

Press release: Boston Barrier flood defence gets the green light

The Environment Agency's £100m Boston Barrier – which will better protect more than 14,000 properties from tidal flooding – has been given the green light by the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Michael Gove, and HM Treasury.

The tidal barrier will feature a moveable gate across the River Witham (also known locally as the Haven), together with a new control building to operate the barrier, new flood defence walls on both banks, and a replacement gate across the entrance to the existing Port of Boston wet dock.

The Barrier will make Boston one of the best protected areas from flooding outside of London.

The Secretary of State has now approved the Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) to grant powers to construct and operate the barrier, and work is set to begin in January.

The Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Not only is this fantastic news for the 14,000 home and business owners who will be better protected from flooding – Boston's new state of the art defences will help attract investment, benefitting the wider area.

This is just one of many flood schemes being built in Lincolnshire and we are investing £229 million over six years to better protect communities across the county.

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

The Boston Barrier scheme is an inspiring example of collaborative work between the Environment Agency, councils, businesses and the local community.

I am pleased that it will help to protect more than 14,000 homes and businesses from the kind of flooding the town experienced in December 2013. I look forward to the finished scheme.

Following approval for the scheme's full business case from HM Treasury last week, the contract for the project has been awarded to Bam Nuttall and Mott MacDonald joint venture (BMMJV).

BMMJV Framework Director Allan Rogers said:

We are looking forward to delivering this innovative flood protection scheme.

We have a proven track record of success having recently completed phase one of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

Boston has a long history of tidal flooding. The town flooded in 1953, again in 1978, and more recently during the tidal surge on 5 December 2013 when defences were over-topped, damaged or breached. This affected the town extensively, with more than 800 properties flooded across 55 streets.

The Environment Agency is investing £2.5 billion across the country, which will see 1,500 flood defences reducing risk to 300,000 homes by 2021.

Everyone has a responsibility to take measures to protect themselves from flooding, such as knowing your risk, signing up for the Environment Agency's free flood warnings, and making a flood plan so you're prepared in advance. Call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit www.gov.uk/flood for more information.

News story: Passenger detrainment onto electrically live line, Peckham Rye

At 18:46 hrs on Tuesday 7 November, an Arriva Rail London (London Overground) service from Dalston Junction to Battersea Park came to a stand, shortly before reaching Peckham Rye station. A faulty component on the train had caused the brakes to apply, and the driver was unable to release them. There were about 450 passengers on the train.

The train driver spoke over the train radio system with the service controller, train technicians, and the signaller. Following these conversations he began, with the assistance of staff from Peckham Rye station, to evacuate the passengers from the train via the door at the right-hand side of the driver's cab at the front of the train. This involved passengers climbing down vertical steps to ground level, very close to the live electric conductor rail (3rd rail) and walking along the side of the line about 30 metres to Peckham Rye station.

Soon afterwards, an operations manager from GTR (which manages Peckham Rye station) contacted station staff and realised they were at the side of the electrically energised track assisting in the evacuation, and that about 80 passengers had already left the train by this route. The operations manager immediately instructed staff to stop the evacuation, and requested that the

train driver contact the signaller and his company's controller for further instructions.

The driver, with further advice from train technicians, then isolated various safety systems which enabled him to release the brakes and move the train forward into Peckham Rye station, arriving at about 19:40 hrs. It was then possible for all the passengers to leave the train normally, and it proceeded, empty, to the depot at New Cross Gate. No-one was hurt in the incident.

Our investigation will examine:

- The sequence of events and the various radio conversations leading up to the incident
- The management of the incident and reasons for the decisions that were taken
- The training, instruction, and competence management of the staff involved
- Any underlying management factors

Our investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, or by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

You can [subscribe](#) to automated emails notifying you when we publish our reports.

[Press release: Ofsted confirms new arrangements for short inspections](#)

A more supportive and collaborative approach to short inspections of good schools was announced by Ofsted today.

The new arrangements are set out in [Ofsted's response to September's consultation](#) on changes to short inspections. Overall, the majority of respondents supported each of the consultation's 3 proposals.

