

# Repeatedly flooded communities to receive dedicated funding

Communities suffering repeated flooding will benefit from a new ring-fenced £100 million allowance designed to better protect their properties, the Government has announced today.

The £100 million Frequently Flooded Allowance will improve access to public funding for these communities, which are often smaller areas requiring more complex flood schemes, meaning that community-wide defences are not always viable.

The funding will be targeted at eligible communities where 10 or more properties have flooded twice or more in the last 10 years, helping to both accelerate existing projects and deliver new ones. It is anticipated around 80 schemes will receive support over the next four years.

This allowance will be part of the Government's current programme of investment in flood and coastal defences. The Government announced in 2020 that the amount invested in flood and coastal erosion schemes would be doubled in England to £5.2 billion between 2021 and 2027, providing around 2,000 flood defences. This year, £700 million is being invested from that pot and will better protect 35,000 properties, bringing the cumulative total for the first two years of the six-year programme to more than 65,000.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

Flooding is a miserable experience, especially for people who suffer its impacts time and again, and I feel we have a moral imperative to help.

Our new Frequently Flooded Allowance will boost schemes in areas which are hit repeatedly and reduce the risk of flooding in the future.

This new allowance will provide extra support for these areas and forms part of our major £5.2 billion effort to build around 2,000 flood schemes by 2027 and level-up defences across the country.

Sir James Bevan, Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, said:

The impacts of climate change are becoming all too familiar both at home and around the world.

While we cannot prevent all flooding, this allowance will help better protect homes and businesses at risk from repeated incidents.

The Environment Agency has a successful track record in delivering flood and coastal defence schemes across the country, having better protected more than 314,000 homes from flooding since 2015.

Communities will be selected through the Environment Agency's annual refresh of the £5.2 billion capital programme – which sets out the latest information on each project in the programme and the amount of grant-in-aid allocated to that project in that year.

The latest investment builds on the [Environment Agency's successful delivery of the government's previous £2.6 billion investment between 2015 and 2021](#), better protecting more than 314,000 homes, exceeding its original target.

Thanks to a £2.6 billion investment, more than 850 new flood and coastal erosion defence projects were completed during this period. Over 580,000 acres of agricultural land, as well as thousands of businesses, communities and major infrastructure – including more than 8,000 kilometres of roads – also benefited from improvement schemes.

Our flood defences recently protected around 50,000 properties from flooding during Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin, and schemes delivered in the last year are already helping to provide better protection for thousands of properties across England.

Today's announcement is another step to delivering on the ambitions of the government's [flood and coastal erosion risk management policy statement](#) and the Environment Agency's [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy](#), which set out a vision and set of comprehensive actions to ensure that our country is more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and climate change in the long term.

#### **Further information**

- The Frequently Flooded Allowance will be part of our record £5.2 billion investment between 2021 and 2027 which, as announced in July 2020, plans to provide around 2,000 flood defences to better protect 336,000 properties.
- Further information on the funding of flood and coastal erosion projects can be found from the Investment and partnership funding community of practice or from your local Environment Agency Partnership and Strategic Overview (PSO) officer ([Partnership funding for FCERM projects – GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#))

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## **History made as Dorothy – HS2's state-**

## of-the-art tunnel boring machine – completes the project's first tunnel after 8 months underground

- Dorothy, HS2's whopping 2000-tonne custom-made tunnel boring machine, has completed her first tunnel breakthrough along the London to Birmingham route
- this is the first of 64 miles of intricate tunnels set to make up Europe's largest infrastructure project, marking a huge step towards quicker, greener and more reliable transport
- once complete, HS2 will play a vital role in revolutionising transport and levelling up the north alongside the government's record-breaking £96 billion Integrated Rail Plan

Passengers across the north and Midlands are one step closer to quicker, greener and more reliable train services as Dorothy, HS2's tunnel boring machine, has made her first breakthrough on the London to Birmingham route after 8 months underground.

