Environment Agency

For homes and habitats

Statement for Portreath Parish Council to Read on Behalf of the Environment Agency



Portreath is at significant and increasing risk of flooding from the Portreath Stream.

The village lies within a rapid response catchment, which means water levels can rise very quickly during periods of intense or prolonged rainfall leaving little opportunity for residents and businesses to respond.

Sadly, not having been flooded is not the same as not being at flood risk and with climate change this was never truer.

Without action, flooding will affect homes, businesses and community infrastructure, causing disruption for local people, damaging properties (including community facilities such as schools and nurseries) and putting increasing pressure on the environment.

The Portreath Flood Alleviation scheme has been designed not only to address this increasing risk, but also to ensure the continued operation of the existing flood management system that has helped protect Portreath for many years……the Portreath Tunnel.

The Portreath tunnel, constructed in 1927 currently carries much of the flow from the stream out to sea bypassing the village. The tunnel however, has limited capacity and when exceeded flows spill onto the road and into the village and also into the historic channel which ultimately discharges at the beach.

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Detailed surveys, hydraulic modelling and ground investigations have shown that the historic channel is no longer capable of safely carrying flood flows without improvements. Over time, a range of factors have reduced its resilience including; encroachment from private development, reductions in the height of historic flood defences, removal of embankment support, sediment build-up, vegetation growth and unstable channel bank.

The proposed works are therefore intended to restore and strengthen the historic channel so that it can safely accommodate excess flood flows. A new control structure will manage when and how much water enters the channel, ensuring it is only used during flood events or to facilitate essential tunnel maintenance.

We recognise that the scheme will affect the community. Construction will cause temporary disruption, vegetation will need to be removed in some locations, and works will take place within a sensitive historic environment.

Environmental considerations have been an important part of the design process. An example of this is that all high-quality trees will be retained, with only three medium-quality trees proposed for removal along the 1.1-kilometre scheme length. The project will also include measures to manage invasive species and enhance biodiversity through the planting of native trees, shrubs and in-channel vegetation to promote biodiversity.

Other elements of the work will protect historic structures from erosion and increase public accessibility through the provision of three new footbridges. The planning application is now available and we ask that you look at it and judge the proposal on its merits.

Change is challenging but it is also necessary…. and in this case this change represents an opportunity for investment in the resilience of the community…. A community that matters.

Should people have any queries regarding the scheme please contact DCISEnquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk and the team will be happy to answer them