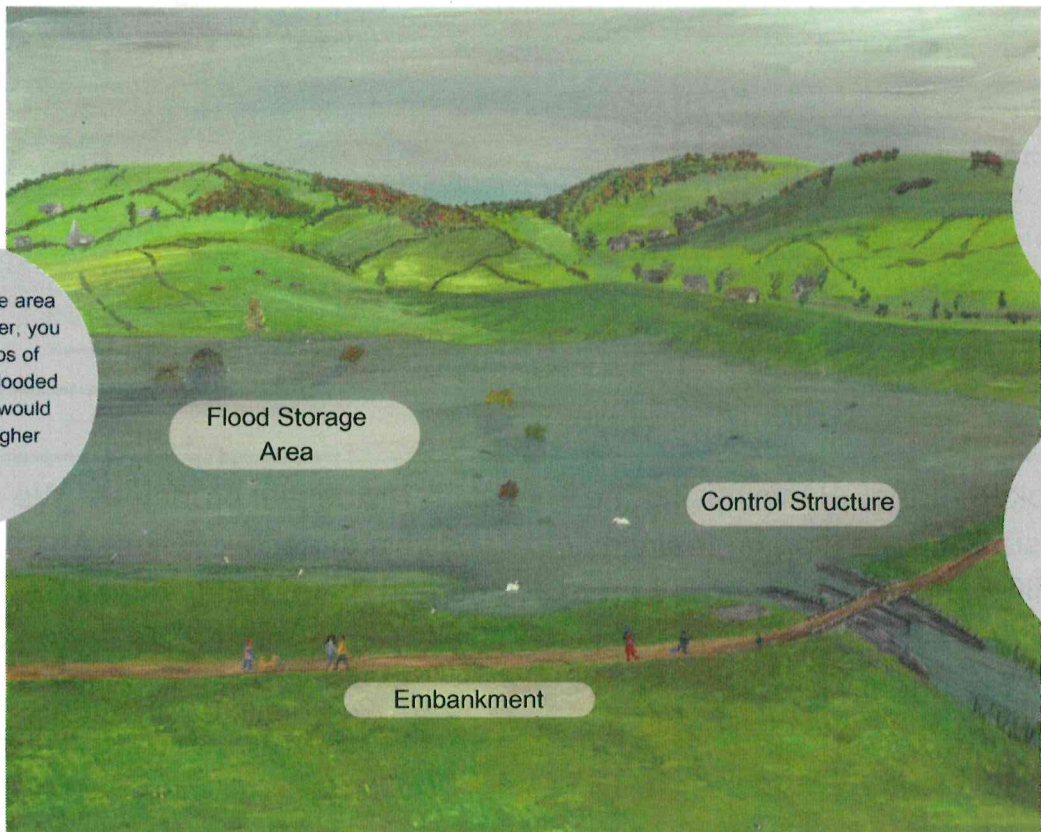
There is potential for recreation such as walking and cycling along the embankment path. Any change in land use would only be made following discussion with the landowner.

The embankment grass may be kept short to allow for inspections.

These paintings show an artist's impression of a flood storage area. They show a generic location, rather than a specific place. In the painting above you can see what the area might look like for most of the year. The image below shows what the flood storage area would look like when flooding is expected, with water being temporarily stored there. By storing water, we can reduce the amount of flooding and associated damage, financial costs and long term mental health impacts.

The flood storage area holding back water, you can see the tops of trees within the flooded area. Livestock would be moved to higher ground.

Properties shown being protected from flooding by raised embankment.



The control structure will be an engineered structure and would be designed specifically for each area. These may vary from this example.

Natural Flood Management

The Environment Agency and partner organisations have delivered many natural flood management projects across the Thames Valley, with others still in progress.

There are numerous benefits of natural flood management. It can bring local flood risk benefits, improve water quality, and reduce the impacts of drought as well as improving the natural habitat.

The Thames Valley Flood Scheme is looking to reduce flood risk on a large scale. While the evidence to date shows that natural flood management works well to manage flood risk locally, the size of this project means that large scale flood storage is needed to meet the project aims. Therefore, we are assessing how natural flood management can be used in combination with flood storage as part of the scheme.



Please view our website to find out more about our work on natural flood management.


Next steps

We will continue to look more closely into the 17 sites we have identified for further investigation. As part of this work, we will carry out more detailed modelling on each site to see what flood risk benefits each could provide, both on their own and when combined together with other sites.

When we have completed this work we are likely to have a shorter list of areas to investigate. At this stage we will seek feedback to learn more about these individual locations. We will use this information along with technical findings and sustainability information to establish whether this project would deliver the flood risk benefits needed at a catchment scale to bring long term flood risk benefits to the Thames Valley.


Contact the team

There are many ways you can stay up to date with the Thames Valley Flood Scheme or contact the team to ask questions or provide comments

 <https://engageenvironmentagency.uk/engagementhq.com/hub-page/thames-valley>

 TVFS@environment-agency.gov.uk

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