

[A trial using nature to help reduce flood risk hailed a success](#)

A trial to help test how nature based solutions such as creating wetlands can be used to help reduce the risk of flooding has been successfully completed at Marlfield Farm, in Earby.

This is one of a series of pilot projects which are part of Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme using natural flood management (NFM) techniques to help protect the people of Leeds and those living near the River Aire from the risk of flooding.

Evidence from these projects is being gathered to fully understand the benefits of NFM and develop how best to work with landowners, tenants and key partners in the future.

A team from the Environment Agency has been working with the River Stewardship Company and landowners at Marlfield Farm, which is on the border of Yorkshire and Lancashire, since last September to slow the flow of rainwater and provide better habitat for local wildlife. Works have included wetland creation, hedge and tree planting, leaky barrier installation and fencing off corners of fields from grazing so that more vegetation can grow which helps to store and slow the flow of water across land.

The Earby project will be the first of many NFM schemes in the area. The Yorkshire Dales National Park recently organised a tour of the site for farmers who were interested in installing NFM measures on their own land so they could see the works in action and learn from the project. A video to show the success of the NFM measures during Storm Ciara in February has been produced by the owners Marlfield Farm which can be viewed below

[Natural flood management at work at Marlfield Farm, Earby](#)

Any landowners interested in using natural flood management techniques on their land can contact the NFM project team by emailing:

LeedsFAS.nfm@environment-agency.gov.uk

Jenny Barlow, flood risk adviser with the Environment Agency, said a time-lapse camera had been fitted on the farm to help show the difference that the project is making. It recorded the impact that these measures made to slow the flow locally during storm Ciara and Dennis.

She said:

We are very grateful to the landowners for working with us to trial these NFM techniques on their land and delighted as the initial results at Marlfield Farm are positive. This project will contribute to local flood risk reduction and provide wider environmental benefits, slowing the flow of water locally and to

downstream communities including Leeds.

Earby has a history of flooding and although these natural techniques will not prevent this from ever happening again, we hope that our success at Earby will be a catalyst for more landowners to come forward and work with us to install more of these measures. These will have a cumulative benefit and should help the landscape to hold more water during flood events.

Natural Flood Management also offers huge potential for climate mitigation, for example, creating wetlands, restoring our uplands and planting trees can help to capture tonnes of carbon from the atmosphere.

Mr Daniel Procter, together with his wife Heather and parents Howard and Lynda, own Marlfield Farm. Daniel said:

We are pleased to support the trial of NFM techniques on our farm having witnessed first-hand how quickly the river reacts to flash flooding.

The features have already been tested and have responded well to recent flooding events, in particular to Storm Ciara.

We are also excited about the added environmental benefits of these measures. We keep rare breed sheep and are keen to strike a balance between farming and conservation. The creation of new ponds, wetland habitats and hedgerows will complement our existing efforts to boost the biodiversity on our farm and in the local area.

Adam Rollitt, Chief Executive of the River Stewardship Company who are carrying out the works on behalf of the Environment Agency said:

It has been a privilege to have worked on this exciting project, complementing the river channel maintenance and engagement work that we are delivering further downstream in Leeds as part of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

It is a fantastic example of what can be achieved when working with land owners and other partners, and it is great to see some of the early, positive results.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

Natural flood management techniques are a very interesting and clever way of using the environment to help reduce the risk and impact of flooding.

The fact these measures will be in place so far upstream of Leeds shows how committed we are to a whole catchment approach to protect all our communities at risk of flooding from the River Aire.

Together with the engineering measures to be installed as part of phase two of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme, this shows how a range of different methods can be used to help achieve the same goal.

Recent storm events have highlighted once again how we need to get this work done as quickly as possible so we would call on the government again to work with us to complete phase two in full so all our communities can have the best level of resilience possible.

This work is part of a wider flood risk programme which has been funded by Leeds City Council to work with nature to reduce flow of water from upstream so the landscape can hold more water in times of flood. The wider Leeds NFM programme includes tree and hedge planting, re-channelling rivers to their natural courses, soil aeration, wetland creation and moorland restoration all of which have lots of benefits for people and wildlife.

