

News story: Torcross sea defence repaired after Devon storms

The Environment Agency has finished repairing Torcross sea defence after damage caused by the storms of February 2016.

Those storms saw large waves hit the sea defence when beach levels were low, causing cracks to appear along the promenade.

The repaired wall cost £2.4 million and reduces the risk of flooding to 51 properties. It is designed to withstand a severe storm, even when beach levels are low. Steel sheet piles have been installed directly in front of the existing line of piles with a new reinforced concrete capping beam. These double-length piles give the wall extra stability.

Steel sheet piles have been driven in front of existing piles and topped with concrete beams

The Environment Agency's Becky Richards said:

A huge thank you to all the residents of Torcross who have supported our repair work.

The project team worked hard to complete this repair quickly as possible, and our contractor, BMM JV, has done well to complete the works in time for the Easter holidays.

Local MP Dr Sarah Wollaston said:

Thank you so much to all those who have worked hard to restore the sea defences at Torcross, and to the community and agencies which came together during the anxious weeks following last year's storms to get things done.

The Environment Agency will inspect the defence every 24 months and monitor the repair during periods of bad weather.

A complementary project is underway to identify the best beach management options for Torcross. South Hams District Council is creating a Torcross and Slapton Beach Management Plan on behalf of The Slapton Line Partnership, to which the Environment Agency will contribute.

Alan Denbigh, Chair of the Slapton Line Partnership, said:

Together we hope to identify the best long-term beach management options to reduce the impact of storms at Torcross.

We are planning events in summer 2017 for residents and businesses in and around Torcross to talk about the plan. Visit www.slaptonline.org to find out more.

Even with this sea defence, parts of Torcross remain at a high risk of flooding from the sea. High risk means that each year this area is at significant risk of flooding during storms due to waves.

Everyone has a part to play to protect themselves from the risk of flooding. There are some simple steps you can take now:

To report an emergency flood incident in Torcross call our 24-hour incident hotline on 0800 80 70 60.

[Press release: Foreign Secretary comments on reports of chemical weapons attack in Syria](#)

On reports of a chemical weapons attack near Idlib in Syria, the Foreign Secretary said:

I am horrified by the reports of an attack near Idlib in Syria. The reports we are receiving strongly suggest the use of chemical weapons. And although we cannot yet be certain about what has happened, this bears all the hallmarks of an attack by the regime which has repeatedly used chemical weapons.

The UK condemns the use of chemical weapons wherever and by whomever they are used and we will continue to lead international efforts to hold perpetrators to account. We continue to support the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and will work closely with them as they seek to investigate this latest incident.

If this is shown to be the work of the regime, it is further evidence of the atrocities perpetrated against the Syrian people over six years of appalling conflict.

Commenting on the UK co-hosted Syria conference in Brussels tomorrow the Foreign Secretary said:

It is vital that the international community continues to support

the Syrian people. I am determined that the conference which the UK is co-hosting in Brussels steps up international assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the conflict. The UK is playing a leading role, with the Prime Minister's announcement of a £1 billion package the latest element of our vital support.

Further information

[News story: Thousands of BPS 2017 applications received](#)

More than 10,000 2017 Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) applications have been submitted since the application window opened on 1 March, the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) announced today (4 April).

The RPA is encouraging farmers to apply online now, to ensure that their application is submitted before the deadline.

Applying online means that farmers and agents can quickly check and update existing personal and business details, as well as view and transfer land and entitlements.

Last year the RPA received a record 80% of applications online and almost 7,000 farmers and agents have started an online application for BPS 2017.

RPA Interim Chief Executive Paul Caldwell said:

More and more farmers and agents are using the Rural Payments service to apply online. Some 1,500 entitlements have been transferred online so far.

Throughout the application process, help and support is available through our online guidance, 'How to' videos and by telephone.

Online and paper applications

Anyone who applied online for the Basic Payment Scheme in 2016 has been emailed all they need to apply online for BPS in 2017. Those who did not apply online in 2016 and did not use an agent have been sent a paper form and guidance on how to apply online.

Support available from the RPA

Farmers and anyone helping them with their claim can find step-by-step guides on transferring land, transferring entitlements and a general overview of how to apply online in useful [‘How to’ videos](#). Further guidance and scheme rules can be found on [GOV.UK](#).

On-screen help is also available, going through the application process screen by screen. A copy of this on-screen guide is also [available for download or print](#).

The application deadline for BPS 2017 is midnight on 15 May 2017. Late applications will be accepted until 9 June but will incur a penalty. More information on how to claim or amend applications in the penalty claim period can be found in the Key Dates section of the [2017 guidance](#).

[News story: A connected and autonomous vehicle ecosystem: apply for funding](#)

The [Centre for Connected and Autonomous Vehicles \(CCAV\)](#) is investing up to £55 million to make the UK’s connected and autonomous vehicle testing ecosystem the world’s most effective.

