

Virtual drop in sessions offer post flood advice for Buckingham

The Environment Agency is inviting people living in Buckingham to two virtual drop in surgeries on Thursday 10 June to discuss the winter 2020/21 flooding.

Anyone who has been affected by or has concerns about the winter flooding is welcome to attend and share their experiences with Environment Agency officers.

The 2 sessions are at 1:00pm and 6:30pm, and will include short presentations plus a live question and answer session.

The 2 hour sessions will be hosted on Zoom and include information about the winter flooding, the flood warning service, how rivers are maintained and operated, and what residents and the community can do to become more flood resilient.

Tamsyn Ellway, Flood Resilience Advisor, said:

We can't stop flooding, but we work to limit the impact from main rivers and we help communities to prepare along with our partners. These surgeries are an excellent opportunity for residents to share their concerns and discuss flooding issues with the Environment Agency.

We want to understand the extent of flooding in Buckingham, gather views and evidence for subsequent investigations. Under normal circumstances, we would have gathered this information in person but we have been unable to do this. Understanding flood risk at a local level and taking appropriate action can help communities become more flood resilient.

Take part

Residents can join the Zoom session by using this [link](#) and entering the passcode 072814.

Zoom is an online audio and web conferencing platform. If anyone needs help with accessing Zoom, or has any questions relating to these virtual sessions, please email us at flood.resilience.eastanglia.cb@environment-agency.gov.uk.

Further information

December 2020 flooding

In December 2020, East Anglia received an exceptionally high amount of rain

with a total averaged rainfall of 108 millimetres, which was 195% of the monthly average.

Up to 55 millimetres rain fell in less than 24 hours between 23 and 24 December 2020. Falling on an already wet catchment this intense rainfall led to widespread flooding across the River Great Ouse, through Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and parts of Suffolk.

The Environment Agency issued 27 flood alerts, 41 flood warnings and a severe flood warning between 23 and 24 December. Over 30 communities recorded property flooding resulting from either surface water or rivers, with at least 567 properties being affected to some degree.

A flood warning was issued in Buckingham on 23 December on the River Great Ouse. At least 30 properties flooded as a result of a combination of river and surface water flooding overwhelming roads, rivers and gullies in the area.

What has happened since the flooding?

The Environment Agency has worked with communities affected by the flooding and its professional partners on the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) including the police, fire and rescue service, local authorities and others to understand the full extent of the flooding.

As part of working more closely with a strengthened Flood Group for Buckingham we will be able to discuss future needs and explain maintenance plans.

Sign up for flood warnings

Residents and businesses in flood-risk areas are encouraged to sign up to our [flood warning service](#) or phone Floodline on 0345 988 1188.

[Four Scottish artists' work acquired by Government Art Collection](#)

- Four contemporary Scottish artists are among 45 visual artists whose work has been acquired by the UK Government Art Collection
- The £230,000 acquisition project, developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, celebrates and supports the diversity of creativity across the whole of the UK

- Works will be displayed in Government buildings around the country, and internationally in British Embassies and Residences

Award-winning artist Alberta Whittle and Glasgow-based painter Rabiya Choudhry are among four Scottish artists whose work has been bought by the prestigious UK Government Art Collection.

Organised in response to the impact of the pandemic on the visual arts sector, the £230,000 X-UK acquisition project celebrates the diversity of creativity across the UK, with 45 contemporary visual artists from all parts of the country represented.

Working in collaboration with the Scottish Contemporary Art Network, as well as national networks in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the project has resulted in over 90 works becoming part of the Government Art Collection.

The newly-acquired pieces will join the 14,500 other works in the Government Art Collection which are displayed in Government buildings across the UK, including in No.10 and No.11 Downing Street, and internationally in British Embassies and Residences in a total of 130 countries around the world.

Culture Minister Caroline Dinenage said:

“The past year has been challenging for the UK’s many brilliant artists. I am grateful that the Government Art Collection has been able to support a diverse range of artists from every corner of the country.”

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

The past year has been extremely difficult for the creative community, so we’re delighted to support these four outstanding Scottish artists by acquiring their works for the UK Government Art Collection. The pieces provide a creative snapshot of the times we’re living through, reflecting a rich variety of voices from right across the UK.

The UK Government has worked hard to support Scotland’s arts and culture sector throughout the pandemic, providing the Scottish Government with £97 million to sustain the country’s arts organisations and backing the Edinburgh Festivals with £1 million of funding.

Alberta Whittle is an award-winning artist, working mainly in film, sculpture and performance art, who is set to represent Scotland at the prestigious Venice Art Biennale 2022. With work already in the Scottish National Gallery Collections and Glasgow Museums Collections, three large prints exploring the relationship between history and the body have been acquired for X-UK.

