

## [Press release: Stourton flood defence works complete protecting businesses](#)

Businesses in the Stourton area of Leeds are benefitting from increased flood protection following the completion of a new 730 metre flood defence wall and property level protection, such as flood gates and demountable barriers.

The project, led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, has reduced the risk of flooding to 88 businesses in Stourton and is one of the first areas of work for the second phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The £1.4m project, funded by Leeds City Council and the European Regional Development Fund, is part of a package of measures of advanced works designed to mobilise defence construction quickly and efficiently to best protect the city, before the main works of the scheme are approved.

As well as the new flood defence wall along the boundary of the Haigh Park Road Industrial estate with the Aire and Calder Canal, property level protection has been installed at four businesses and one Northern Power Grid sit. This has involved supplying 17 aluminium demountable barriers that can be installed by the businesses across door openings in the event of a flood, where surface water flooding could occur due to the water being prevented from discharging into the canal or river as normal.

The works will provide a 1 in 200 year standard of protection to 88 existing businesses in the Stourton Industrial Estate, safeguard over 4,000 existing jobs in the area and help to protect access to the M1.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

“It is very pleasing to see these works at Stourton as part of the initial element of phase two of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme completed.

“Similar measures introduced at Woodlesford for phase one proved effective during the Christmas floods of 2015, so these defences will help protect local businesses, safeguard jobs, and vitally offer reassurance and confidence that these improvements do work at a local level.

“These measures provide further protection for our city centre and for the South Bank area, with formal engineering elements supported by the impressive flexible barriers which can be deployed quickly whenever there is a flood threat. We are firmly committed to seeing all our communities and businesses along the River Aire catchment protected through measures like this, and will continue to make the case for the phase two plans.”

On 26 December 2015, Leeds experienced significant and widespread flooding with some of the highest river levels ever recorded following Storm Eva. The flooding affected nearly 3,000 residential properties and nearly 700 commercial properties. 40 businesses in Stourton, between Thwaite Mills and

the M1, were significantly affected by the floods.

Adrian Gill, area flood risk manager from the Environment Agency, said:

“The completion of these works is great news for the businesses that flooded in Stourton and for the people and communities who depend on them for the services and jobs they provide.

“Following the successful completion of Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme in October 2017, the Environment Agency is continuing to work closely with Leeds City Council to develop and deliver Phase 2 of the scheme, which will help to ensure that Leeds continues to be a great place to live, work and do business.”

Towngate Plc is an industrial property agent that manages around a dozen commercial properties in the Stourton Industrial Estate. All of its tenants were impacted in the December floods.

Tom Lamb, property manager at Towngate Plc said:

“We were delighted when we were informed of the flood defence plans in Stourton. We understand that projects like this take a while to get off the ground and we were surprised at how quickly it took Leeds City Council and the Environment Agency to make the announcement.

“Since we have been able to tell our tenants about the plans, confidence in the area has boosted as many of our tenants’ concerns will now be addressed. We hope this increased confidence will also continue to benefit businesses looking to move here, bringing with them more employment opportunities to the area.”

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and is split into two phases.

A big contribution to the flooding at Stourton was the breach of the river and canal at Knostrop. Stourton is located downstream of Phase 1 of the new Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme and at the time of Storm Eva, Phase 1 of the project was under construction, so it didn’t provide any flood risk benefit to Stourton.

In October last year, the £50 million Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme was officially opened which now provides a 1 in 100 year standard of protection. During construction, there was a repair to Knostrop by-wash with strengthening works including sheet piles. Work also involved the construction of moveable weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop and the removal of a manmade island which separated the canal and river, known locally as Knostrop Cut. The weirs can be lowered when high river flows are expected, to help lower the river level. This work will help protect from another breach happening as it did on Boxing Day, and provide additional protection to Stourton.

The completion of work at Stourton comes as an outline business case for phase 2 of the scheme has been submitted to government, which outlines plans

to reduce flood risk to the city upstream of the city centre, taking a catchment wide approach. Phase two identifies measures further upstream including the Kirkstall corridor which was badly hit by the 2015 Christmas floods. It also looks at areas beyond the city boundary to further reduce the possibility of the river flooding in Leeds, as well as additional measures to offer protection for the South Bank area of the city centre which is a key future economic driver for Leeds.

The phase two plans also have a strong focus on Natural Flood Management (NFM), with proposals to create new woodland areas which would more than double canopy coverage in the River Aire catchment. It also proposes water storage areas to be created and developed, operated by control gates system meaning water can be held and then released back into the river when safe to do so. A third element would be the removal of existing obstructions along the river to help reduce water levels, along with lowering the riverbed in places to improve its capacity and flow.

