

Almost £5million investment brings boost to Yorkshire environment

Press release

More than 82 hectares of habitat has been created or improved in the past year as part of the Environment Agency's programme of improvements across Yorkshire.



A leaky dam as part of the Sheffield Lakeland Landscape project

The programme, which includes almost 40 projects, also includes 15km of riverbank improvements and has seen 53,000 trees planted.

Projects include removing barriers to fish movement, habitat restoration, measures to improve water quality and natural flood management, which protect the natural environment, make rivers more resilient to climate change and boost wildlife.

The Yorkshire Environment Programme is managed and delivered by the Environment Agency working mainly in partnership with government-backed Catchment Partnerships, bringing together river and wildlife trusts, local authorities and other organisations to improve the environment.

There were over 100 partners involved in this year's £5million programme contributing more than £2.1million in funding to the projects.

Key projects progressed in 2021/22 include:

- The Upper Aire Habitat and Land Management Project has improved habitat and water quality across over 350km² through landowner engagement.
- Connecting the Calder is investigating five potential weir removals on the River Calder.
- Derwent Upland Streams has been working with landowners in the North York Moors National Park and surrounding areas to improve land management and boost ecological status across eight waterbodies.
- The BEACH Esk project has worked with local communities and landowners

to reduce marine pollution and increase habitats like saltmarsh in the Esk estuary.

- Other projects on the Esk include the ongoing Pearl Mussel captive breeding programme to drive the recovery of the endangered species, and research work to discover if invasive signal crayfish are present in the river.
- A new Yorkshire Coast Catchment Partnership was set up to bring together expertise to benefit the 320km Yorkshire coastline.
- Sheffield Lakeland Landscape Partnership has reduced the run-off of water from the land and sedimentation in the Don and Rother Catchment and slowed the flow – reducing flood risk downstream.
- The Leven Canal was de-silted delivering 1.6km of improvements to what is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- The Rivers in Elmet project addressed sediment and nutrient pollution through tree and hedgerow planting and making improvements on farms.

Victoria Slingsby, Environment Planning and Engagement Manager for the Environment Agency in Yorkshire, said:

This year's environment programme has yet again seen some significant improvements right across the county, from natural flood management solutions, improved fish migration and interventions to enhance water quality.

The scale of delivery and achievement reflects the appetite of ourselves and our partners in Yorkshire to be at the forefront of managing environmental improvements for people and wildlife.

Published 1 September 2022

Joint Statement of the Syria Contact Group

The United Kingdom joined representatives of the Arab League, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iraq, Jordan, Norway, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the United States in agreeing to:

Reaffirm our commitment to reaching a political solution to the Syrian crisis consistent with UN Security Council resolution 2254, including continued support for implementing and sustaining an immediate nation-wide ceasefire, the Constitutional Committee, free and fair elections, the end of arbitrary detention, and the release of all those unjustly held.

Reiterate the need to create secure conditions for the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons, consistent with UNHCR standards; and support the provision of sufficient and sustainable aid to the displaced and their host countries and communities until such conditions are in place.

Note with concern the continuing threat posed by Daesh and reiterated our commitment to the mission of the Global Coalition Against Daesh, and to the fight against terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Call on all parties, in particular the government-nominated bloc, to resume meetings of the Syrian-led and Syrian-owned Constitutional Committee under UN auspices in Geneva and to advance an inclusive political solution that will protect the territorial integrity, unity, and sovereignty of Syria and the rights and dignity of all Syrians.

Reiterate that there is no military solution to the Syrian crisis and reaffirmed our continued support of UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen and his tireless efforts to advance a UN-facilitated political process consistent with UNSC resolution 2254.

Remain deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation in Syria and the ongoing suffering of the Syrian people. We emphasized the importance of continuing to provide life-saving and early recovery humanitarian assistance across Syria through all modalities, including expansion and extension of the UNSC resolution 2642 cross-border aid mechanism, for which there is no alternative that can match its scope and scale.

