

Press release: Stourton flood defence works complete protecting businesses

Businesses in the Stourton area of Leeds are benefitting from increased flood protection following the completion of a new 730 metre flood defence wall and property level protection, such as flood gates and demountable barriers.

The project, led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency, has reduced the risk of flooding to 88 businesses in Stourton and is one of the first areas of work for the second phase of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme.

The £1.4m project, funded by Leeds City Council and the European Regional Development Fund, is part of a package of measures of advanced works designed to mobilise defence construction quickly and efficiently to best protect the city, before the main works of the scheme are approved.

As well as the new flood defence wall along the boundary of the Haigh Park Road Industrial estate with the Aire and Calder Canal, property level protection has been installed at four businesses and one Northern Power Grid sit. This has involved supplying 17 aluminium demountable barriers that can be installed by the businesses across door openings in the event of a flood, where surface water flooding could occur due to the water being prevented from discharging into the canal or river as normal.

The works will provide a 1 in 200 year standard of protection to 88 existing businesses in the Stourton Industrial Estate, safeguard over 4,000 existing jobs in the area and help to protect access to the M1.

Leader of Leeds City Council Councillor Judith Blake said:

"It is very pleasing to see these works at Stourton as part of the initial element of phase two of the Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme completed.

"Similar measures introduced at Woodlesford for phase one proved effective during the Christmas floods of 2015, so these defences will help protect local businesses, safeguard jobs, and vitally offer reassurance and confidence that these improvements do work at a local level.

"These measures provide further protection for our city centre and for the South Bank area, with formal engineering elements supported by the impressive flexible barriers which can be deployed quickly whenever there is a flood threat. We are firmly committed to seeing all our communities and businesses along the River Aire catchment protected through measures like this, and will continue to make the case for the phase two plans."

On 26 December 2015, Leeds experienced significant and widespread flooding with some of the highest river levels ever recorded following Storm Eva. The flooding affected nearly 3,000 residential properties and nearly 700 commercial properties. 40 businesses in Stourton, between Thwaite Mills and

the M1, were significantly affected by the floods.

Adrian Gill, area flood risk manager from the Environment Agency, said:

“The completion of these works is great news for the businesses that flooded in Stourton and for the people and communities who depend on them for the services and jobs they provide.

“Following the successful completion of Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme in October 2017, the Environment Agency is continuing to work closely with Leeds City Council to develop and deliver Phase 2 of the scheme, which will help to ensure that Leeds continues to be a great place to live, work and do business.”

Towngate Plc is an industrial property agent that manages around a dozen commercial properties in the Stourton Industrial Estate. All of its tenants were impacted in the December floods.

Tom Lamb, property manager at Towngate Plc said:

“We were delighted when we were informed of the flood defence plans in Stourton. We understand that projects like this take a while to get off the ground and we were surprised at how quickly it took Leeds City Council and the Environment Agency to make the announcement.

“Since we have been able to tell our tenants about the plans, confidence in the area has boosted as many of our tenants’ concerns will now be addressed. We hope this increased confidence will also continue to benefit businesses looking to move here, bringing with them more employment opportunities to the area.”

The Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme is led by Leeds City Council in partnership with the Environment Agency and is split into two phases.

A big contribution to the flooding at Stourton was the breach of the river and canal at Knostrop. Stourton is located downstream of Phase 1 of the new Leeds Flood Alleviation Scheme and at the time of Storm Eva, Phase 1 of the project was under construction, so it didn’t provide any flood risk benefit to Stourton.

In October last year, the £50 million Phase 1 of the Leeds Flood Alleviation scheme was officially opened which now provides a 1 in 100 year standard of protection. During construction, there was a repair to Knostrop by-wash with strengthening works including sheet piles. Work also involved the construction of moveable weirs at Crown Point and Knostrop and the removal of a manmade island which separated the canal and river, known locally as Knostrop Cut. The weirs can be lowered when high river flows are expected, to help lower the river level. This work will help protect from another breach happening as it did on Boxing Day, and provide additional protection to Stourton.

