



Representing Drainage
Water Level & Flood Risk
Management Authorities

CIWEM Chartered Institution of
Water and Environmental
Management



All Party Parliamentary Group *for* Sustainable Flood and Drought Management

Notes of APPG Meeting – 15th January 2025

Final

Attendees:

Lee Pitcher MP (Chair)
Charlotte Cane MP (Vice-Chair)
Jo White MP
The Earl of Caithness
Sarah Hall MP
Matt Cowley for Blake Stevenson MP
Catherine for Ashley Dalton MP
Tim Davis for Simon Opher MP
Linda Greg for Caroline Dinenage MP
Tim for Ian Sollom MP

David Jenkins (Speaker – RFCC)
Laura Lutkoski (Speaker – Defra)
Steven Tupper (Speaker – EA)
James Perkins (Defra)
Kelly Ostler-Coyle (Flood Re)
Mark McGann (National Highways)
Innes Thomson (ADA)
Cat Moncrieff (CIWEM)
Jude Noro (CIWEM)
Joe Eaton (PS to Lee Pitcher)

Apologies:

The Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP
Steff Aquarone MP
Kevin McKenna MP

Minutes of meeting on 20th November were taken as a correct record.



Matters arising

IT reported that, following a freedom of information request to the EA, the two outstanding actions from the previous meeting had been partially answered and a copy of the response from the EA is appended to the minutes.

Other actions outstanding from the meeting of 20th November were noted as follows;

- Chair and Officers to decide on dates for February, March, June and July meetings and advise secretariat.
- Officers and Members to gather evidence of surface water flooding in their constituencies for discussion at the May meeting.
- In the name of the Chair, Secretariat to prepare a letter inviting Sarah Dyke MP to be our point of liaison with the EFRA Committee.
- In the name of the Chair, Secretariat to prepare a letter to Helen Morgan MP, Chair of the Flooding and Flooded Communities APPG inviting her to consider a joint meeting with this APPG in the autumn and share this APPG's intended work plan.
- ADA and CIWEM to reflect on documents/evidence required to support a Parliamentary debate on SuDS and Chair to make appropriate request(s) for a 60 minute debate.

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to explore future challenges for flood & drought management and information input to the forthcoming Spending Review.

Speakers

David Jenkins (RFCC Chair - Wessex)

David highlighted three particular points of considerable challenge for flood & drought management, namely;

The building of new schemes but without proper financial provision for their future maintenance. Worryingly, only 92% of EA operated flood defences and around 65% of third party owned flood defences are sufficiently maintained with a declining trend.

- The rigidity of the UK's accounting rules creating a barrier between capital and revenue spending,
- Perhaps influenced by the point above, a reluctance to capitalise work required for flood defence maintenance.



David also cross-referred to his report about surface water flooding, the wide network of those involved in managing flood risk assets and a lack of clarity on exactly who is responsible for doing what.

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5f450822e90e0752a83a7aa2/surface-water-drainage-review.pdf>

In a brief discussion following David's presentation, it was noted that Defra were looking into and progressing most of the 28 recommendations made in David's report. It was also agreed that;

- Chair would send a letter to Floods Minister Emma Hardy MP outlining the APPG's concerns about the imbalance between Capital and Revenue budgets and the consequence of declining flood risk asset condition. To aim to submit the letter ahead of the next Flood Resilience Taskforce meeting on 28th January 2025.
- Kelly Ostler-Coyle (Flood Re) to provide additional information to the APPG on their view of state of UK flood risk assets, a report prepared in conjunction with JBA.

Laura Lutkoski (Deputy Director, Flood & Water, Defra)

Laura set out some of the plans for the reform of Flood Investment which included Defra's ambitions for the short term which included;

- Review of the flood funding formula – there will be a public consultation on the issue in the Spring – exact launch date is to be confirmed,
- A fresh approach to non-EA funding which is not bringing in as much money as expected,
- Reviewing the balance between Capex (Capital) and Opex (Revenue) funding, including the fiscal rules governing the division between the two systems.

Laura also said that Defra was working with the devolved nations on various options for wider investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management.

