

Multi-billion pound investment as government unveils new long-term plan to tackle flooding

Homes and businesses across the country will be better protected and more resilient in future after the government revealed its long-term plan to tackle the risks of flooding and coastal erosion.

The measures set out in the new plan are the most comprehensive in a decade, including investment of £5.2 billion to create around 2,000 new flood and coastal defences to better protect 336,000 properties in England by 2027, alongside support to help households and businesses get back on their feet more quickly after flooding.

The plans also include £200 million for innovative projects such as sustainable drainage systems and nature-based solutions like temporary or permanent water storage areas which also boost wildlife. These will support 25 areas at risk of flooding to test and demonstrate innovative actions to adapt to a changing climate and improve their resilience.

In addition, up to £170 million will be spent to accelerate work on shovel-ready flood defence schemes that will begin construction in 2020 or 2021. 22 areas across the country will benefit from this immediate boost to jobs supporting the local economy as communities recover from the impact of coronavirus

The government's ambitious long-term plan sets out five key commitments – supported by over 40 clear actions – which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country for the coming years:

1. Upgrading and expanding flood defences and infrastructure across the country;
2. Managing the flow of water to both reduce flood risk and manage drought;
3. Harnessing the power of nature to not only reduce flood risk, but deliver benefits for the environment, nature, and communities;
4. Better preparing communities for when flooding and erosion does occur; and
5. Ensuring every area of England has a comprehensive local plan for dealing with flooding and coastal erosion.

The plan will see the delivery of flood and coastal defences to prevent £32 billion in economic damage, the creation of areas to store water during flooding and greater use of nature based solutions to reduce flood risk.

The plan also sets out proposed changes to the joint government and insurance industry Flood Re scheme. This will allow claims to include an additional amount so that flood resilience measures are included in repairs, and allow households that have property flood resilience measures in place to benefit

from lower premiums.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Last winter I saw for myself the misery and upheaval that flooding can bring to lives and livelihoods and I said we would do more to help people.

This long-term plan will help push back the flood waters and protect hundreds of thousands of homes, businesses and livelihoods.

Our record investment will also stimulate economic growth across the UK as we build back better.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

The devastating impacts of last winter's flooding were an important reminder of the need to continue to invest and accelerate action to reduce the impact of flooding on our communities.

Our record investment and ambitious policies will better protect homes, schools, hospitals and businesses, but we also recognise that we cannot prevent flooding entirely, which is why we will ensure that communities at high risk are more resilient.

Working closely with the Environment Agency, local authorities, business and the third sector we will create a better protected and prepared nation.

Andy Bord, Chief Executive of Flood Re, said:

I welcome the Government's commitment today to making the nation more resilient to future flooding.

Flood Re enables access to affordable insurance for hundreds of thousands of homes at high risk of flooding. We believe it is very important that the country is built back better and making homes more resilient through the uptake of property flood resilience adaptations is a key part of addressing the increasing threat of flooding resulting from climate change.

As the nation recovers from coronavirus, the measures announced today will also give long-term reassurance to communities across the country – particularly in areas where families and businesses have had to make huge sacrifices to deal with coronavirus while still suffering from the consequences of last winter's flooding.

The pledge to harness the power of nature to reduce flood risk, while

protecting and restoring habitats, will also play a part in the UK's world-leading work to tackle climate change, especially ahead of COP26 in Glasgow in November 2021 where the restoration of nature and resilience and adaptation will be major themes.

These announcements come ahead of the publication of the Environment Agency's long-term Flood and Coast Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England, which will be published later today and sets out how the Environment Agency will work with communities to deliver the government's plan.

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

For every £1 spent improving protection from flooding and coastal erosion, we avoid around £5 of property damages. The long-term commitments announced today will make homes, businesses and infrastructure more resilient to the accelerating impacts of the climate crisis.

Many communities are all too familiar with flooding, and now the risk is increasing for others too. The Environment Agency is champing at the bit to deliver on the Government's investment with better, and greener, flood schemes. Detail about how we will do this is set out in our strategy.

With climate and nature at its heart, the strategy will provide detail on the Environment Agency's commitment to protect and prepare millions of homes and businesses.

