

Press release: Work starts on major Northumberland flood scheme

Work has started on a major £600,000 flood scheme which will protect homes and businesses in a Northumberland coastal town from tidal flooding.

The project in the Cowpen area of Blyth will see an existing 180m flood wall upgraded and extended to create a 380m wall to reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

When taking climate change into account these new defences, from Crawford Street to Quay Road, will protect over 1,000 properties into the future while also offering immediate improved protection from tidal flooding to 58 properties.

The work is being funded by the Environment Agency but is being built by Port of Blyth as part of their wider redevelopment of the adjacent Bates and Wimbourne Terminals. The flood defences are due to be completed in Spring 2018.

While the Environment Agency has advised on the specifications and design of the flood wall, Port of Blyth will own and maintain the wall. The Environment Agency will carry out annual inspections.

Leila Huntington, the Environment Agency's Flood Risk Manager for the North East, said:

This is a great example of a partnership project which protects homes and businesses now and into the future. We have been working closely with Port of Blyth to support the development of a flood wall as part of a wider land development scheme.

By working together it means a greater standard of flood protection improvements can be provided at a reduced cost and with less disruption to the local community.

We're committed to increasing protection for our at-risk communities and are continuously looking for opportunities to collaborate with our partners and provide the best possible solutions.

Martin Lawlor, Chief Executive of Port of Blyth, added:

This project is a real win-win for the town of Blyth and the Port. As a result of this programme of flood defence work, a huge number of homes and businesses within Blyth will be protected by the flood risks presented by global warming.

On top of this, the scheme enables the Port to move forward with our development plans for connecting our Bates and Wimbourne Quay terminals which will attract inward investment into the town.

A Flood Warning service is available for Blyth residents considered to be at risk of flooding, one for the North Sea at Blyth and another for the North Sea at Blyth Town Centre.

To check if you are at risk of flooding and to sign up for free flood warnings call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit the [gov.uk web pages](#)

Consultation outcome: Invasive non-native species regulations: enforcement

Updated: Summary of responses and government response added in English and Welsh.

We want to know what you think about our proposals to introduce penalties to enforce the EU regulation on invasive non-native species. These penalties will apply to offences in England and Wales.

The [EU Invasive Alien Species Regulation](#) applies restrictions on invasive non-native species of most concern in Europe, including a ban on keeping and selling.

Press release: Work starts on increased flood protection for Starcross and Cockwood

At Starcross the Environment Agency will install 2 new floodgates at Church Road and Generals Lane slipway. They will also raise the car park levels at the Fishing and Cruising Club.

In Cockwood the harbour wall will be improved with a raised level along

Dawlish Road in line with predicted sea level rises. Work is expected to take around 6 months and be finished by summer.

An Environment Agency spokesperson said:

The storms hitting our coast in the past week demonstrate the importance of tidal defences. We are making a number of improvements to increase the level of flood protection in this area. Across England we are investing £2.6 billion in over 1,500 flood and coastal schemes to help protect homes and businesses at risk.

This important scheme has been designed to reduce the risk of tidal flooding to more than 660 residential and commercial properties.

From 8 January the road around Cockwood harbour, including Church Road and Dawlish Warren road, will be closed to traffic to allow work to be carried out and to ensure public safety. Pedestrians will continue to have access.

Works and road closures have been timed to avoid school holidays and the summer season but we apologise for any inconvenience the closures cause.

Construction of the Starcross and Cockwood tidal defence scheme begins just a few weeks after the £12m Dawlish Warren beach management scheme was opened by Michael Gove. The Dawlish Warren scheme provides increased flood protection to around 2,800 properties in the Exe estuary. Once complete, the Starcross and Cockwood tidal defence scheme is expected to further reduce flood risk for over 660 properties.

Notes to editors

The Environment Agency builds, maintains and improves sea defences to reduce the risk of coastal flooding. About 1.8 million homes are at risk of coastal flooding and erosion in England.

Between 2015 and 2021 the Environment Agency is investing in over 1,500 flood and coastal schemes to help protect homes and businesses at risk.

