

Northwich flood defences put to the test ahead of winter

- The £7m Northwich flood risk management scheme, which reduces the flood risk to around 400 homes and businesses throughout the town, will be put to the test on Sunday 7th November.
- The exercise to test the defences comes after a week of heavy rain.

A selection of temporary and permanent flood barriers, which would be deployed in emergencies, are to be put to the test in Northwich ahead of winter.

In a large scale exercise due to take place on Sunday 7th November at 8pm, 100 metres of temporary defences will be erected and 14 flood gates closed.

The exercise will start with the closing of floodgates at Waitrose and the Dane Street Bridge, as well as setting up temporary flood defences outside of Wildwood and the cinema. As part of this phase, the far end of London Road will also be closed and a viable alternative route provided.

Temporary defences are made of lightweight aluminium and can be erected in around 45 minutes in the event of a flood alert or warning.

At Dane Bridge, two layers of barrier act as a channel to keep water within the River Dane, preventing it from spilling over towards London Road or Watling Street.

The floodgates are closed in minutes and create a seal to protect the town from floodwater.

Since its launch in June 2018, the £7 million flood alleviation scheme, which reduces the flood risk to around 400 homes and businesses throughout the town, has been tested and maintained on regular basis.

This latest exercise is part of a series of training drills being carried out by the Environment Agency in the run-up to winter.

Ollie Hope Environment Agency Flood and Coastal Risk Manager for Cheshire and Merseyside said:

“We hope that the £7m Northwich flood risk management scheme won’t be needed this winter but our teams are well-prepared for whatever the elements may have in store.

“Alongside our partners, we are ready to take action wherever it is needed. We train all year round to make sure we are equipped to respond to incidents, but at this time of year with an increase in flood risk it’s vital we make sure we are prepared.

“I hope such emergency response plans will give reassurance to residents in

Northwich but, it is important to remember that we can never fully protect against flooding. Residents should always prepare in advance for this by going online at www.gov.uk and signing up for free flood warnings. Alternatively, they can telephone the Environment Agency Floodline on 0845 988 1188 and find out what they can do to protect themselves and their property when flooding hits.”

Councillor Karen Shore, Deputy Leader of Cheshire West and Chester Council and Cabinet Member – Environment, Highways & Strategic Transport, said:

“Northwich and many areas of our borough suffered badly from flooding last winter and we want to ensure these events are not repeated. We have been working with partners including the Environment Agency throughout the year to prevent a repeat of further flooding damage occurring to homes and businesses.

“Our teams are supporting the Environment Agency’s important and large-scale exercise this weekend to test temporary and permanent flood barriers, which would be deployed in emergencies. It is vital that all agencies are able to act swiftly to protect residents in the event of a flood in the future and testing such as this will help teams be well prepared for the future.”

The Environment Agency has already invested in 40km-worth of temporary flood barriers and 250 high volume pumps across the UK ahead of the winter weather. Other exercises will be carried out by Environment Agency teams from Leigh, Sale and Winsford depots in additional locations across the North West in the run-up to Christmas. The training for all three teams will include the operating of major assets such as pumping stations, sluice gates and both temporary and demountable barriers.

Throughout this year the Environment Agency has continued to build and maintain flood defences across Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire, including projects in Radcliffe and Redvales, Rochdale and Littleborough as well as Sanky Brook and supporting and funding projects in Lymn.

A record £5.2 billion is being invested between 2021-27, creating around 2,000 new flood and coastal defences to better protect 336,000 properties across England. These schemes will help to avoid £32 billion in wider economic damages and reduce the national flood risk by up to 11 per cent. More than £42 million of this will be spent in 2021-22 boosting the design and construction of more than 50 schemes across Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Cheshire.

Over 5 million homes are at risk of flooding in England alone and there are practical steps people can take to reduce the impact, including [signing up to flood warnings](#) and downloading our [‘What to do in a Flood’ plan](#).

[HMRC wins The Lawyer award](#)

News story

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) Solicitor's Office wins 'In-house Legal Operations team of the year' at The Lawyer awards



[HMRC's](#) Solicitor's Office and Legal Services (SOLS) won [The Lawyer's](#) 'In-House Legal Operations Team of the Year' award on 2 November.

This recognises the outstanding work of HMRC's legal group in the design and delivery of the furlough and other Covid support schemes to extraordinary deadlines – alongside innovative work to establish a new UK customs regime and maintain litigation outcomes during the pandemic lockdown.

