

Press release: £16 million Teesside flood scheme complete

- New £16 million scheme better protects 350 homes and 32 businesses
- Almost 50 hectares of new habitat created for local wildlife
- Designed to last 50 years taking climate change into account

Costing almost £16million, the Port Clarence and Greatham South project has increased flood protection to Port Clarence residents from the River Tees and Greatham Creek while also creating new habitat the size of over 90 football pitches for local wildlife.

The Environment Agency joined forces with local industry to build the scheme with multinational company SABIC UK contributing some of the funding and INOVYN ChlorVinyls offering land to allow the creation of the new habitat.

Throughout the project the Environment Agency has worked closely with the RSPB and Natural England to create a scheme which maximises benefits for the internationally designated habitat which includes rare birds as well as seals. The new habitats also feature both a brand new bird hide and seal hide to give nature-lovers a close-up view of these stunning local species.

Combined with flood defences that were completed at Port Clarence in 2015, the project reduces the risk of flooding to 350 homes and 32 businesses in Port Clarence and the Seal Sands Industrial Complex.

Port Clarence and Greatham South Flood Alleviation Scheme

The project therefore helps keep the local community safe from events like the 2013 floods while also providing stability for jobs and industry and safeguarding the future of the natural habitat in the Tees Estuary.

Environment Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

When I visited Teesside in 2017 I was able to speak with the local industry representatives, the Environment Agency and the RSPB about the plans for this new flood defence scheme.

I am delighted it is now open, better protecting hundreds of homes and businesses, helping the local economy and enhancing the natural environment by creating an important new habitat for wildlife and birds.

This £16 million scheme forms part of the government's commitment to better protect 300,000 thousand homes from flooding. We are investing over £2.3 billion across the country – boosting our resilience as a nation, helping our communities to grow and prosper.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

Floods destroy lives and livelihoods. This project is a perfect example of how flood schemes can benefit everyone: communities, businesses and wildlife. We have worked closely with our partners to design a scheme which will provide better flood protection for years to come whilst also helping bird and seal populations to thrive.

This forms part of our commitment to invest over £75million on flood defences across the north-east of England between 2015 and 2021, better protecting thousands of homes and businesses.

The first phase of the project, which saw new flood defences built at Port Clarence to reduce flood risk from the River Tees, was finished in December 2015.

Phase two saw the Environment Agency raise existing flood embankments along Greatham Creek, to reduce the flood risk to Port Clarence and land which is south of the Creek.

They also built new flood defences to the north of RSPB Saltholme Nature Reserve, and breached the old flood defence to allow the new area to fill up with water, creating more than 36 hectares of new inter-tidal habitat. In addition, 12 hectares of freshwater habitat was also created as part of the project.

Chris Francis, Senior Site Manager at RSPB Saltholme, said:

Over the years much of the valuable natural habitat of Tees Estuary has been lost to industry and agriculture. The breaching of the old flood defence means that a large area will be reconnected to the estuary and will eventually return to its natural saltmarsh habitat, which will provide an important feeding ground for many wading birds and wildfowl, especially during the winter months.

Notes to editors

Contractors BMMJV (BAM Nuttall and Mott MacDonald Joint Venture) carried out the work on behalf of the Environment Agency.

Phase 1 of the scheme saw new flood defences built in Port Clarence, consisting of a mixture of earth embankments, flood walls, and a raised section of the road on the approach to the Transporter Bridge.

In addition, the Environment Agency worked together with local business Wilton Engineering to install removable steel flood defences along the River Tees to improve flood protection while still allowing Wilton to operate from the river.