From 2015 to 2021, the Environment Agency is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects.

[News story: Regional Flood and Coastal](#)

Committee (RFCC) chair appointments

Following a recruitment campaign for four [Regional Flood and Coastal Committee \(RFCC\)](#) posts – Anglian (Central), Anglia (Eastern), Severn and Wye and Southern – the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is pleased to announce the following four RFCC Chair appointments:

- Brian West Stewart as the Chair of the Anglian (Central) RFCC
- Paul Hayden as the Chair of the Anglian (Eastern) RFCC
- Shirel Stedman as the Chair of Severn and Wye RFCC
- Dr Martin Hurst as the Chair of Southern RFCC

Brian West Stewart's appointment runs from 2 January 2018 for three years until 1 January 2021.

The remaining appointments will run from 1 July 2018 for three years until 30 June 2021.

We have also re-appointed four RFCC Chairs for a further three years from when their current terms end on 30 June 2018:

- Eddy Poll as the Chair of Anglian (Northern) RFCC
- Vij Randeniya as the Chair of Trent RFCC
- David Jenkins as the Chair of Wessex RFCC
- Colin Mellors as the Chair of Yorkshire RFCC

Their terms will continue to run from 1 July 2018 until 30 June 2021.

All the appointments followed procedures set out in the [Ministerial Governance Code for Public Appointments](#) which came into force on 1 January 2017. There is a requirement for appointees' political activity (if significant) to be declared. None of the appointees for Anglian Central, Anglian Eastern, Severn & Wye and Southern have declared any significant political activity during the past five years.

RFCCs help to provide governance for the [Environment Agency \(EA\)](#) Flood and Coastal Erosion risk management functions and cover all flood risks that are not the responsibility of the water companies.

They have three main purposes:

- to ensure there are coherent plans for identifying, communicating and managing flood and coastal erosion risks across catchments and shorelines
- to promote efficient, targeted and risk-based investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management that optimises value for money and benefits for local communities
- to provide a link between the EA, Lead Local Flood Authorities, other risk management authorities, and other relevant bodies to engender mutual understanding of flood and coastal erosion risks in its area

All Chair posts attract a remuneration currently set at £17,503 for a commitment of five days per month.

Background details of the four appointed RFCC Chairs for Anglian Central, Anglian Eastern, Severn & Wye and Southern are as follows:

ANGLIAN (CENTRAL) RFCC

Brian Stewart OBE is now a portfolio non-executive director and consultant, following an executive career in local and regional government. From 2000 to 2010 he was the Chief Executive of the East of England Regional Assembly. He now sits on the main Board of Clarion Housing Group and is Vice Chair of its subsidiary stock holding Housing Association. He also chairs the Sizewell C Community Forum, sits on the HS2 Need to Sell Scheme Panel and is Vice Chair of Ormiston Families; a major East Anglian children's charity.

ANGLIAN (EASTERN) RFCC

Paul Hayden has been the Chair of the Anglian (Eastern) RFCC since its inception in 2011, working with stakeholders to maximise the opportunities for local decision-making and partnership working. He is a disaster risk reduction and management specialist by background, with 38 years' experience including 15 years working at an international level where he has specialised in natural hazards and climate change related projects. He led national coordination of rescue responses during the 2007 floods and subsequently sat on the Cabinet Committee formed to oversee implementation of the "Pitt Review" recommendations. He was also appointed by Defra to boards responsible for establishment of the Flood Forecasting Centre and delivery of the Flood Rescue National Enhancement Project. In addition to his RFCC and consultancy roles, Paul is a Non-Executive Director of the UK's Natural Environment Research Council, (NERC). He is a contributory author to the World Handbook on Drowning, and is a visiting lecturer at University College London and University of Mauritius. He was appointed as an Officer of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year 2018 Honours list and was awarded the Queens Fire Service Medal in the New Year 2010 Honours List. He has an MA in Management and Public Administration, and an MSc in Fire Command and Disaster Management.

