

Press release: Exercise Tempest tests the Environment Agency flood response ahead of winter

More than 300 metres of temporary flood defence barrier, drones and new visual mapping technology are being put to the test today (7th November) as the Environment Agency continues preparation for the winter ahead.

Exercise Tempest will see frontline staff test out temporary barriers in Stratford-upon-Avon – birthplace of William Shakespeare – for the first time. The exercise will test working arrangements with the local council and partners so that barriers can be put up quickly and safely when needed to help to protect properties on the waterfront from flooding.

Staff on-site and in the Environment Agency's incident room in Lichfield will also be working together to test new visual mapping technology which will provide better intelligence about flood damage and impacts on the ground. This includes drones that teams can use to survey wider flood-hit areas, sending footage via a live feed, to the Environment Agency incident room.

Up and down the country, the Environment Agency is prepared to take action this winter wherever it is needed.

Sir James Bevan, chief executive of the Environment Agency, said:

This test exercise is one of many across the country to make sure we are ready for winter. We have 6,500 trained staff ready to respond to flooding and we're making the most of new kit and technology.

Since the flooding of winter 2015/16, the Environment Agency has invested £12.5 million in new equipment including an additional 20 miles of temporary barriers, 500,000 sandbags and 250 pumps. The use of drones will also allow us to have a clearer idea of flood damage on the ground.

Floods Minister Thérèse Coffey said:

This exercise is a brilliant example of work taking place across the country to make sure we are fully prepared for any potential flooding this winter.

The use of new hi-spec equipment such as drones and live 'visual mapping' to show flood affected areas will be a huge asset to flood prevention teams.

The investment we have made in new technology, portable barriers and other equipment forms part of the £2.5 billion we are spending across the country up until 2021 to better protect over 300,000 properties.

Temporary barriers are just one of the ways the Environment Agency aims to better protect people and properties. But it's important to remember people can never be fully protected against flooding, which is why people are being urged to [go online](#) and check their flood risk by entering their postcode, and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.

More than 1.2 million people are signed up to the Environment Agency's free flood warning service, which sends a message directly by voice message, text or email when a flood warning is issued.

From 2015 to 2021, Government is investing £2.5 billion in flood and coastal erosion risk management projects which will reduce the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water for at least 300,000 homes.

[News story: International experts share decommissioning expertise](#)

Hosted by the NDA, the project was set up by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in the wake of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station in Japan, but is also drawing lessons from decommissioning at other nuclear sites, including:

- Al Tuwaitha nuclear site in Iraq, damaged during conflict
- Three Mile Island Unit 2 in the US, damaged by a partial core melt
- Chernobyl in Ukraine
- the A1 reactor in Slovakia, damaged following incorrect insertion of a new fuel element

The workshop also looked at a number of historical facilities which can face similar challenges, including:

- Sellafield's First Generation Magnox Storage Pond (FGMSP)
- the industrial Uranium Graphite Reactors in Russia
- the redundant fuel cycle facilities at Marcoule, France

Three working groups are studying the above cases and their conclusions will feed in to a final report, providing guidance that could be deployed in the event of future accidents. Their focus is on the challenges faced by regulators, the technical challenges of managing physical and radiological

hazards and the strategic decision-making processes.

Named DAROD (Decommissioning And Remediation of Damaged nuclear facilities), the project began in 2014 as a result of the IAEA's Action Plan on Nuclear Safety, drawn up following the Fukushima-Daiichi accident.

John Rowat, from IAEA's Department of Nuclear Safety and Security, said:

The purpose of DAROD is to identify where existing guidance for normal decommissioning and remediation can be adapted to situations involving damaged nuclear facilities, and to identify how member states might be better prepared to manage such situations in the future.

At the Penrith workshop, a special session was held on Sellafield's FGMS, introduced by Sellafield's Head of Programme Delivery for Legacy Ponds, Dorothy Gradden, who gave an update on progress at the facilities. Delegates were also given an opportunity to tour the FGMS, enabling them understand the challenges and see the progress at first hand.

John Mathieson, the NDA's Head of International Relations, said:

The workshop brought together a diverse range of regulators and decommissioning practitioners from around the world, many of whom have first-hand experience of dealing with damaged nuclear facilities.

It was an honour for the UK and NDA to be asked to host this workshop for this important project, and the discussions were extremely valuable.

Research and analysis: Plausible future scenarios for the water environment to 2030 and 2050

This project developed and explored 4 plausible future scenarios and a reference scenario for the water environment for England and Wales through to 2050.

The scenarios are a strategic tool that can be used to investigate future uncertainties associated with water management in a coherent and consistent manner. The project's findings will help water and environment planners to

help 'future proof' water management strategies and policies.

[Press release: Multi-agency exercise to test temporary barriers at Beales Corner in Bewdley](#)

The Environment Agency's field team, along with support from Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service, Bewdley Town Council and other partners, will be testing out the deployment of temporary flood barriers and the local community flood plan.

The exercise, which will start at 09:00am, will provide an opportunity to test our barrier deployment plan and procedures in this training exercise. We will be testing our working arrangements with partners and the local Community Flood Group, so the barriers can be quickly and safely erected when needed during a flood, with minimum disruption to residents and businesses.

