

Press release: Barriers at the ready in 'Broadchurch'

Visitors to West Bay, near Bridport, will see up to 60 metres of temporary coastal defence barriers deployed in East Beach car park in preparation for any future tidal incidents.

The barriers – one of 4 types used by the Environment Agency – are large, self-supporting, recyclable containers filled with aggregate. They are covered with an impenetrable membrane which prevents water from getting through. They are also fitted with a lid to prevent loss of fill material during over-topping and extreme weather conditions.

Exercise organiser and engineer Dan Hooper said:

West Bay is a high risk flood area because of strong south westerly winds, high tides and the close proximity of properties to the sea and nearby River Brit, so it's essential we are 'incident-ready' by carrying out exercises like this.

These barriers are relatively new to the Environment Agency so this exercise provides us with an opportunity to get to grips with them. We are learning how we open, connect and fill them using a stockpile of beach materials already located on site.

Sharpening our practical skills and knowledge means we can better protect homes, businesses and the environment quickly and safely should a major incident be expected in West Bay or anywhere along the Dorset coast.

Partner agencies have been invited to observe the exercise, including representatives from the British Army, Dorset Local Resilience Forum (local authorities, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Civil Contingencies Unit) and the West Bay Harbourmaster.

One of the Environment Agency's new Incident Command Units (ICU) will also be on site recording footage of the exercise. The WiFi-enabled ICU acts as a mobile incident room and a temporary headquarters for staff out in the field, enabling better site management, situational awareness and visibility in flood risk communities.

Part of the car park will be cordoned off, but vehicle users will still be able to access the remainder of the car park and beach.

Notes for editors

West Bay is a designated World Heritage Site and situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Environment Agency is currently working with

West Dorset District Council, co-ordinated by the Dorset Coast Forum, to identify and improve the coastal defences in West Bay and make the beaches more resistant to storm damage, while also preserving the iconic views and amenities.

The 'Jackbox' flood defence barriers are made by Hesco. They are easy to store and transport and can be deployed quickly by 2 people and a machine. They can be filled with earth, sand, gravel, crushed rock or other granular materials and are easily removed.

Media opportunity

Members of the media are invited to observe the exercise from 11am. Interviews with Dan Hooper will be available at 12pm. Please confirm your attendance with the press office (telephone 0800 917 9271).

Attendees should be appropriately dressed and will be asked to sign in on arrival/given high-visibility clothing and hard hats (if crossing the cordoned off area).

The nearest available alternative car park will be at:

Station Road car park
Station Rd
West Bay
Bridport
DT6 4EW