

£1.5 billion to improve energy efficiency and slash bills

- Government funding of up to £1.5 billion will see around 130,000 social housing and low-income properties in England upgraded
- upgrades will help households save around £400 to £700 a year on their energy bills at current prices and funding could support around 19,000 green energy sector jobs
- funding follows government's direct and decisive intervention ahead of 1 October to reduce energy bills for households and businesses

Around 130,000 low-income households across England could see bills slashed by around £400 to £700 a year as their homes receive energy efficiency upgrades through the government's latest Help to Heat funding.

Up to £1.5 billion is being made available through the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Home Upgrade Grant schemes, allowing social housing providers and local authorities to submit bids for funding to upgrade the properties of around 130,000 low-income and social households.

Today's funding will see the installation of measures such as external wall and loft insulation, energy efficient doors and windows, heat pumps and solar panels, with multiple measures often being installed in a single home to considerably improve the energy performance.

Local authorities and social housing providers will be able to submit bids for funding and will deliver upgrades from early next year until March 2025, building on more than 30,000 homes already being upgraded under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund and Home Upgrade Grant schemes.

Today's announcement comes ahead of unprecedented government support which kicks in this weekend, helping to protect households, businesses and public sector organisations from rising energy costs following Putin's illegal war in Ukraine.

Thanks to the government's Energy Price Guarantee, for the next two years, the typical annual household bill will be £2,500, a saving of at least £1,000 a year based on current prices and energy usage. This is on top of existing government plans to give all households £400 off bills this winter. This direct and decisive action means households will receive significant protection from an 80% rise in the Energy Price Cap and won't see average household bills increase to over £3,500 annually, with some reports predicting bills could have risen as high as £6,500 next year.

There was also no price cap in place for businesses, meaning British companies were also experiencing significant increases in energy costs – in some cases of more than 500% – but thanks to government intervention through the Energy Bill Relief Scheme, businesses, public and third sector organisations will pay wholesale energy costs well below half of expected

prices for this winter.

Business and Energy Secretary Jacob Rees-Mogg said:

Putin's illegal war in Ukraine, would have had dire consequences on the energy bills of both households and businesses this winter, without the government's decisive action. Today I am cutting costs even further for the most vulnerable households for years to come.

By making homes warmer and cheaper to live in, we are not only transforming the lives of households across England, we are creating huge growth in the economy, backing the green energy sector and supporting thousands of high-skilled jobs.

As part of the government's Growth Plan, which was announced by the Chancellor this week, the schemes could together support 19,000 green energy sector jobs.

Social housing with an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of D or lower will be eligible to receive Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) upgrades, while the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) funding will help people who are most vulnerable to fuel poverty, living in privately-owned – both rented and owner-occupied – off gas-grid homes and on low incomes.

The cash boost forms part of £12 billion combined funding under the government's 'Help to Heat' schemes, which also include the Local Authority Delivery and Energy Company Obligation schemes, targeting support to lower income and more vulnerable households.

The HUG funding will see up to £700 million available for local authorities to install energy efficiency measures in around 30,000 properties. Estimates for average annual energy bill savings for low-income households in HUG are around £700 at current prices.

Up to £800 million SHDF wave 2 grant funding will see around 100,000 social homes receiving energy efficiency upgrades, with estimated average energy bill reductions of around £400 a year at current prices. The grant funding provided by the government will have to be matched by those applying, doubling the investment being made under the SHDF scheme to around £1.6 billion.

The wave 2 funding builds on the £179 million funding announced through SHDF wave 1 in February 2022, which is upgrading up to 20,000 social housing properties.

Minister for Business and Energy Lord Callanan said:

The cheapest form of energy is the energy we do not use. Our Help to Heat schemes are already bringing real benefits to tens of thousands of low-income households across the country by improving

the energy performance of their homes and saving them hundreds of pounds on their bills.

Together with the unprecedented support government is putting in place to help households and businesses with rising energy costs, this latest funding will extend that assistance even further, targeting help to those who need it most by making their homes warmer and cheaper to run.

