

Press release: Warrington's £34 million flood defence scheme officially complete

More than 2,000 Warrington homes and businesses will benefit from the town's multi-million pound flood defence scheme, officially opened today (26 January) by Environment Agency Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan and the town's Mayor, Councillor Les Morgan.

The scheme is one of the largest value flood defence projects constructed in the region in recent times, and will significantly reduce flood risk to the town which has been no stranger to flooding – given it sits in naturally low-lying land and within the path of the River Mersey and its tributaries.

The £34 million scheme brings increased flood protection to properties in 9 residential and public areas of Warrington, better protecting the hundreds of families and businesses who have experienced flooding in the past and are aware of the destruction it can bring.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency Chief Executive, said:

The scheme not only brings flood risk benefits but the work in the area is also good news for walkers, birdwatchers and wildlife. It's been great to see the Environment Agency working together in partnership to better protect Warrington – a fine example of what can be achieved by working with others.

These new flood defences will not only benefit hundreds of homes and businesses in the area but will also safeguard critical infrastructure, vital in keeping the town moving.

Due to the scale and complexity of works, the scheme was delivered in 3 phases – parts of which have been effectively operating for some time. Phase one (the Knutsford Road section) was put to the test during the 2013 December high tides, preventing some 200 properties from being flooded. The predicted value of damage to properties that would have otherwise occurred, covered the actual cost of this section of the scheme.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Warrington's new £34 million flood scheme will reduce the flood risk to over 2,000 homes and businesses, and protect vital infrastructure helping to bring investment to the area.

This scheme is an excellent example of how working together with councils and local businesses allows us to make the most of

government funding to secure the best possible defences for communities. By 2021, we will have invested £47 million in flood defences to better protect 4,280 homes in Cheshire.

Comprising 5km of flood walls and 2.2km of embankment, the 7.2km scheme has improved amenity and recreational opportunities, as well as habitat conditions along the river corridor.

The widening and clearing of formerly impassable footpaths has improved connectivity, as well as views of the river and across the town, and extensive tree planting has created many pleasant vantage points for walkers and cyclists.

At the Twiggeries site behind Kingsway North, a 500m section of Padgate Brook has been realigned to create a more natural look and 5 hectares of reed bed habitat has been established to attract wildlife to the area.

The town's main park, Victoria Park, has seen major improvement works to the main entrance, and a 'wavy-topped' railing along the road frontage at Knutsford Road makes a strong urban design statement.

The scheme was designed not only to be functional but to be aesthetically fitting within its environment. Children from local primary schools were challenged to create the winning artworks that adorn the defence walls, from Kingsway North all the way along Knutsford Road.

Funding for the scheme came from a number of sources. The majority – £29m – came from Government Grant-in-Aid, the remaining came from the partners the Environment Agency worked with to deliver the scheme.

The Environment Agency worked closely with Warrington Borough Council, who contributed £4 million towards the scheme, of which £1 million was 'works in kind'. Scottish Power, who owns and operates a high voltage substation in the Howley area that serves almost half of the town, also contributed £2 million to the scheme to better protect this key piece of Warrington infrastructure.

As well as contributing funding, the Council was a key partner in cementing a strong relationship with stakeholders and landowners within the scheme's footprint.

Councillor Hans Mundry, Warrington Borough Council's executive board member for public realm, said:

The work done by the Environment Agency will bring peace of mind to many Warrington people as we work together to protect homes and businesses along the Mersey.

It is more than just functional though, as you will see if you take a walk by the river. It is an attractive addition to the waterfront and has improved the ecology and helped protect wildlife in the area.

You can view [aerial drone footage of the Warrington flood defence scheme on YouTube](#).

Drone footage filmed by Suave Air Photos

Press release: Bridging payments for Basic Payment Scheme 2017 confirmed by Farming Minister

More than 93% of farmers in England signed up to the 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) have now received their payment. While the RPA continue to pay farmers, those who haven't received their money by the end of March will be offered a bridging payment of 75% in April, Farming Minister George Eustice said today (Friday 26 January).

Payments made to date are worth more than £1.5 billion. The 79,000 farmers who have been paid include a range of claim types and sizes including cross-border, young farmer and common land claims.

Farming Minister George Eustice said:

We have made good progress towards getting payments to farmers this year with over 93 per cent now paid and we are working hard on the final seven per cent.

The burden of EU rules continues to be a barrier to some of the remaining processing so we will ensure that, as we did last year, any farmer not paid by the end of March will receive a bridging Payment in April.

As the Environment Secretary has made clear, when we leave the EU we will match the £3 billion that farmers currently receive in support from the CAP until 2022, and we intend to go on supporting farmers for years to come where the environmental benefits of that spending are clear.

News story: Innovative engineering

[firm to open Midlands manufacturing base](#)

Steve Lindsey, Chief Executive and Founder of Lontra.

High-tech engineering company [Lontra](#) is to build a new manufacturing facility in Warwickshire for its innovative industrial compressors and create new jobs.

The first part of the factory will open later this year. It will complement the business's research and development technology centre at Napton.