Alan Evans, General Counsel and Director General for SOLS, said: "I couldn't be prouder of our team. Our people have worked at pace to devise groundbreaking new schemes to support jobs and businesses during the pandemic – while also helping HMRC prepare for EU transition – and protecting £10 billion tax in litigation, working virtually with the courts and tribunals. This couldn't have been achieved without the fantastic support of colleagues across the [Government Legal Profession](#)."

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[Exceptional Sargent painting worth over £7.5 million at risk of leaving UK](#)

- The export bar is to allow time for a UK gallery or institution to acquire the work

- Exceptional painting is considered a contender for Sargent's finest portrait of a male sitter

Worth over £7.5 million, an outstanding three-quarter length portrait of Arthur Ramsay, the 14th Earl of Dalhousie is at risk of leaving the country unless a UK buyer can be found to save the work for the nation.

The Earl of Dalhousie is hugely significant to the study of John Singer Sargent's impressive legacy. Most widely known for his famous Portrait of Madame X, the international artist – who spent most of his life in Europe and whose resting place is in the UK – had an important role in the wider art, history and culture of the period and this piece set the stage for Sargent's fame on both sides of the Atlantic.

Dating back to 1899, the portrait coincides with the founding of psychoanalysis by Sigmund Freud. As a result, The Earl of Dalhousie is considered exceptional for its portrayal of Arthur Ramsay's character and provides a fascinating look at aristocratic masculinity, uncertainty, and imperial doubt at the time.

Arts Minister Lord Parkinson of Whitley Bay said:

John Singer Sargent was, as the National Portrait Gallery's exhibition of 2015 rightly noted, 'the greatest portrait painter of his generation'. He continues to inspire artists, academics, and audiences to think more deeply about ourselves, our history, and the human condition – with Julian Barnes's *The Man in the Red Coat* just one example of the creative impulses he continues to spark.

There is still so much we can learn from this outstanding portrait of the 14th Earl of Dalhousie, painted in the UK at the transition between the 19th and 20th centuries. It would be a huge loss if this piece were to leave the country. I sincerely hope that a UK buyer can be found to save the work for the nation.

The Minister's decision follows the advice of the [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#) (RCEWA). The Committee agreed that it is a fascinating picture on many levels and that this was one of Sargent's finest male portraits.

Committee Member Christopher Baker said:

Sargent's *The Earl of Dalhousie* evokes a brilliant transitional moment in British portraiture, being late Victorian in date but strikingly modern in appearance. The artist injected a new dynamism into such paintings; he had a profound knowledge of both the grandest traditions of portraiture and recent innovations and combined here a nod to the achievement of Van Dyck (in terms of pose and setting) with energised, bravura brushwork and incisive characterisation. Such skills were to prove irresistible to a

generation of British patrons.

Dalhousie was a Scottish aristocrat and his portrait is one of the finest of all Sargent's studies of male subjects; an image of hauteur perhaps tinged by uncertainty, it is a coming of age painting, created when the subject turned twenty-one, and, as recent research has shown, it was paid for by his tenants. Outstanding aesthetically and in terms of the study of the art and culture of the period, it would be a profound misfortune if this scintillating work were not secured for a British collection.

The Reviewing Committee made its recommendation on the grounds that the painting's departure from the UK would be a misfortune because it was of outstanding aesthetic importance and it was of outstanding significance for the study of Sargent's work and the wider art, history and culture of the period.

The decision on the export licence application for the painting will be deferred until 3 March 2022. At the end of the first deferral period owners will have a consideration period of 15 Business Days to consider any offer(s) to purchase the painting at the recommended price of £7,617,360 (plus VAT). The second deferral period will commence following the signing of an Option Agreement and will last for six months.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the painting should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200.
2. Details of the painting are as follows: A painting by John Singer Sargent representing Arthur George Maule Ramsay (1878–1929), the 14th Earl of Dalhousie, in front of double pillars and plinth. The painting is in oil paint on canvas and measures 150.7 x 102.2 cm. The work is in very good condition with the unusual benefit that it has not been lined, preserving the surface and texture of Sargent's distinctive brushwork.
3. Provenance: Arthur George Maule Ramsay, 14th Earl of Dalhousie (1878–1928), the sitter. Thence by descent until its sale in 2021.
4. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by the Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria.
5. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk

UK hosts international military urban exercise

During the event international and British scientists and engineers tested technologies that have the potential capability to find enemy forces in built up environments. The novel equipment was assessed alongside a whole host of futuristic technology by military personnel from 1 Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade, 1st Battalion The Rifles and 1 Artillery Brigade, in selected areas on the streets of Portsmouth and its Naval Base.

