

No time for complacency about flooding

Nearly two in three households at risk of flooding don't believe it will happen to them, new analysis revealed by the Environment Agency today (Tuesday 23 November) has warned. It comes as the Met Office has said there is an above average likelihood of a wet winter.

Members of the public are being urged to join their friends, family and neighbours who have already taken action to help prepare themselves and their properties for possible flooding. The research shows that people who haven't taken action to prepare for flooding are in the clear minority (30%), but this still means that as many as 1.5 million households, who are at risk, are yet to prepare.

The new analysis has been released at the start of Flood Action Week (22–28 November 2021), when the Environment Agency is urging people to [check their flood risk online](#), [sign up for flood warnings](#) and, if they are at risk, [know what to do if flooding hits](#). Those at risk are encouraged to follow the advice to 'Prepare. Act. Survive', specifically:

- If there is a flood alert – prepare by packing medicines and insurance and other important documents and visit the flood warning information service.
- If there is a flood warning – act by moving family, pets and belongings to safety. Turn off gas, water and electricity.
- If there is a severe flood warning – survive immediate danger by following the advice of emergency services or calling 999 if needed

The warnings come as the Environment Agency continues to prepare for possible flooding, with the Met Office's outlook showing there is an above average chance of the UK winter being wetter than normal over the next three months.

Caroline Douglass, Executive Director of Flooding at the Environment Agency, said:

Now is the time for us all to be vigilant, not complacent, about flooding.

Our previous investment programme protected 314,000 properties from flooding. Our flood defences have helped to protect nearly 200,000 properties during flooding incidents since 2019, and we're investing millions into building new schemes and making repairs to keep communities safe.

Yet we can't prevent all flooding – climate change is only increasing that risk – and today's figures show that while some people are prepared, many are not.

It's vitally important for the public to go online and check if they are at risk, sign up for Environment Agency warnings, and know

what to do if flooding hits.

With 250 mobile pumps and 6,000 trained staff across the country, the Environment Agency is ready to take action wherever it is needed this winter. The construction and repair of flood defences has also continued throughout the year as part of the record £5.2 billion government investment to better protect 336,000 properties.

These preparations have already helped to protect communities from flooding in late October, when parts of the country saw a month's worth of rain in 24 hours. While this sadly led to the flooding of 79 households, flood defences and Environment Agency action helped to protect over 3300 properties.

Will Lang, Head of Civil Contingencies at the Met Office said:

Winters in the UK usually includes a wide variety of weather and this winter looks to be no exception. However, when looking at the big global drivers that impact weather in the UK there are indications this winter could be wetter than normal.

Although these wetter conditions are most likely in January and February next year, details will become clearer nearer the time and information can be found on the forecast pages of our website.

With just 30cm of flowing water being enough to float a car, drivers are also being warned not to attempt to drive through flood water and take extra precautions in wet weather.

Tony Rich, from The AA said:

Roads can quickly become impassable during very heavy rainfall, so you should allow plenty of time for journeys. It's also important to leave twice as much space between you and the car in front to allow for greater stopping distances.

Drivers should take extra care where roads dip, for example under bridges, as these areas are more likely to flood.

Flood water can be deceptively deep, and it doesn't take much for water to get sucked into your engine. It can also mask other hazards in the road, such as displaced manhole covers, so if in doubt turn around and find another route.

PM's speech at the Centre for Policy Studies: 22 November 2021

The reason I am here tonight above all else is that I want to pay tribute to my friend Robert Colvile. Not only for his fantastic leadership of the Centre for Policy Studies – the pre-eminent centre-right think tank – also of his thoughtful columns – he used to be my editor I think. But also I want to thank Robert for his work on the 2019 Conservative Party Manifesto – which I found extremely helpful and the people of this country enjoyed, eminently. But most importantly of I all I want to commend Robert, because as many of you will know he lost his wife Andrea to the little-known disease autoimmune hepatitis at a tragically young age just after the birth of your second son. An earth shattering event that is hard for any of us to comprehend, let alone to imagine we could go through.