Critical rail services protected in new deals for GWR and Southeastern

- government signs new contracts with Southeastern and GWR to ensure vital train services continue to connect the South of England and Wales during COVID-19 outbreak
- new agreements with Govia and First will ensure that those who need to can continue to travel and will provide certainty for staff working on the railways
- long-term capacity improvements have also been agreed as part of the contracts

Vital rail services that people across the South East, South West and South Wales depend on will continue to run thanks to new contracts signed between the government and rail operators GWR and Southeastern.

The new agreements with Govia and FirstGroup will also ensure that jobs are protected in the unprecedented circumstances brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, providing those who cannot work from home with the connections they need to get to where they need to and keep the country running.

In the longer-term, tens of thousands of passengers are set to benefit from improvements including increased capacity at peak times, more front-line staff and more fares trials for passengers. The direct awards will allow services to be stepped up when the rail network returns to normal following disruption from COVID-19.

Major improvements to be delivered by GWR include the planned introduction of additional new capacity in the Bristol and Exeter areas.

Southeastern passengers will see space for thousands of extra passengers during the morning and evening peak times, while more front-line staff will be recruited to help passengers with their journeys.

Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, said:

We are taking decisive action across the board to ensure vital rail services continue, allowing those people who cannot work at home to get to work – particularly our NHS, emergency services and other vital industries.

These contracts will keep services running in the short-term but also are positive news for passengers in the future, focusing on more reliable services, extra capacity and improvements to the stations they use every day.

These are unprecedented times and the rail network is central to our national resilience.

The deals announced today (30 March 2020) guarantee vital services in the short term and tangible improvements in the long term.

These agreements will run concurrently with the [emergency measures agreements](#) announced earlier this week which will see the government temporarily take on the revenue and cost risk associated with individual franchises. These measures ensure that key services will keep running across the UK.

Great Western Railway, owned by FirstGroup, has been awarded a direct award for 3 years, extendable to 4. Southeastern, owned by Govia, has also been awarded a direct award for up to 2 years.

Running since 2005, the Great Western franchise provides services from London to the West and South West of England and South Wales, local/regional

services in South West of England and commuter services in the Thames Valley. It is one of the largest and most diverse franchises in the UK, with major commuter, business and leisure markets.

Southeastern has been running the train service between London and Kent and parts of East Sussex since 2006. It operates one of the busiest networks in the country including the UK's first domestic high-speed service with Javelin trains.

[Government cracks down on spread of false coronavirus information online](#)

Specialist units across government are working at pace to combat false and misleading narratives about coronavirus, ensuring the public has the right information to protect themselves and save lives.

The Rapid Response Unit, operating from within the Cabinet Office and No10, is tackling a range of harmful narratives online – from purported 'experts' issuing dangerous misinformation to criminal fraudsters running phishing scams.

Up to 70 incidents a week, often false narratives containing multiple misleading claims, are being identified and resolved. The successful 'Don't Feed the Beast' public information campaign will also relaunch next week, to empower people to question what they read online.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

We need people to follow expert medical advice and stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives. It is vital that this message hits home and that misinformation and disinformation which undermines it is knocked down quickly.

We're working with social media companies, and I'll be pressing them this week for further action to stem the spread of falsehoods and rumours which could cost lives.

When false narratives are identified, the government's Rapid Response Unit coordinates with departments across Whitehall to deploy the appropriate response. This can include a direct rebuttal on social media, working with platforms to remove harmful content and ensuring public health campaigns are promoted through reliable sources.

The unit is one of the teams feeding into the wider Counter Disinformation Cell led by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, made up of

experts from across government and in the tech sector.

The Cell is engaging with social media platforms and with disinformation specialists from civil society and academia, to establish a comprehensive overview of the extent, scope and impact of disinformation related to coronavirus.

The Culture Secretary will be contacting social media companies this week to thank them for their good efforts to date, assess the progress made and discuss what other potential measures can be put in place to ensure accurate, honest information consistently reaches users of their platforms.

Penny Mordaunt, Paymaster General said:

Holding your breath for ten seconds is not a test for coronavirus and gargling water for 15 seconds is not a cure – this is the kind of false advice we have seen coming from sources claiming to be medical experts.

