



House of Commons  
Environmental Audit Committee

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**Flooding: Cooperation  
across Government:  
Government Response  
to the Committee's  
Second Report of  
Session 2016–17**

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**Second Special Report of Session  
2016–17**

*Ordered by the House of Commons  
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## Environmental Audit Committee

The Environmental Audit Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to consider to what extent the policies and programmes of government departments and non-departmental public bodies contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development; to audit their performance against such targets as may be set for them by Her Majesty's Ministers; and to report thereon to the House.

### Current membership

[Mary Creagh MP](#) (*Labour, Wakefield*) (Chair)

[Peter Aldous MP](#) (*Conservative, Waveney*)

[Caroline Ansell MP](#) (*Conservative, Eastbourne*)

[Jo Churchill MP](#) (*Conservative, Bury St Edmunds*)

[Geraint Davies MP](#) (*Labour (Co-op), Swansea West*)

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### Powers

The constitution and powers are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No 152A. These are available on the internet via [www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk).

### Publication

Committee reports are published on the Committee's website at [www.parliament.uk/eacom](http://www.parliament.uk/eacom) and in print by Order of the House.

Evidence relating to this report is published on the [inquiry publications page](#) of the Committee's website.

### Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are David Slater (Clerk), Carl Baker (Second Clerk), Tom Leveridge (Senior Committee Specialist), Stanley Kwong (Committee Specialist), Ameet Chudasama (Senior Committee Assistant), Baris Tufekci (Committee Assistant), and Nicholas Davies (Media Officer).

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## Second Special Report

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The Environmental Audit Committee published its Second Report of Session 2016–17, *Flooding: Cooperation across Government*, HC 183 on 9 June 2016. The Government's response was received on 25 August 2016 and is appended to this report.

## Appendix: Government response

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### Introduction

The Government welcomes the Environmental Audit Committee's report on 'Flooding: Co-operation across Government'

This Government has a clear long-term approach to managing flood risk. Record levels of investment on flood defences are being provided, along with certainty over funding levels. We are investing £2.5bn on improving flood defences between 2015/16 and 2020/21. This is a real terms increase in capital investment – up from £1.7 billion in the last Parliament and £1.5 billion between 2005 and 2010.

We will continue to develop our approach on how we intervene and invest to effectively manage flood risk in the light of emerging evidence such as that on climate change and flooding events. The National Flood Resilience Review has undertaken a major assessment of how the country can be better protected from future flooding and extreme weather events. We expect to publish the full report of the review this summer, including the actions that Government and others will take to strengthen our resilience

### Impacts

**1. The 2015–16 winter floods caused significant damage in south-west Yorkshire. During our visit to Leeds we heard concerns that the Government had not fully appreciated the extent of the impacts felt by businesses in that area. In Calderdale alone the cost to SMEs was estimated to be £47 million with indirect costs totalling £170 million. If the Government is serious about seeing these areas recover then concerns about lack of flood protection and affordability of insurance need to be addressed. (Paragraph 11)**

We fully recognise the significant impacts the flooding in northern England had on communities and businesses. The Government moved quickly following the flooding and has already paid out over £250 million to make sure that householders and businesses can get back on their feet. In addition we announced in Budget 2016 an additional £700 million in funding for flood defences and resilience. This includes £150 million for new flood defence schemes in Cumbria, Leeds, York and Calder Valley and up to £25 million in Carlisle. This will increase protection from flooding for homes and businesses in these areas.

We have also been working with local authorities, the insurance industry and other business representatives to better understand what problems the business sector may have in finding affordable insurance and explore the options for taking action. We are in

regular contact with the British Insurance Brokers Association (BIBA) over a commercial insurance product they are developing to help businesses in flood risk areas access appropriate cover which is due to be launched soon.

