Work under way to upgrade coastal defences in Essex

The work is taking place along a stretch of coastline west of the Stansgate Abbey Road, north of Steeple, and is expected to last until December.

The scheme, which has a budget of over £2 million, will ensure the embankment continues to reduce the risk of flooding to more than 200 properties, including those in the nearby village of St Lawrence, as well as large areas of agricultural land and important habitat.

The old protection has deteriorated due to its age and needs replacing. If left, the embankment would wash away over time and eventually this would lead to flooding of the land behind.

Environment Agency contractors JBA Bentley are removing the old concrete scour protection from the embankment and replacing it with a specialist mix of stone and asphalt (OSA).

Environment Agency project lead Robert Brown said:

> This work will improve the condition of the defence and will reduce the need for maintenance works for many years to come.
>
> The OSA and equipment is being brought to site by lorry. We and JBA Bentley are working hard to ensure that any disruption is kept to a minimum.
>
> For example, the old concrete blocks will be placed at the bottom of the seawall to act as a wave break and habitat, which will remove the need to take them away by lorry.

The work is being complemented by a similar scheme undertaken by the landowner to repair adjoining defences.

Nationally the Environment Agency is investing £2.6 billion between 2015 and 2021, delivering more than 1,500 projects, to better protect 300,000 homes from flooding and coastal erosion.

In May, the Environment Agency also launched its draft Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy which takes a long-term approach to how we can work together to build better resilience into our homes, businesses and infrastructure, ensuring that we are better prepared for the increased level of risk that the future will bring.

Company admits polluting Fenland watercourses

Pretoria Energy Company (Arable) Limited, which produces feedstock for a sister company's anaerobic digestion plants, admitted causing the pollution incidents at Little Racy Drain (a tributary of the Forty Foot Drain) in Emneth Hungate, Norfolk, and the New Cut Drain (West) at Aldreth in Cambridgeshire.

At Cambridge Magistrates' Court on 8 August 2019, the court was told that both pollution incidents were a result of silage liquor leaking from ag-bags and making its way into the watercourses.

Magistrates heard that ag-bags are large bags often stored on fields, filled with agricultural feeds and once sealed should be airtight. They vary in length, but an example of the size of ag-bag involved in this case is 77 meters long and contained 318 tonnes of silage.

Being airtight and subject to direct sunlight, there is a large amount of gas and silage liquor produced in the ag-bags which needs maintenance by the owner, typically by releasing the gas to avoid the bags bursting and removing of the liquor to stop the polluting liquid escaping and getting into the environment.

The court was told that on 7 February 2017, the Environment Agency was contacted by a member of the public to advise that they believed there had been a pollution from the ag-bags located on land in Emneth.

An Environment Agency officer attended the site the following day and found that the pollution was caused by silage liquor escaping from some of the 8 ag-bags present on site. Some of these ag-bags had holes in the sides from where it is believed the silage liquor had leaked.

Sewage fungus was found growing 300m downstream of the incident.

It is believed that other ag-bags had leaked silage from underneath.

A representative from the company attended site on 8 February 2017 to meet with the officer and said that he would get the ag-bags removed.

Despite this, the officer attended back at the Emneth site on 29 March 2017 where he discovered that all 8 of the ag-bags were still present on site. Samples showed that the pollution was continuing to have an impact on the watercourse.

On July 19 2017, a council employee attended the site following an odour complaint and could see that there were 5 ag-bags still present.

At a separate location in Aldreth, Cambridgeshire, reports were received of a potential pollution on 26 May and 30 May 2017.

Environment Agency officers attended the scene and found 14 ag-bags present, each containing up to 318 tonnes of silage.

Although 8 of the bags had completely failed by bursting or leaking and discharging silage liquor, it was believed the liquor had been contained and had not entered the watercourse.

However, during a second visit on 1 June, officers inspected the watercourse and found the water was black, smelt stagnant and there was sewage fungus on the edges of the water's surface up to 535 meters downstream from the point it entered the watercourse. The pollution was traced back to the ag-bags.

Samples taken on 23 June found the water to be "clearly harmful" to the biodiversity of the watercourse.

Interviewed under caution, the company admitted that it had caused the pollution in both instances.

Regarding Emneth, the company said it had tried to identify drains on the site and had checked the ag-bags, but admitted to not pumping out any of the silage liquor which ended up in the watercourse.

The company cited the extreme weather for the bursting of the ag-bags at Aldreth and had said that the ground had been too hard to absorb some of the liquid.

