



Media Release

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Land Expertise Behind Oxford's £176m Flood Scheme Revealed as City Faces Rising Climate Threat

Bicester (UK), Friday 16th May 2025 — With Oxford hit by eight major floods since 2000 - and the risk rising due to climate change—the Secretary of State has approved the Compulsory Purchase Order for the £176 million Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme, following a public inquiry by the Planning Inspectorate. Evidence from the inquiry highlights the key role played by infrastructure specialists Dalcour Maclaren in land strategy and securing the consents needed to move the project forward. The scheme will protect more than 2,000 homes and critical infrastructure across the city.

Dalcour Maclaren's team has been involved in the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme since 2006, with Associate Director, Michael Thorne, contributing from the early stages before joining the firm. From 2016, Dalcour Maclaren supported the Delivery Phase of the project—initially advising the Environment Agency Estates Team and from 2017, with Michael Thorne taking the lead role as Estates Representative. His extensive experience and in-depth knowledge are reflected in the Planning Inspector's report, which cites his evidence* contributing to the Inspector's Recommendation for the Oxford Flood Alleviation Compulsory Purchase Order 2023 to be confirmed.

"This project is a strong example of how technical land expertise enables climate resilience infrastructure to move forward. It's not just about permissions — it's about making the project deliverable on the ground," said Michael Thorne, Dalcour Maclaren.

Oxford has suffered severe flooding in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013–14 and most recently in January 2024. Without intervention, a 1-in-100-year flood event could inundate homes, roads, the railway and key services. The new five-kilometre scheme will create a relief channel and wetland corridor to safely carry floodwater away from built-up areas.

Over the course of the scheme, Dalcour Maclaren has provided comprehensive support including mapping and referencing land ownership across the corridor, arranging access for site and ground investigations, leading landowner engagement and issuing financial compensation offers. The company has also produced statutory Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) mapping and the Schedule of Interests, advised on minimising land take, and supported the successful application for Section 19 certification to acquire open space land without the need for Parliamentary referral.

More than 40 Dalcour Maclaren professionals have contributed, including surveyors, land referencing specialists and geospatial teams. The company has worked on flood resilience projects more than 15 years, including major projects in water, transport and environmental infrastructure across the UK and Ireland.



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Dalcour Maclaren’s extensive experience in land referencing, stakeholder engagement, and statutory consents enables public sector bodies—including councils, the Environment Agency, and DEFRA—to successfully navigate complex land and planning challenges. This expertise is crucial in unlocking and delivering nationally significant infrastructure projects such as the Oxford Flood Alleviation Scheme.

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Notes to Editors

*Michael Thorne is referenced in the Planning Inspectorate’s report in these two places:

248. “Mr Thorne’s evidence provides a comprehensive and detailed account of the negotiations with landowners that have taken place over the last 5 years. The sheer size of Mr Thorne’s proof and appendices indicates the extent to which the Agency and its agents have sought to engage meaningfully with those affected.”

251. “The Inspector can be satisfied that the CPO is pursued as a last resort. As explained in detail in Mr Thorne’s evidence and is evidenced through the resolution of many land deals, intensive and prolonged efforts to acquire by negotiation have been undertaken. It is clear that where matters have not been resolved, this largely relates to matters of in principle objection or matters of compensation, which are not for this Inquiry.”

About Dalcour Maclaren

Dalcour Maclaren is a leading specialist in the utilities and infrastructure sector, helping to drive the UK and Ireland towards a cleaner, greener future. Our expert teams in land, environment and geospatial services unlock the consents needed for major energy, water, transport, and digital infrastructure projects. With an exclusive focus on utilities and infrastructure, we combine scale and expertise to deliver industry-leading solutions. Our people are at the heart of our business, and we are committed to fostering long-term, rewarding careers while prioritising their wellbeing.

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