Steven Tupper (Deputy Director, Surface Water and Pipeline Planning, EA)

From the most recent floods, Steven said that whilst 78,000 properties had been protected, sadly, 1600 properties had suffered flooding. Steven highlighted the publication of the EA's 'National assessment of flood and coastal erosion risk in England 2024' report on 17th December 2024 which will enable and inform change.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024/national-assessment-of-flood-and-coastal-erosion-risk-in-england-2024>

He also reminded the group that the number of homes at risk of flooding is increasing in part due to climate change, and in part due to better understanding and evidence of the different types of flooding which leads to more houses being identified as at risk.

He said that this information is enabling us to manage risk in a more informed way and identify where/types of investment needed, including Natural Flood Management (NFM) and Sustainable Drainage (SuDS). It will also help ensure policy changes actually lead to changes we need to see on the ground.

Following David's, Laura's and Steven's presentations, a discussion followed covering the following issues;

- The Chair raised the issue of problems with benefits apportionment where if money has been spent on one cause of flooding, funds cannot be allocated in the same area for other forms of flooding. Steven Tupper offered to share information about the EA's latest guidance with the APPG on benefits apportionment.
- A challenge was put to Defra about why they cannot mirror the Water industry's model of using a "Totex" approach to funding and whether there are lessons to be learned from sectors who apply that approach.
- A further challenge was put to Defra and the EA about the alignment of programmes such as FDGiA and AMP, to allow a better integrated and collaborative approach. Laura responded that Defra is currently constrained by Government Spending Review timings.
- Jo White MP asked how her constituents could contribute to the investment reform consultation. Laura Lutkoski replied that it would be a public consultation and the Chair offered to push the consultation out through the APPG channels.
- Sarah Hall MP expressed an interest in knowing how her constituents could access cost-effective flood resilience products. Kelly Ostler-Coyle (Flood Re) responded by signposting Sarah to Mary Dhonau's work and her website at www.floodmary.com where she has featured a number of cheaper, practical solutions to reduce flood risk to people's property and possessions.
- Charlotte Cane MP emphasized further need for budget flexibility to be able to support flood resilience measures and discussed the opportunity for year-on-year funding transfer.
- Kelly Oyster-Coyle highlighted that there are useful resources which overlap flood risk and poverty mapping, showing communities at high risk of flooding tend to have lower incomes, and therefore less able to access resilience solutions or benefit from community level investment into flood prevention.

Lee Pitcher MP at this point in the meeting offered his apologies and handed over the Chair to Charlotte Cane MP, with his thanks, for Charlotte to take the meeting to its conclusion.



Forward planning

The next two meetings are planned for February and March. Dates and meeting rooms require to be booked – Action Joe Eaton.

February Meeting

- For February, Charlotte Cane MP requested that an IDB representative be called to speak about future cost challenges – ***post meeting note*** – Paul Burrows, the Middle Level Commissioner’s Chief Executive has agreed to present to the APPG. Meeting date is now fixed for 26th February.
- The issue of drainage responsibility was also flagged: multiple stakeholders own drainage, but they may not keep precise record of the location and status of their drainage infrastructure and responsibilities are unclear.
- David Jenkins suggested that the Law Commission may also provide an interesting angle with respect to duties and responsibilities, with some focus on riparian duties and gaps in legislation and legal process. David to provide contact details for an invitation to be issued.
- ***Post Meeting note*** - it may also be opportune to invite a third speaker from Local Government to present their views on future cost challenges – this could be arranged through the LGA Special Interest Group for IDBs.

March Meeting

Sir Jon Cunliffe has been invited to speak at that meeting and it was agreed that he should be the single focus of that meeting with detailed discussion with him. Joe Eaton to follow up on the invitation sent and establish date and venue for the meeting.

Charlotte Cane MP and others were keen that a future meeting addresses the subject of collaboration and partnership working, including for flood response. This has been loosely scheduled for a spring/summer APPG discussion.

The Earl of Caithness has asked that one meeting takes an agricultural focus and suggested inviting the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust to participate.

It was reported that the Environment Audit Committee had concluded its call for written evidence on Flood Resilience in England. Innes Thomson mentioned that ADA had submitted a comprehensive response and would be happy to share that with APPG members. A number of APPG members said that they would be prepared to be called to provide oral evidence of asked.

It was suggested that the APPG should provide a submission to the Spending Review on the Opex versus Capex issue, and the associated accounting issues.