Up to £65 million will ultimately be invested in the new manufacturing facility, creating 75 new jobs by 2020 to more than double its workforce.

The project has been backed by [Shield Group Engineering](#), one of the largest manufacturers in the UK, which has contracts to supply Caterpillar, Cummins, Aston Martin, Jaguar Land Rover and JCB.

Vote of confidence in UK manufacturing

Steve Lindsey, Chief Executive and Founder of Lontra, said:

This is a vote of confidence in Britain's ability to manufacture at volume and high specification at globally competitive prices.

We've long led the world in innovative ideas. The spread of technology across prototyping and manufacturing means that Britain is perfectly placed to lead the fourth industrial revolution.

This is a new chapter for our business and we are delighted to be spearheading a new wave of precision manufacturing in the UK, and are committed to the Midlands where we believe that some of the world's very best engineering minds can be found.

Lontra's compressor offers big energy savings

The business developed its Blade Compressor® – a revolutionary new design for an air compressor – with the support of Innovate UK.

Compressors are used to pump air into sewage. They account for 1% of all UK electricity usage. In a trial with [Severn Water](#), the Blade Compressor® led to energy savings of 21.2%.

It has been licensed to global pumping equipment business, [Sulzer](#) for use in the municipal and regulated wastewater sector. Aeration equipment incorporating the compressor will be sold in 150 countries.

Manufacture of the compressor for Sulzer will continue at a factory in Southern Ireland, while the factory in Warwickshire will manufacture compressors for new applications and markets.

Investment in innovation leads to growth

Innovate UK support for the development of the Blade Compressor came through a number of projects. This includes initial feasibility studies, development of a prototype, and investigating its use in industrial areas including power generation and food processing.

Simon Edmonds, Director – Manufacturing and Materials, Innovate UK, said:

This excellent news from Lontra is testament to the strengths of UK high-value manufacturing and in particular the West Midlands region. It illustrates how investing in innovation leads to jobs and growth for the UK economy.

Speech: Penny Mordaunt speech at the Kenyan Chamber of Commerce

Thank you.

Principal Secretary, Professor Low, Mr Chairman, members of the Chamber.

I am delighted to be here today to contribute to your discussions on the future of Global Britain and to celebrate the UK's flourishing economic relationship with Kenya.

I want to begin by thanking the Chairman and members of the British Chamber of Commerce Kenya for hosting us here today; for the enormous contribution you make to the economies of Kenya and the UK; and the inspiring example that you are setting here in East Africa.

As members of the British business community here in Kenya, you have a unique understanding of the strong economic ties between our countries.

You see the potential for these ties to grow and develop.

You understand that the UK must move away from a relationship with Africa that is dominated by aid, and towards one that embraces the power of economic growth and delivers mutual prosperity.

And you understand that sustained, job-creating growth will play a vital role

in lifting people out of poverty, and allow Kenya to realise its ambition of economic independence.

You know that great changes are underway, both here in Kenya and at home.

This is a really exciting moment for the UK's partnership in Africa and around the world.

As we prepare to leave the EU and enter a new phase of international engagement, we will renew our focus on our African relationships.

There are abundant opportunities across the continent, and nowhere more than in Sub-Saharan Africa. These opportunities will only grow over the next twenty years.

We want to ensure complete coherence on our approach, and we are determined to ensure that our efforts across the continent become more than the sum of their individual parts.

We are also determined to ensure that our renewed focus on Africa's economic development delivers jobs, investment and trade.

For both the UK and Kenya, this presents a tremendous opportunity.

When we talk of growth in Africa, we risk limiting our outlook to the large economies at either end of the continent. But Kenya should not be overlooked.

In recent years, it has dramatically improved its 'ease of doing business' rankings, rising 30 places in the last three years on the World Bank's global index.

The country has an impressive growth rate – greater than most of its neighbours and many developing countries. It has an immense appetite for economic expansion and diversification. It acts as a critical regional hub, providing trade access to 200 million people across seven countries.

And Kenya's reputation for innovation spreads across the continent. It is leading the charge in sectors, such as mobile money, and transforming lives across Africa.

As with all growing economies, we know that there are still hurdles to jump. But no one can deny that Kenya is a profound success story – the largest and most diverse economy in East Africa. Throughout this journey, the UK has stood beside Kenya every step of the way.

The British government's support has driven essential policy and regulatory changes that have helped Kenya and its neighbours power ahead in recent years.

We have delivered transformational reforms to the country's ports, borders and infrastructure; to facilitate trade across the region; and have helped harness the use of technology to improve services and help businesses to

reach their customers, including those who might otherwise have been left behind.

Our commercial impact in Kenya is without equal.

The UK is the largest cumulative investor in Kenya, and the fourth exporter of goods.

British companies, both local and global, rank among Kenya's most successful and respected firms.

We contribute an enormous proportion of tax revenue to Kenya; seven of the top ten corporate tax payers in this country are British companies, and the revenue they generate delivers investment across the breadth of the Kenyan government's priorities, changing the lives of Kenyans as their country grows.

