

Platinum Jubilee Rug unveiled at Ulster Carpets

Dundonald Primary School pupil Emily McMullan (11), was announced as the winner of the competition by Minister of State Conor Burns in June, and met with Ulster Carpets designers to learn how her design was being turned into a special gift for Her Majesty the Queen.

Emily's design, featuring some of Northern Ireland's most iconic landmarks such as Samson and Goliath in Belfast and the North Coast's Giant's Causeway, was woven into a rug by Ulster Carpets' expert team, and unveiled by Emily and Minister of State Conor Burns at the manufacturing company's Portadown headquarters on Tuesday 23 August.

Emily's postcard to the Queen was chosen from over 2000 colourful and creative entries, with primary schools across Northern Ireland offered the opportunity to take part in a unique design competition as part of this year's Platinum Jubilee celebrations.

The specially designed Jubilee rug will be delivered to Her Majesty the Queen as a gift from the children of Northern Ireland in her Jubilee year and Emily will also receive her own copy of the rug as a lasting memory of the important role that she has played in helping Her Majesty celebrate her Platinum Jubilee.

Speaking about seeing the rug, competition winner Emily McMullan said:

"It's amazing to see all of the places that remind me of home being made into a gift for Her Majesty the Queen. I still can't believe that something I designed in art class is now being delivered to the Queen!

"It has been great learning from the designers at Ulster Carpets about how they turn art into rugs and carpets. It is something that I will never forget and I think I would like to be a designer in the future."

Speaking after the visit, Minister of State Conor Burns said:

'It seems like only a few weeks ago when I was on the phone to Nick from a primary school in Bournemouth. I told him I'd had an idea and asked him to tell me honestly if it was crazy. Thankfully Nick and his team at Ulster Carpets are as open minded as they are creative. Nick said let's do it. So the Platinum Jubilee Rug Competition was conceived.

"Little did I imagine then that it would be embraced so wholeheartedly by Northern Ireland's young people. Yet the entries flooded in – over 2000 from schools of every kind in every county. Emily, her fellow finalists and indeed every child who entered can be incredibly proud of their designs.

“They have captured the natural and built wonder of this amazing place. Today I have seen the finished product and it is beyond my wildest dreams. We asked the young people to design a rug on the theme ‘a postcard from Northern Ireland’. What they did and Ulster carpets have produced is literally a gift fit for the Queen.

“I am bursting with pride in what these wonderful young people – the future of Northern Ireland – have done and I thank them sincerely.”

Group Managing Director of Ulster Carpets Nick Coburn said:

“It has been a great privilege to be involved in the NIO’s Platinum Jubilee design competition and to have the honour of manufacturing a rug for Her Majesty the Queen, particularly in the same year as we received the Royal Warrant.

“The designs created by schoolchildren from across Northern Ireland demonstrate the immense artistic talent that we have in our country. As we look to the future, it is reassuring to know that Ulster Carpets can transform this potential into the carpet designers of the future.”

[Latest win for West Cumbrian firms with Sellafield partnership](#)

The North West Energy Coast Alliance was formed as a collaborative partnership between two Workington-based SMEs, McMenon Engineering Services and TIS Cumbria. Now the partnership has been successfully appointed to deliver fabricated and manufactured equipment packages for two major projects at Sellafield.

Duncan Elliott, head of the programme and project partners, said:

It’s fantastic to see two local SMEs collaborate, and I’d like to congratulate everyone involved in winning these two contracts on two flagship projects. The programme and project partners approach is all about collaboration, innovation, transformation and harnessing opportunities, and that’s exactly what we’re seeing with the partnership between McMenon Engineering Services and TIS Cumbria.

The contract awards follow the North West Energy Coast Alliance being announced as a long-term delivery partner back in January this year.

The programme and project partners approach allows the partnership between

Sellafield Ltd, KBR, Jacobs, Morgan Sindall Infrastructure and Doosan to appoint key delivery partners and secure long-term goods and services agreements with suppliers and SMEs to support projects across the programme's 20-year pipeline.

The approach encourages long-term collaboration throughout the supply chain, enhanced project delivery outcomes, and paves the way for greater economic and social impact in the West Cumbria region.

