

Statement to Parliament: PM Commons statement on European Council: 26 March 2018

[unable to retrieve full-text content]Prime Minister Theresa May gave a statement to Parliament on last week's EU Council meeting.

Press release: Events to find out more about North East natural flood management

Weardale residents can find out more about how a £2.1million natural flood management project could reduce their risk of flooding and create a haven for wildlife in a series of events to be held next month.

The Weardale Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project will see the Environment Agency investigate and deliver natural features across 100km squared area to reduce the risk of flooding to 141 properties.

The project team is currently carrying out an assessment of NFM techniques that might help reduce flood risk in Weardale and takes in towns and villages including Stanhope, Westgate, Eastgate and Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency is working on the project with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Durham County Council and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

They want to work with local farmers and landowners who are interested in getting involved in the project to assess the impact of different NFM features. Over the coming months, the North Pennines AONB partnership will be taking the lead in approaching farmers and landowners to discuss voluntary involvement in the scheme. They will be supported by Wear Rivers Trust.

A series of information events for communities is taking place in April to find out more about what it means for them and how they can get involved, as well as capturing their local knowledge about flooding history in the area.

First step in 'pioneering project'

Environment Agency Project Manager Kirsty Hardy said:

This is the first step in what is a pioneering project to explore and deliver natural flood management features to reduce flood risk, as well as enrich the landscape and habitat of what is a beautiful area of countryside.

Until December this year we will be assessing different techniques and our colleagues at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, supported by Wear Rivers Trust, will be speaking with local farmers and landowners before we can then identify any suitable locations for potential delivery of natural flood management features.

This project is ultimately going to increase our understanding of the impact natural flood management can have on reducing flows along tributaries on the Upper River Wear.

We're hosting a series of events where people can find out more about natural flood management and how they can get involved, as well as help us understand past flooding in the area. This really is an exciting project where the community can play a key role and I'd encourage people to come along.

Early discussions

Rebecca Barrett, Biodiversity Lead for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, added:

We have already had some early discussions with a number of farmers and landowners in Weardale. They are interested in the project and are happy to discuss ways to help reduce the impact of flooding on their community.

It is a pleasure to meet with the people whose land management activities play such an important role in the appearance and function of our landscape and we are looking forward to developing the project in partnership with them over the coming months.

All drop-in events take place between 2.30pm and 7pm on:

Date	Location
4 April	Westgate Village Hall, Front Street, Westgate, DL13 1RX
5 April	Wearhead Village Hall, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DY
10 April	Cowshill Village Hall, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DA
11 April	Eastgate Village Hall, Eastgate, DL13 2HU
12 April	Stanhope Community Association, Front Street, Stanhope, DL13 2NQ

In March 2017 the Environment Agency announced £15million of funding had been made available for NFM schemes nationally. The Weardale project will allow the Environment Agency to gather and understand evidence to support that natural flood management can play a role in reducing flood risk.

NFM features are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. As with traditional flood walls and embankments they are a tool to help reduce risk but can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely.

News story: Manufacturing better buildings: apply for funding

Funding will establish a core innovation hub that will transform construction.

Innovate UK has up to £72 million to invest in establishing a core innovation hub to support collaboration between industry and academia and transform the construction sector.

The funding is for UK-based research and technology organisations that already have substantive existing facilities and expertise to work with others in the construction sector, such as businesses, the research base or public sector organisations.

Transforming construction

The way we create buildings has not changed in 40 years, and construction has not seen the same increases in productivity as other industries. The sector is also facing a skills crisis due to an ageing workforce.

This competition aims to fund a single, core innovation hub that will develop and commercialise new digital and manufacturing technologies for construction. The hub should focus on how to:

- create better performing built assets
- increase the industry-wide adoption of emerging digital and manufacturing technologies
- design new processes to improve productivity in construction

To be successful in their application, the research and technology organisation will need to demonstrate there is a commitment from the private sector to invest and use the hub once it is complete.

Part of the Industrial Strategy

The [transforming construction challenge](#) aims to support the construction industry to adopt the latest digital manufacturing technologies to produce safe, healthy, efficient building.

This will help buildings to be constructed 50% faster, 33% cheaper and with half the lifetime carbon emissions.

It is the part of government's [Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund](#), which brings together world-leading research with businesses to take on the major societal and economic challenges of our time.

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for applications is at midday on 23 May 2018
- projects must be led by a research and technology organisation working in collaboration with other businesses, the research base or public sector
- total eligible project costs should be £72 million or less
- projects should start in August 2018 and last up to 4 years
- a briefing event will be held on 28 March 2018 and consortia-building event on 19 April 2018

[Press release: Foreign Secretary comments on attempted missile attacks against Saudi Arabia](#)

I was appalled by last night's multiple Houthi missile launches at Saudi Arabia, which threatened civilian areas and resulted in at least one fatality. I offer my condolences to the families of those killed and injured. Building on the recent UN Panel of Experts report, we will be calling on the UN to investigate how these latest missiles found their way into Yemen in contravention of Security Council Resolutions.

The United Kingdom stands shoulder to shoulder with Saudi Arabia in the face of such serious national security threats. Those responsible must cease these dangerous and provocative actions. A return to political dialogue remains vital to ensuring an end to the conflict for the sake of the Yemeni people and regional security. British nationals in Saudi Arabia should continue to follow [FCO Travel Advice](#).

News story: Skills Minister highlights new provider access law for schools

Skills Minister Anne Milton has highlighted how the Government's [careers strategy](#) sets out how it will ensure all young people can learn from employers and providers about the range of opportunities available to them.

The strategy includes new legislation that aims to give all young people the chance to talk regularly to local education and training providers. This means young people can learn more about different routes to higher-level skills and the workplace, including technical and professional qualifications, apprenticeships, traineeships and supported internships.

The new careers guidance law introduced in January 2018 requires all maintained schools and academies to provide opportunities for a range of education and training providers to have access to pupils, to inform them about approved technical education qualifications and apprenticeships.

Skills Minister Anne Milton explained why this new legislation is important:

I want every young person, whatever their background, to have a good understanding of both the academic and technical routes that can lead to future success in a rewarding career or job.

We must expand the breadth of information that young people receive on all education and training options but particularly technical options and apprenticeships. It is only by talking directly to a range of providers, including university technical colleges, FE colleges and apprenticeship providers, that young people can truly appreciate the opportunities available to them.

To comply, schools must publish a policy statement on their website setting out how providers can request access. The statement can be short but must include:

- the process for requesting access – this might be details for the main contact point at the school
- grounds for granting and refusing access – this might include details of timetabled careers lessons, assemblies or events which providers may attend
- details of premises or facilities available to those given access – this might be a brief reference to rooms and resources

Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

I recognise that schools have needed time to adjust to this new legislation but, now that it is in place, all schools should have

published their arrangements for providers to visit all pupils in years 8 to 13. I know that schools already provide a range of inspiring and informative careers events, assemblies and options evenings. In many cases, schools can comply with the legislation by integrating a range of opportunities for provider visits into those existing plans and making this information publicly available.

More details about what schools need to do to comply with the legislation are in [Careers guidance and access for education and training providers](#). This includes an example policy statement, which schools can adapt to suit their needs. This must take account of what action is required to comply with the law, as set out in paragraphs 61 to 69.