

Press release: Environment Agency launches consultation to give communities more say in how rivers are managed

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to consider proposals to 're-designate' sections of watercourses in a number of locations

The Environment Agency is considering proposals to transfer 'flood risk management activities' on a number of stretches of watercourses to internal drainage boards (IDBs), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and district councils. This will only happen where the watercourses have a low level of flood risk, are not associated with major rivers or major city centres and where the local community supports the change.

A transfer would mean that IDBs, LLFAs and district councils can take on more responsibility for their local flood risk, where appropriate – by carrying out activities such as maintenance or giving permission to carry out works.

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to consider proposals to 're-designate' sections of watercourses in a number of locations. The watercourses will be re-designated from what is currently known as a 'main river' to an 'ordinary watercourse' – a change referred to as 'de-maining'.

Rachael Hill, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

The project aims to bring more choice to communities and local organisations in how watercourses are managed and maintained. We want to strengthen local flood risk management and decision-making by ensuring the right people are managing the right watercourses.

We want to hear from anyone who is affected by, or interested in, the proposals. This consultation explains how the proposed sections of watercourse are currently managed and funded and provides details on future management and funding if de-maining goes ahead.

The project is exploring the potential to re-designate several sections of selected main rivers as ordinary watercourses in: various rivers in Suffolk (East Anglia), South Forty Foot Catchment in Lincolnshire and Stour Marshes in Kent. But if there is support for the approach it could pave the way for further de-maining in England.

For the Environment Agency, the project will also ensure resources are prioritised where the greatest impact on reducing flood risk can be achieved.

Innes Thomson Chief Executive of ADA (Association of Drainage Authorities) added:

Despite their low flood risk to people and homes, the good management of these rivers still plays a major part in peoples' lives, and the environmental and economic wellbeing of the communities through which they flow.

It is very important for existing and potential new river managers to know what the views of local people are so we can make the right decisions together for the best future of these rivers.

The public will be able to view and give feedback between midday 15 January 2018 and midday 12 February 2018. There will be an option to view information and give feedback on each of the proposals or the de-maining project as a whole by accessing the [consultation link](#).

[News story: UK fighter jets intercept Russian bombers approaching UK airspace](#)



One of the Russian Blackjack Tupolev Tu-160 long-range bombers, which were escorted out of the UK's area of interest.

Today (Mon 15 January), RAF Quick Reaction Alert (QRA) Typhoon aircraft scrambled from RAF Lossiemouth to monitor two Russian planes approaching UK airspace. The Russian Blackjack Tupolev Tu-160 long-range bombers were not talking to air traffic control, making them a hazard to all other aviation.

The RAF worked closely with NATO partners to monitor the jets as they passed through a variety of international airspace, before they were intercepted by the RAF in the North Sea. Subsequently, our fighters escorted the Russian Blackjacks north, out of the UK's area of interest. At no time did the Russian bombers enter UK sovereign airspace.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The threats this country faces are intensifying and we will not hesitate in defending our skies from acts of aggression.

Our excellent RAF tracked the Russian aircraft every step of the way, and they continue to police UK and international airspace every hour of every day, to help keep the British people safe.

RAF QRA was launched today because the Russian Military aircraft were not talking to air traffic agencies.

The RAF routinely intercept, identify and escort Russian aircraft that transit international airspace within the UK's area of interest and continue to be on call; 24/7, 365.

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[News story: New Nancy and the Meerkats resources](#)

[Nancy and the Meerkats](#), with the help of Big Joe, present a new radio series to engage pupils with the concept of intellectual property (IP). Aimed at primary education, the resource guides pupils through the process of setting up a band and recording and releasing a song, which is promoted and performed live on tour.

Building on the success of the previous two series, Nancy and the Meerkats consists of a new radio series, short videos, comic book, lesson plans and competition. The supporting teaching resource also includes themed activities and engaging lesson plans. Together, these support and develop pupils' understanding of copyright, trade marks and the importance of respecting IP.

Curriculum links are provided for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The series will launch on Monday 15th January at 5pm on [Fun Kids Radio](#)

News story: Designing roads for driverless vehicles: apply for contracts

A30 dual carriage section on Bodmin bypass, Cornwall. By Paul Nash via Shutterstock.com.