This means that from January 2018:

- inspectors will continue to convert short inspections, usually within 48 hours, if they have serious concerns about safeguarding or behaviour, or if they think the quality of education provided by a school has declined to inadequate

- when there are no significant issues with safeguarding or behaviour, but inspectors identify potential concerns about either the quality of education or leadership and management, the inspection will not convert. Instead, Ofsted will publish a letter setting out the school's strengths and areas for improvement. A section 5 inspection will then take place later, typically within 1 to 2 years. This will give the school time to address any weaknesses and seek support from appropriate bodies. In the meantime, the letter will be clear that the school's current overall effectiveness judgement has not changed.
- when inspectors have reason to believe that a school may be improving towards an outstanding judgement, Ofsted will publish a letter confirming that the school is still good and setting out its strengths and priorities for further improvement. A section 5 inspection will then take place within 1 to 2 years, giving the school time to consolidate its strong practice. However, requests from schools for early inspections will be considered. The majority of short inspections will confirm that the school remains good and, as now, Ofsted will return to carry out another short inspection after approximately 3 years.

Ofsted's National Director of Education, Sean Harford said:

The process for converting short inspections to full section 5 inspections has proven challenging for both schools and inspectors. We have been consulting with the sector on ways to address these challenges and I'm delighted that the majority of respondents supported our latest proposals. I'm very grateful to everyone who took the time to engage with us.

These new arrangements reflect our overall aim to act as a force for improvement through inspection, and to catch schools before they fall. We're confident they will ensure short inspections are responsible interventions that minimise the burden on schools, while at the same time providing constructive support and more time to improve.

The consultation ran from 21 September to 8 November 2017 and was open to the general public. In total, more than 1,500 responses to the online questionnaire were submitted. Ofsted also gathered responses from direct engagement with parents, headteachers, teaching unions and professional associations.

[**News story: Pupils in England climb**](#)

global rankings in reading and literacy

Pupils in England are outperforming peers across the world in reading and literacy, according to an international [study](#) published today (5 December).

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) ranks England joint eighth out of 50 countries, and among the highest performing countries in Europe.

The results – which are based on a study of the reading comprehension and enjoyment of a cohort of 340,000 nine-year-olds around the world – mean England's nine-year-olds are significantly better readers than their American, Canadian and Australian counterparts.

The study was first introduced in 2001, and this year's results are the country's best to date and a dramatic improvement on the 2006 results, when England was ranked 19th out of 45 countries. The study also reveals that while all pupils are making improvements it is low-performing pupils who have made the greatest progress.

It follows the publication of figures in [September](#) which show 154,000 more six-year-old children are on track to become fluent readers compared to 2012.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Today's results put the success of our increased emphasis on phonics and continued focus on raising education standards on a global scale. Thanks to the hard work of teachers across the country, 154,000 more six year olds are reading better than ever before – this is fundamental to our ambition of helping every child fulfil their potential.

Our rise through the global rankings is even more commendable because it has been driven by an increase in the number of low-performing pupils reading well. This demonstrates our determination to ensure this is a country that works for everyone, regardless of background.

Mark Lehain, Director of Parents and Teachers for Excellence and Founder of Bedford Free School, said:

This adds to the already substantial base of evidence that systematic synthetic phonics are the most effective way of starting a child's lifelong love of reading. The hard work of the teaching profession is shown in the excellent results that these children have achieved, and we should all be proud of what we as a country

have done here.

There is also a wider point about the reforms of the past seven years. A great deal of bravery was required to really shake up the system and implement them, but here is yet more evidence that this was the right thing to do.

Michaela Khatib, Head Teacher at Cobham Free School, said:

I'm really pleased to see that English pupils have done so well in this test. Reading is one of the core skills that all pupils should be able to master by the time they turn 10, and I think that the recent work put in by teachers to implement the phonics check across the country has definitely begun to pay dividends. It's also great to see that so many children say they have a real love of reading, and we must keep working towards the goal of every child being able to access the best of what their cultural heritage has to offer.

Clare Sealy, Headteacher at St Matthias School, Tower Hamlets, said:

These results are hugely encouraging because they are further evidence that the hard work of the profession and focus on both reading high quality literature alongside excellent phonics teaching is really making a difference.

As a profession we are determined that every child gets the best possible start to their school career, and skilled phonics teaching, alongside immersion in the amazing riches of the best of children's literature, are both absolutely crucial if we are to kick start a life-long love of reading.

We know from research that children who read for pleasure do best at school, so it is particularly heartening to see that children are developing a love of reading, not only because this will help them thrive at school but also because their lives will be so much richer as a result.

