

[Update from the Environment Agency](#)

I have received the following update from the Environment Agency:

Maintenance programme

- In 2015/16 we carried out river maintenance at 15 locations in your constituency. This work took place along 14.5km of rivers including the Loddon, Swallowfield Ditch, Emm Brook and the Kennet. It included removing obstructions, tree and shrub maintenance and carrying out selective weed and vegetation clearance. In 2016 / 17 we are carrying out a similar maintenance programme. The attached map shows the main locations and types of work we're doing.

Emm Brook and South Wokingham Distributor Road

- We have been engaging with Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) over the design of the South Wokingham Distributor Road (SWDR) since the early planning stages, and we will continue to work with WBC as the plans progress. The aim is that the SWDR reduces downstream flood risk from the Emm Brook, notably in locations which have historically been affected by river flooding. The developer anticipates completing the design for the relief road and residential development this calendar year with a view to start construction of the different elements of the scheme in 2018 and 2019.

Planning consultations and permitting

- Since April 2016 we have commented on 78 planning applications within Wokingham. In line with our remit our responses ensured that the layout of development sites, where there is a risk of flooding from rivers, is appropriate; for example, siting dwellings where there is a low risk. Redevelopment does occur within floodplains and in these situations we provide advice so that floor levels are set above flood levels. In the vast majority of cases the local planning authority will take our advice on any flood risk objections. However if planning permission, for a major application, is given against our advice and the effects of flood risk are significant, we would use a call in process (through the Secretary of State) to reconsider whether planning permission should be granted. We did not call in any applications in 2016 in Wokingham.

Swallowfield Temporary Defence Deployment Plan

- In 2016 the Government funded 32km of additional temporary barriers nationally (bringing our total national stock to 40km) to protect local communities during flooding. We have a draft deployment plan for Swallowfield where our assessments show there is potential to protect the community. We are consulting with partners and the community to finalise the arrangements.

Appraisals for future flood risk improvements

- Our future programme for permanent flood defences includes Swallowfield and Lower Earley. We will appraise whether options such as flood walls and embankments are viable in these locations. River modelling is needed to make these assessments and we will test these options once the modelling is available. We will have the outcomes from the appraisal in autumn 2018.

Local Partnership Meetings

- The Berkshire Flood Partnership is made up of all Berkshire Lead Local Flood Authorities, Thames Water and ourselves. The next meeting is on 7 March 2017. The meeting is chaired by Cllr Jesse Grey of Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead.

We also meet with the Loddon Valley Residents Association and Loddon Basin Flood Action Group



[This White Paper is a wish list, not an action plan – Keir Starmer](#)

Keir

Starmer MP, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, speaking after the release of the Government's Brexit White Paper, said:

"Today's White Paper is indicative of the Government's whole approach to Brexit.

"For months they have refused to publish a plan or allow proper scrutiny, and when they are finally forced to produce a White Paper it is rushed, limited and not well thought through.

"The White Paper offers no certainty for EU citizens living in the UK, no additional detail on how workers' and consumer rights will be protected, and nothing on how full tariff-free access to the single market will be delivered.

"It's a wish list, not an action plan.

"Labour has said throughout that there needs to be accountability and scrutiny

throughout the Brexit process.

"Next

week we will debate amendments to the Article 50 Bill that would achieve that –
in particular by guaranteeing a meaningful vote that ensures our Parliament votes on the Article 50 deal before the European Parliament does. The Government should welcome that, not reject it".

[Sarah Champion responds to Government's failure to provide assurances on funding for revenge porn helpline](#)

Sarah Champion MP, Labour's Shadow

Secretary of State for Women and Equalities, responding

to the Government's failure to provide assurances that it will continue to fund the national revenge porn helpline, said:

"Once again, the Tories are all talk but no action when protecting women and girls from violence.

"The revenge porn helpline is an invaluable resource for victims who are desperate to receive advice on how to have indecent images removed from the internet and how to pursue a prosecution if they so choose.