That is why government communicators are working in tandem with health bodies to promote official medical advice, rebut false narratives and clamp down on criminals seeking to exploit public concern during this pandemic.

But the public can also help with this effort, so today we implore them to take some simple steps before sharing information online, such as always reading beyond the headline and scrutinising the source.

The public can help stop the spread of potentially dangerous or false stories circulating online by following official government guidance – the ‘SHARE’ checklist (see further information). This includes basic but essential advice such as checking the source of a story and analysing the facts before sharing.

Certain states routinely use disinformation as a policy tool, so the government is also stepping up its efforts to share its assessments on coronavirus disinformation with international partners. Working collaboratively has already helped make the UK safer, providing ourselves and our allies with a better understanding of how different techniques are used as part of malicious information operations – and how to protect against those techniques more effectively.

These measures follow recent advice from the National Cyber Security Centre, which revealed a range of attacks being perpetrated online by cyber criminals seeking to exploit coronavirus earlier this month.

This included guidance on how to spot and deal with suspicious emails related to coronavirus, as well as mitigate and defend against malware and ransomware.

Further information

To help the public spot false information the government is running the SHARE checklist and [Don't Feed The Beast campaign here](#). This gives the public five easy steps to follow to identify whether information may be misleading:

- Source – make sure information comes from a trusted source
- Headline – always read beyond the headline
- Analyse – check the facts
- Retouched – does the image or video look as though it has been doctored?
- Error – look out for bad grammar and spelling

Communities Secretary Robert Jenrick on COVID19 response

Good afternoon,

I would like to update you on our response to COVID-19.

I'm joined today by Dr Jenny Harries, the Deputy Chief Medical Officer.

As of 9am today:

127,737 people have now been tested for the virus.

108,215 have tested negative.

19,522 have tested positive.

Of those who have contracted the virus, 1,228 have, sadly, died.

The virus is indiscriminate

It doesn't matter who you are, where you are or how old you are.

We each have a part to play by staying at home, protecting the NHS and helping to save lives.

We all have a duty to one another to keep everyone safe.

So today I would like to give you two updates, before answering questions.

The first on the plans I have put in place to ensure that every corner of the country can confront the coronavirus epidemic.

The second on what the government is doing to shield the most vulnerable people in society.

On the first question, I have put in place in all parts of the country procedures to ensure that everywhere can be ready to move forward together. All parts of the country are now on an emergency footing.

This is an unprecedented step in peace time.

We haven't done anything like this since the Second World War.

This means that we're establishing strategic co-ordination centres across the whole country.

Each centre is led by gold commanders.

We are bringing together senior members of the emergency services

- the police, the fire service, the ambulance service
- with local authorities and the NHS, to lead communities through this challenging period.

From Cornwall to Cumbria.

And we have embedded within each of these groups members of the armed forces – including some of the finest military planners in the world.

These groups are planning the local response to the virus.

Using their expertise, their judgement and their leadership to ensure a comprehensive, a coordinated, and consistent response across the country.

One issue that they have been helping us to coordinate and about which I know there is a lot of concern is the provision of personal protect equipment.

We simply cannot and should not ask people to be on the frontline without the right protective equipment.

We have a clear plan to ensure that those serving this country at this time have the right equipment.

We have established the National Supply Distribution Response Team and they are supported now by the armed forces and other emergency services who are working round the clock to deliver the equipment to the people who need it most:

- 170 million masks
- 42.8 million gloves
- 13.7 million aprons
- 182,000 gowns
- Almost 10 million items of cleaning equipment
- and 2.3 million pairs of eye protectors

all delivered to 58,000 NHS Trusts and healthcare settings including GP surgeries, pharmacies and community providers.

Every single GP practice, dental practice and community pharmacy has had a PPE delivery. All care homes, hospices and home care providers have or will shortly receive a delivery.

To NHS and social care workers, all those who rely on this equipment and to their families and loved ones watching this afternoon – we understand.

And we will not stop until we have got you the equipment that you need.