The court was told that another company in the group has previous convictions for 2 similar offences dating back to 2014. A director of Pretoria Energy Company (Arable) Limited accepted that the companies communicated lessons learnt from that incident.

At sentencing, the Magistrates found that the company were reckless with respect to both incidents.

After the sentencing, environment officer, Joe Vervaeke, said:

> We are satisfied with the sentence handed out today and hope it acts as a deterrent to others.

> The silage liquor which leaked from the ag-bags into the watercourses would have had a detrimental effect on the environment so it is only right that the company responsible should be held to account.

Response to Pearson changes to BTEC grading criteria 2019

Students will receive their Level 1/2 BTEC awards on Wednesday this week. These are new versions of qualifications that are being awarded for the first time this year.

Pearson found during its awarding process that learners' outcomes were significantly higher, and grading was more generous across the cohort, than it had predicted on the basis of students' prior attainment. As a result, Pearson decided to make adjustments to most of its grading points.

Pearson made us aware of this situation and its response in early August. It is always challenging with new specifications to know precisely how the assessments will function and how students will perform on them. It is therefore regrettable that Pearson set out definitive grading points in its specification, and we have seen that changing these has led to understandable uncertainty and frustration.

Our priority is securing that appropriate standards are set, being fair to all students who have taken these qualifications this year, in previous years and in years to come. On the basis of the evidence we have seen, the action Pearson has taken to set standards has been appropriate at the overall, cohort level. However, the decision to publish grading points in their specification may have led some teachers and students to take different decisions than they might otherwise have done.

We understand that students, schools and colleges will be concerned about how these changes may impact them. If students or teachers have questions or concerns now, or after receiving their results, they should seek support from Pearson, which is providing information and advice.

There are significant lessons to be learned by all awarding organisations about the commitments they make in their specifications and associated materials, and how they communicate with schools and colleges when issues arise. We will be reflecting on these issues further after results are published.

Light extravaganza to raise flood

awareness at Tendring

A blue strobe light illuminated the skies of Tendring this weekend as part of a project to raise flood awareness.

The Environment Agency teamed up with Tides of Tendring project, Heritage Lottery Fund, Midas and Kl sound to launch the 3-night light extravaganza.

On Friday 16 through to Sunday 18 August, light was projected from Jaywick Martello Tower and Golf Green Hall to highlight the current flood plain and the extent of the devastating floods of 1953.

The project aimed to spread awareness of flood safety and celebrate the Tides of Tendring exhibition, which was funded by Heritage Lottery Fund. The volunteer group, Friends of Martello Tower, launched the project as they wanted to inform the local community about flood awareness and safety.

Caroline Adams, project manager of Tides of Tendring, said:

> The volunteers discovered that many people were unaware of the current and future flooding risks.
>
> Residents didn't know how best to prepare or what to do if the seawall was breached. The lights are to highlight the size of the flood plain and how far the water has reached.
>
> We hope that the lights will guide them to discover more via the exhibition, talks and events at the Jaywick Martello Tower.

Tina Starling, flood resilience advisor for the Environment Agency in East Anglia, said:

> We want this to create a conversation about the risk of flooding, encourage people to check their flood risk and sign up for free flood warnings.
>
> We are hoping that as a result of this project more people will become flood aware.
>
> I would encourage members of the public to take advantage of the Tides of Tendring exhibition. It will be running a number of free events and activities so you can become flood aware and help the

Environment Agency create a nation of climate champions.

The Tides of Tendring exhibition runs until 5 September with a number of free educational family activities planned including the painting of the seawall, children's activities with the Environment Agency and a number of talks.

You can see the full list of events on the Jaywick Martello Tower website and Facebook page.

People can always check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest outlook on the Environment Agency's website, call the Environment Agency Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.

An estimated 1 in 7 five years olds are not immunised against MMR

As hundreds of thousands of parents across England prepare their children to start primary school in the next few weeks, Public Health England (PHE) is warning that 1 in 7 five year olds may not be fully up-to-date with some routine immunisations, with the figure rising to around 1 in 4 children in London.

These worrying estimates, released as part of PHE's Value of Vaccines campaign, show that some 4 and 5 year olds are starting school at unnecessary risk of serious diseases compared to the majority of their classmates, prompting a call for parents to check their child's Red Book to ensure their children are up-to-date with scheduled immunisations.