Additional information which may be useful to APPG members was also offered;

- Kelly Ostler-Coyle offered to provide a copy of the Red Cross report into flood poverty in the UK. Research by Paul Sayers on ethnic diversity and flooding was also mentioned,
- Laura Lutkoski offered to provide a report about flood risk and extreme heat (AXA).

Agreed Actions

- Chair and Officers to decide on dates for Feb, March, June and July meetings and advise secretariat,
- Chair to send a letter to Minister Hardy about concerns over the imbalance between Capital and Revenue funding – to be sent before 28th January ahead of the next Flood Resilience Taskforce meeting,
- Kelly Ostler-Coyle to provide a link to the Flood Re report on the state of England’s flood risk assets and to share the Red Cross report on flood poverty in the UK and research by Paul Sayers on ethnic diversity and flooding,
- Secretariat to finalise speakers and draft invitation letters to for February meeting once date and venue have been confirmed,
- Joe Eaton to follow up on invitation issued to Sir Jon Cunliffe for March meeting,
- Officers and Members were asked to gather evidence of surface water flooding in their constituencies for discussion at the May meeting,
- Steven Tupper to share the EA’s latest guidance on benefits apportionment
- Defra to provide a more detailed response about the possible adoption of a “Totex” approach to funding and possible future alignment of investment programmes,
- APPG Chair to push Investment Reform Consultation out through APPG members once it goes live,
- In the name of the Chair, Secretariat to prepare a letter inviting Sarah Dyke MP to be our point of liaison with the EFRA Committee,
- In the name of the Chair, Secretariat to prepare a letter to Helen Morgan MP, Chair of the Flooding and Flooded Communities APPG inviting her to consider a joint meeting with this APPG in the autumn and share this APPG’s intended work plan,
- Chair to make appropriate request(s) for a 60 minute debate,
- ADA and CIWEM to reflect on documents/evidence required to support a Parliamentary debate on SuDS as part of the debate above.



Appendix 1- Reply to the Freedom of Information request to the Environment Agency

Request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA)/ Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR)

Thank you for your email dated 25 November 2024 requesting the following information.

1. The numbers of recordable
 - a. flood and
 - b. droughtevents in the past 10 years.
2. The total money map for Government-funded flood management, covering both capital and revenue spending for the financial period 2023-24.
3. The total money map for Government-funded water resource management, covering both capital and revenue spending for the financial period 2023-24

Please note that we are only part responsible for the delivery of the Government's Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) and Water Resource Management policy intent. We have therefore answered questions 2 and 3 as fully as possible in relation to those funding aspects which are under our remit.

Information held

1. **b.** There have been two drought events over the last 10 years. The detail of which of our Environment Agency areas moved to drought in these two events is outlined below.
 - o 2018 to early 2020 – 6 Environment Agency areas were in drought.
 - Kent and South London - Jan to April 2018
 - Hertfordshire and North London - Jan to April 2018
 - Greater Manchester Merseyside and Cheshire – July to Oct 2018
 - Cumbria and Lancashire – July to Oct 2018
 - Yorkshire – November 2018 to Feb 2019
 - East Anglia - May 2019 to Jan 2020
 - Hertfordshire and North London – July 2019 to February 2020
 - o 2022 to 2023 – 11 Environment Agency areas were in drought
 - West Midlands – August to December 2022
 - Solent and South Downs – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Yorkshire – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Thames – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Wessex – August 2022 to January 2023
 - East Midlands – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Hertfordshire and North London – August 2022 to January 2023
 - Kent and South London – August 2022 to January 2023
 - East Anglia – August 2022 to September 2023
 - Devon and Cornwall – August 2022 to October 2023

Notes:

- i. Droughts are characterised by a period of low rainfall creating a shortage of water, but there is not a single definition of drought. Each drought is different – varying in nature, timing and impacts.
- ii. We classify them as environmental, agricultural or water supply droughts, which may occur separately or together.
- iii. The drought events detailed above are recorded in line with the Environment Agency's policy and geographical areas of responsibility.
- iv. The periods set out above for each of the Environment Agency areas cover the periods that those areas declared they were in drought, but droughts take time to build up and there is a period of low rainfall before the area formally moves to drought which the timeframes above do not cover. How long the build up to an area moving to drought status takes varies depending on factors, such as rainfall, geology, environmental pressure, time of year, population demands and water supply infrastructure.



