

Experts mull future of Thames Barrier

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Sea levels are rising much faster than when the Thames Barrier was designed, and British officials are looking ahead to new consider flood defenses.

The barrier was designed in the 1970s and completed in 1982. At the time, average sea level rise around the world was 1.8 millimeters or .07 inches a year.

In the past 15 years, sea-level rise has speeded up to 3.1 millimeters or .12 inches annually -- and it could accelerate with global warming. While experts say the barrier can do the job at least through 2030, the Environment Agency is already planning for the decades after that, The Independent reports.

Thames Estuary 2100 is preparing a report, scheduled to be completed next year, on how to protect London from storm surges in the future. Experts expect sea levels to rise by 2 meters (6.5 feet) by the end of the century but are also preparing for a worst-case 4 meters (13 feet).

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