

Speech: EU8 joint statement on Syria

I would like to make the following statement today on behalf of the five EU Members of the Security Council (France, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK), joined today by the former (Italy) and future (Belgium and Germany) EU Members of the Security Council to show the continuity of the EU's position on Syria.

We as Member States of the European Union acknowledge the signing of the memorandum to establish a ceasefire on Idlib and we call on the Astana guarantors to ensure that this ceasefire is upheld and to safeguard the last remaining de-escalation zone in Syria. We emphasize the need for a comprehensive nationwide ceasefire and for safe, sustained and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the country.

We fully believe that the Idlib ceasefire agreement should be an opportunity for the urgent resumption of the UN-led political process in Geneva.

We express our full support for the efforts of Staffan de Mistura, Special Envoy for Syria, to establish urgently a credible and legitimate constitutional committee to advance the UN's efforts to achieve a sustainable political solution to the conflict in Syria in line with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

We underscore the Special Envoy's authority to establish an inclusive constitutional committee, including the participation of a minimum of 30 percent women, that will begin the work of drafting a new Syrian constitution and laying the groundwork for free and fair UN-supervised elections consistent with UN Security Council Resolution 2254.

We call on all parties, but specifically Damascus, to constructively engage with the Special Envoy with the aim of, as quickly as possible and without any further delays, convening a credible and inclusive constitutional committee and we encourage the Special Envoy to report back to the Council shortly.

We reiterate that the EU will be ready to assist in the reconstruction of Syria only when a comprehensive, genuine and inclusive political transition, negotiated by the Syrian parties to the conflict on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 2254 and the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, is firmly under way.

Speech: The Trade Dividend

Your excellencies, my lords ladies and gentlemen. It's an absolute pleasure to be here tonight. I would like to thank, in particular, the Lord Mayor and

the Lady Mayoress, and all the staff of Mansion House for hosting us this evening.

Charles has been an advocate of DIT from the very beginning, so thank you for your support and your unwavering commitment to spreading the message of free trade around the world on behalf of the City of London.

I would also like to thank my three excellent ministers who are with us this evening – George Hollingbery, Rona Fairhead and Graham Stuart, all our trade envoys and all my fantastic staff from the Department for International Trade, all of whom contribute so much to Britain's trade and investment performance.

And I wish to extend a particular welcome to the Director-General of the World Trade Organization, my friend and colleague, Roberto Azevêdo, who you'll all be fortunate enough to hear from once you've sat through my speech.

Winston Churchill said that:

Free Trade is a condition of progress; it is an aid to progress; it is a herald of progress.

Those words were written more than a century ago, yet he was speaking from a tradition which stretched a lot further – almost a quarter of a millennium – to Adam Smith and David Ricardo.

In all our recent history the Governments of this country, whether Labour or Conservative, have recognised the strategic advantages of international free trade.

In this, of course, they have been right. All trade is strategic. It is also economic. It is also social.

It represents one of the oldest forms of human interaction, and one of the most enduring.

It has linked civilisations, crossed the deserts and the oceans, and bridged the chasm of time.

It spurs innovation, rewards enterprise, and fosters interdependence.

Trade is the food we eat, the clothes we wear, the TVs we watch, the mobiles we use, and the cars we drive.

And all these elements contribute to the "trade dividend", and that is what I wish to discuss tonight – the human dividend, the security dividend, and the economic dividend of trade – before briefly turning to tonight's Brexit discussions.

The Human Dividend

The first part of the trade dividend – the human dividend – is not always given the credit it deserves. But it is, perhaps, the most important of all.

As economies across the world have liberalised, opportunities for employment, or commerce, have allowed billions of people to lift themselves from poverty.

According to the World Bank, the three decades between 1981 and 2011, within all of our lifetimes, witnessed the single greatest decrease in material deprivation in history.

It is hard to imagine an international aid programme – even one as generous as our own – that would or could have been so effective.

Such a reduction in human suffering should rank among the greatest of humankind's achievements, and we should recognise it.

At a fundamental level, free and open trade allows people to improve their own lives, by giving them access to global opportunities, sharing knowledge, skills and experience and fundamentally, by the exchange of goods and services.

As a consequence, living standards across the globe are at their highest level in history.

The desire for comfort, for financial security, to provide for your family and to leave something for your children is innate in humankind. We should all strive to ensure that the next generation can have an easier start in life than the one before.

