

Business as usual won't tackle the challenges we face, warns Environment Agency

Returning to business as usual after the Coronavirus pandemic won't be enough to address the challenges of the future, warns Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency.

Instead of working to return to a world we once knew, the Environment Agency is today setting out how it plans to lead the way toward a greener, healthier future.

Its new 5 year plan, EA2025, calls for a new approach which promotes health, equity and environmental enhancement and says that the Coronavirus pandemic presents an opportunity to reshape a better future. It can help society better understand the largest public health threat of the century: climate change.

[Video: EA2025 – Business as usual won't tackle the challenges we face](#)

By 2025 the Environment Agency aims to have created more climate resilient places and infrastructure, by ensuring the nation is prepared for flooding, coastal change and drought.

The plan also highlights a renewed focus on improving the health of air, land and water for people and nature – and ensuring green growth for a sustainable future.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency, said:

Tackling climate change must become a default position for everyone. We know that life post-lockdown presents a unique opportunity to change the way we live and work for the better.

We have been gifted a glimpse of how we could adapt our lives and think differently about how we operate. This applies not just to us but the communities we serve, too. People are ready to think differently, and with our new 5 year plan we want to make the most of this once-in-a-lifetime chance to lead the way.

Emma Howard Boyd, chair of the Environment Agency, said:

The Prime Minister has announced that the country needs to build back better, build back greener, build back faster. This action plan sets out how we will help to accelerate a just transition to a low-carbon and more resilient future.

Although the plan points at 2025 it starts now, and the lessons we learn along the way will help develop the whole UK workforce for the risks and opportunities of the coming decades.

Since lockdown began, the Environment Agency has remained fully operational, with the majority of staff working from home, and frontline staff remaining active on the ground tackling issues such as flood risk and pollution.

Staff have been making the best use of technology to continue work – such as remotely concluding legal hearings and using drones to monitor regulated sites, and looking at how we can adopt these practices in the future to be more efficient and effective. Teams have been maintaining equipment that supports public water supply, food production and river flows.

The hot weather led to several fish rescues, while fisheries enforcement teams were out in force clamping down on illegal fishing. Last month a major coastal flood defence scheme was completed which will protect more than 300 properties in West Sussex.

EA2025 sets out 3 long-term goals: a nation resilient to climate change; healthy air, land and water; and green growth and a sustainable future. Some of its ambitious targets for 2020/21 include:

- improving more than 4,000 kilometres of river
- creating nearly 1,200 hectares of habitat
- and being on track to be carbon-neutral by 2030

[Download EA2025 in full here.](#)

[Read the latest blog from Environment Agency chair Emma Howard Boyd on the launch of EA2025](#)