

Press release: North West awarded £1 million funding for natural flood scheme

People, homes and businesses across the North West will be better protected from flooding thanks to a £1 million natural flood scheme, the Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey announced Friday (14 July).

More than 1,000 properties across Delph, Uppermill, Stalybridge, Mossley, Hayfield, Glossop and Whaley Bridge will benefit from the pioneering 'Slow the Flow' project. The project will 'slow the flow' of water reaching rivers and watercourses upstream of communities at flood risk.

Measures to slow the flow of water – from peat restoration to woodland planting and leaky barriers – will trap sediment and help to reduce the need for channel maintenance. The project will be carried out by a wide range of partners, including the Irwell River Trust, United Utilities and Cheshire Wildlife Trust.

The scheme is one of 58 across England which will benefit from £15 million of government funding for natural flood defences.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

I am thrilled to announce £1 million to help communities across the North West make the most of the innovative natural flood management measures now on offer. By restoring peat and planting woodlands, multiple 'slow-the flow' schemes across the region will help protect families, homes and businesses from flooding, benefiting the wider environment and the people who live in those communities.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

Natural flood management is an important part of our approach, alongside traditional flood defences and helping homeowners to improve their own property resilience. There is no 'one size fits all' solution to flooding and this scheme is a fantastic example of how we can use a variety of measures that work together to reduce flood risk.

Two other projects aiming to 'slow the flow' of water in catchments in the Pennines have each been awarded £50,000 funding from the natural flood management pot. One will reduce flood risk to nearly 300 homes in the Upper Dove catchment, while the other will benefit approximately 50 homes in the Upper Dean catchment.

David Brown of the Environment Agency said:

In the Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire area, we are pleased with this funding allocation and are keen to work in partnership going forward on projects that will benefit nature at the same time as reducing the risk of flooding.

The more of these schemes we have, the more we can use our natural habitats to build-up flood resilience, so it really is a win-win situation. We are now looking forward to developing a programme of projects in the catchment to 'slow the flow' and reduce flood risk.

Natural flood management involves restoring the natural function of catchments, rivers, floodplains and coasts. This can include methods such as reinstating floodplains, creating wetlands, installing debris dams and planting trees.

The government's natural flood management drive builds on the 1,500 flood schemes the Environment Agency is already building across the country to better protect more than 300,000 homes by 2021.

The £15 million of government funding also includes the £1 million competition for smaller community projects to fund natural flood management schemes.

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Press release: HS2 reveals station design and Euston master development partner shortlists

High Speed Two (HS2) Ltd today revealed the designers and engineers in the running for the prestigious station design contracts for London and Birmingham as well as a partner to take forward long-term development around Euston station.

The winning designers will work with HS2 Ltd to develop and refine the detailed plans for three brand new stations, at Birmingham Curzon Street, Birmingham Interchange and London's Old Oak Common, as well as a major expansion of London Euston.

The shortlists for the station design contracts include, Arup, Mott MacDonald, WSP, Arcadis and a Jacobs/BuroHappold/Idom joint venture. All the bidders have been invited to tender for at least two station packages.

The stations will welcome tens of thousands of passengers every day from all over the UK, providing easy and accessible onward connections to local transport, airports and connecting rail services as well as step-free access from street to seat. In total more than 170,000 new jobs are expected to be created in the wider development areas surrounding the four stations.

HS2 Ltd Chief Executive, Mark Thurston said:

Today's announcements are a major milestone for the project, setting the scene for the next stage of the station design process. Together with the successful bidders, we will go on to deliver one of HS2's most tangible legacies – three brand new stations and the long-term transformation of Euston.

All four projects represent exciting opportunities to showcase the very best in engineering and design while also delivering value for money.

We are looking for partners to help us deliver stations which not only provide unparalleled levels of accessibility, ease and convenience for our passengers, but who will work with local communities to ensure we also help unlock wider regeneration, new jobs, homes and opportunities.

HS2 Ltd today also published the names of the bidders in the running to win the Euston Master Development Partner contract. The winner will advise on, and later take forward, sustainable mixed-use development opportunities, including new homes, offices and retail space above and around the revamped London Euston. This includes working with HS2 Ltd, Network Rail, the station design contract winner and local authorities to deliver a unified masterplan to unlock the full potential of the area.

The following bidders have been shortlisted and invited to participate in dialogue:

- Westfield Europe Ltd
- Euston Regeneration Partnership (Led by Argent Related Services LLP)
- Canary Wharf Group
- Land Securities Property Holdings Limited
- Lendlease Europe Holdings Limited

This comprehensive approach has the potential to deliver up to 22 hectares of development space as well as improving accessibility and creating new public and green spaces across the wider Euston site.

Managing Director, Network Rail Property, David Biggs, said:

This brings us another step closer to realising an exciting and vibrant new district in the heart of London.

The opportunities are vast. A regenerated Euston Station not only affords us the ability to improve connectivity and exceed the expectations of those travelling by train. It also allows us the rare chance to create new space for homes and businesses, to craft a desirable destination for people to live, work and meet.

The new station can be a catalyst for local regeneration and increase connection across the local community, bringing huge benefits both to the area itself as well as the country as a whole.

Contracts for the station designs and the Euston Master Development Partner will be awarded early next year.

Press release: Water scheme keeps River Slea flowing

The river that gives Sleaford its name is being given a helping hand by the Environment Agency with the switch-on of a groundwater scheme.

Around 1.1million litres of water a day is being drawn up from an underground limestone aquifer, via a 44-metre deep borehole, and fed into the River Slea, keeping it from drying out.

The 'augmentation scheme' ensures the river continues to flow during its driest months, benefiting local habitat and preserving the look and feel of the town's water environment.

Almost 150 years ago, the river was described as "a never failing source of pure water" but natural and man-made changes to the environment and water cycle saw it dry up for extended periods from the 1960s.

The augmentation scheme was established in 1995 in response to calls from the local community, which values the river as an attractive feature.

For most years since, it has been supplementing the flow during the river's driest months, which tend to be between July and December. Without it, the river would typically run dry during this period.

Claire Anderson, environment planning specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency exists to create better places for people to enjoy and wildlife to thrive. This scheme achieves both. By supplementing the flow of water, we contribute to the town's cherished water environment and we minimise the environmental impact of dry weather, protecting the habitat in which dozens of species live.

After activating the scheme, Environment Agency officers monitor the Slea between the borehole and Cogglesford Mill, ensuring everything is working as it should.

The Slea augmentation scheme was activated on Saturday 15 July.

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