The UK Armed Forces already train for and conduct urban warfare, but this type of experimentation is vital to understand and adapt to the changing warfighting environment. There are many challenges to finding and dealing with threats, such as those experienced when operating in and around dense, tall buildings and within modern urban areas or 'smart cities', and with differences of culture and language.

Processor Dame Angela McLean, MOD Chief Adviser said:

It was impressive to see the CUE21 experiment in action – testing this kind of technology is absolutely vital to better equip our Armed Forces. The collaboration with our allies means we are able to share technical knowledge to fight the battles of the future together.

The Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) is at the forefront of testing new technologies collaborated with industry and academia, as well as their '5-eyes' partners: Canada, the USA, New Zealand and Australia. Born out of The Technical Cooperation Programme (TTCP), the 5 partner nations are testing novel technologies that seek to help our forces when operating in urban environments, including:

- highly distributed autonomous sensors that exploit artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) to identify threats
- advanced technologies to support intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance activities on the ground, in the air and at sea
- advanced sensors and technologies for detecting uncrewed air vehicles used in urban environments
- understanding the city environment and the interactions of natural and human systems
- technologies that support soldiers operating in dense urban terrain by supporting navigation, detection of threats
- robotic and autonomous systems to support logistics re-supply to deliver to the frontline
- casualty evacuation and handling optimised for the complexity of an

urban environment

The capabilities were tested through a combination of field experimentation and analytical techniques. The field experiment in Portsmouth was based on a scenario which involved particular military capabilities that could be enhanced by science and technology (S&T).

Christopher Briggs, Dstl's National Lead for CUE, said:

This is an opportunity for science and technology to have a major impact on military capability in urban environments, as well as enhancing our mutual reliance with our closest allies. Current thinking on future conflicts has been used to generate scenarios that show the challenges of operations in city settings against a range of potential enemies.

The first Contested Urban Environment (CUE) experiment took place in November 2017 in Adelaide, Australia, the second took place in September 2018 in Montreal, Canada, and the most recent event took place in New York City, in the US in July 2019. The technology tested then and during the Portsmouth event could be made available to military personnel by 2025.

[Carbon-saving Cambridgeshire project to be showcased at COP26](#)

Projects inspired by and delivered by nature to tackle the climate emergency in the UK will be showcased as world leaders gather at COP26.

The [Inter-agency Climate Change Group](#) will showcase 12 nature-based solution projects from across the UK at its stand in the Green Zone. One of the projects being highlighted is the restoration on the [Great Fen in Cambridgeshire](#)

The partners working on this project are [Natural England](#), [Environment Agency](#), [Huntingdon District Council](#), [Middle Level Commissioners](#) and [Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northampton Wildlife Trust](#).

It has been running since 2001 and is aiming to reconnect two ancient fen habitats, Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves. The project will create 3,700 hectares of fen landscape between Huntingdon and Peterborough.

Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves are two of the last remnants of fenland that once stretched from Lincoln to Cambridge.

The area was once 'wild fen', a landscape rich in wildlife, stretching between Lincoln and Cambridge, in Eastern England. However, in the 17th century the fenland was drained for agriculture, which resulted in 99% of the wild fen being destroyed. Woodwalton Fen and Holme Fen National Nature Reserves are two of the last remnants.

The restoration is expected to take between 50 and 100 years to complete.

Improvements are already being seen as a result of the progress made so far including:

- reduced risk of flooding in the locality
- reducing greenhouse gas emissions by starting to restore the peatland
- increased numbers of wildlife, including bitterns, lapwing and snipe

The project will take 50 to 100 years to complete.

Catherine Weightman, Natural England Cambridgeshire team leader, said:

We are thrilled that this highly important project will be showcased at the Inter-agency Climate Change Group stand during COP26.

Our work with our partners will benefit wildlife and people for centuries to come.

Clive Walmsley, Chair of the Inter-agency Climate Change Group, said:

Our ambition at COP26 is to showcase the very best examples of nature-based solution projects from across the UK. Highlighting to new audiences how nature can provide important solutions to climate change and help achieve environmental improvements for the benefit of current and future generations.