
RESIDENTS NEWSLETTER

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NEW FLOOD RISK RESEARCH ABOUT TO START

... focus on Staines and vulnerable areas of Runnymede ...

FIELD WORK BEGINS THIS MONTH on 'phase two' of flood risk research by Royal Holloway, University of London. The three-month project will comprise a follow-up study of ground water quality and flood risk in and around Staines on the Spelthorne side of the Thames, and new base-line investigations of groundwater quality and flood risk on the Runnymede side from Egham to Chertsey. Funded by a government grant through the Open University, the project will be led by Dr Jonathan Paul, Associate Professor in Geoscience at Royal Holloway. It will involve both students and residents in the affected communities. Dr Paul led the 2024 research into groundwater flood risk in Staines. The dramatic findings of that study called into question a number of proposed developments in the town and the need for a new robust policy directive on flood risk. Spelthorne Borough Council has committed to producing an enforceable Supplementary Planning Document on flood risk, working with AECOM consultants and Dr Paul. Findings from this year's Royal Holloway research are expected to be released in the autumn. Funding is also being sought for a proposed third phase covering a wider area of both Spelthorne and Runnymede in early 2027.

This year's study in Staines will focus on sites identified for development. It will evaluate changes from the 2024 study in groundwater levels, flows and chemistry (*see technical note below*). Locations to be examined on the Runnymede side of the Thames will include those impacted by old gravel extraction works and other land-fill operations, also with a focus on water quality as well as flood risk.

"This broader 'phase two' research programme will deepen the understanding of flood risk and groundwater quality in Staines and produce valuable new data on these issues relevant to communities on the Runnymede side of the Thames," says a spokesperson for the Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition. "Hopefully Spelthorne Council's new Supplementary Planning Document on flood risk will be sufficiently robust to become the gold-standard for other local authorities to copy."

Technical background: *Staines, like a wide area above and below the town along the Thames, sits on a thin layer of gravel through which vast quantities of water flow. It is a major source of flooding, adding to and often fed by that from the river and surface-water run-off. Barriers in the gravel particularly from the foundations and basements of high-rise buildings force these water flows upwards because they have nowhere else to go, creating a significant additional risk of flooding in the area around them. Little was known about the extent and characteristics of groundwater as a source of flooding in and around Staines until dramatic findings of the Royal Holloway research in 2024. Climate change will only make this problem worse.*

Riverside Residents (Staines) Coalition – a working group of six residents' organisations serving the interests of residents on both sides of the river.
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