

Press release: Be prepared and protect your property against risk of flooding

Be prepared for the unexpected is the stark warning from volunteer flood wardens in Calderdale.

Katie Kimber is one of two Environment Agency flood wardens in a newly formed group set up to help protect residents and businesses in Luddenden Foot and they are looking to recruit more this Autumn.

She lives a row of houses at the bottom of the Calder Valley that has a canal running at the front and a river behind them, with their gardens protected by a high wall. Until Boxing Day 2015 they had never been flooded.

Katie said:

I was completely unprepared. I had only just moved to the area and even though the damage I suffered was minimal compared to houses just a stone throw away it made me determined to be ready for the next time.

The mother of two children, aged 12 and 15, now has a flood plan for her own property and has helped set up a flood container for her local community kitted out with sandbags, Floodsax, brushes, spades, gully cleaners, wheelbarrows, gloves and hand hygiene gel – all the provisions needed for clean-up operations.

Katie has recently attended a sessions with Calder Valley Search and Rescue where the team demonstrated the dangers of water and how to keep safe during a flood event. She has worked with her husband to develop an app called Flood Aware for tracking water levels in the local area. Her role is to work with the Environment Agency to provide them with valuable local knowledge about what is happening on the ground and to support her community in the event of a flood – particularly older and vulnerable people living in the hamlet.

Her advice to all residents is to make sure they have measures in place to protect their own property, sign up for the Environment Agency weather warnings and flood alerts available by email, text and phone, check what the warnings mean and what they should do, keep a close eye on the weather outside and the levels of nearby rivers, particularly during prolonged, heavy rain.

Katie, whose day job is working for Watermark Flood Fund Calderdale, a Community Foundation For Calderdale project which raises money to provide grants in case of future flooding and provides public relations support for Landlines and Watermarks – a unique community arts project with a water theme – said:

Expect the unexpected, have FloodSax or something similar ready under your sink and an emergency bag full of essentials such as a change of clothes, wellies, mobile phone, snacks. Even if you feel silly knock on your neighbour's door if you have any concerns.

A positive to come out of the recent flooding incident is we have become a very close-knit community, we know and look out for each other.

Karl Boggis, father of two young boys, joined the Mytholmroyd flood group shortly after there were two flood events just two weeks apart in his village in 2012. The group has developed from being a small local pressure group to being the 'eyes and ears' of organisations such as the Environment Agency (EA) with 22 active volunteer wardens covering eight zones. The flood wardens receive early warnings of bad weather on the horizon from the EA's duty officer and one of group's first tasks is to set up a communications cell in one of their living rooms to provide people of Mytholmroyd with regular updates using their Facebook Group about all flood related activity.

Karl is part of the Mytholmroyd flood group

They communicate with each other using radios, visit neighbours to ask them to move any cars at risk and move property upstairs to safety, help evacuate local schools if necessary and will direct traffic to keep it out of flood water.

Karl, a town councillor and former town Mayor, said:

We know all the hot spots now, which areas are more at risk of flooding so we visit them first to check everything is OK and make them aware of the likelihood of bad weather. We have evacuation plans for some houses, check drains and gullies to make sure they are not blocked. When necessary, we will open up the cabin store in Mytholmroyd for people to collect sandbags.

A lot of our work is through effective communications and making sure people don't panic. We ask people to stay at home, turn their radios on and if they have elderly neighbours please check on them.

As part of my role I visit people in my local community to introduce myself as their flood warden so they know who to contact if they have a problem. Most of our hard work is actually to help people clear up after a flood.

Karl, a property developer who also works part-time in a utility warehouse

distributor, had six of his seven properties badly damaged during the Boxing Day floods with water reaching 10ft in his own house. He said:

Sometimes we do get alerted to bad weather and it doesn't materialise which does make people complacent. However, the effects of floods are so devastating it is much better to be warned and be safe than sorry.

All flood wardens in Calderdale are being encouraged to take part in an exercise to test their flood plans on the 20th October to coincide with the Upper Calder flood sirens being sounded as part an annual test.

When asked what qualities you need to be a flood warden Karl said:

You need plenty of community spirit, a desire to help and good local knowledge helps.

