

Pioneering North East project uses nature to reduce flood risk

More than 20 natural features have been constructed to bolster flood protection in the North East as part of a pioneering natural flood management project.

The £2.1million government-funded Weardale Natural Flood Management scheme, which includes a series of nature based solutions such as storage areas, wooden leaky barriers and timber fences, could reduce flood risk across 41km² to communities including Lanehead, Wearhead, Westgate and Stanhope.

It's also seen 150 hectares of peatland restored, will aim to create up to 75 hectares of woodland and brings a habitat boost to wildlife.

The project is led by the Environment Agency working in partnership with Natural England, North Pennines AONB Partnership, the Forestry Commission and Durham County Council with representation from the Wear Catchment Partnership, alongside local farmers and landowners.

This week (Thursday, 12 August) MP for North West Durham Richard Holden visited the site to find out more about the project.

Leaky barriers and storage areas

The first set of features were completed by two landowners this summer on the Middlehope and Killhope Burns, with the next phase due to start in September. In total, they have the potential to store up to 5,150m³ of water – the capacity of more than two Olympic sized swimming pools.

At Killhope Burn, 13 leaky dams have been built across the burn to restrict the flow of water and four timber fences constructed to slow the movement of water across the landscape

At Middlehope Burn four storage areas have been created which will hold back water during heavy rain. By October, four more storage areas will be created.

Further features will be built into the landscape next year as the project continues. The work explores reducing flood risk using natural flood management techniques to communities which have historically flooded due to water running from the surrounding hills.

(L-R) Kirsty Hardy, Environment Agency; Richard Holden, MP for North West Durham; John Greenbank, part of the construction team; Greg Dalton, farmer and landowner; Jamie Fletcher, Environment Agency.

Landowners play key role

Kirsty Hardy, Environment Agency Project Manager, said:

Our innovative approach, which has included flood risk modelling and working with communities to understand the flood history and landscape, has helped us identify the locations that provide the greatest benefit to reduce flood risk.

Landowners and farmers and their skills and local knowledge are integral to the project's ongoing success and our commitment to all working together has ensured our vision is coming to life.

Not only is this protecting local communities, it's bringing so many positive benefits for climate regulation, wildlife, water quality, water resources and amenity.

Leaky barriers on the Killhope Burn, which are designed to hold water back during heavy rainfall.

Landowner Greg Dalton, who led on the construction of the features, added:

We have enjoyed working collaboratively with the Environment Agency and hopefully these installations will mitigate flooding for the community and businesses downstream for many years to come.

I am also hopeful that this will form part of the government's future support schemes for farming, and farmers will be rewarded for helping address the pertinent issues arising from climate change.

We have used local contractors and suppliers to ensure all installations are in keeping with the local landscape as well as supporting local businesses.

Changing the way floods are managed

MP Richard Holden said:

The better our flood management systems, the better we can protect our towns and villages across Weardale from life-changing harm.

I was really pleased to hear from local farmer Greg Dalton and

Kirsty and the Environment Agency team. When it comes to natural flood management it seems to me it's best to work with the landowner from the start. It was great to see that Greg's ideas were taken on and implemented by Kirsty and the Agency.

From what I have seen today natural flood management could change the way we manage floods and how the Environment Agency work with landowners to understand what works best on their land and for the local towns and villages.

Construction taking place on one of the timber fences on the Killhope Burn.

The latest work follows a demonstrator site which was completed in August 2019 and which stored 400m³ of flood water to protect communities from the impact of Storm Ciara in February 2020. A citizen science programme will monitor the features and feed into a range of projects to better understand flood risk management on a catchment scale.

Sarah Tooze, Biodiversity Lead from the North Pennines AONB Partnership, said:

The AONB Partnership's role in this project has been to lead the engagement with farmers and landowners, which follows work on a demonstrator site completed in October 2019.

Our upland landscape is incredibly important in providing public goods, such as Natural Flood Management. The forthcoming Environmental Land Management scheme, beginning in 2024, will recognise and reward farmers and land managers for this. The North Pennines AONB Partnership will continue to offer support and advice to ensure the best outcome for the environment and farming businesses.

[CMA calls for stronger laws to tackle illegal ticket resale](#)

Press release

Sales of tickets on platforms such as viagogo and StubHub should be subject to tighter rules, the CMA has today proposed.



Image credit: nd3000 via istock

As live events such as music festivals and large sporting events resume over the coming months, the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) has set out several recommended changes to the law and existing system of regulation, which are intended to protect consumers.