British companies directly employ a quarter of a million Kenyans and are growing the job market. Just recently, Chamber member East African Breweries Ltd / Diageo announced a new site that will bring over 100,000 jobs to the Kenyan economy and shows that British investment is not limited to the major cities.

Our investment travels through Kenyan society more than other countries, because our firms reinvest significant revenues in their local communities and value chains.

Unilever, which was recently rated Kenya's top employer for the fourth time in a row – an incredible achievement that demonstrates the company's commitment to its workforce.

And GSK, which has reinvested 20% of profits from its African interests to train community healthcare workers and combat childhood mortality.

These are just two examples of the tremendous work of members of this Chamber.

These companies represent the best of British investment. They set a gold standard with their business practices, and in doing so they send a powerful message about British standards and our commitment. They demonstrate the real impact of British commercial engagement on the country's economic and social progress.

Across the UK government, we are determined to ensure that we support British companies abroad in every way possible, to boost the economies of both countries and the lives of Kenyan people. On the way here from the airport this morning, I was delighted to visit the Hela garment factory.

Opened just 18 months ago it already employs over 4,000 people. It has invested heavily in corporate social responsibility, introducing a safe water programme, child care facilities and free lunches for its staff. Other companies in the export zone now follow their example, and Hela's team already provides training and support for its fellow companies to deliver

their own CSR programmes.

Hela is a world leader in responsible manufacturing and sets the standard for others in East Africa to follow. They are working in partnership with the British government to advise Kenya on how it can grow the manufacturing sector to deliver the best conditions, not just for businesses like theirs, but for the Kenyans who work for them.

To ensure that this ripple effect is also felt beyond the manufacturing sector, UK aid is also partnering with the government to create more comprehensive Special Economic Zones, allowing companies – not only those who export – to flourish and grow, bringing jobs and wealth to Kenya.

We want British commercial and government expertise to play its part in preparing Kenya's economy for its next phase of growth.

We will continue to invest and scale up our trade initiatives like Trade Mark East Africa, to tackle barriers and to increase the potential for trade success across the region. And we will continue to grow CDC.

We will increase our infrastructure development funds, building the crucial pathways for trade and investment and removing obstacles to the economic expansion we all want to see.

We will launch our five-year urban programme to unlock both development and commercial opportunities at the sub-national level, responding to the opportunities that Kenya's devolution brings.

And we will enhance our modern partnership with the Government of Kenya to strengthen the bilateral economic relationship and long term prosperity of both countries.

We are building a great team to do this work, including experts on trade policy, export finance and investment.

I am delighted that many government colleagues and implementing partners are here with us today, demonstrating our commitment to a whole of government approach on this important issue.

I hope you will take the opportunity to talk to them about opportunities to partner in your areas of expertise. You are part of the team too. We cannot do this without you.

The support of the British business community will be crucial to the success of a new, modern UK-Kenya partnership.

We need you to keep doing all that you are doing. Keep growing the economy, keep creating jobs, keep setting world class standards.

Please share your success stories. The British are famously bad at 'blowing our own trumpets' – but I ask you to promote your successes. This will build confidence in Kenya's potential and show others what can be achieved. And tell us what you need. If there are changes that need to be made or areas

where you need support, talk to our team. They are there to help.

We have a huge opportunity to shape the health, wealth and prosperity of the nation in a way that grows and protects the economy of the UK too.

Our development, diplomatic and commercial investment here has helped to create a self-sufficient economy and a powerful trading partner for the future. The UK should be enormously proud of that.

Kenya now stands strong and we must transition our relationship to a new, modern footing, for the mutual prosperity of our two great nations.

Thank you for the part that you are playing in that and the part you will play in the future.

[News story: Returning money to charities](#)

We are aware that numerous registered charities have received donations from the Presidents Club Charitable Trust and may be unsure about what to do with these donations.

Accepting or refusing future donations

It is up to a charity's trustees to make the difficult decision as to whether they should refuse a donation. They must make this decision on the basis of the best interests of the charity. That will include weighing up any issues around how the funds were raised, which may include reputational concerns, against the financial impact on the charity of turning the donation down.

Different charities may legitimately come to different decisions, and trustees can approach the Commission for advice if they are unsure about their approach.

Keeping or returning donations already accepted

As with accepting or refusing future donations, when deciding whether to keep or return donations that have already been accepted, trustees should think carefully about, and be able to demonstrate, what is in the best interest of their charities.

Depending on the terms of the donations and how the funds were raised, there may be restrictions on whether a donation can be returned and the Commission may need to authorise such returns. Charities should seek the Commission's advice about whether our authorisation is required in their specific case. Trustees may wish to seek their own legal advice. The Commission does not

expect trustees to return funds raised for charitable purposes in the circumstances but understands if they wish to consider doing so.

Trustees should remember their duty to report any serious incidents which could harm their charity's reputation to the Commission. See our guidance on How to report a serious incident in your charity.

To seek the Commission's advice on this matter please contact raumailteam@charitycommission.gsi.gov.uk with The President's Club in the subject line.