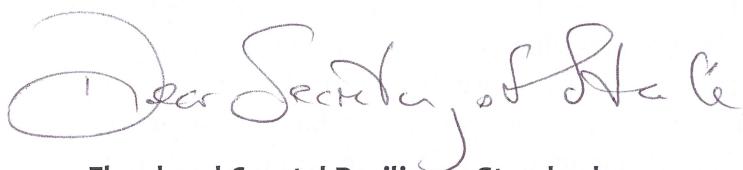


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14th February 2020



Flood and Coastal Resilience Standards

We have a world class track record of delivering high quality flood and coastal defences. However, we cannot afford to continue to build our way out of future climate risks in many places. We welcome the manifesto commitment to invest £4 billion in flood and coastal defences, and we are writing to highlight the need to make a clear statement of ambition to ensure the nation's resilience to flooding and climate change that goes further.

The Government has already shown leadership in its commitment to achieving net zero emissions by 2050. But we know that up until at least 2050, global and UK temperatures are expected to increase even with strong emissions reductions globally; and the risks that the UK faces after that are dependent on global emissions reductions, not just what mitigation happens in the UK. In all climate futures, including a net zero world, we'll experience a continued rise in sea level well into the next century.

The 2018 National Infrastructure Assessment recommended that government should set out a strategy to deliver a nationwide standard of resilience to flooding by 2050. In 2019 the Environment Agency's draft National Flood & Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy built on this to propose an ambitious vision for a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100. Flood Re published its Transition Plan identifying the resilience actions required to enable it to exit the market by 2039. The Adaptation Committee of the Committee on Climate Change highlighted in its 2019 Progress Report that plans and actions to address the increasing risk from flooding and coastal erosion from climate change were lacking in development policy, sustainable urban drainage and property-level flood resilience.

The National Infrastructure Strategy is due to provide a formal government response to the National Infrastructure Commission's recommendation alongside the Budget in March. The FCERM Strategy is with your Ministers for approval before being due to be laid in Parliament after the Budget. Together these provide an excellent opportunity to make a clear statement of ambition to ensure the nation's resilience to flooding and climate change.

The current approach has been shaped by our responses to flood events in the past. Instead, we need to plan for the challenges we will face in the future. We have to support communities to plan better and – in some cases – adapt to future flooding and coastal change. This requires action now so that the UK's population and economy are ready for what the future will bring.

The Environment Agency's draft FCERM Strategy includes a commitment to explore and develop the concept of national resilience standards. The central thesis is that we need to move from a narrow concept of protection to a broader one of resilience. This broader range of resilience responses should include constructing flood and coastal defences; natural flood management; ensuring new development is safe from flood risk; building back better so that property and infrastructure are able to cope with flood water; as well as supporting and empowering communities to keep themselves safe.

The Adaptation Committee has assessed the likely impact of climate change on UK flood risk and the message is concerning: without strong national adaptation responses combined with rapid global greenhouse gas emissions reductions, the number of people, property and economic infrastructure exposed to high flood risk in the UK could more than quadruple by the end of the century. This situation will threaten the viability of communities situated in areas at the highest levels of risk.

That is why the National Infrastructure Commission proposed national standards for flood resilience in its National Infrastructure Assessment. Analysis for the Assessment demonstrated that a national resilience standard will ensure that society as a whole is better off, with benefits exceeding costs. The Assessment also demonstrated that resilience standards are affordable in line with the Fiscal Remit for economic infrastructure set by HM Treasury.

The Environment Agency has recently completed a high profile public consultation on the draft FCERM Strategy and has found there to be broad positive support for the concept of place-based resilience standards. Place-based resilience allows the most effective and efficient package of interventions to be implemented according to need rather than the current situation that limits adaptation options. We believe resilience standards will enable all types of places to achieve an appropriate level of resilience that reduces the likelihood and/or consequences of flooding and coastal change for people, infrastructure, the economy and the environment.

The manifesto commitment to invest £4 billion over the next five years should enable considerable progress to be made. The standards would not be achieved immediately, but a phased approach should be adopted, reflecting the assessment of risks in different places.

Our analyses have shown that national resilience standards would have significant benefits including:

- Promoting place-based resilience by enhancing the capacity of people to plan for, better protect, respond to, and recover from flooding and coastal erosion risks. This includes making the best land use and development choices, protecting people and places, responding to and recovering from flooding and coastal erosion and all the time adapting to climate change.
- Supporting a thriving economy, by offering financial benefits that outweigh costs of implementation, contributing to a more secure economic position.

In addition, they would:

- Be equitable: a nationally consistent approach to setting standards avoids a resilience ‘post code lottery’, reduces regional inequality in flood and coastal expenditure and help with the transition to an affordable, risk reflective home insurance market when Flood Re support ends in 2039.
- Empower local communities: people in places at risk would be engaged in the process of selecting and applying tools to achieve resilience in their communities (i.e. not one-size fits all).
- Support adaptation to climate change: local places would co-develop the adaptation response to manage future flooding, coastal change, and climate risks.

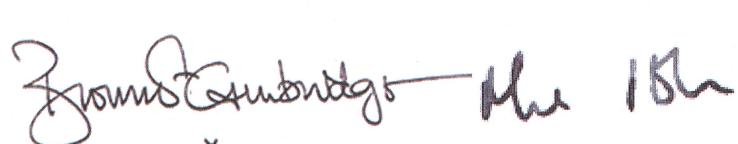
Our collective work on flood and coastal resilience will place the UK at the forefront of driving ambitious climate action as a world leader in both mitigation and adaptation, supporting our international leadership through the UK COP26 Presidency. Nationwide resilience standards would improve the capacity of people and places to live with, recover from and adapt to flooding and coastal change. We see this as a great opportunity for the government to commit to a more flood and climate-resilient future.

We would welcome a meeting with you to discuss the exciting opportunity that flood and coastal resilience standards present and ensure we better manage future climate risks as well as contributing to a prosperous economic future.

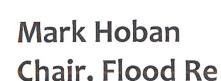
Yours sincerely,



Sir John Armitt
Chair, National
Infrastructure
Commission



Baroness Brown of
Cambridge
Chair, Adaptation
Committee of the
Committee on Climate
Change



Mark Hoban
Chair, Flood Re

