

[Press release: Marlow is now better protected from flooding](#)

On 8 March 2019, the Environment Agency hosted an event with project partners and guests to demonstrate that the Marlow flood alleviation scheme is now in operation. Construction work was completed in autumn 2018.

Guests at the event were shown how the flood risk to some 287 properties in Marlow has been reduced. They also saw how, should Marlow now suffer prolonged or heavy rainfall, as it has several times in recent years and before, the risk of flooding from the river and groundwater to these properties has been lowered.

The Environment Agency worked with Buckinghamshire County Council and Marlow Town Council to deliver the £9.5 million scheme. The Environment Agency project team, including the contractors GBV, or GallifordTry and Black and Veatch, and consultants, were joined at the event by guests including the chief executive of the Environment Agency, Sir James Bevan, Dominic Grieve MP and representatives of the partners.

Guests were shown around the site by the project team to see what has been constructed. They were also shown the planned interpretation boards that will be installed on the site for future visitors to see what the scheme has included to make Marlow less vulnerable to flooding.

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

The Environment Agency has worked with the local community, Buckinghamshire County Council and Marlow Town Council to deliver this £9.5 million scheme. It will better-protect the beautiful town of Marlow from flooding, not only from the Thames, but also from groundwater. There are real environmental benefits, too, with 18 hectares of habitat created and more than 300 trees and 10,000 shrubs planted.

This scheme is part of the Environment Agency's plan to reduce the risk of flooding for 300,000 homes between 2015 and 2021."

The final phase of the scheme which includes reinstatement and planting work is continuing and will take place over the summer months.

This scheme is part of the Environment Agency's plan to reduce the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, groundwater and surface water and from coastal erosion for a least 300,000 homes between 2015 and 2021. The Marlow scheme consists of new flood walls and embankments in the Gossmore Lane and Pound Lane areas of the town. It also includes a flood-storage area at Lower Pound Lane to replace the natural floodplain.

Low lying areas of Marlow are also prone to flooding from groundwater travelling up through the gravels found below the ground. So the scheme also includes a pumping system which pumps groundwater back into the Thames reducing the risk of flooding.

Modelling done by the Environment Agency shows that the scheme will benefit the 287 properties.

[News story: Dstl Reveals Venturefest Line Up for Small and Medium Enterprises](#)

Discovering ways the Royal Navy might use artificial intelligence (AI) in future operations, and how desktop wargames help the Army learn risk analysis, are just two of the attractions lined up by the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) for Venturefest South on 29 March at the Ageas Bowl in Southampton.

Small and Medium enterprises (SMEs) will be able to hear about the skills and equipment needs of the Armed Forces, and the opportunities to sell to the defence sector. Commercial and technical experts from Dstl, as well as military representatives, will be available for one-to-one meetings to explain the simple qualification process for businesses to work with Government.

Dstl is seeking new supply-chain partners for a series of research projects due to start this year across a diverse range of technology. The Laboratory has already announced additional funding of £40 million to £45 million to spend with external suppliers this year and set up the Searchlight initiative to engage with non-traditional Defence suppliers and SMEs to help meet this need.

Dstl will also be supported by representatives from the Defence and Security Accelerator (DASA) which speeds the development of innovative ideas into exploitable products and services for defence and security customers.

Dstl works with a range of start-ups and SMEs, providing funding and guidance to develop new and innovative ideas to help protect the UK's Armed Forces, helping companies grow and boosting the regional economy.

By working with investors, Dstl also helps companies to commercialise the impact and bring new technologies to market. Licensing agreements have been signed for 125 technologies across defence and security, biometrics, life sciences, and diagnostics, which have created 580 jobs.

Rob Solly, senior lead for Searchlight commented:

SMEs are essential supply-chain partners for Dstl and contribute to the unique capability we have in defence science and technology. By encouraging innovation and helping companies get their ideas and products into the defence arena we aspire to boost the regional economy and UK prosperity, as well as protecting our Armed Forces. We understand the pressures on small enterprises and we are determined to make working with Dstl as straightforward as possible.

