

Press release: Barriers at the ready in 'Broadchurch'

Visitors to West Bay, near Bridport, will see up to 60 metres of temporary coastal defence barriers deployed in East Beach car park in preparation for any future tidal incidents.

The barriers – one of 4 types used by the Environment Agency – are large, self-supporting, recyclable containers filled with aggregate. They are covered with an impenetrable membrane which prevents water from getting through. They are also fitted with a lid to prevent loss of fill material during over-topping and extreme weather conditions.

Exercise organiser and engineer Dan Hooper said:

West Bay is a high risk flood area because of strong south westerly winds, high tides and the close proximity of properties to the sea and nearby River Brit, so it's essential we are 'incident-ready' by carrying out exercises like this.

These barriers are relatively new to the Environment Agency so this exercise provides us with an opportunity to get to grips with them. We are learning how we open, connect and fill them using a stockpile of beach materials already located on site.

Sharpening our practical skills and knowledge means we can better protect homes, businesses and the environment quickly and safely should a major incident be expected in West Bay or anywhere along the Dorset coast.

Partner agencies have been invited to observe the exercise, including representatives from the British Army, Dorset Local Resilience Forum (local authorities, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, Civil Contingencies Unit) and the West Bay Harbourmaster.

One of the Environment Agency's new Incident Command Units (ICU) will also be on site recording footage of the exercise. The WiFi-enabled ICU acts as a mobile incident room and a temporary headquarters for staff out in the field, enabling better site management, situational awareness and visibility in flood risk communities.

Part of the car park will be cordoned off, but vehicle users will still be able to access the remainder of the car park and beach.

Notes for editors

West Bay is a designated World Heritage Site and situated in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Environment Agency is currently working with

West Dorset District Council, co-ordinated by the Dorset Coast Forum, to identify and improve the coastal defences in West Bay and make the beaches more resistant to storm damage, while also preserving the iconic views and amenities.

The 'Jackbox' flood defence barriers are made by Hesco. They are easy to store and transport and can be deployed quickly by 2 people and a machine. They can be filled with earth, sand, gravel, crushed rock or other granular materials and are easily removed.

Media opportunity

Members of the media are invited to observe the exercise from 11am. Interviews with Dan Hooper will be available at 12pm. Please confirm your attendance with the press office (telephone 0800 917 9271).

Attendees should be appropriately dressed and will be asked to sign in on arrival/given high-visibility clothing and hard hats (if crossing the cordoned off area).

The nearest available alternative car park will be at:

Station Road car park
Station Rd
West Bay
Bridport
DT6 4EW

[News story: £28,220 penalty for release of non-native species](#)

On 20 September 2017 Ni Li and Zhixiong Li pleaded guilty to a breach of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 at Brighton Magistrates' Court.

The court heard how on 15 June 2015, 361 live American lobsters and 35 Dungeness crabs were released off Brighton on the Sussex coast by a party of over 100 Buddhists as part of a religious ceremony. The court was told how Zhixiong Li organised the party and oversaw the release, and that Ni Li procured the Lobsters from a specialist fish merchant in London. The action was contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which is in place to protect indigenous species from invasion by non-native species. When the release was discovered swift action by the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) working with the local fishing industry led to a significant number of the non-native animals being recovered.

Ni Li was fined £3,500, ordered to pay £9000 in compensation, costs of £3000 and a victim surcharge of £170.00.

Zhixiong Li was fined £500.00, ordered to pay £9000 in compensation, costs of £3000 and a victim surcharge of £50.00.

The compensation was awarded to the MMO to pay for the action to recover the non-native species. Commenting on the prosecution a spokesman for the MMO said:

“The size of the fines in this case recognises the significant risk to the marine environment posed by offences of this nature.

The MMO would like to thank both the local fishing industry for their significant assistance in the recovery of the animals from our seas and the Buddhist community for their help in communicating and educating people on the risks posed by the release of non-native species into our waters.”

[Press release: Major A21 upgrade complete](#)

The upgrade to the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury has built a new dual carriageway, to speed up journeys, improve safety, reduce congestion and boost the economy.

Two new junctions have been built as part of the project, as well as better, safer access to the A21 for the homes and businesses along it and dedicated new facilities for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists.

Highways England Regional Investment Programme Director David Haines said:

This is another missing link in the country’s road network filled in. For decades, the single carriageway section of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury has been a source of daily congestion, delaying drivers and frustrating business who depend on the road. That changes today. These A21 improvements are another great achievement for Highways England’s delivery of the first Road Investment Strategy, the biggest road investment for a generation. I hope the people of Kent enjoy driving on their new improved A21.

The improvements were formally opened today by Tom Tugendhat MP for Tonbridge and Malling.

Work started on the scheme in spring 2015. Over the last few months drivers have been benefitting from a phased opening of the improvements, starting

with the new flyover at Longfield Road, which partially opened in July 2017. The road layout has also been improved for properties along the A21 with a new junction to provide safer access.