It is set to deliver further on the huge progress that has already been made to increase the energy efficiency of UK homes.

In 2010, just 14% had an Energy Performance of C or above, however it is now at 46% and rising, with the social housing sector up from 18% in 2008 to around 66%. Energy efficiency improvements are one of the most effective ways to save money on energy bills at a time of rising global gas prices.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation, said:

The launch of the second wave of the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund is hugely welcome. This vital funding will enable housing associations across the country to make significant progress in retrofitting and decarbonising their homes – work that not only cuts carbon emissions but saves residents money on their heating bills.

We know that England's homes produce more carbon each year than the average annual use of the country's cars, so decarbonising social homes has a pivotal role to play to meeting the country's net zero target.

The National Housing Federation and our members look forward to continuing to work with BEIS to demonstrate the benefits that decarbonising homes has on residents' lives.

Tracy Harrison, Chief Executive, Northern Housing Consortium said:

We welcome the opening of this important funding, which gives the North the opportunity to scale-up social housing retrofit programmes, creating good, skilled, green jobs and helping to tackle fuel poverty in our communities.

The North is ambitious for this Wave – some significant collaborations are under way and councils and housing associations are looking forward to working with BEIS to build on the momentum we've already established together.

This latest funding is in addition to government action to protect UK

households from the costs of energy that are being pushed up by pressures on global markets following Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine.

The Energy Price Guarantee will limit the amount consumers can be charged for each unit of gas and electricity you use in their home and will apply from 1 October, fixing the unit cost at the equivalent of a £2500 annual bill for a typical household with average gas and electricity use.

This will save the average household £1,000 a year based on current energy prices from October. It comes in addition to the announced £400 energy bills discount for all households and together they will bring costs close to where the energy price cap stands today.

Taken together, the government is cutting energy bills by an expected £1,400 this year, and millions of the most vulnerable households will receive additional payments, taking their total savings this year to £2,200.

Meanwhile, the Energy Bill Relief Scheme will reduce wholesale gas and electricity prices for all UK businesses, charities and public sector bodies, such as schools and hospitals, meaning they will pay wholesale energy costs below half of expected prices for this winter. The next wave of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme will also soon open for new applications, with up to £635 million in funding to further support bill savings in the public sector.

Further details on the government's [Help to Heat schemes](#) and how to find out if a property is eligible for a grant is available on the GOV.UK website.

Details on how local authorities and social housing providers can bid for funding are on the [Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund](#) and [Home Upgrade Grant](#) pages on GOV.UK.

In the [Heat and Buildings Strategy](#) and [Net Zero Strategy](#), it was announced that £800 million has been committed for the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) and £950 million for the Home Upgrade Grant (HUG) as part of the 2021 Spending Review process across the next three years.

The SHDF is a £3.8 billion government manifesto commitment over a 10-year period to improve the energy performance of socially rented homes. Today's announcement marks the launch of the Wave 2.1 competition. – A total of 69 projects were awarded funding in [Wave 1](#) of the SHDF in February 2022.

The £62 million [SHDF demonstrator](#) project launched in 2020, and will improve the energy efficiency of up to 2,000 social homes to at least EPC Band C – cutting bills for tenants and supporting over 1,000 jobs.

The 2021 Spending Review brought the total committed funding for the SHDF and associated demonstrator to just over £1 billion so far, representing a significant investment that will drive the decarbonisation agenda across this important sector on the pathway to net zero.

The Home Upgrade Grant provides energy efficiency upgrades and low-carbon heating to low-income households living off the gas grid in England to tackle

fuel poverty and meet net zero.

Government has allocated a total of £1.1 billion to the Home Upgrade Grant, with delivery taking place from early 2022 to March 2025.

The worst performing low-income, off gas grid homes, ranging from Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Bands D to G, are eligible to receive upgrades under HUG.

The government has also launched an [online service](#) to help homeowners make informed choices on the energy efficiency of their homes, as part of its 'Help to Heat' support.

