

# Flood Forecasting Centre: helping the nation prepare

News story

The Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) issues guidance which enables authorities to prepare for flooding by using temporary flood barriers.



During February 2014, prolonged rainfall led to severe flooding across the country. The Environment Agency and regional authorities in Berkshire used portable temporary flood barriers to protect communities.

The barriers proved their worth. This led to the Environment Agency acquiring more of them for use in future flooding emergencies.

## **Rapid Deployment**

The Environment Agency now has a national stock of one-metre-high barriers. They can be put in place extremely quickly, with a team of eight able to erect up to 100 metres in one hour.

The barriers are held in depots across the country, within easy reach of communities prone to flooding.

Daily Flood Guidance Statements from the FFC allow barriers and human resources to be deployed in the right places around the country.

Vulnerable sites have an activation plan, which includes information on:

- the equipment, vehicles and number of people needed
- instructions on how to erect the barriers
- triggers for responses – for example, an amber warning in the Flood Guidance Statement
- the stages of deployment – such as moving the barriers nearby, delivering to the site and then erecting them

## Engaging with communities

As the barriers can cause disruption, the Environment Agency works hard to establish local links and engage communities.

Despite the challenges to deployment and the chance of false alarms, the barriers play a vital role in reducing flood risk.

Without them, flood responders would have fewer options to protect communities.

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## [The Flood Forecasting Centre: measuring satisfaction levels](#)

News story

Every 2 years, the Flood Forecasting Centre asks its users to rate and review the services it provides.



The Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) produces daily forecasts that help emergency responders prepare for flooding.

The best way to measure whether that advice is useful and valued is to ask the people who use it themselves. That's why, every 2 years, the FFC invites its customers to take part in the Emergency Responder Survey.

### Positive results

In the 2019 survey:

- 92% of responders they were satisfied with the daily Flood Guidance

Statements (FGS) issued by the FFC – with 47% being very satisfied

- 91% responders were satisfied with the service provided by the FFC – which is the highest since the survey began.

The satisfaction levels with the FFC have been rising every year, with a score of:

- 88% in 2013
- 89% in 2015
- 90% in 2017

## **Flood Guidance Statements**

Every day, the FFC issues the FGS. The FGS illustrates the risk of flooding and where it might occur. Emergency responders such as the police and fire service use the information to prepare.

The last major redesign of the FGS was introduced in 2017 after an extensive review of user needs. This led to the introduction of some new features as well as more clarity in the way information was presented.

The survey found that the redesign has been effective, with:

- 75% of responders saying that the FGS is easy to use
- 85% of responders stating that the FGS gives enough time to act on all or most occasions

The survey gives some insights into what types of response might be triggered by the FGS. The most common are to:

- monitor the weather and flooding situation
- place resources on standby
- put plans into action

## **Constant improvement**

The survey provides invaluable feedback on how FFC services can be enhanced. In 2019 the results showed that:

- two-thirds of responders were interested in receiving training on how to use the FGS
- responders who have regular contact with the FFC are more likely to be very satisfied

Since the survey the FFC has acted on this information by:

- improving the training available
- engaging with customers more consistently

## Looking forward

The FFC is now preparing for the 2022 responder survey, which has been postponed from 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As in 2019, the survey will track satisfaction with the FGS and the FFC. It will also include new questions to find out about:

- the new Hazard Manager service
- how confident responders are using our forecasts – and why they might find using the information difficult
- how many responders know and use our new website and training materials

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## [The Flood Forecasting Centre – thinking globally](#)

As a national centre, the Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) needs to use the latest forecasting techniques. To remain at the top of its game, it must draw on knowledge and insight that extends beyond the team based in Exeter.

This is one of the reasons why the FFC works with international partners.

### **Working with the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia**

One such organisation is the Bureau of Meteorology in Australia. Through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between them and the Environment Agency, knowledge can be shared. This can open new ways of working to improve services.

The agreement with Australia has highlighted five specific themes to work together on:

- flood forecasting systems
- flood warning and informing
- people, skills, and competency
- performance standards
- organisational performance

The partnership with Australia has already led to some useful insights that could help enhance FFC services. For example, the Bureau has been using Water Coach. This is a scenario-based exercise designed to improve forecasters' skills. The Bureau's Melbourne office can run an exercise remotely with forecasters in different States, so decisions are made in 'real time'.

Australia's Bureau has also gained insights from the FFC about the role of operational hydrometeorologist. Currently, the Bureau uses separate hydrologists and meteorologists. The FFC's success shows how using someone trained in both hydrology and meteorology can pay dividends.

## **An international benchmark**

International collaboration is also now being encouraged by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). One example is through its Assessment Guidelines for Early Warning Systems for Flood Forecasting. The WMO is introducing a scoring system to enable countries to assess their own performance on an international scale. The FFC is still working through the WMO's benchmarking assessment guidelines. This will identify:

- FFCs strengths and weaknesses
- how other countries might learn from its experiences

The FFC also sharing its experiences through international conferences. By developing networks and sharing best practices, it is playing its part in the forecasting community.

## **Practical partnerships**

The FFC is developing relationships with other countries as well as Australia – for example with Holland.

