

£2 million fund opens for flood-affected farmers

A £2 million fund to support farmers who suffered uninsurable damage to their property in the devastating floods in November has opened for applications today (Monday 6 January).

The Government confirmed in November 2019 that it would extend its Farming Recovery Fund so farmers in parts of South Yorkshire could apply for grants between £500 and £25,000 to cover a number of repair costs, including removing debris, re-cultivation and replacing damaged field gates.

The Farming Recovery Fund is open for applications from farmers with affected land in parts of South Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and the Midlands. Affected farmers in these areas are being encouraged to check GOV.UK to see if they are eligible to claim.

The announcement followed significant overtopping of flood defences and breaches in rivers occurred due to the unprecedented rainfall and subsequent flooding in parts of South Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and the Midlands, including areas within Lincolnshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Worcestershire.

The Farming Recovery Fund first opened in September 2019 with £2 million available to support farmers affected by flooding in North Yorkshire and Wainfleet in Lincolnshire over the summer. Today's announcement brings the total funding available this year up to £4 million, to help affected farmers get back on their feet.

Environment Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

I saw first-hand the impacts of this devastating flooding myself when visiting farmers in Lincolnshire in November. I am delighted we've been able to extend our Farming Recovery Fund to cover farmers in parts of South Yorkshire, Gloucestershire and the Midlands who were hit with unprecedented weather last year.

This scheme, coupled with the other measures we've announced, will help farmers get back on their feet.

Rural Payments Agency Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

We recognise there has been severe and unprecedented weather this year, so the RPA is working hard to offer advice and support to affected farmers to complete their Farming Recovery Fund applications.

The Farming Recovery Fund provides support to farmers following extreme flooding events, contributing to the costs of the clean-up operation and to uninsurable losses.

While insurance will pay out for the majority of the damage, under the Farming Recovery Fund farmers will be able to apply for money to help cover unexpected costs – such as rebuilding fences and stone walls.

Farmers who have already repaired damage caused by the flooding should keep records of all relevant evidence, including receipts and before and after photos, in order to help the RPA process eligible applications promptly.

The application window for flood affected farmers in North Yorkshire and Wainfleet in Lincolnshire which opened in September 2019 closes on 31 March. The window for this extension of the Fund will close on 31 July, but farmers are encouraged to submit their applications when they are able.

[The Farming Recovery Fund handbook](#) has been published today on GOV.UK with full details of which areas are eligible, what is covered and how to apply for funding. All farmers whose land has been flooded can [access existing guidance around CAP payments](#) on GOV.UK.

Information about [other forms of Government recovery support](#), including the Business Support Grant and Property Flood Resilience Recovery Support Scheme can be found on GOV.UK.

[PM statement on the situation in Iraq following calls with President Macron, President Trump and Chancellor Merkel](#)

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Today I have spoken with President Macron, President Trump and Chancellor Merkel and will be speaking with other leaders in the coming days.

General Qasem Soleimani posed a threat to all our interests and was responsible for a pattern of disruptive, destabilising behaviour in the region. Given the leading role he has played in actions that have led to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians and western personnel, we will not lament his death.

It is clear however that all calls for retaliation or reprisals will simply lead to more violence in the region and they are in no one's interest.

We are in close contact with all sides to encourage de-escalation. I will be speaking to other leaders and our Iraqi friends to support peace and stability. The Foreign Secretary has been in constant contact with leaders and foreign ministers from across the globe and we have taken steps to increase the security of our personnel and interests in the region. Following further international engagement and ministerial meetings here in the UK, Parliament will be updated on Tuesday.

Government confirms extra support for Troubled Families to succeed

Families with deep rooted problems will receive much-needed support to get their lives back on track with up to £165 million of new funding, Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP announced today (5 January 2020).

The funding for the Troubled Families programme will provide intensive support for some of the most vulnerable families.

Working with the whole family unit across local services, with a focus on early intervention, the programme has a proven track record of driving reforms across public services.

The funding will be used to tackle complex inter-connected problems including unemployment, poor school attendance, mental health issues, anti-social behaviour and domestic abuse.

Communities Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

The Troubled Families programme will help more people in need get access to the early, practical and coordinated support to transform their lives for the better.

This is the right thing to do for families and for society as a whole, and these reforms will reduce the demand and dependency on costly, reactive key public services.

