

The Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme

Autumn 2024

Project overview

The Environment Agency is working with Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (previously part of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership) to reduce flood risk to over 1,400 homes and businesses in Tonbridge, Hildenborough and downstream communities.

The Leigh expansion and Hildenborough embankment scheme has 2 aspects: increasing the capacity of the Leigh Flood Storage Area (FSA) and constructing a new embankment to protect homes in Hildenborough.

Project updates:

Leigh FSA expansion

We have made great progress on the Leigh FSA expansion over recent months. In September, the team achieved a significant milestone by successfully installing the first of the three new gates on the control structure. This is the first time that a gate has been replaced in the structure's 42-year life.



You can [view drone footage of the gate being lifted into place on X](#) or [read our press release](#) celebrating this milestone.

Cattle Arch and Leigh pumping station

We are placing new topsoil along the final sections of embankment slopes where the last stages of work have been completed.

We are in the process of removing the temporary fencing and installing the replacement post and rail fencing. We are expecting to have these works completed before the New Year.

Hildenborough

In Hildenborough, we have also made significant progress. After removing some further vegetation, we installed a temporary crossing over the stream. This allowed machinery to access the area so we could install the first set of piling.

We used a specialist piece of equipment called a spider excavator to install the piling. These are used on slopes and have a smaller footprint than traditional piling methods. It also meant we could undertake the works more efficiently within the gardens, with lower vibrating equipment.



Next steps

We are continuing to integrate the new gate into the existing structure and prepare for next year's work to replace the 2 remaining gates at the structure.

The flood storage area continues to remain fully operational throughout the works.

In Hildenborough, we will start building the new penstock chamber in the Hawden Stream and begin installing the new pumping station.

The programme is tight, but the project team is working closely together to ensure we identify risks early and make the most of opportunities to ensure we stay on track.

We still expect both parts of the scheme to be operational by the end of 2025.

Working together

We have been working closely with the community. We attended meetings with both Leigh Parish Council and Hildenborough Parish Council to provide updates and answer questions.

We also had a visit from Tom Tugendhat MP on 25 October 2024, which highlighted the project's importance. You can view a video that Tom made during his visit here: [Leigh Flood Storage Area](#)



Supporting the local community

As well as reducing flood risk, the project team is keen to leave a positive legacy by supporting the local communities we're working in.

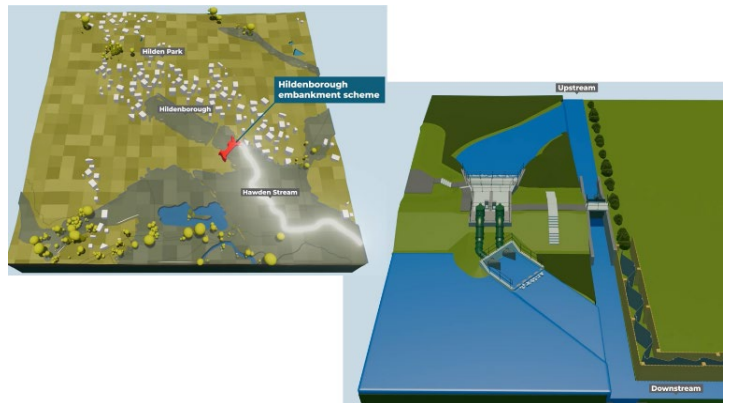
Here are a few examples of how the team is getting involved:

- Supporting local businesses: a local farm shop supplies a weekly healthy eating box to the team
- Supporting the local environment: we removed a damaged tree at Haysden Country Park and used the wood to create a habitat for local wildlife
- Supporting local students: as well as giving a presentation to local college engineering students, sixth form student Rhys Gabriel from the Hugh Christie School in Tonbridge recently joined us for work experience. He shadowed our engineering team, assisting with surveys, site control setup, and inspections of temporary and permanent works.
- Supporting the local community: The project contractor, VolkerStevin has donated a defibrillator to Leigh Parish Council and some funds to the Leigh Performing Arts pantomime, Live and Let Leigh!

How to get in touch or find out more

You can find out more about how the the 2 elements of the scheme work by viewing our YouTube animations:

- [Hildenborough embankment scheme - YouTube](#)
- [How the Leigh flood Storage Area works to reduce flood risk](#)



Further information is available on our [gov.uk website](#).

If you have any questions or would like to join our electronic distribution list for future updates, please contact the project team at:

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