

Press release: Environment Agency's work helps canoeists navigate River Stour

The River Stour, which runs along much of the Suffolk/Essex border, will be utilised this weekend by up to 300 canoes and kayaks as dedicated paddlers navigate some 22 miles, through up to 18 portages from Sudbury, through Constable Country all the way to the coast at Cattawade.

The annual Sudbury to the Sea event, organised by the River Stour Trust, takes place this weekend (September 9 and 10) and thanks to the efforts of the Environment Agency those taking part will be enjoying a much clearer journey.

Dozens of fallen trees and other blockages have been cleared from the waterway, while several landing points have been repaired or refurbished in time for the event.

Environment Agency officers will be on hand alongside event marshals and River Stour Trust volunteers throughout the weekend to offer advice and answer questions from the public at key sites on the route as well as assisting participants as they negotiate some of the portages.

Among the locations that have undergone work is the portage at Lamarsh Regulator weir, which has been refurbished by the Environment Agency Waterways Operations team.

Paul Separovic, Waterways Operations team leader for the River Stour Navigation, said:

The Environment Agency has worked really hard and is responsible for maintaining the River Stour Navigation. We work closely with our partners on the river via the River Stour Users Group and the River Stour Trust to enable as many people as possible to fully enjoy what this beautiful river has to offer.

The River Stour is navigable from Brundon Mill just upstream of Sudbury all the way through to the tidal waters of the Stour Estuary at Cattawade and Manningtree for unpowered craft and a short section of a few miles is also open to powered craft.

Sudbury to the Sea is an annual event that attracts a surge of visitors to the river and is the River Stour Trust's prime event on their calendar. It provides an ideal opportunity to showcase to a wider audience all that the River Stour has to offer. Over recent years we have invested on improving navigation infrastructure on the river and on maintaining and keeping the navigation clear.

Catherine Burrows at the River Stour Trust said:

We work in partnership with the Environment Agency and we would like to thank them for efforts made to maintain and keep the River Stour Navigation in working order.

We believe the upcoming Sudbury to the Sea event will be a great success and it gives people a chance to see what the River Stour Trust is doing to promote the river as a navigation and what our aspirations are for the future. Should anyone further wish to participate in this year's event or future events or find out more about the River Stour Trust, please contact us.

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Press release: Schools around the country to stamp out LGBT bullying

Over 1,000 schools this academic year are launching projects to stamp out homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying in the classroom, the Minister for School Standards and Equalities Nick Gibb confirmed today.

The £3 million initiative led by the Government Equalities Office aims to ensure children are free from being bullied for their sexual orientation or gender identity, as part of the duty all schools have to ensure effective measures are in place to protect pupils from bullying.

The programme will see primary and secondary schools across the country

partnered up with organisations such as Stonewall, Barnardo's and the National Children's Bureau, to educate young people to accept and respect each other's individuality in an age-appropriate way.

It is part of the government's drive to deliver further progress on LGBT equality and to help prepare young people for life in 21st century Britain.

Minister for School Standards and Equalities Nick Gibb said:

Bullying at school is cruel, particularly at a time when LGBT pupils are coming to terms with their sexuality or gender. I am determined that we stamp out the use of the word 'gay' as a pejorative term and prevent bullying of all kinds so pupils feel safe and able to achieve their full potential.

I'm delighted that so many schools across the country will be participating in this programme. By creating a culture of acceptance and respect in our classrooms we can support young people as they discover who they are.

Levels of HBT bullying and language reported in Stonewall's 2017 School Report have decreased by almost a third since 2012. However, further action is needed to teach students about the impact of bullying and to support teachers to spot HBT bullying in schools.

The anti-HBT bullying programme builds on the success of the 2015/16 pilot, which included a range of innovative projects such as Barnardo's providing group support to pupils who had been bullied or had bullied someone and supporting schools to develop policy. In addition, Stonewall's Train the Trainer courses provided resource packs of posters, curriculum guides and DVDs to help teachers discuss HBT bullying in an interactive way.

Barnardo's Chief Executive Javed Khan said:

Barnardo's Positive Identities Service worked in two school clusters on the pilot programme in 2015/16, trialling new approaches to tackle and prevent HBT bullying and embed good practice to create inclusive school environments. We worked directly with young people, parents, governors, senior leadership teams, teaching and non-teaching staff to develop programmes that would increase awareness and knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities. We successfully started groups in schools to empower and support young people, enhancing our learning of what they required.

