

News story: Flood defence milestone: 100,000 more properties better protected

Better protecting communities from flooding continues to be a top priority for the government, the Environment Secretary Michael Gove will reaffirm today.

Flood defences continue to be built apace across England and 100,000 properties are now better protected thanks to the 350 new flood schemes that have been completed since April 2015.

The Environment Secretary is in Devon today to open a new £12 million flood defence scheme in Dawlish Warren, reducing flood risk to 2800 homes and businesses around the Exe Estuary, as well as the main rail line into South Devon and Cornwall.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Our £2.6 billion investment programme is well underway, with 100,000 more properties already better protected from flooding and that figure set to triple in under four years.

Dawlish Warren is only one of 350 new defences built since 2015 and work continues on schemes across the country – all of which are helping to bring peace of mind to communities, as well as investment and opportunities.

With elements including a new 100 metre long flood wall and over 200,000 cubic metres of sand, Dawlish Warren uses top engineering techniques and the natural landscape to reduce flood risk, while also conserving habitat for birds and wildlife.

As the Environment Secretary opens one flood scheme for Devon, he will simultaneously announce that work will begin next year on another £12 million scheme just across the estuary, in Exmouth. Both schemes are part of the government's continued £115 million investment drive to reduce flood risk to 15,000 homes and businesses in Devon and Cornwall by 2021.

On top of this existing funding, the Environment Secretary will announce an extra £1.6 million for Devon from the recent Budget: this will go towards two schemes, one in Plymouth and one in Whimple.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency said:

We have made great progress in the last two years to reduce flood

risk around the country and this milestone of 100,000 homes better protected shows how far we've come. These new schemes at Dawlish Warren and Exmouth are brilliant examples of how the Environment Agency's teams continue to work hard to benefit local communities.

In addition to building new defences, this winter we are better prepared than ever before to respond if flooding occurs with new equipment, better technology and more than 6,500 trained staff ready to act.

Following his visit to Dawlish Warren, the Environment Secretary will visit the Devon Wildlife Trust's trial reintroduction of beavers on the River Otter to see the visible impacts they have had on the landscape; creating new dams, pools and other dramatic changes.

The Environment Secretary's interest in the project follows the recent announcement that he is supportive of a planned similar scheme in the Forest of Dean, which has been granted a licence to proceed.