Further information

- The plan set out today represents the most substantive update to our national effort to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk in a decade since the Flood Water Management Act 2010.
- Alongside the five key over-arching policy commitments, the plan includes over 40 actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.
- The plan represents a comprehensive, cross-government commitment to increase our national resilience to flooding and coastal erosion, including proposals to change regulations and unlock more investment from government and others.
- The £5.2 billion capital funding programme announced here runs from 2021-2027. However other aspects of the plan will continue further into the future.
- The plan applies to England, as responsibility for flood and coastal erosion risk management is devolved. The Flood Re insurance scheme applies to the UK.

Further detail of key commitments and actions in the government's plan

Upgrading and expanding flood defences and infrastructure across the country

- Building 2,000 new flood and coastal defence schemes by 2027, providing better protection to 336,000 properties including 46,000 key sites including schools and hospitals, as well as ensuring existing defences continue to be well maintained.
- This will avoid £32 billion of wider economic damages – providing savings to businesses, householders and the exchequer.
- Ensuring that our existing flood defences are well-maintained and climate resilient.
- We will consider expanding local authority powers to ensure they can secure additional funding for flood schemes, and review local government funding for statutory functions to ensure that it matches the needs of communities.

Managing the flow of water to both reduce flood risk and manage drought

- As flood mitigation and water management go hand-in-hand, we will ensure an integrated approach, for example storing upstream to prevent flooding during heavy rainfall, then capturing this water for use during dry weather.
- Ofwat has already permitted water companies to invest £469 million to develop water management schemes, with flood mitigation being examined as part of this.

Harnessing the power of nature to not only reduce flood risk, but deliver benefits for climate, nature, and communities

- Planting trees, restoring peatland and wetlands, and properly managing soil can all contribute to reducing flood risk, while providing benefits for the climate, nature, and society.
- Commitment to double the number of government funded projects which include “nature-based solutions” such as these.
- The Environmental Land Management scheme, Nature for Climate Fund, and English Tree Strategy will all play a part in reducing flood risk for local communities, while providing them with green spaces to enjoy and habitats for wildlife.

Better preparing communities for when flooding does occur

- A £200 million innovative resilience programme
- Changes to the Flood Re scheme will boost the resilience of homes, enabling a quicker and less costly recovery when flooding occurs.
- Review of policy for building in areas at flood risk, ensuring future developments are safe from floods.
- Review of the current approach to flood resilient design to help keep

water out and limit damage if water gets in.

- The flood warning system will be expanded to ensure that all properties at high risk of flooding will be aware when flooding may occur and can take action.
- Support for the voluntary sector to improve their capacity and capability to help local communities during floods.

Ensuring every area of England has a comprehensive local plan for dealing with flooding and coastal erosion.

- Every area of England will have a strategic and comprehensive plan for dealing with flooding and coastal erosion from source to sea, taking into account demographic changes and the future challenges of climate change.

£170 million to accelerate flood defence construction

Work will start on 22 new shovel-ready flood defence projects in 2020 and 2021 which will drive growth and unlock a range of benefits for local economies.

The flood schemes that will receive funding have strong local economic benefits, including better protecting more than 10,000 local businesses and safeguarding around 100,000 jobs:

- In Leeds, the government will provide up to £21 million to for the Leeds Phase 2 Flood Alleviation Scheme which will protect more than 370 businesses and 3,300 jobs, and enable the development of land for the creation of homes and jobs. This is subject to a satisfactory business case approved by Defra and HMT. Government will also provide £1,320,000 for the Leeds Natural Flood Management Scheme. This brings the government's total investment in Leeds to more than £100m to help prevent a repeat of the 2015 Boxing Day floods.
- In Sheffield and the Upper Don Valley, the flood scheme will protect more than 650 businesses and will play a part in delivering 70,000 new jobs in the city
- In Tenbury Wells and the Severn Valley, two flood schemes will protect nearly 3,000 homes in areas which were badly affected by last winter's floods, and protecting and creating more than 22,000 jobs along the Severn Valley. This will be supplemented by an additional scheme combining natural flood risk management, tree planting and habitat creation to reduce flood risk and capture carbon throughout the Severn Valley.
- In Hebden Bridge, the funding will provide better protection for an area that was badly affected by last winter's flooding, including nearly 1,000 businesses, while maintaining the importance of access to the river in the picturesque town.
- In Lowestoft and the Suffolk coast, the funding will deliver a tidal barrier and flood walls to protect key infrastructure and businesses, and providing a boost to the offshore energy and tourism sectors.

