

## [Press release: Clean-up takes place following heavy rainfall](#)

The Environment Agency has removed a large amount of debris from a County Durham dam following rain and high river flows.

Prolonged heavy rain saw river levels rise across the north east leading to Environment Agency field teams working through the night to keep the region's rivers flowing.

Spring Gardens dam – which reduces the risk of flooding to West Auckland from the River Gaunless – prevented large amounts of debris from causing blockages further downstream.

This week the field team has been back out clearing up after the heavy rain resulted in 12 Flood Alerts being issued across the region.

Alex Murray, Field Team Leader, said:

The dam is designed to hold back flood water during high flows, and then slowly release it once the threat has passed.

While it wasn't necessary for it to operate during the heavy rain last week, it prevented debris from reaching downstream and creating blockages, which is equally important and helps reduce the risk of flooding to the town.

It resulted in a large build-up of debris so this week we've been clearing it up, along with our other flood defence assets, to ensure they are clear and in working order ready to do their job again.

Our Field Teams regularly carry out work to check and maintain our rivers right across the north east to make sure anything which is deemed a potential flood risk is removed.

Spring Gardens dam was built after West Auckland and South Church were badly affected by floods in 2000.

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## [News story: Department of Health](#)

# appoints new team of non-executive directors

Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has appointed Kate Lampard, Dame Sue Bailey, Sir Ron Kerr, Michael Mire and Prof. Sir Mike Richards as non-executive directors to the Department of Health board.

Kate Lampard is the chair of GambleAware and works as an independent consultant advising organisations on management and service effectiveness. She is a former barrister and previously led the NHS investigations into Jimmy Savile.

Prof. Dame Sue Bailey is chair of the Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition and Honorary Professor of Mental Health Policy at the University of Central Lancashire. She serves as Chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges and was a consultant child and adolescent forensic psychiatrist.

Sir Ron Kerr served as Chief Executive of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust until October 2015 and remains with the Trust as executive vice chairman. He was Chief Executive of United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust, and Deputy Director of Financial Management for the NHS Executive.

Michael Mire is the Chair of the Land Registry and senior independent director at the Care Quality Commission. He was a senior partner at McKinsey & Company.

Gerry Murphy has served as a non-executive director and Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee at the Department of Health since 2015. He is a non-executive director at Dixons Carphone Plc.

Prof. Sir Mike Richards was previously a physician for more than 20 years. In 1999 he was appointed as the department's first National Cancer Director. He was Director for Reducing Premature Mortality on the NHS Commissioning Board (now NHS England).

Minister of State for Health, Philip Dunne said:

We are delighted to welcome our new team of non-executive directors who bring with them experience and knowledge from different spheres to support us as leaders of the nation's health and care.

They will join Gerry Murphy who we are pleased to reappoint to his role. We will be encouraging their involvement in priority issues for the department and wider system. I look forward to working with them all and to their contributions to departmental board.

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# Press release: Candidate selected for Ofcom Chair

The Government has announced that following an open recruitment process, Lord (Terry) Burns has been chosen as their the preferred candidate for Chair of Ofcom from 1 January 2018.

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee will now hold a pre-appointment hearing with Lord Burns on 13 December 2017.

The Committee's conclusions will be considered carefully before deciding whether or not to proceed with the appointment.

The term of the outgoing chair, Dame Patricia Hodgson, ends on 31 December 2017.

Lord Burns is Senior Adviser to Banco Santander and a non-executive member of the Office for Budget Responsibility. He is also a member of the House of Lords Economic Affairs Select Committee and Chairman of the Lord Speaker's Committee on the Size of the House.

He was Chief Economic Advisor to the Treasury and Head of the Government Economic Service from 1980 to 1991 and Permanent Secretary to the Treasury from 1991 until 1998.

Previous appointments include Chairman of Santander UK plc, Channel 4 Television Corporation; Marks and Spencer plc, Welsh Water, the National Lottery Commission and The Royal Academy of Music.

From 2004 to 2006 he was Independent Adviser to the Secretary of State on the BBC Charter Review.

**ENDS**

## **Notes to Editors**

1. This appointment has been made in accordance with the Cabinet Office's Governance Code on Public Appointments.
2. The Chair of Ofcom is appointed by the Secretary of State. Remuneration for this role is £120,000 for up to three days a week. The term of appointments will last for four years.
3. In accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments, any significant political activity undertaken by an appointee in the last

five years must be declared. This is defined as including holding office, public speaking, making a recordable donation, or candidature for election. Lord Burns has declared no such political activity.

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## [News story: Vacancies: Inspectors of Air Accidents \(Operations\)](#)

The Air Accidents Investigation Branch (AAIB) seeks applications from exceptional individuals to join our team of professional pilots who are Inspectors of Air Accidents (Operations). Working at the leading edge of aviation safety on the world stage, these unique roles offer the opportunity to make a real difference as we strive to improve aviation safety.