And yet Robert you responded with extraordinary courage and forbearance, and you wrote movingly about your love for Andrea and his experience of losing her. And in doing so, in communicating so well, you've raised over £100,000 and launched new research projects with the Medical Research Foundation.

And it's a small thing but there's a little-known tradition in Downing Street, whereby every day the Prime Minister writes a thank you letter to recognise someone somewhere in our country for their service.

And so today I am sending you such a letter Robert, and I think we have a framed certificate for you too, because you are a true Point of Light. And on behalf of everyone here, and indeed the whole country, I want to say thank you.

I'm very pleased to be here in addition because this is a great celebration of free trade and the critical role played by Margaret Thatcher, if I'm right, which I think I am.

And I'm delighted to support that. But even her most ardent fans would have to accept that there was a blot on her record.

Of course, she did amazing things for free markets.

She ended the restraints on trades imposed by the unions, the so-called 'Spanish practices' of the print workers and others.

She also decreed that you did not need to go to an optician to buy a pair of spectacles. Just think next time anyone buys a pair of readers in the supermarket, you owe that to Margaret Thatcher.

But she had a blind spot. She actively campaigned to join what was then called the common market.

And under the terms of the Treaty of Rome, I'm a Thatcher fan I can say this, she was part of the government that handed away this country's ability to

control its own trade policy.

And while she was always sceptical over the inexorable extension of European powers over those things, she was later persuaded that she needed to go further and agree to another cession of powers in the mid-1980s.

And I am not going to name the guilty men who talked her into it – I can't see any here tonight – but my fellow CPS disciples I am proud to tell you that thanks at least partly to your assistance we have righted that spiritual wrong. We have freed Margaret Thatcher posthumously from the ideological prison in which she inadvertently locked herself.

And we have honoured the true meaning of her legacy and we have in the immortal phrase, taken back control.

And this country has resumed its role as the great global agitator and campaigner for free trade. We have done free trade deals with 70 countries around the world plus the EU including New Zealand who I'm glad to see represented here.

We have persuaded the Japanese to eat more of our Stilton, how much of our Stilton I don't know. They have the option of eating our Stilton. We have persuaded the Americans to eat not just British beef, but to get rid of their punitive tariffs on Scotch whisky. And we have persuaded Australians to dispense with the requirement that young Britons who want to go and live and work in Australia must spend six months working on a farm.

When I was told about that I thought maybe they should spend nine months on a farm...anyway, we've dropped that.

And once we have got world trade humming again. And once we have cleared the backlogs and the bottlenecks world trade is currently experiencing, largely caused by resurgent global demand, we are very ambitious in this country. I see some real experts on trade policy and we know quite what can be done. We want to double the volume of our trade to £1 trillion. And we are going to sell not just goods but services of all kinds, we are going to sell the fruits of our imagination.

I don't know if you've heard the news my friends but yesterday I went to Peppa Pig World. Hands up who has been to Peppa Pig World?

I was initially quite hesitant but I found it was very much my kind of place. It had good schools, excellent health care – there's a bear called Dr Brown Bear, no trouble too great, always turns up for a consultation. Superb infrastructure – novel transport systems in Peppa Pig World. And safe streets, virtually no crime.

But what amazed me most of all was the discovery that this hairdryer shaped pig has already got two theme parks in her honour in China and two I think in America and she is currently exported, her shows and her merchandise, to 180 countries around the world in a multi-billion pound franchise. Isn't that an astonishing thing?

And I want to leave you with this closing thought. Think how much more we could do when we revive the slightly moribund world trading system and protect our intellectual property with deals, with the CPTPP and so many others. And do more to send fantastic products like Peppa Pig around the world. If we can sell this Picasso-oid pig to Chinese children there is no limit to our creative abilities.

Peppa's influence, cultural influence – she's got a younger brother called George by the way – is so pervasive that kids in America now say 'tomato' instead of 'tomato' and 'mummy' rather than 'mom'. And there you go – that is believed to be a direct result of Peppa Pig and that is the effect of the free trade in which Margaret Thatcher believed.

