

Press release: Gedling MP looks at Nottingham's flood defences

Gedling Member of Parliament Vernon Coaker has visited the Holme Sluices at Colwick, Nottinghamshire to find out more about the Trent flood defences and the work of the Environment Agency.

The MP met with EA officials, led by Louise Cresswell, Area Director for the East Midlands, to see how the sluices work in protecting properties from flooding and how they maintain levels in the River Trent during times of low flow.

He also discussed the general work of the EA including the ambitious plan to improve fish passage for all species in the lower River Trent.

The EA are seeking support for the Trent Gateway Project which aims to open up 8 barriers on the river which presently block fish migration.

At present, the EA has funded the design of a possible fish pass at Colwick sluices and are working in conjunction with Nottingham City Council on a proposed Heritage Lottery Fund bid to build a visitor hub at Colwick Country Park.

Louise Cresswell, Area Director, East Midlands, said:

The visit of one of our local MPs was a great opportunity to talk about how the EA works to improve the environment for everybody.

We took time to show how the sluices work and to explain the flood defences for the area generally which protect a huge number of people and properties, including many in his own constituency.

The Trent Gateway Project is an ambitious plan to improve fish passage on the River Trent. Our aspiration is to open up all of those 8 weirs for passes which will increase the fish populations both coarse and salmon.

Vernon Coaker, Member of Parliament for Gedling, said:

It was a fascinating visit and gave me a better understanding of the River Trent and how it works.

The Environment Agency are doing some great work and it is important that we continue to work together for the good of the local area.

I feel very passionately about protecting our local environment and

I was pleased to hear all about the Trent Gateway Project which is an ambitious project but one that will benefit everybody by helping to improve the environment.

Press release: Environment Agency launches consultation to give communities more say in how rivers are managed

The Environment Agency is considering proposals to transfer 'flood risk management activities' on a number of stretches of watercourses to internal drainage boards (IDBs), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) and district councils. This will only happen where the watercourses have a low level of flood risk, are not associated with major rivers or major city centres and where the local community supports the change.

A transfer would mean that IDBs, LLFAs and district councils can take on more responsibility for their local flood risk, where appropriate – by carrying out activities such as maintenance or giving permission to carry out works.

The Environment Agency has been working with partners to consider proposals to 're-designate' sections of watercourses in a number of locations. The watercourses will be re-designated from what is currently known as a 'main river' to an 'ordinary watercourse' – a change referred to as 'de-maining'.

Rachael Hill, Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

The project aims to bring more choice to communities and local organisations in how watercourses are managed and maintained. We want to strengthen local flood risk management and decision-making by ensuring the right people are managing the right watercourses.

We want to hear from anyone who is affected by, or interested in, the proposals. This consultation explains how the proposed sections of watercourse are currently managed and funded and provides details on future management and funding if de-maining goes ahead.

The project is exploring the potential to re-designate several sections of selected main rivers as ordinary watercourses in: various rivers in Suffolk

(East Anglia), South Forty Foot Catchment in Lincolnshire and Stour Marshes in Kent. But if there is support for the approach it could pave the way for further de-maining in England.

For the Environment Agency, the project will also ensure resources are prioritised where the greatest impact on reducing flood risk can be achieved.

Innes Thomson Chief Executive of ADA (Association of Drainage Authorities) added:

Despite their low flood risk to people and homes, the good management of these rivers still plays a major part in peoples' lives, and the environmental and economic wellbeing of the communities through which they flow.

It is very important for existing and potential new river managers to know what the views of local people are so we can make the right decisions together for the best future of these rivers.

The public will be able to view and give feedback between midday 15 January 2018 and midday 12 February 2018. There will be an option to view information and give feedback on each of the proposals or the de-maining project as a whole by accessing the [consultation link](#).

Press release: New steps to tackle illegal waste and fly-tipping announced

New powers to tackle the serious problem of waste crime will be granted, and further action opened for consultation in a crack-down on illegal sites, Environment Minister Therese Coffey announced today following the recent launch of the 25 Year Environment Plan.

