

# Press release: UK aid continues to arrive for Hurricane Irma victims

[VIDEO: Jemone's story, a recipient of UK aid on the British Virgin Islands.](#)

Over 60 tonnes of UK aid has now reached the Caribbean to support the victims of Hurricane Irma, with another 60 tonnes on the way on board HMS Ocean.

British military troops along with DFID logisticians supported the restoration of electricity to the main power station on the British Virgin Islands as part of the ongoing recovery operation.

Six UK medical health experts have been deployed to Antigua to assess the capacity of healthcare provisions on affected islands in the region.

The team, made up of experts from UK-Med and Public Health England, will measure the current state of public health and any potential threat of disease breaking out.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

The Government has been working non-stop to get vital assistance to the victims of Hurricane Irma in the last week.

Aid continues to arrive on the affected islands on a daily basis, and we'll continue to do all that is needed to get people back on their feet.

We are also looking at long-term recovery on the islands. We want to get families back into houses, and schools and hospitals working again as soon as possible.

Yesterday (Thursday), a flight carrying aid reached Turks and Caicos Islands delivering over 150 shelter kits and 720 litres of water.

Further flights carrying UK aid arrived in the affected areas earlier this week. Two of these flights, headed to Anguilla, delivered nearly five tonnes of food and water

A flight carrying three tonnes of food and water also arrived in the British Virgin Islands. This much-needed aid has already been distributed on Tortola alongside 40 shelter kits in Road Town.

Elsewhere, British aid experts quickly sorted and arranged for the delivery of 1 tonne of food aid including biscuits, fish, vegetables and sausages, in addition to 38 packs of water and shelter kits in BVI. The items were distributed to 130 families using a school as a shelter after their homes were destroyed in the hurricane

A senior civil expert has been deployed to the Caribbean to coordinate the entire UK Task Force following Hurricane Irma. Chris Austin, recently based with DFID in Afghanistan, will oversee civilian and military operations as part of the UK's response.

This week, Prime Minister Theresa May announced an additional £25 million to support Hurricane Irma recovery efforts, on top of £32 million announced last week. The announcement takes the UK's support to the disaster to £57 million.

The funding will continue to meet immediate needs and early recovery.

Several hospitals, schools, roads and other public services remain affected following Hurricane Irma, and the support will help to get basic infrastructure and services up and running again.

Additionally, the UK government is doubling any public donations made to the Red Cross appeal for the hurricane's victims up to £3 million.

Aid also continues to be distributed by British military personnel and the Red Cross, coordinated by DFID.

The overall UK response today involves over 1,000 military personnel, 60 police officers, and 30 aid workers.

The aid on HMS Ocean includes over 5,000 hygiene kits containing essential items such as soap and a torch, 500,000 water purification tablets and 10,000 buckets.

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## **Press release: First phase of major A1 improvement to go live**

From Friday (22 September) drivers will benefit from the extra capacity and improved road information on the six mile section between Leeming and Catterick.

Once finished, the full scheme between Leeming and Barton will complete the missing link of motorway between London and Newcastle, using the M1 and A1 (M), as well as improving journey times and increasing safety.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Upgrading the A1 is a big priority for the Government and this is the latest stage in our broad ranging investment plan for better transport in the north, cutting congestion and journey times.

Highways England project manager, Tom Howard, said:

We are pleased to be able to open this section ahead of the main completion to give drivers the benefits of motorway standards as well as smoother and safer journeys.

This is an important milestone and means we are now halfway to completing this major scheme on this vitally important route.

Over the autumn period our focus will be on the remainder of the project including completing the local access road between Scotch Corner and Brompton-on-Swale and opening the new Fort Bridge which will provide a new east – west link to Catterick for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.

Once Fort Bridge is fully open by the middle of November, the next major milestones will be the opening of the motorway between Scotch Corner interchange and junction 56 at Barton, and between Catterick junction and Scotch Corner interchange. The scheme will be fully open by Winter 2017/18.

Complicated ground conditions have impacted on the method used to stabilise the embankment near the River Swale. This has resulted in an extension to the planned completion date. Highways England is working with contractors to resolve the issue as quickly as possible.

When fully open, journey times between Leeming and Barton are expected to be reduced by approximately 20 per cent.

For more details, [visit the scheme website](#).