Venturefest South is a not-for-profit initiative that has been created and developed by a group of partners within the regional innovation economy including: Carswell Gould, Solent LEP, Innovate UK, the Knowledge Transfer Network, University of Portsmouth, Southampton City Council, Solent University, The University of Southampton, Portsmouth City Council, and Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council.

[Find out more, apply to take part in any of the pitching sessions, showcase an innovation in the exhibition or sponsor Venturefest South 2019](#)

Additionally, a host of opportunities exist for SMEs to work across Dstl's portfolio over the next 12 months, and through the SME Searchlight programme there will be a series of events, workshops and consultations to develop a broader supplier community, particularly in the fields of radio frequency engineering, artificial intelligence, synthetic biology and wargaming. The team can be contacted by emailing searchlight@dstl.gov.uk

[News story: Essex haven for nature gets new protection](#)

As the Essex town of Basildon celebrates its 70th birthday this year, [Natural England](#) has announced new protection for the iconic landscapes of nearby Langdon Ridge.

2019 marks the UK government's [Year of Green Action](#), a year-long drive to help people to connect with, protect and enhance nature. Langdon Ridge is easily accessible from Basildon, and the newly-notified Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will help ensure it remains both a thriving place for nature, and a valuable green space enjoyed by future generations.

Around 345 hectares of land across parts of the town and surrounding areas has received legal protection for its nationally significant array of grassland, woodlands, rare plants and insects.

The new designation will ensure stronger protection for features such as wildflower rich grasslands, woodland habitats, as well as rare species such as the Deptford Pink and the Grizzled Skipper butterfly.

The new SSSI will encompass sites that are well known for their natural history in the local area, including the [Dunton Plotlands Nature Reserve](#), [Langdon Hills Country Park](#), [Marks Hill Wood](#) and [Willow Park](#).

Natural England's Interim Chief Executive, Marian Spain said:

Natural England is here to make sure that people and nature can thrive together. I am delighted therefore that we have been able to extend the protection for this nationally important network of sites around Basildon which as well as being of huge value for wildlife is a much loved and much used open space for local people.

The support from our partners and stakeholders across the area has been vital to our work and we look forward to continuing to work with them. This is an ideal area for people to make a commitment to get involved with the Year of Green Action, with lots of opportunity to engage with, enjoy and help protect nature close to where they live.

Habitat fragmentation is a key conservation challenge, and a key element of this designation is that it looks at how species use the landscape as a whole. The SSSI will ensure protection for not only the existing high quality environments, but also the interconnecting green corridors of habitat that enable species to move between locations.

The [Natural England](#) Board has confirmed the designation of the site after considering responses to a four-month long consultation.

Natural England Board member, Dr Simon Lyster said:

Langdon Ridge is an amazing wildlife-rich landscape within 25 miles of central London that fully deserves SSSI status.

It is particularly extraordinary because it is a large, 345 hectare mosaic of species rich grassland and woodland right on the edge of Basildon, providing a brilliant opportunity for local residents to enjoy nature right on their doorstep. Away from the town it offers fantastic views of the Thames Estuary and links in well with other SSSIs in that part of Essex.

Langdon Ridge is living proof that wildlife and people can both thrive if the will is there, and congratulations to all the local people and organisations who have made it possible.

Whilst nature conservation is the primary aim of the new SSSI, given its

location on the urban edge, the importance of this area for people hasn't been ignored. The designation as a SSSI will ensure that local communities will continue to have opportunity to connect with nature on their doorstep as part of their daily lives.

Research has shown how the natural environment provides society with benefits in terms of helping mental and physical health, offering informal recreation opportunities, inspiration for art, and helping people feel connected with their local area. This new SSSI will ensure nearby residents will continue to have this amazing natural resource protected in the long term.

Whilst Natural England has led on this new designation, this achievement is thanks to the hard work and support of many key stakeholders.