Waste crime cost the English economy more than £600m in 2015, including lost landfill tax revenues and clean-up costs, and creates severe problems for people who live or work nearby with odour, dust, litter, vermin, fly infestations, pollution and fires blighting lives. Waste criminals also undercut genuine businesses who dispose of waste responsibly.

New powers will therefore be introduced for the Environment Agency (EA) to lock the gates or block access to problem waste sites to prevent thousands of tonnes of waste illegally building up. The powers will also enable the EA to

force operators to clear all the waste at a problem waste site, not just the illegal waste.

The government has also launched [a new consultation to tackle crime and poor performance in the waste sector](#). Proposals include raising the bar required to hold EA waste permits, and putting a stop to criminals hiding their illegal activities by requiring them to register low-risk waste operations which are currently exempt from the need to hold a permit.

The consultation proposes improving awareness amongst householders, so people can check on the EA website to see if the recipient of their waste is licensed to take their waste, or their duty to pass waste to legitimate carriers.

It also suggests providing local authorities with the option of fining those whose waste ends up fly-tipped or illegally dumped rather than having to pursue them through the courts. Latest statistics show that some of the worst hit areas include London which saw over 360,000 fly-tipping incidents last year and the North West of England which saw 128,000 incidents in 2016/17.

Environment Minister Therese Coffey said:

Waste crime and fly-tipping blight our communities and spoil our countryside, and we need determined action to tackle it.

These new powers for the Environment Agency will curb the rise of waste sites that continue to operate outside the law.

But we must all take responsibility for our waste to make sure it does not end up in the hands of criminals who will wilfully dump it. Our new consultation looks more widely at the waste sector and we are keen to hear from industry and the public how we can improve performance, tackle illegality and protect our precious environment.

More than 850 new illegal waste sites were discovered by the EA in 2016-17. While an average of two illegal waste sites are shut down every day, they continue to create severe problems for local communities and business as well as posing a risk to key national infrastructure.

In 2013, for example, a fire at a waste site in Stockport resulted in the closure of the M60 motorway and three weeks of disruption to traffic, residents and businesses. By empowering the EA further, these measures will help prevent such disruption.

Household waste is also a problem and makes up nearly two thirds of fly-tipped waste. Currently local authorities can only prosecute householders in

court but a new fixed penalty notice would be less costly to enforce for local authorities, and more proportionate for householders.

The government is clear however that new fixed penalty notices should not be abused simply as a means of raising money. Guidance on how the fines should be applied will therefore be issued to councils.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

We take tough action against anyone involved in illegal waste activity and last year, the Environment Agency >closed down two illegal waste sites every day. We welcome these new powers, which will enable our teams to block access to problem sites, preventing illegal waste building up and becoming even more serious.

This will allow us to take faster action against criminals and will make a real difference to communities, but >everyone has a role to play. We all need to check our waste is going to the right place and is handled by the right people.

The new powers for the EA to tackle problem waste sites will be introduced by spring 2018, subject to parliamentary approval. This follows a public consultation in which an overwhelming majority (90%) of respondents were in favour of allowing regulators to take physical steps, such as locking the gates to an illegal waste site, to prevent operators from accepting more illegally dumped waste and enabling the EA to require all the waste to be removed.

Notes:

- [The responses to the 2015 public consultation on increasing EAs powers is available online](#)
- Current rules are already clear that action against those who litter the streets and cause harm to their local communities must be fair and proportionate. We do not expect anti-social behaviour legislation, for example, to be used as a backdoor fine to penalise a householder for not closing a bin lid nor for putting a bin out for collection a few hours too early. In addition, the Government will work with WRAP and local authorities to review current guidance to make clear what can and cannot be charged for waste at HWRCs (including in respect of DIY waste) and the Government believes it should be free for residents to dispose of DIY household at a civil amenity site.
- The cost of waste crime to the English economy being over £600m in 2015 is from the Environmental Services Association 2017 report 'Rethinking

waste crime'

- Householders can check on the EA website that a waste carrier is licensed to take their waste.
- [The government's 25 Year Environment Plan is available to read online](#)

Press release: Communities urged to log on for new flood films

From February, the 'Flood Friday' films will be released on the first Friday of every month throughout the year and will focus on what residents and businesses can do to 'Prepare, Act, Survive' in the event of flooding.