In the UK, dose 1 of the MMR vaccine, which protects against Measles, Mumps and Rubella, is usually given to infants at around 12 months of age. A second dose is given before school, usually at 3 years and 4 months of age, to ensure best protection. Two doses of MMR in a lifetime are needed for a person to be considered fully protected. The 4-in-1 pre-school booster is also usually offered at 3 years and 4 months of age and protects against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio.

Around 680,000 five-year-olds start school in England each year according to Department for Education figures. Based on percentage uptake from latest vaccination coverage figures* PHE estimates that:

- over 30,000 (around 1 in 19) five year olds may still need to receive their first dose of MMR, leaving them significantly more at risk compared to pupils who are fully vaccinated
- around 90,000 (or 1 in 7) five year olds in England may still need to

receive their second dose of MMR vaccine. Almost 30,000 of these children are in London, meaning that around 1 in 4 primary school starters in the capital don't have the full protection that the MMR vaccine offers
- around 100,000 (or 1 in 8) five year olds in England may still need their 4-in-1 pre-school booster that protects against diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus and polio

This means that more than 5% of five year olds are starting reception year having not received any MMR. This leaves them at high risk of measles at a time when outbreaks of the disease are occurring across the country.

Dr Mary Ramsay, Head of Immunisation at PHE, said:

> It's a real concern that so many young children – as many as a quarter of a reception class in some areas – could be starting school without the full protection that the NHS childhood immunisation programme offers for free.
>
> We know that parents want the best protection for their children and so many may be unaware that their child is not up-to-date. We're urging all parents of primary school starters to check their child's Red Book now to make sure there is a record of two MMR doses and the 4-in-1 booster vaccine. If not, parents should contact their GP practice to arrange any further vaccinations that are needed.
>
> We're particularly concerned about children being at greater risk of measles. We're continuing to see outbreaks of the disease occurring in communities across the country, many linked to visiting European countries over the summer holidays.
>
> The vast majority of those affected are not fully immunised and vaccine preventable diseases spread more easily in schools. It's crucial that children have maximum protection as they begin to mix with other children at the start of their school journey.
>
> We often think that these diseases are confined to the past, but the World Health Organisation has recently confirmed that measles is no longer eliminated in England. Whilst tetanus and polio are still rare thanks to the success of the NHS childhood immunisation programme, over the past few years we've also seen cases of whooping cough and diphtheria in school-aged children.

To check that your child has received all their vaccines on schedule, visit the NHS website and refer to your child's Red Book. If in any doubt, contact your GP practice.

It’s never too late for a child to be immunised. PHE’s catch-up call for primary school starters follows the issue of a new GP contract from NHS England and Improvement which also encourages 10 and 11 year olds to be caught up with any missing MMR vaccinations prior to them reaching secondary school age.

1. Vaccination Coverage Report, January to March 2019
2. 2019 General Medical Services (GMS) Contract
3. Approximate estimates of children aged 5 with routine vaccinations outstanding, as at end of March 2019

Region	5y DTaP-IPV% coverage	5y DTaP-IPV% number missing	5y MMR1% coverage	5y MMR1% number missing	5y MMR2% coverage	5y MMR2% number missing
England	85.6%	101,000	94.9%	36,000	87.2%	90,000
North East	91.1%	3,000	97.2%	1,000	91.9%	2,000
North West	88.8%	10,000	95.9%	4,000	89.4%	9,000
Yorkshire and the Humber	89.9%	7,000	95.9%	3,000	90.5%	7,000
East Midlands	88.4%	7,000	96.4%	2,000	89.0%	7,000
West Midlands	85.6%	10,000	95.7%	3,000	87.6%	9,000
East of England	88.2%	9,000	96.1%	3,000	89.8%	8,000
London	75.9%	31,000	91.4%	11,000	77.8%	28,000
South East	84.1%	17,000	93.9%	7,000	87.2%	14,000
South West	89.9%	6,000	96.1%	2,000	90.9%	5,000

Measles signs and symptoms

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications. It’s now uncommon in the UK because of the effective MMR vaccination programme. Although usually a mild illness in children, measles can be more severe in adults.

The initial symptoms of measles develop around 10 days after a person is infected. These can include:

- cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, sneezing, and a cough
- sore, red eyes that may be sensitive to light
- a high temperature (fever), which may reach around 40°C (104°F)
- a few days later, a red-brown blotchy rash will appear. This usually starts on the head or upper neck, before spreading outwards to the rest of the body

Symptoms usually resolve in about 7 to 10 days. Complications include pneumonia, ear infections, brain inflammation (encephalitis) and even death.