## Reviews

**2. Over the last 20 years there has been a review following every major flooding event. Failure to take a long-term approach to flood risk management and implement fully the recommendations from these reviews - especially from the Pitt Review - may have affected the Government's ability to respond effectively to last winter's floods. We support the Government's original idea from 2014 that there should be an annual national review of the nation's resilience. The Government should work with the Committee on Climate Change to produce this. In the interests of transparency and accountability the Government should also publish an action plan alongside this yearly review setting out, using measurable objectives, its progress. The Government's current review would be a good starting point upon which to build. This will enable the Government and the Environment Agency to be held to account for its performance in delivering those actions particularly in light of future flooding events. During this inquiry a diverse range of stakeholders shared a common desire to see improvements in communication and collaboration between key organisations involved in or affected by flooding. We hope that the Government will take this into account. (Paragraph 30)**

We reject the Committee's conclusion that the Government has failed to take a long-term approach to flood management and to implementing review recommendations.

During the last Parliament the Government established the first ever long term investment programme, committing increased capital funding between 2015 and 2021. We have now done the same on maintenance funding, announcing in the Spending Review that we would protect flood defence maintenance funding, in real terms, until the end of this Parliament. In addition, in the Budget 2016, the Government announced that it would spend an additional £40m per year on maintenance until the end of the Parliament.

Each review following flooding events has provided important learning in support of our long-term strategic flood risk management. Recommendations from previous reviews have been implemented including all of the Pitt Review recommendations except one. This related to making flood risk a part of the Home Information packs (HIPs) when people buy properties. HIPs were abolished in 2010.

We expect to publish our National Flood Resilience Review this summer. This has been a major cross-departmental assessment that has looked at how the country can be better protected from future flooding and extreme weather events. It has tested our understanding of the river and coastal flood risk in England and assessed the resilience of key local infrastructure to flood risk. The report will include the actions that Government and others will take to strengthen our resilience.

Every two years the Government reviews all the risks the country faces. This forms the basis of the National Risk Assessment (NRA). In addition, all departments with responsibility for the UK's infrastructure sectors produce annual Sector Resilience Plans (SRPs). These plans assess the resilience of their sector's infrastructure to flooding and other hazards

and threats identified in the NRA. They also set out action plans for the forthcoming financial year. A public summary of these plans is published on Gov.uk: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sector-resilience-plans>.

## Investment

**3. The Government's claim that spending on flooding has increased every five years does not reflect the fact that funding was initially planned to decline over the 2010–2015 Parliament and was only higher due to the reactive funding injection following the winter 2013/2014 floods. This approach is inefficient and goes against the advice of Sir Michael Pitt and Mark Worsfold in their reviews. We recommend that the Government adopt a more strategic approach to funding flood risk management which avoids such fluctuations in funding. (Paragraph 34)**

We are investing £2.5 billion on renewing and upgrading flood defences between 2015 and 2021. This is a real terms increase in capital investment – up from £1.7 billion in the last Parliament and £1.5 billion between 2005 and 2010. In December 2014, the Government published [Reducing the risks of flooding and coastal erosion, An investment plan](#) together with details of the projects in the 6 year programme. This settlement allowed flood defences to be planned over a far more effective planning horizon and provided much greater certainty to communities at risk of flooding.

**4. The Worsfold review demonstrated a relationship between maintenance spending and the condition of critical assets which protect people and property from flooding. As maintenance spending has fallen so to have the number of critical assets which meet the Environment Agency's required condition. Any decline in the condition of critical assets represents a real world and unacceptable risk to local communities at risk of flooding. Given the increasing risk from climate change we urge the Government to see the 97% target as a minimum and to have the ambition of 99% of critical assets meeting the Environment Agency's required condition by 2019. The Foss Barrier in York provides a cautionary example of what could happen in other parts of the country when ageing defences fail. We note the Government's commitment to sustain maintenance spending over this Parliament. However, it is worth noting that, since there are more new flood defence assets being built, maintenance spend needs to increase simply in order to stand still. (Paragraph 41)**

The Government announced in the Spending Review that it would protect flood defence maintenance funding, in real terms, until the end of this Parliament. In addition, in the Budget 2016, the Government committed an additional £40m per year on maintenance until the end of the Parliament. This will bring spending on flood defence maintenance to over £1bn this Parliament.