The dream of achieving what once only existed in the developed world, increasingly blossoms in all parts of the globe – and more importantly is increasingly possible.

Our aim, as a Department and as a country should be to continue this remarkable progress. To give the world's poorest the ability to trade their way out of poverty.

Yet those in the anti-trade lobby would deny them this possibility. As part of their wider ideological anti-capitalist agenda, they would stop the clock on the social progress and poverty reduction of recent decades.

We must take head-on the destructive arguments of those whose narrative is that free trade is nothing more than a global corporate conspiracy. In fact, our ability to trade is a condition of our freedom.

Indeed, as the American economist Milton Friedman said:

Underlying most arguments against the free market is a lack of belief in freedom itself.

Free trade is intrinsically linked to personal and political freedom. And that brings me onto the second of our trade dividends – the security dividend.

It is important to understand that trade is not an end in itself but a means to an end – to grow and spread our collective prosperity.

The Security Dividend

I have always believed that prosperity underpins social cohesion. That social cohesion itself underpins political stability, and that political stability is the building block of our collective security.

These are all part of the same continuum; you cannot disrupt one of these without disrupting the whole.

To deny people their access to prosperity, or the economic freedom to achieve it, is to risk political extremism, uncontrolled migration, and diminished security.

For the United Kingdom, trade contributes directly to our safety, helping to fund our armed forces and our security services.

It ensures that vital supplies, such as energy and raw materials, continue to enter the UK from abroad.

And the denial of trade – the ability to impose effective economic sanctions on external aggressors – provides a vital tool in dealing with global dangers and rogue states.

Looked at another way, the clamour for economic freedoms against an authoritarian state can help to liberate the innovation, enterprise and individual aspiration that are hallmarks of a free society.

By this reckoning, the promotion of free and open international trade, will in turn foster political stability, promote social security, and build a safer world.

The Economic Dividend

Of course, the benefits of prosperity are not only felt internationally, but in this country as well.

It is as true today as it always was that there is no such thing as government money – only taxpayers' money.

And, £186 billion of that taxpayer's money comes, in one form or another, from business. So, it follows that if we improve the profitability and productivity of business through exporting and investment, then the public coffers benefit too.

When I arrived in the newly created Department for International Trade, I was

amazed to find that we had no mechanism to enable us to translate the value of our exports into returns for the Treasury – although, as I am finding, this is not unique to the UK.

Since that day, the United Kingdom's exports have risen dramatically. In 2017 alone, we saw a 10.9% increase. This means that since the time of the referendum we have added £111 billion to our annual exporting total with all the financial implications of tax receipts that this brings.

The result of this is what we might call the economic, or more precisely, the "export dividend". As a government, we have been elected to be fiscally responsible whilst, of course, continuing to fund public services.

This can only be achieved through a strong economy that brings rising tax revenues without increasing the individual tax burden.

But fiscal balance is not solely about whether to raise taxes or cut spending – it is also about how to generate more revenue by growing the economy domestically and selling more of our goods and services abroad. Put simply as a country, if we want to spend more, we must earn more.

Increasing GDP, however, is not the sole preserve of government. I need hardly tell a room full of business leaders, the head of the City of London Corporation, and the Director-General of the WTO, that economic activity is led by private enterprise and through the demand and supply of a free market, rather than by government directive.

But where government does have a role to play is in facilitating enterprise – creating the optimum conditions for our businesses to succeed and thrive.

And thrive is what our businesses have done.

This remarkable achievement belongs to the thousands of exporters across the United Kingdom who have worked tirelessly to develop and manufacture great products and expand into global markets.

Many of you have joined us here this evening. Your success is Britain's success.

Exporting, generates wider benefits for the economy, including productivity gains, greater profitability and increased longevity for those that participate in it.

That is not to downplay the importance of imports. It would be naïve indeed to ignore the huge and necessary role that imports play in the production of goods and services for export, as well as consumer benefits: with more choice of higher quality products at lower prices.

Our global era is one where interdependence is increasing – one of the reasons why protectionism and economic nationalism are likely to be inefficient, ineffective, and damaging.

Of course, to benefit fully from the opportunities of the global economy we

have to be fully 'match fit'.

Which is why it is important that supply side reforms, such as those set out in the Government's Industrial Strategy, complement our push to transform the UK's exporting potential. The two are mutually reinforcing. We must, create the right conditions for firms to move up the value chain, improving their productivity, competitiveness and profitability.