Aside from these measures, phase two would also see some new infrastructure measures installed including landscaping, terracing, embankments and walls, but due to the range of natural measures the height of any engineered defences would not need to be as high as originally projected, typically averaging 1.2 to 1.5 metres in height.

If approved by the government, proposals for the main works of Phase 2, created by Leeds City Council working with the Environment Agency and BMM jV Limited, would see work scheduled to begin in summer 2019.

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## [Press release: Barclays launches major Midlands trade centre to boost UK exports](#)

- the centre follows the Barclays' Midlands Growth Fund, a £370 million lending fund for SMEs across the Midlands to boost jobs and growth
- new report reveals the characteristics of 'superstar' exporters – to further improve support for UK businesses

Minister of State for Trade and Export Promotion Baroness Fairhead opened Barclays' new trade centre on Monday 3rd September, dedicated to helping over 1000 UK businesses to export more of their goods and services each year.

Staffed by 30 export and trade product specialists, the new centre will work to boost jobs and economic growth, enabling British businesses to start exporting sooner, or sell even more of their products in domestic and overseas markets.

The announcement is a great example of the private sector support that the Department for International Trade (DIT) is promoting as part of their new Export Strategy. This is part of a commitment to better signpost all support available to British companies.

The strategy also sets out the government's ambition to raise exports as a percentage of GDP from 30% to 35%.

A raft of measures, including the roll out of thousands of Export Champions, increased awareness raising of the £50 billion of finance available from [UK Export Finance](#) and a boost to the number of export opportunities listed on [GREAT.gov.uk](#) were also announced as part of the strategy.

The Birmingham-based team has already started to help a number of British businesses with their export activity into markets such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, across Europe, the Middle East, Africa, as well as Far Eastern markets such as China, South Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Minister of State for the Department for International Trade, Baroness Fairhead, said:

Time and again we have seen the boost that exporting gives to UK businesses. By selling their goods and services around the world, companies can increase profits, employ more workers and create businesses which endure longer.

That is why our new Export Strategy aims to increase the substance, availability and awareness of export support.

I am therefore delighted to be opening Barclays' new trade centre today, and would encourage businesses up and down the country to make the most of the team's expertise.

Jes Staley, Barclays Group CEO, said:

From manufacturing to agriculture, retail to digital, we are helping more UK businesses sell their goods and services to more people around the world. This trade centre is our latest initiative to make it easier for UK businesses to find their way in overseas markets, by providing the right finance, and all-important advice and guidance.

New research we have commissioned on this important subject, published today with the Policy Institute at King's College London, shows that one important way to boost UK exports is to create more 'superstar exporters', or UK firms who export 10 or more products to 10 or more overseas markets. Helping these businesses to export more in turn helps smaller firms in their supply chain to grow, and to create jobs. Helping firms to become superstar exporters can deliver wider benefits to the UK economy and Barclays is determined to play its part.

The key findings from the report are:

- superstar exporters support smaller firms to export through their supply chains
- non-manufacturing production sectors are weakly represented in terms of access to trade support
- export growth associated with DIT support appears to arise mainly from access to more overseas markets
- overseas trade missions can increase the likelihood that firms start and continue exporting to a new market
- firms receiving trade support are unevenly distributed across the country

DIT will consider the recommendations in the report as part of the department's commitment to listen to voices from across the business

community with regards to trade and export support.

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## [News story: New pocket guide for troops to access mental health support](#)

The guide, jointly launched by Samaritans and the Ministry of Defence, gives advice on how to identify signs that someone may be having difficulties, suggests ways of offering support and gives information on where help can be found.

All military personnel and reserves, some 200,000 people, will have access to either a hard copy or digital version of the booklet.

The guide builds on the range of support already available to service personnel who are struggling with their mental health, including access to specialist mental health medical care, training and education on good mental fitness and the Combat Stress 24-hour Mental Health Helpline.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

Mental health issues can affect anyone and I want to ensure no one in our military suffers in silence. It is vital that service personnel know where to turn to in times of crisis, and this guide will raise awareness of the support available.

By helping our people to spot the early signs that someone may be struggling, we give them the best chance of a full recovery.

Specifically designed to promote peer support amongst those serving, the guide champions “looking after your mates”, and covers:

- Identifying someone struggling to cope with mental health issues
- Understanding the complexity of suicide
- Knowing when to intervene, support and report
- Where to get further support, including the Samaritans service, whose volunteers are available any time, via phone and email or in person at the charity’s 201 branches, and the recently launched Combat Stress 24/7 Military Mental Health Helpline

Minister for Defence People and Veterans Tobias Ellwood said:

While military mental health continues to be slightly better than the general population, we’re committed to ensuring that those who need help are able to get the support they need.



