

[Press release: Upcoming exercise at Worcester City Centre flood scheme](#)

Environment Agency to test operational procedures and carry out essential maintenance on the Hylton Road flood scheme.

On Thursday 2 November, the Environment Agency will be carrying out an exercise at the Hylton Road flood defence scheme in Worcester city centre.

The exercise will allow the Environment Agency field operations team to test the barrier deployment process, while also carrying out essential maintenance to parts of the demountable flood barriers which are in the highway.

This will mean that there will be some disruption caused during the exercise as Hylton Road will be closed to traffic between 6:30pm and 8:30pm. The path by the river will remain open to pedestrians.

Barry Killner from the Environment Agency said:

Exercises like this are essential for us to test our procedures and ensure an effective operational response, so that we are fully prepared for when flooding does occur. We are also using the closure of Hylton Road as an opportunity to carry out essential maintenance on our flood barriers across the highway, reducing future impacts to the businesses and residents.

Cabinet Member with Responsibility for the Environment, Councillor Tony Miller said:

Testing the processes and carrying out essential maintenance of our flood barriers, can only be a positive thing for the county. It contributes to the county being able to continue to function as normal as possible, during bad weather, lessening the impacts on the local residents and institutions such as schools and businesses”.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary](#)

[statement on Kurdish/Iraq tensions](#)

The Foreign Secretary spoke with both Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government Nechirvan Barzani and the Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi on Sunday afternoon. He urged both parties to seek a quick, peaceful resolution within the constitution to the current Kurdish/Iraqi tensions and reiterated the UK's continued support to the Kurds within a unified Iraq.

Last night, I spoke to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and the Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, Nechirvan Barzani. I encouraged both to continue to de-escalate the situation on the ground in Iraq and to avoid misunderstandings that could lead to conflict. The UK welcomes the willingness of the Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government to engage in dialogue on the basis of the Iraqi Constitution. The UK encourages both sides to agree a timetable for talks.

The UK remains committed to the sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Iraq and will continue to support all Iraq's people, including Iraq's Kurds, within a unified Iraq.

It is also critical that all parties continue to focus on the fight against Daesh, prevent its re-emergence and work together to rebuild liberated towns, villages and lives.

Yesterday, Masoud Barzani also retired from the office of the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. We welcome the opportunity this presents for leadership of the Kurdistan Region to pass to a new generation of Kurds. They must build strong democratic institutions and resolve the historic differences between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Government of Iraq consistent with the Iraqi Constitution. They will have the UK's full support.

The Government of Iraq and Kurdistan Regional Government have been staunch allies of the UK in recent years as we have jointly fought the scourge of Daesh in the region. I want to pay tribute to former President Barzani's leadership in that fight, to his years of service to the Iraqi Kurdish people and to the role he played in the formation of modern Iraq.

[News story: Initial £3 million awarded for UK leadership of new space science](#)

mission SMILE

The £3 million will support academics working on SMILE (the Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer), a European Space Agency (ESA) science mission, being delivered jointly with the Chinese Academy of Sciences and due to launch in 2021. SMILE will address fundamental gaps in knowledge of the solar-terrestrial relationship by providing, for the first time ever, global imaging of the Earth's magnetosphere and its dynamic response to solar wind – charged particles streaming from the Sun.

The magnetosphere is a vast region around our planet that protects us from solar wind and cosmic particle radiation. The Earth's magnetosphere is the strongest of all the rocky planets in our solar system and its protective role is thought to have played a key role in the Earth's habitability. SMILE will provide a step change in understanding its behaviour, and will serve a broad range of research communities in which the UK is world leading, including solar, fundamental physics, heliophysics, and planetary sciences.

SMILE will also provide crucial improvements to the modelling of space weather, which is recognised in the Government's National Risk Register as a key disruptive threat to UK national technological infrastructure.

Science Minister, Jo Johnson, said:

“Satellites, power grids and communications networks are integral to our modern lives and through this funding, we are ensuring UK academics continue to lead international research in solar-terrestrial science and space weather. This will help us gain a greater understanding of its causes and behaviour – helping us to better prepare and protect our vital infrastructure from its effects.

“SMILE is a prime example of scientific innovation underpinning the broader economy with real-world applications, a key foundation of our Industrial Strategy.”