The Environment Agency follows a risk-based programme of inspections to assess the condition of the assets. Where assets are below required condition this identifies that some maintenance work is required. It does not mean that the assets have failed or that performance in a flood is compromised. If the performance of an asset is significantly reduced the Environment Agency takes immediate action to ensure that flood risk is effectively managed until the asset is repaired or replaced.

The optimum range for asset condition is between 96% and 98%. This allows for maximum value to be extracted from assets through extending their service life, while effectively managing the pipeline of maintenance work. If the target was increased to 99%, any maintenance work identified would have to be carried out very quickly and at substantially increased cost. This can lead to short term choices to undertake maintenance rather than more cost-effective solutions which involve a planned programme of maintenance work.

**5. The Government's commitment to spend £2.3 billion and an additional £700 million on flood risk management is welcome. We remain sceptical that the Government will reach its target of protecting 300,000 properties, based as it is on an inherently optimistic forecast that assumes optimal efficiency in spending decisions. The Government should also clarify whether the £2.3 billion will pay for 1500 flood defence projects, as originally proposed, or 1400 projects, which the Minister said during our inquiry. We were also surprised to hear that the additional £700 million of funding was based on a "political calculation". This is an economically inefficient way of allocating Government resources. It highlights that the Government is continuing to take a reactive rather than proactive approach to funding flood risk management by ignoring the recommendations on these issues from previous reviews. Communities deserve more certainty that they will be protected from floods. (Paragraph 48)**

The Government does undertake long-term strategic investment and planning to manage flood risks and have implemented and learned from earlier reviews.

The Government's six year funding programme from 2015–2021 will invest £2.5bn in new flood defences. The Environment Agency remains confident that the programme will provide better protection to 300,000 homes by 2021. The first year of the programme has already provided better protection to over 50,000 homes.

There are over 1,500 schemes in the six year programme. By making use of efficiencies we have been able to bring additional schemes into the programme since it was first announced in December 2014.

An additional £700m of funding was announced at Budget 2016. This included £150m for new flood defence schemes in areas that had been badly affected by last winter's flooding, such as Cumbria, Calder Valley, Leeds and York. Investment in defences here will better protect thousands of more homes and businesses. After exceptional events, such as we saw in December, it is right to consider what more could be done to protect communities, which can include accelerating projects or bringing new schemes into the funding programme.

**6. The Government has made good progress in raising partnership funds to support overall funding for flood protection. However, 85% of this funding is still expected to come from the public sector, which is subject to significant resource constraints, and only 15% from the private sector. Partnership funding represents a risky approach to funding flood protection. It increases uncertainty for local communities about whether they will be protected from future floods. If the Government or the Environment Agency fails to attract additional funds, important flood protection schemes will not get the go-ahead. The Government must set out how it intends to support these flood protection schemes if additional partnership funding cannot be raised. (Paragraph 55)**

We believe that partnership funding represents a sensible approach to funding flood protection and that this approach gives many more schemes the opportunity to access central funding, without which would limit the programme of flood protection schemes to what central Government alone could afford. There would be little or no incentive for contributions from others or efficiency or for local areas to make decisions about their own priorities.

As the Report recognises, we have made good progress in raising partnership funding. Since the current funding approach was introduced in 2011, it has been successful in increasing the amount of contributions; from just £13 million in the 4 years before 2011 to £134 million in the first four years of the scheme, and an expected £600 million in the current 6 year programme. Just over a year into the six year programme, £270 million has already been secured with sources for the remaining £330 million identified. This is on top of rising central government funding meaning more schemes can go ahead. We do not yet know how much of the partnership contribution will come from the directly from the private sector. Legislation was introduced in the Finance Bill 2015 to ensure that companies and unincorporated businesses can receive tax relief on their contributions. We expect this to encourage private sector contributions to projects across the country.

