

Press release: Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme wins large project of the year at NEC Awards

Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme has scooped the Large Project of the Year award at this year's NEC awards in London.

The awards were announced at a recent NEC Users' Group Annual Seminar.

The driving force behind the award winning scheme is a dedicated project team made up of experts from Leeds City Council, Environment Agency, BMMjv (a joint venture between BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald) and ARUP.

Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is one of the largest river flood defence projects in the country. Led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, it aims to provide an increased level of protection against flooding from the River Aire and Hol Beck for 3,500 residential properties and businesses in the city centre. The scheme also includes flood risk reduction at Woodlesford.

One of the key aspects of the scheme is the replacement of Victorian weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop in the city, with innovative moveable weirs, which are being used for the first time as a flood defence in the UK. The new moveable weirs can be lowered in flood conditions to reduce river levels and the threat of flooding. The use of this technology has meant lower flood defence walls elsewhere in the city, to help preserve connectivity with the waterfront.

The floods experienced in December 2015 reinforced just how important this scheme is for the city of Leeds. Widespread flooding from some of the highest river levels ever recorded affected more than 2,000 residential properties and nearly 600 businesses.

The scheme was recognised for its 'one team' ethos with members of all partner organisations working side by side on a daily basis. This collaborative approach between client, contractor and consultant puts the project at the forefront of contract management, resulting in a project which is on programme and within budget despite being affected by some of the worst flooding Leeds has experienced.

The NEC Awards recognise excellence in project delivery and showcase examples of good practice through collaboration from across the world.

The site works for Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme started in January 2015 and are scheduled to be completed this September.

The project team is currently working on options for Phase 2 of the scheme, which will adopt a catchment-wide approach meaning the entire River Aire catchment area will be considered to help reduce flood risk in Leeds.

Consultation on potential options is due to be carried out from September.

Press release: Oil and gas regulators host public drop-in event

Agencies that regulate Third Energy's oil and gas activities are hosting a drop-in event in Kirby Misperton to explain how they are working together to protect the community and the environment.

The Environment Agency, Health and Safety Executive, Oil and Gas Authority, Public Health England and Ryedale Borough Council are hosting the event at Kirby Misperton Village Hall on Thursday 7 September.

These agencies work together to assess the impacts of the oil and gas industry, to oversee industry operations, and to ensure that any exploration and development, including fracking, is done in a way that does not put people or the environment at risk of harm.

The drop-in session will give local people a chance to talk to agency staff on a one-to-one basis to find out about agencies' roles and to hear more about the plans that have been put in place since permissions have been granted, along with what will be done in the coming months to regulate site activities.

Everyone is welcome to attend at any time between 2pm and 7pm.

Press release: Warning for anglers after illegal cast net seized

Anyone caught fishing with an illegal cast net in North East waters will be prosecuted, the Environment Agency has warned.

The warning follows the seizure of a cast net from an angler caught using it to catch salmon on the River Wear at Durham. The seizure was a first for the area and Environment Officers want it to stay that way.

Fisheries Enforcement Technical Specialist Kevin Summerson is leading the investigation against the angler. He said:

Even though these nets can be purchased from a number of UK outlets it is illegal to use them in North East rivers. Anyone caught and prosecuted could face a hefty fine and even a custodial sentence.

We take illegal fishing very seriously. Whether anglers use illegal equipment or fish without a licence, it's not fair on other anglers and endangers the future of the sport.

"Our work is intelligence led and we work closely with our partners at the police and Angling Trust to target known hot spots and where illegal fishing is reported to us.

We carry out enforcement work all year round and will be continuing throughout the coming weeks, including the upcoming Bank Holiday weekends. I'd urge people to help us protect the health of our fisheries by reporting any suspected illegal activity to us.

It is illegal to use cast nets to catch freshwater fish, eels, trout, migratory trout or salmon in the North East. They are also illegal if used to catch migratory trout, salmon or freshwater eels up to six nautical miles from the coast line.

The maximum penalty for this offence if convicted before a magistrate is an unlimited fine and/or three months in custody, or an unlimited fine and/or up to two years in custody before the crown court.

The Environment Agency works 24 hours a day to protect people and wildlife from pollution incidents and we encourage people to report such incidents to our Incident Hotline on 0800 807060.

Press release: Environment Agency tests flood sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes

The Environment Agency is conducting its annual test of the flood sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes on Friday 25 August.

Installed in 2007, the 18 sirens help warn over 25,000 households and local businesses of imminent tidal flooding. The siren on the Willows Estate in Grimsby is used to warn residents about flooding from the New Cut Drain and the River Freshney, while the others warn of flooding from the Humber.

Testing will take place on Friday 25 August between 10am and 12pm. If you hear the sirens during this time, you do not need to take any action. If

flooding is expected on the day, the test will be rescheduled and flood warnings will be issued through the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning System.

Environment Agency staff will be present together with representatives from North East Lincolnshire council at Freshney Place shopping centre in Grimsby between 9am and 5pm on 25 August. They'll be able to answer questions about the sirens and provide information about your own flood risk, including what steps you can take to prepare for an emergency.

The sirens in Grimsby and Cleethorpes are a secondary flood warning tool to the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning Service, which provides targeted flooding warnings via phone call or text to mobile landlines or through email.

Luke Dawson, Flood Resilience team leader with the Environment Agency, said:

The flood sirens we own and operate in Grimsby and Cleethorpes help us warn over 25,000 households and local businesses. It's important that we conduct these annual tests to make sure the sirens will work during an emergency.