Last weekend, at this press conference, the Prime Minister and I explained why 1.5million people who are extremely vulnerable to the virus, due to their underlying health conditions, needed to stay at home for a period of 12 weeks and avoid face to face contact.

Since then, the NHS have written to almost a million of these people and outlined the steps that they need to take to protect themselves.

We have also established a dedicated web page on gov.uk which those in receipt of a letter should go to, to let us know whether or not they need further assistance over the course of the next 12 weeks. There is also a new phone number, which is on the letter they have or will receive shortly.

If this applies to you, I know that you will find this a very worrying time.

You will be thinking about how you can continue to access the medicine that you need, how you can get the food and other essential supplies that you rely on.

If you don't have family or friends or neighbours nearby who you can rely on then the NHS will deliver your medicines through the community pharmacy network.

And if you register online or using the phone service that we have set up, letting us know you need support, then we will deliver food and supplies to your doorstep.

And this weekend I saw for myself first-hand the first deliveries being made.

The packages included cereal, fruit, tinned goods, teabags, biscuits, toiletries and other essentials.

The first 50,000 will have been sent out by the end of this week and we are ramping up production to send out as many as are required for as long as it takes.

If this applies to you, while you will now have to be at home for a prolonged period of time and that will be difficult, I want you to know that you are not alone. We are here to support you for as long as you need us.

We have all been hugely impressed by the commitment and the dedication of

those working in social care, in local councils delivering essential public services like ensuring that the bins continue to get collected. None more so than me, as the Secretary of State for Local Government.

We all respect the 12,000 heroic former doctors and nurses and paramedics who have come back to work and been deployed this weekend.

And I think we have all been moved by the number of people who have signed up to be one of the NHS Voluntary Responders – today we can announce an extraordinary, three quarters of a million people have signed up to do that.

In every city, in every town, in every village, there is going to be work to be done and in each of us there is the power to do it.

And so please take part, please play your part, please consider your friends, your family, your neighbours when you are shopping, please call the elderly and support them.

When this is done, and it will be done, we all want to be proud of the part that we've played together.

Thank you very much.

COVID-19: FAQs for British Nationals in Bangladesh

In response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic the UK government advised on 17 March against non-essential travel overseas.

Please note, we are working with the Bangladesh authorities and airlines to support British nationals who want to leave Bangladesh and return to the UK. If you are unable to leave at this time, you should follow the advice of the local authorities, keep in contact with friends and family, and continue to follow our travel advice.

If you are a British national in Bangladesh, you should be prepared to stay in the country until commercial flights resume. You will need to be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements, and to rely on the local health system. Given that many restrictions remain in place, and continue to be introduced, moving within Bangladesh may become more difficult than normal for British nationals. Unless you have an urgent reason to travel within Bangladesh, you may have to stay where you are whilst the flight ban and lockdowns remain in place.

Please sign up for alerts on our [travel advice page](#) and follow our social media channels [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) for the latest information.

Urgent Consular Assistance

If you require urgent consular assistance and your question is not covered in the FAQs below, please contact our consular helpline on:

+88 02 55668700

Alternatively contact us via web messenger:

www.gov.uk/contact-consulate-dhaka

Why did the British Government not inform us that flights were being cancelled?

Decisions taken by airlines to suspend and/or alter their operations were commercially driven and/or in response to restrictions imposed by the Bangladesh Government. These decisions were often taken with little or no notice. We have been updating our travel advice regularly throughout this period with information likely to affect British travellers. As a result of the global travel restrictions being introduced at short notice the UK Foreign Secretary took an unprecedented decision on 17 March to advise all British travellers against all non-essential travel. Since then we have been encouraging British travellers to return to the UK while commercial options were available. We are continuously updating our [travel advice page](#) with the latest information.

Why has Biman decided to cancel its flights?

This is a decision taken by the Bangladesh government to suspend flights to the UK for 7 days from 31 March. We recognise that this will disrupt the plans of British citizens currently in Bangladesh who intended to return to the UK between 31 March – 7 April. We are in regular contact with Biman airlines and the Bangladesh Government to ensure flights can resume from 7 April and that existing customers can be rebooked on flights as soon as possible. We also recognise that capacity constraints may involve people remaining in Bangladesh for longer than they had anticipated.