The recommendations include:

- a ban on platforms allowing resellers to sell more tickets for an event than they can legally buy from the primary market;
- ensuring platforms are fully responsible for incorrect information about tickets that are listed for sale on their websites;
- a new system of licensing for platforms that sell secondary tickets that would enable an authority to act quickly and issue sanctions such as taking down websites, withdrawing a business's right to operate in the sector, and the imposition of substantial fines.

Whilst the bulk-buying of tickets ahead of real fans by professional resellers – who then sell them at inflated prices – may be illegal, swift and effective action by authorities is not possible under the current law. Similar issues arise in relation to laws which prevent resellers advertising tickets using incorrect information, or 'speculatively selling' tickets that they don't own.

Over recent years the CMA has taken strong action against secondary ticketing websites to tackle non-compliance in the sector, including the failure to provide important and accurate information to consumers. This has included requiring viagogo and StubHub to remove misleading messaging about ticket availability and to tell customers where the tickets they buy might lead to them being turned away at the door.

George Lusty, Senior Director for Consumer Protection at the CMA, said:

"Over recent years we have taken strong action to protect people buying tickets from resellers online, and the secondary ticket websites are now worlds apart from those we saw before the CMA took action.

"While it is clear that concerns about the sector remain, there are limits to what the CMA and other enforcers can do with their current powers. With live

music and sporting events starting back up we want the Government to take action to strengthen the current laws and introduce a licensing regime for secondary ticketing platforms.

“If adopted, these proposals will help prevent people getting ripped off by unscrupulous resellers online and we stand ready to help the Government to implement them.”

You can read the full report, including further details on the proposals, on the CMA’s [website](#).

Notes to editors:

- All media enquiries should be directed to the CMA press office by email on press@cma.gov.uk, or by phone on 020 3738 6460.
- For further details regarding the CMA’s enforcement action in the secondary ticketing sector, please see [here](#).
- Based on data provided from all the main secondary platform operators in the UK, the CMA’s investigation into the acquisition of Stubhub by viagogo estimated the value of the tickets sold in 2019 through secondary ticketing websites was approximately £350 million.

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[Banks ranked in latest customer survey results](#)

The latest independent results are available via the links below:

[Ipsos MORI](#) (which covers personal current accounts)

[BVA BDRC](#) (which covers business current accounts)

This is the sixth publication which ranks the service quality of personal and business current account providers in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The survey was set up by the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), following its market investigation into retail banking in 2016.

The latest results include Starling and Virgin Money as new entrants to the survey for Business Current Accounts. This is also the first full year of results to indicate how the pandemic has impacted on customer satisfaction with their banks.

In the surveys, personal and small business current account holders were asked how likely they would be to recommend their provider to a friend, relative or other business. Questions also covered the quality of online and

mobile provision, branch and overdraft services and, for small businesses, the quality of the relationship management they receive.

The results clearly show customers how their bank is rated on overall quality of service and make it easier for people to compare offers. They also drive up competition between providers, resulting in a better overall experience for the account holder.

Since the survey's introduction in August 2018, providers have been required to display their ranking prominently both in branch and on their websites and apps. The CMA also made it compulsory for all relevant banks to take part in the survey, so customers get the full picture.

Adam Land, Senior Director at the CMA, said:

"Lots of people don't have time for life admin, which is why jobs like comparing providers can fall to the bottom of the list. These results make it easy for people to see which banks are best meeting their customers' needs at the click of a button, which puts pressure on poorly performing banks to raise their game.

"The past year has put financial pressure on many people and small businesses, and this is the first full set of results to reflect how banks have supported customers through this difficult period. If the service and quality offered by your bank has not been up to scratch, you may well be able to do better."

1. The CMA cannot comment on the performance of individual banks. Journalists should speak to the individual banks for further explanation.
2. Personal account providers (such as banks and building societies) with more than 150,000 active account holders in Great Britain and more than 20,000 small business accounts are obliged to collect and publish this data. In Northern Ireland, the equivalent numbers are 20,000 for personal current accounts (PCAs) and 15,000 for business current accounts (BCAs).
3. For media enquiries, please contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.