Breaking through at Long Itchington Wood late last week, Dorothy – one of HS2's 10 custom-built tunnel boring machines – completed the first of 64 miles of tunnel which will span intermittently between London and Manchester. The tunnel network is set to improve transport across the country, level up the north and Midlands and bring Europe's largest rail project to life.

As well as boosting local economies through fast and reliable services, the tunnel boring machines are already delivering for communities along the route with Dorothy alone employing 400 workers, adding to the over 25,000 jobs created through HS2 so far.

HS2 Minister Trudy Harrison said:

This is, quite literally, a ground-breaking moment – demonstrating that we are getting on with delivering on our promises and progressing our transformative plans to boost transport, bring communities together and level up the north and Midlands.

As Dorothy paves the way for journeys between Birmingham and London, we continue to strive towards a greener, faster and more direct transport network. And along with our record breaking Integrated Rail Plan, we're boosting the economy, delivering over 25,000 jobs.

The tunnels have been specially designed to protect the ancient woodland and complex ecosystem above. They integrate with the natural landscape by reusing material excavated from the tunnel to build a soil 'roof' around the tunnel entrance. The rest of the excavated material will be transported by conveyor

belt out of the site rather than by lorries and trucks, avoiding the use of around 30,000 HGVs on the local roads.

HS2 will play a key role in the government's £96 billion [Integrated Rail Plan](#) – the biggest ever public investment in Britain's rail network – which, through the creation of 3 new high speed lines, will add more seats, shorten journey times, support local services and deliver a modern, fully connected transport for the north and Midlands quicker than under any previous plan.

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## [New guidance brings clarity on employment status for workers and businesses](#)

- New government guidance will act as one-stop-shop for individuals and businesses to understand which employment rights apply to them
- gig economy workers set to benefit the most, as fresh guidance enables them to check their workplace is treating them fairly
- Business Minister Jane Hunt said: "Today we are tidying up the rules, helping workers to find out if they are being treated fairly by their workplace."

Businesses and workers, particularly those in the gig economy, will benefit from greater clarity over their employment status, thanks to [new guidance](#) published by the government today (Tuesday 26 July).

A person's employment status is what defines the rights and employment protections they are entitled to at work including pay, leave and working conditions, and therefore dictates the responsibilities that an employer owes to that worker.

Today's new guidance brings together employment status case law into one place for businesses and individuals to access. This will support workers by improving their understanding of what rights they are entitled to at work, enabling them to have informed discussions with their employer and take steps to claim or enforce them where necessary.

Crucially, the guidance also clarifies the rights that gig economy workers are entitled to – from the national minimum wage to paid leave – while offering them the same degree of flexibility to take on additional work to top up their income, if they choose. This clarity comes following the landmark Uber Supreme Court judgement which held that individuals in the gig economy can qualify as 'workers', meaning they are entitled to core employment protections.

The new guidance includes advice for micro businesses, start-ups and SMEs

that have less capacity and legal expertise to understand the law. By reducing the risk of companies being fined by rules they have broken unknowingly, it will inject confidence into businesses to support their staff and stimulate economic growth. Equally, the guidance will help to curb unscrupulous employers from attempting to exploit the system in order to save on employment costs.

Business Minister Jane Hunt said:

Today we are tidying up the rules, helping workers understand their employment rights and find out if they are being treated fairly by their workplace.

Importantly, this one-stop shop guidance is not just for workers – it will also give businesses the confidence and the tools to better support their staff, helping to increase productivity and drive growth.

By featuring real world examples of what an individual's working day or contract may involve – and how that translates into their employment status – this new one stop shop guidance will help to ensure that work pays fairly.

Getir General Manager Kristof Van Beveren said:

Getir employs thousands of people in the UK in the superfast grocery delivery sector. Our growth plans will see us employ thousands more in the coming months and years and we welcome any guidance, such as this, that can help us contribute further to the UK's economic growth and create more jobs.

The guidance is being published alongside a [response to a consultation on employment status](#), where many respondents called for additional clarity around the employment status boundaries and examples of how to apply the rules to different scenarios.

The UK has a '3-tiered' employment status framework, broken down by employee, worker and those that are self-employed. This system helps to create a flexible and dynamic labour market but has led to some individuals not understanding their employment status.

