

Press release: £16 million Teesside flood scheme complete

- New £16 million scheme better protects 350 homes and 32 businesses
- Almost 50 hectares of new habitat created for local wildlife
- Designed to last 50 years taking climate change into account

Costing almost £16million, the Port Clarence and Greatham South project has increased flood protection to Port Clarence residents from the River Tees and Greatham Creek while also creating new habitat the size of over 90 football pitches for local wildlife.

The Environment Agency joined forces with local industry to build the scheme with multinational company SABIC UK contributing some of the funding and INOVYN ChlorVinyls offering land to allow the creation of the new habitat.

Throughout the project the Environment Agency has worked closely with the RSPB and Natural England to create a scheme which maximises benefits for the internationally designated habitat which includes rare birds as well as seals. The new habitats also feature both a brand new bird hide and seal hide to give nature-lovers a close-up view of these stunning local species.

Combined with flood defences that were completed at Port Clarence in 2015, the project reduces the risk of flooding to 350 homes and 32 businesses in Port Clarence and the Seal Sands Industrial Complex.

Port Clarence and Greatham South Flood Alleviation Scheme

The project therefore helps keep the local community safe from events like the 2013 floods while also providing stability for jobs and industry and safeguarding the future of the natural habitat in the Tees Estuary.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

When I visited Teesside in 2017 I was able to speak with the local industry representatives, the Environment Agency and the RSPB about the plans for this new flood defence scheme.

I am delighted it is now open, better protecting hundreds of homes and businesses, helping the local economy and enhancing the natural environment by creating an important new habitat for wildlife and birds.

This £16 million scheme forms part of the government's commitment to better protect 300,000 thousand homes from flooding. We are investing over £2.3 billion across the country – boosting our resilience as a nation, helping our communities to grow and prosper.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

Floods destroy lives and livelihoods. This project is a perfect example of how flood schemes can benefit everyone: communities, businesses and wildlife. We have worked closely with our partners to design a scheme which will provide better flood protection for years to come whilst also helping bird and seal populations to thrive.

This forms part of our commitment to invest over £75million on flood defences across the north-east of England between 2015 and 2021, better protecting thousands of homes and businesses.

The first phase of the project, which saw new flood defences built at Port Clarence to reduce flood risk from the River Tees, was finished in December 2015.

Phase two saw the Environment Agency raise existing flood embankments along Greatham Creek, to reduce the flood risk to Port Clarence and land which is south of the Creek.

They also built new flood defences to the north of RSPB Saltholme Nature Reserve, and breached the old flood defence to allow the new area to fill up with water, creating more than 36 hectares of new inter-tidal habitat. In addition, 12 hectares of freshwater habitat was also created as part of the project.

Chris Francis, Senior Site Manager at RSPB Saltholme, said:

Over the years much of the valuable natural habitat of Tees Estuary has been lost to industry and agriculture. The breaching of the old flood defence means that a large area will be reconnected to the estuary and will eventually return to its natural saltmarsh habitat, which will provide an important feeding ground for many wading birds and wildfowl, especially during the winter months.

Notes to editors

Contractors BMMJV (BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald Joint Venture) carried out the work on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Phase 1 of the scheme saw new flood defences built in Port Clarence, consisting of a mixture of earth embankments, flood walls, and a raised section of the road on the approach to the Transporter Bridge.

In addition, the Environment Agency worked together with local business Wilton Engineering to install removable steel flood defences along the River Tees to improve flood protection while still allowing Wilton to operate from the river.

Press release: £16 million Teesside flood scheme complete

The Environment Agency has completed a vital new Teesside flood scheme which benefits local residents and businesses and provides a significant boost to local wildlife.

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[Press release: Beavers to return to Essex for the first time in 400 years](#)

A pair of beavers will be heading to a new home in North Essex as part of a pioneering natural flood management scheme for East Anglia.

It is hoped the Eurasian Beavers will improve biodiversity and help to reduce local flood risk as part of a new approach to flood prevention at the historic Spains Hall Estate, just upstream of the picturesque village of Finchingfield.