As part of its drive to make homes cheaper to heat, the government also announced in the [Growth Plan](#) that it would be bringing forward legislation to implement new obligations on energy suppliers to help hundreds of thousands of their customers take action to reduce their energy bills, delivering an average saving of around £200 a year.

This help will be worth £1 billion over the next three years, starting from April 2023. Support will be targeted at those most vulnerable but will also be available for the least efficient homes in lower council tax bands. As with previous schemes, the government will work with the Scottish Government on arrangements in Scotland. – In the short term, the government is providing a package of measures to help households meet the cost of living that is being driven up by global pressures on wholesale energy prices.

The [Energy Price Guarantee](#) (EPG) will fix the unit cost at the equivalent of a £2500 annual bill for a typical household with average gas and electricity use. This is to stop the immediate challenge of bills going up sharply on 1 October and will run for an initial period of three months to 31 December, but the firm intention is that a EPG scheme will continue into 2023 in order to protect households through this winter.

The EPG limits the amount a household can be charged per unit of gas or electricity for the next 2 years. Saving will depend on how much you use, but a typical household will save at least £1,000 a year.

Consumers in England, Scotland and Wales do not have to do anything to receive the benefit of the EPG. Changes to gas and electricity tariffs will happen automatically.

The [Energy Bills Support Scheme](#) will deliver a £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households to help with energy bills from October and £1,200 to around 8 million low-income households. [Further details of the scheme can be read here.](#)

This is alongside existing support for the most vulnerable, including the Winter Fuel Payment, worth up to £300 and the Warm Home Discount, providing a one-off payment of £150 this October. The Cold Weather Payment, which is a £25 payment for vulnerable households on qualifying benefits, is also available to help with the cost of bills when the weather is or expected to be unusually cold.

The [Energy Bill Relief Scheme](#) will provide a price reduction to ensure that all businesses and other non-domestic customers are protected from excessively high energy bills over the winter period. Non-domestic customers do not need to take action or apply to the scheme – support will automatically be applied to bills. The price reduction will run initially for 6 months covering energy use from 1 October 2022 until 31 March 2023.

The government has also launched a £10 million Homes Decarbonisation Skills Training competition for training providers in England to offer subsidised skills training to installers within the home retrofit, energy efficiency and low carbon heating sector.

The Midlands Net Zero Hub will administer, monitor and evaluate the skills training competition.

Better broadband for rural Teesdale under Project Gigabit

- GoFibre to build lightning-fast gigabit-capable connections more than twenty times faster than 'superfast'
- Made possible via Project Gigabit, the government's £5 billion plan to boost broadband across the UK

More than 4,000 rural premises in Teesdale will gain access to faster and more reliable broadband after a multi-million contract was awarded under the government's Project Gigabit scheme.

Borderlink, trading as GoFibre, will work with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and Durham County Council to enable thousands of hard-to-reach homes and businesses to access gigabit-capable broadband, made possible by £6.6m of DCMS investment.

The project will cover towns, villages and hamlets across the region including premises near to Barnard Castle and Bishop Auckland, subject to further survey completion.

Gigabit-capable networks are lightning-fast and fit for the future, allowing communities to upload and download data with none of the disruptions associated with ageing copper networks. More than 70 per cent of the UK can access gigabit connections – such as full fibre – but these are mostly in urban areas which is why the government is investing £5 billion to connect hard-to-reach areas that might otherwise miss out.

The contract with GoFibre's parent company Borderlink has been signed and planning is now underway, with construction due to begin in Spring 2023. This is the second Project Gigabit contract to be awarded following one covering

North Dorset in August.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Julia Lopez said:

Families and businesses across rural Teesdale can soon say goodbye to buffering broadband and hello to lightning-fast speeds thanks to the government leading the biggest broadband roll out in British history.

I'm delighted Teesdale will be one of the first places to benefit from the dozens of multi-million pound contracts we will be signing over the coming weeks and months to make sure people in 'hard-to-reach' areas across the UK get the broadband they deserve.

