Rivercraft: Minecraft game inspires young environmental champions

Children and young people across the world can learn more about climate change, the environment, and reducing the impacts of flooding thanks to a new Minecraft: Education Edition game, 'Rivercraft'.

Based on the £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South Ribble, the in-game Preston world is the first activity of its kind that uses Artificial Intelligence to map a region and convert it into an interactive Minecraft map. The games will be available globally and in multiple languages to be used in educational and home environments across the world within Minecraft: Education Edition. This established educational tool is used by millions of educators and students in 112 countries, with hundreds of free lessons and curriculum, teacher trainings, and learning programs.

The Environment Agency and Microsoft will work alongside experts in youth engagement, BlockBuilders to draw users into three themed games. The Preston world will encourage young people to learn about flood risk management, climate change, local human geography, engineering and the environment.

- Game 1 – Managing Flooding. This game will focus on building the Preston and South Ribble flood defences. The player will be tasked with constructing various types of flood prevention measures including natural flood management, walls and embankments as well as flood storage areas and flood gates. Players will learn about the pros and cons of each approach and their suitability within local communities
- Game 2 – Flood Prevention. This game will explore how individual actions can alleviate climate change and how understanding flood risk can reduce the damage to people and property.
- Game 3 – Our Local Environment. This game will begin on the riverbank where the player will be tasked with conducting an ecological survey using their digital workbook and camera. The aim of this game will be for the surveyors to spot and record some of our most beloved wildlife species including water voles and otters.

With a drive to encourage young people into environment based careers, the characters in the game have also been adapted to reflect the diversity of the local project team and the communities the Environment Agency serves.

Andy Brown, Flood Risk Manager for the Environment Agency, said:

> This is an amazing opportunity for students and a project we are proud to be a part of. Not only will young people learn about a major flooding scheme in the UK, but they will also discover more about climate change, the environment, flooding and the types of roles available for careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Introducing the next generation to the brilliant career opportunities we have here at the Environment Agency is key if we are to deliver our vital flood and coastal defence projects. This includes the Preston and South Ribble Scheme, which will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses.

We want to help everyone discover their drive, passion and enthusiasm for the environment and the jobs available within that sector. We can't wait to see Rivercraft and the Preston world brought to life across the globe.

Justin Edwards, Director of Learning Programmes, Minecraft, said:

We know that people around the world love Minecraft, and so it is really rewarding for us to see Minecraft encouraging students to talk about and engage with environmental issues.

The game provides an opportunity not just to get to know the flooding scheme in Preston and South Ribble, but also understand real world impact in a safe and fun way. The game also shows how communities are impacted, not just individuals. We're committed to making a better world through the power of play and this project is at the forefront of that vision.

You can [read more about Rivercraft](#).

Notes to editors

- Rivercraft is a world developed by the EA in Minecraft Education Edition and is based on the Environment Agency £54.7million flood risk management scheme in Preston and South Ribble.
- This scheme started construction in October 2021 and will directly reduce flood risk to 4,700 homes and businesses from Preston Riversway up towards the M6 and Higher Walton.
- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is contributing £6.525M towards the scheme and funding has been secured from multiple sources including the Department for Education.
- Construction of the scheme will be completed by summer 2023 and in line with ERDF timescales.
- Work also continues on the design of the defences for the later stages of the scheme in Walton-le-Dale, Frenchwood and Higher Walton.
- The scheme will deliver, improved access to the River Ribble including for emergency access on Strand Road through the remediation of the old slipway to the river.
- The scheme will also create additional environmental improvements including habitat creation in the Ribble Sidings area (during 2023). Revetment work to stabilise the river banks will also create additional bank habitat and wider footpaths in some of the more narrow areas around the entrance to Miller Park and along Riverside Road.
- Four new sports pitches will also be created as a permanent scheme

legacy
- All scheme information can be viewed at www.thefloodhub.co.uk