

Press release: New £63 million defence scheme is turning the tide against floods in Rossall

A multi-million pound coastal defence scheme to shore up Rossall's sea defences while reducing flood risk to 7,500 homes has been officially opened today (1st June 2018). It is one of the single biggest investments in a single coastal flood scheme to date.

Led by Wyre Council, in partnership with the Environment Agency and main contractor Balfour Beatty, the new scheme is made up of two kilometres of sea defences. It forms one of the three projects being delivered by the Fylde Peninsula Coastal Programme Partnership, alongside the recently completed Anchorsholme Coastal Protection Scheme in Blackpool and the Fairhaven to Church Scar Coastal Protection Scheme in Lytham.

Designed for the next 100 years to hold back the Irish Sea during major storms, the Rossall flood defences will provide better protection to the town's tramway, hospital and schools whilst reducing flood risk to 7,500 homes. The scheme comprises of 1.84km of sheet piles, more than 10,000 specially manufactured precast concrete units, 211,000 tonnes of stone, 46,000m³ of insitu concrete and 327,000 tonnes of locally sourced rock from 12 quarries across the north of the UK. The scheme is one of the single biggest investments the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), has made in a coastal flood scheme to date.

The Environment Agency builds climate change projections into the design of all of its flood defences to make sure they are fit for the future. So, aside from being an impressive piece of infrastructure within its own right, the Rossall scheme is helping in the fight against climate change by taking into account changing circumstances in sea level rise and weather patterns over the next 100 years.

Construction of the scheme has also allowed for improvements to the local environment as part of the new defences. This has included the creation of a new ecology park on the landward side of the defences to enhance the area through its visual impact and environmental footprint.

Known as Larkholme Grasslands, the park has been designed by Lancashire County Council with bridges and artwork by Stephen Broadbent, a British sculptor who specialises in public art. This strip of grassland, from West Way to Fleetwood Golf Club, is already classed as a Biological Heritage Site because of the rarer species of flora and fauna that grow there.

The completion of the scheme delivers on a long-held vision to not only create a lagoon area behind the new defences – to act as an additional flood storage for spray coming over the seawall – but also to provide a home for local wildlife and a new green space for residents and tourists to enjoy.

The park will also feature specially created sculptures by Stephen Broadbent, and, in a nod to the folklore and myth surrounding the local coastline, the new seawall at Rossall continues the story of The Sea Swallow, cementing its place on the Mythic Coast.

Beginning at Cleveleys, visitors to the site can follow an artwork and poetry trail from the popular children's book until the story ends at Rossall Point Observation Tower. Characters from The Sea Swallow, including a giant stainless steel seashell and sea ogre carved from limestone, can also be spotted along the picturesque walk.

Councillor Roger Berry, Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder at Wyre Council said:

I'd like to thank all our partners for helping us to deliver the new sea defences. The completed scheme will not only protect our residents, their homes and our businesses and infrastructure, but also has provided us with a visually stunning promenade for walkers and cyclists. Locals and visitors alike will be able to enjoy the magnificent coastline, whilst the grasslands will give a contrasting green and natural landscape.

Sir James Bevan, Environment Agency chief executive, said:

This is one of the biggest investments ever in a coastal flood scheme. It will reduce flood risk to 7,500 homes, create new green space and benefit the local economy, including by using locally sourced materials. It's a great example of partnership: by working together the Environment Agency, Wyre Council, our other partners and the local community have helped create an even better place for people and wildlife.

Defra Minister David Rutley said:

Rossall's new coastal defence scheme has been made possible thanks not only to significant government funding, but also the huge support of local government and other partners. The result is positive news for the community – regenerating the area, creating an ecology park and providing better protection for 7,500 properties from the risk of flooding.

I also welcome the fact these vital defences have been constructed using local materials and expertise, supporting industry and the economy in the North West of England.

Dean Banks, Balfour Beatty Chief Executive Officer for UK Construction Services, said:

We are delighted that the local community and visitors to the Fylde coast can now fully experience the extensive benefits of the Rossall scheme, which will protect thousands of nearby properties from the risk of flooding and offer a captivating promenade for people of all ages to enjoy.

The project's success is a testament to the skills and collaborative working relationship between the fully integrated delivery team, with Wyre Council and the Environment Agency.

Notes to editors

327,000 tonnes of rock is the total of underlayer and main rock armour that make up the scheme. This is made of 86,342T of under layer placed and 241,000T of rock armour.

The Rossall Coastal Protection Scheme has been fully funded through DEFRA grant in aid totalling £63.2m (protecting 7,500 properties).