Rabiya Choudhry is a British-Pakistani artist whose paintings are inspired by everything from comic books to song lyrics to the Glasgow clothes shops her dad ran in the 80s and 90s. Her work acquired by the Government Art Collection, *The New Normal*, reflects on the strange year brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also represented in the list of acquisitions is Glasgow-based artist Jamie Crewe. For the works acquired by the Government Art Collection, Crewe used the 19th century traditional craft of 'well dressing' to create designs formed out of rose petals, elderflowers, poppy seeds and other natural materials on clay slabs.

Designer Beca Lipscombe and artist Lucy McKenzie have collaborated under the name Atelier E.B since 2007 to create work that explores the relationship between art and fashion. Three silkscreen prints acquired for X-UK are based on commemorative travel blankets the pair produced as souvenirs for the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth and 2012 London Olympic Games.

Moira Jeffery, Director, Scottish Contemporary Art Network, said:

We're so proud to have played our part in a scheme that will share with the work of brilliant artists from Scotland, Atelier E.B, Rabiya Choudhry, Jamie Crewe and Alberta Whittle, with audiences across the world. This Government Art Collection initiative is supporting artists through the pandemic and telling a richer story about who is making art today, where, how and why.

Sir David Verey, Chair, Advisory Committee to the Government Art Collection, said:

There is no better way to support artists in this terrible time than to buy their art. The Advisory Committee of the Government Art Collection is very proud to have been part of this effort.

[A.I. used at sea for first time off coast of Scotland](#)

- Royal Navy uses Artificial Intelligence as part of Exercise Formidable Shield
- A.I. technology trialled against a supersonic missile threat
- Research led by Defence scientists

For the first time, Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) is being used by the Royal

Navy at sea as part of Exercise Formidable Shield, which is currently taking place off the coast of Scotland.

This Operational Experiment (OpEx) on the Type 45 Destroyer (HMS Dragon) and Type 23 Frigate (HMS Lancaster), is using the A.I. applications, Startle and Sycoiea, which were tested against a supersonic missile threat.

As part of the Above Water Systems programme, led by Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) scientists, the A.I. improves the early detection of lethal threat, accelerates engagement timelines and provides Royal Navy Commanders with a rapid hazard assessment to select the optimum weapon or measure to counter and destroy the target.

Scottish Secretary Alister Jack said:

It's vital that our brave and highly skilled Armed Forces stay ahead of the game for the security of the United Kingdom and our allies.

The Royal Navy's use of A.I. for the first time at sea is an important development in ensuring readiness to tackle threats we may face. I'm proud to see that two Scottish built Royal Navy vessels are at the heart of this exercise in the waters off the Hebrides.

Dstl has worked closely with industry partners Roke (Startle App), CGI (Sycoiea App) and BAE Systems to ensure the new A.I. based applications work alongside existing radar and combat management systems.

- The Startle A.I. system is designed to help ease the load on sailors monitoring the 'Air Picture' in the Operations Room, providing live recommendations and alerts.
- The Sycoiea system builds upon this with Threat Evaluation and Weapon assignment identifying the nearest threat and how best to deal with it.

Dstl's Programme Manager, Alasdair Gilchrist MBE said:

Dstl has invested heavily in the systems that are installed at the moment, but it's imperative that we continue to invest to make sure that the Royal Navy remains relevant now and in the future.

Being able to bring A.I. onto the ships is a massive achievement, and while we can prove the A.I. works in the labs, actually getting Navy personnel hands on is brilliant.

As outlined in the recent Defence Command Paper, the MOD is committed to investing in A.I. and increased automation to transform capabilities as the Armed Forces adapt to meet future threats, which will be supported by the £24bn uplift in defence spending over the next four years.

HMS Lancaster and HMS Dragon are currently trialling the use of A.I. as part of a glimpse into the future of air defence at sea.

HMS Lancaster's Weapon Engineer Officer, Lieutenant Commander Adam Leveridge said:

Observing Startle and Sycoia augment the human warfighter in real time against a live supersonic missile threat was truly impressive – a glimpse into our highly-autonomous future.

Exercise Formidable Shield is Europe's biggest and most complex air and missile exercise. Designed to improve allied interoperability and capabilities, it is a three-week exercise that carries out live-fire Integrated Air & Missile Defence activity with more than 15 ships, 10 aircraft and around 3,300 military personnel from around the world taking part.

Using NATO command and control reporting structures, ten nations are taking part in the Exercise including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Held every two years, Formidable Shield will run until 3 June and is led by Naval Striking and Support Forces NATO on behalf of the US Sixth Fleet.

