

Annual £7m flood defence work finishes for 2020

The Environment Agency's annual flood defence work to protect thousands of coastal properties from flooding is almost complete for 2020 – in spite of the additional challenges posed by the coronavirus outbreak.

The £7m scheme saw 400,000 cubic metres of sand replaced on Lincolnshire's beaches – enough to fill the Royal Albert Hall more than 4 times over.

The sand is pumped from the seabed back onto the beach to replace levels lost to the sea over winter.

This means the beaches – rather than hard defences like sea walls – take the brunt of the waves' force and energy, so hard defences sustain less damage and erosion.

Each year the work is carried out from Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point and helps protect 20,000 homes and businesses, 24,500 static caravans and 35,000 hectares of land from flooding.

But this year saw extra challenges as the country responded to the risk of coronavirus.

Despite a delayed start, Environment Agency teams worked throughout the summer in line with government guidance. The work is expected to finish by the end of July.

Equipment will be removed in the first week of August, and as much as possible will be moved by sea to reduce congestion on local roads.

To ensure public safety, the beach between Roman Bank and Huttoft car park will be temporarily closed while the equipment is moved off-site. Parking restrictions will be in place at the Roman Bank and Sea Lane junction to allow large machinery to be removed and Huttoft beach and car park will be temporarily shut to people and vehicles.

But the closure will only be in place from 6am on Monday, 3 August to 10pm on Friday, 7 August – and the beach will reopen ahead of the weekend.

Deborah Campbell, east coast flood risk manager for the Environment Agency, said:

Lincolnshire's beloved sandy beaches welcome thousands of visitors each year, and now that lockdown has lifted, we know many are looking forward to returning.

That's why we're looking to remove our equipment as quickly, safely, and with as little disruption as possible.

This annual project is vital to helping protect homes and businesses up and down the coast, so we appreciate everyone's patience as we wrap up this year's work, which we're satisfied to say has been successful despite the challenging circumstances.

The work draws to a close just as the [Environment Agency launches its new strategy](#) to protect millions from, and prepare them for, the risk of future flooding brought on by the climate emergency. Measures include an extended flood warning service, increased investment in natural flood management, measures to help home-owners and businesses become more resilient, and better partnerships with road, rail and utility providers.

The Environment Agency has been restoring and maintaining sand levels on the Lincolnshire coast each year since 1994, and, while the work continues to be effective, long-term estimates suggest that the impacts of climate change will mean continuing to use sand alone as a method of managing flood risk may not be suitable.

The Environment Agency has developed a new draft strategy with a number of options based on the results of a consultation held last year. More information on the Strategy can be found on our [Saltfleet to Gibraltar Point and Lincolnshire beach management website](#).

You can check whether you're at risk of flooding and sign up for free warnings at www.gov.uk/flood or by calling 0345 988 1188.