A GoFibre spokesperson, said:

Closing the digital divide and helping local communities to thrive by providing previously unimaginable levels of capability through high-quality broadband services is at the heart of everything we do. Through our latest appointment, we will work as a trusted partner, equipping Teesdale with world-class connectivity built for the future.

GoFibre is a Scottish independent broadband provider bringing full fibre broadband services to homes and businesses across Scotland and the north of England. This is the first contract Borderlink Broadband has been successfully awarded under Project Gigabit.

The fast, reliable networks delivered by Project Gigabit will level-up mostly rural and remote communities across the UK, as well as tackling pockets of poor connectivity in urban areas. Having the fastest connections also means the UK is fit for the future, with broadband infrastructure designed to deliver for people's needs for decades to come.

Cllr Susan McDonnell, Durham County Council's Cabinet member for digital, customer services and procurement, said:

We look forward to working on this exciting development, which will benefit thousands of our residents and businesses in rural areas.

Reliable broadband is integral to our ambitious plans for economic growth across County Durham. It plays a significant role in opening up a wider range of education and employment opportunities and helping communities to connect with each other and thrive.

Following a £164 million investment earlier this year from Gresham House's British Sustainable Infrastructure Fund, GoFibre is accelerating its rollout of full fibre broadband throughout Scotland and the north of England,

enabling the company to transform more lives and address the UK's digital divide. GoFibre already has a presence across East Lothian, Fife and the Scottish Borders, with the aim to reach hundreds of thousands of homes over the next three years.

Households and businesses can register their interest in GoFibre's full fibre broadband services by visiting www.gofibre.co.uk/register.

—ENDS—

Notes to Editors

- Project Gigabit is DCMS's flagship £5 billion programme to enable hard-to-reach communities to access lightning-fast gigabit-capable broadband.
- The Teesdale contract assigns around £6.6m of UK government funding to build a gigabit-capable broadband network to more than 4,000 local premises, subject to survey completion.
- GoFibre, trading under parent company Borderlink Broadband, secured an investment of £164 million in early 2022 from the British Sustainable Infrastructure fund, managed by Gresham House PLC, to accelerate its rollout of full fibre broadband throughout Scotland and the North of England, enabling the company to transform more lives and help to address the UK's digital divide.
- Founded by CEO, Alex Cacciamani, and his wife, Laura, in their hometown of Duns, GoFibre was created out of the need to solve their broadband problems at home. After moving to the Scottish Borders in 2017 with their three kids, they realised quickly there was a need for faster broadband in these rural areas and set about solving the issue.
- The company is headquartered in Edinburgh, with an engineering depot in Berwick-Upon-Tweed.
- With GoFibre, customers can access speeds of between 100Mbps and 10Gbps, with standard pricing starting at £36 per month.
- Individuals and businesses can find out more and register their interest in full fibre broadband by visiting <http://www.gofibre.co.uk/get-in-touch/>

Trade Secretary speech at the Atlantic Future Forum in New York

Thank you and good afternoon everyone.

How wonderful it to be at the Atlantic Future Forum.

This a superb event organised by the Royal Navy and our teams from the Department for International Trade, the Ministry of Defence and of course the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office.

It is particularly poignant being on HMS Queen Elizabeth given the events of the last few weeks.

To say it's been emotional would be an understatement. For everyone in the UK, young or old Her Late Majesty had been ever presence of force in British Life. Many of us here were more than her subjects we were Her Majesty's Ambassadors, Her Majesty's Civil Service, Her Majesty's Armed Forces, Her Royal Navy, Her Government.

Our late sovereign was also, of course, a stateswoman, who devoted herself to deepening the special relationship.

So it is a particular privilege to stand on this vessel which she named at Rosyth Dockyard 8 years ago, as we begin the Carolean age in the service of His Majesty.

And talk about an important aspect of the US and UK's shared future and by that I mean...our economic partnership.

I lived briefly in the US, and learned very quickly that Americans and New Yorkers especially, like to cut to the chase.

So, I'm going to get straight to the point:

Right now, there's a global growth slow-down underway.