It is here that we can see the 'coal face' of the potential intersection between exports and GDP and its impact on government finances.

We know that higher incomes and economic activity translate into higher tax revenues, both at a business and personal level.

This obviously raises the question of just how great an export dividend could be.

Last month the Institute of Economic Affairs attempted to work this out – and I stress that this is not government analysis. But, where they got to suggested that a 10% increase in the gross value of our exports – currently at £620 billion – could lead to a £50 billion increase in GDP.

Put simply, increased exports could mean increased economic activity. Increased economic activity increases labour demand, raising employment and pushing up wages. And the resulting increased output leads to higher profits and higher corporate tax revenues.

And what of our budget balance. Based still on the 10% uplift in exports, the budget deficit could, according to the IEA, reduce by some £20bn. The potential for us to balance our budget, is real.

Of course, raising the value of a country's exports by 10% is no easy task, even for a nation as dynamic, resourceful and competitive as the United Kingdom. But not impossible. 20 years ago, Germany's exports were exactly ours are today as a proportion of GDP, and now they stand at 47% of GDP, sitting on a fiscal surplus.

So we have accepted this challenge.

Our Export Strategy, launched in August, set out the ambitious target of raising exports as a proportion of the UK's GDP from 30 to 35 percent, putting us towards the top of the G7.

That is the scale of our ambition.

For Britain to fulfil its whole potential we must access all the available global markets. It is not a choice between the EU and the rest of the world – we need to sell to both. The EU remains the market for 44% of our exports, but the EU itself accepts that 90% of global growth in the next five to ten years will come from markets outside Europe.

Tonight, the Prime Minister is in Brussels for the October EU Council. We have made our position clear: that we will honour the democratic decision of

the British people made at the referendum.

We will leave the customs union and the single market. We cannot accept the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice. We will leave the Common Fisheries policy and the Common Agricultural Policy. We will end free movement. We will have our own independent trade policy and we will not accept any solution that divides the United Kingdom by treating Northern Ireland differently to any other part of our country.

We hope that we will achieve agreement that leaves all European countries able to take advantage of both our own and growing global markets.

Trade, and the rules-based international system that upholds its freedoms, underpins everything, from political stability and security, to economic prosperity and the livelihoods that have lifted a generation out of poverty.

We are opening a new chapter in this nation's history. It is a once in a generation chance to shape a better future for our own people, realise the highest ambitions of our businesses, and offer real leadership on free trade in an often uncertain and divided world.

It is also a chance to address the legitimate concerns of those who have been left behind by the pace of global change, and to build a global economy that works for everyone.

We in government have a responsibility to ensure that the dividends of trade are evenly spread. The rising tide of prosperity must lift all boats.

In fact, the dividends of trade are perhaps greater than for almost any other human activity. Yet in every place in the world, and at every time in history, trading freedoms have been under threat.

We all have a duty to defend it.

[Press release: We need to think differently on cancer to save even more lives says Sir Harpal Kumar at MHRA annual lecture](#)

Speaking at the 13th Annual Lecture organised by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency in London tonight, Sir Harpal Kumar, the former CEO of Cancer Research UK outlined his vision for cancer care in the future.

He said earlier diagnosis would enable the UK to catch-up with its

international counterparts in terms of survival rates and would also make the NHS more efficient.

Sir Harpal said he would like to see an end to the unacceptable variation in cancer treatment that exists in the UK, whereby some patients have long waits for appointments or tests, depending on where they live.

He also wants to see an improvement in the relationship between research and the NHS so patients receive new treatments much quicker.

Citing recent Cancer UK Research, Sir Harpal said the evidence showed around 60% of doctors felt they'd experienced a barrier to adopting a new treatment, rising to 83% amongst oncologists, with money being the most frequent barrier.

In his speech to an audience of clinicians and healthcare leaders, he made reference to the ageing population meaning in the next decade, there is likely to be an increase in the total number of deaths from cancer in the UK. Last year, more than 162,000 deaths were cancer-related, representing 28% of all deaths in the UK.

Sir Harpal Kumar said:

We have the potential to transform outcomes for many thousands of cancer patients, based on what we know now, even if there were no more research.

We have to think and act differently. If we cracked earlier diagnosis, it wouldn't just enable us to catch up with our international counterparts, through the thousands of lives saved. It would also mean a huge increase in NHS efficiency.

