

Press release: Thousands of fish saved from salt water during tidal surge

The barrier at Herbert Woods boat yard in Potter Heigham, Norfolk Broads, is raised when surge tides are expected. This is to prevent salt water from entering the boat yard where shoals of freshwater fish, which gather in the boat yard during the winter, are protected from salt water.

Earlier this week Environment Agency teams carried out salinity tests in parts of the Broads system and as levels of salt were high, the barrier was shut on Monday.

Officers then used a specialist underwater sonar camera to assess the fish numbers in the boatyard and it is estimated hundreds of thousands of fish had sheltered there. The barrier was re-opened today and no fish deaths have been reported.

Steve Lane, fisheries technical specialist, said:

If we had not closed the barrier, there is no doubt we would have had to carry out a significant fish rescue and it is likely there would have been some fish deaths. Thankfully Environment Agency teams worked together to take action when this salt water surge occurred.

We are continually grateful to Herbert Woods boat yard for their assistance and understanding in operating the barrier, and also to the private boat owners for their co-operation and help to protect the fish. We would also like to thank the anglers who have been out checking in the last few days to see if there have been any fish in distress.

The Environment Agency uses water quality monitors called sondes to track the salt as it moves up the river, thereby giving them enough time to raise the barrier.

During September to March, it is more common to see surge tides push saltwater into tidal rivers and with the added factor of strong winds, this can mean an influx of salt water infiltrates the boat yards and dykes, trapping the fish.

If you see any fish in distress, call the Environment Agency incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

Press release: Welsh Secretary welcomes Defence Secretary to Welsh bases leading the way in training and education

In a visit spanning the length of the country Gavin Williamson, Alun Cairns and Nigel Adams will inspect some of the Welsh bases contributing to the UK's vital defence capabilities. From speaking to those undertaking fast jet training in Hawk aircraft at RAF Valley to exploring the School of Technical Training at St Athan, the UK Government Ministers will see first-hand what Wales has to offer in defence, security and innovation.

On their visit to RAF St. Athan, the UK Government Ministers will meet high-ranking representatives from the Welsh-based RAF and army. At the meetings they will discuss their ambition for the future of the south Wales base.

RAF Valley on Anglesey is home to the No 4 Flying Training School, responsible for training the UK's next generation of world-class fighter pilots. On what is the Defence Secretary's first visit to the base, the UK Government Ministers will have the chance to meet some of the 2,210 regular UK Armed Forces personnel based in Wales and hear of their experiences on the Anglesey base and further afield.

With a total investment of £945 million from the UK Government's Ministry of Defence into Welsh businesses in 2016/17, Wales is now one of the most competitive places in the world from which to innovate, build business and deliver security. Speaking to commanders at RAF Valley and St Athan, UK Government Ministers will reinforce this vital support for the Welsh defence sector and outline their visions for its future.

Secretary of State for Defence, Gavin Williamson said:

The 2,210 regular and 1,080 reservist Armed Forces personnel in Wales make a tremendous contribution to the security and prosperity of the United Kingdom. Wales is home to our 160 Brigade HQ, a light infantry unit, the fast jet pilot training school at RAF Valley and their ground engineering school at MOD St Athan, as well as vital training facilities around Brecon.

Defence invests £945 million each year with businesses in Wales supporting 6,300 jobs, from General Dynamics in Merthyr Tydfil, building armoured vehicles for the Army, to the high tech work of Qinetiq in Aberporth, and the Defence Electronics and Components Agency in Flintshire, which supports our new world-beating RAF F-35 fast jets.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

RAF Valley and St Athan are prime examples of how the UK defence sector not only protects us from global threats but also fosters prosperity, creating thousands of highly-skilled jobs and generating millions of pounds in exports.

After seeing first-hand the world-class talent, not only here in our bases but also as part of our ongoing deployment on the ground in Afghanistan, I am more determined than ever to secure and strengthen Wales' military footprint.

UK Government Minister for Wales, Nigel Adams said:

The first-class training available at the bases across Wales is a true testament to the strength of the Welsh defence sector.

With Welsh-based soldiers, aircrew and sailors deployed worldwide the skill and expertise produced here can be seen and felt globally. The UK Government is committed to preserving Wales' reputation for producing military excellence and I look forward to working closely with the Defence Secretary to drive forward this success.

Following the visit to the two RAF bases, the UK Government Ministers will learn of the invaluable support provided to veterans in south Wales. Helping veterans to re-engage with their families and communities, Woody's Lodge provides a welcoming space for veterans to receive expert support and advice.

Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Cairns said:

Following the recent launch of the UK-wide Veteran's Strategy by the UK Government, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and the Northern Ireland Office, it is inspiring to visit an organisation that for many years has been working towards achieving some of the strategy's core aims here in south Wales.

Woody's lodge supports Veterans to face some of the wide variety of challenges and issues that Veterans can come across when they leave the armed forces. By visiting such organisations, the UK Government can gain a better insight into these challenges and ensure that we are fully informed to deliver a strategy that works.

ENDS

[Press release: Flood protection event for North East town](#)

Residents in a Northumberland town are invited to find out more about potential options for flood protection.

The Environment Agency is carrying out an appraisal of flood defences in Ponteland and are considering a number of options to continue to protect properties from flooding as well as bring environmental improvements.

Residents are invited to a drop-in event which takes place on 23 January at Ponteland Memorial Hall, Darras Road, NE20 9NX. They can drop-in at any time between 2.30pm and 6.30pm.

Ponteland has a history of flooding from the River Pont and currently the Environment Agency maintains a range of assets in the area, including flood walls, embankments and pumping stations.

It is currently reviewing the condition of those assets and working with partners to better understand flood risk in Ponteland and develop a flood alleviation scheme to better protect properties in the town into the future.

The scheme aims to:

- Improve understanding of main river and surface water flood risk in Ponteland, with an improved model to support the scheme as well as the flood warning and incident response.
- Reduce flood risk to homes and businesses in Ponteland, and reduce the impacts on roads and utility infrastructure.
- Seek opportunities to provide environmental benefits as a result of any scheme.

During this year, working with partners and the community, the Environment Agency hopes to identify a preferred option for flood protection.

Vanessa Collins, Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

We are updating our flood modelling and investigating the existing flood defences in Ponteland to improve our understanding of flood risk and ensure the standard of protection can be maintained in the

future.

We are considering a number of options in more detail over the next few months and we would like to hear the thoughts of residents.

We understand just how devastating it is to be flooded – we know there is a history of flooding in Ponteland – and we are committed to ensuring residents are protected.

We want to work closely with the community throughout this process and would encourage people to come along to find out more.

The latest information about the scheme and the potential options are available on the scheme's new [online consultation website](#).

[Press release: FCO statement on the attack on a police academy in Bogotá, Colombia](#)



An FCO spokesperson:

The UK deplores the bomb attack on the General Santander police academy in Bogotá, which has claimed innocent lives and injured many more.

We offer our condolences to the families of the victims and our thoughts are with all those affected by the attack.

Colombia has been steadfast in its rejection of violence for political ends. We reaffirm the UK's strong condemnation of all acts of terror, and our unwavering support to the Colombian authorities as they seek to ensure sustainable peace in Colombia.

Further information

Published 18 January 2019

[Press release: Natural England's longest-serving Chair retires](#)

[unable to retrieve full-text content] Andrew Sells retires today as Chair of Natural England after five years.