Through this learning and direct practice we developed two separate models of work that could assist schools in tackling HBT bullying. We also examined ways to tackle HBT bullying and attitudes when justified by a religious, faith or cultural belief. We are delivering the current programme, utilising our learning to now work with schools across Yorkshire and Humber. The response has

been phenomenal and we have engaged with over 220 schools who want to take part.

We are excited to be a part of this programme and proud to be able to contribute to help make schools safer and more representative of LGBTQ+ young people.

Michelle Colledge-Smith, Vice Principal at Outwood Grange Academy said:

Outwood Grange Academy has benefitted from the work with Barnardo's and the development of the faith toolkit. The success has allowed students to be able to express themselves more freely. Personal and sensitive areas are effectively discussed in school with staff who feel confident in the conversations they are having. The staff and student training has been the cornerstone to the work and its success, as we continue to challenge language and preconceived ideas.

Dominic Arnall, Head of Projects and Programmes at Stonewall said:

We welcome the Department of Education's continued dedication to tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying in schools. We work with over 1,000 schools across Britain, empowering teaching staff to celebrate difference and acceptance in their classrooms. We also train teachers to go on and train other groups of teaching professionals, not just on how to tackle anti-lesbian, gay, bi and trans bullying, but how to prevent it in the first place.

When bullying is not tackled, it can have a deeply damaging and long-lasting effect on young people. Our School Report (2017) shows that although anti-LGBT bullying has decreased, half of LGBT pupils say they hear HBT slurs 'frequently' or 'often' at school. This is unacceptable. We will continue to support the DfE, as we work towards a society in all LGBT people can be accepted without exception.

The programme is part of the government's wider work to deliver greater equality for the LGBT community. In July, the government announced the launch of a national LGBT survey to drive further progress in LGBT equality, along with proposals to streamline and de-medicalise the process for changing legal gender. Over 95,000 people have already taken part in the survey. If you are LGBT, have your say by filling out the survey [here](#) before 15 October.

Earlier this year, the Department for Education made [relationships and sex education](#) mandatory in all secondary schools and age-appropriate relationships education will be taught in all primary schools. The department is also updating its guidance so it reflects the challenges pupils face

today, including LGBT issues.

Speech: First Sea Lord speech for HMS Prince of Wales naming

Your Royal Highnesses, my Lords, ladies and gentlemen, honoured guests, 3 years ago, the naming of HMS Queen Elizabeth was a strategic awakening for the United Kingdom.

The moment when we proved to the world, and to ourselves, that we still have what it takes to be a great maritime industrial nation.

Today, we return to Rosyth, to the cradle of modern British sea power, to dedicate HMS Prince of Wales.

We are honoured by the presence of Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall; of course, as we are in Scotland, more appropriately the Duke and Duchess of Rothesay.

We are also joined by representatives from across government, the armed forces, together with veterans and some of our vital international partners.

This ceremony, and all that it represents, demonstrates the United Kingdom's determination to see through our strategic intent and to fulfil the promise of our maritime renaissance.

For though she is the second of her class, HMS Prince of Wales has a strategic significance all of her own.

If building one carrier is a statement of national ambition; then building 2 is an unmistakable sign of commitment, to our own defence and that of our allies.

Atlantic Charter

Today, HMS Prince of Wales is the newest and most advanced vessel of her kind.

In the half century of service that lies before her, she will assimilate astonishing developments in technology, from unmanned vehicles on the seas and in the skies, to the all encompassing, all pervading, tide of data that is shaping modern warfare.

And yet the name Prince of Wales is a historic one. It is emblematic of many centuries of loyal service to crown and country.

Of the many ships that have borne this princely title, none better

demonstrates the importance of our continuing strategic responsibility than the seventh and last.

In the darkest period of the Second World War, the battleship HMS Prince of Wales was the venue for Winston Churchill's first meeting with President Roosevelt.

During a church service off the coast of Newfoundland, the 2 leaders sat beneath her great guns, amid a congregation of sailors and marines from both nations.

Until that point Britain had stood alone. But on that Sunday morning, onboard that ship, the New World joined the Old in common cause.

Of all the many legacies borne out of that extraordinary partnership, few have been more significant than the Atlantic Charter.

It pledged economic and social progress for the benefit of all. At its heart was a commitment to self determination, freedom of the seas and the rule of law in the world.

This settlement was the inspiration for the United Nations and has been the basis of security and progress in the world since 1945.

It is a settlement under which our own nation has enjoyed 7 decades of comparative peace and rising prosperity.

But today the principles upon which it is founded are being tested.

From the Baltic to the Black Sea, hybrid warfare seeks to undermine democratic governments and sovereign borders.

