

[Press release: Events to find out more about North East natural flood management](#)

Weardale residents can find out more about how a £2.1million natural flood management project could reduce their risk of flooding and create a haven for wildlife in a series of events to be held next month.

The Weardale Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project will see the Environment Agency investigate and deliver natural features across 100km squared area to reduce the risk of flooding to 141 properties.

The project team is currently carrying out an assessment of NFM techniques that might help reduce flood risk in Weardale and takes in towns and villages including Stanhope, Westgate, Eastgate and Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency is working on the project with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Durham County Council and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

They want to work with local farmers and landowners who are interested in getting involved in the project to assess the impact of different NFM features. Over the coming months, the North Pennines AONB partnership will be taking the lead in approaching farmers and landowners to discuss voluntary involvement in the scheme. They will be supported by Wear Rivers Trust.

A series of information events for communities is taking place in April to find out more about what it means for them and how they can get involved, as well as capturing their local knowledge about flooding history in the area.

First step in 'pioneering project'

Environment Agency Project Manager Kirsty Hardy said:

This is the first step in what is a pioneering project to explore and deliver natural flood management features to reduce flood risk, as well as enrich the landscape and habitat of what is a beautiful area of countryside.

Until December this year we will be assessing different techniques and our colleagues at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, supported by Wear Rivers Trust, will be speaking with local farmers and landowners before we can then identify any suitable locations for potential delivery of natural flood management features.

This project is ultimately going to increase our understanding of the impact natural flood management can have on reducing flows along tributaries on the Upper River Wear.

We're hosting a series of events where people can find out more about natural flood management and how they can get involved, as well as help us understand past flooding in the area. This really is an exciting project where the community can play a key role and I'd encourage people to come along.

Early discussions

Rebecca Barrett, Biodiversity Lead for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, added:

We have already had some early discussions with a number of farmers and landowners in Weardale. They are interested in the project and are happy to discuss ways to help reduce the impact of flooding on their community.

It is a pleasure to meet with the people whose land management activities play such an important role in the appearance and function of our landscape and we are looking forward to developing the project in partnership with them over the coming months.

All drop-in events take place between 2.30pm and 7pm on:

Date	Location
4 April	Westgate Village Hall, Front Street, Westgate, DL13 1RX
5 April	Wearhead Village Hall, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DY
10 April	Cowhill Village Hall, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DA
11 April	Eastgate Village Hall, Eastgate, DL13 2HU
12 April	Stanhope Community Association, Front Street, Stanhope, DL13 2NQ

In March 2017 the Environment Agency announced £15million of funding had been made available for NFM schemes nationally. The Weardale project will allow the Environment Agency to gather and understand evidence to support that natural flood management can play a role in reducing flood risk.

NFM features are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. As with traditional flood walls and embankments they are a tool to help reduce risk but can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely.