

News story: National Drought Group – Chairman's statement

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened today (Monday 23 July) to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

We are in a continuing period of prolonged hot and dry weather. June 2018 was the driest June since 1925, with a rainfall total for England of only 15 mm.

One water company, United Utilities, has announced its intention to impose a hosepipe ban ("Temporary Use Ban") in parts of the North West from 5 August. The other water companies do not currently intend to introduce hosepipe bans, and there is no threat to essential public water supplies. But continued dry weather into autumn could see the risk of some further restrictions and further environmental impacts across the country. Action we are taking

The water companies, the Environment Agency and others are taking action to reduce the risk of further water restrictions and to ensure that water users and the environment itself continue to get the water they need. Participants agreed to step up their activity on all fronts.

The water companies are stepping up action to sustain a reliable water supply to their customers. They:

- Have put additional resources in place to do so.
 - Are implementing their contingency drought plans as appropriate.
 - Are actively advising customers on water efficiency and offering free water saving devices.
 - Are stepping up their efforts to find and fix leaks to protect supplies and help reduce the risk of further hosepipe bans
 - Are taking a range of other steps to sustain supply, including water trading between companies and additional measures to keep farmers and other customers supplied with a particular focus on vulnerable customers
- The Environment Agency is
- Actively monitoring the weather, water situation and the environment, analysing the prospects and sharing its analysis with others.
 - Working with the water companies to ensure they are following their drought plans and implementing actions in a timely way.
 - Working with businesses, farmers and others who abstract water under licence from the EA to manage down demand and protect the environment, using its regulatory powers as necessary.
 - Stepping up engagement to encourage the public and others to cut down on non-essential water use.
 - Operating water transfers such as the Shropshire Groundwater Scheme to help maintain river flows for water supply and the environment.

- Stepping up its incident response to ensure the environment is protected – responding to 50% more hot weather incidents, including fish kills.
- Moving its operations to higher alert status and increasing staff resources to support its own work and those of partners in affected areas.
- Leading by example: EA fleet vehicles and office windows will not be cleaned to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Other partners

- The National Farmers Union (NFU) and farmers are working closely with the EA, Internal Drainage Boards, water companies and Defra to manage the situation and sustain farming production, including through water trading and abstraction restrictions that are now in place in some catchments.
- The Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) have produced top tips for farmers on coping with drought and heat.
- The Canal and Rivers Trust (CRT) are closing some navigations to save water, providing information to boat users on the situation and asking them to consider sharing locks where possible – as they always do in summer.
- The Angling Trust have distributed guidance to their members on fishery management during hot and dry weather. Anglers can report any fish in distress to the Environment Agency hotline on 0800 80 70 60.
- Other partners are taking action to preserve water supplies, sustain economic and leisure activity and protect as far as possible the environment, rivers, lakes and wildlife.

Advice to the public

Please use water wisely. Prolonged dry weather and localised drought is not unusual. Water companies plan for periods of exceptionally low rainfall. There is enough water for all if water resources are managed properly. All of us can play a role. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Enhanced coordination and next NDG meeting

The NDG agreed to step up coordination between its members to maintain a common assessment of the situation and ensure the closest possible cooperation to address the current challenges; and agreed to meet again on 29 August.

[News story: National Drought Group –](#)

Chairman's statement

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The present situation and the prospects

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Water companies

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licence from the EA to manage down demand and protect the environment, using its regulatory powers as necessary.

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Press release: Liam Fox launches consultations on UK's trading future outside of EU

International Trade Secretary, Dr Liam Fox launches the UK government's first ever public consultations on new trade agreements.

People across the UK will have their say on prospective new agreements with the USA, Australia, New Zealand and on the UK's potential membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership today (Sunday, 22 July).

In a historic moment for the country, the 14-week consultations will allow the public to have a say on what trade will look like with some of the largest and fastest growing economies in the world. People will be invited to share their views on which areas matter to them most as well as any concerns they have.

The consultations, which are available online now show determination to make the most of the UK's ability to set its own trade policy for the first time in 40 years.

The prospect of a future trade agreement will be one of the subjects discussed by Dr Fox with senior trade officials including US Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer in the USA on Tuesday (24 July). The International Trade Secretary will also raise the issue of the recent imposition of tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from the EU, calling instead for a multilateral solution to global issues of overcapacity.

He will meet US Commerce Secretary, Wilbur Ross in Washington DC where he will also make a speech at think tank, the Heritage Foundation.

The visit will also build on the work of the UK-US Trade and Investment Working Group, launched by Dr Fox and Lighthizer in Washington last summer, which held its fourth official-level meeting in London last week. The working group is already taking steps to strengthen trade and investment ties now including supporting industry agreements on mutual recognition of qualifications, cooperation on science and technology and launching a joint SME dialogue to share best practice and boost exports.

He will then fly to San Francisco where he will address the British American Business Council and meet companies including Facebook, IT company Oracle who employ 5,000 people in the UK and American film and TV production company, LucasFilm.

International Trade Secretary Dr Liam Fox said:

For the first time in over 40 years, the UK will be able to determine who we trade with and the public will have a say on the terms of these trading agreements.

This is a hugely historic moment for the British people who voted to leave the European Union and take back control and the government is delivering exactly that on trade.

We are seeking to put the UK at the heart of the world's fastest growing regions agreements like the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). It's also why I'm making the case for a trade deal with our single largest trading partner the USA and will continue do the same with the New Zealand and Australia.

The launch of public consultations follows Dr Fox's statement to Parliament on Monday, where he set out the government's approach to a transparent and inclusive UK trade policy which takes in the views of MPs, devolved governments, businesses, civil society groups and consumers.

If the UK were to join CPTPP, it would be the second largest economy in the group, and CPTPP's coverage of global GDP would increase to around 17%.

The agreement reduces 95% of tariffs along with other barriers to trade among its 11 members, including Canada, Japan and Singapore.

The 11 existing members of CPTPP accounted for £82 billion of UK trade in 2016, more than the Netherlands, France or China. The economies of existing members are diverse, spanning a region which is a driving force of global economic growth. Many, including Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore have been growing substantially over the last 5 years, growth which the IMF projects will continue in the near future.

The US is the UK's single largest trading partner, accounting for £100 billion of UK annual exports and supporting millions of UK jobs.

UK exports to Australia and New Zealand, 2 of the UK's closest allies, are growing at 14.8% and 16.8% respectively, a faster pace than our global average.

[News story: £1million to improve life skills for young people in Doncaster](#)

A £1 million programme to improve access to sports, arts and culture for 5,000 disadvantaged young people across Doncaster has been launched today by

Education Secretary Damian Hinds.

Young people from some of the most deprived parts of the town will have access to free extra-curricular activities and healthy meals over the summer holidays including competitive sport, cooking classes and outdoor pursuits. The programme will help broaden young people's horizons, giving them the opportunity develop lifelong skills in leadership and teamwork, as well as helping build character, resilience and confidence so they can become successful adults.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds launched the programme of activities, funded through the Government's Opportunity Area programme, during a visit to Bentley Youth Centre where he met with the first young people to benefit from the scheme this summer.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

The Opportunity Area programme is about broadening the horizons of young people from disadvantaged areas. I want every young person living in Doncaster to be able to access extra-curricular activities that build the resilience and character they need to fulfill their ambitions, whatever they are.

This investment will help young people in Doncaster learn the skills of leadership and teamwork that are so important later in life, giving them the boost in confidence they need to succeed in education or the world of work.

The funding includes £550,000 to pay for a programme of summer activities in 2018 and 2019, and a £450,000 fund for local voluntary and community groups to support young people in Doncaster develop additional skills through out-of-school activities from September.

The summer activities are free for participants aged five-18 and include boxing, cycling, football, baking, nature trails and stop motion animation classes. From September, schools will be able to access community programmes through The Princes Trust, drama and arts classes through Doncaster Arts, sports through organisations like the Jamie McDonnell Fight for Good CIC (Community Interest Company), and business and entrepreneurial skills workshops.

The summer project will be run by EXPECT Youth, Doncaster's youth alliance which works closely with the Opportunity Area programme by delivering projects for the most vulnerable in the borough.

Alongside a schedule of activities running from 23 July to 31 August, the funding will also offer healthy meals to the thousands of children taking part over the summer.

Chair of the Doncaster Opportunity Area Partnership Board, Professor Sir Chris Husbands, said:

It's great to see EXPECT Summer's programme of events for children and young people in Doncaster. This supports the priorities we outlined in our Opportunity Area delivery plan and will help young people to develop essential life skills.

EXPECT Youth Strategic Development Director, Peter Norman, said:

We are committed to creating opportunities for children and young people to lead a healthy, active lifestyle that will help them unlock their talent and fulfil their potential.

EXPECT Summer activities will help aid the development of their essential life skills to help them deal with the challenges of everyday life at school, college and employment.

Each of the Government's 12 Opportunity Areas receive a share of £72 million for a tailored plan to improve social mobility for children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Doncaster's [plan](#) focuses on boosting development in the early school years, increasing excellent teaching capacity, improving careers advice and introducing mentoring programmes.

[News story: Yorkshire apprentices will take leading role in UK's railway future](#)

- Transport Secretary Chris Grayling met with apprentices at the National College for High Speed Rail in Doncaster today
- visit follows Prime Minister Theresa May announcing up to £780 million to upgrade East Coast Main Line between London and Edinburgh by early 2020s

Graduates of the National College for High Speed Rail in Yorkshire are set to play a leading role in designing, building and operating Britain's future rail network, the Transport Secretary stated today (23 July 2018).

Visiting the world-class facilities at the National College of High Speed Rail in Doncaster, the Transport Secretary Chris Grayling saw how Yorkshire's apprentices are gaining crucial skills and experience, ensuring a new workforce will be ready to deliver HS2 and future rail projects.

The visit follows the Prime Minister's announcement that [up to £780 million will be invested on the East Coast Main Line by the early 2020s](#) – enabling faster and more frequent trains with more seats for passengers between Edinburgh and London – and highlighting the need to train more skilled apprentices.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

With up to £780 million set to be invested in the East Coast Main Line by the early 2020s, we are ensuring passengers across the country get the fast, reliable and modern services they need.

There is no doubt that the talented graduates of the National College for High Speed Rail in Doncaster will play a leading role in realising that vision. Yorkshire's apprentices will be instrumental in creating the future rail network of the UK, helping to improve vital connections between our cities and drive forward economic growth.

Clair Mowbray, chief executive of the National College for High Speed Rail, said:

We welcome the transport secretary's ongoing support for the college, and look forward to continued dialogue with the government so that we can fully realise our potential as the largest of five national colleges.

Last week's progress update on the government's transport infrastructure skills strategy has shown that improved connectivity will be the key to rebalancing Britain's economy. The college has a major role to play in this, by working with businesses across Yorkshire and further afield to equip the national workforce with the world class skills they need to drive forward existing schemes, as well as future projects from Britain's record £600 billion pipeline. However, if we are to succeed, we will need to see more and more businesses investing in their pipeline of talent, so that we can deliver the 21st century infrastructure that Britain needs.

The visit follows the publication of the [Transport infrastructure skills strategy: two years on](#) report, which shows that significant transport investment is leading the way in creating apprenticeships, helping unlock brilliant careers and tackling the need for the engineers of the future.