

# Government announces intervention into Thurrock Council

Press release

Local Government Secretary Greg Clark has introduced new intervention measures in Thurrock Council to ensure delivery of key essential services.



- Essex County Council to take control of financial functions at neighbouring Thurrock
- Appointment made in response to concerns about level of financial risk and debt at the council
- Best Value Inspection ordered for Thurrock Council

Local Government Secretary Greg Clark has today (2 September 2022) announced measures to [intervene in Thurrock Council](#) to address serious concerns about the financial management of the council and the risk this poses to local services.

Essex County Council has been appointed in the role of the Commissioner and Best Value Inspector, giving them full control of the financial functions of Thurrock Council and powers to assess whether there are failures in other functions to mitigate any further risk to services.

Thurrock Council will work with Essex County Council to prepare an Improvement Plan within the first 3 months of the intervention and is expected to provide a Best Value Inspection Report to the Secretary of State in the same timeframe.

The move comes in response to grave concerns about the exceptional level of financial risk and debt incurred by the council.

**Local Government Secretary Greg Clark said:**

Given the serious financial situation at Thurrock Council and its potential impact on local services, I believe it is necessary for

government to intervene.

I strongly believe that when a council gets into difficulties its local government neighbours should be the preferred source of help in turning it around.

I know that Essex County Council possesses the expertise and ability to help its local government neighbour. Working together, I believe the councils can deliver the improvements local people expect and deserve.

In its role as Commissioner, Essex County Council will take control of all the functions associated with the financial governance and scrutiny of strategic financial decision making by the authority.

The Best Value Inspection will look into the governance, audit (internal and external), risk management, overview and scrutiny functions of the council, and consider their impact on service delivery.

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## Wrexham becomes Wales's seventh city

Wrexham became a city on Thursday 1 September after winning the prestigious status through a competition which was part of Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. The honour was granted earlier this year and the official 'Letter Patent' confirms city status from 1 September 2022.

Wrexham now becomes the seventh city in Wales joining Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, Bangor, St Davids and St Asaph. The competition to receive civic honours was last run 10 years ago to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, when St Asaph was honoured with city status.

Secretary of State for Wales, Sir Robert Buckland said:

Congratulations to Wrexham on achieving city status. The city and surrounding area already has so much to offer – it's home to the famous Wrexham Lager Brewery, the Unesco World Heritage Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and a fantastic football club which is Wales's oldest and one of the oldest in the world.

There is already much for Wrexham to be proud of and its future is equally exciting. I hope that the city of Wrexham continues to prosper and grow.

Councillor Mark Pritchard, Leader of Wrexham Council, said:

We have so much to celebrate in Wrexham. We have an amazing World Heritage Site, and incredible football club with incredible owners, and a rich and diverse arts and culture scene. We have strong links with our armed forces, world-class businesses and friends all over the world.

But our greatest asset is our communities, and it's the amazing passion, character and creativity of the people who live here that make Wrexham what it is.

City status is a wonderful achievement and reflects the growing confidence and ambition we have in Wrexham. I'd like to thank everybody who supported the ambitious city status bid, from MPs and MSs, to elected councillors, and all the businesses within Wrexham and beyond.

I'd also like to thank Her Majesty the Queen for granting Wrexham city status. We've received congratulations from supporters and friends all over the world, and this is a truly historic day.

Wrexham Council is planning a month of weekend events throughout September to celebrate Wrexham:

### **Saturday 3 September**

- Reaffirmation of the Freedom of the Borough to the Royal Welsh – starts at Llwyn Isaf at 11am.

### **Saturday 10 September**

- Invited guest service at St Giles Church to celebrate city status at 12pm.
- Wrexham AFC vs Maidenhead Utd FC at The Racecourse stadium at 3pm.
- Live music from The Royston Club plus guests on Llwyn Isaf from 6pm.

### **Saturday 17 September**

- Wrexham City Fun Day – activities throughout the city centre for all the family.

### **Saturday 24 September**

- Wrexham Feast food festival at Waterworld car park from 10am (also Sunday, September 25)
- Wrexham AFC v Torquay United at the Racecourse at 3pm.

The Platinum Jubilee Civic Honours Competition required applicants to demonstrate how their unique communities and distinct local identity meant

they deserved to be awarded city status. They were also required to highlight their royal associations and cultural heritage.