The guidance encourages workers to contact Acas for further advice should they think their employment status is wrong, and to engage their employer in conversations about their rights before taking further steps to hold them to account if needed.

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# Government reveals plans to divert thousands of civil legal disputes away from court

- Claims under £10,000 would be diverted automatically to mediation
- 272,000 more people every year could be helped to resolve disputes outside court
- Move would free up vital court capacity to deal with more complex cases quicker

Ministers have published a blueprint for major reforms to the civil justice system which seeks to save people the cost, time and stress of lengthy courtroom battles.

It will see mediation made compulsory for small claims of up to £10,000, such as disputes over goods and services. People would be referred automatically to a free hour-long telephone session with a professional mediator provided by HM Courts and Tribunals Service (HMCTS) before their case can be progressed to a hearing.

During the session the parties involved will speak separately to the mediator to see if there is a common ground between them. If a solution is brokered, both parties will agree over the phone for it to be made legally binding through a settlement agreement.

It is expected that up to 20,000 extra cases every year could be settled away from court under these proposals – sparing people the time and cost of litigation. This would also free up vital court capacity with up to 7,000 judicial sitting days being available to help reduce waiting times for more complex cases which require a hearing. Overall around 272,000 people should be able to access the free mediation.

Justice Minister Lord Bellamy QC said:

Millions of businesses and individuals go through the civil courts every year and many of them simply do not need to.

Mediation is often a quicker and cheaper way of resolving disputes and under our proposals this will be free of charge for claims up to £10,000.

This could also help free up vital capacity in the civil courts to deal with more complex cases quicker.

The proposals are set out in a Government consultation published today. They form part of wider efforts to promote the use of mediation and help people resolve their disputes away from the courtroom – with Ministers committed to making these services a key part of the justice system.

The move follows a government call for evidence which examined how dispute resolution services, such as mediation, could be used more widely to resolve disagreements away from court. It found that mediation often offered faster, cheaper and more flexible solutions, but more needs to be done to encourage its use.

Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) National Chair Martin McTague said:

We support a more accessible, fair and affordable dispute resolution system. These proposals are a step in the right direction to help speed up access to justice, and to avoid expensive litigation for small claims.

Automatic or mandatory mediation has been in use in three Canadian cities in Ontario for over 20 years, and a recent survey of Ontario Bar Association members showed that 90 percent of respondents favoured expanding it further.

Jennifer Egsgard, an executive member of the Ontario Bar Association's Alternative Dispute Resolution Section said:

A major early study on Ontario's mandatory mediation programme showed that it significantly reduced the time taken to dispose of cases, decreased costs to litigants and led to a high proportion of cases being completely settled earlier in the process.

It also found that both the people and lawyers involved in these cases experienced considerable satisfaction with the process.

The Government welcomes views from court users, mediators, the legal profession, the judiciary, the advice sector, and anyone with an interest in the resolution of civil disputes.

The consultation will last 10 weeks and a response will be published in due course. The proposals would not include personal injury or housing disrepair claims.

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# New government plans to fire up innovation in 5G and 6G as UK and South Korea launch telecoms technology partnership

Universities and telecoms firms have been invited to apply for up to £25 million to research and develop the next generation of 5G and 6G network equipment as part of new government plans to unleash innovation in the sector.

The Future Open Networks Research Challenge will enable academics and the industry to conduct early-stage research into open and interoperable telecoms solutions, such as Open Radio Access Network (Open RAN), for use in 5G and future networks such as 6G.

The government is accelerating the development of this technology – which allows operators to mix and match equipment rather than relying on a single supplier when building or maintaining networks – as part of its £250 million Open Networks R&D Fund. It aims to build more secure and resilient broadband and mobile infrastructure by boosting competition and innovation within the telecoms supply chain.

It comes as £10 million has been awarded to launch the UK Telecoms Innovation Network (UKTIN), a new body dedicated to boosting creativity in the country's telecoms supply chain.

