

Over 314,000 homes better protected due to flood protection work

A £2.6 billion, six-year programme of work dedicated to improving flood and coastal defences has exceeded its original targets by 14,000 – with over 314,000 homes now better protected from flooding since 2015.

More than 850 new flood and coastal erosion defence projects have been completed during this period. Over 580,000 acres of agricultural land, as well as thousands of businesses, communities and major infrastructure – including more than 8,000 kilometres of roads – also benefited from improvement schemes. Analysis in a new report published today shows this work is estimated to have reduced national flood risk by 5%.

Alongside delivering on its headline target, Defra's capital investment programme from 2015-2021 has also brought wider benefits to both the environment through the creation and enhancement of natural habitats, and also local communities, through better protecting nationally important infrastructure and wider contributions to economic recovery. Early analysis suggests the programme of work over the last six years has saved the economy more than £28 billion in avoided damages to properties, businesses and more over the lifetime of these defence assets.

[Defra's final post-programme assessment](#) shows that the original commitment of 300,000 homes was revised upwards by more than 4.5% after extra funding was allocated across the period.

The programme's original £2.3 billion budget was expanded to a total £2.6 billion to allow for additional work to be carried out. Alongside the current record £5.2 billion investment, from 2021-2027, the government's long-term policy statement on flood and coastal erosion risk management is the most comprehensive in a decade with five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions to accelerate progress to better protect and prepare the country for future flooding and coastal erosion.

Investment during 2015-2021 was spread across every region of England and included targeted funding for areas where it was needed the most, pushing forward regeneration in communities at high risk of flooding – many of whom suffered from significant flooding during the winter of 2015.

One example is Yorkshire, with the government investing more in flood defences for Yorkshire and the Humber than any other region, better protecting more than 83,000 homes since 2015.

Investment was also targeted at areas likely to be hardest hit by the impact of a flood, with new flood schemes in the most deprived parts of the country continuing to qualify for funding at 2.25 times the rate of other areas.

£40 million of funding was announced in 2018 specifically aimed at boosting

regeneration in some of these areas. As a result, more than 46,000 homes in areas from Cornwall to Northumberland are now better protected from flooding – including 800 residential properties around Rochdale and Littleborough following a £5 million of investment injection into the River Roch Flood Alleviation scheme. More than £10 million was awarded to protect communities in the St. Austell Bay area of Cornwall.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

Our programme of work has protected over 314,000 properties, defending people, communities, and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion. We know that there is still more to do, so we are doubling our investment with a record £5.2 billion over the next six years.

Over 1,700 homes were also better protected through more than 80 property flood resilience schemes – aimed at reducing the amount of damage experienced by property owners, occupiers and businesses and enable them to recover faster after flooding. More than 280 homes in Kent were upgraded with adaptive measures including flood doors, flood gates and air brick covers thanks to the Middle Medway flood resilience scheme.

The report also reveals many of the schemes across the programme looked to enhance or provide additional environmental benefits including improving access to rivers, wildlife sites and the creation of new green spaces as well as increasing our use of natural flood management to reduce flood risk.

Approximately 12,000 acres of natural habitat were created or improved, and approximately 700 kilometres of rivers enhanced during this period. This includes new habitat the size of more than 90 football pitches created for local wildlife, thanks to the Port Clarence and Greatham South project in County Durham.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

The Environment Agency's six year flood defence building programme has better protected over 314,000 homes and businesses from the cost, pain and disruption of flooding. There are very few national infrastructure programmes that come in on time, on budget, and on target: I am very proud that the EA has achieved this. That is all down to the expertise, dedication and commitment of the EA teams and our partners across the country: they deserve the nation's thanks.

Flood defence works. While we can never protect everyone against all flooding all the time, we can reduce the risk of it happening and the impact when it does. In February – for the first time – we had three named storms in a week, and rivers rose to record heights. While some 400 properties sadly flooded, over 40,000 homes and businesses were protected by our defences.

The climate emergency is bringing greater risks. Our response must be to protect our communities as best we can, make them more resilient, using natural flood management as well as hard defences, and to tackle both the causes and consequences of climate change. The EA is doing all that in our new £5.2bn flood defence investment programme. We will stay focused on delivering it for the people and places we serve.

