

Press release: Project to resume to reduce risk of flooding in Earby

Essential work on a £1million flood alleviation project is to resume in Earby next week, to reduce the risk of flooding to 91 homes and 17 businesses.

The culvert repair project started in the Lancashire town in July 2018, and was expected to take 13 weeks to complete.

The project experienced a set back due to a major obstruction being discovered whilst drilling the new culvert beneath the disused railway embankment just under halfway along the new route.

The Environment Agency's contractors, JBA Bentley have now found a solution to complete the remaining part of the Victoria Clough culvert repair project.

Further investigation of the existing Victoria Clough culvert beneath the disused railway embankment has found that a technique called 'pipe bursting' can be used, to remove the obstruction and install a new culvert along the existing line.

Works are due commence on Monday 11 February to replace the existing culvert beneath the disused railway embankment and install an improved trash screen at the culvert inlet. This work is expected to take 8 weeks.

Temporary traffic management will be set up on Monday 25 February on the A56 to allow for the permanent repair of the footpath, kerbing and road to take place safely. This work is expected to take 2 weeks to complete.

Paul Swales, flood risk advisor for the Environment Agency, said:

We are now closing in on the completion of this project and would like to thank residents and businesses for their patience and understanding while we carry out this essential work to reduce flood risk in Earby.

The flood alleviation project involves making Victoria culvert structurally sound. Culverts are structures which carry water underground. They were often built to allow development to take place around them such as roads, homes and businesses. Many people live and work near culverts and may not even know they are there.

Other elements of the project have progressed well and have been completed, including 60 metres of structural re-lining of Victoria Clough culvert from the junction of Valley Road and Victoria Road and the Victoria Road/A56 junction.

The Environment Agency continues to explore other options to reduce flood

risk from all sources in and around Earby. The team is investigating the options in more detail, which include flood storage areas on Earby Beck, the New Cut and Victoria Clough and installing a flood defence wall at Albert Street.

The Environment Agency is looking for volunteer flood wardens to play a key part in keeping Earby prepared and informed before, during and after a flood. Anyone interested in becoming a flood warden can email heather.cottrill@environment-agency.gov.uk to find out more.

By signing up to the Environment Agency's free Flood Warning service residents and businesses can receive flood alerts and flood warnings for Earby Beck and/or Earby New Cut directly to their phone and emails, 24/7.

Press release: Joint statement on behalf of the Prime Minister and President Juncker

Prime Minister May and President Juncker have met today to review the next steps in the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

The talks were held in a spirit of working together to achieve the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU, especially in the context of a shared determination to achieve a strong partnership for the future given the global challenges the EU and the UK face together in upholding open and fair trade, cooperation in the fight against climate change and terrorism and defending the rules-based international system.

The Prime Minister described the context in the UK Parliament, and the motivation behind last week's vote in the House of Commons seeking a legally binding change to the terms of the backstop. She raised various options for dealing with these concerns in the context of the Withdrawal Agreement in line with her commitments to the Parliament.

President Juncker underlined that the EU27 will not reopen the Withdrawal Agreement, which represents a carefully balanced compromise between the European Union and the UK, in which both sides have made significant concessions to arrive at a deal. President Juncker however expressed his openness to add wording to the Political Declaration agreed by the EU27 and the UK in order to be more ambitious in terms of content and speed when it comes to the future relationship between the European Union and the UK. President Juncker drew attention to the fact that any solution would have to be agreed by the European Parliament and the EU27.

The discussion was robust but constructive. Despite the challenges, the two

leaders agreed that their teams should hold talks as to whether a way through can be found that would gain the broadest possible support in the UK Parliament and respect the guidelines agreed by the European Council. The Prime Minister and the President will meet again before the end of February to take stock of these discussions.

[News story: CMA launches court action against Care UK](#)

Last December, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) told Care UK, one of the UK's largest care home providers, that it must refund over 1,600 residents who were charged a compulsory upfront 'administration' fee of as much as £3,000 or else face legal action.

The CMA believes the care home provider was breaking consumer protection law by requiring a substantial non-refundable administration fee from residents for which they received no services or products in return. It also believes that the company's description of the charge, and what it was for, was misleading and that residents were told about the fee too late in the admission process.