We have seen other airlines suspend their flights only to cancel at a later date. What guarantees are there that Biman won't do the same?

Decisions taken by Biman airlines or any other carrier are out of our control and we cannot therefore guarantee that flights will resume or operate when they are scheduled. However, resuming flights is a top priority for the British Government and the British High Commission is in regular contact with the Bangladesh authorities to ensure British travellers in Bangladesh are able to return to the UK as soon as possible. We will update our travel advice with the latest information as soon as it becomes available.

I had flights booked with another airline, such as Emirates, who are no longer operating flights. How can I change my booking to Biman?

You are advised to contact Biman Bangladesh Airlines for all flight bookings.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines: <https://biman-airlines.com>
Call Centre (Working hours: 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM)
+88-01777715613, +88-01777715614, +88-01777715615, +88-01777715616
Email: sms@bdbiman.com

Alternatively, please speak to the travel agent/airline who booked your original flights. You may also wish to contact your travel insurance provider to check what costs they are able to cover associated with rebooking your flights.

I can't get through to Biman. What should I do?

Biman have advised that their online flight information is up-to-date. They are currently receiving a large volume of calls, so if you are unable to get through to Biman by phone, we suggest you continue to try to contact them via their [website](#)

We have notified Biman about feedback from British travellers of the difficulties they are experiencing. We will continue to raise these concerns with them until normal service resumes.

What is the British Government doing to ensure flights will resume?

We are working with the Bangladesh authorities and airlines to support British nationals who want to leave Bangladesh and return to the UK. We have been told that flights will resume on 7 April and we are monitoring this closely. We will update our travel advice with more information as soon as we receive it. If you are unable to leave at this time, you should follow the advice of local authorities, keep in contact with friends and family, and continue to follow our travel advice.

Why isn't the British Government evacuating British citizens in Bangladesh like in other parts of the world?

The British Government is prioritising repatriation flights in countries where there are very large numbers of stranded British nationals, where there have been no commercial options available for some time, and where no further flights are scheduled for the foreseeable future. We have no plans to introduce repatriation flights from Dhaka, but are monitoring the situation closely.

We have published [advice for British nationals](#) who do not have immediate departure options available to them:

The only available flights are too expensive – what is the British Government doing to assist citizens to get back to the UK?

We have been working closely with airlines to ensure as many people as possible can get commercial flights home in this unprecedented and rapidly changing situation. Prices are a commercial decision for the airline or travel company.

If you have had to purchase a new airline ticket(s), your original airline insurance provider will be able to advise arrangements for refunds.

If your airline has cancelled your flight you may need to buy a new ticket. Your original airline insurance provider will be able to confirm arrangements for refunds.

I'm running out of my medication. What should I do?

If you need medicine, you should visit the nearest pharmacy or ask for assistance from family/friends or your accommodation provider. Carry any medical papers or prescriptions and be prepared to answer questions if stopped by law enforcement authorities.

If the same medication you're on is not available, consult a local doctor for a Bangladeshi alternative or go to the nearest hospital. In case of any emergency, you can dial the Bangladesh National Emergency Hotline – 999 from your mobile/telephone for any assistance whilst in Bangladesh.

How can I extend my Visa?

If you are concerned that your visa is about to expire/has just expired, the Government of Bangladesh has advised that you will be able to extend your existing visa by 3 months (once government offices reopen).

Can you suggest an authentic source to get COVID-19 related information?

The latest Public Health England guidelines on Coronavirus and information on returning travellers can be found [here](#)

If you are unable to return to the UK or choose not to do so once flights resume

- Please make sure you have adequate accommodation, funds and travel insurance including for any medical bills.
- You will need to follow advice of local authorities – your safety and security is the responsibility of the local authority where you are. You will also need to be ready to comply with local isolation, testing or quarantine requirements.

Further information

British High Commission Dhaka
United Nations Road
Baridhara
Dhaka – 1212
Bangladesh

Email: Dhaka.Press@fco.gov.uk

Follow the British High Commissioner to Bangladesh on Twitter: [@RCDicksonUK](https://twitter.com/RCDicksonUK)

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