The Environment Agency is working in partnership with Spains Hall Estate, the Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust, Essex Wildlife Trust and others, with funding from partners including the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

The whole story will be captured in a documentary series, due to be screened next year, overseen by renowned wildlife filmmaker Russell Savory for independent film company Copper Productions.

The beavers will have a territory covering 4 hectares, with plenty of trees to get their teeth stuck into and a boundary fence helping to keep them safe. Beavers have not been found in Essex for 400 years since they were hunted to extinction, although they have been reintroduced in small numbers in other parts of the country in recent years.

A second element of the project will involve man-made natural flood management measures being introduced on a separate strand of Finchingfield Brook at Spains Hall Estate. As well as helping to slow the flow after heavy rain, the scheme should also create wetland that will slowly release water in

drier periods.

Spains Hall Estate owner Archie Ruggles-Brise said he was excited to welcome the beavers to the estate, home to his family for 250 years.

He said:

We have experienced first-hand the disruption caused by flooding in Finchingfield so we are excited to be able to contribute to this novel approach to reducing flood risk, an undeniable public good.

The added attraction of being able to pit nature against man to see who 'does it better' will be a rare chance to learn and adapt our approach.

We hope the project will also focus a spotlight on our little corner of rural North West Essex, a hidden gem normally only enjoyed by those in the know. We are keen to welcome more people to the area so they can see for themselves what they might be able to do back home.

The Environment Agency's Matt Butcher said it was a "pioneering" project for East Anglia. He said:

Natural Flood Management can be a great way to reduce flood risk for communities where traditional flood defences are not appropriate. Introducing leaky dams along Finchingfield Brook should slow the flow and reduce flood peaks downstream whilst improving habitat in this fantastic landscape.

The beavers bring another exciting dimension, as we can assess how effective they are at creating amazing new wetlands and as flood engineers.

Essex County Councillor and RFCC member Simon Walsh said:

Natural Flood Management provides many opportunities to explore innovative solutions for local flood risk concerns. Working with nature, we can often achieve successful outcomes to better protect people and property from flooding, whilst at the same time improving the environment for wildlife.

Beavers are renowned for felling trees and building dams and to use them for natural flood management is really exiting, as not only are more properties protected from flood risk, but animals once lost to the British countryside are being re-introduced in lowland Britain.

Darren Tansley, river catchment co-ordinator for Essex Wildlife Trust, said:

Working with Government, other conservationists and a forward thinking landowner to reduce flood risk in Finchingfield is an ideal opportunity for Essex Wildlife Trust. But the partners that eclipse us all are surely the beavers; natural engineers of our freshwater environment that we hope will trigger an explosion of biodiversity in their wake.

Essex & Suffolk Rivers Trust chairman Andrew Davies said:

This project brings river improvement through Natural Flood Management, betters the river environment for many other species and by raising the profile of beavers, educates us all. It achieves many of our objectives as a Rivers Trust. It is a very exciting project for us to be involved with.

Notes to editors

Hunted to extinction

The Eurasian Beaver is a large semi-aquatic native mammal that was once widespread throughout Britain. They were hunted to extinction by the beginning of the 16th Century for their meat, fur and scent glands. The species was reintroduced into parts of Scotland since 2001 and earlier this year a pair were released into the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, an event attended by Environment Secretary Michael Gove through a partnership with the Forestry Commission and Natural England.

Keystone species

Beavers are a 'keystone species' – playing an important role in wetland ecology by creating ecosystems that provide habitats for many other plant, insect and mammal species. Few other animals, aside from humans, have the ability to so drastically modify and shape their surrounding environment.

For this reason beavers are often referred to as "ecosystem engineers". Beavers are well known for their ability to fell trees to dam shallow watercourses and create pools to make them feel safe.

The associated wetlands, interconnecting beaver canals, coppiced woodland, glades and deadwood provides rich and diverse habitat for an abundance of wildlife including plants, insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

For more details visit the project web page
www.spainshallestate.co.uk/nfm_beavers

Contact

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0800 917 9250

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