

Committee on Climate Change
7 Holbein Place
London SW1W 8NR

Neil Parish MP
Chair, EFRA Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

15th March 2016

Dear Neil,

Written evidence from the Adaptation Sub-Committee on the winter floods

I am writing on behalf of the Committee on Climate Change's Adaptation Sub-Committee, the UK Government's independent statutory advisers on preparing for climate change. I am pleased to submit written evidence to inform your Committee's inquiry into the winter flooding of 2015/16.

We very much welcome this inquiry. The record rainfall totals in December were unprecedented in the instrumental record but severe flooding somewhere in England in any given year is almost to be expected. As a result of climate change, heavy rain and high river flows especially in winter will become increasingly likely. Investment in flood defence structures will alleviate some risk for some communities, but by no means all.

The more strategic question at the catchment scale is how the overall extent of flood damage can be reduced by planning for, and allowing, occasional inundation where it can have least impact. At the moment damages are heavily skewed towards urban areas, with the costs borne by households, businesses and owners of infrastructure. Downstream flood prevention and resilience measures must be accompanied by stronger action upstream to hold back and slow the flow of flood water.

I look forward to discussing these issues with your Committee as the inquiry progresses.

Yours ever,



PROFESSOR LORD KREBS Kt FRS
Chair, Adaptation Sub-Committee