Another factor here is driving collaboration. Any North Sea coastal storm surge that affects England's east coast is also likely to have an impact on Holland.

By working together, the FFC can assess how well its flood models are performing and input into Dutch modelling. In future, the need for international collaboration is only going to become more important. The FFC looks forward to developing its international networks to ensure it can continue to deliver a first-class service.

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## **World-class training to deliver savings and sustainability from major government projects**

The government has signed a contract (5 April 2022) to launch the next version of the Major Projects Leadership Academy (MPLA) and Orchestrating Major Projects (OMP) programmes, as part of the continuing drive to transform the delivery of government major projects.

Oxford Saïd Business School has been awarded the contract to update and deliver the Major Projects Leadership Academy, providing mandatory training for major project leaders, and its complementary programme, Orchestrating Major Projects, which provides training for senior officials who sponsor and are accountable for major project delivery.

The contract will see the content of the programmes refreshed to meet the government's future major project challenges, including training on modern construction and digital methods, managing costs and carbon impacts, and delivering government projects better, faster and greener for the benefit of the people of the UK.

Together the programmes, which will welcome participants from summer 2022, are expected to improve standards of major project delivery, while driving savings to provide better value for taxpayers.

Minister for Brexit Opportunities and Government Efficiency Jacob Rees Mogg said:

It is important that we are launching the latest version of the Major Project Leadership Academy (MPLA). This is an example of HM government's determination to build professional expertise and capabilities that will ensure that taxpayers' money is spent well so that infrastructure will be built efficiently.

As we build back better following the pandemic while facing an uncertain world, it is fundamental to our success that projects are managed to the highest standards, commonplace in the commercial world.

Success will boost productivity and enhance economic growth: it is the challenge of our time.

Nick Smallwood, Chief Executive of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority and Head of the Government Project Delivery Function, said:

It is vital that all project professionals and SROs have access to world-class training that enables them to deliver the UK's essential and ambitious projects and programmes – that is why we are investing in the future of our leaders so that they are equipped with the right skills and experience to make a real difference.

The Major Projects Academy is just one example of this and I look forward to continuing to work with Oxford Saïd Business School on the programme.

Dr Paul Chapman, Programme Director of the MPLA and OMP at Oxford Saïd Business School said:

UK government major project leaders are accountable for the most complex and impactful projects that shape the nation's social and economic fabric and deliver benefits that impact the lives of millions.

Oxford Saïd Business School, supported by key subcontractors Atkins Limited and Edgumbe Consulting Group Limited, looks forward to continuing to work with the Infrastructure and Projects Authority to ensure major project leaders benefit from rigorous insights and personal and professional development that equips them with the right skills to discharge their accountability effectively and with vigour in an ever-changing world.

Over 500 senior leaders from over 50 public sector organisations successfully completed the previous Major Projects Leadership Academy, while more than 70 senior officials have enrolled on the Orchestrating Major Projects programme.

The contract award was made following fair and open competition.

The current Major Projects Leadership Academy programme has been run by Oxford Saïd Business School since 2012. This programme will be refreshed and relaunched in the second quarter of 2022.

The current Orchestrating Major Projects programme has been run by Oxford Saïd Business School since 2016. This programme will be refreshed and relaunched in between the third and fourth quarter of 2022.

[More information on Oxford Saïd Business School can be found on their website.](#)

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## **“This is Ukraine’s finest hour” – PM to address Ukrainian Parliament**

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson will address Ukraine’s Parliament today.



- PM will address Ukraine's Parliament today via live videolink, the first world leader to address the Verkhovna Rada since the conflict began
- The Government will announce a new £300m package of defensive military aid for Ukraine and send specialised civilian protection vehicles
- PM is expected to say this is Ukraine's 'finest hour' and the UK is 'proud to be among their friends'

The Prime Minister is expected to hail Ukraine's resistance against tyranny as an exemplar for the world in a live address to the country's Parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, today.

As the British embassy reopens in Kyiv, the Prime Minister will say the United Kingdom is "proud to be among Ukraine's friends" when he speaks to parliamentarians via videolink.

Ministers updated Parliament last week on plans to send sophisticated land Brimstone missiles and STORMER air defence vehicles to Ukraine. The Prime Minister will today set out a new package of military aid today worth £300 million, to support Ukraine's ongoing defence against Russia's illegal invasion. The package includes electronic warfare equipment, a counter battery radar system, GPS jamming equipment and thousands of night vision devices.

The UK will also send in the coming weeks heavy lift systems to provide logistical support to isolated forces, and more than a dozen new specialised Toyota Landcruisers to help protect civilian officials in Eastern Ukraine and evacuate civilians from frontline areas, following a request from the Ukrainian government.

The Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to say:

When my country faced the threat of invasion during the Second World War, our parliament – like yours – continued to meet throughout the conflict, and the British people showed such unity and resolve that we remember our time of greatest peril as our finest hour.

This is Ukraine's finest hour, an epic chapter in your national story that will be remembered and recounted for generations to come.



Your children and grandchildren will say that Ukrainians taught the world that the brute force of an aggressor counts for nothing against the moral force of a people determined to be free.

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