

WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

DEPARTMENT FOR ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL AFFAIRS

PITT REVIEW OF 2007 FLOODS: PROGRESS REPORT**Date 25 June 2009**

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Hilary Benn)

I have today placed in the House library copies of an update report detailing the progress Government has made in implementing the recommendations contained in Sir Michael Pitt's report on the 2007 summer floods. A copy of the report is also on the Defra web site at: <http://defraweb/environ/fcd/floods07.htm>

Significant progress has been made. We have published a draft Flood and Water Management Bill for consultation, and will develop firm legislative proposals in the light of comments from Parliament and consultees. However, in advance of the Bill becoming law, we have taken immediate action to help communities at risk of flooding. Since the summer 2007 floods we have for example:

- Increased Government funding from £600m in 2007/8 to a forecast of £780m for 2010/11, with an additional £20m brought forward into this year's budgets to allow an early start to projects that will benefit 27,000 homes when complete.
- Completed 85 flood defence schemes, protecting nearly 58,000 additional homes in England. Operating authorities are currently on course to exceed delivery targets and provide better protection to 160,000 homes over the three years to March 2011.
- Signed up 136,000 additional people to receive flood warnings in England and Wales.
- Set up a £7.7m Flood Forecasting Centre, jointly run by the Environment Agency and Met Office, which is already providing important services to local authorities and emergency responders, helping them to be better prepared for potential flooding.
- Announced a £5m grant scheme for householders for property-level flood protection like air bricks and door boards. I am announcing today the results of the first round of this scheme which will provide greater flood protection to nearly 600 households in England.

- Announced funding for 27 places for local authority participants in the existing Environment Agency Foundation Degree programmes and other local flood risk management training. This will help ensure that local communities have the expertise they need to help them protect themselves from flooding.
- Provided the first allocations to six local authorities from the £15m funding allocated to help the highest priority areas manage surface water flood risk. Progress on implementing the first tranche as well as next steps on the remaining funds will be announced later this summer.
- Announced £1m funding for three projects to demonstrate how land management change and working with natural processes can help protect against flooding.
- Published a long-term investment strategy, the Environment Agency's assessment of the costs and benefits of investment over the next 25 years given the latest projections of climate change. I am keen to encourage a public debate on how future funding needs are best met.
- Published a new policy statement on appraisal of flood and coastal erosion risk management, to ensure better value for money in the investment decisions made.

The Government has today announced that around 99% of those displaced by the summer 2007 floods are now back in their homes. We sympathise with those who for whatever reason have not yet been able to return and are committed to ensuring the remaining families get back into their homes as soon as possible.

The Pitt progress report explains how we will complete implementation of Sir Michael's recommendations, with target dates. The risk of flooding remains and last week's publication of the UKCP09 climate projections underlines how it will increase in the future as a result of climate change. The Government remains determined to make this country better able to anticipate and deal with the impacts of flooding. I will continue to keep the House informed of progress through future progress reports, the next of which will be due around the turn of the year.