

Environment Agency warns of ongoing flood risk following Storm Franklin

The Environment Agency is urging communities along the River Severn to be prepared for significant flooding as the impact of Storm Franklin continues to cause high river levels.

Two [severe flood warnings](#), meaning there is a danger to life, remain in place for the River Severn at the Wharfage in Ironbridge and in Wribbenhall, Bewdley where some residents were evacuated.

Unprecedented weather, during which three storms were named by the Met Office, has led to river levels coming close to beating historic highs, including at the Upper Severn and River Mersey in Didsbury.

Where defences are outflanked we undertake pumping where possible and safe to do so, to reduce water levels, as well as supporting the community through warning and informing.

Sadly around 400 properties have flooded across different parts of the country as a result of the heavy rain and our thoughts are with all those who have suffered damage to their properties as a result of the storms.

The Environment Agency has been working over the past week to prepare for the reasonable worst case impacts of Storm Eunice and Storm Franklin, planning for all scenarios to help keep communities and people safe.

Teams have been out on the ground to erect barriers and clear screens to help mitigate potential flooding impacts.

Environment Agency defences have protected more than 40,000 properties from flooding in places such as Didsbury, Derby and Mytholmroyd.

Dan Bond, flood duty manager at the Environment Agency, said:

We are still facing a significant flooding risk, and we are urging people to remain vigilant and take extreme care. Last weekend's heavy rainfall on already wet areas continues to cause river flooding along the River Severn and is likely to continue over the next few days.

So far we have received reports of around 400 properties having flooded over the past few days. Our thoughts go out to all those affected – flooding can and does have a devastating impact on people's lives.

We have teams out on the ground taking preventative action, closing flood gates, deploying temporary barriers and moving pumps and other response equipment to areas of highest risk. Environment

Agency defences have protected more than 40,000 properties despite record river levels.

We advise people to stay away from swollen rivers and not to drive through flood water as just 30cm of flowing water is enough to move your car.

People should check their flood risk, sign up for free flood warnings and keep up to date with the latest situation at <https://www.gov.uk/check-flood-risk>, call Floodline on 0345 988 1188 or follow @EnvAgency on Twitter for the latest flood updates.”□

Over the coming days, the risk of flooding along the River Severn poses the greatest threat to communities. As of 2pm, there are 2 severe flood warnings in place, meaning there is a danger to life, 52 flood warnings in place, meaning that flooding is expected, and 43 flood alerts, meaning that flooding is likely.

[£1.4m delivered to projects supporting sustainable fishing and fisheries science across the UK](#)

Eight [innovative new projects](#) that will support the UK’s fishing industry to be more productive and sustainable have been awarded a share of £1.4 million, the government has announced today.

The funding is the first part of the £24 million earmarked from the [£100 million UK Seafood Fund](#) specifically for science and innovation projects – to invest in new technology, trial new gear and support world-class research.

One of the successful applicants announced today is a project trialling the use of kites and Looming Eye buoys to deter seabirds from diving into the water near to an operational fishery and getting caught up in the nets – an issue which is estimated to kill up to 400,000 seabirds worldwide each year. It’s hoped the project will help to protect the UK’s vital but threatened seabird populations, such as the Great Northern Divers, Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes.

Another winning project will explore the use of artificial lights to change fish behaviour with a long term goal to look at more selective and sustainable ways of trawling for nephrops and squid, which can currently impact on other marine wildlife.

The £100 million UK Seafood Fund was launched to help level up coastal communities across the UK. Alongside the funding for science and innovation, it also includes a [£65 million infrastructure scheme](#) announced in December which will be made available for projects such as modernising ports and harbours, and a further £10 million to encourage new entrants into the processing, catching and aquaculture sectors, alongside training and upskilling current workers.

These schemes will ensure the industry and coastal communities are equipped to benefit from additional quota gained as a result of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA) signed with the EU in 2020. Following our departure from the Common Fisheries Policy, there have been uplifts in quota for UK vessels, with the value of UK-EU fishing opportunities for the UK in 2021 totalling approximately £333 million.

Fisheries Minister, Victoria Prentis, said:

I am pleased to see the £100m UK Seafood Fund in action, backing the impressive wealth of talent and innovation in our fishing industry.

A sustainable fishing industry is essential if we are to ensure we have a healthy, thriving marine environment that is capable of supporting our world-class industry long into the future.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Malcolm Offord said:

It's pleasing, but unsurprising, to see Scottish expertise at the heart of many of these projects receiving UK Government funding to boost innovation and sustainability in the UK fisheries sector.

Scotland's seafood, aquaculture and science sectors are world renowned and I look forward to continuing to work closely with them to ensure that this funding – and future allocations – drives the fishing industry to new heights and helps to deliver a sustainable and profitable future.

The funding has been awarded through the Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships (FISP) scheme, established to strengthen relations between industry and research organisations to promote world-class fisheries management. Today's investment is the first in a series of funding rounds that will see the fishing and seafood industry supported to work with scientists to research more productive and sustainable fishing gear and gather new data to more sustainably manage the UK's fish stocks. Applications for a second round of funding will open on Wednesday 2 March and run until 25 April.