Whilst Care UK has stopped charging this fee following CMA intervention, it has not agreed to refund any residents. As a result, the CMA has issued court proceedings and is now seeking a court order to secure refunds for those affected. Ultimately, only a court can decide whether any conduct breaches consumer protection law.

The CMA will argue that in charging these administration fees, Care UK used contract terms and practices that were unfair and contrary to consumer protection law. The CMA will also argue that Care UK should be prevented from charging these – or similar fees – in the future.

The CMA's [consumer law investigation into care homes](#) has already led to positive changes in the sector, including residents receiving [£2 million in compensation](#) from one of the UK's major care home providers for paying upfront compulsory fees and Care UK reducing the length of time for which it charges fees after a resident's death.

In November 2018, the CMA issued comprehensive advice [to care homes](#) to help them understand their responsibilities under consumer protection law, as well as an [open letter](#) urging them to review their practices in light of the guidance immediately. Care homes should make sure that their contract terms and business practices are in line with this advice.

Press release: Name of British built Mars rover revealed

The name was revealed this morning by Science Minister Chris Skidmore and British European Space Agency (ESA) Astronaut Tim Peake in the 'Mars Yard' at Airbus Defence and Space UK in Stevenage, where the rover is being built.

Chris Skidmore, UK Science Minister said:

It is a tremendously fitting tribute that the rover has been named after Rosalind Franklin as she helped us understand life on Earth and now her namesake will do the same on Mars.

Just as Rosalind Franklin overcame many obstacles during her career, I hope 'Rosalind the rover' will successfully persevere in this exciting adventure, inspiring generations of female scientists and engineers to come.

This is a big moment for British science and through our modern Industrial Strategy we are embracing this moment as part of our ambition to be the world's most innovative economy, creating opportunities for business through science.

Dr Alice Bunn, International Director, UK Space Agency said:

Rosalind Franklin is one of science's most influential women, and her part in the discovery of the structure of DNA was truly groundbreaking.

It's fitting that the robot bearing her name will search for the building blocks of life on Mars, as she did so on Earth through her work on DNA.

Over a third of the science instruments used in the ExoMars mission are led by women.

The UK Space Agency is the second largest European contributor to the ESA-Roscosmos ExoMars mission, having invested €287 million in the mission and £14 million on the instruments. This, in addition to successful negotiations with ESA, secured key mission contracts for the UK space sector.

'Rosalind Franklin' was chosen by a panel of experts from a shortlist submitted by the public, following a naming competition opened in July last year in which nearly 36,000 people responded. Competition entrants that

guessed the final name were invited to the naming ceremony at Airbus where they met astronaut Tim Peake and had a tour of the facility.

Tim Peake, British ESA Astronaut said:

This rover will scout the Martian surface equipped with next-generation instruments – a fully-fledged automated laboratory on Mars. With it, we are building on our European heritage in robotic exploration, and at the same time devising new technologies.

Johann-Dietrich 'Jan' Wörner Director General, European Space Agency said:

This name reminds us that it is in the human genes to explore. Science is in our DNA, and in everything we do at ESA. Rosalind the rover captures this spirit and carries us all to the forefront of space exploration.

Colin Paynter, Managing Director Airbus Defence and Space UK said:

Integration of the ExoMars rover, or rather Rosalind, has started here in Stevenage and the teams are now working round the clock in the sterile cleanroom to make sure she will be ready to fly next year.

ExoMars is the culmination of our industry experience over the last half a century where we have worked alongside academia and agencies to push the boundaries in space both for satellites and missions to other planets.

In November experts meeting at the National Space Centre in Leicester chose Oxia Planum near the Martian equator as the landing site for Rosalind due to its geology and the likelihood of finding signs of life.

The Government's modern Industrial Strategy is backing businesses to succeed by increasing investment in science, because countries that invest in ideas create more opportunities for business. The ambition is for the UK be the world's most innovative economy – and the development of the ExoMars rover for the UK is a part of this ambition.