The UK Space Agency's £3 million investment package supports three UK academic groups for the next two years, and is planned to be extended to support the mission throughout its development. It will deliver the overall scientific leadership role with Prof Graziella Branduardi-Raymont, from the UCL Mullard Space Science Laboratory, overseeing the European consortium, and the design and build of the mission's most innovative science instrument, the SXI (Soft X-ray Imager), led by Dr Steven Sembay, from the University of Leicester.

Prof Andrew Holland, of the Open University, will also manage the development of the SXI detectors from Teledyne e2v Ltd, a world renowned UK-based provider of cutting edge space technology, which has a separate ESA contract to provide the SXI detectors worth €1.5 million.

Thales Alenia Space UK (TAS UK) is also bidding for a major role in the

provision of the spacecraft's Payload Module, and has been awarded one of three competitive studies funded by ESA to lead the design definition of this hardware.

The UK Space Agency funded academic roles maximise UK science return by combining privileged access to SMILE science data with intimate instrument knowledge. SMILE builds on a very productive legacy of academic collaboration between the UK and China, and will act as a further high profile pillar of cooperation. The UK roles demonstrate our ongoing international leadership and engagement with world-class science and research.

Prof Graziella Branduardi-Raymont, mission Co-Principal Investigator, said:

"SMILE is a most innovative space mission dedicated to study the impact of the solar wind on the Earth's magnetic environment. It will explore scientifically what drives space weather and return knowledge that will eventually lead to mitigating its effects."

[News story: Cliff rescue near Neist Point lighthouse](#)

Dramatic rescue of climber on Isle of Skye.

Dramatic rescue footage of an injured fallen rock climber has been released by the HM Coastguard search and rescue helicopter based at Stornoway.

The female rock climber, reported to be in her early 20s, was rescued Saturday 27 October, after falling about 2 metres directly underneath Neist Point lighthouse on the Isle of Skye.

The coastguard received a 999 call from a member of the public just after 1pm Saturday reporting that a climber had sustained a lower leg injury after falling and needed medical assistance.

Portree, Dunvegan and Kyle coastguard rescue teams, Leverburgh all weather lifeboat and the Stornoway coastguard helicopter were all sent to the scene.

The young climber was winched into the helicopter and taken to Stornoway airport where she was met by the Scottish ambulance service for onward transfer to the Western Isles hospital. We wish her a speedy recovery.

[Neist Point cliff rescue](#)

[Press release: Social housing regulator publishes Fees Statement](#)

The Regulator of Social Housing has published a Fees Statement today (30 October 2017) and held its first Fees and Resources Advisory Panel (FRAP) as part of its commitment to be open and transparent with the social housing sector.

The Fees Statement outlines the regulatory priorities for 2018 to 2019, the associated budget breakdown and the fee per social housing unit. It also sets out background information on the regulator's role, its approach to regulation and the measures it will apply to its work.

The Statement was discussed at the inaugural FRAP meeting on 24 October with representatives nominated by sector umbrella bodies and individual stakeholders. Attendees included representatives from Chartered Institute for Housing, g15, g320, Homes for the North, National Housing Federation, Placeshapers, Tenants Participation Advisory Service, and UK Finance.

Julian Ashby, Chair of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Regulation Committee said:

While the regulator is accountable to Parliament for the delivery of its statutory objectives, it is important that we are transparent with stakeholders in relation to the fees we have started charging and the quality of the regulation that we deliver.

The annual Fees Statement supports our commitment to transparency. The twice yearly Panel meetings are alongside our extensive stakeholder engagement and will ensure an appropriate geographical, sectoral and stakeholder coverage of views. I hope these steps demonstrate our determination to deliver value for money regulation that supports our ability to retain investors' confidence in the sector.

The [Fees Statement](#); the [FRAP membership and Terms of Reference](#) and [fees guidance for registered providers](#) is available on the HCA regulation website.

1. The [consultation on fees](#) is available on the website.
2. Funding for some aspects of the regulation function, such as reactive regulation including consumer regulation, will be continued through government grant in aid.

3. The Homes and Communities Agency is the single, national housing and regeneration delivery agency for England, and is the regulator of social housing providers. As regulator, its purpose is to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. It does this by undertaking robust economic regulation, focusing on governance, financial viability and value for money that maintains lender confidence and protects the taxpayer.

For more information visit the [HCA website](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

Our [media enquiries page](#) has contact details for journalists.

For general queries to the HCA, please email mail@homesandcommunities.co.uk or call 0300 1234 500.