The completion of work at Stourton comes as an outline business case for phase 2 of the scheme has been submitted to government, which outlines plans

to reduce flood risk to the city upstream of the city centre, taking a catchment wide approach. Phase two identifies measures further upstream including the Kirkstall corridor which was badly hit by the 2015 Christmas floods. It also looks at areas beyond the city boundary to further reduce the possibility of the river flooding in Leeds, as well as additional measures to offer protection for the South Bank area of the city centre which is a key future economic driver for Leeds.

The phase two plans also have a strong focus on Natural Flood Management (NFM), with proposals to create new woodland areas which would more than double canopy coverage in the River Aire catchment. It also proposes water storage areas to be created and developed, operated by control gates system meaning water can be held and then released back into the river when safe to do so. A third element would be the removal of existing obstructions along the river to help reduce water levels, along with lowering the riverbed in places to improve its capacity and flow.

Aside from these measures, phase two would also see some new infrastructure measures installed including landscaping, terracing, embankments and walls, but due to the range of natural measures the height of any engineered defences would not need to be as high as originally projected, typically averaging 1.2 to 1.5 metres in height.

If approved by the government, proposals for the main works of Phase 2, created by Leeds City Council working with the Environment Agency and BMM jV Limited, would see work scheduled to begin in summer 2019.

News story: National Drought Group – Chairman's Statement – August

The National Drought Group (NDG), chaired by the Environment Agency's Chief Executive, brings together government departments, water companies, environmental groups and others to coordinate action to maintain water supplies and manage the other risks associated with drought. The NDG convened on Wednesday 29 August to assess the present situation and coordinate plans for the weeks ahead.

The present situation and the prospects

Rainfall across England over three months from May to July was 54% of the long-term average (LTA). Farmers, the environment and water companies faced considerable pressures caused by the rapid deterioration in water resources.

At the end of July, a band of wet weather brought some respite as it moved across parts of the country. United Utilities called off a proposed hosepipe ban in early August but continued with applications for 4 drought permits,

should they be needed later in the year. These have been approved by the Environment Agency.

August has been unsettled with dry periods interrupted by wet weather. This has helped the situation.

The Met Office's 3 month outlook for September to November forecasts that above average temperatures and slightly lower than average rainfall are likely.

As we move into autumn the Environment Agency, the water companies and the other members of the NDG will continue to work closely together to reduce the risk of water restrictions and balance the needs of the public, businesses and the environment.

Action we are taking

Water Companies

Water companies have taken and will continue to take a range of actions to maintain water supplies for customers, including:

- Operational interventions such as installing new pumping stations, reconfiguring networks to reduce reliance on specific water treatment works, and accelerating work to bring sites back into operation.
- Tackling leakage by providing extra funding and resource to fix leaks, alongside use of technology such as satellite imaging and drones to find leaks.
- Implementing contingency drought plans as appropriate.
- Promoting water efficiency messages to customers through increased media activity, roadshows and community engagement.

Environment Agency

The Environment Agency has:

- Responded to a 330% increase in dry-weather related incidents compared with this time last year.
- [Introduced flexible abstraction for farmers](#) in emergency cases in order to safeguard food production and animal welfare, where it is satisfied there will be no adverse effects on the environment.
- Allowed farmers to trade water allowances – as set out in their

abstraction licence – on a short-term basis, without the need to change their licences.

- Granted United Utilities 4 drought permits at locations in Cumbria, to enable them to be deployed quickly should they be needed.
- Used our powers to protect the environment by applying for a drought order. This is the first time we have used these powers due to the extraordinary dry weather this summer.

Other partners

Defra, the National Farmers' Union, Canal & River Trust, the Angling Trust and other NDG members are working actively to manage down the risks and support the needs of water users and the environment.

Advice to the public

Although we have received some rainfall during August, the overall outlook for the next 3 months remains drier than average. We encourage everyone to follow the advice of their water company and use water wisely. This will help protect the environment and the economy, and reduce the risk of further water restrictions.

Next NDG meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 20 September where we will focus on preparing for next summer as the drought may continue through the winter.

[Press release: Drought planning continues after hot summer puts pressure on environment](#)

The National Drought Group has urged people to use water wisely following a meeting to discuss pressure on water resources and the environment following this summer's heat wave.