The UKTIN will act as an information and ideas hub for industry and academics looking to access funding or R&D testing facilities and opportunities to collaborate on developing new mobile and broadband technology. Digital Catapult, CW (Cambridge Wireless), University of Bristol and West Midlands 5G are announced today as the winners of the competition to set up and oversee the network.

In a further boost to the industry, the UK will also invest £1.6 million in a joint-funded £3.6 million competition with the Republic of Korea to collaborate on a world-first R&D project to accelerate the development of Open RAN technology.

Each country will fund a group of several companies to work together to accelerate the development of technical solutions to improve power efficiency in Open RAN networks. Power consumption is a major operating cost, so the work will support wider adoption of Open RAN technologies, reduce operating costs and support net zero ambitions.

Digital Infrastructure Minister Matt Warman said:

The seamless connectivity and blistering speeds of 5G and then 6G



will power a tech revolution which will enrich people's lives and fire up productivity across the economy.

It's why we're investing millions and partnering with international allies to unleash innovation and develop new ways to make these networks more secure, resilient and less reliant on a handful of suppliers.

Chief Executive at Mobile UK Hamish MacLeod said:

Mobile UK welcomes today's announcement. A strong, diverse mobile ecosystem in the UK will be a cornerstone of the country's future prosperity and well-being.

The measures announced today offer further opportunities to build on the UK's thriving R&D into advanced telecoms, and enabling operators to access more diversity in the supply chain while enhancing security and innovation.

## **Future Open Networks Research Challenge**

This scheme will fund several consortia of universities and suppliers to conduct early-stage research and development of telecom solutions sustaining openness and interoperability for 5G and future networks such as 6G.

These early-stage projects will draw on the UK's impressive depth of research, development and industrial capability to ensure that open and interoperable telecoms solutions become commercially viable and suitable for inclusion in future telecoms standards.

£25 million will boost skills of the next generation to enter the workforce, enhance educational capabilities, and bring expertise to a broader range of universities and businesses that will support the UK to grow presence and influence within the global supply chain.

## **UK Telecoms Innovation Network competition winners**

The UKTIN, first announced in March, aims to make the UK the easiest place in the world to access and take part in telecoms R&D. It will guide businesses and researchers looking to access funding or testing facilities in the UK and enable the best use of public and private investment in R&D, as well as ensuring that knowledge is effectively and efficiently shared across the telecoms industry.

UKTIN is expected to be up and running in September, at which point it will begin to take over from UK5G to help organisations get the most out of what the UK has to offer.

On behalf of the winning UKTIN consortium, Jeremy Silver, CEO of Digital Catapult said:

With the UK Telecoms Innovation Network, we have an exciting opportunity to transform UK telecoms into a growing, resilient, secure and globally significant sector. The UK has many strengths but our ecosystem across research, development and innovation is fragmented. I am proud to be joined by a strong consortium of partners (Digital Catapult, Cambridge Wireless, University of Bristol and WM5G) who each bring their own expertise and experience that will prove vital in coalescing and expanding our ecosystem and driving future UK capabilities”.

## **UK-Republic of Korea Competition Launch**

This competition is open to applications from consortia with two or more members from relevant industry, academic or public sector organisations, with funding available for activity taking place in the UK.

Bids must be submitted by noon on 20 September 2022. Application guidance is available on gov.uk.

### **Ends**

### **Notes to editors**

- More information about the [Open Networks R&D fund](#)
- More information about the [Future Open Networks Research Challenge](#)
- Consortia applying for the Future Open Networks Research Challenge should be led by universities with participation of at least one large vendor, and can also include mobile network operators and other industrial partners. Proposals must be submitted by 03 October 2022, but consortia can submit an optional expression of interest (EOI) until 12 August 2022 to receive feedback from DCMS on their proposed research ideas. Application guidance is available on gov.uk.
- The UK government is providing up to £1.6 million funding for the UK-ROK competition (to be matched by industry) and ROK £1.5 million (with £0.5 million from industry). Projects are expected to run until March 2024.
- Enquiries for the UK Telecoms Innovation Network should go to [enquiries@uktin.net](mailto:enquiries@uktin.net).