

Press release: Major A21 upgrade complete

The upgrade to the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury has built a new dual carriageway, to speed up journeys, improve safety, reduce congestion and boost the economy.

Two new junctions have been built as part of the project, as well as better, safer access to the A21 for the homes and businesses along it and dedicated new facilities for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists.

Highways England Regional Investment Programme Director David Haines said:

This is another missing link in the country's road network filled in. For decades, the single carriageway section of the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury has been a source of daily congestion, delaying drivers and frustrating business who depend on the road. That changes today. These A21 improvements are another great achievement for Highways England's delivery of the first Road Investment Strategy, the biggest road investment for a generation. I hope the people of Kent enjoy driving on their new improved A21.

The improvements were formally opened today by Tom Tugendhat MP for Tonbridge and Malling.

Work started on the scheme in spring 2015. Over the last few months drivers have been benefitting from a phased opening of the improvements, starting with the new flyover at Longfield Road, which partially opened in July 2017. The road layout has also been improved for properties along the A21 with a new junction to provide safer access.

George Pargeter, Balfour Beatty Project Director for the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury Project, said:

We are delighted to announce the completion of the A21 project, enabling the local community and travelling public to enjoy the benefits of the new dual carriageway. This has been a complex project which presented a number of challenges, however our expertise and collaboration with Highways England has enabled us to successfully and safely deliver a high quality, more streamlined route connecting Hastings and London.

The A21 improvements have not just been about building a new road; the project team have taken great care to protect the exceptionally beautiful and protected countryside alongside the road. 18 hectares of new woodland has been created as part of the project – twice that needed for construction,

with cutting edge translocation techniques, to preserve its ecological make up. New areas of heathland have been created and an ancient barn has been carefully taken down and is now being reconstructed and preserved at a heritage museum.

An ancient barn is being preserved at a museum

As well as improving the road, a new path along the A21 has been completed. Kent County Council will provide additional links to Tonbridge Station and Pembury Hospital to benefit the local community thanks to additional funding from Highways England.

Members of the public should contact the Highways England customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

News story: New funding announced for victims of sexual abuse

Grant funding of £600,000 has been awarded to four charities to help victims of child sexual abuse.

The funding, awarded to the National Association of People Abused in Childhood (NAPAC), Barnardo's, Rape Crisis England & Wales, and Safeline Warwick, will help them provide vital services including developing services for boys impacted by child sexual abuse, boosting rape support centres, and expanding an online counselling service for victims of child sexual abuse.

NAPAC will use the funding (£314,360) for a telephone support line, training for professionals, boosting research capability, support and advocacy work targeted at adult victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.

The funding awarded to Barnardo's will go towards developing approaches for identifying, assessing and preventing the sexual abuse of boys.

Rape Crisis England & Wales will use the funding to support survivors by email and its website, to amplify survivors' voices through an awareness-raising audio project, and to develop the capability of Rape Crisis Centres.

Safeline Warwick will extend a telephone and online counselling service to women aged 18 and over who have experienced child sexual abuse.

Minister for Crime, Safeguarding and Vulnerability, Sarah Newton, said:

Child sexual abuse is a devastating crime and we are determined to ensure every victim has the support they need, as we work to bring their abusers to justice.

This government is committed to protecting the most vulnerable in our society and we have done more than any other to tackle these horrific offences. We have increased support for victims of sexual abuse, invested in training and technology to improve law enforcement's response to abuse both on and offline, and brought in a tougher inspection regime to ensure all front-line professions are meeting their child protection duties.

But there is more to do, and this funding will ensure that charities who protect and support people who have suffered child sexual abuse are able to continue and develop the vital support they offer.

The funding has been awarded through the Ministry of Justice Victims' Fund, and was allocated by the Home Office to organisations providing a national service to victims of child sexual abuse.

Grant funding break-down:

Rape Crisis England and Wales	£76,659
Safeline Warwick	£24,099
Barnardo's	£184,873
NAPAC (National Association for People Abused in Childhood)	£314,360

[Press release: Latest on UK response to Hurricane Maria](#)

UK aid teams have been on the ground in Dominica to assess the devastation caused by the recent extreme weather in the Caribbean.

DFID field teams arrived on the island yesterday (20 September) to carry out a three day assessment of the impact of the Category 5 hurricane.

Initial reports suggest widespread destruction, with 90% of buildings damaged or destroyed.

Medical supplies, including insulin and aquatabs, funded by DFID and a medical doctor from the Pan American Health Organisation also arrived on one of the first ships into Dominica yesterday.

Today a UK team will also travel to Monserrat to assess the impact of Hurricane Maria. Initial reports suggest the damage to buildings is not

extensive, with the east side of Island being more affected.

It comes as a Red Cross appeal to help the victims of Hurricanes Maria and the earlier Hurricane Irma hit over £2million.

The appeal launched a fortnight ago was boosted by DFID's aid match scheme doubling all public UK donations.

International Development Secretary Priti Patel said:

This is an unprecedented crisis with two hurricanes of such brutal force hitting the Caribbean in less than a fortnight.

Our focus now is on making sure the islands affected have the right supplies in the right places to deal with the aftermath of the latest hurricane.