Often leading multi-disciplinary teams from many organisations, Inspectors of Air Accidents (Operations) help to determine the operational causes of civil aircraft accidents and serious incidents worldwide. The scope of these role are wide reaching and, in addition to the technical investigation, will encompass many areas of responsibility, from working closely with families, to liaising with UK embassies overseas. You will, therefore, need to have excellent communication skills with the ability to quickly adapt your style to suit your audience.

A full job description and role profile is on the [Civil Service Jobs website](#)

Read more about the work of an inspector of air accidents below.

The deadline for applications is 31 December.

Emma Truswell, Inspector of Air Accident (Operations)

As a new AAIB Operations Inspector, I quickly noticed the amount of variety in the job. Every week is filled with new learning experiences and interesting challenges. It provides a tremendous opportunity to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge, and to apply them to important real-life events. The most rewarding aspect for me is knowing that I am part of something meaningful and just. On one level we can be finding answers for bereaved families during the most difficult time in their lives, and on another we are helping to improve international flight safety.

A core part of the job is deploying to the scenes of accidents and serious incidents. A roster shows who is available for call-out any time of the day or night, and any day of the year. Once called, you could be sent anywhere in the world, so you need to have your kit ready. Time is of the essence to get to the site and start evidence collection.

Having been deployed a number of times already, it is clear that every

occurrence is unique. You may be dealing with a light aircraft accident on remote terrain, or it could be a serious incident involving an airliner at a major airport. The site can be distressing, and the pace dramatic. With all kinds of people and agencies present, it is a case of prioritising and using people skills to manage the site, and be efficient in your work.

You can be away for a few days during the field phase, and then it's back to the Branch to begin the post-field and analysis phase. This phase is full of twists and turns as you delve deeper in to the circumstances of an accident – trying to figure out the key factors and, crucially, what safety lessons can be learned by the wider industry. You may be dealing with anyone from eye-witnesses and flight crew, to operators and regulators – travelling all over to find answers and learn more. At the end of an investigation, the team produces a report to broadcast the safety message, with the aim of preventing re-occurrence. Sometimes it is also necessary to give evidence in court.

A positive aspect of the job is the continual scope for training and development. From remote terrain awareness and off-road driving training courses, to attending interesting conferences and manufacturer visits – this job represents an amazing opportunity to challenge yourself. Crucially for a pilot, you get the opportunity to continue flying in all its shapes and forms. For example, I fly regularly for an airline and have recently started my PPL(H). Also, the Ops Inspectors recently had the chance to do a Sikorsky S-92 simulator session, getting to practice landing on oil rigs at night and such like! The job really does offer the ideal balance for those passionate about aviation.

If you are a motivated and inquisitive person, who wants to improve flight safety as part of a well-established team, then grab this opportunity with both hands. Even after the short time I have been here I feel a real sense of fulfilment at the AAIB.

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## **Statement to Parliament: Rail update, 29 November 2017**

When Britain's railways were privatised in the mid-1990s, it was against a background of what many regarded as terminal decline. The radical Beeching cuts of the 1960s had been followed by further line closures under British Rail, and passenger numbers had been steadily falling since the Second World War.

Yet privatisation sparked a remarkable turnaround in the railway's fortunes. Over a million and a half more trains are timetabled each year than 20 years ago. Passenger demand has more than doubled. And other countries are now adopting Great Britain's rail model in their own markets.

To support this growth – and reverse decades of underinvestment in the infrastructure – we have embarked on the biggest rail modernisation programme since Victorian times. In addition to government funding, billions of pounds of investment from the private sector is also helping to renew and expand train fleets, upgrade stations and transform services across the country.

And franchises are making an increasing contribution to the public purse. So the rail renaissance we are seeing in Great Britain today is the direct result of a successful partnership between public and private sectors.

This partnership of public and private has delivered real benefits for passengers for more than 20 years. But the success of privatisation has created its own challenges. As the number of services has increased, our network has become more and more congested, making delivering the punctual, reliable services that passengers expect more challenging. On much of the network our railway is operating on the edge of what it can cope with. It carries more passengers today than since its heyday of the 1920s, on a network a fraction of the size.

And when things go wrong, the impact can be widespread and quick, causing significant frustration for the travelling public.

That is why last year I announced plans to start bringing back together the operation of track and train on our railways.

This is a process of evolution and not revolution.

And I said that the exact approach may differ from area to area. But the outcome must be the same – a railway that is predominantly run by a joint local team of people with an absolute commitment to the smooth running of the timetable – whether planning essential repairs, responding to incidents on the line, or communicating with passengers.

Today (29 November 2017) I am publishing more details about our plans, and the steps we will take to realise them. This publication, called '[Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail](#)', explains how we will create a new generation of regional rail operations with a relentless focus on the passengers, economies and communities they serve. It represents the biggest change to the delivery of rail services since privatisation.

