

The Duchess of Northumberland visits Mitford Dam

On Monday 4th November The Duchess of Northumberland, in her role as Lord-Lieutenant of Northumberland, was given a guided tour of a vital flood alleviation scheme in the heart of Morpeth.

The visit to Mitford Dam, an Environment Agency asset, was organised by the Morpeth Flood Action Group (MFAG).

The Mitford Dam is part of a £27 million pound programme that was launched back in August 2015. A scheme funded by the Environment Agency and Northumberland County Council, and initiated by the Northumbria Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

The new defences will cope with a repeat of the events in 2008, which caused the largest flood the town has experienced.

In these times of unstable weather patterns and the effects of climate change, assets like Mitford Dam are becoming more crucial to help better protect the community. In Morpeth this flood alleviation scheme, the largest of its kind in the North East of England, reduces the risk of flooding to over 1,000 homes and businesses.

Mitford Dam is an exemplar project containing the largest flood storage reservoirs ever built by the Environment Agency.

The dam and storage area are located upstream in the village of Mitford. They store up to 1.4 million cubic metres of water – this is enough to fill 560 Olympic sized swimming pools. They combine when river levels are too high and would ordinarily cause flooding in the town.

Her Grace, The Duchess of Northumberland, said:

We are fortunate to have a flood defence like Mitford Dam in Morpeth that provides residents and people who run their own businesses with the opportunity to sleep a little easier in their beds at night, knowing they have a safeguard in place to help protect them against the effects of flooding. The community appreciates all of the hard work that everyone delivers in the town by providing services that allow us to safely go about our day, and I was happy to accept the chance to have a guided tour of the dam by the very people who made it all possible.

Environment Agency's Alan Cadas, Operations Manager in the North East, said:

The Environment Agency continues to be very proud of Mitford Dam

and what it represents. It's a ground-breaking project that has changed the lives of so many people who live and work in Morpeth. The dam gives them some additional reassurance that if bad weather does hit the town then the areas which are at higher risk of flooding are now better protected.

Like with any flood alleviation scheme anywhere in the country, we can't prevent the risk of flooding to every home or business. But we can try and use the latest technology and years of knowledge and experience, to try and create measures that will help provide crucial warning time and the necessary protection.

We couldn't have done any of the scheme without the support of our partners and the continued dedication shown by local community groups like the Morpeth Flood Action Group. Together we are looking to build on this invaluable work for years to come.

The Environment Agency also works closely with the local community by delivering a dedicated engagement programme for schools, charities, groups and associations through its flood resilience team. This programme receives welcomed support by organisations including Morpeth Town Council, Northumberland County Council and Northumberland Fire and Rescue.

Alan Bell, Chair Morpeth Flood Action Group (MFAG), said:

We welcome the opportunity, facilitated by the Environment Agency, to show The Duchess of Northumberland the alleviation scheme that means so much to the people of Morpeth. After the tour some of our members and other residents will be meeting with the Duchess to tell her of our experiences from 2008 and our hopes for the future.

The role of Morpeth Flood Action Group has evolved over the eleven years of our existence. In that time we have worked in close collaboration with the EA, who have offered help and support both to the group and the people of Morpeth.

As a group located firmly within the community, we are ideally positioned to offer information, support and, when appropriate reassurance to residents who may be at risk or fear of flooding.

The Duchess of Northumberland also visited the Morpeth Flood Alleviation Scheme in the heart of the town at High Stanners – where she was given a demonstration of one of the flood gates being closed. Her Grace then met up

with residents who were affected by the flooding back in 2008, and also members from the Morpeth Lions.

To find out if you are living in a flood risk area and for information on how to sign up for flood alerts please [visit the Environment Agency website](#)