Natural England has worked closely with partners such as [Essex Wildlife Trust](#), [Thurrock](#) and [Basildon Councils](#), and [Basildon Natural History Society](#) to gather the evidence needed to proceed with this designation. This partnership approach will continue in the coming months, as we work together to build a long term vision for a wildlife-rich, accessible environment around Basildon.

Eamonn Martin, Basildon resident and former London Marathon winner, said:

I know this area well from my many training runs around Basildon. It is marvellous news that more of our precious countryside will be protected for local people to enjoy.

Green action can be as simple as going for a run in the local park or changing your training route to take in a local nature reserve with public access.

I would encourage local residents and families to improve their health and get exercising, through walking and running, at Langdon Ridge.

[Press release: Three further batches of blood pressure and heart medication recalled from pharmacies](#)

As a precautionary measure to protect public health, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) today recalled 3 batches of Losartan tablets due to contamination with the nitrosamine N-nitroso-N-methylamino butyric acid (NMBA). The affected batches can be viewed [here](#).

The recall is taking place as part of the continued investigation into potential nitrosamine contamination of sartan containing medicines, a class of medicine to treat blood pressure and heart attacks and heart failures.

Currently there is no evidence that nitrosamine impurities can cause harm and patients are being advised to continue taking their medication.

The investigation into possible contamination of sartan medicines began in 2018, after the nitrosamine N-nitrosodimethylamine (NDMA), was identified in valsartan manufactured at a facility based in China.

Last year, the MHRA recalled batches of valsartan containing tablets to pharmacy level in [July](#) and [November](#) due to possible NDMA and N-nitrosodiethylamine (NDEA) contamination.

In [January](#) and [February](#) 2019 the MHRA recalled batches of irbesartan containing tablets after testing revealed possible contamination with NDEA.

The MHRA continues to monitor the situation in the UK and are comprehensively investigating the issue alongside the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines (EDQM).

Bernadette Sinclair-Jenkins, MHRA's Manager, Regulatory Assessment Unit of the Inspection, Enforcement and Standards Division, said:

Our priority as regulator is to make sure the medicines you and your family take are effective and acceptably safe.

This recall shows we are continuing to investigate potential contamination of sartan containing medicines.

There is no evidence at present that medicines containing NDMA, NDEA or NMBA have caused any harm to patients and this recall is a precautionary measure.

Because of the risk associated with suddenly stopping high blood pressure medication, continue to take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

Please speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have any concerns about your medicine.

[**News story: Sellafield unveils new**](#)

plant to support clean-up

The Silos Maintenance Facility will house and maintain the machinery that will get the waste out of two of the oldest plants on the site.

It has taken nine years to build and is described as the site's 'Formula One pit lane', a place where the machinery doing the most important job in UK nuclear decommissioning can be maintained in a safe, secure environment.

Silos Maintenance Facility unveiled at Sellafield

This is a major step towards emptying the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo and the Pile Fuel Cladding Silo, which is a top priority for the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority.

Chris Halliwell, head of the Magnox Swarf Storage Silo for Sellafield Ltd said:

Getting this new facility ready is a huge success story for the Sellafield clean-up mission.

It will play an important role in the UK's hazard reduction programme and is testament to the collaboration between Sellafield Ltd and our supply chain partners, Balfour Beatty and Cavendish Nuclear.

Not only was the project delivered to time and budget but it also has an impeccable safety record, to have had five and a half years without an accident on a construction site of this scale is no mean feat.

Congratulations to all those who have played their part and those who will safely operate the plant as it makes Sellafield safer, sooner.

The project cost £250 million and is a collaboration between Sellafield Ltd, Balfour Beatty and Cavendish Nuclear, working together to deliver design, construct, install and test of the facility.

To mark their impressive safety record, the team has donated £8000 to eight local charities, chosen by those who have worked on the project.

The nuclear site is moving into a 100 year programme of environmental remediation, which means speeding up the decommissioning of old facilities and moving the waste into safe containment for centuries to come.