

Press release: Bright future for Forestry Commission in England

New changes to strengthen the role of the [Forestry Commission](#) and protect England's forests for future generations have been announced today by Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey.

From April 2019 Scottish Ministers will take on full responsibility for their national forests – meaning the Forestry Commission will remain in England, continuing to protect, improve and expand some of the country's best-known landscapes, from the Forest of Dean to Northumberland's Kielder Forest.

The Commission will continue to manage more than 250,000 hectares of England's Public Forest Estate, with a new board of Commissioners established to oversee this.

The world-renowned Forest Research will remain as an agency of the Forestry Commission, working closely with partners across the UK.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

Our forests and woodlands are vital for providing timber, protecting wildlife, and helping us improve our environment for the next generation.

Public forests in particular are one of our greatest national assets, and the Forestry Commission's work to enhance woodlands across England remains at the heart of our environmental ambitions.

These arrangements provide certainty for the Commission and its staff, helping some of our most precious landscapes thrive into the future.

The Forestry Commission will maintain its specialist forestry expertise, continuing to offer support, advice and guidance to land owners and managers responsible for England's woodlands.

The new Board of Commissioners will bring strong experience in commercial, community and environmental backgrounds that will complement the work of the new organisation.

The changes will coincide with the Forestry Commission's Centenary year in 2019.

Sir Harry Studholme, Chair of the Forestry Commission, said:

This is an exciting moment for the Forestry Commission. After

nearly a century of creating and managing Britain's forests, the transfer of formal responsibility for Scotland's forests to the Scottish Government will allow the Forestry Commission in England to increase its focus on the needs of English users.

This will strengthen the Commission in its role of safeguarding and protecting the Public Forest Estate now and for the next 100 years.

The English, Scottish and Welsh Governments will continue to work together to commission forest research, sustain high standards for forestry in the UK, and protect trees against pests and diseases.

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Press release: Exercise Tempest tests the Environment Agency flood response ahead of winter

More than 300 metres of temporary flood defence barrier, drones and new visual mapping technology are being put to the test today (7th November) as the Environment Agency continues preparation for the winter ahead.

Exercise Tempest will see frontline staff test out temporary barriers in Stratford-upon-Avon – birthplace of William Shakespeare – for the first time. The exercise will test working arrangements with the local council and partners so that barriers can be put up quickly and safely when needed to help to protect properties on the waterfront from flooding.

Staff on-site and in the Environment Agency's incident room in Lichfield will also be working together to test new visual mapping technology which will provide better intelligence about flood damage and impacts on the ground. This includes drones that teams can use to survey wider flood-hit areas, sending footage via a live feed, to the Environment Agency incident room.

Up and down the country, the Environment Agency is prepared to take action this winter wherever it is needed.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency, said:

This test exercise is one of many across the country to make sure we are ready for winter. We have 6,500 trained staff ready to respond to flooding and we're making the most of new kit and technology.

Since the flooding of winter 2015/16, the Environment Agency has invested £12.5 million in new equipment including an additional 20 miles of temporary barriers, 500,000 sandbags and 250 pumps. The use of drones will also allow us to have a clearer idea of flood damage on the ground.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This exercise is a brilliant example of work taking place across the country to make sure we are fully prepared for any potential flooding this winter.

The use of new hi-spec equipment such as drones and live 'visual mapping' to show flood affected areas will be a huge asset to flood prevention teams.

The investment we have made in new technology, portable barriers and other equipment forms part of the £2.5 billion we are spending across the country up until 2021 to better protect over 300,000 properties.

Temporary barriers are just one of the ways the Environment Agency aims to better protect people and properties. But it's important to remember people can never be fully protected against flooding, which is why people are being urged to [go online](#) and check their flood risk by entering their postcode, and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

More than 1.2 million people are signed up to the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued.

From 2015 to 2021, Government is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects which will reduce the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water for at least 300,000 homes.