- v. You can find out more about how droughts are managed in [Drought response: our framework for England](#). An updated version of this is currently being consulted on, if you would like to see this version or respond to the consultation it is being hosted on Citizen Space, the Environment Agency's online consultation hub: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/drought-how-it-is-managed-in-england/>

Information not held

1. a. The term 'recordable flood event' is not a term which we use or recognise in our processes. We are therefore unable to provide this information.

Further information:

- o Flooding is defined as any case where land not normally covered by water becomes covered by water ([Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#)) It can occur from a number of sources including rivers, the sea, rising groundwater, surface water and overwhelmed drains and sewers. The Environment Agency do not hold a record of every event which occurs under this broad definition.
 - o The Environment Agency do not define a point at which the scale of a flood means that it becomes a 'recordable flood event' as outlined in your request.
 - o Lead Local Flood authorities (LLFAs) have a duty under section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act to undertake a flood investigation following a 'significant' flood event. Under this act a flood event is considered to be significant where certain criteria are met, such as internal flooding to five or more properties and/or if damage and disruption is caused to critical infrastructure and buildings, such as major roads and hospitals. The Environment Agency do not use these same criteria to classify flood incidents. However, if you would like to seek information on flooding events in a certain area the LLFA section report 19 will provide detailed information.
 - o Information regarding large flooding incidents, usually associated with a named weather event are listed on our annual Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) report, published on gov.uk. Information is held for [flooding between April 2023 and March 2024](#) and also a [record of past flood events](#) dating back to 2020.
2. We do not have a money map for Government-funded flood management, covering both capital and revenue spending for the financial period 2023-24.

Further information: Funding for the [FCERM Capital Investment Programme](#) during this period is published in our Flood and coastal erosion risk management report: 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 on gov.uk.

3. We cannot provide the total money map for Government-funded water resource management, covering both capital and revenue spending for the financial period 2023-24. The reason for this is that Government-funding information is not provided at this level.

All requests for information are handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR). In respect of questions 1a, 2 and 3 the duty to make information available to you under EIR Regulation 5(1) does not arise because in accordance with EIR Regulation 3(2) we do not hold the information you have requested. Regulation 12(4)(a) also applies – we cannot supply the information because we do not hold it.

Further information

2. The following documents provide a comprehensive overview of the Government's spending on flood defence and coastal erosion risk management.
- a. [Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Funding for Local Authorities](#): This report, published by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra), provides detailed information on funding allocated to local authorities for flood and coastal erosion risk management.
 - b. [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#): This strategy document, published by the Environment Agency, outlines the long-term vision and funding plans for managing flood and coastal erosion risks in England.
 - c. [Funding for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management \(FCERM\)](#): This document provides historical data on central government funding for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England, including allocations for recent years. This also includes details of historical spending and trend analysis.



3. The following documents provide an overview of water resource management.
 - a. [Water Resources 2023-2024: Analysis of the Water Industry's Annual Water Resources Performance](#): This report, published by the Environment Agency, provides a detailed analysis of the water industry's performance, including funding and management plans for water resources. You can access it [here](#). This report summarises and reviews progress on key water demand and supply metrics across wholesale water companies in England, for the year April 2023 to March 2024. Whilst performance is assessed against water company published WRMP19, this is set within the context of most water companies recently finalising their 2024 water resources management plans (WRMP24), which will be reported on from 2025.
 - b. [A Summary of England's Revised Draft Regional and Water Resources Management Plans](#): This document reviews the draft regional and water resources management plans, outlining the government's strategy and spending on water resource management.

Rights of appeal

If you are not satisfied you can contact us within 2 calendar months to ask for our decision to be reviewed. We shall review our response to your request and give you our decision in writing within 40 working days.

If you are still not satisfied following this, you can raise a concern with the Information Commissioner, who is the statutory regulator for Freedom of Information and the Environmental Information Regulations. The contact details are:

Information Commissioner's Office
Wycliffe House
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF
Tel: 0303 123 1113
Website: <http://ico.org.uk>

Yours sincerely

Kind regards

Mohammed Zabair
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