Here in the UK we have a strong automotive and technology heartland in the West Midlands through to Europe’s only megacity, London. Projects should look to build on these strengths, integrating existing proving grounds and public road test sites to improve capabilities and create new ones, and develop a national cluster of excellence.

This competition is part of the test bed programme for the government’s [Industrial Strategy](#).

Project streams

UK businesses and research organisations can make applications in 3 streams.

Stream 1

In stream 1 we are looking for projects that develop a public test environment in an urban, highly-dense city location. Up to £35 million is available to support up to 2 projects.

Stream 2

For this stream we are looking to fund one controlled test facility that is

representative of an urban or city environment. Examples might be a semi-controlled environment, such as a university campus or science and industry park, or a simulator that incorporates physical elements into a virtual environment. Up to £7 million is available.

Stream 3

For this stream we are looking to fund one realistic, controlled high-speed, limit-handling environment. We expect this environment to allow the creation of a diverse range of test scenarios. This may include vehicle to everything (V2X) interactions, collision avoidance and limit handling. Simulators may also be included. Up to £13 million is available.

In all cases preference will be given to projects that can deliver operational facilities and be open for business within 12 to 18 months.

A map of the defined area for test facility sites. See the brief for a full explanation.

The background

CCAV is a joint policy unit by the Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and the Department for Transport. Its aim is to ensure that the UK is a world leader in developing and testing connected and autonomous vehicles.

Funding is being provided by CCAV. It is being supported by Innovate UK.

Competition information

- this competition opens on 3 April 2017
- there will be a briefing event on 4 April 2017
- the registration deadline is midday on 12 July 2017
- the application deadline is midday on 19 July 2017
- you must be a UK-based business, work collaboratively and carry out your project in the UK
- test facilities should meet specified criteria, as outlined in the competition brief

[Press release: Twelve new Enterprise Zones go live](#)

Announced in the Autumn Statement 2015, these new zones support businesses, helping budding entrepreneurs to start and established companies to grow. They offer business rates discounts and additional tax breaks, backed by a

simplified local planning process.

In addition, 2 Enterprise Zones – the west of England LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) and the New Anglia LEP – have expanded to benefit more places and communities.

These new Enterprise Zones bring the total to 48 in England. They will build on the success of current zones, which have attracted more than £2.6 billion of private investment and more than 700 new businesses. It means more than 29,000 jobs have been created across a range of key industries since their launch in 2012.

Local Growth Minister Andrew Percy said:

Our modern Industrial Strategy is about creating the right environment for businesses to grow – Enterprise Zones are making sure this happens across the country.

This is a key part of our [Plan for Britain](#), creating a stronger economy that works for everyone. These 12 new Enterprise Zones will help even more businesses to set up and grow. I'm confident they will build on the success we've already seen over the past 5 years.

Support for growing business

Enterprise Zones are central to the government's Industrial Strategy. They will help businesses up and down the country seize the opportunities presented by leaving the European Union.

Each Enterprise Zone is unique, building on the strengths of each area. They support some of the country's most vital industries including manufacturing, technology and renewable energy.

The zones going live include:

- M62 Corridor Leeds City Region: in a boost to the Northern Powerhouse, the Zone will capitalise on the area's strong manufacturing industry and focus on digital technology, automotive engineering, textiles and glass making
- North Kent Innovation Zone: with 3 sites covering Ebbsfleet Garden City, Kent Medical Campus and Rochester Airport Technology Park, the Zone will focus on the life sciences sector
- Brierley Hill: a new tech office hub for the Black Country will support development of Britain's advanced manufacturing heartland in the Midlands Engine; it will have easy access to surrounding industrial sites as well as central Birmingham, national and international

connections

- Cornwall Marine Hub: located over 3 sites at Hayle, Tolvaddon and Falmouth Docks, the Zone will establish Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly as a global centre for the marine renewable energy sector

Further information

The Enterprise Zones launching were announced at Autumn Statement 2015 and are:

Northern Powerhouse

- M62 Corridor (Leeds City Region LEP)
- North East Round 2 (North East LEP)
- York Central (York, North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP)

Midlands Engine

- Brierley Hill (Black Country LEP)
- Loughborough and Leicester (Leicester and Leicestershire LEP)

South West

- Cornwall MarineHub (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP)
- Dorset (Dorset LEP)
- Heart of the South West (Heart of the South West LEP)
- An extension to the West of England LEP Enterprise Zone

South East and East

- Enterprise M3 (Enterprise M3 LEP)
- Enviro-Tech (Hertfordshire LEP)
- Newhaven (Coast to Capital LEP)
- North Kent Innovation Zone (South East LEP)
- An extension to the New Anglia LEP Enterprise Zone

Businesses basing themselves on Enterprise Zones can access a number of benefits:

- business rate discount worth up to £275,000 per business over a 5-year period
- generous enhanced capital allowances (tax relief) worth millions to businesses making large investments in plant and machinery
- 100% retention of business rate growth for the Local Enterprise Partnership, to enable them to fund development on the Enterprise Zone