[Government to tighten rules to stop 'greenwashing' of electricity tariffs](#)

- Government to review green electricity tariffs amid concerns energy companies could be exaggerating their environmental benefits
- ministers will consider whether there is currently sufficient clarity around where energy on bills comes from

- review comes as poll shows 75% of consumers believe suppliers should be more transparent over their green tariffs

How energy retailers market 'green' electricity tariffs to consumers will be reviewed by the government, amid concerns that some are overstating how environmentally friendly their products are, Energy Minister Anne-Marie Trevelyan has announced today (16 August).

9 million British households are now on green tariffs, with over half of all new electricity tariffs launched now badged as '100% renewable' or 'green'.

With more and more consumers looking to make a green switch and reduce their carbon footprint and the UK having more than quadrupled its renewable electricity generation since 2010, the government wants to ensure consumers signing up to a green tariff know their energy is coming from green sources of electricity generation.

The review launched today will explore the extent of 'greenwashing' in the retail energy sector, whether the current system is suitably transparent and whether the rules around what can be called a 'green' tariff remain fit for purpose.

Energy companies are currently able to market tariffs as 'green' even if some of the energy they supply to customers comes from fossil fuels, as long as this is offset by purchasing enough certificates called Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin to cover their customer base. These determine the proportion of electricity that they source from renewable electricity generation.

Options being explored include looking at whether the system around these certificates needs to be smarter, as well as whether suppliers need to provide clearer information to households about their green tariffs, including type of renewable energy used (such as wind or solar), where the renewable power was generated and when.

The government is also publishing a separate call for evidence on third-party intermediaries in the retail energy market, such as price comparison sites, auto-switching services, and non-domestic brokers, with around half of households using them when engaging with the energy market. They currently operate outside of the retail market rules, and ministers will seek views on whether a general regulatory framework is needed.

Minister of State for Energy and Clean Growth, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, said:

Millions of UK households are choosing to make the green switch and more and more of our energy comes from renewables. But I want people to know that when they sign up to a green tariff, they are investing in companies that make a conscious choice to invest in renewable energy.

Part of that is ensuring companies are being as transparent as

possible on where their power comes from. That way, every family in Britain can rest assured their choices are helping to contribute to our world-leading target of eliminating our contribution to climate change by 2050.

Nearly two-thirds (62%) of UK energy consumers say their purchasing decisions are influenced by how eco-friendly an energy tariff is. However, 75% believe suppliers should be open and transparent about their tariffs, including how much of their renewable energy they buy from other companies.

Consumer protection advocates and price comparison services have also called for greater transparency around suppliers who market their tariffs as green.

Head of Regulation at Uswitch.com, Richard Neudegg, said:

Transparency is key to bring consumers on the journey to net zero. Households want to do their bit to help the environment, so it's vital to make it as simple as possible for them to confidently pick the tariffs that actually help to support renewable energy.

More and more people are purchasing green tariffs but it's been difficult for bill-payers to know exactly what's under the hood of these deals. We support any measures that aim to demystify green tariffs for households.

The call for evidence on designing a framework for transparency of carbon content in energy products was promised in the [Energy White Paper](#). It seeks to gather information from consumer groups, energy suppliers, generators and industry bodies about the need for reform to the green tariff framework. It presents options on how things could change to become more transparent for consumers

Research of consumer attitudes comes from a YouGov poll that features in a Scottish Power and Good Energy report [‘Come Clean on Green’ \(2020\)](#)

Renewable Energy Guarantees of Origin (REGO) are issued to energy generators by the energy regulator Ofgem to certify that electricity has come from a renewable source. For a tariff to be badged as ‘green’ or ‘100% renewable’, a supplier must be able to show evidence that they are in possession of enough REGO certificates to cover the energy consumed by customers on that tariff

[PM's calls with the NATO Secretary](#)

General and UN Secretary General: 15 August 2021

News story

PM Boris Johnson spoke to the NATO Secretary General and the UN Secretary about the current situation in Afghanistan.



This afternoon the Prime Minister spoke to the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg and the UN Secretary General António Guterres about the current situation in Afghanistan.

He welcomed the joined-up international efforts to get foreign nationals, Afghan contractors and humanitarian workers to safety in recent days.

The Prime Minister emphasised the need for a coordinated and concerted effort from the international community in the coming months to tackle the extremist threat and address the humanitarian emergency in Afghanistan.

He stressed the importance of any recognition of a new Afghan Government happening on a joint, rather than unilateral, basis.

The Prime Minister called for meetings of NATO's North Atlantic Council and the UN Security Council to take place as soon as possible to enable high-level international discussions on these issues.

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