

Over 314,000 homes better protected due to flood protection work

A £2.6 billion, six-year programme of work dedicated to improving flood and coastal defences has exceeded its original targets by 14,000 – with over 314,000 homes now better protected from flooding since 2015.

More than 850 new flood and coastal erosion defence projects have been completed during this period. Over 580,000 acres of agricultural land, as well as thousands of businesses, communities and major infrastructure – including more than 8,000 kilometres of roads – also benefited from improvement schemes. Analysis in a new report published today shows this work is estimated to have reduced national flood risk by 5%.

Alongside delivering on its headline target, Defra's capital investment programme from 2015-2021 has also brought wider benefits to both the environment through the creation and enhancement of natural habitats, and also local communities, through better protecting nationally important infrastructure and wider contributions to economic recovery. Early analysis suggests the programme of work over the last six years has saved the economy more than £28 billion in avoided damages to properties, businesses and more over the lifetime of these defence assets.

[Defra's final post-programme assessment](#) shows that the original commitment of 300,000 homes was revised upwards by more than 4.5% after extra funding was allocated across the period.

The programme's original £2.3 billion budget was expanded to a total £2.6 billion to allow for additional work to be carried out. Alongside the current record £5.2 billion investment, from 2021-2027, the government's long-term policy statement on flood and coastal erosion risk management is the most comprehensive in a decade with five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions to accelerate progress to better protect and prepare the country for future flooding and coastal erosion.

Investment during 2015-2021 was spread across every region of England and included targeted funding for areas where it was needed the most, pushing forward regeneration in communities at high risk of flooding – many of whom suffered from significant flooding during the winter of 2015.

One example is Yorkshire, with the government investing more in flood defences for Yorkshire and the Humber than any other region, better protecting more than 83,000 homes since 2015.

Investment was also targeted at areas likely to be hardest hit by the impact of a flood, with new flood schemes in the most deprived parts of the country continuing to qualify for funding at 2.25 times the rate of other areas.

£40 million of funding was announced in 2018 specifically aimed at boosting

regeneration in some of these areas. As a result, more than 46,000 homes in areas from Cornwall to Northumberland are now better protected from flooding – including 800 residential properties around Rochdale and Littleborough following a £5 million of investment injection into the River Roch Flood Alleviation scheme. More than £10 million was awarded to protect communities in the St. Austell Bay area of Cornwall.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

Our programme of work has protected over 314,000 properties, defending people, communities, and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion. We know that there is still more to do, so we are doubling our investment with a record £5.2 billion over the next six years.

Over 1,700 homes were also better protected through more than 80 property flood resilience schemes – aimed at reducing the amount of damage experienced by property owners, occupiers and businesses and enable them to recover faster after flooding. More than 280 homes in Kent were upgraded with adaptive measures including flood doors, flood gates and air brick covers thanks to the Middle Medway flood resilience scheme.

The report also reveals many of the schemes across the programme looked to enhance or provide additional environmental benefits including improving access to rivers, wildlife sites and the creation of new green spaces as well as increasing our use of natural flood management to reduce flood risk.

Approximately 12,000 acres of natural habitat were created or improved, and approximately 700 kilometres of rivers enhanced during this period. This includes new habitat the size of more than 90 football pitches created for local wildlife, thanks to the Port Clarence and Greatham South project in County Durham.

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

The Environment Agency's six year flood defence building programme has better protected over 314,000 homes and businesses from the cost, pain and disruption of flooding. There are very few national infrastructure programmes that come in on time, on budget, and on target: I am very proud that the EA has achieved this. That is all down to the expertise, dedication and commitment of the EA teams and our partners across the country: they deserve the nation's thanks.

Flood defence works. While we can never protect everyone against all flooding all the time, we can reduce the risk of it happening and the impact when it does. In February – for the first time – we had three named storms in a week, and rivers rose to record heights. While some 400 properties sadly flooded, over 40,000 homes and businesses were protected by our defences.

The climate emergency is bringing greater risks. Our response must be to protect our communities as best we can, make them more resilient, using natural flood management as well as hard defences, and to tackle both the causes and consequences of climate change. The EA is doing all that in our new £5.2bn flood defence investment programme. We will stay focused on delivering it for the people and places we serve.

Other notable schemes that also benefited from this investment include:

- Humber: Hull Frontage scheme: A £42 million flood defence upgrade of the defences along the edge of the Humber Estuary to protect the city of Hull from tidal flooding. The scheme will reduce the risk of flooding from the estuary for 113,000 homes and non-residential properties.
- Ipswich Barrier: One of the most significant defences that the Environment Agency has constructed in recent years, costing £67 million, protecting 1,600 homes and 400 businesses from flooding and the impacts of climate change over the course of the next century.
- Boston Barrier gate: Now fully ready and working, giving an enhanced level of flood protection to over 13,000 homes and businesses in the town. As the centrepiece of the flood scheme, the barrier gate can be raised in just 20 minutes, responding quickly to threats of North Sea tidal surges.
- Ulverston Town Beck flood scheme: This £9.5 million flood scheme was completed in May 2018. It includes raised flood walls and a maze of underground culverts and protects more than 500 homes and businesses in Cumbria will be better protected from flooding.
- Cannington flood defence scheme: This created a new flood bypass channel capable of moving flood water away from the village. The scheme was completed in 2017 and was a partnership project costing a total of £4.5 million. It saw 200 properties better protected.

The assessment of this 2015-2021 programme comes as the government is one year into a £5.2 billion investment in around 2,000 new flood and coastal defences between 2021 and 2027.

These upcoming schemes will help to reduce the national flood risk by up to 11 per cent and help to avoid £32 billion of wider economic damages along with a range of other benefits for local communities and the environment.

It will better protect 550 kilometres of road and rail infrastructure, create or improve 13,000 acres of natural habitat, and enhance 830 kilometres of rivers.

Background

- The [post-programme assessment](#) will be available on gov.uk.
- Alongside the policy statement, the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England guides the activities of those involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management.

- Taken together, this policy statement and strategy will ensure that our country is more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and climate change in the long term.