## **General enquiries**

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

## **Media enquiries**

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

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[\*\*News story: Tony Fountain to step down\*\*](#)

## from his role as Chair of Sellafield Ltd

Tony Fountain has accepted an offer to become Chair at Essar Oil, and has therefore decided to step down from his role as Chair of Sellafield Ltd.

He will chair his last Board later this month.

The Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) will now begin the process of finding a suitable successor to continue the momentum created under Tony's tenure.

Nigel Smith, a senior independent Non-Executive Director with Sellafield Ltd, will cover the role in the interim.

David Peattie, NDA Chief Executive Officer, said:

On behalf of the NDA, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Tony for his excellent leadership and contribution to the clean-up mission at Sellafield. We wish him every success in his new role.

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## Press release: Explore the wonders of the Witham in free Wyndham Park event

Habitat improvements at Grantham's Wyndham Park are the stage for a day of free activities helping everyone enjoy the nature on their doorstep.

Environment and conservation experts will be on hand at the award-winning location on Sunday 24 September, offering games, competitions, crafts, wildlife spotting and more.

All activities have been designed to show how easy and fun it is to get closer to nature – and play a part in protecting it.

The event marks the official unveiling of improvements to Wyndham's Park's natural habitat, and a 100m-stretch of the River Witham that flows through it.

Enhancements include an area of stepped decking enabling safe access to a shallow part of the river and new wetland habitat to attract rare species.

All were funded using fishing licence money from the Environment Agency, which is re-invested into rivers, helping to improve facilities for anglers, tackle illegal fishing and encourage more people to take up the sport.

The event will offer a chance to explore the changes to the park's habitat, and discover how they benefit both visitors and wildlife.

Matt Parr, geomorphology technical specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

Few things beat the great outdoors but that doesn't mean you have to escape into the wilderness. Natural wonders can be found right in the heart of your town.

We'll be on hand to help you spot the opportunities, using the beauty of Wyndham Park – and our improvements to the river there – to show how easy and fun it is to get closer to nature.

Organisations taking part in the event include the Environment Agency, South Kesteven District Council, Lincolnshire Rivers Trust, Anglian Water and Rivercare.

It takes place from 12noon to 4.30pm on Sunday 24 September. The date coincides with World Rivers Day, a global celebration of rivers, their value to local communities and the importance of looking after them.

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## **Press release: Salmon in Derbyshire river a first since Industrial Revolution**

Atlantic salmon have been discovered on the River Ecclesbourne, a tributary of the River Derwent, Derbyshire for the first time since the Industrial Revolution following work carried out by the Environment Agency and its partners.

The discovery comes following the installation of fish passes on the River Derwent by the Environment Agency and Trent Rivers Trust which have helped to improve fish migration and allow the salmon to move upstream through the river.

The installation of fish passes is just one of a programme of actions carried out by the Environment Agency and its partners to remove barriers to migration and help restore salmon stocks throughout England.

Fisheries Specialist at the Environment Agency, Matt Buck, said:

Salmon is an important species and after two decades of work to improve water quality and the habitat for fish in the Trent catchment area, we now have a recovering population of salmon.

We are particularly excited to have found juvenile salmon in the Ecclesbourne for the first time in living memory, which indicates the success of salmon in this part of the river.

Poor water quality and weirs on the River Derwent constructed in the Industrial Revolution acted as a barrier to fish migration and left them stuck in unsuitable water. Weirs not only stop fish migrating, but trap fish spawning gravels and create ponded areas upstream which are not suitable for riverine fish species.

Over the past seven years, the Environment Agency has worked with partners and developers on the construction of fish passes on a number of weirs in the area. These passes have enabled adult salmon to swim freely further up the river, where they have access to more varied habitats providing suitable conditions to spawn, shelter and feed.

Matt continued:

Thanks to the work we have carried out with our partners, we are, for the first time ever, witnessing a recovering population of salmon on the River Derwent and other local rivers which is an excellent result. Last year we saw a record number of sightings of adult salmon, including a salmon found at Belper weir for the first time in over 100 years.

We are committed to ensuring that salmon numbers continue to increase within the catchment by working with partners to enable fish passage on the remaining barriers and to improve the quality of river habitats for this fascinating species. If salmon are thriving we know the river is doing well for all fish and wildlife.