

13,000 homes to be protected from floods thanks to new tidal barrier

Nearly 13,000 homes and businesses will be better protected thanks to the construction of a new tidal barrier in Somerset, which the Environment Secretary has authorised this week.

George Eustice has granted permission for construction of the £100m Bridgwater tidal barrier with a Transport and Works Act better protecting 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses in the town and surrounding areas.

This major infrastructure project, which will function similarly to the Thames Barrier, marks a sizeable investment in the area and will help protect existing jobs and create new ones as it prevents more than £1.5bn of flood damage over the next 100 years.

The main railway line between Taunton and Bridgwater, the A38 and links to the M5 will all benefit from this additional protection.

The barrier, which it is anticipated will be built from low carbon concrete, will also protect four schools, a hospital and the town's shopping centre.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

This is an important step forward in the delivery of one of the most complex and significant flood defences in the country.

The £100 million Bridgwater Barrier is a significant investment in Somerset, protecting nearly 13,000 homes and helping unlock growth opportunities in the region.

Rachel Burden, Wessex Flood and Coastal Risk Manager at the Environment Agency said:

This is a significant milestone for one of the biggest flood defence schemes in the country.

This decision gives real confidence that the barrier is well on the way to be delivered and will help the town of Bridgwater and surrounding areas be ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and past the year 2100.

The design of the barrier consists of two moveable gates on the River Parrett, along with new flood defence embankments and improvements to existing embankments downstream of the barrier.

The scheme could also bring a number of environmental benefits, including the

creation of wetland habitats, improvements to fish passes and eel passes on the Parrett and the Tone to help boost fish numbers and a cycle and footbridge at the barrier to encourage active travel.

The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor Council are now aiming for construction to begin early next year, with the project including funding from Somerset Rivers Authority and others, subject to HM Treasury agreement on the business case.

Since 2015, the Government has protected over 300,000 properties and is now investing a record £5.2 billion to deliver a further 2,000 schemes that will better protected hundreds of thousands of properties across England.

In 2021-22, over £125 million has been allocated for over 100 planned schemes in the South West, due to begin this financial year.