

13,000 homes to be protected from floods thanks to new tidal barrier

Nearly 13,000 homes and businesses will be better protected thanks to the construction of a new tidal barrier in Somerset, which the Environment Secretary has authorised this week.

George Eustice has granted permission for construction of the £100m Bridgwater tidal barrier with a Transport and Works Act better protecting 11,300 homes and 1,500 businesses in the town and surrounding areas.

This major infrastructure project, which will function similarly to the Thames Barrier, marks a sizeable investment in the area and will help protect existing jobs and create new ones as it prevents more than £1.5bn of flood damage over the next 100 years.

The main railway line between Taunton and Bridgwater, the A38 and links to the M5 will all benefit from this additional protection.

The barrier, which it is anticipated will be built from low carbon concrete, will also protect four schools, a hospital and the town's shopping centre.

Environment Secretary George Eustice said:

This is an important step forward in the delivery of one of the most complex and significant flood defences in the country.

The £100 million Bridgwater Barrier is a significant investment in Somerset, protecting nearly 13,000 homes and helping unlock growth opportunities in the region.

Rachel Burden, Wessex Flood and Coastal Risk Manager at the Environment Agency said:

This is a significant milestone for one of the biggest flood defence schemes in the country.

This decision gives real confidence that the barrier is well on the way to be delivered and will help the town of Bridgwater and surrounding areas be ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and past the year 2100.

The design of the barrier consists of two moveable gates on the River Parrett, along with new flood defence embankments and improvements to existing embankments downstream of the barrier.

The scheme could also bring a number of environmental benefits, including the

creation of wetland habitats, improvements to fish passes and eel passes on the Parrett and the Tone to help boost fish numbers and a cycle and footbridge at the barrier to encourage active travel.

The Environment Agency and Sedgemoor Council are now aiming for construction to begin early next year, with the project including funding from Somerset Rivers Authority and others, subject to HM Treasury agreement on the business case.

Since 2015, the Government has protected over 300,000 properties and is now investing a record £5.2 billion to deliver a further 2,000 schemes that will better protected hundreds of thousands of properties across England.

In 2021-22, over £125 million has been allocated for over 100 planned schemes in the South West, due to begin this financial year.

[Chilean market opens to UK pork exports](#)

UK pork producers will be able to export to Chile for the first time, in a move estimated to be worth £20m in the first five years of trade. This follows UK pork access to Mexico and Taiwan.

The new market creates new export opportunities for the pig industry as the Government, the UK Export Certification Partnership (UKECP) and Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) continue working to develop market access opportunities as part of work to support the sector.

This builds on measures including the launch of an immediate review of fairness in supply chains in the pig sector, using powers under the Agriculture Act 2020.

Farming Minister Victoria Prentis has held various roundtables with farmers and industry representatives and spoken to the agricultural leads at the major banks to ensure that they are showing pig farmers as much flexibility as possible. The Government has additionally introduced a Private Storage Aid Scheme, Slaughter Incentive Payment Scheme, and a bespoke temporary visa scheme for pork butchers.

The UK exported £339m of pork in 2021, with over two thirds going to non-EU destinations, demonstrating the value of new markets. Chilean authorities have now opened up their market to 27 firms across the UK including those in Angus, Armagh, Wrexham and Suffolk.

Farming Minister Victoria Prentis said:

The pig sector is facing a range of challenges and we must make use of all levers available to us. That includes new export markets, and it is great to see the Chilean market open its doors to our pig producers.

This will be worth £20m over the next five years and will build on other measures we have introduced to bolster the industry.

UK Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Richard Irvine said:

It is fantastic to see another market open its doors to high quality UK produce. Gaining pork market access to Chile represents yet another success for UK Industry and strengthens our global reputation for excellence.

AHDB International Market Development Director Dr Phil Hadley said:

This announcement is the latest in a run of successful market access wins for the red meat sector and is another example of the high regard and reputation our products command overseas.

Opening the market for UK pork to Chile, following gaining access to Mexico, will provide our pig farmers and processors with another valuable market to sell their products, providing a much-needed boost for the sector in difficult times.

Her Majesty's Trade Commissioner for Latin America and the Caribbean Jonathan Knott said:

I am delighted that British pork can now enter the Chilean market for the first time, after negotiations with the Chilean authorities.

Chilean consumers will be able to enjoy even more quality British produce, and UK pork exporters will have access to this important and growing market. Another success in our campaign to lower trade barriers between our nations.

The Chile market is open to all UK exporters approved by the Chilean Authorities. Through the GREAT Britain & Northern Ireland campaign, the UK government aims to raise the international profile and reputation of food and drink from across the UK and help more food and drink companies export their produce abroad.

UK PROPERTY PREDICTIONS FOR 2022: Insights from GPA's experts

2022 will be a pivotal year for the workplace. For the [Government Property Agency](#) (GPA), our work continues in supporting the delivery of Government priorities including supporting levelling up, sustainability and Civil Service Reform through property technology and hybrid working – issues which have important parallels for the industry at large.