There are many options for raising funding whether from private or public sources. For example, schemes such as Community Infrastructure Levy are a means by which public authorities can raise funding from the private sector beneficiaries.

**7. We recognise that Defra needs to prioritise flooding as an issue that impacts on lives and livelihoods. However, it should be transparent about where it has had to make cuts to accommodate this. We also ask the Government to set out, in the response to this Report, the evidence-base justifying its decision to protect flooding at the expense of other parts of the Department, in order to demonstrate that this decision was grounded in evidence and not just “political calculation”. (Paragraph 61)**

It is a key objective for Defra in its strategy: Creating a great place for living, for the nation to be better protected against floods, animal and plant diseases and other hazards, with strong response and recovery capabilities. Defra's Spending Review settlement subsequently ensures this commitment to flood protection. This was not achieved at the expense of the rest of Defra's budget, but rather by reducing Defra's overall savings target correspondingly. Defra's savings will be delivered by carrying out organisational reform, primarily generating efficiencies through our corporate services functions.

## Planning and strategy

**8. The winter floods of 2013 and 2015 called into question the preparedness of some infrastructure companies to deal with flood events. The companies we heard from were all aiming to protect their assets to different standards. We are concerned that infrastructure operators continue to adopt varying degrees of preparedness and that there is an apparent lack of Government vigour to ensure a consistent and robust approach is taken to protecting services. (Paragraph 67)**

**9. We therefore recommend that the Government implement the Committee on Climate Change's proposals that infrastructure companies be mandated to report their target resilience level, why this target is appropriate and what progress they are**

**making to achieve it. The Government should also adopt the CCC's recommendation to ensure that critical assets meet a minimum of a one in 200-year event. The flooding of small-scale energy and communications assets can cause large-scale problems, as it did in Leeds in winter 2015. We therefore welcome the Government's focus on protecting local infrastructure against extreme flooding, but recommend that Ministers publish which assets comprise the 40% being protected with temporary defences and which make up the remaining 60% that will have to wait for permanent safeguards. Notwithstanding this, Ministers must also ensure that the resilience of other, larger critical infrastructure assets are improved. (Paragraph 68)**

The Government does not think that the actions proposed are the most effective way of achieving this, so the Government does not accept the Committee's recommendations. However, the Government shares the Committee's goal of ensuring that local infrastructure is resilient to flooding. As the former Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, Oliver Letwin, set out in his evidence to the Committee, the Government has been working closely with industry to establish the current resilience of key local infrastructure against fluvial and coastal flooding and to understand what steps can be taken to improve it. Some sectors have already achieved significant resilience. The National Flood Resilience Review will announce further actions agreed with industry to improve resilience.

**10. Available statistics indicate that Environment Agency advice on whether, or how, to build in high flood-risk areas is almost always followed by local authorities. In the interests of clarity, transparency and consistency, however, this information—the decisions on, and terms of, planning permission in such areas—should be published in full by local authorities. We recommend that DCLG publish, by the end of 2016, a proposed framework for the reporting of such information. There are no comprehensive statistics detailing whether developers subsequently build according to planning permission, however. Given that almost 10,000 homes were built in high flood-risk areas in 2013–14, we recommend that Defra work with DCLG to establish a systematic approach to ensuring that these properties are built in accordance with planning permission. (Paragraph 73)**

We recognise the need for transparency in planning decision-taking. There are existing statutory requirements placed on local planning authorities to give notice of their decisions on planning applications, and to make available information on planning permissions in their public registers. Guidance is provided on the provision of additional information beyond the statutory requirements. All local planning authorities are required to maintain a register of planning applications in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. This means that local planning authorities are already required to record their planning decisions and the conditions and/or obligations attached to a planning permission, in their public planning registers. It is for local planning authorities to decide what information beyond the statutory minimum should be included on the planning register (having regard to the Code of Recommended Practice for Local Authorities on Data Transparency).