[UK-wide search is underway to find next City of Culture](#)

- Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has launched the search for UK City of Culture 2025
- The competition is now live and applications are encouraged from towns and cities across the UK
- Winner will have baton passed to them from Coventry – UK City of Culture 2021

UK Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden has today launched the competition to find the UK's next City of Culture.

The competition, delivered by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) in collaboration with the devolved administrations, will use culture as a catalyst for levelling up areas outside London and put culture

at the heart of their plans to recover from the impact of the pandemic.

The new winner will take on the baton from Coventry and be at the centre of the UK's cultural spotlight for a year.

For the first time, groups of towns will now be able to join together and apply for the title to be awarded to their local area – widening the scope of which areas of the country could benefit.

Towns and cities will need to articulate a strong and unique vision for their future growth, celebrating local heritage and using culture to bring communities together, build a sense of place and inspire local pride. Bidders will also be asked to demonstrate how investment in culture and creativity will drive growth, how they will open up access to culture and to develop partnerships and celebrate links with places across the UK.

UK Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said:

UK City of Culture is a fantastic showcase of the huge impact culture has in towns and cities across the country. From Derry-Londonderry, to Hull and Coventry, previous winners have shown how the competition can deliver greater cultural participation, drive economic regeneration and boost local pride. I encourage towns and cities across the UK to put forward bids for 2025 and champion their local arts and culture scene. I'm also delighted to confirm the competition will run in future years, as a sign of our commitment to levelling up culture across the whole of the UK.

UK Government Minister for Scotland Iain Stewart said:

The UK City of Culture competition offers a wonderful opportunity for the winning city to make its mark on the UK's cultural landscape.

Through raising a city's creative and cultural profile and drawing in visitors, winning this prestigious title can also provide a real social and economic boost.

It would be brilliant to bring the prize to Scotland for the first time and I'd strongly urge Scottish towns and cities to get involved.

Scottish Culture Minister Jenny Gilruth said:

I encourage Scottish towns and cities to take this opportunity to

celebrate their local culture and consider bidding to be UK City of Culture in 2025.

The competition can have a transformational impact on host communities and has the potential to bring a major boost to Scotland as we look ahead to the recovery and renewal of the culture sector.

The future for the competition has also been confirmed, with Oliver Dowden announcing today that UK City of Culture will become a regular event in the country's cultural calendar – running in 2029 and beyond.

The first city to take up the mantle was Derry-Londonderry in 2013, followed by Hull in 2017. The City of Culture title attracted millions of visitors and drew in significant investments for both cities. The cultural programmes have had a lasting positive impact on local people, with surveys showing that communities felt prouder and more positive about the place they live after their City of Culture year.

Bidding for the title in its own right can have a hugely positive impact on a place – helping to bring partners together and develop strategic cultural leadership. To encourage as many places as possible across the UK to bid and to benefit from the UK City of Culture process, DCMS will offer funding of up to £40,000 to up to six longlisted places to help develop their applications.

Coventry City of Culture 2021 is already providing a blueprint for how culture can be at the heart of social and economic recovery. It is expected that Coventry's status as UK City of Culture will see a significant boost in visitor numbers and economic investment with over £110 million in additional investment secured over the 2018-22 period. The programme aims to attract around 5,000 volunteers and create more than 900 jobs.

The bids for the 2025 title will be assessed by an independent panel chaired by Sir Phil Redmond. He is joined this year by Claire McColgan, Director of Culture Liverpool, as Deputy Chair. The panel of 11 members will include representatives for Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England. It will visit each of the shortlisted cities, to be announced later this year, before each city or town makes a final pitch to become the next UK City of Culture.

The formal application process for the 2025 competition is now open. The winning city or town will be announced in Spring 2022. Prospective bidders will be invited to join a two day workshop in Coventry which will provide further detailed information and advice on the bidding process.

PM meeting with NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg: 2 June 2021

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson met NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at Downing Street.



The Prime Minister welcomed NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg to Downing Street today.

The Prime Minister stressed the UK's commitment to NATO as demonstrated through our record investment in defence spending and our commitment of cutting edge technology, including the Queen Elizabeth Aircraft Carrier, to the alliance.

The leaders discussed a number of issues affecting NATO, including the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. They agreed on the need to ensure Afghanistan has a long-term peaceful and democratic future.

They also condemned the recent actions taken by Belarus to arrest Roman Protasevich and Sofia Sapega. They agreed the Belarusian regime must release political prisoners and provide a full explanation for what happened.

The Prime Minister emphasised his support for the Secretary General's vision for NATO's future. The leaders agreed that NATO is essential to transatlantic security and has an important role to play in tackling wider geopolitical challenges like climate change.

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