This comes as the UK and Devolved governments call for views on the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS). The JFS sets out policies for achieving or

contributing to the eight objectives outlined in the Fisheries Act 2020 which will help to achieve the UK's vision for clean, healthy, safe, productive, and biologically diverse oceans and seas. Each of the eight FISP award winners have been chosen for their potential to meet one or multiple Fisheries Act objectives.

A second round of Fisheries Industry Science Partnerships funding opens on 2nd March and will remain open to applications until 25th April 2022.

Funding awarded includes:

- Over £274,000 to improve UK-wide data on catches of crab, lobster and whelks by using autonomous sampling systems on active fishing vessels, or at processing sites. The innovative project will also use image analysis technology to determine quantity, size and sex of shellfish catches to significantly improve our understanding of shellfish stocks and shape long-term sustainable fisheries management. The project will be delivered by Seafish, the Welsh Fishermen's Association, Western Fish Producers Organisation, Holderness Fishing Industry Group, Heriot Watt University, Bangor University and South Devon and Channel Shell fishermen Ltd.
- Almost £300,000 to support a healthy lobster and crab industry with a programme that will see creel mounted cameras deployed in fisheries in Holderness, Orkney and the Isle of Man. The project will look to develop a more accurate picture of population size. With FISP funding, the project will see the Holderness Fishing Industry Group, Orkney Sustainable Fisheries, Cefas, Heriot Watt University and Bangor University working collaboratively to deliver rigorous stock assessments.
- Almost £16,000 to address bycatch in gillnet fisheries, an issue which has been estimated to be responsible for the death of nearly 400,000 seabirds worldwide each year. The project will be delivered by Fishtek Marine, partnered with the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Seafood And Eat It Processing Ltd and SeaScope Fisheries Research Ltd. The organisations will collectively develop a full research proposal that will lead to a systematic programme of bycatch monitoring and evaluation of deterrents designed to protect the UK's vital but threatened seabird populations, such as the Great Northern Divers, Black-throated Divers and Slavonian Grebes.
- Other selected projects include a programme to develop one or more full research proposals that will address the specific challenges facing the Celtic Sea demersal trawl mixed fisheries that will receive £19,000 in funding. A data collection project using bio-collectors to develop a more predictive stock assessment of inshore lobster fisheries has secured over £264,000 and a study of whelk, lobster and crab fisheries to understand wider impacts of fishing activity, including use of static

gears, will receive almost £18,000.

- The first round of funding will also invest over £280,000 in a project that will explore the effectiveness of using artificial lights to change fish behaviour. Almost £248,000 will be provided to facilitate a major research project to address key barriers to improved assessment and management of whelk fisheries. The project aims to support sustainable management and assess the effectiveness and economic viability of alternatives to traditional whelk baits.

Further information:

- For a full list and information on the eight project winners, [please see here](#).
- The FISP Network, comprised of three fishing charities, has been set up to support fishers connect with scientists and jointly develop proposals. More information on this can be found here: FISHERIES ANIMATEUR (fishinganimateur.co.uk)
- All FISP projects are delivered in collaboration between the fishing and seafood industry and research organisations.
- (1) The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global review', The incidental catch of seabirds in gillnet fisheries: A global review (fao.org)

[GDF report highlights a year of progress](#)

The GDF Annual Report has been published today and outlines progress of the nationwide programme. Among the highlights are the formation of Community Partnerships in Mid Copeland, South Copeland, and Allerdale, Cumbria, and a Working Group in Theddlethorpe, Lincolnshire. These developments provide platforms for early engagement about a GDF.

The report also provides comprehensive information about the potential overall cost for a GDF, ranging from £20-£53 billion depending on a range of factors, such as the specific location, how much and what sort of materials goes into it, and geology. These costs will be spread over the lifetime of the 100-plus year project.

Representing one of the country's largest infrastructure investments, a highly engineered GDF will provide the highest levels of safety, security, and protection for generations, disposing of hazardous UK radioactive waste that has been accumulating for more than 60 years.

Also included is a summary of international progress in countries such as Sweden, Finland, and France, who are developing their own geological disposal programmes.

Karen Wheeler, Nuclear Waste Services Deputy CEO/ Major Capital Programmes Director, said:

A GDF will be one of the biggest infrastructure programmes in the UK and provide a major investment for the host local community and its economy, as well as being a vital project for the UK.

It is about acting now to deliver for future generations, an essential solution to radioactive waste which will protect our environment, boost our economy, and invest in local communities.

We are now making real progress and having conversations with a number of communities about the potential for them to host a GDF.

The UK search for a suitable site is a nationwide process based on community consent and includes detailed site investigations over a number of years. To learn about GDF and for more information about progress, read the [GDF Annual Report](#).

The SIXEP Continuity Plant success shows future for our project delivery

Each of our infrastructure projects will deliver vital work to create a clean and safe environment for future generations.

