

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers visits Whaley Bridge

New Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers today visited Whaley Bridge where she met with emergency response teams working around the clock to fix a breach at Toddbrook Reservoir.

The Environment Secretary was joined by Environment Agency Chair Emma Howard Boyd and spoke to senior officials, including Chief Executive of the [Canal and Riverside Trust](#) Richard Parry, [Derbyshire Police](#) incident commander Inspector Adam Wilkins and RAF Squadron Leader John Plenty – who briefed them on the current measures being undertaken to fix the dam.

Measures include the use of RAF Chinook to drop over 400 sandbags, and the use of pumps to remove excess water from the reservoir – levels continue to fall as the operation to pump away water continues, with a current reduction of 1.3 metres.

The Secretary of State then visited the Rest Centre at Chapel-en-le-Frith school, which is being used as a community hub, where she met with residents who have been evacuated from their homes. About 1500 people were evacuated, but were allowed to return home today for a short period of time in order to collect essential belongings and pets.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

My thoughts are with the people who have had to leave their homes. Having spoken today to some of those evacuated I know how difficult this situation is for them and I pay tribute to their patience and fortitude. It's been wonderful to see the community support and spirit in Whaley Bridge.

I want to thank all emergency services, military personnel, Environment Agency and volunteers for their continued hard work. I am confident that everything that can be done is being done and I've seen a reassuring amount of progress today.

Chair of the Environment Agency, Emma Howard Boyd said:

Visiting Whaley Bridge today it was amazing to see the pure dedication of the teams at work here. Not just those in the Environment Agency – of whom I am immensely proud – but the numerous other organisations that are working tirelessly to keep the community safe.

Real progress has been made, and after seeing our pumps and the RAF Chinooks at work today I am confident we are doing all we can to

lower the water levels and secure the dam.

All teams on site continue to work to ensure the structural integrity of the dam and a progress update will be made in due course. The Environment Agency continue to monitor the flood risk closely.