The pupils who took part in this study are the first to be assessed since the government's wide ranging education reforms, which saw the introduction of the more rigorous, knowledge-rich primary school curriculum.

This includes an increased focus on phonics – the internationally approved approach to teaching children to read by breaking words down into their component sounds and 'blending' these sounds together – as well as a focus on children reading more and enjoying more challenging texts in the classroom.

The improved PIRLS results reflect the raising of standards in schools more

generally across the country. Thanks to the dedication of teachers and the government's reforms the proportion of pupils meeting the expected standard in phonics has risen from just 58% in 2012 to 81% in 2017, with 92% of pupils reaching this standard by age seven.

The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their more affluent peers has also closed by 9.3% at age 11 and 7% at age 16 and this summer secondary schools rose to the challenge of the new more demanding GCSEs in English and maths.

PIRLS is a worldwide research project that takes place every five years to look at trends in children's reading literacy achievement over time. The study assesses the knowledge and skills of pupils aged 9 to 10 around the world. England is joint eighth of 50 countries in this year's study with an average score of 559, the highest the country has achieved in the last four PIRLS cycles, significantly above the international median of 539.

The PIRLS study looks at the strategies used to teach reading. For example, in England, teachers are encouraged to use the phonics approach in their classrooms. It examines four main comprehension processes of reading. These are the abilities to:

- focus on and retrieve information explicitly stated in text
- make straightforward inferences from a text, understanding parts of a text that are not stated
- interpret and integrate ideas and information
- examine and evaluate content, language and features of texts

[News story: DAC D'Orsi meets with representatives from cities affected by terrorism to share collective experience](#)

Addressing policing and government officials from around the world at an event in London last week, DAC D'Orsi stressed the importance for the commercial sector to start factoring protective security measures into event planning and new infrastructure projects at the earliest possible stage.

She said:

Methodologies to protect our cities from the increasing terrorist threat are constantly evolving, to ensure that we are prepared to effectively respond and recover from attacks. We in policing will

rightly lead on this vital work, but there is always a limit to what we can do and I believe that our colleagues in the private sector also have an important part to play.

DAC D'Orsi made the comments while co-chairing a 'Safer Cities' round table discussion alongside the Home Office. Taking place at the UK Security Expo at London Olympia on Wednesday 29 November, 'Safer Cities' was created in conjunction with the Cross-sector Safety and Security Communications (CSSC), and hosted officials from Melbourne, Barcelona, Brussels and Rotterdam.

The purpose was to bring together representatives from cities which have been recently affected by terrorism, to share our collective experience of dealing with attacks in the hope it can promote best practice and help keep the global public safer.

DAC D'Orsi used the platform to appeal to companies to make protective security key to their future events planning and building management.

She continued:

Terrorists are using low sophistication, high impact methodologies which are often planned and executed in a short time frame, minimising our ability to disrupt attacks before they occur. Protective security is therefore a key strand of our activity to reduce the impact of attacks.

The private sector has become more willing partners in recent years. Together we have developed communications packages like CSSC and have partnered with business under the Step Change initiative – but to do more to protect the public we need to deliver a more fundamental shift of approach.

The police have a duty to protect the public from terrorist threats, but many responsible private sector entities are already asking how they, too, can contribute. By sharing this 'duty' more widely we can increase its reach, scope and efficacy even further.

Senior officers working for Counter Terrorism Policing are developing plans for how policing can better support the private sector in contributing to the UK's collective Protective Security measures. These include developing accredited private sector security advisory services, creating bespoke products and communications networks for specific sectors, such as entertainment venues or commercial buildings.

Specialist officers could also support testing and exercising across the country to ensure a national standard of security training across private sector workers, as well as developing develop protocols and systems which would allow for the police and government to recover the costs of the use of national assets to protect private events.

DAC D'Orsi added:

Private companies looking to host public events or begin new infrastructure projects must meet stringent targets to ensure they have valid fire safety certificates, and I see no reason why we can't do the same for Protective Security measures.

Similarly, commercial entities such as football clubs must contribute to the policing operations which protect their sites and their customers. So surely it is only right they do the same when utilising national protective security resources.

I know from speaking to private sector representatives that the vast majority of private companies are ready to work alongside police to make the UK safer place, and I believe we now have the blueprints to make that a reality by making our public spaces as hostile as possible for those looking to do us harm.