Furthermore, underline the necessity to continue to press for accountability for all atrocities and international crimes perpetrated in Syria, including the use of chemical weapons, as well as to press for a full accounting of the missing.

New Freeport in Wales will deliver regeneration and high quality jobs

- From today, applications are open to set up a new Freeport in Wales
- Bidders must set out how the Freeport will turbocharge the surrounding economy, deliver regeneration and create high-quality jobs
- Builds on UK Government's plan to level up whole of UK and is backed by £26 million UK government funding

The UK and Welsh Governments have today set out their shared ambitions for a new Freeport Programme in Wales as bidding opens for the innovative new site.

Bidders are encouraged to demonstrate how a Welsh Freeport will provide more

high-quality local jobs, attract fresh investment to Wales, and support the country to become more sustainable to reach net zero by 2050.

Consortiums will have 12 weeks from today to assess the prospectus and prepare their bids, which will be jointly assessed by officials from the UK and Welsh governments in an open and transparent selection process.

It is expected that the successful site will be announced this winter and become operational in 2023.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Darparu ar gyfer y dyfodol! (Delivering for the future)

It is fantastic to mark this first step in opening up this tremendous opportunity for the people of Wales to reap the rewards of a Freeport – from Porthcawl to Prestatyn.

Freeports have the potential to place rocket boosters under communities with their huge power in driving, harnessing and delivering tangible growth – in the same way Wales has with its proud and historic role as the engine room of success for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Secretary of State for Levelling Up Greg Clark said:

A new Freeport will provide a huge boost to people in Wales, and I am delighted to open bidding as we continue our work with the Welsh Government to bring jobs and prosperity to the country.

The UK Government's Freeports Programme is already delivering benefits to businesses and communities across England.

I look forward to seeing similar benefits for Wales as we deliver a ground-breaking new Freeport and level up the whole of the United Kingdom.

Welsh Government Economy Minister Vaughan Gething said:

As an intrinsic part of our rich industrial history and the engine room of our economy, ports have huge potential to accelerate future industries which support net zero – from off-shore energy to advanced manufacturing.

Thanks to the agreement we have reached with the UK government, we are launching a Freeports Programme in Wales which offers an opportunity to harness Wales' abundant economic potential domestically and internationally by reimagining the role of ports, whilst promoting fair work and sustainability.

The Welsh Government believes a better deal for workers is essential to a fairer and more equal Wales. So, I am looking for bids that break the industry ceiling on net zero standards, exemplify the high labour standards that promote fair work, and articulate a shared vision formed by long-lasting partnerships which genuinely involve all social partners.

I look forward to considering innovative bids which deliver meaningful economic and social benefits for Wales.

Backed by £26million in UK Government funding, a key aim of the Freeport Programme in Wales is to create jobs in new and exciting industries, boosting the local economy and regenerating the areas that need it most.

Applicants are being encouraged to show how the new Freeport will:

- help to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales
- support Wales to build a stronger, greener economy as it makes maximum progress towards decarbonization, with an emphasis on fair work and supporting the industries and services of the future
- form strong coalitions and partner with leaders in the private and public sectors to support businesses with a global reach, and businesses who aspire to a global reach, to achieve their ambitions.

Welsh Secretary Robert Buckland said:

The UK Government's ambitious Freeports agenda will help to level up communities and bring opportunities for people and businesses across the country.

By creating hundreds of local jobs and driving investment, the successful Welsh Freeport will bring significant benefits to its surrounding region.

This is hugely exciting for Wales and I look forward to seeing bids from as many potential sites as possible.

The UK Government and the Welsh Government have jointly agreed that they would be prepared to consider the case for a further additional Freeport in Wales, if a truly exceptional proposal were presented at the bidding stage.

