News story: Boston Barrier tidal flood defence construction begins

The EA's Toby Willison and MP Matt Warman joined Floods Minister Therese Coffey to mark the start of works on the Boston Barrier.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey has marked the start of works on the £100 million Boston Barrier flood defence, breaking ground on an Environment Agency scheme that will protect 14,000 homes and businesses from tidal flooding.

Work is already underway to dredge more than 5,000 cubic metres of silt from the Boston Haven to make way for construction. Over the coming months, 2,000 tonnes of steel sheeting – weighing as much as 280 elephants – will be put in place to strengthen the riverbanks in preparation for the barrier.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

> This Government investment will make sure Boston is one of the best protected towns on the east coast and I am proud to be putting the first spade in the ground on this project.
>
> The Boston Barrier is part of our plan to invest £229 million over the next four years to make sure the risk of flooding to 49,000 homes and businesses in Lincolnshire is significantly reduced.

It is expected that works will be complete by the end of 2020, and will make Boston one of the best-protected areas from tidal flooding outside of London.

The scheme will feature a moveable gate across the River Witham together with a new control building to operate the barrier, new flood defence walls on both banks and a replacement gate across the entrance to the existing Port of Boston wet dock.

Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations at the Environment Agency, said:

> This state-of-the-art defence will help protect Boston's communities and businesses from the kind of flooding the town experienced in December 2013.
>
> It's yet another example of the brilliant work our teams are doing up and down the country to better protect people from flooding, and recently we've reached a milestone of an extra 100,000 homes protected.

The barrier's 25-metre wide hydraulic-powered gate, when not in use, will lay flat on the riverbed out of sight, but will be raised to close off the River Witham when flooding is expected, preventing high tides on the North Sea from raising river levels in the town.

Boston has a long history of tidal flooding, most recently in December 2013 when more than 800 properties flooded across 55 streets. Flooding also occurred in 1953 and 1978.

The Environment Agency is investing £2.6 billion of government funding in more than 1,500 flood defences to protect homes and businesses across the country by 2021.

Everyone has a responsibility to take steps to protect themselves from flooding, such as knowing your risk, signing up for free flood warnings and making a floodplan in advance. Call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit www.gov.uk/flood for more information.

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News story: Collaborating to support marine licence applications from the subsea cable sector

The Marine Management Organisation's (MMO) Marine Licensing Team have worked with the European Subsea Cables Association (ESCA) to develop a desk note to assist with marine licence applications.

Trudi Wakelin MMO Director of Marine Licensing said:

> We worked closely with ESCA in developing this desk note to make sure that the content is of value to the cable industry and that the information contained in it gives a clear understanding of what applicants need to do to achieve licences.
>
> This demonstrates the benefits of working together to achieve the common goals of economic growth and environmental protection.

Peter Jamieson, Chair of ESCA said:

> ESCA welcomes this publicly available desk note, which will ensure consistency for both applicant and regulator.
>
> This desk note provides an overview of the subsea cable sector, the relevant legislation, a description of the different types of cable, the main methods of cable installation, as well as the key impacts to be considered in a subsea cable application.

The full desk note is available on the ESCA website.

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News story: UKHO features on BBC One's 'Antiques Road Trip'

A recent episode of BBC One's Antiques Road Trip paid a visit to the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (UKHO) in Taunton, Somerset, to find out about their history spanning over 200 years and how they use marine geospatial data today.

Airing weekdays on BBC One and BBC Two, the show sees two antiques experts buying and selling antiques across the UK in order to make a profit at auction for charity. During an episode aired on 5 January, James Braxton met with National Hydrographer RAdm Tim Lowe and Dr Adrian Webb to learn more about the organisation.

The UKHO's archive contains thousands of historical items, including nautical charts, Royal Navy surveys, books, letters and more. During the clip, James viewed the oldest chart in the archives (thought to date back to the early 1600s) as well as the work of Captain Greenvile Collins, who conducted Britain's first official hydrographic survey in 1681.

The clip also showcases some of the UKHO's work from the present day, including high-resolution bathymetric data captured to support HMS Queen Elizabeth's transit from the Rosyth and entry into Portsmouth Harbour last year, as RAdm Tim Lowe explains:

> HMS Queen Elizabeth had to come down from Rosyth and those waters were not surveyed to modern standards. So, a combination of the Royal Navy survey teams and their cartographers and geodesists here [at the UKHO] helped develop the new charts and products to help her get out of Rosyth, and more importantly, into her new home in Portsmouth Harbour.

> They had to do a massive amount of infrastructure change to

> actually allow HMS Queen Elizabeth to get into the harbour. They had to dredge quite a lot of the water approach channel to allow her room to manoeuvre. Portsmouth Harbour is a large area and the seabed can change, so we'll have to keep going back and we'll have to keep checking.

You can view the full clip below:

Antiques Road Trip – United Kingdom Hydrographic Office