And if you'll forgive the pun, we need all hands on-deck to get the world economy's wheels spinning again.

And that's why in the UK we're going for growth in a big way. And in fact some of you may have heard some major reforms we announced on Friday, to achieve this:

But before I go into what we are doing, it would be odd not to address the elephant in the room.. and the financial instability in markets over the last few days.

You would by now have heard the Bank of England taking short-term measures to provide stability – as is their job.

My colleagues, including the Chancellor, continue to work very closely with our institutions to support them in their aims while maintaining their independence. And we must look at all of this in the context of the fundamentals, which are that the UK economy is strong and we have a plan – a Growth Plan to cut taxes, promote enterprise and cut red tape for business.

So what are some of the things we're doing?

We're keeping corporation tax at the lowest in the G20 at 19% not cutting keeping.

We're creating low tax investment zones around the country, to make it quicker and easier to build and get things done because the regulatory

environment has not kept pace with our economic needs.

We're accelerating critical infrastructure projects in sectors like transport, energy, and telecoms...to ensure we invest in our future and deliver for the next generation.

We're also going to be spending 3% of GDP on defence by 2030. Something I know looking at all of the uniforms in the room is especially relevant to all of you here today.

We're rolling out significant financial services reforms that will make the UK an even better place to do business and much more.

There is radical change happening on our side of the Atlantic. It's the kind of radical change that we've not seen for 40 years.

We know it is bold.

We know it comes with risk.

But in these volatile times, every option, even the status quo is risky.

And the Prime Minister, my predecessor but one in my role as Trade Secretary gets trade and knows that our global economic relationships have got to be at the heart of this work.

Right now, US-UK trade is booming. Sadly, not enough people know this or hear the message enough. So I want to make sure they do and I'll continue to bang the drum.

But it's the investment story that's even more interesting.

Increasing numbers of American firms are realising that backing the UK is a great move.

I could make your eyes glaze over by trotting out an endless list of statistics! Don't worry I'm not going to do that today

.... but the numbers speak for themselves:

US businesses already invested £479 billion pounds into in our economy –To put that figure into context it's more than Sweden's annual GDP.

Every day just under 1.5 million Britons go to work for an American firm.

And in the year to March alone, American investment created 27,000 British jobs.

I know to some extent I'm preaching to the choir here.

Because I don't have to look far around this room to spot businesses that are boosting their UK operations.

In fact, Lockheed Martin and Raytheon, are just some of the American firms

here today that have said they will do precisely that. And we look forward to working with them.

Undoubtedly, factors like good infrastructure, our legal system and a lack of red-tape, are part of the UK's attraction.

But there's another reason too. We are fast becoming the world's innovation destination.

Just like Manhattan, we're an island full of dynamism and ingenuity.

We're the nation with big ideas.

We're Europe's unicorn factory.

And the first quarter of this year our tech start-ups attracted more global investment than anywhere bar the US....and partnerships between UK and American firms are pushing forward progress....

For instance, there's a really interesting story taking place right now involving a firm in Cambridge called PhoreMost and a business named Polaris Quantum Biotech from North Carolina.

Together, they want to cut the time it takes to create cancer therapies. That's not only a great business partnership, it's literally a life-saving collaboration.

But I want to do even more to make sure American ambitions collide with British ideas or vice versa.

So here's my elevator pitch. The UK is pro-ambition, pro entrepreneur, pro-growth and home to top-flight talent fizzing with extraordinary ideas.

And we are more determined than ever before to turn the country into the place to come if you want your business to succeed.

Of course, we mustn't pretend everything is perfect or easy. We know that, sometimes trading our way to growth can be more difficult than it needs to be.

But it's because the US and UK are close that we can fix problems wherever we find them.

Look at the way we recently solved the Section 232 tariff dispute on UK steel and aluminium exports and reached an understanding on the Airbus-Boeing dispute.

Very soon, Americans will be able to pick up a leg of Welsh lamb at their local store for the first time in decades, after a long-standing rule was removed.