- In Derby, the flood scheme will protect over 1,000 businesses and 7,000 jobs, acting as a catalyst for regeneration in the city.
- In Brighton, Hove, and Shoreham, £2 million will be spent to protect critical infrastructure on the south coast, including a power plant serving 300,000 homes and one of the largest cargo ports in the south of England.
- In Falmouth, the flood scheme will reduce risks associated with surface water flooding and will allow further growth in a town centre waterfront location.
- In Bude, the flood scheme will sustain existing protection, preserving the functioning of a key part of the town and thereby allowing continued growth in the local tourism industry.
- In East Cowes, funding will be provided to reduce the risk of tidal flooding and increase resilience for properties and businesses including the ferry terminal.
- In Padiham, the flood scheme will protect over 2,000 jobs and nearly 300 businesses, delivering of £30m of economic benefits.
- In Lowdham, the storage of water in reservoirs will help to reduce flood risk in a village which has flooded three times in the last 12 months.
- In Ponteland, the flood scheme will allow the continued protection of the town, local businesses to continue to trade (almost 500 will be better protected) and provide confidence for future growth and investment.

£200 million Innovative Resilience Programme

This new programme, first announced in the Budget, will deliver innovative actions in 25 local areas such as nature based solutions, sustainable drainage systems, pro-active approaches for making existing properties more flood resilient, encouraging local businesses to improve their flood resilience, and building voluntary sector capacity to respond and recover. It will demonstrate how innovative actions can work individually and in combination to improve resilience to flooding and coastal erosion, and encourage strategic thinking and working across administrative boundaries.

Funding will be around £6 million per area during 2021-27. The Environment Agency will invite Lead Local Flood Authorities and Coast Protection Authorities to work with local partners on expressions of interest later this year. We will publish a prospectus which will include a menu of actions from which each area can select those it will take forward. Once selected, the 25 areas will then work up their proposals in more detail, before the programme begins in April 2021. We will provide some preparation funding to the 25 areas in 2020-21.

The programme will also support work in the Thames and Humber estuaries, the Severn Valley and Yorkshire to trial and develop ways of planning ahead and making wise investment choices for the decades to come in face of the long-term uncertainties brought by climate change. In the Thames and Humber we will continue and build on previous work looking at major investments to manage tidal flooding. In the Severn Valley and Yorkshire this will be new work to explore how the approach might be applied to other situations where

major investments in flood and coastal erosion risk are likely to be needed over the coming decades.

The evidence gained from this programme will enable successful approaches to be identified and implemented more widely.

Changes to the Flood Re insurance scheme

We are also announcing some specific changes to the Flood Re scheme that, subject to consultation, will help implement the vision set out in the long-term plan. They aim to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Flood Re scheme and encourage greater uptake of Property Flood Resilience among households at high risk of flooding across the UK.

We intend to consult later this year on a number of proposals, including some which go further than Flood Re's Quinquennial Review proposals in order to accelerate the uptake of Property Flood Resilience and better support customers and insurers to recognise the benefits. These are:

- The ability for Flood Re to offer discounted premiums to households that have fitted property flood resilience measures, such as airbrick covers or non-return valves.
- Permitting the payment of claims to include an additional amount to build back better, in a more flood resilient way.
- Speeding up resilient homes through working with Flood Re and the insurance industry to explore whether it would be beneficial for insurers to share more information with customers about their flood risk– encouraging everyone to take responsibility to encourage greater uptake.
- Exploring whether there's more that the Flood Re scheme could do to accelerate uptake of PFR, including whether the scheme's currently available funding could contribute.

Technical changes to enable Flood Re to amend the amount of levy raised from UK insurers and the maximum amount that Flood Re are liable to pay out each financial year to deliver better value for money.