

North East town welcomes new flood warning sign

The sign, at Rothbury Riverside, will inform residents and road users when the town's flood gates will be closed to protect properties.

The 9-foot tall LED sign has a visual display that posts messages for passers-by to read, giving them ample warning about the movements of the flood gates, before and after any forecast severe weather conditions.

Earlier this month, the government unveiled its long-term plan to tackle the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, ensuring 336,000 properties in England are better protected from flooding by 2027 with a record £5.2 billion investment.

Tristan Drought, Flood and Coastal Risk Management Team Leader at the Environment Agency in the North East, said:

The flood warning sign is a great new way for us to update residents in Rothbury and those visiting the area that the gates will be closing, giving them plenty of time to prepare and take action ahead of potential flooding in the town. It will work alongside our other warning measures such as the issuing of flood alerts and warnings through text alerts and our website.

Ensuring communities are prepared for flooding and helping them be more resilient to climate change is one of the cornerstones of our recently announced Flood and Coastal Risk Strategy. Engagement with communities is vital and we're committed to working together with them through flood wardens, workshops and events to help them understand their flood risk and what they can do to prepare.

The new flood warning resource can be operated remotely by the Environment Agency's incident and field operation teams.

New sign is welcomed

The LED sign has been welcomed by two of the town's current flood wardens Duncan and Fran Elson. Duncan, aged 73, and Fran, aged 70, have been flood wardens for 12-years. Duncan is a retired photographer and Fran used to help manage the family-run photography shops.

Next year, the pair will be celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary. They have two children, Chris and Heather. Duncan and Fran have lived in Rothbury for over thirty years. Duncan explains why they became flood wardens:

When we saw what had happened to local properties we just got stuck

in, and helped where we could. I started with a wheelbarrow and a brush but ended up photographing the damage so residents could get on with cleaning up while retaining a record for the insurance companies.

Fran went from a helping hand to co-ordinating accommodation and fundraising for those effected. Becoming flood wardens was the next natural step.

The new sign will benefit all residents of Rothbury by making them more aware of what is happening in the town, in the build up to any potential flooding incidents.

Fran also welcomed the sign and gives advice to those people who are considering becoming a volunteer flood warden. She added:

Our advice would be to get involved. Try and find out if your local town or village has a group and put your name down to help out – as it provides wonderful community spirit.

The flood warning sign will be beneficial to visitors to Rothbury, and increase awareness to local residents who already receive the text message flood alerts.

If you would like to volunteer as a flood warden in Rothbury or in your local area then please contact engagement_northeast@environment-agency.gov.uk

[People can also sign up to flood warnings and check if their local area is in danger of flood risk](#)

If you do find out that your property or business does fall within a flood risk area, it might be a good idea to create a 'flood plan' and check list of essential actions and items that you might require if faced with a flood situation.