Luke Richardson, programme and project partners head of social impact, added:

The combined businesses of McMenon and TIS presents a joint alliance able to deliver the works we need on site but equally brings together two responsible employers who can deliver further impacts because of these latest contract wins.

The alliance will provide process cabinets for the SIXEP Continuity Plant with a total contract value of £3.5 million. This will include the fabrication, assembly, testing and supply of wash and process cabinets to be used in the site's new-build facility that will ensure the existing Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant facility, which has been running since 1985, can continue its vital work for decades to come.

Another contract is for 191 fabrications for the Sellafield Product and Residue Store Retreatment Plant with a contract value of £813,939. This includes a manufacturing package for specialist trolleys, handling equipment, personnel access and machine operating and maintenance tooling.

McMenon chief executive officer, Anand Puthran, said:

We are delighted that McMenon, as part of North West Energy Coast Alliance, along with TIS Cumbria, has been awarded the F16 cabinet contract. This is a fantastic opportunity to showcase our engineering and manufacturing expertise and show what two SMEs, on the west coast of Cumbria, can achieve through collaborative working. Winning the 191 small fabrication contract for SRP is another ringing endorsement for the skills and quality of both companies.

The alliance's aim was always to help establish a long-term and sustainable legacy for the West Cumbrian economy through the provision of opportunities, skills, engagement and employment. And this contract win is a huge boost to our aims. We are all excited to get started. Our thanks go to Programme and Project Partners for the endorsement, and we look forward to developing our relationship with Sellafield Ltd moving forward.

TIS Cumbria managing director, Tony O'Pray, added:

We would like to thank the Programme and Project Partners for their confidence in awarding these contracts to the alliance. Both projects will be manufactured within West Cumbria using our own local skilled engineers, works teams and apprentices.

It is expected that these projects will generate new positions of employment in both companies from within our local community, in addition to generating much needed new skills. Our committed and dedicated team of engineers have achieved a milestone which many aspire to, showing that true collaboration between two SMEs can succeed in a very competitive world against much larger companies in the UK. We look forward to the manufacture, test and delivery of these projects and others to the Programme and Projects Partners team at Sellafield over the future months.

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News story

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Our Profession wants to help everyone embed science and engineering in government decision making and increase the capability of scientists and engineers across government.

To support all our government colleagues, regardless of their background, we have developed products to:

- showcase the value of science and engineering across government

- provide everyone in government with access to science and engineering expertise
- upskill all of government on introductory science and engineering techniques

Our products

To showcase the value of government science and engineering, we have designed:

To help provide all of government access to high quality science and engineering expertise, we have created:

- an [expertise directory](#) to ensure that those in government can incorporate science and engineering in everything they do

To fulfil the government aim of increasing science and engineering literacy across government, we have created:

- a series of [introductory learning](#) collated by the GSE profession that provides a grounding in science and engineering techniques

Accessing our products

To access most of our products, you will need to sign up to our Knowledge Hub page using your government email address. You can do this by following 3 simple steps:

1. Visit <https://khub.net/sign-up> and follow the steps to create an account with your .gov.uk email address.
2. Once created visit <https://khub.net/group/gse-profession> or search GSE Profession in the search bar. You will need to request to gain access to the page.
3. Once you have been accepted, a GSE icon will appear on your home page under 'Your Groups'. Click on the icon to access the GSE Knowledge Hub page.

Published 23 August 2022

PM address to Crimea Platform summit: 23 August 2022

I want to congratulate President Volodymyr Zelenskyy particularly for bringing us together and focusing our attention on Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea because that land grab in 2014 was the direct precursor to today's war, and we should have the humility to acknowledge that not everyone realised the sheer enormity of what was happening at the time.

All of our countries however reacted with strength and unity after Putin escalated his onslaught against Ukraine on the 24th February this year, but the first act of this tragedy opened eight years earlier – almost to the day – when Russian forces began fanning out across Crimea, and taking control of a peninsula seizing which constitutes 10,000 square miles of sovereign Ukrainian territory.

At a stroke, Putin forcibly annexed the territory of a European country – and forcibly redrew a European frontier for the first time since 1945.