The environment has suffered due to the driest May to July across England since 1921. The Environment Agency (EA) responded to a 330% increase in significant drought-related incidents as teams acted to protect wildlife and rescue fish struggling due to low river flows.

Numerous species, habitats, birds, trees and aquatic life have been affected

by the hot, dry summer and high demand for water. EA hydrologists recorded 'exceptionally low' river flows for 5 weeks in a row, reservoir stocks for England as a whole were at historic lows for the end of July and soils were the driest on record in the North West.

The EA's Chief Executive, Sir James Bevan, chaired the National Drought Group meeting and received updates from water companies, discussed ways to protect the environment and sustain support for farmers and businesses. Water companies were asked to outline progress against agreed action plans to maintain water supplies while protecting the environment. They reported that there are no current plans to bring in Temporary Use Bans (hosepipe bans) although water restrictions remain a possibility if rainfall in September is low.

The EA has taken a range of actions to respond to the impacts of dry weather including:

- Supporting farmers by allowing more flexibility with water abstraction in order to safeguard food production and animal welfare.
- Operating water transfers to help maintain river flows.
- Increased monitoring and inspection of businesses abstracting water to ensure they are not taking more water than they need.
- Issuing 4 drought permits to United Utilities at locations in Cumbria, should they be needed later in the year.
- Not cleaning EA fleet vehicles and office windows to avoid unnecessary water usage.

Although August has seen dry periods interrupted by bouts of wet weather, the Met Office 3 month outlook for September to November forecasts that above average temperatures and slightly lower than average rainfall are likely.

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

Over the last few months of prolonged dry weather the Environment Agency, the water companies and many others have been working hard together to reduce the risk of water restrictions and balance the needs of the public, businesses and the environment.

Despite the recent rain, we will need to continue to collaborate closely as we move into autumn. All of us have a role to play in helping to protect the environment and maintain supplies. We encourage everyone to use water wisely.

Press release: Official opening of Hexham flood defence

A new £65,000 flood embankment which protects homes in Hexham from flooding has been officially opened.

Storm Desmond saw flooding to 15 properties at Tyne Green, Hexham, on 5 December 2015.

Properties flooded as a result of water from the River Tyne flowing through an underpass beneath the Newcastle-Carlisle railway line near to Tyne Green Golf Course.

The Environment Agency prioritises delivery of new and improved flood defences using government funding over a rolling six year programme, to schemes which provide the greatest benefits to protect properties from flooding.

Due to the small number of properties that would benefit, against the cost of delivering a flood scheme at Tyne Green, the Environment Agency had been unable to deliver new flood defences in the area.

The new flood bank has been uniquely funded by residents who pooled individual government grants made available to them following flooding over the winter period of 2015/16.

The Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council worked closely with Tyne Green residents, Northumbrian Water and Network Rail to provide a creative solution.

The new bank was officially opened by local resident Joan McDonald – who contributed to the scheme – and Hexham MP Guy Opperman at an event on Tuesday 28 August.



L-R Tyne Green resident Keith Hutton, Coun. Nick Oliver from Northumberland County Council, Hexham MP Guy Opperman and Environment Agency Area Director Oliver Harmar.

Real success for residents

MP Guy Opperman said:

This is great news! I am delighted that a pragmatic team effort has produced a real success for the Tyne Green residents. I want this collaborative working to be the prototype for future flood defence projects in Tynedale.

Tyne Green resident Keith Hutton added:

I am pleased to have been involved in this project alongside so many others, and on behalf of everyone, I would like to extend a huge thank you to Guy Opperman, our MP, for his steadfast support in getting all the agencies together, something we could not have done single-handedly.

Special credit should also go to Chris Hood, from the Environment Agency and Aaron McNeil from Northumberland County Council. They recognised the opportunity and worked hard alongside our community to deliver this scheme.

Finally, Network Rail and Northumbrian Water have been a huge support to this lengthy project and I think we all recognise that going forward, this flood defence, which has been funded in such a unique way, gives our community a real peace of mind.

The flood embankment, built by Breheny Civil Engineering, has been designed to protect against a flood event similar to that experienced by Tyne Green residents during Storm Desmond.

Thanks to residents

Chris Hood, Project Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

I'm delighted we've been able to build this flood defence which is great news for the residents of Tyne Green. I'd like to thank them for their continued support and patience while we worked with our partners to find the best and most cost-effective solution.