Dr Ian Hudson, MHRA's Chief Executive, said:

As a regulator, we know the important role that research and development plays in bringing new treatments to patients.

Given the ageing population, our work is even more vital to help transform outcomes for many thousands of patients – including cancer patients – to help make sure new and innovative treatments are made available to patients at the earliest, safest opportunity.

Notes to Editor

1. The MHRA Annual Lecture is the Agency's flagship event bringing together more than 200 senior domestic and international leaders from medicine, government, industry, academia, third sector and world health institutions. This year's event took place on 17 October at the Royal Institution, in London.

2. Each year the lecture is delivered by internationally renowned experts to bring their perspective on topics of global importance. This year, Sir Harpal Kumar, ex-CEO of Cancer Research UK delivered a lecture titled “Medical Innovation and the battle against cancer: is the health system keeping pace?” His lecture follows those by [Dr Jeremy Farrar, Wellcome Trust, in 2017](#), [Dr Margaret Chan, World Health Organisation, in 2016](#), and [Dr Dan Hartman, Gates Foundation, in 2015](#).
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Updated: Added video of the full annual lecture.

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[MHRA Annual Lecture 2018 – Medical innovation and the battle against cancer](#)

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[News story: Surface water: The biggest flood risk of all](#)

Introduction

I used to be a diplomat. I don't think I was a very good diplomat, because I kept telling people exactly what I thought. And I will do the same for you today. But one thing I did learn during my previous career was that if you want to understand any issue in foreign policy, you only need to know two things: history and the map. And I would suggest that the history, and the map, are equally good guides if you want to understand flooding – and in particular surface water flooding.

What surface water flooding is

I suspect that very few of you signed up to attend this conference on surface water management in order to find out what surface water flooding is. But I'm pretty sure that most the people outside this hall, the general public to whom this speech is also directed, won't. So for them, surface water flooding is what happens when there is too much rain for the drains and the streets fill with water.

This doesn't sound that threatening. Gene Kelly danced through a minor surface water flood in *Singing In The Rain*. Who doesn't love that?

Why it matters: surface water flooding is a real and growing threat

But the reality of surface water flooding is not nearly as cheerful as the movie. It is a real and growing threat – to life, to property, to the economy, to the country.

Surface water flooding is a risk because of its reach. Of all the flood risks to which our rainy island is subject – from coasts, rivers, groundwater, sewers and surface water – it is surface water flooding which threatens more people and properties than any other form of flood risk. Over 3 million properties in England are at risk of surface water flooding, even more than those at risk from rivers and the sea (2.7 million).

Surface water flooding is a risk because of its effect. It hits not just individual homes and businesses, but the whole infrastructure – road, rail, utilities etc – of a town or city, disrupting pretty much all aspects of modern life.

Surface water flooding is a risk because people don't know it is a risk. If you don't live near a river or the sea, it's not wholly unreasonable to think that you are not at risk of flooding. But reasonableness isn't the point. Leon Trotsky once said: "you may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you". Well, you may not be interested in surface water flooding, but it is interested in you. And people who don't know they are at risk are less well prepared to cope when the risk materialises.

Surface water flooding is a risk that tends to fall particularly on communities that can least afford it. Urban areas are more susceptible, because they have more concrete. Poor urban areas with high density housing are the most susceptible of all, because there are a lot of people and a lot of paved drives and parking spaces which don't absorb the rainwater, not big suburban lawns which do.

Surface water flooding is a risk which doesn't just affect our own country. The flash flood in Majorca last week, which tragically killed two British nationals, was a surface water event. The Dutch, who have been so successful in fighting sea flooding and are rightly regarded as world leaders in the field, are themselves struggling to manage a serious surface water risk building behind their mighty sea walls.

Most important of all, surface water flooding is a risk which is growing. An increasing population means more people are at risk. An increasingly urban population means more people are in cities, where the effects are starker. Development means more concrete, which means fewer places for rainwater to drain safely away. And the more frequent and intense rainfall which climate change is bringing will make flash flooding and overloading of the sewer network more likely and more frequent. That is why the government decided for the first time in 2016 to include surface water flooding on the national risk register.

Imagine this. It's another beautiful hot summer day in the South East. Gradually it turns humid, with thunderclouds building up over central London. Then the clouds burst with astonishing intensity. Within minutes water is overwhelming the drainage system. The underpasses start to fill up and the roads become impassable. The Tube stops running as parts of it flood. The city starts to grind to a halt. Then the power goes out. It's dark, and water starts coming into thousands of homes. It is inches not feet in most places. But in parts of the city it pours into basements, where it's several feet deep, and people start to drown.