George Pargeter, Balfour Beatty Project Director for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Project, said:

We are delighted to announce the completion of the A21 project, enabling the local community and travelling public to enjoy the benefits of the new dual carriageway. This has been a complex project which presented a number of challenges, however our expertise and collaboration with Highways England has enabled us to successfully and safely deliver a high quality, more streamlined route connecting Hastings and London.

The A21 improvements have not just been about building a new road; the project team have taken great care to protect the exceptionally beautiful and protected countryside alongside the road. 18 hectares of new woodland has been created as part of the project – twice that needed for construction, with cutting edge translocation techniques, to preserve its ecological make up. New areas of heathland have been created and an ancient barn has been carefully taken down and is now being reconstructed and preserved at a heritage museum.

An ancient barn is being preserved at a museum

As well as improving the road, a new path along the A21 has been completed. Kent County Council will provide additional links to Tonbridge Station and Pembury Hospital to benefit the local community thanks to additional funding from Highways England.

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[News story: New funding announced for victims of sexual abuse](#)

Grant funding of £600,000 has been awarded to four charities to help victims of child sexual abuse.

The funding, awarded to the National Association of People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), Barnardo's, Rape Crisis England & Wales, and Safeline

Warwick, will help them provide vital services including developing services for boys impacted by child sexual abuse, boosting rape support centres, and expanding an online counselling service for victims of child sexual abuse.

NAPAC will use the funding (£314,360) for a telephone support line, training for professionals, boosting research capability, support and advocacy work targeted at adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

The funding awarded to Barnardo's will go towards developing approaches for identifying, assessing and preventing the sexual abuse of boys.

Rape Crisis England & Wales will use the funding to support survivors by email and its website, to amplify survivors' voices through an awareness-raising audio project, and to develop the capability of Rape Crisis Centres.

Safeline Warwick will extend a telephone and online counselling service to women aged 18 and over who have experienced child sexual abuse.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Sarah Newton, said:

Child sexual abuse is a devastating crime and we are determined to ensure every victim has the support they need, as we work to bring their abusers to justice.

This government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable in our society and we have done more than any other to tackle these horrific offences. We have increased support for victims of sexual abuse, invested in training and technology to improve law enforcement's response to abuse both on and offline, and brought in a tougher inspection regime to ensure all front-line professions are meeting their child protection duties.

But there is more to do, and this funding will ensure that charities who protect and support people who have suffered child sexual abuse are able to continue and develop the vital support they offer.

The funding has been awarded through the Ministry of Justice Victims' Fund, and was allocated by the Home Office to organisations providing a national service to victims of child sexual abuse.

Grant funding break-down:

Rape Crisis England and Wales	£76,659
Safeline Warwick	£24,099
Barnardo's	£184,873
NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)	£314,360

Press release: Latest on UK response to Hurricane Maria

UK aid teams have been on the ground in Dominica to assess the devastation caused by the recent extreme weather in the Caribbean.

DFID field teams arrived on the island yesterday (20 September) to carry out a three day assessment of the impact of the Category 5 hurricane.

Initial reports suggest widespread destruction, with 90% of buildings damaged or destroyed.

Medical supplies, including insulin and aquatabs, funded by DFID and a medical doctor from the Pan American Health Organisation also arrived on one of the first ships into Dominica yesterday.

Today a UK team will also travel to Monserrat to assess the impact of Hurricane Maria. Initial reports suggest the damage to buildings is not extensive, with the east side of Island being more affected.

It comes as a Red Cross appeal to help the victims of Hurricanes Maria and the earlier Hurricane Irma hit over £2million.

The appeal launched a fortnight ago was boosted by DFID's aid match scheme doubling all public UK donations.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

This is an unprecedented crisis with two hurricanes of such brutal force hitting the Caribbean in less than a fortnight.

Our focus now is on making sure the islands affected have the right supplies in the right places to deal with the aftermath of the latest hurricane.

The British public has once again shown its overwhelming generosity in a time of crisis by helping out the victims of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

This money will ensure food, water and shelter goes directly to those who need it most on the worst hit islands.

To date 75 tonnes of DFID aid has arrived or been bought in the region, including food, water, nearly 3,000 shelter kits, 5,000 solar lanterns and 10,000 buckets.

Another 60 tonnes are on the way on HMS Ocean due to arrive in the region on Friday.

Work to prepare Anguilla for the impact of Hurricane Maria proved hugely successful in preventing further damage to infrastructure. Two tonnes of corrugated iron was provided to bolster hospital and police stations roofs. Food, tarpaulins, hygiene and shelter kits provided by DFID are also being distributed on the island by the Red Cross.

Vital supplies, including food, bottled water and shelters, were distributed to the Turks and Caicos Islands yesterday via three RAF flights and DFID field teams are urgently assessing the damage on the island.