Wales has already received millions from UK Government to support levelling up. This has gone towards projects such as transforming Haverfordwest Castle into an attraction ready for all seasons, a facelift for the Queen's Ballroom

in Tredegar and giving Llandrindod Wells a new lease of life in the form of affordable, energy efficient homes.

The progress made on a new Freeport for Wales builds on this ambitious agenda, delivering on our commitment to level up by spreading opportunity more equally across the whole of the UK.

Welsh Freeport bidding prospectus in [English](#) and [Welsh](#)

Applicants and multi-applicant partnerships must submit their proposals to both governments via the online bidding portal by 6pm on 24 November 2022. Potential bidders can register for portal access via the [Pre registration form](#).

Freeports are special areas within the UK's borders where different economic and customs regulations apply. Freeports are sites centred around one or a combination of air, rail, or seaport, within an encompassing outer boundary. [See more information on Freeports](#).

[Microsoft / Activision deal could lead to competition concerns](#)

Microsoft is 1 of 3 large companies, together with Sony and Nintendo, that have led the market for gaming consoles for the past 20 years with limited entries from new rivals. Activision Blizzard has some of the world's best-selling and most recognisable gaming franchises, such as Call of Duty and World of Warcraft. The CMA is concerned that if Microsoft buys Activision Blizzard it could harm rivals, including recent and future entrants into gaming, by refusing them access to Activision Blizzard games or providing access on much worse terms.

The CMA has also received evidence about the potential impact of combining Activision Blizzard with Microsoft's broader ecosystem. Microsoft already has a leading gaming console (Xbox), a leading cloud platform (Azure), and the leading PC operating system (Windows OS), all of which could be important to its success in cloud gaming. The CMA is concerned that Microsoft could leverage Activision Blizzard's games together with Microsoft's strength across console, cloud, and PC operating systems to damage competition in the nascent market for cloud gaming services.

The CMA considers that these concerns warrant an in-depth Phase 2 investigation. Microsoft and Activision Blizzard now have 5 working days to submit proposals to address the CMA's concerns. If suitable proposals are not submitted, the deal will be referred for a Phase 2 investigation.

Phase 2 investigations allow an independent panel of experts to probe in more

depth the risks identified at Phase 1.

Sorcha O'Carroll, Senior Director of Mergers at the CMA, said:

Following our Phase 1 investigation, we are concerned that Microsoft could use its control over popular games like Call of Duty and World of Warcraft post-merger to harm rivals, including recent and future rivals in multi-game subscription services and cloud gaming.

If our current concerns are not addressed, we plan to explore this deal in an in-depth Phase 2 investigation to reach a decision that works in the interests of UK gamers and businesses.

At Phase 2, the CMA appoints an independent panel to examine the deal in more depth and evaluate whether it is more likely than not that a substantial lessening of competition will occur as a result of the merger – a higher threshold than Phase 1. It typically builds on the work and evidence from Phase 1 with more third-party engagement via requests for information and use of its statutory powers in gathering internal documents. At Phase 2, the CMA will also carry out further in-depth review of the merging parties' internal documents which show how they view competition and the market.

For more information, visit the [Microsoft / Activision case page](#).

1. For media enquiries, contact the CMA press office on 020 3738 6460 or press@cma.gov.uk.
2. Under the Enterprise Act 2002 (the Act) the CMA has a duty to make a reference to Phase 2 if the CMA believes that it is or may be the case that a relevant merger situation has been created, or arrangements are in progress or contemplation which, if carried into effect, will result in the creation of a relevant merger situation; and the creation of that situation has resulted, or may be expected to result, in a substantial lessening of competition with any markets or markets in the United Kingdom for goods or services.
3. Microsoft is a global technology company offering a wide range of products and services, with a global turnover of nearly £125 billion last year. Since 2001, it has sold various generations of Xbox gaming consoles. Gamers typically download digital copies of the games they want to play on Xbox from Microsoft's Xbox Store. Microsoft also offers a multi-game subscription service, Xbox Game Pass, where gamers pay a monthly fee to gain access to a library of games.
4. Activision Blizzard is a game developer and publisher with global turnover of £6.3 billion last year. It develops popular gaming content

for consoles, PC, and mobile, which includes titles such as Call of Duty, World of Warcraft and Candy Crush.