This nightmare could happen. London is prone to high intensity thunderstorms and has an ageing Victorian sewer system. A smaller version did happen, in Hampstead in 1975 when in a localised thunderstorm it got more than three months of rain in three hours. Four of London's main-line railway stations were flooded and closed. Much of the Underground was brought to a standstill as tunnels were inundated and the electrics failed. 250 people were made homeless. One day, a much bigger rainfall event than that will happen somewhere in this country. We need to be ready.

The story so far: Pitt and after

The 2007 summer floods were a wake up call for all of us. They left 13 people dead, 44,600 homes flooded and £3bn damage. The rescue effort was the biggest in peacetime Britain. That event led to the 2008 Pitt Review, which concluded that much of the flooding had arisen not from rivers over-topping but from surface water pouring off the land.

The Pitt review led to the Flood and Water Management Act (2010), which provided clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the Environment Agency, local authorities, water and sewerage companies and others who manage flood risks. It gave the EA responsibility for the strategic overview of flood and coastal erosion in England and powers to manage that risk, which we exercise with our direct responsibility for managing the risk of coastal and main river flooding. And it established Lead Local Flood Authorities (the unitary authority or county council), responsible for managing flood risk from surface water, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses in their areas.

The Environment Agency has made many changes in the light of the Pitt review:

We now give people better information so they can see whether they are at risk. In 2008, we produced the first map of areas at higher risk from surface water flooding. In 2013 we produced the Risk of Flooding from Surface Water maps. Check out whether your own house is at risk online.

We have improved how we forecast flooding. In 2009 the Environment Agency and Met Office jointly established the Flood Forecasting Centre. It provides a 24/7 flood forecasting service to the Environment Agency, the Government and the emergency responders.

We have completely overhauled how we warn and inform people of an imminent flood risk. Over 1.4 million people can now receive direct warnings from our flood warning service. We automatically register properties with landlines and mobile operators.

We've upgraded how we respond when flooding threatens, to deploy more people more quickly to more places to help. We've invested in new kit, including 40km of temporary flood barriers, 250 high volume pumps, and 4 incident response vehicles. We now have 6,500 staff trained to respond to incidents. And we regularly exercise with the military to ensure that we can call on their support when required.

And by the way, in responding to a flooding incident we don't distinguish between surface water flooding (the local authorities' responsibility) and

river flooding (ours). To the public it is all water, and there is anyway often a mix of both kinds of flooding when it rains. So we will turn out to help local authorities with significant surface water flooding if they need us.

We are making record levels of investment in flood defence construction projects: £2.6 billion to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

We've changed how we deliver those flood defence projects. We now work in partnership with local authorities, businesses, the water companies, and local people to design and deliver the schemes that work for those local communities.

That includes schemes which reduce surface water flood risk. For example, the £14m Willerby and Derringham Flood Alleviation Scheme completed in 2016, led by East Riding of Yorkshire Council and Hull City Council. It better protects approximately 8,000 homes and 200 businesses from surface water flooding through a series of lagoons for rainwater storage. These lagoons resemble flat pasture and for the majority of the time will remain dry, only to be filled during severe wet weather.

We've also taken up the Pitt Review recommendation that we improve the way we work with natural processes. Using nature to help manage flood risk, and adopting greener approaches to engineering, can help us to achieve better reduction of flood risk and create better habitats for wildlife and greater beauty for people.

The future: the challenges and how to meet them

So things are better than they were. But we cannot afford complacency. Because as all of us seek to improve our performance, the future challenges are growing. The challenge of climate change, which will bring more extreme rainfall. The challenge of development, which requires us to build more houses, all of which have potential to increase the risk of surface water flooding. The challenge of constructing modern infrastructure which does not increase the risk of surface water flooding and is more resilient to it when it happens.

How do we meet those challenges? By pressing all the buttons that are available to us, and by doing it together.

Pressing all the buttons means several things:

It means improving how we manage surface water now. Defra's Surface Water Management Action Plan (published in July 2018) seeks to strengthen the current arrangements by improving our collective understanding of the risks and helping those responsible to manage them effectively. It promotes better partnership working across all the flood risk management authorities, better risk assessments, better data sharing, and better guidance. We in the Environment Agency will help take this forward by leading work to produce a national picture of skills and capability in our risk management authorities, by giving guidance on asset registers, and by putting in place mechanisms to allow better sharing of data and communication of forecasts.

