

Press release: Event brings North East Flood Wardens together

From Cleveland to Northumberland, there are groups of flood wardens in communities in the North East.

On Tuesday November 6, the Environment Agency hosted an event to say thank you, to bring groups together in one place and show how by working together they can be more resilient to flooding.

Flood wardens – from areas including Corbridge, Morpeth, North Tyneside and Croft-on-Tees – were also given a tour of the new state-of-the-art North East Area Incident Room, which opened a year ago, where it was explained to them the steps the Environment Agency takes during an incident.

Phil Taylor, the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team leader for the North East, hosted the event along with the four Flood Community Engagement Officers who work across the region to support communities in preparing for flooding. He said:

The event was really successful and was our chance to say thank you to them for taking the time out of their busy lives to support their communities in preparing for and during and after a flood.

By bringing the different flood warden groups together, they were able to share ideas about their community flood plan, and learn from each other's experiences. And it was an opportunity to talk about the work we are doing to recruit more wardens and set up new groups in communities at risk.

The local knowledge flood wardens can provide on the ground is invaluable. They complement our work by implementing their community action plans and offer a key point of contact for us to be able to warn and inform.

Northumbrian Water also attended the event with some of their volunteer Water Rangers as the two organisations work together to understand how both sets of volunteers can join forces.

The Environment Agency's four Flood Community Engagement Officers – Taryn Al-mashgari for Tyne and Wear, Sarah Duffy for Cleveland, Anna Caygill for Durham and Darlington and Colin Hall for Northumberland – work together with local authorities to help communities understand the different types of flooding, whether they are at risk, and how to prepare in the event of a

flood.

The Environment Agency is encouraging people to learn how to Prepare Act Survive in a flood to reduce the impacts of damage.

Press release: UK condemns illegitimate “elections” held in the Donbas, Ukraine

A Foreign & Commonwealth Office spokesperson said:

The UK condemns the so-called “elections” which Russian-backed separatists held in the Donbas, Ukraine on 11 November: they are illegitimate and in violation of the Minsk Agreements. They undermine efforts to achieve peace in the region, and they are illegal under Ukrainian law.

These so-called “elections” took place against the background of Russia’s continued violation of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. Russia is providing arms to the separatists in the Donbas, with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) reporting a flow of Russian military convoys crossing in and out of eastern Ukraine.

We call on Russia to fully implement its commitments under the Minsk Agreements, to stop providing financial and military support to the separatists, and to withdraw its armed forces and military equipment from Ukrainian territory.

We also strongly urge the Russian-backed separatists to stop obstructing OSCE monitors, and to grant safe and unhindered access so essential humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the 1.8 million people in need within non-government controlled areas.

The UK again reiterates our commitment to diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict in eastern Ukraine, so that legitimate and credible elections can be held in line with the Minsk Agreements and that this conflict be brought to an end.

Further information

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[Press release: UK condemns illegitimate “elections” held in the Donbas, Ukraine](#)

FCO condemns illegitimate and unlawful “elections” held in the Donbas and calls on Russia to withdraw its military forces from Ukrainian territory.

[News story: Five ways HMRC can help boost your finances](#)



From helping people buy their first home to government-funded top-ups for savers, HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) is supporting Talk Money Week and reminding taxpayers how the department can help boost their finances.

Mel Stride MP, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said:

The tax that HMRC collects funds our vital public services, and also provides financial support to taxpayers and those most in need through programmes delivered by HMRC.

We want to make sure everyone gets the financial help they are entitled to – offering a helping hand so they can take that first step on the property ladder through First-Time Buyers Relief, or supporting them with the cost of childcare through Tax-Free Childcare.

Ways in which HMRC is helping taxpayers boost their finances include:

1. If you are married or in a civil partnership, you can claim up to £238 a year in Marriage Allowance. It is quick and easy to [apply online](#). If you claim at any point in the tax year, you will still receive the full entitlement.

Help to Save

1. Are you on a low income and find it difficult to save money? [Help to Save](#) is a new government savings scheme. It rewards savers with an extra 50p for every £1 saved, meaning over 4 years a maximum saving of £2,400 would result in an overall bonus of £1,200.
2. Tax-Free Childcare is available for parents or guardians with children aged under 12, or aged under 17 if disabled. It is available to around 1.5 million households to help with the cost of registered childcare, enabling more parents to go out to work. For every £8 that you pay in, the government will make a top-up payment of an additional £2, up to a maximum of £2,000 per child per year (or £4,000 for disabled children). You can [check whether you're eligible](#).
3. Nurses, hairdressers, construction workers and millions of other employees can claim tax relief on work-related expenses – money they've spent on things like work uniform and clothing, tools, business travel, professional fees and subscriptions. A simple [Check if You Can Claim tool](#) is available.

Tax relief for employees

1. If you are first time buyers of a residential property you can claim First-Time Buyers Relief on your property purchase made on or after 22 November 2017 – this applies to England, Wales and Northern Ireland only. This means you will not pay any stamp duty on properties up to the value of £300,000 outside London, or £500,000 in London. You can [read further guidance and check your eligibility](#).

HMRC has also designed an accessible and free resource – [Junior Tax Facts](#) – to educate young people on how public money is raised and spent.

Talk Money Week (formerly Financial Capability Week) runs from 12 to 18 November and is the annual celebration of the work thousands of organisations are doing to improve money management across the UK. It aims to get more people talking about money.

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