That's why getting them up and running is vital. Each may be a multi-million-pound facility with a specific job to do, but they are each also a link in a chain which runs from emptying our legacy facilities through to safely storing that waste for decades to come.

The sooner we can safely get these facilities ready for action, the better. The need to deliver them at pace and under budget is why we've set up a ground-breaking project delivery framework, called Programme and Project Partners.

One of the first of our facilities to be delivered through the partnership is our SIXEP Continuity Project. When finished, this facility will help ensure the continued operation of our Site Ion Exchange Effluent Plant (SIXEP).

SIXEP treats and makes safe the effluent created by risk reduction activities in our First Generation Magnox Storage Pond and Magnox Swarf Storage Silo.

Having the SIXEP Continuity Plant will enable us to continue treating this waste for decades to come.

The plant is currently in the construction phase, with building set to finish in 2029.

Already this year we have seen it get final government backing for its plans months ahead of expectations, and more recently the team completed the final concrete pour on its foundation slab weeks ahead of schedule.

Head of the project, Jeremy Hunt explained:

We finished the final pour on the base slab 2 weeks ahead of our original baseline estimate. This came soon after we received approval from government for the project's full business case.

Getting this approval means our client can place the full contract for delivery of the whole project, right up to completion in 2028.

There are no further government approvals required. It shows that HM Treasury has confidence in our plans and that we will do what we have said we will do.

The project is benefiting from being part of the Programme and Project Partners, and the collaboration the framework brings.

It's gained a lot of learning from fellow projects like the Sellafield Retreatment Plant, which went through the business case process first.

This sharing of information across projects is an essential part of the partners approach.

Jeremy added:

We also engaged early with Sellafield Ltd's new business case authoring team, part of our own supply chain department. We also produced a video which was held up as best practice to explain how the project will work and what the facility is going to achieve.

It's successes like this that can now be weaved into the approach for future projects.

2022 will continue to be a busy year for the SIXEP Continuity Plant.

The project will be testing the large vessels the facility will use to clean the effluent.

A test rig at Bendalls in Carlisle will pump water through the vessels to ensure they work correctly.

Tyler Richardson from Bendalls, talks us through his role in the video below:

[Bendalls](#)

Meanwhile on-site the plant walls will be going up and the contractors who will deliver the miles of stainless-steel pipework and complex electrical instrumentation needed are already on-board. Their early involvement in the project is seen as an important part of the partnership.

[Consultation to begin on proposed changes to permit conditions at Walleys Quarry](#)

An application to vary the conditions of the environmental permit (Ref. DP3734DC) was made in July 2020 by the site operator, Walleys Quarry Ltd (formerly named Red Industries RM Ltd), to allow changes to approved landfill operations.

Variations to environmental permits are not unusual during the operational lifespan of a landfill and the specific variations within this permit are standard for such a regulated site. In most cases they are introduced to allow for the implementation of improved operational technologies and techniques, or to add additional conditions to improve regulation.

Applications of this kind do not require public consultation. However, given the level of interest from the neighbouring community, the Environment Agency has decided to carry out a consultation before it reaches its final decision.

The permit variation application proposes two changes. The first relates to the type of material used to cap the landfill as part of the restoration process. The current permit requires the use of a clay layer to seal the site, but the operator has instead requested that a geo-synthetic layer be used. Whilst clay is a widely used and acceptable means of capping, geo-synthetic caps are more effective in controlling landfill gas emissions and offer a better alternative to clay.

The second change involves the introduction of revised limits of methane and carbon dioxide measured at specific boreholes at the perimeter of the site. This will allow the Environment Agency to better identify the levels of methane emitted by Walleys Quarry. The removal of carbon dioxide compliance limits is standard across the landfill sector.

Gas detected at the specified boreholes does not contain hydrogen sulphide, so an amendment to account for these background levels will not increase the risk of odours.

Having carefully considered Walleys Quarry Ltd's application, the Environment Agency is satisfied that the proposals do not increase the risk to the environment or human health. As a result, it is proposing to accept the operator's proposals and to vary the current permit conditions to incorporate the requested changes.

Those interested are invited to submit any new relevant information related to the proposed changes before a final decision is made. The consultation begins on 21 February 2022 and will remain open for 20 days.

To access the relevant documentation from Monday 21 February, please visit the [consultation website](#).

The consultation documents can also be viewed from Monday 21 February in the following local libraries:

- Newcastle Library, Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 1BL
- Knutton Library, Church Lane, Knutton, Newcastle, Staffordshire, ST5 6EB
- Silverdale Library, High Street, Silverdale, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 6LY

Anyone wishing to comment on the proposals is invited to read the documentation online or at the local libraries detailed above before responding electronically on the website, by email to PSCpublicresponse@environment-agency.gov.uk or by post to: PSC – EP Team, Quadrant 2, 99 Parkway Avenue, Sheffield, S9 4WF.

Those unable to make representation via the consultation website, by email, or by post, should contact the Environment Agency on 03708 506 506.