Jon Follows, flood resilience officer with the Environment Agency, said:

The local knowledge flood wardens can provide on the ground is invaluable. They complement our work by implementing their community action plans and offer a key point of contact for us to be able to warn and inform people.

These days with climate change our weather is becoming even more unpredictable and so it's vital for communities at risk to protect themselves by signing up for free flood warnings, and prepare a flood plan.

1 in 6 properties in England are at risk of flooding – that's almost 5 million people. A big worry is that only about half of the people who are in a flood risk area, actually know about it.

Jon's advice is to start by taking three simple steps to help protect you, your family and home from the devastating effects flooding:

If you are interested in becoming a flood warden or would like to ask questions, please email the flood resilience team at yorkshiresw.fim@environment-agency.gov.uk.

For the latest information on current flood warnings and the local weather forecast, Calderdale residents can visit the 'Eye on Calderdale' website – www.eyeoncalderdale.com

You can also stay up to date by following @EnvAgencyYNE and #floodaware on Twitter.

On Boxing Day 2015 around 370 properties were flooded in Mytholmroyd as extreme rainfall affected the upper Calder Valley. Since then, Environment Agency teams have carried out thousands of inspections, made crucial repairs and constructed temporary defences. A flood action plan for the town was published in May 2016 setting out plans for permanent improvements to flood protection.

[Press release: Dual carriageway bypass unveiled for key A585 improvement](#)

Plans for the new dual carriageway – between Windy Harbour and Skippool – were unveiled today as part of Highways England’s preferred route announcement (PRA) for the project which is part of the Government’s £15 billion Road Investment Strategy (RIS).

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

The Government is taking major decisions for Britain’s future and delivering the largest roads upgrade in a generation.

The £100 million new bypass along the A585 near Poulton-le-Fylde will boost the regional economy as well as reduce congestion and cut journey times for drivers.

The 2.7 mile Windy Harbour to Skippool section is one of the busiest and most congested along the 11.5 mile road which links Fleetwood to the M55. The Shard and Little Singleton junctions are particular congestion bottlenecks.

The announcement follows last year’s consultation – in which 78 percent of people and both Fylde and Wyre councils backed the bypass option over an alternative to improve the existing single carriageway road.

Highways England project manager David Hopkin said:

We are delighted to announce we have decided to take the Southern Bypass option forward. It was comfortably the most popular option in a consultation in which almost everyone agreed that something needs to be done about congestion along this section of the A585.

The new road will help secure and improve opportunities for housing

and jobs in this part of Lancashire and contribute to improved connections to the whole of the motorway network.

Work to construct the new road could start in early 2020 but the bypass is subject to a statutory consultation.

Highways England also revealed today it is continuing to consider options for the Garstang New Road junction. Another idea to link the new bypass to Shard Road which was raised by local people during the consultation will also be investigated.

More details of the consultation report and today's announcement are [available on the scheme website](#).

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.

[Press release: New programme launched to improve colleges](#)

First ever recruitment round opens to find National Leaders of Further Education

The Department for Education has today (24 October) announced a programme to recruit a team of high-performing leaders to provide specialist support to struggling FE colleges.

The National Leaders of Further Education (NLFE) will be comprised of experts from the FE sector who will work to improve colleges judged as "Requires Improvement" or "Inadequate" in their most recent Ofsted inspection.

Successful applicants will provide mentoring and support to develop the skills of senior staff at impacted colleges and will partner their colleges on the delivery of improvement programmes.

They will also work with other NLFE as part of a network and share best practice with institutions across their region.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

This country has fantastic leaders across the FE sector and we want to harness their ability to raise standards across the FE Sector.

We want to make sure that improvements to schools are replicated in colleges. The National Leaders of Further Education, which will sit alongside the Strategic College Improvement Fund can ensure this happens. I look forward to welcoming these leaders into this exciting programme.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The NLFE programme is modelled on the highly successful National Leaders of Education scheme in schools.

Interested applicants should contact FE.leaders@education.gov.uk. Applications will close on 14 November 2017.

