

A workshop and consultation exercise at the end of the month could pave the way for an ambitious new flood defence scheme for parts of Upton upon Severn.

The event – on Thursday January 31 – is being staged by the Environment Agency. They have engaged consultants to investigate the wider social and economic impact flooding has on the town. The event will be in the Memorial Hall from 2pm to 6pm.

Advance news of the exercise was given to the New Street Flood Forum, a residents' group established after the initial June flooding last year.

Following the major floods in July, the Forum has been carrying out a wide-ranging exercise to lobby politicians and the Environment Agency to progress a permanent defence for New Street.

A crucial participant at the workshop will be the attendance of the Agency's London based National Capital Programme Management Service.

“I believe the involvement of this senior team bodes well for the town,” said Chris Mair, the Forum's coordinator. “I understand they are prepared to look at a wider scheme that would benefit both New Street and a permanent but flexible scheme for the waterfront.”

Following the July floods the Environment Agency arranged a 'walkabout' in November with its senior officials, Forum members, Cllr Tim Perry, town mayor and Upton Tourism and Trade Association to see at first hand what options might be suitable.

One is a permanent clay 'bund' that would encompass New Street, Backfields Lane and Upton Rugby Club.

Funding for this would come from an existing, regional pot of money. The scheme would need the approval of a regional Flood Defence Committee of the Environment Agency.

What could make the scheme financially more attractive is that the clay could be 'recycled' from the excavation of the proposed second marina.

The riverside itself could also see a low wall built from the road bridge as a permanent defence that might remove the need for the current demountable defences and could be similar to a scheme being developed for Hereford.

“Our Forum has had good support from our MP Sir Michael Spicer and the Shadow Environment Minister, Anne McIntosh MP,” said Mr Mair. “Baroness Young, chief executive of the Environment Agency confirmed back in October that her Agency was carrying out a feasibility study for New Street ‘to identify an engineered cost-effective scheme’”.

“We now need Upton people to come along to the event and make a positive contribution to the workshop. If all goes well a scheme could be started next year,” added Mr Mair.

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