



Thank you for attending the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier stakeholder and public consultation on Thursday 10 March. Both the meeting and the drop-in were really well attended and a wide variety of thoughts and ideas were shared both on the day and following the event.

As the project moves forward we will continue to work closely with Sedgemoor District Council, the Somerset Rivers Authority, consultants CH2M and local stakeholders. We will continue regularly to inform the local community of progress and provide updates as the scheme progresses and we very much value your personal feedback.

The meeting and public event presented 7 potential locations for the proposed tidal barrier. Feedback collected from the event will be used to support the short listing process of reducing 7 locations to a smaller number for more detailed assessment. The next stage of appraisal will include looking at the location, gate arrangement and operating regime of a barrier and the associated defences.

A summary of the feedback collated from the event is described below. If you would like to add any new thoughts, or have a specific question or concern please email bridgwater.barrier@environment-agency.gov.uk

The next stakeholder meeting and public consultation will be held in the summer when a shortlist of locations will be presented. The shortlist will take account of the feedback from the March 2016 consultation.

A summary of feedback from the Bridgwater Tidal Barrier stakeholder and public consultation;

Stakeholders who responded included:

Durleigh Parish Council, Bridgwater Town Council, Sedgemoor District Councillors, Friends of Bridgwater Docks and Canal, Wessex Water, Somerset Consortium Drainage Boards, Military Boats, Royal Yachting Association, Inland Waterways Association, Otterhampton Parish Council, RSPB, Historic England and local residents of Bridgwater and the surrounding area.

Key comments and observations:

The overall feedback from attendees was that the construction of a tidal barrier to reduce tidal flood risk to Bridgwater would be positive for the town and the surrounding area.

Overall, there was a slight preference shown for the sites further downstream from Bridgwater, although these sites also attracted the most questions.

Summary of the main points and questions raised

- Would the barrier enhance the look of the river and town
- Would there be space for a navigation lock
- It would be good to combine the barrier with a road bridge, this would also ease traffic in the town
- Questions on associated project costs and benefits
- Which options would provide the highest flood risk protection for the town
- Whether the barrier is close enough or too far away from the town
- The design of the barrier itself
- Access for pleasure boats and small craft
- How the land will be protected if archaeological remains are found
- How the location choice could impact on future development of the town
- This could be an excellent opportunity to enhance nature and the environment
- Who will be responsible for maintaining banks and associated costs in the future
- Whether the barrier will impact on the level of silt that travels up the river
- Whether the type of barrier will be suitable for the level and type of silt in the River Parrett
- More information required on each individual option for the future
- The plans should not adversely impact on nature and the environment
- Consideration of water management (penning water)

Answers in response to the main points and questions raised:

The main aim of the project is to protect Bridgwater and the surrounding area from tidal flooding. We are proposing to build a tidal barrier that keeps the river as far as possible in its natural state.

Some feedback showed a desire to hold the water at a higher level in Bridgwater by penning the river. This is not something we are aiming to do. It would add cost and complexity to the project for several reasons. Drainage from the town relies on low water levels in the river. Alternative drainage methods would be very costly. Penning the river could make the water stagnant and covered in weed during the summer months as river flows in summer are very small without any tidal action. This could impact on nature and the environment and would not be visually attractive. Furthermore a raised river level may increase flood risk, for example when thunderstorms occur leading to a build up of surface water that can't escape.

Our first preference would be to provide a barrier that does not significantly reduce the ability of boats to navigate the river. The chosen location and design of the barrier will be influenced by this aim. For this reason, we are not considering constructing a navigation lock at this stage.

Several comments were received questioning whether a road crossing could be included within the design of a barrier. At this stage, the proposed locations do not incorporate a road crossing.

The location for a road crossing may not be the best location for flood risk management and a road bridge is likely to impact on the construction and operation of a tidal barrier. A cost saving by merging the two aspirations cannot be guaranteed. Combining with a road crossing and altering the road network could delay the timely completion of the barrier. The project is working under tight time constraints and the 20 Year Flood Action Plan envisages that a barrier for Bridgwater will be constructed by 2024.

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However, we may be able to alter the project to help deliver other aspirations if other infrastructure projects emerge which can be combined with the project and which:

- Have sufficient certainty
- Align technically with the preferred barrier option
- Do not add excessive cost to the barrier
- Do not add excessive operational demands on the Environment Agency or Sedgemoor District Council
- Do not unacceptably slow the delivery of the tidal barrier
- Do not result in unacceptable environmental impacts

We would not, at this stage, rule out another organisation building the tidal barrier within a wider project if we could be confident of delivery timescales and costs.

What happens next?

Thank you once again, to everyone who visited the event and contributed their ideas and feedback. The comments received will be used to help develop a shortlist of locations in time for the next public consultation event in the summer of 2016.

At the next event you will be able to see in more detail the shortlisted locations. You will also be able to ask any specific questions to the project partners.

We also received comments on the exhibition itself, how complex information was presented and the layout of the display boards. We have listened to your feedback and will make changes for the next consultation in the summer.

There is still time to ask questions or put forward suggestions before the next public consultation, please email; bridgwater.barrier@environment-agency.gov.uk
Or visit www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/bridgwaterbarrier for the latest news and updates.

We appreciate your continued support and look forward to seeing you at the next event.

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