Thank you Centre for Policy Studies for flying the flag for market capitalism, for free markets, for free trade and so on.

And by the way, I think this is being sponsored by the Daily Telegraph, isn't it? And HSBC?

Well thank you HSBC for everything you do. In the dark days of 2008 only one Conservative politician said anything remotely positive about the banks and that was me. I continue to believe the financial services are crucial for our country. I believe HSBC is a colossal employer not just in the UK but around the world so thank you.

And thank you also to the Daily Telegraph for your long, heroic and sometimes lonely campaign for a new aquatic headquarters for the sales force of Global Britain.

There is one overriding reason I think for supporting a new national flagship. It is not just the joy that it will bring to the face of Chris Hope, the kind of joy that you see in the face of an 18 month-old child meeting Peppa Pig. The reason is it is obvious that it would pay for itself over and over again, as British goods and services and ideas are championed and marketed up every creek and inlet in the world for the benefit of the British people in every expo and marketplace in the world.

And with that final thought and those thanks to the Daily Telegraph I want to say that we are now reclaiming our place as a great, independent free trading nation – agitator, campaigner, paladin for free trade in a way that would have made Margaret Thatcher very proud.

Informal briefing on Ethiopia with the OHCHR High Commissioner: UK statement

Thank you Madam High Commissioner,

We are grateful to you for holding today's briefing. It is a key part of your mandate to be able to inform states about issues of pressing concern, through whatever means you decide. Clearly the gravity of the information you have just presented deserves our full attention.

Anyone who has read the Joint Investigation's report can be in no doubt that the most serious of violations and abuses have been taking place over the last year in Ethiopia. It documents the widespread use of sexual violence as a weapon of war, torture, unlawful killings, detentions, attacks on civilians and forced displacement. And the report only tells part of the story.

As you made clear in your public statement last week – atrocities are continuing. Thousands of people are now being arrested and detained because of their ethnic identity. This, alongside the proposal of issuing new ID cards to identify specific groups and the increasing use of hate speech by public figures, is deeply concerning. It should ring alarm bells for all of us as to where the situation could be headed.

Having heard your presentation, it is vital that the UN Human Rights system respond swiftly to the violations which have occurred, and which continue, with a view to preventing even more serious atrocities from taking place. For its part, the Human Rights Council must not sit idly by and let these actions go unreported and allow impunity to prevail.

Madam High Commissioner, we took note of your clear message on the need for further urgent discussions by the Human Rights Council.

[Major reforms to NHS workforce planning and tech agenda](#)

Recruitment, training and retention of NHS staff and digital transformation will be put at the heart of the NHS in England, under new reforms announced by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care today.

The plans will aim to see more patients benefit from the best possible care, with the right staff in place to meet patients' needs.

This will sit alongside the strategic NHS workforce plan Ministers previously commissioned to report in spring, looking at what the workforce of the future should look like.

The Health and Social Care Secretary Sajid Javid is also setting out his intention to merge the body responsible for the education and training of the health workforce, Health Education England, with NHSE/I, putting long-term planning and strategy for healthcare staff recruitment and retention at the forefront of the national NHS agenda.

In addition, the Secretary of State has accepted the recommendations of Laura Wade-Gery, Non-Executive Director at NHS England and Chair of NHS Digital, including to merge NHSX and NHS Digital into NHSE/I.

The recommendations build on the huge progress made on digital transformation during the pandemic, following a commission by the Secretary of State in summer 2020, and will improve co-operation between the key digital bodies of the NHS by bringing them under one roof for the first time.

By merging these three organisations with NHSE/I, government and the NHS are ensuring the health and care sector is fully equipped to face the future and deliver for patients.

The changes will better support the recovery of NHS services, address waiting list backlogs, and support hardworking staff, all while driving forwards an ambitious agenda of digital transformation and progress.

Secretary of State for Health and Social Care Sajid Javid said:

To ensure our record NHS investment makes a lasting impact, I am bringing workforce planning and digital transformation into the heart of the NHS.