The requirements for local planning authorities to give notice of decisions on planning applications are set out in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. Our planning guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework explains that local planning authorities may take a flexible approach and make a judgement about whether additional publication of the decision is

needed on a case by case basis, weighing up factors such as the level of public interest in the application and the cost of additional notification. The guidance makes clear that it is particularly important for the local planning authority to notify the Environment Agency of any decision taken on a planning application where the Agency has objected on flood risk grounds.

On ensuring a systematic approach to ensuring that properties are built in accordance with planning permission, national planning policy is very clear that where it is necessary to build in flood risk areas, developments should only be allowed if they are safe and resilient, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. The available evidence indicates that the policy is being implemented. For example, Environment Agency monitoring indicates that over 99% of proposed new homes have planning outcomes in line with the Agency's flood risk advice. Developers must comply with the terms of a planning permission and it should be in their best-interests to do so. If they build their development in breach of the planning permission, they may face enforcement action by the local planning authority; and there are also reputational risks for the developer or builder. Consequently, the Government does not consider there is a justified need to introduce a new, systematic and potentially onerous approach of this nature.

Local planning authorities can decide how and when it would be appropriate to monitor compliance with planning permissions, in accordance with local circumstances. To this end, the National Planning Policy Framework expects local planning authorities to consider publishing a local enforcement plan to manage enforcement proactively in a way that is appropriate to their area. This should set out how they will monitor the implementation of planning permissions, investigate alleged cases of unauthorised development and take action where it is appropriate to do so.

**11. Government should devise a means of establishing and communicating to people the cumulative impact of individual local authorities granting planning permission across the country for developments in one in 100-year areas. The chances of one of those developments flooding significantly is greater than one in 100 years and will increase as more such developments are approved. Ministers must also consider whether local plans are fit for purpose, given that the areas they cover by and large do not correspond to catchment areas and that their short timescales do not correspond to the longer-term environmental changes that local areas need to be planning for now. Given the number of local authorities that do not either have an adopted local plan or one that reflects NPPF guidance, Government should, in the short term, provide more support to local authorities to enable them to adopt a plan and, in the medium term, support and encourage local authorities to develop joint local plans that are more ambitious in time and scale. (Paragraph 76)**

National planning policy is clear that where development is necessary in a high flood risk area, it should only be allowed if it can be made safe, without increasing flood risk elsewhere. This approach should be applied through Local Plans and planning decisions. Through their Local Plan, local planning authorities are expected to develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources, and this could include any cumulative impact from new development, taking account of advice from the Environment Agency, lead local flood authorities and other flood risk management authorities. The Local Plan should be supported by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment of the area. Our planning guidance supporting the National Planning Policy Framework explains that a Strategic Flood Risk

Assessment should assess the risk to an area from flooding from all sources, now and in the future, taking account of the impacts of climate change, and to assess the impact that land use changes and development in the area will have on flood risk. This assessment should provide the opportunity to identify any areas that may be susceptible to cumulative impacts, and for appropriate policies to be included in the Local Plan.

The Government has been very clear about the need for local planning authorities to have in place robust, up-to-date Local Plans that are consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework. Good progress has been made in plan-making, 71% of local authorities have an adopted local plan compared to 17% in 2010. We have been clear that it is our expectation that all local planning authorities should have an up to date Plan in place. We have committed to take action to accelerate plan production, and earlier this year we consulted on our proposed criteria to inform decisions on where to intervene in Local Plans, responses are currently being considered. The Framework sets out the strategic priorities and policies that Local Plans should cover, including in relation to the environment. The Framework explains that Plans should be drawn-up over an appropriate time scale, preferable a 15-year time horizon, take account of longer term requirements, and be kept up to date.