Created by the Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Team community engagement officers, the campaign is aimed at helping those who live, work and study in the region be more flood resilient.

The short films will focus on different aspects of flooding including:

- how to stay safe in a flood
- how to check if you are at risk of flooding
- what is surface water flooding?
- who to report flooding issues to

The first film focuses on how to check your flood risk and is already available on the Environment Agency's Youtube channel and will be shared through social media.

Community engagement officers Taryn Al-Mashgari (Tyne and Wear), Sarah Pearce (Cleveland) and Anna Caygill (Durham and Darlington) worked together on the project. Taryn said:

These videos will be short and informative and include links to websites and organisations we work closely with to ensure communities have reliable information to help them understand, prepare for and recover from flooding.

From our work with communities, we know how devastating it is to be flooded and the impact it has on lives and livelihoods, so we're working hard to raise awareness of how to plan for such events.

As well as being shared on the Environment Agency's Twitter and Youtube

channels, they will be available on local authority websites and social media and shared with other partners including the social housing, community and voluntary sector.

To see the video visit [Youtube](#)

Communities can take three simple steps to help protect them, their homes and property from the devastating effects of flooding. [Visit the gov.uk web pages](#) to:

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

[Press release: Boaters to benefit from £4.4m Nene-regeneration scheme](#)

The [Nenescape](#) programme, which was launched in November with a £2.6m grant from the [Heritage Lottery Fund](#), will see 16 projects carried out by 11 organisations.

The scheme will invest more than £4.4m in the Nene Valley over the next 5 years, delivering projects that will improve access to the water, restore wetland and wildlife habitat, uncover and celebrate the area's history, and develop tourism.

Renowned destination

Among the initiatives is one aimed at boosting the river's reputation as a nationally-renowned destination for boaters.

Led by the [Environment Agency](#), this part of Nenescape will improve access to and from the navigable part of the river, provide better facilities for those cruising it, and make the most of nearby transport links, communities and attractions. A total of £500,000 has been allocated to this part of the scheme.

Proposals include additional moorings, better routes and access for canoeing, improved links with nearby footpaths and cycleways, and more information for visitors about the area's sights, heritage and wildlife.

Boost for local economy

It is hoped this part of the Nenescape programme will attract more boaters and other visitors to the area, boosting the local economy.

Candy Reed, partnership officer for the Environment Agency, said:

The River Nene is one of the nation's greatest rivers – we're delighted to be playing a part in its future. Our work – and that of the wider Nenescape programme – will help everyone get the most out of this stunning location, which really is a national treasure.

Vision for the future

The Environment Agency's proposals are the result of an extensive study into the River Nene, its surrounding communities, and its economic potential.

In consultation with people who use the river and representatives of the local area, the agency's [Waterspace Study](#) identified opportunities that would improve, protect and promote the Nene, creating a vision for the future that underpins the Nenescape programme and supported the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Amanda Johnson, Nenescape project manager, said:

It is so important to create an inviting environment for boaters to enjoy the spectacular views and heritage offered along the Nene Valley and, equally, to maintain a healthy environment for wildlife to thrive in. We are so pleased to be working with the Environment Agency to deliver these complementary projects and look forward to seeing the benefits for years to come.

At 91 miles, the Nene is the tenth longest river in the UK. It flows through Northamptonshire, Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, borders Norfolk and ends at The Wash. Around 65 miles of it is navigable.

Environmental improvements

Away from the navigable stretch, the [River Nene Regional Park](#) is taking the lead on a project to improve the ecology of backwaters, with the Environment Agency's help. This [Resilient River](#) element of Nenescape will restore natural features, boost biodiversity, improve water quality and provide safe and supportive habitats for a greater range of wildlife.

Other Nenescape partners include the [River Nene Regional Park](#), the [Wildlife Trust](#) for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire, [Natural England](#), [East Northamptonshire Council](#), [Angling Trust](#), [University of Northampton](#), [Nene Park Trust](#), [Rockingham Forest Trust](#), [Destination Nene Valley](#), [University of Nottingham](#), [Screen Northants](#) and [Northamptonshire Music and Performing Arts Trust](#).