We want to build on the success of the programme in the coming year, delivering on our manifesto commitment to ensure we reach all

those who could benefit from the programme – from the early years and throughout their lives.

Rather than responding to each problem, or single family member separately, assigned Troubled Families keyworkers engage with the whole family. Through this approach they coordinate support from a range of services to identify and address family issues as early as possible rather than merely reacting to crises.

The latest evaluation results show that, compared to families with similar characteristics who have not been on the programme, 19-24 months after starting to receive support:

- the proportion of children on the programme going into care has reduced by a third
- the proportion of adults on the programme going to prison has reduced by a quarter and juvenile convictions reduced by 15%
- more people on the programme are back in work, with 10% fewer people claiming Jobseekers Allowance.

The programme was originally set to run for 5 years from 2015 to 2020 but was extended by a year in Spending Round 2019. Today £165 million of funding has been confirmed for 2020 to 2021.

Since the current programme began in 2015, 297,733 families have made improvements with the problems that led to them joining the programme. In 26,848 of these families one or more adults has moved off benefits and into work.

The current Troubled Families Programme was rolled out in England in April 2015 and replaced the first programme which had been in place since 2012.

The third annual report of the current Troubled Families Programme annual report [Building Resilient Families](#) is available.

[Foreign Secretary statement on updated travel advice.](#)

Following the death of Qasem Soleimani and heightened tensions in the region, we have decided to update our travel advice for Iraq and Iran. We now advise

British nationals against all travel to Iraq, outside of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, where we continue to advise against all but essential travel. We now advise against all but essential travel to Iran. We urge those British nationals in the region to remain vigilant and monitor the media carefully.

Commenting on the change, the Foreign Secretary said:

The first job of any government is to keep British people safe. Given heightened tensions in the region, the FCO now advise people not to travel to Iraq, with the exception of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, and to consider carefully whether it's essential to travel to Iran. We will keep this under review.

ENDS

[Recycle or replant your tree for a greener Christmas](#)

As the country winds down from the festive period, millions of households and businesses will be looking to take down their Christmas decorations – and in total dispose of eight million Christmas trees.

Real Christmas trees are recyclable and can be shredded into chippings, which are then used in parks or woodland areas. Alternatively you can replant them, meaning you can enjoy your tree for years to come.

If not reused or recycled, trees can end up in landfill which is costly to both the environment and the taxpayer, with the cost of landfilling eight million trees being around £22 million.

Environment Minister Rebecca Pow, said:

Millions of families around the UK celebrated Christmas with a beautiful Fir or Spruce tree in their home, but when the decorations are taken down, it's important that we dispose of trees sustainably.

If you have a tree with its roots still attached, then replanting your Christmas tree is a great way to reduce your carbon footprint and help our efforts to plant more trees. But if replanting is not an option, make sure to check what collection and recycling services are available where you live. Alternatively, if you have a compost bin or heap, then you could break up your tree and add it to the compost.

If, however, you have an artificial tree, then make sure to look at ways of keeping them for future Christmases so they don't end up in landfill where they can take centuries to decompose.

Four ways to reuse or dispose of your Christmas tree:

1. Replant your potted Christmas tree in a garden to give it a new lease of life. You could also add bird feeders to provide shelter for wildlife
2. Drop your tree off at a recycling centre where it can be turned into chippings for paths or turned into soil
3. Check with your local council to see if there's a special collection service
4. Look for an organisation or charity that offers a 'treecycling' service where it could be used to build effective flood barriers in communities around the UK

Further information

- Local authorities often arrange drop-off points or special collections of trees in early January and advertise the dates this will take place
- Details for each local authority, including their contact details, can be found by entering your postcode into the [Recycling Locator tool](#) on the [Recycle Now](#) website
- Estimated total cost of landfill is based on average landfill costs per tonne of waste
- According to the [British Christmas Tree Growers Association](#), between six and eight million real Christmas trees are sold in the UK every year; A typical six to seven foot high Christmas tree is between 10 and 12 years old; Nordmann Firs are the most popular in homes, making up 80% of those sold, with Norway Spruce making up 10-15%
- For future Christmases, the [Royal Horticultural Society](#) encourages buyers to ask their supplier where the trees come from and to choose a locally sourced and grown tree, or one that has at least been grown in the UK rather than abroad