These reforms will support our recovery from COVID-19 and help us tackle waiting lists to give patients excellent care in years to come.

I would like to pay tribute to all our colleagues at Health Education England, NHS Digital and NHSX for the enormous progress they have made, which we will continue to drive forward with their help.

Amanda Pritchard, NHS chief executive said:

NHS organisations have worked more closely than ever to respond to the COVID pandemic and these changes build on that success.

Digital and workforce are central to transforming the NHS to tackle the backlog and recover services after the COVID pandemic, as well of course deliver on our Long Term Plan commitments and maintain momentum of the lifesaving NHS COVID vaccination programme, all while looking after thousands of patients in hospital with the virus. By coming together in this way, the whole health service can continue progress in delivering these goals.

Health Education England Chair, Sir David Behan, said:

The current arrangements separate service and financial planning from workforce planning and development . These changes bring these

three functions together at the centre of the NHS and reinforce the priority of workforce at the very heart of the NHS. They will allow more progress to be made more quickly.

Chief Executive of Health Education England, Dr Navina Evans, said:

This decision marks a step change in the approach to service delivery and workforce planning. It presents an opportunity to bring the strengths of our HEE people in to the centre of the NHS and focus on supporting the right future of health and care for the population we serve.

Chief executive of NHSX, Matthew Gould, said:

For the past two years, NHSX has been making the case for digital transformation in the NHS, and for digital to be integrated within the NHS rather than kept in its own silo. This reorganisation is the culmination of that campaign. It is an excellent step – a more coherent structure that will allow us to accelerate digital transformation across health and care.

It comes after two years in which NHSX, NHS Digital and the NHS and social care frontline have together made extraordinary progress - from allowing the NHS to move to remote working and consultations in the heat of the pandemic, to introducing virtual wards and remote monitoring of patients at home, to building the tech to underpin the vaccine rollout and the NHS COVID Pass.

Non-Executive Director at NHS England and Chair of NHS Digital, Laura Wade-Gery, said:

In the rest of our lives, digital has really changed how we live and we must now make this true in healthcare. The goal of my review is to equip the national centre with the right capability to support Integrated Care Systems to deliver better citizen health. We need to have the culture, operating model, skills, capabilities and processes to put data, digital and technology at the heart of how we transform health services. I'm delighted that the Secretary of State and Amanda Pritchard intend to implement my recommendations and accelerate progress in transforming the way healthcare is delivered.

Interim CEO of NHS Digital, Simon Bolton, said:

The use of technology and data across health and care has been vital in managing the pandemic, and essential to supporting the

frontline and ensuring care can continue to be delivered.

From the vaccine roll out to identifying and protecting the most vulnerable to coronavirus, I am extremely proud of everything we have achieved during this challenging period, in close collaboration with our partners, which has made a real and valuable impact for the public.

Now we will build on this progress as one organisation, accelerating the digitally enabled transformation of the NHS and improving it, both for its staff and the people it serves at the time they are most in need.

Under the leadership of Sir David Behan and Dr Navina Evans, HEE has helped to grow the NHS workforce rapidly and played a vital role during the pandemic, enabling the safe deployment of students to the frontline and working closely with educational institutions to enable students to complete their studies.

The workforce reforms build on the progress HEE has made, with record numbers of doctors and nurses currently working in the NHS. This includes:

- integrating NHS, workforce and finance planning in one place at a national and local level;
- driving changes to education and training to allow employers to recruit the health professionals they need to provide the right care to patients in the years to come;
- enabling a single national strategy for the NHS and make every penny of the record government investment in the NHS count; and
- providing a simplified national system and single line of accountability for NHS performance.

The NHS and social care sectors have made significant digital and technological advancements over the last few years. NHSX has fulfilled its mandate, getting digital transformation into the heart of the NHS's future vision.

Working at pace, both NHSX and NHS Digital have delivered innovative solutions to new challenges such as monitoring patients at home in virtual wards and the roll out of NHS COVID Pass. There are now nearly 20 million users registered to the NHS App which offers a wide range of individual health benefits and allows users to have their GP records at their fingertips.