Councillor Glen Sanderson, Cabinet member for Environment and Local Services with Northumberland County Council, added:

This is another fine example of agencies working with local communities to find innovative solutions to improve their areas and prevent flooding events damaging their homes in the future. Storm Desmond had a massive impact on communities in Tynedale and this work should help provide peace of mind for the future.

The Environment Agency is urging people to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' by [visiting the Floods Destroy website](#) and do three things to prepare for flooding.

- check your postcode and find out if you are at risk of flooding
- sign-up for free flood warnings if you are at risk
- view and save the 3-point flood plan so you know how to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' in a flood

Press release: Bathing water investigation continues

Investigations are continuing into the bathing water quality of a popular North East beach.

Cullercoats in North Tyneside is currently rated as 'sufficient', meaning it has passed bathing water quality standards. But work to understand the reasons for its decline in quality from 'good' are ongoing.

On Wednesday (22 August) Environment Agency Chief Executive Sir James Bevan visited the bay to hear about the work being done by the agency and its partners at Northumbrian Water and North Tyneside Council to investigate and understand the issues.

A number of factors can impact on bathing water quality, including the impact of humans, animals and birds, misconnections of pipes going into the sea, and heavy rainfall, which can result in run off from the land going into the sea and causing a temporary drop in seawater quality.

During recent years, the Environment Agency has seen that bathing water quality at Cullercoats deteriorates towards the end of the season. A partnership working group was set up in 2017 to investigate the issues and work has continued throughout this year.

The Environment Agency is carrying out additional monitoring at suspected sources of pollution and further microbial source tracking (MST) which through DNA analysis identifies the sources of bacteria predominantly present in the seawater.

Northumbrian Water is carrying out extensive investigations on the drainage network and is working with partners to resolve any issues found. This has involved checking a previously blocked up culvert owned by North Tyneside Council that was identified as having discharged poor quality water to the beach in 2011. The working group is also investigating potential misconnections from properties discharging into the surface water outlets rather than the sewer.



The Environment Agency's Mick Donkin collecting samples at Cullercoats

'Drastic improvements

The Environment Agency's Gordon Reid, who leads on the Environment Agency's activity in the North East, said:

The North East remains a beacon for bathing water excellence with a real success story of drastic improvements over the past 30 years. In 1988, nearly half of our bathing waters failed to meet mandatory standards, while in the most recent assessment they all passed. We'd encourage people to make the most of our wonderful coastline by getting out and enjoying it!

We work closely with our partners at local authorities and Northumbrian Water to understand what impacts on a particular bathing water's quality and then carry out work to try to improve it, and such work has already taken place here at Cullercoats.

We remain committed to identifying all sources of pollution and a number of investigations are taking place to understand the type of bacteria in the water and where it is potentially coming from. It's important to note that 'sufficient' status still means the bathing water has passed water quality standards.



Partnership working is important

All of the North East's Bathing Waters passed water quality standards in the most recent assessment at the end of last year with 32 out of 34 being rated excellent or good and 2 being rated sufficient.

Compliance is based on the current and previous four years of sample data (a maximum of 80 samples per beach, from 2014 to 2017). The samples are taken by the Environment Agency between May and September each year to assess the bathing waters against the strict regulations.

Northumbrian Water's wastewater director, Richard Warneford, said:

Looking after the environment is at the heart of what we do. We are extremely proud of the contribution we have made to protect and improve our region's stunning coastline through both investment and partnership working and we appreciate the significant impact that beaches have on tourism, the economy and the leisure industry.

Partnership working is particularly important in understanding the issues affecting bathing water quality and to provide the improvements needed".

Across the UK 98.3% of bathing waters tested at over 400 beaches and lakes passed tough water quality standards. Action plans are in place for all bathing waters in need of improvement.

The public have a key role to play in ensuring their local beaches are clean. They can do their bit by ensuring they #binit4beaches and take their litter home with them.

You can check for temporary warnings against bathing, or see the sampling results [online](#)

[Read Mick Donkin's blog on his role as Sampling and Collection Team Leader in the north east and his love of the north east coast!](#)