The British public has once again shown its overwhelming generosity in a time of crisis by helping out the victims of Hurricanes Irma and Maria.

This money will ensure food, water and shelter goes directly to those who need it most on the worst hit islands.

To date 75 tonnes of DFID aid has arrived or been bought in the region, including food, water, nearly 3,000 shelter kits, 5,000 solar lanterns and 10,000 buckets.

Another 60 tonnes are on the way on HMS Ocean due to arrive in the region on Friday.

Work to prepare Anguilla for the impact of Hurricane Maria proved hugely successful in preventing further damage to infrastructure. Two tonnes of corrugated iron was provided to bolster hospital and police stations roofs. Food, tarpaulins, hygiene and shelter kits provided by DFID are also being distributed on the island by the Red Cross.

Vital supplies, including food, bottled water and shelters, were distributed to the Turks and Caicos Islands yesterday via three RAF flights and DFID field teams are urgently assessing the damage on the island.

[Press release: Foreign Office minister signs historic resolution to bring](#)

Daesh to justice

Speaking at the United Nations, Minister Burt said:

There can never be adequate recompense for those who were forced to endure the wanton brutality of Daesh, and the dead will not be brought back, but this Resolution means that the international community is united in our belief that there should, at least, be accountability for those who perpetrated such wicked acts.

The United Nations will now help to gather and preserve evidence of Daesh's crimes in Iraq and I can announce that Britain will provide £1 million to establish the UN investigative team that will lead these efforts – and I would respectfully encourage other countries to contribute.

The resolution represents a concerted effort of coordinated global action to bring Daesh to justice for their crimes. It requests:

- to establish an investigative team of experts to collect, preserve and analyse evidence of Daesh's crimes, beginning in Iraq.
- to appoint a UN special adviser to lead the investigative team and promote the importance of holding Daesh accountable for their crimes globally.

Proposed by the UK and fully supported by Iraq, the resolution was passed by the Security Council following a letter written to the U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres from the Iraqi Prime Minister and Foreign Minister requesting international support of Iraqi efforts to bring Daesh to justice.

Further information

[News story: £4.5 million flood alleviation scheme to open in Cannington](#)

Somerset's newest flood alleviation scheme will be officially opened by the chair of the Environment Agency next week.

The chance of flooding has been cut for 200 homes in Cannington thanks to a jointly funded £4.5 million scheme which will be opened by chair Emma Howard

Boyd on Wednesday 27 September.

This is a result of a partnership with the Environment Agency, EDF, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset Rivers Authority, Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Wessex Water and Cannington Parish Council.

To avoid a repeat of more than 40 homes and businesses flooded twice in November 2012, a new flood alleviation channel has been created after the old brook, built in 1984, was deemed unfit to cope with present and future flood flows. All the fish have since been moved.

Disruption to motorists on the A39 was kept to a minimum in April this year when 4 culverts were installed under the road. Inside each one is a hydrobrake. These cone-shaped funnels accept large volumes of water, swirl it to reduce its speed, before releasing it.

By the time reseedling ends next month, more than 57,000 hours of work will have been put into the award-winning project.

Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency, said:

From the recovery after the 2012 flood to the development of this scheme, it's been great to see Cannington's community and the Environment Agency working together in partnership.

To better protect over 200 properties in Cannington, 45,000 cubic metres of earth was moved. This uncovered some fascinating archaeological discoveries about the history of flooding in Cannington, dating back to the Roman period.

Thank you to all the partners for making this possible.

David Jenkins, chairman of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, said:

This is an excellent example of what can be achieved, when so many people and organisations work together with a shared sense of purpose.

David Eccles, EDF Energy's head of stakeholder engagement for Hinkley Point C, said:

Cannington residents have long suffered real issues from flooding so we were pleased to contribute £500,000 to support this vital flood defence scheme.

The funding is part of our wider commitment to support local communities and services through agreements, worth almost £100 million, to build Hinkley Point C.

Of that, some £865,000 has been specifically allocated for environmental schemes, including other flood defences in Bridgwater and Stolford.

Councillor Anne Fraser, Sedgemoor District Council's Portfolio holder for Economic Growth said:

I am delighted that this work has been completed. Not only will it save residents' homes from potential future flooding but enable road users in the area to benefit from the scheme.

Sedgemoor District Council were pleased to make a financial contribution which, along with other partners, enabled the scheme to go forward.

Councillor John Osman, Chair of Somerset Rivers Authority (SRA), said:

This Cannington scheme met all the objectives of Somerset's 20 Year Flood Action Plan, which is overseen by the SRA, so we were delighted to give the final £300,000 that meant this Environment Agency scheme could go ahead. It's good for people, property, business, road users and the environment.

Archaeological findings during construction revealed that Cannington's history with water problems extended further than first thought. Four skeletons were unearthed and the works revealed intensive activity dating back to the Roman period (AD43-AD410), including part of a square enclosure and human burials.

The first phase of Roman features was sealed by alluvial layers, which strongly suggests that the area was flooded in the Roman period. At some point after this flooding episode, the Romans returned to the site, and there was a second phase of Roman activity cut into the top of the alluvial layers.

Editor's notes

The Cannington flood alleviation scheme won a Green Apple award and was shortlisted for the 2017 BIG Biodiversity Challenge Awards.