Winning city status can provide a boost to local communities and open up new opportunities for people who live there, as is the case with previous winners, Perth and Preston, where residents have described how their success contributed to increased national and global standing, putting them on the international map as a place to do business.

Perth, which was granted city status in 2012 as part of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, has seen the local economy expand by 12% in the decade it was granted city status.

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## [Help protect communities across Yorkshire from flooding](#)

Press release

The Environment Agency is looking for three new independent members to join a committee that plays a vital part in shaping local flood and coastal management plans across Yorkshire.



Committee members decide on the priorities for the funding and delivery of flood risk management projects as part of the Yorkshire Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

Applications are welcome from people actively interested in flood risk management, from different backgrounds and with an interest in, or experience of:

- local community flood forums or action groups
- engineering and construction

- spatial planning
- finance and accountancy
- asset management
- managing resilience and recovery
- conservation
- farming and land management
- the business community

Yorkshire RFCC chair, Professor Colin Mellors said:

There are 12 RFCCs in England and members of the committee play an important role in determining local priorities for investment in flood and coastal risk management, ensuring a joined-up approach among partners and raising local levies for flood alleviation schemes.

As a member of the Yorkshire RFCC you will help create partnerships that fund and deliver projects for local communities at risk of the devastating effects of flooding.

The region, consisting of over five million people and a diverse geography, makes a substantial contribution to the national economy. At the same time, it is vulnerable to the risk of flooding from many sources; rivers, surface water, groundwater and includes some of the fastest eroding coastline in Europe.

Mike Dugher, Environment Agency Yorkshire area director said:

We are looking for three enthusiastic and committed members to help us set the strategic priorities for managing flood risk throughout the Yorkshire area in the face of the challenge of our changing climate.

It is an exciting opportunity to make a practical difference to people's lives, businesses and to the environment in which we live.

Committee members do not receive a salary, but reasonable expenses are paid. RFCCs meet four times a year with potential additional work between meetings

to help progress objectives set out in the RFCC's business plan.

The deadline for applications is Monday 19 September 2022.

For details on the roles and how to apply please contact Amer Bhatti on 07786 523779 or email [YRFCC@environment-agency.gov.uk](mailto:YRFCC@environment-agency.gov.uk).

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## **MMO response to actions by Greenpeace in South West Deeps**

We were informed by Greenpeace yesterday (Wed 7 Sept) that it intends to collect more boulders and drop them into the sea at South West Deeps in what it refers to as a peaceful protest to prevent "destructive bottom trawling".

This would mean further boulder drops into the marine space without the required marine licences.

We are extremely disappointed that Greenpeace intends to continue with its actions. Greenpeace is aware of the work that is being undertaken by MMO to protect these sites and the process that must be followed, and Greenpeace was left in no doubt following the judicial comments in the previous court proceedings, that it is expected to comply with the marine licensing regime.

We will continue to monitor and investigate as appropriate.

Since the programme started, MMO has already delivered a range of management measures in four offshore sites, including Dogger Bank SAC which at 12,331 sq. kilometres, is the largest MPA in England protecting seabed habitat. We also recently published a call for evidence, and sought views on MMO's draft assessments of the impacts of bottom-towed fishing gear on a further 13 marine protected areas (MPAs) in order to identify appropriate long-term site protection.

MMO will continue to undertake full evidence-based assessments in consultation with all stakeholders to establish robust legislative measures to protect our important marine habitats. These will be based on the best available scientific evidence and will be accompanied by a thorough analysis of how such measures will affect fishing activity. We are implementing this work in a phased, risk-based manner ensuring that those MPAs that are most vulnerable to damage from fishing activities are assessed and managed first. We will also engage with all users and stakeholders, including interested environmental NGOs with whom we have established a forum to engage and update on progress. This includes Greenpeace.

Therefore, as England's marine regulator, we are very disappointed that Greenpeace has chosen to take this action to drop boulders to form a barrier as we don't believe it is justified or will help protect our marine environment.

It is also a requirement under the Marine and Coastal Access Act that any deposit of construction below high water is required to have a Marine Licence. Greenpeace do not hold, nor have they applied for one and as such their activity is potentially illegal.

As unlicensed activity has now taken place today (Thurs 1 Sept), MMO has launched a formal investigation in accordance with its regulatory function around marine licensing enforcement and is gathering evidence before considering its next response.