That's obviously big news for British farmers. And it's arguably even better news for Americans who get to tuck in on some of the finest grass-fed lamb in

the world...

And, of course, we're delighted that bourbon is fully back on the drinks menu, in Britain, following the Section 232 resolution.

I know that behind the scenes we're working hard to resolve issues and make it quicker, easier and cheaper for our firms to do business.

The UK also sees the huge potential to develop our relationships with individual states as another huge opportunity.

In May, under the stewardship of my predecessor, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, who is also here today, we signed a Memorandum of Understanding on trade and economic cooperation with Indiana – a state that already buys \$1.4 billion worth of UK goods every year.

North Carolina followed in July.

And I know the DIT team is working hard on continuing Anne Marie's legacy with me and securing more this year...so watch this space.

Given we're anchored not far from the Statue of Liberty, I want to end by saying a few words about trade as a force for progress and a force for good.

Free markets and fair trade are very personal to me.

Too many people trot them out as cliches and platitudes, but a world without these freedoms is not just poorer it's also more dangerous.

I grew up in Nigeria. And I saw first-hand what happens when a nation can't trade or worse embraces protectionism.

Not long ago, the government there banned rice and tomato not tomatato tomato imports to support local industry. The result was not a boom in production, but supply shortages, price rises and people smuggling in tomatoes like they were diamonds.

I will never forget the sight of my mother a university professor stuffing her suitcase with Tesco Value Rice when she visited me in London because it was cheaper there than back home for her.

One of the many reasons I'm so frustrated by the trope that Brexit was the UK retreating from the world, is because it is completely untrue. I voted to leave the European Union and I saw Brexit as a once in a generation opportunity for the UK to embrace the world and trade was and still is at the heart of that.

So I want to make sure that we use our freedoms to build better and fairer trading relationships with emerging economies.

When trade is open and free and everyone plays by the rules, we will win and developing countries gain an alternative to authoritarian regimes.

But at a time when weaker economies are being exploited by those who don't share our values, it's not enough to talk about why free and fairtrade matters, we need to show why too.

Last month, my department launched the Developing Countries Trading Scheme. It's one of the most generous initiatives of its type in the world and it's going to give a boost to businesses in 65 countries by cutting red tape and lowering tariffs.

It's early days but I'm already hearing how the scheme is giving entrepreneurs in countries like Bangladesh the opportunities they need to grow their businesses. And closer to home, I'm very much focused on exploring how trade can support the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Of course, the UK-US trading relationship couldn't be a better illustration of capitalism's power to influence, unite and act as a counter to protectionism and authoritarian regimes.

And We're already using trade to tackle some of the biggest issues facing the world.

At last year's G7 we renewed our Atlantic Charter; originally signed by Churchill and Roosevelt pledging UK and US economic and security collaboration.

Through our Future of Atlantic Trade dialogues, we're working on critical issues, such as developing and diversifying our supply chains in response to the war in Ukraine and the pandemic.

We're deepening our ties in the Indo-Pacific through our AUKUS pact.

Our response to the Indo Pacific region's rapid growth and China's growing assertiveness, is another shared challenge.

And I know we're both committed to opposing economic coercion, and the unfair trade practices that choke competition and penalise countries that follow the rules.

President Ronald Reagan once said: 'Free trade serves the cause of economic progress and it serves the cause of world peace.'

And the UK-US economic partnership is the clearest possible example of why free trade and free markets are not just integral to our growth but to the freedoms we share.

Next month, we'll mark the 75th anniversary of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade – the forerunner of today's multilateral system.

Our nations helped to forge that deal after WW2, following long negotiations.

At GATT's heart was an acknowledgement that free and fair trade would be key to our future.

Again today, we face unprecedented challenges.

Again, at times, we may have differences...

But just like the American and British teams who gathered round the negotiating table three quarters of a century ago.

I know we are committed to deepening our transatlantic economic partnership.

Building our businesses' bonds of commerce.

And demonstrating, unequivocally, how through free trade we can together create a better world. Thank you.