Although we have already achieved significant structural improvements – with joined-up working between operators and Network Rail, and Network Rail's own transformation into a series of regional route businesses – the document explains our plans to go much further.

Where it will deliver real benefits for passengers, many future rail franchises will be run by a joint team, made up of staff from Network Rail and the train company, and headed by a new Alliance director. Put simply, placing one person in charge. This will make the railway more reliable for passengers by devolving power to local routes and ensuring that one team is responsible for running the trains and the infrastructure they use.

Today I am also issuing the [invitation to tender for the next South Eastern](#)

[franchise](#). This will deliver longer trains, providing space for at least 40,000 additional passengers in the morning rush-hour. And a simpler high-frequency 'turn up and go' timetable on suburban routes will boost capacity and provide a better service to passengers. Day-to-day track and train operations on the South Eastern network will be run by a joint team led by a new Alliance Director. And on the East Midland Mainline we will also introduce a joint team approach – bringing more benefits to passengers.

Hon members will know the East Coast Mainline has had its challenges in recent times. I intend to take a different approach, from 2020 the East Coast Partnership will run the intercity trains and track operations on this route. This partnership between the public and private sector will operate under one management and a single brand, overseen by a single leader. It will also take a leading role in planning the future route infrastructure.

Bringing the perspective of train operators into decisions on rail infrastructure will help ensure passenger needs are better represented in the process.

While we run a competition to appoint the East Coast Partnership, we are in discussions with the existing East Coast franchise operator to ensure the needs of passengers and taxpayers are being met in the short term while laying the foundations for the reforms I have just outlined.

I want the passenger to be central to train operators' strategies. On some parts of the network that will mean we will introduce smaller train companies.

I am today launching a [consultation on the Great Western franchise](#), to seek views on how it can best meet the needs of passengers and communities in the 2020s and beyond. We want to establish whether it should be retained in its current size or split into smaller parts, to best deliver for customers.

We will also begin the process of splitting up the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern franchise in 2021. When the 2 franchises were put together, it was intended this would help the implementation of the Thameslink upgrade programme, which is now near completion.

Despite the improvements in the railway since privatisation, we are still some way from achieving the modern, high performance, low cost and customer-focused industry we all want to see.

That is why we must continue to reform and invest in the railway, and maximise the contribution that both public and private sectors make to improving services.

Today's proposals will do precisely that. They will take time to deliver, and it won't always be easy, but we have now set a clear path for the future.

Getting to grips with industry structure will go hand-in-hand with investment in the infrastructure. We need new capacity to cope with growing demand – and new links to support economic growth and housing development.

The Great North Rail Project is transforming journeys across the North. Faster, more comfortable journeys. New direct services. Room for tens of thousands more passengers.

And I intend to invest around £3 billion in upgrading the Transpennine route. This will deliver faster journey times, and improved capacity between the great cities of Leeds, York and Manchester.

In the south, flagship projects such as Crossrail and Thameslink are providing the capacity to underpin economic growth.

But our investment in HS2 will bring north and south closer together, and bring benefits for people across the country. A new railway, for a new era for rail. It is a bold and ambitious project. But if it weren't for ambition and faith in the power of rail to transform the country, we would have no railways at all.

Our vision rejects the mentality of decline that characterised the railway in the second half of the twentieth century. To complement record levels of private investment, we recently announced government funding of up to £34.7 billion for the railway in the years 2019 to 2024. It is part of an [expected spend of around £47.9 billion](#). This will support an overhaul of the network's ageing assets, and other vital work and improvements. Passengers value reliability more than anything – and we will deliver it.

We also want to deliver new connections. We are establishing the East West Rail company to restore the rail link between Oxford and Cambridge – lost to passengers in 1967 – and provide a major boost to the region. And we will look at other opportunities to restore capacity lost under Beeching and British Rail cuts of the 1960s and 1970s, where they unlock development and growth, and offer value for money.

Large projects and industry reform take time – but passengers want to see faster improvements in their day-to-day experience travelling on the railway. We do too, and we're doing something about it.

We are introducing smart ticketing across almost all of the network by the end of 2018. We're improving arrangements for compensation and dispute resolution when things go wrong, including supporting the establishment of a new passenger ombudsman.

We are working with industry to extend the benefits of discounted rail travel, to ensure those aged 16 to 30 can access appropriate concessions. We're investing in new digital technologies and better mobile connectivity. And we're committed to improving the accessibility of the network, and delivering a modern customer experience, open to all.

Privatisation brought a revolution to our railways. Investment, growth, and a new lease of life for a key public service. Now is the time for evolution to build on that success. Joining up track and train. Expanding the network. Modernising the customer experience. Opening the railway for new innovation.

We have a vision of a revitalised railway used to its full potential by a

partnership between the public and private sectors, supporting people, communities and the economy. And we are taking decisive action to make that vision a reality.

I am making copies of the strategic vision available in the Libraries of both Houses. And the Great Western and South Eastern documents are now on the website of the Department for Transport.

I commend this statement to the House.