Plans should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area, including drawing, for example, from River Basin Management Plans. They should also be informed by a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Our planning guidance advises local planning authorities to use this assessment to determine the variations in risk from all sources of flooding across their areas, and also the risks to and from surrounding areas in the same flood catchment. The assessment should also take account of the impacts of climate change, informed by advice issued by the Environment Agency which assesses factors, such as likely changes in peak rainfall, during time periods over the next 100 years.

The Duty to Cooperate, introduced by the 2011 Localism Act, placed a legal duty on local planning authorities, county councils in England and public bodies to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local and Marine Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. Working together collaboratively, having a joint Local Plan is one option for local planning authorities.

**12. Almost one third of lead local flood authorities (LLFAs) still do not have a local flood risk management strategy in place, according to the most recent figures available. These figures are, however, more than one year old. This suggests that Government may not know whether progress has been made to reduce this worryingly high figure. It also suggests Government lacks a comprehensive, up-to-date overview of local authority preparedness for flood risk. Furthermore, those LLFAs that do have a plan in place may not have one that is fit-for-purpose. There is an urgent need to put the right plans in place as soon as possible, but some LLFAs may not have the capacity to do so. For strategic oversight of flood risk management throughout the country, the Government needs to have an up-to-date overview of the number of LLFAs with plans in place. But it also needs to support the Environment Agency to ensure it can support those LLFAs that lack the capacity to produce these plans, and to review existing plans to guarantee they are preparing for the appropriate risk level. (Paragraph 83)**

LLFAs are required by the Flood and Water Management Act to develop and maintain a local flood risk management strategy and to report annually on progress with their strategies. As at 31 March 2016 out of the 152 LLFAs in England, 114 have completed and published their strategy, 26 have completed or are undergoing public consultation on their draft strategy and 12 are in progress. Defra has been working in close partnership with the Local Government Association, the Environment Agency, Regional Flood and Coastal Committees and DCLG to support and encourage LLFAs to complete their strategies.

Defra has evaluated the effectiveness of local flood risk management under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. This independent evaluation by external consultants has concluded and we expect to publish it soon. The evaluation found that overall the duties introduced by the Flood and Water Management Act has resulted in a more comprehensive understanding of local flood risk and more proactive and co-ordinated management at local level. Partnership- working and data sharing have also improved significantly, generating efficiencies and supporting bids from various sources.

As part of this review, we have developed an action plan to help support local authorities carry out their responsibilities for managing local flood risk, including producing strategies for local flood risk management. We expect to publish this soon alongside the evaluation as an annex to the Post- Legislative Scrutiny Memorandum on the Flood and Water Management Act for the EFRA committee further to a commitment given to the Committee on Climate Change following its June 2015 Progress Report to Parliament.

**13. Sustainable urban drainage systems, such as rainwater capture and storage, are widely acknowledged to be an efficient way of dealing with surface water. But successive Governments have been reluctant to commence the legal powers that would make such systems the default option in new developments. The often cited reason is cost to developers. While these should not be underestimated, if the refusal is introduced to all developments, except in very particular circumstances, a level playing field should be maintained. Developers may pass those costs on to house buyers, a concern that again should not be ignored. But the longer-term costs, directly or from increased insurance premiums, of paying to repair houses and clean up local areas can be expected to outweigh short-term expense. We question, nine years after the Pitt review recommendation that SUDS be the default option in new developments, why a further review is required. Given this has now been legislated for, however, we recommend that it be completed at the latest in time for the CCC to use the findings in its 2017 progress report to Parliament. (Paragraph 88)**

The Housing and Planning Act 2016 contains a commitment for the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to carry out a review of planning legislation, government planning policy and local planning policies concerning sustainable drainage in relation to the development of land in England. Defra is working with DCLG on this review. This review will make a constructive contribution to the work of the Adaptation Sub-Committee of the Committee on Climate Change to inform their 2017 progress update on the National Adaptation Plan

The Government recognises the contribution sustainable drainage systems can make to reducing the risk of surface water flooding, as well as wider water quality, biodiversity and amenity benefits. National planning policy is clear that sustainable drainage systems should be given priority in new developments in flood risk areas. With effect from April

2015, this policy was strengthened to make clear the expectation that sustainable drainage systems will be provided in all new major developments, such as of ten or more homes, unless demonstrated to be inappropriate. At the same time, planning practice guidance on sustainable drainage systems was expanded and lead local flood authorities were made statutory consultees for planning applications for major development with surface water drainage implications.