Other notable schemes that also benefited from this investment include:

- Humber: Hull Frontage scheme: A £42 million flood defence upgrade of the defences along the edge of the Humber Estuary to protect the city of Hull from tidal flooding. The scheme will reduce the risk of flooding from the estuary for 113,000 homes and non-residential properties.
- Ipswich Barrier: One of the most significant defences that the Environment Agency has constructed in recent years, costing £67 million, protecting 1,600 homes and 400 businesses from flooding and the impacts of climate change over the course of the next century.
- Boston Barrier gate: Now fully ready and working, giving an enhanced level of flood protection to over 13,000 homes and businesses in the town. As the centrepiece of the flood scheme, the barrier gate can be raised in just 20 minutes, responding quickly to threats of North Sea tidal surges.
- Ulverston Town Beck flood scheme: This £9.5 million flood scheme was completed in May 2018. It includes raised flood walls and a maze of underground culverts and protects more than 500 homes and businesses in Cumbria will be better protected from flooding.
- Cannington flood defence scheme: This created a new flood bypass channel capable of moving flood water away from the village. The scheme was completed in 2017 and was a partnership project costing a total of £4.5 million. It saw 200 properties better protected.

The assessment of this 2015-2021 programme comes as the government is one year into a £5.2 billion investment in around 2,000 new flood and coastal defences between 2021 and 2027.

These upcoming schemes will help to reduce the national flood risk by up to 11 per cent and help to avoid £32 billion of wider economic damages along with a range of other benefits for local communities and the environment.

It will better protect 550 kilometres of road and rail infrastructure, create or improve 13,000 acres of natural habitat, and enhance 830 kilometres of rivers.

Background

- The [post-programme assessment](#) will be available on gov.uk.
- Alongside the policy statement, the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England guides the activities of those involved in flood and coastal erosion risk management.

- Taken together, this policy statement and strategy will ensure that our country is more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and climate change in the long term.
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Russia's illegal war on the women and children of Ukraine – UK at UN Security Council

May I begin first of all in joining others in thanking the insightful and expert and deeply thoughtful contributions of our briefers. My thanks go to Sima Bahous from UN Women, to Mr Manuel Fontaine from UNICEF, and of course, Ms Kateryna Cherepakha who gave us a direct insight of the situation, on the ground, in Ukraine.

And in doing so, it reminds me that the Geneva Conventions contain numerous provisions that afford special protections to women and girls, as civilians, in conflict zones.

Yet, what we see today with our own eyes, and as today's detailed briefings testify, is harrowing evidence of how women and girls are suffering.

Mr Putin's invading forces are absolutely oblivious to even the most basic tenet of the Geneva Conventions – the distinction, the absolutely essential distinction, between civilians and combatants.

Today, sadly, we've once again heard Russia trying to deflect from the facts, the reality on the ground – muddy the waters – by what can only be described as quite extraordinary statements, and even lies. Yet, what is true, what is fact, is that Russian attacks on civilians and residential areas have been truly barbaric.

Yet, what we've seen shine through this, as a real beacon, is the Ukrainian people themselves. Ukrainian women have demonstrated incredible fortitude, and demonstrated the real resilience of the Ukrainian people.

Indeed, that was reflected in the engagement our own Prime Minister had in Ukraine recently. And, I myself – as we heard from the representatives of UNICEF, from UN Women and, indeed, the Representative of the United States – I've also had the opportunity, and I'm pleased we're joined by Poland, when I visited Poland, I saw the strength and support of the Polish people. The incredible welcome being given to fleeing refugees. But also the resilience of Ukrainian women, predominantly women, as we've heard from many statements today, who are crossing the border. They're being forced across the border because they want to protect their children who are accompanying them.

We've also met and seen female Members of Parliament who have resorted, because they can't sit as Parliamentary Members, to take up firearms to defend themselves, to defend their people.

We've seen incredible courage from civic leaders refusing to leave their communities.

To the countless, and absolutely incredible, untold stories of heroism across Ukraine, as women have stood up to Russian forces – many armed with little more than patriotism, their own sense of courage and resilience, and a fierce sense of injustice.

Emerging reports paint a deeply disturbing picture, including alleged rapes and sexual violence within Ukraine's borders.

The violence and exploitation does not end there – beyond the borders, displaced Ukrainian women and girls, as we've heard again today, face heightened risks of trafficking, a point made by UNICEF, and also sexual exploitation by criminal gangs.

The mounting evidence of war crimes in Ukraine compels us, surely, as the international community, to come together to stand and do more and stand with Ukraine – and stand with those who have faced such unspeakable violence.

The vote recently to suspend the Russian Federation from the Human Rights Council was proof of our collective will to do just that.

We must now work ceaselessly to investigate these crimes, and to hold Mr Putin, Russia and the forces of Russia to account.

And that is why the United Kingdom has worked closely with partners to refer this illegal invasion to the International Criminal Court, to establish a Commission of Inquiry through the Human Rights Council, and to establish an OSCE Mission of Experts.