[News story: PE and Sports Premium doubles to £320 million](#)

The department is doubling the funding that primary schools receive to improve the quality of their PE and sport provision from £160 million to £320 million a year, and today (Tuesday 24 October) we have published details of the [individual allocations](#) at school level. We have also published our [funding guidance](#) for this scheme alongside case studies showing how some schools have delivered a real impact for pupils through sports and physical activity.

The PE and Sport Premium is part of a series of programmes led by the department to improve healthy lifestyles among pupils and tackle childhood obesity. As part of the [Childhood Obesity Plan](#), we are working with other departments and agencies – including the Department of Health and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – to make sure children are healthy and active.

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

We want to make sure all children have a healthy and active lifestyle and it's vital that we encourage this in our classrooms. That's why we have doubled the Primary PE and Sport Premium to £320

million per year to improve the quality of PE and sport in our schools. I'm also pleased that more pupils will benefit from our new £100 million Healthy Pupil Capital Fund, which will help improve facilities, such as sports halls and playgrounds.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine said:

Investing in school facilities such as sports halls, playgrounds, kitchens and dining facilities will undoubtedly make a significant difference to children's health across the country. The school environment is critical in shaping a healthy lifestyle, which is why we are using the money from the soft drinks industry levy to double the PE and sport premium. This is another positive outcome from our world leading Childhood Obesity Plan.

Healthy eating, physical activity and sport not only help tackle childhood obesity, but can also have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, attendance, concentration and attainment, helping children to reach their potential.

The government is delivering a series of actions to improve children's health. Alongside the doubled PE and Sport Premium, we are investing £100 million through the [Healthy Pupils Capital Fund](#) to facilitate improvements to children's physical and mental health by increasing and improving access to and use of relevant facilities, such as kitchens, dining facilities, changing rooms and sports facilities.

As part of our wider programme of work, we are also investing a further £26 million in breakfast clubs. This money will encourage innovation and kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in at least 1,500 schools, with a focus on increasing provision for disadvantaged pupils in [Opportunity Areas](#).

[Press release: New steps to tackle littering announced](#)

New steps will be taken to deal with litter louts and those few who mindlessly throw rubbish from their vehicles, Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey announced today.

Cleaning up our streets and countryside currently costs the taxpayer almost £800 million a year and so maximum on-the-spot fines for dropping litter will almost double from April next year – from the current limit of £80 to £150 – in order to deter and punish the anti-social minority who continue to drop

rubbish.

In future councils will also be able to impose these fines on the owners of vehicles from which litter is thrown, even if it was discarded by someone else. The government is clear these fines should not be abused simply as a means of raising money, so guidance on how fines should be applied will be issued to councils.

Environment minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Littering blights our communities, spoils our countryside and taxpayers' money is wasted cleaning it up.

Throwing rubbish from a vehicle is just as unacceptable as dropping it in the street and we will tackle this antisocial behaviour by hitting litter louts in the pocket.

These new fines will make sure the perpetrators, not the local community, bear the cost of keeping our streets and roads clean.

Today's announcement means that:

- From April next year, the maximum on-the-spot fine local authorities can issue for dropping litter will nearly double, from £80 to £150. The minimum fine will increase from £50 to £65, while the default fine will increase from £75 to £100.
- For the first time, local authorities will also be able to apply these penalties for littering to vehicle owners if it can be proved litter was thrown from their car – even if it was discarded by somebody else.

The changes to fines for littering follow a public consultation as part of the launch of England's first ever Litter Strategy in April 2017. These new findings showed the vast majority of respondents were in favour of increasing on-the-spot fines.

More than 85% were in favour of increasing fixed penalties for littering, while local authorities agreed that new penalties to tackle littering from cars would help to improve environmental quality in their area. The government is today confirming that it will proceed with these measures, with legislation introduced by the end of this year and the new fines in place by April next year, subject to parliamentary approval.

The government is clear however that councils must not abuse the power to impose fines. Councils should take into account local circumstances, like local ability to pay, when setting the level for these fines. Government guidance will be issued around the turn of the year to ensure the new powers are used in a fair and proportionate way by local authorities.