In addition to these reforms, DHSC will also establish a Digital Delivery Unit to sit within the existing NHS Delivery Unit. This single, central unit with data at its core will help government better understand the blockers to recovering NHS services following the pandemic and how they can be overcome.

Ahead of winter to support the workforce, in 2021/22 the NHS is investing £37 million in mental health support with 40 dedicated staff mental health hubs across the country.

From the outset of the pandemic the NHS increased its health and wellbeing support for staff by offering a range of services, including: a mental health helpline in partnership with the Samaritans, open 7am-11pm, and a 24/7 text support service to provide listening and counselling support; specialist bereavement support from fully qualified trained advisors; a range of free self-help apps; and a dedicated website which signposts to further materials and practical support.

From April 2022, thanks to the new Health and Social Care Levy, UK wide healthcare funding will rise by a record £36 billion over the next three years, and the reforms announced today will help ensure this funding makes a lasting impact.

The levy funding is on top of the government's previous historic long-term settlement for the NHS, which will see NHS funding increase by £33.9 billion to a total of £148.5 billion by 2023-24, which we have enshrined in law.

The new funding includes a commitment to ring-fence an additional £8 billion to fund waiting list recovery – the biggest catch-up programme in NHS history.

Background information

- HEE is an executive non-departmental public body of the Department of Health and Social Care, responsible for coordination of education and training within the health and public health workforce within England, including the training of doctors and nurses.
- NHS Digital is a non-departmental public body responsible for the information, data and IT systems for commissioners, analysts and clinicians in health and social care in England,
- NHSX is a joint unit of NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care, supporting local NHS and care organisations to digitise their services, connect the health and social care systems through technology and transform the way patients' care is delivered at home, in the community and in hospital
- A power to enable formal legal mergers of DHSC's arm's length bodies is currently being considered by Parliament as part of the Health and Care Bill. The formal merger of HEE and NHSEI is therefore subject to Parliament's approval of that measure, expected in summer 2022.
- NHS Digital and NHSX will form part of the new Transformation Directorate within NHSE alongside Improvement, and Innovation, Research and Life Sciences
- The NHSE/I Transformation Directorate will continue to lead the digital transformation agenda for the NHS and social care at national and ICS level.
- NHSX will evolve into the strategy function of the Transformation Directorate.
- Simon Bolton, the interim CEO of NHS Digital will become the Chief Information Officer of NHSE/I.
- As soon as legislation allows, NHS Digital will cease to be an independent Arm's Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care.

How Bulb customers are being protected after its insolvency

Bulb recently announced that they will support placing the company into a Special Administration Regime (SAR). Ofgem, with the government's consent, intend to apply urgently to the court to appoint Energy Administrators to continue running Bulb.

During the court process and a Special Administration Regime, Bulb customers will not see any difference in their energy supplies and will not need to worry about their energy being cut off.

Questions and answers

Do Bulb customers need to do anything now?

Bulb's customers, including those with prepayment meters, do not need to do anything. Their energy supplies remain secure and customers' credit balances are protected.

Customers do not need to look for a new energy supplier, although they are free to do so if they wish.

[Find out how you're protected when energy firms collapse.](#)

I'm a Bulb customer, will my bills now be instantly going up?

Bulb customers would not see any immediate rise to their energy bills if the company is under Energy Administrators.

All customers in Great Britain are also protected by the Energy Price Cap. This limits the rates a supplier can charge for their default tariffs and includes the standing charge and price the units your bill is calculated from. The Energy Price Cap protects millions of customers and ensure they pay a fair price for their energy.

Customers can still switch energy supplier during a Special Administration Regime if they wish, though it's likely they will already be on the best tariff on the market.

What is a Special Administration Regime?

A Special Administration Regime (SAR) is a long-standing, well-established mechanism available to the government and the energy regulator Ofgem to protect energy consumers and ensure continued energy supply when a supplier fails.

It's only used if Ofgem's primary means to address supplier failure, called the Supplier of Last Resort process, is not viable for an insolvent energy supplier.