Ukraine's women, like many women around the world, as they continue to do today, helped build that open, democratic, free Ukraine – a society that for some reason, Mr Putin fears. And Ukrainian women's participation at all levels, as we heard today from colleagues from Ireland and Kenya, amongst others, will be central if we are to build a sustainable and lasting peace.

And any peace settlement must also reflect the disproportionate impact of this conflict, this war, on the girls and women of Ukraine.

In conclusion, today's UN Security Council discussion and meeting is a rallying call to us all, the international community, to recognise the impact of this illegal war. The impact of this illegal war on the very basis and foundations of international law. On the very basis and attack – on the very foundations on which this institution, the United Nations, is based. The actual Charter of the United Nations itself. And, it is an illegal war on the women and children of Ukraine – and ultimately we must come together, and act together, to hold Russia to account for these crimes.

I now resume my function as President of the Council.

Ensuring delivery of COVID-19 vaccines to people living through conflict and humanitarian crises

Colleagues,

May I first thank our briefers, Ted Chaiban, Dr Martiniez, and Dr Ojwang for their insightful and detailed briefings and for reminding us all that we are not out of the woods. The COVID-19 pandemic is still very much a reality for all of us. Together we have been battling the COVID pandemic for a little over two years.

It has been a time of great pain for all of us, but also a real expression of how far humanity has come on this journey together.

We have moved from having no vaccine at all, to having a steady supply of multiple vaccines.

The UK has committed £1.4 billion of UK aid to address the impacts of the COVID pandemic and to help end the pandemic as quickly as possible.

This also includes £829 million on global development, manufacture and delivery of COVID vaccines, treatments and tests.

Another good example was the UK-India partnership on vaccines has enabled over a billion people to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, saving lives and mitigating the spread of the pandemic globally. The Oxford University, AstraZeneca, and Serum Institute of India partnership combined the UK's leadership in Research and development and India's manufacturing capacity as the "pharmacy of the world".

Last month, the UK hosted the Global Pandemic Preparedness Summit which raised US\$1.5 billion funding for the Coalition of Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) to develop vaccines against new health threats in 100 days and rapidly scale-up regional manufacturing for affordable global supply.

The UK plays its part, through the COVAX Facility, to give access to vaccines, wherever they are needed.

We are among the largest donors to the Advance Market Commitment, committing half a billion pounds so far.

COVAX itself has now delivered over 1.4 billion vaccines to 144 countries, the majority of which are low- and lower-middle income.

Vaccination rates are also steadily increasing. But as we have heard already from our briefers, they continue to lag in many low-income countries, and in particular, communities in conflict and humanitarian crisis risk being left behind.

After more than a year of steady vaccine production, the challenge has moved from being one of supply, to a challenge of roll-out.

OCHA report that less than four percent of the populations of DRC, Yemen, Haiti and Burundi are vaccinated.

This, frankly put, is a staggering inequity that is bad for us all.

The delivery of vaccines to marginalised and conflict-affected communities is being obstructed by under-resourced and overstretched health systems, and by curtailed humanitarian access.

Last year this Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2565, calling for the provision of vaccines to areas in conflict. It gained the highest ever number of co-sponsors for a Council resolution.

What is clear: full, safe and unhindered humanitarian access, and the protection of health workers in line with International Humanitarian Law, remain vitally important, but elusive – a point amplified by Dr Martinez. So what more can we do to ensure the most vulnerable are not left behind?

First, we can help ensure that COVID vaccination is prioritised by governments in countries in conflict.

We can offer support through the COVAX humanitarian buffer: a measure of last resort to target individuals in fragile regions not included in national vaccination plans.

We can also support efforts to strengthen international cooperation. COVAX has recently set up a new Vaccine Delivery Partnership to improve coordination at global and country level, including with the African Union, for COVID vaccine delivery and support, including in the most vulnerable countries, most of which are in Africa – and our expert briefers again outlined this very point.

Second, we can spell out to all parties to conflicts, their obligations under International Humanitarian Law to provide unhindered humanitarian access, including for vaccinations. This must happen.

Third, we must work together, and as the United Nations, to overcome obstacles to delivery, and to advance Sustainable Development Goal 3 and our collective efforts to build stronger health systems worldwide. Dr Ojwang also stressed the importance of leveraging networks in country through his own experience in South Sudan. I welcome the important role, as Dr Ojwang highlighted, of faith leaders who have also been brought on board.

In conclusion, resolution 2565 continues to be an important roadmap for our discussions on vaccines and health in conflict zones.

COVID-19 has showed us that the best way to achieve success is by collaboration and working together. This resolution represents an investment in stability and global health, not just for individual countries but for the world – and as such, must remain a top priority for us all.