It is important that any judgement on the effectiveness of the strengthened policy is based on good, up-to-date evidence, allowing time for the policy to work through the planning process.

## Natural Flood Management

**14. The majority of the witnesses we heard from during this inquiry supported natural flood risk management. Some of the pilots demonstrating this approach, including in Pickering, have been successful. We look forward to seeing the results of the pilots in Cumbria at the end of this year and hope that decisions on further roll out will follow soon afterwards. The Government should make sure that funds are available to fund more pilots to continue to make the case for this approach and to protect those places like Pickering which might benefit from a cheaper natural flood management project. However, to roll this out nationally will take time and people want their homes protected today. It is only right then that current flood risk management approaches should continue to be the focus. (Paragraph 98)**

The Government agrees with the importance of maintaining a balance of more traditional measures and natural flood management approaches to ensure the most effective flood risk management locally and nationally. We are committed to getting the most for people and the environment from our investment, and this includes securing wider environmental benefits from flood defence spending. We are determined to see that natural flood management solutions are fairly assessed and supported where they offer a viable way of reducing the damaging impacts of flooding.

We want to see a coordinated and integrated approach, including natural flood management measures to reduce flood risk, in the context of whole catchment-planning. The challenge will be to identify where in catchments land management measures can reduce the risk and impact of floods – normally in conjunction with traditional flood defences – and the extent of land management change that is required.

There is a huge range of work being taken in the country on natural flood management, often led by local authorities, as well as the Environment Agency, including the Defra funded demonstration projects in Upper Derwent, Pickering and Holnicote. In addition, actions under the [Cumbria Flood Action Plan](#), published on 30th June, include increasing the uptake of natural flood management measures through schemes as part of an integrated approach to managing catchment areas. The Plan sets out in one place what the Environment Agency, working with local partners, has done since December, and how we are starting to plan and invest for the future.

## Conclusion

15. Over the last 20 years there has been a review following every major flooding event and this year is no exception. This repetitive cycle suggests that there has been a lack of effective long-term strategic planning about how to manage flood risk. Our analysis of government flood funding and its approach to planning has demonstrated that the Government could do more to mitigate the future risk of flooding. Importantly, the Government appears to be reactive rather than proactive. If the Government fails to learn lessons and improve its long-term strategy then communities and businesses which would otherwise be protected will continue to suffer the unnecessary distress of being flooded. The Government needs to ensure that local plans and flood strategies are in place to ensure resilience and that it can deliver on its long-term funding commitments by meeting targets for partnership funding and efficiency savings, without putting at risk the 1,500 flood defence projects currently being planned or negatively impacting Defra's other essential services. It is critical that the Government undertakes its current reviews in an open and transparent way to allow stakeholders, including Parliament, to monitor its progress and hold it to account. (Paragraph 99)

We do not accept that the Government has failed to take a long-term approach to flood management and or to learn lessons from previous reviews. The Government has committed record levels of investment on flood defences and has provided, for the first time, long term certainty over funding. We continue to develop our approach on how we intervene and invest to effectively manage flood risk in the light of emerging evidence such as that on climate change and flooding events. The National Flood Resilience Review is expected to be published in the summer and will set out a series of actions that Government and others will take to improve the country's resilience against flooding. Defra will then turn its attention to investment after 2021 and the Government's role in supporting the resilience of communities and the wider economy. The department will work with HM Treasury and the National Infrastructure Commission to consider long term investment needs and funding options, the balance between protection and resilience and the role of both government and wider society in reducing flood risk.