[News story: International experts share decommissioning expertise](#)

Hosted by the NDA, the project was set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan, but is also drawing lessons from decommissioning at other nuclear sites, including:

- Al Tuwaitha nuclear site in Iraq, damaged during conflict
- Three Mile Island Unit 2 in the US, damaged by a partial core melt
- Chernobyl in Ukraine
- the A1 reactor in Slovakia, damaged following incorrect insertion of a new fuel element

The workshop also looked at a number of historical facilities which can face similar challenges, including:

- Sellafield's First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)
- the industrial Uranium Graphite Reactors in Russia
- the redundant fuel cycle facilities at Marcoule, France

Three working groups are studying the above cases and their conclusions will feed in to a final report, providing guidance that could be deployed in the event of future accidents. Their focus is on the challenges faced by regulators, the technical challenges of managing physical and radiological hazards and the strategic decision-making processes.

Named DAROD (Decommissioning And Remediation of Damaged nuclear facilities), the project began in 2014 as a result of the IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, drawn up following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident.

John Rowat, from IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, said:

The purpose of DAROD is to identify where existing guidance for normal decommissioning and remediation can be adapted to situations involving damaged nuclear facilities, and to identify how member states might be better prepared to manage such situations in the future.

At the Penrith workshop, a special session was held on Sellafield's FGMSP, introduced by Sellafield's Head of Programme Delivery for Legacy Ponds, Dorothy Gradden, who gave an update on progress at the facilities. Delegates were also given an opportunity to tour the FGMSP, enabling them understand the challenges and see the progress at first hand.

John Mathieson, the NDA's Head of International Relations, said:

The workshop brought together a diverse range of regulators and decommissioning practitioners from around the world, many of whom have first-hand experience of dealing with damaged nuclear facilities.

It was an honour for the UK and NDA to be asked to host this workshop for this important project, and the discussions were extremely valuable.

Research and analysis: Plausible future scenarios for the water environment to 2030 and 2050

This project developed and explored 4 plausible future scenarios and a reference scenario for the water environment for England and Wales through to 2050.

The scenarios are a strategic tool that can be used to investigate future uncertainties associated with water management in a coherent and consistent manner. The project's findings will help water and environment planners to help 'future proof' water management strategies and policies.

Press release: Multi-agency exercise to test temporary barriers at Beales Corner in Bewdley

The Environment Agency's field team, along with support from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Bewdley Town Council and other partners, will be testing out the deployment of temporary flood barriers and the local community flood plan.

The exercise, which will start at 09:00am, will provide an opportunity to test our barrier deployment plan and procedures in this training exercise. We will be testing our working arrangements with partners and the local Community Flood Group, so the barriers can be quickly and safely erected when needed during a flood, with minimum disruption to residents and businesses.

Pedestrians and traffic will be unable to use this section of road and pathway between Millside Court to where it joins with Kidderminster Road, via the Stourport Road. Access to Bewdley Bridge and the town will remain fully accessible by using the Kidderminster Road.

Mark Bowers, Flood Risk Manager said:

This is a test of our operational equipment and local community flood plan. Although we have carried out numerous barrier deployment exercises at our training depots, doing it on location

will give our field team invaluable experience.

It's important to remember that we can never protect 100% against flooding, and we can't guarantee that specific communities will always have access to temporary barriers.

Local residents and businesses should be prepared by checking their flood risk, signing up to flood warnings and finding out what they can do to protect themselves and their property by visiting the Prepare for Flooding page on GOV.UK or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Nick Farress, Bewdley Town Council Clerk added:

This will be a vital practice run to test our new community led flood plan which has been developed to support the Environment Agency in retaining the temporary barrier at Beale's Corner. The Town Council are very grateful to our band of volunteers who have put themselves forward to help with this vital work".

The temporary barrier deployment is also being supported by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service who is a key partner in the project. Wyre Forest Station Commander, Daryl Justice, said:

Our involvement with the Bewdley Flood Barrier response is new arrangement that will see our Firefighters add even more value to the Wyre Forest community.

When flooding is predicted our on-call firefighters will be given a period of notice which will minimise the impact on their primary employment and, although deployed under the direction of the Environment Agency, they will remain available for life threatening emergencies.

This is one of the first initiatives of its type in the UK and is a great example of how fire crews can add value in other areas. It also supports Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's wider vision of 'Saving More Lives'.

Environment Agency staff and Community Flood Group members will be available during the exercise to provide the public with information about access restrictions, alternative routes and general flood advice. The exercise is likely to conclude around 13:00pm.