[A modern partnership between countries that share values and objectives](#)

On her first visit to Zambia since her appointment as Minister for Africa, Vicky Ford saw how the UK is supporting Zambia's education system in order to further remove the barriers preventing children – especially teenage girls – from accessing formal education.

The Minister visited Mulola School in Kapete District, where she saw how international support on sanitation, nutrition and sexual and reproductive health is important to removing the non-financial barriers that can prevent the poorest from getting the education they need.

Minister Ford also launched British Investment International (BII) in Zambia, in conjunction with the BII CEO Nick O'Donohoe. BII is the new British development finance institution that will invest billions in infrastructure and technology in low and middle income countries across Asia, Africa and the Caribbean.

During the launch, she announced that the UK mining company Moxico Resources is going to invest an additional \$100m in developing its Mimbula and Kalengwa mine projects and that, through InfracoAfrica, UK aid would be used to increase access for Zambian households and businesses to clean, green energy.

Minister Ford said:

Over the past 2 days, I've seen the breadth of the partnership between the UK and Zambia. Amongst many areas, our governments are working together to improve the lives of those in poverty and, increasing the opportunities for both Zambian and UK companies to invest in Zambia's growing economy.

Zambia's long history of supporting peace and democracy continues today. The resounding vote for respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law that millions of Zambians made last year has demonstrated yet again, their country's position as a beacon of peace and democracy in the region and beyond. I'm committed to our 2 nations, the UK and Zambia, continuing to work together on protecting and promoting our shared values in the international sphere.

Through the launch of British International Investment here in Zambia, we have sent a strong message of the UK government's commitment to building a stronger, more diversified Zambian economy. Equally, it has been my pleasure to learn more about the steps being taken by the Zambian government to deliver free education to all, and discuss how the UK continues to actively support better futures for all Zambian children.

Minister Ford attended a briefing at Lilayi Elephant Sanctuary to hear how the UK is supporting Zambian efforts to tackle the illegal wildlife trade, through the UK Army's training of wildlife rangers at Zambia's Kafue National Park in anti-poaching techniques.

The Minister paid a condolence visit on Thandiwe Banda, following the recent passing of Zambia's 4th President, Rupiah Banda. During the visit, she reflected on Rupiah Banda's long public service and his role in supporting Zambian democracy, particularly during last year's election.

In a meeting with President Hichilema, Minister Ford reiterated the UK's commitment to continue working with Zambia in the areas where the countries have shared values and priorities. In particular, she noted how Zambia and the UK had stood united in condemning the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

During her visit, the Minister met with the Foreign Minister, Hon Stanley Kakubo, as well as the leader of the opposition and representatives from the Zambian business community.

The visit to Zambia was part of a regional visit by Minister Ford and included visits to Malawi and Tanzania.

[Deputy Trade Commissioner for Latin America visits Paraguay](#)



Meeting with Ministers Raúl Cano and Raúl Silvero, from the Paraguay Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The visit focused on strengthening trade relations. It reaffirms the commitment of the British government to increasing bilateral trade with Paraguay.

The Department for International Trade Paraguay and the British Embassy in Paraguay put together an encompassing agenda. The programme included meetings with Paraguay government, unions and British-business stakeholders.

Meeting with Vice Minister Pedro Mancuello, from the Paraguay Ministry of Industry and Trade.

Deputy Commissioner Mahony had the opportunity to meet with representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Industrial Union of Paraguay.

The agenda also included meetings with representatives of British companies and subsidiaries in the country. The visit ended with a social gathering with the Paraguayan-British Chamber of Commerce.

Dinner with the Paraguay-British Chamber of Commerce

Dinner with the Paraguay-British Chamber of Commerce

A key point of interest is to share the UK's potential for technological innovation and sustainability. One of the most recent investments British-stakeholder investment comes by the hand of ATOME Energy PLC. The venture estimates an input of USD 550 million for the production of green hydrogen and ammonia in Paraguay.

Commissioner Mahony personally thanked all hosts and reflected on his time in Paraguay [in his LinkedIn profile](#). On trade and new technologies, Commissioner Mahony said:

The UK is a powerhouse in areas such as the use of hydropower, solar energy or biomass. We also have expertise in more sustainable technology in agriculture, hydropower, health diagnostics and cyber security.

We are excited to share this with Paraguay.

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1. 12 April 2022

Erratum: incorrectly stated that Deputy Commissioner Mahony met with the Rural Association of Paraguay. Due to last-minute changes to the

programme, this meeting could not take place.

2. 11 April 2022

Added translation