

Great Yarmouth £40m tidal defence project gets underway

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow MP and Environment Agency Chair, Emma Howard Boyd, joined local partners to mark the start of work on this major scheme which will see thousands of homes and businesses better protected from tidal flooding for decades to come.

The work, which is expected to complete next year, will upgrade the level of protection from tidal flooding to more than 4,500 homes and businesses in the local area. The refurbishment works will extend the working life of the existing defences, and the new innovative construction methods being used will significantly reduce the carbon footprint of the project.

Great Yarmouth has a history of flooding, during the 1953 east coast tidal surge, the tidal river defences in the town were breached in several places resulting in a tragic loss of life.

More recently, in December 2013, approximately 9,000 people were urged to evacuate their homes as a result of the highest ever recorded tide in Great Yarmouth.

This major project will see 46 flood defence walls refurbished at locations across the town using an innovative technique that will extend their lifespan by up to 30 years.

The refurbishment follows on from an initial five-year phase of work which included the use of a specialised dam to inspect and repair the steel sheet piles that form the flood walls.

Environment Minister, Rebecca Pow, said:

I'm delighted to be here to witness the start of work on this vital project which will see homes and businesses in Great Yarmouth better protected from flooding for decades to come.

This innovative scheme, which has received over £32 million of government funding and involves refurbishing 4 kilometres of flood defence walls across the town, will not only provide greater peace of mind to local residents but will also help secure jobs and boost economic opportunities for the town both now and into the future.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency said:

This important project will upgrade over 4km of coastal defences for Great Yarmouth and the surrounding area, better protecting over 4,500 homes and businesses from tidal flooding.

This scheme is a prime example of how we are taking a long-term collaborative approach to tackling both the causes and the impacts of the climate emergency, ensuring that communities, homes and infrastructure are more resilient to the additional risks that the future will bring.

The £40.3 million investment, plus £6.2 million for ongoing maintenance, has come from a range of sources including £32.4 million provided by central government.

Partnership contributions have come from New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, £8.2 million through the Growth Deal programme, and £2.8 million from the Anglian Eastern Regional Flood & Coastal Committee.

Norfolk County Council and Great Yarmouth Borough Council have also contributed towards the project and local quayside businesses are supporting through contributions and the provision of compound space.

This project forms part of the Environment Agency's £2.6bn investment in flood and coastal defences, spanning from 2015-2021, which will better protect over 300,000 homes from the risk of flooding.

Cllr Carl Smith, leader of Great Yarmouth Borough Council, said:

The River Yare Tidal Defences are a huge benefit to everyone who lives in, works in and visits our borough, reducing flood risk to our homes, workplaces, and the highways and other vital infrastructure that we use every day, better protecting communities and helping the borough to realise its full economic potential.

Together with the Environment Agency and local businesses, the borough council has played an instrumental role over the years in securing this crucial and most welcome investment from multiple sources, helping with lobbying and developing the robust business case. I'm pleased that work is under way on the second phase.

Chair of the Anglia Eastern RFCC, Paul Hayden OBE, said:

Our £2.8m contribution to these works comes from a Local Levy collected across Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, Southend and Thurrock, and this investment is a demonstration of our commitment to protecting homes, jobs and businesses, and in encouraging further economic investment in the town.

Doug Field, chair of New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership, said:

This project is a great example of how partnership working can deliver projects which have a real impact on our people, places and

economy.

Great Yarmouth is a vital part of our all-energy coast. It sits at the centre of the world's largest market for offshore wind and is of huge strategic importance to our region.

By protecting homes and businesses and creating a safe environment for more to be created, these sea defences will allow the town to reach its potential as a key contributor to our economy.

Cllr Andrew Proctor, Leader of Norfolk County Council said:

This refurbishment work will help to safeguard the future prosperity of Great Yarmouth. This is an important funding partnership which we are happy to support.