It means thinking about how we should manage surface water flood risk in future. Michael Gove recently commissioned a review of the Multi Agency Flood Plans produced by the Local Resilience Forums. Major General Tim Cross led that review and reported this summer. He underlined the need for the Environment Agency, the local authorities and the emergency responders to work even more closely together in the Local Resilience Forums to plan for and respond to surface water flooding and other local flood events. We in the EA agree with that, and will redouble our efforts over the coming months.

It means improving our forecasting, so that communities get more accurate and earlier warning when flooding threatens. Our flood forecasting is now much better than it was even a few years ago. We can usually predict coastal flooding like an East Coast storm surge 2-5 days before it arrives; and river flooding 12-48 hours before. But surface water flooding is the hardest of all to predict, and at present is sometimes just not possible at all. We can predict that there will be thunderstorms in a particular area. But precisely where the rain will fall, the duration and the effect on the ground often can't be predicted until it's happened. Getting better at this is a huge technical challenge. But we are working with our partners to make progress. It means designing resilience into our towns and cities. Part of this is about Sustainable Drainage Systems, which can make communities more resilient to surface water flooding and deliver a host of other benefits – public spaces with more green and blue; more beautiful surroundings in which people can live, work and play; enhanced habitat for wildlife, greater biodiversity, improved water quality, and so on. The EA is working with developers, local authorities and the water companies to support the integration of SUDs into as many locations as possible, and I have seen some great examples.

One of my favourites is Slough Salthill Park SUDs, a project which the EA supported with the local school, the local authority and Thames Water. Together we turned part of an inner city school's playing field into a sustainable drainage lake, filled with plants and animals. It was a win for everyone. It reduced flood risk to Slough. It helped Thames Water: like other water companies, they don't want any more water than necessary going into the main drains, because that risks flooding and/or sewage contamination. Most of all, it gave those schoolchildren a first hand and now permanent experience of nature.

But designing in resilience is about a lot more than SUDs. It means starting far upstream in the planning process so that new developments are themselves laid out in ways which reduce surface water and other risks. Milton Keynes is a good example – a city that was planned to be decentralised, without high concentrations of concrete in one centre with the attendant risks, with green and blue spaces designed in where they already existed and new ones created where not. All over the country now we are working with developers and local authorities to seek to emulate that.

It means innovation and new technology. Engineers, inventors, housebuilders, the construction companies, those who design utilities and all the other things which contribute to or can suffer from surface water flooding, all have a part to play.

It means recognising that some of the causes of surface water flooding are neither urban nor to do with concrete. The wrong kind of farming in the wrong place can cause significant surface water flooding. Example: Maize. There has been a dramatic increase in maize production over the last few years, primarily to feed Anaerobic Digestion plants. The problem with maize is that it's harvested in late autumn, when the ground is wet. This, combined with the use of heavy harvesting machinery, tends to compact the soil. And compacted soil can't absorb rainwater, which causes surface water runoff, which in turn can cause local flooding and pollute watercourses.

It means mitigating climate change. There is a direct connection between chaos on the streets of Birmingham or Newcastle, both of which have been affected by major surface water flooding events in recent years, and man-made climate change. This is not a speech about climate change. (That was last month, if you are interested). But the more we can stop the activities that cause climate change, the easier we will make it to tackle the greater flood risk it will otherwise generate.

Finally, there is one more button we need to press if we are to tackle the surface water flooding issue: public awareness. If people know they are at risk they are more likely to do something about it, whether that means ensuring they put in property level protection in their own house, or encouraging their local council to ensure that the risks are mitigated. So just talking about surface water flooding, letting people know it exists and has consequences, as we are doing today, is an important part of the mitigation.

Conclusion

A wise environmentalist once said to me: "The thing about water is that it gets everywhere". This is a simple but profound truth. Water does get everywhere, and when it gets where it's going there are always consequences, good or bad.

So if there is somewhere you don't want water to be, like people's houses or the local supermarket, a community centre, a power station, a railway line, an underpass or a road, you'd better make sure that you have the right measures to stop it going where it wants to go.

Today's event, and the debate I'm sure it will launch, is an important step in thinking through together how we can ensure water only goes where we want it. I wish you all well in your deliberations. Because this really, really matters.