
APPG Flooding and Flooded Communities – General Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday 22nd January 2025

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: Committee Room 8, House of Commons

1. Welcome and Introductions

- **Chair:** Helen Morgan MP opened the meeting, welcomed attendees, and introduced the agenda.
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2. Presentation: Met Office – Forecasting Overview

Speaker: Holly Clements (Met Office)

- The **National Severe Weather Warning Service** is one of the Met Office's key products, forecasting up to seven days in advance using meteorological modelling.
- The system is **impact-based**, factoring both severity and likelihood.
- Met Office is a **Category 2 responder** under the Civil Contingencies Act.
- **Winter 2024/25 Trends:**
 - Wetter-than-average conditions across the South and East.
 - December and January were wetter, milder, and windier than usual.
 - Continued wet trend anticipated over the next three months.
- **Storm Events:** Since September, warnings issued for storms including Ash, Bert, Darragh, and upcoming Eoghan.
- **Forecast Scale:** Modelling operates at a 2km² resolution.
- Surveys show 80–90% of people feel the warning system is improving.
- **Desensitisation concern:** Back-to-back warnings may reduce public responsiveness.

Discussion Points:

- **David Goff:** Raised concerns about the broad coverage of yellow alerts.
 - **George Freeman MP:** Emphasised need for better cross-agency collaboration.
 - **Helen Morgan MP:** Asked about public responsiveness to warnings – surveys are conducted.
 - **John Slinger:** Praised EA's local response in Walston and highlighted difficulties faced by small but high-impact communities.
 - **Met Office & EA:** Highlighted current collaborations and data integration efforts (e.g., rainfall forecasts feeding into river-level data and flood models).
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3. Environment Agency (EA) Presentation

Speaker: Jacqui Cotton (Environment Agency)

- The EA receives five-day flood guidance from the Met Office and scales response accordingly.
- Uses a tiered status system (Green, Yellow, Amber, Red) to coordinate resources and trigger field deployment.
- **Recent Flood Events:**
 - Since New Year's Eve, two significant flooding events occurred.
 - Over **1,600 properties** affected nationwide (subject to revision).
 - Incidents included:
 - **Dec 31st:** Mersey, Cheshire, West Yorkshire – 200 properties impacted.
 - **Jan 4th–7th:** East Midlands snowmelt and rain – major incidents in Leicestershire and Lincolnshire.
- **Response:**
 - 200 EA staff in incident rooms and 200 on the ground.
 - 500 flood warnings, 520 alerts, and one emergency alert issued in Barrow upon Soar.
 - Deployed: High-volume pumps, 500m demountable defences, protected 7,800 properties.

Discussion Points:

- Recognition of EA, LAs, and flood wardens as “unsung heroes.”
- MPs & Baroness McIntosh raised concerns about future planning, building homes in flood-risk areas, and EA's input as statutory consultee.
- EA to release **new risk data and mapping next week**, including climate change projections.
- **Planning Concerns:**
 - Tessa Munt MP: Advocated for elevated/stilt housing in high-risk zones.
 - Emphasis on better local engagement and conversations with farmers and flood-affected communities.
 - Delegation of responsibilities and engagement with local knowledge considered.
- **Preventative Measures:**
 - Terry Jermy MP: Called for more proactive hotspot mapping and engagement with local authorities.
 - EA: Developing new incident reporting and asset mapping systems.
- **Dredging & Maintenance:**
 - Richard Tice MP rep: Questioned cessation of dredging and local impacts (e.g., Black Sluice Pumping Station).
 - EA: Explained dredging often ineffective long-term due to sediment return; local assessments ongoing.

- **Modelling and Communication:**

- Ben Spencer MP: Repeated flooding despite previous modelling – called for transparency.
- EA: Updating risk modelling with new data; new public tools to improve forecasting and response.
- Concerns about communication during flood events; EA acknowledged room for improvement in real-time updates.

Groundwater Monitoring:

- Helen Morgan MP asked about progress in groundwater forecasting.
 - EA acknowledged it is the least mature flood risk model; improvements underway using local intelligence (e.g., Wessex area).
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4. Actions

- **Letter to the Minister** to be drafted by the APPG, outlining members' concerns on:
 - Planning and development in flood-risk areas.
 - EA resource limitations and public communications.
 - Integration of local knowledge and stakeholder collaboration.
 - Improvements needed in flood response, modelling, and preventative measures.
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