5. The Phase 1 investigation identified a realistic prospect of SLCs (significant lessening of competition) in the following frames of reference in the UK: gaming consoles; multi-game subscription services; and cloud gaming services.

[UK steps up support for Pakistan's flood response](#)

The UK is providing further urgent life-saving support to Pakistan following devastating floods that have left a third of the country underwater, Foreign Secretary Liz Truss announced today (1 September 2022).

Humanitarian support totalling £15 million from the UK will help provide shelter and essential supplies to people across the country. The flooding has affected more than 33 million people, with 1,100 lives lost. The latest funding announced by the Foreign Secretary comes after the [UK provided £1.5 million to the disaster](#) last weekend.

Following the launch of the [Disasters Emergency Committee \(DEC\) Pakistan Floods Appeal](#) today (1 September 2022), the UK government has announced it will match pound for pound the first £5 million of public donations, as part of today's total £15 million pledge.

The rest of the UK funding of £10 million announced today will go to international aid agencies on the ground to help them respond to people's immediate needs, including through providing water, sanitation, shelter, protecting women and girls. It will also support families to repair their homes and maintain their livelihoods.

Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said:

The UK stands with Pakistan, as tens of millions of people face devastating floods, which have left a third of the country – an area roughly the size of the UK – underwater.

As a major humanitarian donor, we will do all we can to get life-saving aid to the most vulnerable, including through this £15 million package of support.

The Government of Pakistan and the UN launched a joint appeal on 30 August

for \$160 million to help the long-term recovery. Early estimates of the damage suggest that it will have a \$10 billion impact.

Lord Tariq Ahmad of Wimbledon, FCDO Minister of State for South and Central Asia, said:

We are seeing first-hand the tragic effects of climate change and the impact it is having on millions of people across the country. The UK is working around the clock with the Pakistan authorities to determine what support is required in the short-term and longer-term.

We are also working at pace with international organisations working directly on the ground to help victims of the disaster. These include the United Nations and World Bank. We will continue to work hand in hand with the international community to garner the best possible global support package for Pakistan to recover.

- according to Pakistan's National Disaster Management Agency, the flooding has damaged 950,000 houses and destroyed 287,000, with 500,000 people now living in relief camps. The disaster has also destroyed 3,000km of roads and damaged 7,566 schools. In total 745 health centres have been damaged or destroyed
- according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), over 800,000 livestock have been lost
- on Friday 26 August 2022, the UK was one of the first countries to [announce funding \(£1.5 million\) in response to the flooding](#)
- the [UK pledged over £55 million to partner with Pakistan](#) to fight climate change, manage water more sustainably and unlock climate investment in November 2021 during the COP26 Conference in Glasgow
- today's announcement of £15 million in humanitarian funding is an allocation from existing support to Pakistan and will go to the relief efforts in the areas worst-hit by the flooding. £5 million of the total £15 million amount will go to the [DEC Pakistan Floods Appeal](#)
- UK government match funding will double British public's own donations to the DEC appeal up to £5 million and will ensure that DEC member charities working on the ground can reach even more people in need. Donations can be made at www.dec.org.uk or by calling 0330 678 1000
- UK Aid Match has increased the impact of a number of DEC appeals, including most recently those for Ukraine and Afghanistan
- when large-scale disasters hit countries without the capacity to respond, the DEC brings together 15 leading UK aid charities to raise funds quickly and efficiently. The 10 DEC members responding so far to the flooding in Pakistan are: Action Against Hunger, Age International, British Red Cross, CAFOD, CARE International UK, Concern Worldwide UK, International Rescue Committee UK, Islamic Relief, Save the Children UK and Tearfund