We'd like to remind people in the area that our free Flood Warning System provides as much notice as possible ahead of a potential flooding incident. While the sirens are a vital secondary flood warning tool, we encourage everyone to check their flood risk and sign up for flood warnings. You can sign up for our free, targeted flood warnings by calling 0345 988 1188 or by visiting www.gov.uk/sign-up-for-flood-warnings.

Our flood defences reduce the risk of flooding to thousands of homes and businesses in Grimsby and Cleethorpes, but we cannot remove the risk of flooding entirely. This is why it is important that everyone plays their part to protect themselves from the risk of flooding. If you are in the area on 25 August, please do come along to Freshney Place to learn more about flood risk and how you can protect yourself and your property.

Cllr David Watson, portfolio holder for environment and energy at North East Lincolnshire Council, said:

On the flood siren testing day, North East Lincolnshire Council staff and its partner Engie will be joining the Environment Agency in Freshney Place Shopping Centre between 9am and 5pm. Officers will be available to answer any questions on flood risk and how you can prepare.

Press release: Flood committee sets out £22million of spending for coming year

A flood and coastal group will oversee spending of almost £22million to protect hundreds of homes across the north east as it sets out its objectives for the next year.

The Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (NRFCC) has launched its business plan for 2017/18, which will include continued work at Greatham in Hartlepool, Killingworth in North Tyneside, Hartlepool Headland Coastal Protection Scheme, improvements to the Central Promenade at Whitley Bay, and Monkton Village Flood Alleviation Study in South Tyneside.

It will better protect around 743 properties from flood risk and another 100 from coastal erosion.

It also announced in its 2016/17 annual report that it's overseen 110 projects costing £24.5million over the past year, reducing the risk of flooding and coastal erosion to 1,291 properties.

Projects include Lustrum Beck flood alleviation scheme in partnership with Stockton Borough Council which better protects over 150 properties, and the Brunton Park scheme in partnership with Northumbrian Water and Newcastle City Council, which addressed sewer flooding issues and reduces the risk of flooding from the Ouseburn.

And a dam on the Cotting Burn, the final part of the significant £28million Morpeth flood alleviation scheme which protects 1,000 homes and business in the town, was completed.

The dam has been renamed 'The Hargreaves Dam' in memory of Jon Hargreaves, NRFCC Chairman who sadly passed away last October.



Lustrum Beck: Raised embankment (L) and new flood wall (R)

Third year of six-year programme

The past year has also seen the completion of a £3million repair programme following the devastating floods during Storm Desmond in December 2015.

The annual report and business plan together summarise the past year and look forward to the year ahead.

It is the third year of a six-year programme of work which was agreed in January 2015. The business plan will be updated each year to take into account any adjustments to the £108million, six-year programme, which will better protect a total of 5,300 properties once complete.

Leila Huntington, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager with the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

On completion of our £22million programme of work for the coming year, we will see a reduction in flood and coastal risk to around 843 homes and businesses in the region, as well as creating 30 hectares of new water dependent wildlife habitat.

The committee is a great example of true partnership working, with all local councils, the Environment Agency and Northumbrian Water pulling together on behalf of communities in the north east.

It has an essential role to play in developing and completing flood

risk management projects which reflect local priorities and understand the needs of communities.

This is the third year of our six-year programme – so far we have already better protected 2,045 properties, bringing significant benefits to communities, properties, businesses and the environment, and this work will continue.



Brunton Park: Northumbrian Water's Paul Davison (L) and the Environment Agency's Phil Welton (R) at the new River Ouseburn channel.

Partnership working

Most projects in the plan are carried out by the Environment Agency and local authorities, with some carried out by, or in partnership with Northumbrian Water.

Councillor Nick Oliver, Northumberland County Council's NRFCC member, said:

The Morpeth scheme is a great example of agencies working together on a hugely ambitious engineering project and the fact it has already been used more than proves its worth.

One of the cornerstones of the scheme has been the help and support of the local community, and their input and engagement has been absolutely invaluable throughout.

In Northumberland we are only too aware of the devastating effects of flooding and we welcome this latest plan which details continuing investment in schemes to protect communities across the region.

The Brunton Park scheme, which was completed last year, involved creating a new river channel to divert the River Ouseburn and, by using the old channel as a new storage basin, creating a valuable habitat for wildlife. It also involved the construction of flood defences, the installation of two kilometres of new sewer pipe and a new storage tank.

Richard Warneford, Northumbrian Water Group's Wastewater Director, said:

Tackling flooding and improving the resilience of our sewer network are key priorities for us. We know that being flooded is a truly awful experience for our customers and we work tirelessly to reduce the risk of this happening. By working in partnership with the Environment Agency and local authorities we can tackle flooding from all sources.

The Brunton Park scheme is an excellent example of partnership work. By drawing upon the experience and expertise of all our partners, an innovative and creative solution was agreed that enabled us to manage surface water in the natural environment.

I am extremely proud of our partnership approach which resulted in reducing the risk of flooding to our customers and the community. We will certainly be able to build on the experience of delivering this project for future schemes.

The NRFCC receives funding from a variety of sources, including from Government Grant-in-Aid, public and private contributions and a levy raised through local authorities.

The committee consists of elected and independent members and plays an important part in deciding local priorities for the flood and coastal risk management programme in North East England.

Anyone who would like a copy of the business plan and annual report can email nrfcc@environment-agency.gov.uk