The energy supply company SAR mechanism was established in law in 2011. The mechanism is also in place for other critical services such as water, sewerage, rail transport, air traffic control, education, postal and investment services. Its purpose is to protect essential services that may otherwise be interrupted if normal insolvency processes were used.

Special Administration Regimes have been successfully used to protect customers and support market stability in other sectors; for example Hadlow College entered one in 2019.

Will Ofgem be applying for a Special Administration Regime?

Ofgem's Supplier of Last Resort process has recently been successful in appointing new suppliers to replace energy companies leaving the market in this period of high wholesale gas prices.

The Supplier of Last Resort process involves a competitive auction for other energy suppliers to bid to take on the failed company's customers. This process ensures consumers get the best deal. The successful Supplier of Last Resort then takes on a failed company's customers as their own – with customers' credit balances moving with them.

However, in some cases when a large energy company is in financial difficulty, the Special Administration Regime may be a better option to protect consumers than a Supplier of Last Resort process. Ofgem made the assessment that based on the current market circumstances, a Special Administration Regime is the most suitable option to protect consumers, ensure security of supply, and maintain the long-term stability of the energy market. The government has agreed with Ofgem on the appointment of special administrators for Bulb and are taking this forward in the quickest possible timeframe.

How is the Special Administration Regime set up?

The decision to place a company into a Special Administration Regime is made by the court upon an application by Ofgem with the consent of the Secretary of State.

The court appoints administrators to manage the supplier throughout the period of administration. The government provides funding to the administrators during this period, if necessary, to enable them to continue to supply energy to their customers and manage the company's exit from the administration. This process is set out in the Energy Act 2004 and the Energy Act 2011 as well as in insolvency law, such as the Energy Supply Company Administration Rules.

The administrators' role is to ensure that customers' supply is protected throughout, with energy supplies continuing to be provided at the lowest

reasonable practicable cost until it's possible to end the administration through the rescue of the company, its sale, or the transfer of its customers.

This will ensure that customers' energy supplies continue to flow as usual and that the overall energy market remains stable.

How is the Special Administration Regime funded?

The government would provide the funding necessary to ensure that the administration is managed in a way that protects customers' supply.

The government can recoup these costs at a later date, ensuring that we get the best outcome for Bulb's customers and the British taxpayer.

This will be done in a way that minimises the impact on consumers and takes into account the solvency of industry participants, like transmission operators and shippers.

A SAR is a temporary arrangement which provides an ultimate safety net to protect consumers and ensure continued supply. The government does not want Bulb to remain in this temporary state longer than is absolutely necessary.

What can I do to get help with my energy bills?

In addition to the Energy Price Cap, we are also supporting low income and households with energy bills in a number of ways, including:

Warm Home Discount

The [Warm Home Discount](#), providing eligible households with a one-off £140 discount on their energy bill for winter 2021 to 2022. Customers should contact their supplier to ask for it. As long as you qualify, even if you're moved to a new supplier, they are expected to still provide you with this discount. This will rise to £150 from next year and help an extra 780,000 pensioners and low-income families, with the money being paid automatically.

Winter Fuel Payments

[Winter Fuel Payments](#), worth between £100 and £300 are paid automatically to those in receipt of State Pension or other social security benefit (not including Housing Benefit, Council Tax Reduction, Child Benefit or Universal Credit).

Cold Weather Payments

[Cold Weather Payments](#), which is a £25 payment for vulnerable households on qualifying benefits when the weather has been, or is forecasted to be, unusually cold. It's paid to eligible households for each 7-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

Advice and support

If you're in difficulty during this time you can also talk to your energy supplier, who will be able to discuss personal circumstances and consider options to help, including reassessing, reducing or pausing payments.

[Emergency measures](#) have been agreed between government and energy suppliers to support those most in need during the disruption caused by COVID-19, and this agreement remains in place this winter.

For support with your rights on energy, visit the [Ofgem website](#).

For further advice, consumers can also contact [Citizens Advice](#).