National Drought Group agrees further action to tackle drought through winter

Participants at the latest [National Drought Group](#) (NDG) meeting have set out further action needed now and over winter to mitigate the impacts of drought on water supplies, agriculture and the environment next year.

Senior decision makers from the Environment Agency, government, water companies and key representative groups, met today (28 September) to discuss the current situation, which – despite recent rainfall – sees most areas across England still experiencing drought conditions.

Although essential supplies of water remain safe, and many areas of England have experienced rainfall in recent weeks, reservoirs across the country continue to be at lower levels than usual. Nearly half of reservoirs were classed as exceptionally low for the time of year in the most recent [monthly water situation report](#) for August, with total reservoir stocks at 52% of total capacity on 20 September.

September rainfall has had a limited positive impact on water levels, after six months of below average rainfall. Current September rainfall totals ranged from 47% of the long-term average (LTA) in north-west England to 89% of the LTA in south-east England. Very dry soils mean that rainfall will take longer to replenish groundwater and reservoir water levels.

As a result, most of England remains in drought, with 11 of the Environment Agency's 14 areas in drought. The remaining areas classed as being in 'prolonged dry weather' include Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire; the North East; and most recently Cumbria and Lancashire, which moved to prolonged dry weather status last week. Without average rainfall over autumn

and winter, it is expected that the drought will continue into 2023.

The Group discussed how the tools within the pre-agreed water company drought plans have had a positive effect on demand so far, but the Environment Agency expects water companies to continue to take all the necessary actions to mitigate the impact of the drought by implementing their drought plans. This includes applying for drought permits and drought orders where required to increase their water supplies.

The following drought permits have recently been submitted to the Environment Agency by water companies:

1. South West Water have applied for a drought permit to manage the abstraction of water from the Tamar Lakes in Cornwall
2. Yorkshire Water have applied for drought permits to conserve water by reducing the flows out of the North West group of reservoirs
3. South East Water have applied for a drought permit to manage the abstraction of water from the Ardingly (River Ouse) reservoir
4. Thames Water have applied for a drought permit to manage the abstraction of water from the Farmoor (River Thames) reservoir

The Environment Agency have also recently applied to Defra for two [drought orders](#) to protect the water environment of the Black Moss and Elslack Reservoirs.

Today, National Drought Group members agreed to:

1. Take a proactive approach to implementing drought plan interventions and other, additional schemes, over the winter period.
2. Review the projections for autumn and winter and continue scenario planning into next year
3. Continue working collaboratively across sectors to manage the impacts on water supplies, the environment and agriculture.

David Dangerfield, Environment Agency Director of Water, Land and Biodiversity and chair of the NDG, said:

When rain falls, it is easy to assume the need to act against drought and prolonged dry weather has passed – but that is not the case. Water pressures on agriculture, wildlife and the environment remain high as we head into the autumn and winter, which is why we must continue to manage water wisely.

For this year – and indeed the coming decade – significant action must be taken if we are to mitigate the impacts of climate change on our water security.

The past summer has been a clear reminder of the need to effectively prepare for weather extremes and how we make the very best use of our water resources. Our National Framework for Water Resources sets out clearly what we are doing in the face of a new normal for water and we are determined to continue driving that

forward.

Attending the National Drought Group meeting for the first time since taking up her role, Trudy Harrison, Minister for Water Security, said:

I look forward to working with the Environment Agency, water companies and everyone else involved in the water industry to strengthen our water security

While essential water supplies are safe, more work must be done to ensure that we accelerate the investment needed to cut leaks, increase water efficiency and water supply and better prepare for prolonged dry weather events over the coming decade.

Water companies must put the needs of their bill payers at the heart of their plans – which means redoubling efforts to cut leakage, accelerate delivery of projects increasing water resilience and protect our natural environment.

Water companies have a statutory duty to ensure water supplies and it is for the individual companies to ensure they remain resilient for their customers.

In drought affected areas, the public and businesses should be very mindful of the pressures on water resources and should use water wisely. But while there is an important role for individuals to sustainably manage their usage, Government expects water companies to act to reduce leakage and fix leaking pipes as quickly as possible and take timely and wider action alongside government policy.