Pedestrians and traffic will be unable to use this section of road and pathway between Millside Court to where it joins with Kidderminster Road, via the Stourport Road. Access to Bewdley Bridge and the town will remain fully accessible by using the Kidderminster Road.

Mark Bowers, Flood Risk Manager said:

This is a test of our operational equipment and local community flood plan. Although we have carried out numerous barrier deployment exercises at our training depots, doing it on location will give our field team invaluable experience.

It's important to remember that we can never protect 100% against flooding, and we can't guarantee that specific communities will always have access to temporary barriers.

Local residents and businesses should be prepared by checking their flood risk, signing up to flood warnings and finding out what they can do to protect themselves and their property by visiting the Prepare for Flooding page on GOV.UK or calling Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

Nick Farress, Bewdley Town Council Clerk added:

This will be a vital practice run to test our new community led flood plan which has been developed to support the Environment

Agency in retaining the temporary barrier at Beale's Corner. The Town Council are very grateful to our band of volunteers who have put themselves forward to help with this vital work".

The temporary barrier deployment is also being supported by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service who is a key partner in the project. Wyre Forest Station Commander, Daryl Justice, said:

Our involvement with the Bewdley Flood Barrier response is new arrangement that will see our Firefighters add even more value to the Wyre Forest community.

When flooding is predicted our on-call firefighters will be given a period of notice which will minimise the impact on their primary employment and, although deployed under the direction of the Environment Agency, they will remain available for life threatening emergencies.

This is one of the first initiatives of its type in the UK and is a great example of how fire crews can add value in other areas. It also supports Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service's wider vision of 'Saving More Lives'.

Environment Agency staff and Community Flood Group members will be available during the exercise to provide the public with information about access restrictions, alternative routes and general flood advice. The exercise is likely to conclude around 13:00pm.

Press release: Bees' Needs Champions awards celebrate pollinator heroes

A 'Bee City' and a successful reintroduction scheme for the short-haired bumblebee are among the innovative projects highlighted today by Defra Minister Lord Gardiner as inspirational examples of action to protect our pollinators.

The annual [Bees' Needs](#) Champions awards, hosted at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, celebrated 17 bee boosting projects from volunteers, schools, charities and councils across the country which are helping pollinators thrive both in the countryside and in our towns and cities.

From buzzing bumble bees to beautiful butterflies, the UK's 1,500 species of pollinators play a crucial role, helping our flowers, fruit trees and crops to grow and contributing £400-680million per year due to improved

productivity.

Speaking at the Bees' Needs Champions Awards, Minister for Rural Affairs and Biosecurity Lord Gardiner said:

We must all be thankful for our essential pollinators who do such vital work on our behalf, flying from crop to crop, tree to tree, helping us to grow our food. The champions I had the pleasure to meet today are doing exceptional things to return the favour and look after our pollinators. We must not leave them to it. We can all play a part.

Whether it is leaving grass uncut to give bees a home over winter, or inspiring young people to be the pollinator protectors of the future, our combined efforts make a real difference.

Among the champion projects creating a buzz were the Bumblebee Conservation Trust's short-haired bumblebee re-introduction scheme and the Secret Garden project in Salisbury with their 'Bee City' and 'Bee Trail'.

Goldthorpe Primary School in Barnsley and St Albans Primary School in Havant also featured for their pollinator-encouraging enterprises, including building bee hotels, creating wildlife meadows and campaigning in the local community. St Albans school has set up a 'pollinator promise' to get the local community involved, too.

Outdoor education teacher at St Albans Primary School, Julie Newman, said:

By working together as a community, Pollinator Promise is about inspiring others to give hungry and homeless bees food and shelter. Each small individual change adds up to make a big difference to pollinators and people.

Friends of the Earth Bee Cause campaigner, Paul de Zylva, said:

This year's Bees' Needs Champions show how anyone anywhere can help our bees and other vital pollinators not just to survive but to thrive.

The ten year [National Pollinator Strategy](#) is now in its fourth year and relies on action by businesses, community groups, farmers, land owners and local councils to improve conditions for pollinators. Doing so is essential to restore nature across the nation.

With winter fast approaching, bees need our help more than ever to provide them with the food and shelter they need to survive the cold.

Everyone can follow our three top tips on how we can all help pollinators

this winter. You do not have to be an expert gardener to make a difference: from installing urban window boxes to planting the right bulbs, everyone can play their part to ensure bees have food and a home.

- Plant flowers, shrubs and trees that thrive in winter. The evergreen mahonia is excellent winter food for bees, while the pendant bells of winter flowering clematis can give pollinators a sugary energy boost. Ivy plants are also an ideal source of food for bees in late autumn – avoid cutting them down.
- Leave suitable places for hibernation undisturbed. Letting areas of a lawn grow long until the spring can provide a hibernation home while cool, north-facing banks are ideal places for bees to burrow. The hollow tubes of dead stems of plants in borders can also serve as a great nesting spot.
- Planting early flowering bulbs like crocus, primrose, snowdrop or coltsfoot that flower in February and March to help support bees and pollinators looking for an early feed. Winter is also the perfect time to plant bee-friendly trees, such as acacia, blackthorn and hazel.