IN THE WORKPLACE

Despite a lot of the change in working habits starting pre-pandemic, Dominic Brankin, our Workplace Services Director, and Kate Guthrie, our Deputy Director Workplace Experience believe that this evolution will continue for some time. They see 2022 as the year in which businesses show real commitment to learning and curiosity about their people's workplace experience. It's expected that companies will make good progress in getting the right workplace design to support the combination of people's different working practices. People have had experience of working at home for a long period of time now, and there will be some who want to continue this practice, but also a lot of people who will relish a choice of working environments to suit different tasks. The organisations that will be most successful will be the ones where great workplaces meet great leadership – where honest conversations about the workplace are proactively facilitated and feed into choices made by teams to enable them to work as effectively as possible.

A lot has been said about 'collaboration zones' and 'social spaces' when reconfiguring the office. But we believe that businesses enhancing or introducing these types of space in 2022 and beyond shouldn't forget the quiet, individual spaces that support focussed work. Our research with Leesman surveying 26,000 civil servants told us that 'individual work' was still the priority for many and this should be factored into office design too.

We also believe that 2022 will see organisations focus on understanding and supporting team effectiveness, measuring the aspects of the work experience that indicate employees are getting what they need to be able to do their best at their job. This will inevitably include the workplace experience. Do people have the workplaces they want and the experiences they need? Are they supported effectively to do their job, and work collaboratively with their team?

POST-COVID 'ATTENDEE-ISM'

In respect of demand for space, Alan Whitelaw, our Property Director, believes that across businesses there will be a general shift in focus from

the pre-Covid 'presenteeism' way of thinking about the workplace to a post-Covid 'attendee-ism' – where people are not judged on the amount of time they spend in the office, rather how they use that time – for example, for team working, in-person presentations and training, creative work and projects. He is seeing a shift in the perception of organisations towards empowerment and trust that people will use the office for a purpose, rather than requiring mandated attendance. Alan points out that different businesses and functions need to use the office differently – during lockdown we still had some departments that needed to be in the office and were there throughout. Similarly, there are some functions that were thought to need to be in the office that have proved that they can work efficiently on a more flexible basis.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IS KEY

On the technology side, our Chief Digital and Technology Officer, Neil Williams, believes there will be a focus on interoperability in 2022 – customer experience is key. This means making the use of the office and digital tools as easy as possible for our customers – the civil servants who use our space – and creating a streamlined experience. In particular, audio visual technology will become much more widespread in collaborative and creative spaces as well as in meeting rooms. Again, simplicity is key with plug-and-play equipment enabling hybrid meetings between staff in several different locations.

On the data front, Neil believes that it will take some time to gather and gain insight from data on how people are working together and interacting with space. But bringing available data together in one place to create a complete overview will add the most value: which spaces are used and when – collaborative vs individual for example; whether people are booking spaces before they travel; what issues are reported and how quickly they are dealt with; water and electricity usage and at what times of the day.

GETTING TO GRIPS WITH ESG

And last but definitely not least, sustainability will be on everybody's minds in 2022 as they really get to grips with Environmental Social Governance (ESG) – some might say finally! Dr Miguel Godfrey, our Head of Sustainability, and Louisa Le Roux, our Net Carbon Zero Programme Manager, predict that property companies will start to prioritise not only reaching targets but searching for ways to exceed them. For example, BREEAM Excellent is the ambition for many developers. However, the reality is that there is much more that can be accomplished. Achieving the required 78% carbon reduction by 2035 will not be easy, and to achieve this we will need both concerted effort and work to deliver the quick wins early.

We will see businesses shift their focus to a wider array of green initiatives with sub-metering set to be a real trend. This will allow businesses to understand their energy usage so that they can pick the right measures to reduce it. These measures will most likely include switching to green tariffs, landlords installing more EV charging units, revisiting their heating and cooling units, and undertaking a 'greening' of their procurement

and supply chain process. These are all areas the GPA is taking forward at pace.

For the bigger developments and refurbishment, we expect to see wider use of Modern Methods of Construction and the use of digital twins to help with the drive towards sustainability – something we are developing across our own projects. On the retrofitting side, we think 2022 will be the year where heritage buildings are tackled more widely. It's been proven that retrofitting can be done to improve sustainability and so more will follow suit. As technology develops at pace, we will start to see more usage of solar panel solutions which will blend in better with the façade and fabric of older buildings.

We are currently working on potential PV panel installation on some of our Central London buildings with a test site going through listed building consent. We are also putting a plan in place for decarbonising our Whitehall District Heat System which will go a long way to reducing carbon emissions on our Central London heritage estate.

Finally, we hope (and want) 2022 to be the year where the industry gets to grips with the measurement of embodied carbon and a reduction in construction waste which will help supercharge our collaborative race to Net Zero.