The National Drought Group will continue to work very closely together over the coming weeks. Environment Agency Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan, will chair a further meeting of the Group on 14 October when the Water Supply sub-group will report back on progress made with planning to manage any water shortfalls into 2023.

Further action

Action is already being taken by Government, Environment Agency, water companies, environmental and angling groups and farmers to manage the impacts. The EA's ongoing actions include:

1. Managing abstraction licences to balance the needs of water companies and our natural environment;
2. Working with farmers, businesses and other abstractors to manage water availability and ensure they get the water they need to be resilient while maintaining our protection of the environment.
3. Operating water transfer schemes between different areas of the country, to make sure water gets to the areas which are worst affected by prolonged dry weather and the drought;
4. Planning with water companies and ensuring they are implementing their

[drought plans](#) and applying for drought permits and drought orders where required. Every water company in England has a published drought plan available on their website;

5. Monitoring environmental conditions on key rivers to check temperature, dissolved oxygen levels and algae activity
6. Activating EA waterways drought plans to carefully manage navigations
7. Reoxygenating water and rescuing fish in distress where river flows are especially low;

Further information:

Attendees at the National Drought Group included

1. Environment Agency
2. Defra
3. AHDB
4. HTA
5. DLUHC
6. Canal and River Trust
7. Consumer Council for Water
8. Drinking Water Inspectorate
9. Energy UK
10. National Resources Wales
11. Rivers Trust
12. RSPB
13. Ofwat
14. UKHSA
15. Met Office
16. MOSL
17. Natural England
18. National Farmers Union
19. Water UK
20. Waterwise
21. Welsh Government
22. Affinity Water
23. Anglian Water
24. Northumbria Water
25. Southern Water
26. Yorkshire Water
27. SES
28. South Staffs Water
29. Thames Water
30. Severn Trent
31. South West Water
32. South East Water
33. United Utilities
34. Wessex Water
35. DCWW

Please see the map of Environment Agency areas [here](#).

The Environment Agency uses four stages to describe and manage drought

conditions:

1. Prolonged dry weather
2. Drought
3. Severe Drought
4. Recovering Drought

Drought orders and drought permits

1. Water companies can apply for drought permits from the Environment Agency to help them manage public water supplies.
2. If granted, they give companies more flexibility to manage their resources during periods of drought.
3. A drought permit can last up to six months but can be amended to last up to a year.
4. Water companies will need to prove that they are making efforts to conserve water (for example by imposing a Temporary Use Ban (hosepipe ban) before EA will grant a permit.
5. Drought orders can also be applied for by the Environment Agency or a water company. They can be used by the Environment Agency to protect the environment (an environmental drought order) or by water companies to maintain water supply.
6. Drought orders are issued/granted by the Environment Secretary.
7. Before granting an order, the Environment Secretary must be satisfied that there is an "exceptional shortage of rain", and that there is an "actual or threatened serious deficiency in water supplies" or a "serious threat to the environment due to low flows or water levels"

[Winners of the Falklands regional student competition 2022/2023 announced](#)

World news story

The Falkland Islands Government and the British Embassies in Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay announce the winners of the 2022/2023 student competition to visit the Falkland Islands.



The Falkland Islands Government and the British Embassies in Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile are delighted to announce the winners of this year's regional student competition. Participants from the four countries were asked to submit a short video in English, in which they answered the question: "Why would I like to meet my neighbours in the Falkland Islands?".

Almost 200 students entered the competition. All entries were reviewed and representatives from the Falkland Islands Government and British Embassies of the four countries selected the winners:

- Braian Espinoza Zalazar – Argentina
- Barbara Rost Dalchiavon – Brazil
- Isidora Ocampos – Chile
- Sofía Canessa – Uruguay

The winners will travel to the Falkland Islands in January, where they will spend a week experiencing the unique character of the Islands including its food and culture, nature and environment and meeting members of the community.

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