He ignored the fact that Russia itself had repeatedly recognised Crimea as being part of Ukraine, and he broke so many international agreements that I cannot list them all, but they include [Article 2 of the United Nations Charter](#), the [Helsinki Final Act](#) and the Russia-Ukraine Treaty of Friendship.

And ever since the annexation, the people of Crimea have endured a brutal and systematic campaign of human rights abuses by the Russian authorities, including the persecution of the Tatars, arbitrary arrests, with a tenfold increase in detentions in last year, and the restriction of land ownership to Russian citizens.

Once he had grabbed Crimea, Putin deployed more and more Russian forces in the peninsula, turning the territory into an armed camp from which to threaten the rest of Ukraine, and Crimea duly became the launch pad for the invasion on 24th February. Or one of the launch pads. And I'm afraid that all this has even greater salience today because Putin is planning to do to parts of Ukraine, in fact all of Ukraine, what he has done to Crimea, and he is preparing more annexations and more sham referendums.

So it has never been more important for all of us to stand together in defence of the foundational principle of international law, which is that, no territory, no country, can acquire territory or change borders by force of arms, and it so follows that we will never recognise Russia's annexation of Crimea or any other Ukrainian territory.

In the face of Putin's assault, we must continue give our Ukrainian friends all the military, humanitarian, economic and diplomatic support that they need until Russia ends this hideous war and withdraws its forces from the entirety of Ukraine.

Thank you all very much.

National Drought Group agrees further steps to manage drought now and in the long term

The National Drought Group (NDG), made up of senior decision-makers from the Environment Agency, government, water companies and key representative groups met today (23 August) under the chairmanship of Sir James Bevan, EA Chief Executive. Water Minister Steve Double also joined the meeting.

Members agreed further steps to manage the current drought; to start work now to reduce the risk of drought next year; and to accelerate measures to ensure long-term water security.

Current situation

Despite the recent scattered rainfall, this has been the driest summer for fifty years, and the driest ever recorded for Southern England. The prolonged hot dry weather has led to exceptionally low river flows and low groundwater levels and a decline in reservoir levels with some well below average for the time of year. We have also seen a very large increase in demand for water and significant environmental impacts, with rivers and ponds drying out and fish and other wildlife dying or in distress.

Large parts of the country are now in drought status: Devon & Cornwall/Isles of Scilly; Solent and South Downs; Thames; Hertfordshire and North London; Kent and South London; East Anglia; Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire; East Midlands; and Yorkshire. The West Midlands has today been announced as the most recent area to move into drought status, meaning ten of the Environment Agency's 14 areas are now in drought. Other areas classed as being in 'prolonged dry weather' include Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire; Wessex; and the North East. The only area now at 'normal water resource' status is Cumbria and Lancashire.

The recent rainfall in some parts of the country is not enough to replenish rivers, groundwater or reservoirs to normal levels. That will require a return to sustained average or above average rainfall over the coming months. Until – and unless – that happens, many areas will remain in drought.

EA Chief Executive Sir James Bevan said:

Water pressures on wildlife and the environment remain high and despite recent rainfall and the pause in the hot dry weather, we

must continue to manage water wisely.

Both for the coming year and, with the impact of climate change, for the coming decade, a complete gear change is needed for how water companies and all water users, from farmers to households, think about how they use water and understand its fundamental value.

This summer should be a wake-up call for how the nation prepares for weather extremes and how we make the very best use of our water resources. Our National Framework for Water Resources sets out clearly what we are doing in the face of a new normal for water and we are determined to drive that forward.

Water Minister Steve Double said:

We know essential water supplies are safe – but more work must be done to ensure that we push forward investment to cut leaks and better prepare for prolonged dry weather for this year, next year and the coming decade.

Water companies need to be putting the needs of their bill payers front and centre of their plans – which means redoubling efforts to cut leakage and protect our natural environment.

Prospects and our response

There is no threat to essential water supplies. The water companies have confirmed that they have and will continue to have enough water for all essential household and business needs.