In the Mediterranean, a sorry tide of human suffering has exposed once again the inequality borne out of conflict and repression.

And in the South China Sea, growing regional competition highlights the continuing importance of freedom of navigation to global stability and prosperity.

The United Kingdom holds positions of international responsibility: other countries look to us for leadership, partnership and example.

So the biggest test of all comes from within.

Do we still have the necessary belief to stand by the principles under which we have prospered?

Are we still prepared to do what it takes to defend them and to lead others in doing the same?

And, most importantly, are we prepared to match our words with the tools to do the job?

Modernised Royal Navy

Today we are gathered in this great dockyard to answer those questions.

Standing in the shadow of a new Prince of Wales, and in the company of our most important allies, we rededicate ourselves to this historic cause, and to the obligations it brings.

With 2 Queen Elizabeth class carriers in Royal Navy service, one will be available for operations at all times.

In the United States, aviators from the Fleet Air Arm are working hand-in-glove with their Royal Air Force counterparts to bring the F35B Joint Strike Fighter into UK service, and the first operational squadron moves to Marham next year.

This combination of ships and jets will provide our nation with a continuous carrier strike capability, a powerful conventional deterrent in a dangerous and uncertain world.

Alongside this new undertaking, the Royal Navy will deliver the UK's nuclear deterrent, as we have done every hour of every day for nearly half a century.

These 2 strategic responsibilities will sit at the heart of a modernised and emboldened Royal Navy.

On the River Clyde, steel has been cut for the first city-class frigate, HMS Glasgow. She and her sister ships will carry names from all parts of our United Kingdom, renewing the bond between the nation and its navy.

Meanwhile, after the long years in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Royal Marines have returned to sea, and to the environment in which they have demonstrated such unswerving professionalism and adaptability across 3 and a half centuries.

And finally, the Royal Fleet Auxiliary will continue to be found where they've always been in times of peace and war: right by our side.

But this is not a journey our sailors and marines make by themselves.

Working with the Army and the Royal Air Force, the UK Carrier Strike Group will project British power and influence at sea, in the air, over the land and in cyberspace.

And working with our international partners, it represents a new and substantial commitment to NATO and to all the UK's alliances throughout the world.

We could not have reached this point without the substantial and ongoing support of the United States Navy, the US Marine Corps and the Marine Nationale, and I pay grateful tribute to them today.

We will repay the military and political capital they have invested in us by

delivering a comprehensive, credible capability that opens the way for closer carrier cooperation between us.

So the advent of the Queen Elizabeth class carriers truly represents the start of a new era of strategic responsibility for the Royal Navy and the nation.

Conclusion

In drawing to a close, I would like to pay tribute to all those who have dedicated their efforts to this great national endeavour.

In the few short months since she put to sea, HMS Queen Elizabeth has become an icon of British engineering and British innovation, and it was a joyous occasion to welcome her into her home port of Portsmouth just over 3 weeks ago.

The same will be true for HMS Prince of Wales. Wherever she travels, at home or overseas, she will draw crowds to the water's edge where they will marvel at your achievement.

Alone, either one of these vessels would be a formidable expression of military might. But together, HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Prince of Wales send a powerful message to friend and foe alike.

We may live in uncertain times, but the United Kingdom has lost none of its famous resolve. We will protect our interests, we will support our allies, and we will shoulder our responsibilities, wherever in the world they are at stake.

As I consider all that has been accomplished, and that which is yet to come, I am drawn to the words of the poet Longfellow, sent by Roosevelt to Churchill after their historic meeting onboard the last Prince of Wales 76 years ago, words that find new meaning in the vessel before us, and the responsibilities that await the young men and women who will take her to sea:

Sail on, O Ship of State!

Sail on, O Union strong and great!

Humanity with all its fears,

With all the hopes of future years,

Is hanging breathless on thy fate!

Press release: Hurricane Irma: Foreign Secretary's statement, 8 September 2017

I want to say something about the continuing crisis in the Caribbean where Hurricane Irma has caused great devastation in the British Virgin Islands and elsewhere. There are now further storms moving in, Hurricane Jose.

We have sent, as you know, RFA Mounts Bay which will be moving from Anguila to the British Virgin Islands later on this morning to distribute humanitarian aid there. We've announced a £32 million aid package for the area. We're sending a Foreign Office team as well as DFID teams and UK troops.

And the Foreign Office has set up a hotline. If anyone is concerned about their relatives or about what is likely to happen to holiday makers in that area, please get onto that hotline which should be available on the website.