

News story: Boston Barrier tidal flood defence construction begins

The EA's Toby Willison and MP Matt Warman joined Floods Minister Therese Coffey to mark the start of works on the Boston Barrier.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey has marked the start of works on the £100 million Boston Barrier flood defence, breaking ground on an Environment Agency scheme that will protect 14,000 homes and businesses from tidal flooding.

Work is already underway to dredge more than 5,000 cubic metres of silt from the Boston Haven to make way for construction. Over the coming months, 2,000 tonnes of steel sheeting – weighing as much as 280 elephants – will be put in place to strengthen the riverbanks in preparation for the barrier.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This Government investment will make sure Boston is one of the best protected towns on the east coast and I am proud to be putting the first spade in the ground on this project.

The Boston Barrier is part of our plan to invest £229 million over the next four years to make sure the risk of flooding to 49,000 homes and businesses in Lincolnshire is significantly reduced.

It is expected that works will be complete by the end of 2020, and will make Boston one of the best-protected areas from tidal flooding outside of London.

The scheme will feature a moveable gate across the River Witham together with a new control building to operate the barrier, new flood defence walls on both banks and a replacement gate across the entrance to the existing Port of Boston wet dock.

Toby Willison, Executive Director of Operations at the Environment Agency, said:

This state-of-the-art defence will help protect Boston's communities and businesses from the kind of flooding the town experienced in December 2013.

It's yet another example of the brilliant work our teams are doing up and down the country to better protect people from flooding, and recently we've reached a milestone of an extra 100,000 homes protected.

The barrier's 25-metre wide hydraulic-powered gate, when not in use, will lay flat on the riverbed out of sight, but will be raised to close off the River Witham when flooding is expected, preventing high tides on the North Sea from raising river levels in the town.

Boston has a long history of tidal flooding, most recently in December 2013 when more than 800 properties flooded across 55 streets. Flooding also occurred in 1953 and 1978.

The Environment Agency is investing £2.6 billion of government funding in more than 1,500 flood defences to protect homes and businesses across the country by 2021.

Everyone has a responsibility to take steps to protect themselves from flooding, such as knowing your risk, signing up for free flood warnings and making a floodplan in advance. Call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or visit www.gov.uk/flood for more information.