"Coming forward as a survivor of revenge porn takes such bravery and we need to send the message that those victims will be supported in every way possible.

"Labour is urging the Government to maintain this vital, value-for-money service. Ministers must now clarify and publish their continued funding arrangements for the helpline."

[Debbie Abrahams responds to Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy](#)

Debbie Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on the Government's 'Fuller Working Lives' strategy, said:

"It's right that the Government is taking steps to boost employment for older people.

"However, more than half a million workers aged over 50 rely on in-work support – and that support is at risk of being rolled back through Universal Credit.

"That's why Labour is calling on the Tories to reverse cuts to Universal Credit, which could see some older workers worse off by £2,600 a year."

[News story: Sir Mark Walport will lead UK Research and Innovation](#)

In this role Sir Mark will lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure it plays a central role at the heart of the Industrial Strategy.

Subject to the passage of the [Higher Education and Research Bill](#) through parliament, UKRI will be established as a single, strategic body that will bring together the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the research and knowledge exchange functions of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation Jo Johnson said:

I am delighted that Mark has agreed to take on this pivotal role. With his experience of running a large scale research organisation, collaboration with businesses in all sectors and his work at the heart of government, Mark is uniquely placed to lead the establishment of UKRI and ensure the organisation becomes a major voice for UK research and innovation.

Following his appointment Mark will now work closely with the UKRI Chair Sir John Kingman and the research and innovation communities across the UK to shape the new organisation over the coming months, delivering on the Industrial Strategy proposals for investing in science, research and innovation in the UK.

UKRI Chief Executive Designate Prof Sir Mark Walport said:

I am honoured to be appointed as the first Chief Executive of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). My ambition is to make UKRI the world's leading research and innovation public funding agency.

I look forward to working closely with the Research Councils, Innovate UK and Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) as we work together to create UKRI. I also look forward to working closely with all of our research and innovation communities to provide a strong and coherent voice for UK science and innovation.

UKRI Non-Executive Chair Sir John Kingman said:

I have worked closely with Mark over many years; he is a superb scientific leader who believes passionately in the potential for great science and innovation to make a profound difference to society and to the economy. He is the ideal first leader for UKRI.

Detail on UKRI

Science, research and innovation are key strengths of the UK; vital underpinning elements of our economy and national wellbeing. The UK research and innovation system is world-leading, but there is an opportunity to make it even more effective.

The purpose of Part 3 of the Higher Education and Research Bill is to put in place the legal powers and safeguards that will enable government to protect the UK's status as a full-spectrum scientific power in the future. The proposals before parliament are to create UKRI, a strong, agile and joined up funder of research and innovation for the UK.

Through UKRI, we are implementing the recommendations of Nobel Prize winning scientist Sir Paul Nurse, who the government asked to lead a review of the UK's research landscape. In his report, published in November 2015, Sir Paul called on government to "support the Research Councils to collectively make up more than the sum of their parts", and develop a "smoother pathway to more applied research".

Subject to the passage of the Higher Education and Research Bill through parliament, UKRI will include the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and the

research and knowledge exchange functions of HEFCE. This will create a single strategic research and innovation funding body, which will build on and protect the strengths and values of the current system.

UKRI will deliver a strengthened strategic approach to future challenges and a maximisation of the value and benefit from government's investment of over £6 billion per annum in research and innovation. It will provide a greater focus on cross-cutting issues that are outside the core remits of the current funding bodies, such as multi- and inter-disciplinary research, enabling the system to respond rapidly and effectively to current and future challenges. It will be a strengthened, unified voice for the UK's research and innovation funding system, facilitating the dialogue with government and partners on the global stage. Furthermore, it will create a smoother pathway for innovation, enabling improved collaboration between businesses and researchers and better alignment of research outputs with business needs.

- [Letter from Sir Mark Walport to partner organisations.](#) (PDF, 79.7KB, 2 pages)