South West Deeps (East) is a large offshore marine conservation zone (MCZ) covering an area of 4,676 km<sup>2</sup>. It is located in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea where it's closest point to land lies 190 km south-west of Cornwall. The depth of the water reaches 750m in some places and the area is home to a wide variety of important species including flatfish such as sole and plaice on the seabed surface, and species of clam, cockles and marine worms. The site also provides habitats and prey species for a range of commercial fish species, as well as marine birds and mammals.

The location is part of a third round of the MMO's work to manage fishing in our offshore MPAs, and the MMO is currently gathering and analysing evidence to inform our management decisions for this site. Any proposed management for this site will be subject to public consultation, and all necessary fisheries management measures for all English offshore MPAs will be in place by the end of 2024.

The fishing vessels that work in these waters are predominantly French and Spanish with only two UK static netters which are vessels that deploy a static wall of netting (either trammel or gill net) in a fixed position. From available records, the type of fishing undertaken is a mix of gill netting, long lining, bottom trawling, pelagic trawling and fly seining.

Therefore, it is our view that to drop boulders in this location will have minimal impact.

The MMO remains open to discussions with Greenpeace to ensure we can achieve our joint goal of marine nature recovery. In fact, MMO met with a range of MPA stakeholders, including Greenpeace, just last week to discuss our work to manage fishing in MPAs.

To assist vessels' safe navigation, MMO understands that there are 18 boulders in the following locations, based on communication from Greenpeace and observation by MMO officers.

The coordinates of each boulder provided by Greenpeace are:

- N 48-59.1284 W 008-46.7469

- N 48-58.9120 W 008-47.9099
  - N 48-57.8316 W 008-47.3914
  - N 48-57.6745 W 008-48.8258
  - N 48-56.9305 W 008-47.9453
  - N 48-56.7746 W 008-49.3467
  - N 48-55.7351 W 008-48.7217
  - N 48-55.8803 W 008-49.9904
  - N 48-55.0817 W 008-49.1273
  - N 48-54.9064 W 008-50.8714
  - N 48-54.2681 W 008-49.7659
  - N 48-54.0387 W 008-51.2680
  - N 48-53.2421 W 008-50.4760
  - N 48-53.1244 W 008-51.8232
  - N 48-52.2789 W 008-51.3377
  - N 48-52.1629 W 008-52.6250
  - N 48-50.8866 W 008-53.5042
  - N 48-51.1433 W 008-51.9922
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# Foreign criminals and illegal entrants to the UK removed to Albania

Yesterday (Thursday 1 September) the UK government removed a total of 32 foreign criminals and immigration offenders on a charter flight to Albania.

Five individuals who entered the UK illegally were removed on yesterday's flight, including one person who was removed in 24 days after arriving via small boat in August.

Other individuals included a person who was removed 19 days after being caught by immigration officers working in a restaurant having overstayed as a visitor, and another who arrived hidden in a lorry from May.

The 27 foreign national offenders removed had received combined prison sentences of more than 87 years and were convicted of crimes including the supply of Class A drugs, facilitating illegal entry and sexual offences.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This flight sends a clear message to those who flout our laws and immigration rules that you will be swiftly removed. Anyone who comes to our country in a small boat or other dangerous, illegal means should not expect to stay in the UK for long.

We are working closely with the Albanian government to tackle illegal immigration and have this week agreed our joint operational plans to expedite the removal of Albanians who enter the UK illegally via small boats.

Alongside measures in our Nationality and Borders Act, this will help end the cycle of last-minute claims and appeals that can delay removals. We will stop at nothing to remove those with no right to be here as the public rightly expects.

Foreign offenders returned on yesterday's flight to Albania include:

- an individual sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for intent to supply Class A drugs
- an individual sentenced to over four years' imprisonment for facilitating illegal entry
- an individual sentenced to over seven years' imprisonment for intent to supply Class A drugs

Yesterday's flight is the 45th operated by the Home Office this year as the government tackles illegal migration and abuse of the asylum system.

Since signing our returns agreement with Albania in 2021, we have removed

nearly 1,000 Albanian foreign national offenders, including some who crossed the Channel illegally to come to the UK.

The UK has removed 7,638 people via enforced, voluntary and other return types since January 1, including 1,995 foreign national offenders. In August 2022 alone, 220 criminals were removed from the UK on both charter and scheduled flights.

The Nationality and Borders Act will further deter illegal entry into the UK, breaking the business model of people-smuggling networks and speed up the removal of those with no right to be in the UK.