[SMC responds to the publication of 'Inclusive Britain'](#)

News story

A statement from the Social Mobility Commission on the publication of 'Inclusive Britain: government response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities'



Responding to the publication of [Inclusive Britain, government's response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#), SMC Chair Katharine

Birbalsingh and Deputy Chair Alun Francis said:

We welcome the Government's response to the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities' report.

Racism is a blight on our society and we must continue to work to eradicate it. While this is a matter for everybody, public policy has an important contribution to make, by building an evidence base to improve our understanding of disparities, strengthen our analysis of the sources of racism and identify effective solutions.

We commend the commitment to addressing these disparities in the context of building trust and fairness, and supporting opportunity, agency and inclusion for all disadvantaged individuals and groups.

There are a number of recommendations which overlap with areas of Social Mobility Commission interest, particularly the labour market value of different higher education qualifications, and we will strive to progress this as part of our wider work.

Ultimately a focus on taking action on social mobility is welcome, and we will continue to advise on the best actions to ensure all individuals and communities reach their potential and live a successful, fulfilling life.

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UK and Turkey agree clean transport deal worth £1.7 billion in boost to British rail industry

- UK Export Finance guarantee a EUR2.1 billion loan to fund construction of 503km high speed electric railway
- Huge nine-figure contracts set to be awarded to UK rail suppliers as a condition of UK support
- Deal announced at UK-Türkiye Green Finance Conference designed to help Turkey finance major climate-friendly projects and meet its COP26 commitments

UK government's biggest ever sustainable, civil infrastructure deal will help finance a new high speed electric railway line in Turkey to decarbonise travel, with major contracts awarded to British and Turkish businesses.

The EUR2.1 billion green financing will be guaranteed by UK Export Finance (UKEF), through its Buyer Credit Scheme, with Credit Suisse and Standard Chartered structuring and coordinating banks arranging the transaction.

This is the first UK-supported rail transaction in Turkey for over 160 years, and forms part of Turkey's plan to transform high speed rail in the country.

The new 503km electric-powered railway line will connect Ankara, Turkey's capital, to the huge port-side city of Izmir. When complete, the new line will provide a faster, lower carbon alternative to current air and road routes between the two cities, helping to fulfil Turkey's climate change commitments made at COP26.

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan said:

Turkey is a vital trading partner for the UK. Our shared global outlook on free trade and the environment is the driving force behind economic growth in our two nations.

It is fitting that UK Export Finance's biggest ever civil infrastructure deal is strongly sustainable. This is a proud moment for the UK railway industry, using its industrial roots to reduce emissions in heavily polluted cities.

Treasury and Finance Minister for Türkiye Dr. Nureddin Nebati, said:

Referring to the Bilateral Cooperation Agreement signed between the UK and Türkiye in 1999; we have successfully achieved the closing of the landmark financing of Ankara İzmir High Speed Railway Project under the green loan structure.

We have given utmost importance to the environmental and social procedures during this project and as the Ministry of Treasury and Finance we are closely following the improvements of such issues. We also desire to be among the active and important players of the rapidly growing green finance market.

We are very glad for the cooperation and strong longstanding relations with UK government and we hope to further strengthen our collaboration.

Turkey is one of the UK's most important independent trading partners. The bilateral trading relationship was worth £17.5 billion in the four quarters to the end of Q3 2021, increasing by £1.4 billion from the same period in

2020.

The deal will secure major contracts for UK companies of all sizes to supply to the project, with several nine-figure deals for UK companies close to being agreed. Engineering and construction giants ERG International Group is using its close ties with the UK supply chain to support the project. UK companies are expected to supply British-made railway lines, turnouts, point machines, fasteners, material and equipment for signaling, telecommunication and electrification systems, as well as vital insurance and freight services.

The financing was led by Credit Suisse and Standard Chartered Bank with support from UK Export Finance and meets internationally recognised sustainability standards and is aligned with the Green Loan Principles. Reinsurance is also being provided by international export credit agencies such as SACE in Italy, SERV in Switzerland and OeKB in Austria, reducing the risk to the UK taxpayer.

Yoshi Ichikawa, Head of Structured Export Finance for Europe, Standard Chartered Bank said:

We're proud to further strengthen our relationship with the Turkish government, providing a loan structured with a clear focus on international social and environmental standards, and working closely with Credit Suisse and UKEF. This support is another in the line of Standard Chartered's financing in Türkiye to help the government deliver its railway infrastructure plan.

Murat Dedeoglu, ERG International UK, Group CEO said:

ERG is honored with the achievement and its historic milestone. ERG look forward strengthening ties with UKEF and the Turkish Government in the construction sector and adding value to the economies by making advance engineering and technological solutions available. Like in all our previous projects over the last 50 years, ERG is committed to create sustainable economic added value.

ERG's Turkish and UK based Environmental & Social teams will bring many years of international experience to this important project, in order to ensure that IFC, Equator Principles, and national standards are at all times met. We would like to thank all our partners and stakeholders in the UK, Europe and Turkey to make this dream project come true, which will positively change and enhance the lives of millions of travellers and people living along the alignment.

Contact