There is however a need to continue to manage water resources carefully over the coming weeks and months to ensure that the needs of the public, farmers and industry, and nature and wildlife are met. All participants agreed that they would continue to work together to do so.

The water companies are responsible for providing water to their customers, ensuring that public water supply is secure, and for maintaining supplies whilst minimising environmental impact. They will:

- continue to implement their drought plans proactively
- seek to maintain or where necessary increase water availability
- reduce water loss by stepping up work to fix leaks
- help their customers use less water
- take other measures to ensure there is enough water for essential supplies.

As part of these efforts, six companies (Southern Water, South East Water, Thames Water, Yorkshire Water, South West Water and Welsh Water) have so far implemented or announced hosepipe bans.

The Environment Agency will sustain, and where necessary, step up its work to manage drought and help meet the needs of water users, businesses and the environment, including by:

- monitoring and predicting river flows and groundwater levels, increasing the number of checks in important locations.
- managing water users' abstraction licences to balance the needs of water companies, other abstractors and the natural environment.
- carrying out irrigation patrols and other compliance checks to ensure abstractors are complying with licence restrictions.
- responding to incidents caused by low river flows and high temperatures, including fish rescues and wildfires.
- operating its water transfer schemes to maintain river flows and groundwater levels to support wildlife and facilitate abstraction by water companies for public supply.
- supporting farmers and growers, including by helping them continue to access water while balancing their needs with that of the public water supply, other abstractors and the environment; and by providing advice and guidance.
- actively managing river levels and conserving water on the Thames and other rivers for which the EA is the navigation authority on behalf of river users and abstractors.

The public can all do their part to help ensure good water supplies by using water wisely.

Preparing for 2023

The Group agreed that sufficient rainfall over the autumn and winter would replenish rivers, lakes, groundwaters and reservoirs to normal levels by the spring; but that planning should begin now, on a precautionary basis, on how best to manage any water shortfalls that might arise in 2023 in the event of a dry autumn and/or winter.

It was agreed that the NDG's Water Supply Sub-Group will meet next month to take this forward and report to the NDG in October on progress. The EA will lead an NDG exercise in December to test plans.

Ensuring long-term water security

The NDG also reaffirmed the need to ensure long-term national water security in the face of a growing population and climate change. It noted that there is already a plan to do so, the National Framework for Water Resources (NFWR), launched by the Environment Agency in 2020 and agreed with the other regulators, the government and the water companies, which aims to ensure that by 2050:

- Leakage rates have been cut by 50%.
- Demand has been reduced to an average of 110 litres per person per day.
- New sources of supply have been developed, including through the construction of new reservoirs, desalination plants, water recycling and water transfer schemes.

- All the water companies are working together effectively to predict and supply the water needs of each region of the country, not just the needs of their own area.
- National resilience to drought has been greatly enhanced, to a standard (1:500) which will allow water companies to maintain supply in all except the most extreme droughts (i.e.those of a severity with only a 0.2% chance of occurring in any given year).

The NDG agreed to intensify work to meet or beat these targets. The NFWR's Strategic Steering Group will meet in September to identify ways to accelerate progress. A central element will be Ofwat's 2024 Price Review which will set levels of water investment until 2030.

The NDG will meet again on 19 September to review the latest situation and agree any further necessary measures.

Further information:

Attendees at the National Drought Group included:

- Environment Agency
- Defra
- Cabinet Office
- DLUHC
- AHDB
- Angling Trust
- HTA
- CLA
- Canal and River Trust
- Consumer Council for Water
- Drinking Water Inspectorate
- Energy UK
- National Resources Wales
- Rivers Trust
- RSPB
- Ofwat
- UKHSA
- Met Office
- Natural England
- National Farmers Union
- Water UK
- Waterwise
- Welsh Government
- Affinity Water
- Anglian Water
- Bristol Water
- Northumbria Water
- Portsmouth Water
- Severn Trent
- Southern Water
- South East Water
- South Staffs Water

- South West Water
- Thames Water
- Yorkshire Water
- SES
- DCWW
- United Utilities

The Environment Agency uses four stages to describe and manage drought conditions:

- Prolonged dry weather
- Drought
- Severe Drought
- Recovering Drought