Rosalind Franklin (1920-1958)

Rosalind Elsie Franklin was a British biophysicist, physicist, chemist, biologist and X-ray crystallographer who made contributions to the understanding of the fine molecular structures of DNA, RNA, viruses, coal and graphite. She went to Newnham College, Cambridge in 1938 and passed her finals in 1941, but was only awarded a degree titular as women were not entitled to degrees at that time. She received a PhD from Ohio University in

1945.

Franklin is best known for her work on the X-ray diffraction images of DNA. Her data was a part of the data used to formulate Crick and Watson's 1953 hypothesis regarding the structure of DNA. Unpublished drafts of her papers show that she had determined the overall B-form of the DNA helix. Her work supported the hypothesis of Watson and Crick and was published third in the series of three DNA Nature articles. After finishing her portion of the DNA work, Franklin led pioneering work on the tobacco mosaic and polio viruses. Franklin died from ovarian cancer at the age of 37, four years before Crick, Watson and Wilkins were awarded the Nobel Prize in 1962 for their work on DNA. Franklin was unable to receive the prize as Nobel Prizes cannot be awarded posthumously, but she received no mention in the acceptance speeches. Although Franklin's contribution to the 'discovery' of DNA is now widely recognised, there remains a lingering sense that her contribution was unjustly overlooked and undervalued. Her contribution was not recognised in many science books until the 1990s. Courtesy of the Royal Society

The ESA ExoMars Mission

The rover is part of the ExoMars programme, a joint endeavour between ESA and the Russian State Space Corporation, Roscosmos.

The main aims of ExoMars is to examine the geological environment on Mars and search for evidence of environments that may have once, and perhaps could still, support life. It will also assist in preparing for other robotic missions, including a Mars Sample Return mission, and possible future human exploration. Data from the mission will also provide invaluable input for broader studies of Martian geochemistry, environmental science and exobiology – the search for evidence of life on other planets.

As the first European rover to traverse the surface of Mars, Rosalind Franklin will uniquely drill down to two metres into the Martian surface allowing the rover's scientific instruments to sample and analyse the soil, determine its mineral content and composition, and search for evidence of whether past environments could once have harboured life.

The rover will roam around the Martian surface by using electrical power generated from its solar arrays. The rover's software will have a degree of 'intelligence' and autonomy to make certain decisions on the ground and will navigate using optical sensors.

The rover will relay data to Earth through the Trace Gas Orbiter, a spacecraft searching for tiny amounts of gases in the Martian atmosphere that might be linked to biological or geological activity since 2016.

UK mission content

Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage is leading the build of the rover while the UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory is leading on a key instrument known as the PanCam, a high-resolution 3D camera which will be used to look at the terrain and rocks to try to detect signs of life.

The University of Leicester and Teledyne e2v are working on the Raman Spectrometer with STFC RAL Space providing some of the electronics, including the data processing board.

Images

[ExoMars rover](#)

[Size of the ExoMars mission](#)

Statement to parliament: Smart ticketing on the rail network

In November 2017 in our [Strategic vision for rail](#), the Department for Transport set out ambitious plans for the roll out of smart ticketing across the network, with the aim of making it more convenient for passengers to buy and receive their train tickets. Over a year later, we have made real progress. Every franchise offers smart cards and/or barcodes and smart tickets are available across almost all of the network.

We now want to go further. Our ambition is to ensure that across regional and urban commuter areas smart ticketing can deliver the kind of pay-as-you-go (PAYG) structure that is used in London, to make journeys easier and smoother for passengers.

In the north of England, the government has allocated £150 million to the multi-modal PAYG programme already being progressed by Transport for the North and, in London, Oyster ticketing already offers seamless PAYG travel. However, there is demand for PAYG to be deployed more widely, so today we begin consulting on the feasibility of delivering PAYG to an expanded area across the south-east of England. This is just a first step, and we will continue to work with other areas to assess opportunities to roll out PAYG.

The [consultation](#) offers the travelling public, business, local authorities and others the opportunity to have their say on how the system could operate and where it could extend to. We are aware that there are views on the appropriate ticketing systems and the way the fares structure could be organised to complement pay as you go travel, these issues are also being considered in the consultation.