The [National Infrastructure Commission](#) and [Highways England](#) have up to £200,000 to invest in projects that look at changes to roads and related infrastructure to maximise the benefits of driverless and connected vehicle technologies.

Change in how we use roads

Self-driving cars could be on UK roads in the next decade.

The way we use roads could change as a result. Vehicles could move in convoys, there may be no need for traffic lights, and lane directions could change depending on the time of day.

Practical ideas on design and management

The competition is seeking practical ideas on designing and managing roads in 3 areas:

- road design and related infrastructure including line markings, signs, posts, gantries, crash barriers and lighting columns
- traffic management such as traffic signals and any other means of controlling traffic flow
- road rules and regulations including such things as speed limits and waiting or loading restrictions

Funding for the competition is under SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative).

Up to £150,000 is available for feasibility studies in a first phase. The best project could attract £50,000 to develop it further in a second phase.

Competition information

- the competition is open, and the deadline for registration is at midday

on 7 March 2018

- it is open to any organisation that can demonstrate a route to market for its idea
 - we expect phase 1 contracts to be worth up to £30,000
 - successful projects will attract 100% funded development contracts
 - a briefing event will be held on 31 January 2018
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Speech: Statement on behalf of NATO allies, 24th OSCE Ministerial Council

STATEMENT BY THE DELEGATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM (ALSO ON BEHALF OF ALBANIA, BELGIUM, BULGARIA, CANADA, CROATIA, THE CZECH REPUBLIC, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FRANCE, GERMANY, GREECE, HUNGARY, ICELAND, ITALY, LATVIA, LITHUANIA, LUXEMBOURG, MONTENEGRO, THE NETHERLANDS, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, ROMANIA, SLOVAKIA, SLOVENIA, SPAIN, TURKEY, THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)

Thank you, Mr. Chairperson.

This statement is delivered on behalf of the following participating States: Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, and the United States of America, as well as my own country, the United Kingdom.

Mr. Chairperson,

Arms control, disarmament, and non-proliferation continue to play an important role in the achievement of our security objectives. Both the success and failure of these efforts can have a direct impact on our security environment. We welcome the Decision on small arms and light weapons and stockpiles of conventional ammunitions.

Enhancing military transparency and confidence in Europe is a top priority. We remain committed to conventional arms control as a key element of Euro-Atlantic security. Full implementation and compliance with these commitments is essential to rebuild trust and confidence in the Euro-Atlantic region. Russia's unilateral military activity in and around Ukraine continues to undermine peace, security, and stability across the region, and its selective implementation of the Vienna Document and Open Skies Treaty and long-standing non-implementation of the Conventional Armed Forces in Europe Treaty have eroded the positive contributions of these arms control instruments. We call on Russia to fully adhere to its commitments and treaty obligations. Reciprocal military transparency and risk reduction have the potential to improve stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area, helping to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We are determined to preserve,

strengthen, and modernise conventional arms control in Europe, based on key principles and commitments, including respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, reciprocity, transparency, and host nation consent.

We remain, inter alia, committed to improving implementation of and achieving concrete progress in 2018 on modernising the Vienna Document to adapt it to the evolving security environment, including through its substantive update. We welcome the wealth of concrete proposals aimed, inter alia, at strengthening risk reduction mechanisms, enhancing military transparency, preventing military incidents and rendering verification more effective. We call on Russia, which has a very substantial conventional military force, to constructively engage by joining other Participating States in the ongoing discussions in the OSCE to modernise the Vienna Document, so that we can reach agreement on meaningful updates. Full implementation and modernization of Vienna Document will help to avoid miscalculation and misunderstanding. We also underline that the OSCE remains a relevant and inclusive forum to rebuild trust and confidence through multilateral military dialogue.

We welcome the Structured Dialogue as an opportunity to renew a meaningful exchange of ideas among all of the stakeholders of European Security in the OSCE area to rebuild trust. The process will take more time but we value the significant, initial work done in the Structured Dialogue at OSCE during 2017, including discussions of threat perceptions, challenges to the rules-based order, military to military contact, and analysis of trends in military force postures and exercises. We look forward to the continuation of the Structured Dialogue in 2018.

Mr. Chairperson,

The participating States subscribing to this statement request its inclusion in the journal of this Ministerial Meeting.

Thank you.