

Grimsby and Cleethorpes flood sirens to be decommissioned

More than 80% of the 33,000 properties at risk of flooding in the area now receive advanced warnings through the direct-messaging service, making the old sirens redundant.

The towns' 18 flood sirens were installed in 2006 to help warn the vast majority of at-risk properties that – at the time – were not yet signed up to the then-fledgling [Flood Warning Service](#).

Sirens now redundant

Now, 14 years later, that service's advanced-warning messages are delivered to around 3,750 more properties than the sirens were ever able to reach, with more accurate, tailored and reliable messages than the sirens could.

Using the latest forecasting and modelling techniques, the Flood Warning Service alerts people to the possibility of flooding many hours – and sometimes days – in advance.

It sends timely, tailored, location-specific messages with exact details of what to expect, when, and how to react.

Sign up to stay alert

Those messages can be sent via a choice of text, landline, mobile and email – or any combination of those methods up to a maximum selection of five. For example, text messages to two mobiles, emails to two addresses, and an automated call to a landline.

It is a far cry from a short-notice, potentially confusing siren containing no specifics and no advice, and with no guarantee of being heard.

Since the Flood Warning Service launched in 2006, the [Environment Agency](#) and its partners have been continuously transforming it, making the best use of the latest technology to better reach people living, working and travelling through flood-risk areas.

World-class warning service

Innovations include automated warning messages to mobile phones registered with certain providers, and becoming one of the first European countries to use Google Public Alerts to display live flood warnings on Google searches and Google Maps, just seconds after they have been issued.

The advances combine to make England's Flood Warning Service among the best in the world – and the sirens out-dated.

Ben Thornely, flood risk manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We know how devastating flooding can be, and we want people to have the most accurate and timely information when flooding is expected.

The best way of doing that is via our free, reliable Flood Warning Service, which gives people clear, specific advice on how to protect themselves, their loved ones and their homes. This just isn't possible with sirens.

It takes just a minute to check online if you're at risk of flooding and to sign up for warnings. We urge people to do that now via [GOV.UK/Flood](https://www.gov.uk/flood) or by calling 0345 988 1188.

Doing so can reduce the impact of flooding – saving you thousands of pounds.

Cllr Stewart Swinburn, [North East Lincolnshire Council's](#) cabinet member for the environment, said:

We've been kept up-to-date with the Environment Agency's plans for the flood sirens and they've also held two virtual sessions with councillors to explain their proposals. Those sessions have allowed us to inform the Environment Agency's approach and we've stressed the need for local people to be given all the information they require to adapt to the changes with the sirens.

We're aware similar system updates have worked well in other areas and we share the Environment Agency's expectation that advances in technology will make it easier for people to get any flood messages as quickly as possible should the need arise.

To give the best service, the Flood Warning Service relies on people choosing to sign up. It takes around a minute to do so, and can help reduce flooding's impact and damage – saving potentially thousands of pounds.

People are urged to sign up now via 0345 988 1188 or [GOV.UK/Flood](https://www.gov.uk/flood), where there is also information on the [practical things](#) people can do to protect their businesses, homes and valuables.

Prepare for flooding

Checking if you live in an area at high risk of flooding, preparing a bag with medication and important documents, and moving valuable and sentimental items upstairs or to a safe place can [reduce the damage](#) caused by a flood by around 40%.

Since the sirens were installed in 2006, the Environment Agency has invested around £20m into the area's flood defences. That includes a £19m upgrade along the Humber and at the port of Grimsby, and improvements along the River

Freshney. Further work between Immingham and Grimsby is expected to begin in 2022.

The Environment Agency plans to stop using the flood sirens from 31 December 2020.

Background

- The Flood Warning Service currently reaches 83% of at-risk properties in the area, compared to the 72% of at-risk properties within audible range of a siren. Even those in range of a siren may not hear them because of things like wind direction and double glazing.
- The average cost of repairing a flood-damaged home is around £32,000.
- 33,235 homes are at risk of flooding across the area. – 27,735 (around 83%) are reached by the Flood Warning Service. 5,500 (around 17%) are not reached by the Flood Warning Service and need to sign up. 23,997 (72%) are in range of a siren but not guaranteed to hear it or know how to react.
- 5.2 million properties are at risk of flooding in England. People are urged to visit [GOV.UK/Flood](https://gov.uk/flood), check if they're at risk, and make sure they know what to do if it floods.
- In many flood risk areas, people can sign up for [flood warnings](#). These warn of the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea and groundwater. They'll alert people by phone, email or text when flooding is expected.
- The best way for people to protect themselves from flooding is to know what to do in advance – they can download and save a simple [Prepare, Act, Survive plan](#) so they know what to do when there's a flood warning in their area.
- The [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#) was adopted in Autumn 2020 and sets the blueprint for how the Environment Agency and other organisations will manage flood and coastal change from now until 2100.