SEVERN AND WYE RFCC

Shirel Stedman is currently the Director of Advisory Group, Water Europe at Royal HaskoningDHV providing strategic direction and driving commercial acumen to the group. Early in Shirel's career, she trained as a paramedic in the Army establishing core values of collaboration and compassion. Shirel is a leading Civil Engineer within the UK water industry, and has a reputation that has been established over 25 years in this sector. Shirel first joined the Midlands Regional Flood and Defence Committee (RFDC) in 2008 and has continuously served until the present day. She was the Director of Central and Local Government Partnerships at AECOM, responsible for forming teams of technical, managerial and business development staff for a variety of short-term projects for a range of clients and sectors. Shirel has significant experience within the Midlands and was a Project Director for key Midlands

region flood alleviation schemes. Between 2006 and 2009, she worked as a Resources Director at Halcrow and was responsible for over 500 staff. During this time she won a commendation from South Derbyshire MP Mark Todd for her work with communities on the River Dove Strategy. Shirel has been a board member of Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management and was appointed as the institutions first Managing Director in January 2016. Shirel is a member of the Engineering Council, the Institution of Civil Engineers and the Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management.

SOUTHERN RFCC

Dr Martin Hurst had a long career as a senior civil servant and professional economist, including as environment, housing and planning advisor in Number 10, and Flood and Water Director in Defra – in which he played a leading role in the government’s response to the 2007 floods and the subsequent Pitt review and Flood and Water Management Act 2010. He has wide voluntary sector experience – as trustee and non-executive director – over the past 15 years – and he has a track record of working with the water industry and with local government. Martin is currently chair of finance and treasury for two large housing associations, a visiting lecturer on major infrastructure appraisal at University College London, and has a number of water and housing related trustee, corporate finance advisor and consumer champion roles.

[Press release: World-leading microbeads ban takes effect](#)

A ban on the manufacture of products containing microbeads has come into force today – a landmark step in the introduction of one of the world’s toughest bans on these harmful pieces of plastic.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey has announced that manufacturers of cosmetics and personal care products will no longer be able to add tiny pieces of plastic known as ‘microbeads’ to rinse-off products such as face scrubs, toothpastes and shower gels.

These damaging beads can cause serious harm to marine life, but the UK’s ban – praised by campaigners as one of the toughest in the world – will help to stop billions of microbeads ending up in the ocean every year. Alongside the success of the government’s 5p plastic bag charge – which has taken nine billion bags out of circulation – the ban puts the UK at the forefront of international efforts to crack down on plastic pollution.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

The world’s seas and oceans are some of our most valuable natural

assets and I am determined we act now to tackle the plastic that devastates our precious marine life.

Microbeads are entirely unnecessary when there are so many natural alternatives available, and I am delighted that from today cosmetics manufacturers will no longer be able to add this harmful plastic to their rinse-off products.

Now we have reached this important milestone, we will explore how we can build on our world-leading ban and tackle other forms of plastic waste.

Dilyana Mihaylova, Marine Plastics Projects Manager at Fauna & Flora International, said:

Fauna & Flora International has been working to address the issue of plastic microbead pollution since 2009, and we are delighted that the Government took such a clear stand on this issue and that a robust UK microbeads ban comes into force today.

We hope this ban signals the dawn of a new era in the fight for cleaner, healthier oceans, with the UK leading the way and supporting other countries to ensure that plastic will no longer reach the environment.

Dr Sue Kinsey, Senior Pollution Officer at the Marine Conservation Society, said:

We are delighted that such a robust microbead ban has come into force. This is the strongest and most comprehensive ban to be enacted in the world and will help to stem the flow of micro plastics into our oceans.

We believe that this signals a real commitment on the part of this Government to clean up our seas and beaches and hope this is a first step on this road before we see further actions to combat plastic waste.

Today's announcement comes ahead of the government's upcoming 25 Year Environment Plan, which will set out how we will be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it and create clean, healthy and productive oceans.

A ban on the sale of products containing microbeads will follow later in the year.