This guide, alongside our extra investment in mental health care and the 24-hour Mental Health Helpline, will be invaluable in helping our people to help each other.

Samaritans and the MOD have announced several joint initiatives to offer training and support to serving personnel, veterans and their families who are struggling with mental health issues.

The Samaritans programme has been funded by £3.5m from LIBOR, and the guide is the latest part of this programme. A separate booklet is set to be launched for veterans, and the wider military community.

The next stage of the project will include the launch of other peer support tools, specially designed training courses for military personnel and a confidential webchat service. Training for Samaritans volunteers on how address mental health in a military environment will also be introduced.

Samaritans CEO, Ruth Sutherland, said:

Samaritans is committed to bringing the expertise we have gained in training people to provide peer support to the military, in order to prevent suicides. This is the first step in a journey to provide a variety of support for serving personnel, veterans, reservists and their families.

The booklet will also help personnel spot signs that colleagues may be having suicidal thoughts and provides information on how such a situation should be approached, and where support is available.

The number of military personnel who take their lives continues to be below rates for the general population, with the military rate of suicide being 8 per 100,000, in 2017, compared to 18 per 100,000 in the general population in 2016.

The Ministry of Defence is now spending £220 million over the next decade to improve mental health services for serving personnel. In February of this year, the Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson also announced the establishment of a 24-Hour Mental Health Helpline for serving personnel and their families, funded by the MOD and run by the charity Combat Stress.

The MOD's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy is designed to encourage all members of the armed forces to recognise the importance of mental fitness and encourages individuals to seek support if they are struggling with their mental health.

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# Press release: Traffic officers hit the road to help motorists in Cornwall

As part of a trial announced earlier this year, Highways England's traffic officers have been patrolling a section of the A30 in Cornwall for the first time during the busy holiday periods, and have been on hand to deal with everything from live lane breakdowns, road traffic collisions and debris clearance.

During the summer holidays, Highways England crews have attended a total of 112 incidents during the 31 days of patrols. And on the last Sunday in July, the traffic officers' 'powers of recovery' averted major disruption on the westbound A30 as they were able to assist police by towing a broken down horsebox and vehicle to Okehampton Services.

The current patrols will come to an end on 10 September.

Rob Penney, South West Service Delivery Manager for Highways England, said:

The aim of the initiative is to provide further assistance to motorists on our South West network, and we're delighted to extend our service further south into Cornwall and to continue our close working partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police and Cornwall Council.

The patrols have provided real value, they've been well received, and there may be scope to increase the patrols in the future, dependent on a review of this trial period.

Earlier trial patrols took place over the Easter and May Bank Holidays. During five days over Easter the traffic officers dealt with and assisted 16 incidents on the A30 between Carland Cross and Lifton Down, and during the May Bank Holiday weekend, they attended 13 incidents over the three days, 11 of which saw them help broken down vehicles to safety.

Highways England already works in partnership with Devon and Cornwall Police, forming part of a multi-agency partnership in terms of safety and severe weather handling, and the trial is aimed at providing further support to Devon and Cornwall Police to help meet the demands of increased traffic volumes and related incidents on the A30 in Cornwall.

Welcome to Cornwall sign on the A30 near Liftdown

Traffic officers currently assist drivers in any difficulty, co-ordinate the resources of the emergency services, manage traffic to reduce incident-related congestion and clear debris from the carriageways.

The traffic officers are currently patrolling the A30 between Carland Cross

and Lifford and, based at Bodmin police station and Cornwall Council's Castle Canyke depot during the peak holiday months, they have been much closer at hand to provide assistance along both the A30 and A38.

Chief Inspector Adrian Leisk, head of roads policing for the Devon & Cornwall Police and Dorset Police alliance, said:

Devon and Cornwall Police is delighted to expand its partnership working with Highways England into Cornwall.

This builds on the considerable success of the operational activity on the M5, A38 and A30 in Devon, where Highways England Traffic Officers have supported police resources in dealing with road traffic collisions and other incidents which have the potential to cause disruption on our strategic road network

This 'one team' approach will undoubtedly help support communities and businesses who rely on a resilient and capable road network in Cornwall, particularly during the busiest periods of the year.

Highways England's Traffic Officer service patrols England's motorways and major A roads, helping to keep traffic flowing smoothly.

Traffic officers are not an enforcement agency, but they do have the power to stop and direct traffic, close lanes and carriageways and manage traffic, and road users must obey their directions.

As well as incident management, they also deal with broken down and abandoned vehicles on the strategic road network, recovering vehicles that are causing a blockage or hazard, and ensure that the scene of an incident is safe, for road users and working partners.

For more information on the roles and responsibilities of a Highways England traffic officer go to the [traffic officer information page](#).

## **General enquiries**

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

## **Media enquiries**

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.