

Flood and coastal erosion policy

I have received this update from the Government:

Dear John

I recognise the immense impacts that flooding and coastal erosion can have on homes and businesses across the country. That is why this government is committed to reducing the risk of harm to people, the environment and the economy from flooding and coastal erosion – as shown by our £2.6 billion investment in flood and coastal defences since 2015 to better protect 300,000 homes by 2021.

At the Budget we committed to double our investment in the flood and coastal defence programme in England over the next six years to £5.2 billion which will better protect a further 336,000 properties by 2027. In addition to this record funding, I am today announcing a further investment of up to £170 million to accelerate work on 22 shovel-ready flood defence schemes to boost jobs, businesses and economic growth as part of economic recovery from coronavirus. These projects will commence in 2020 and 2021 to drive growth and unlock a range of benefits for local economies across the country – from Sheffield to Bude.

As part of the government's continuing action to tackle climate change, we have today set out a package of measures to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion for the long-term. I have today published a new Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Policy Statement for England which represents the most substantive update to our national effort to tackle flood and coastal erosion risk in a decade – since the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

I am announcing further details of the £200 million programme which will support 25 local areas to drive innovation to increase resilience to flooding and coastal erosion – and I am proposing to take forward changes to the Flood Re scheme which will accelerate uptake of property flood resilience measures.

The long-term Policy Statement sets out the government's ambition to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. It outlines five ambitious policies and over 40 supporting actions which will accelerate progress to better protect and better prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

These actions will not just reduce the likelihood of flooding and coastal erosion but will also reduce the impacts if flooding does happen. They will work together to increase resilience across the country. The Policy Statement will encourage wider and more comprehensive action by all those with a part to play to drive down flood risk from every angle through these five policies:

Upgrading and expanding our national flood defences and infrastructure

We will continue to build the new flood defences that the nation needs, investing in more permanent, demountable and temporary defences – building on the success of our £2.6 billion investment to better protect 300,000 properties since 2015. As announced at the Budget, over the next six years, we will invest a record £5.2 billion in the flood and coastal defence programme in England. This will better protect a further 336,000 properties and reduce national flood risk by up to 11% by 2027.

Managing the flow of water more effectively

We will deliver an integrated approach to managing water to better protect communities from flooding and provide wider benefits for water resource management and the environment. As part of this, we will increase the number of water management schemes within and across catchments to reduce flood risk and help manage drought risk. We will also do more to tackle surface water flood risk.

Harnessing the power of nature to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk and achieve multiple benefits

We will double the number of government funded projects which include nature-based solutions to reduce flood and coastal erosion risk. We will strengthen links between natural flood risk management and wider environmental and social benefits and explore how we can do more to deliver multiple benefits.

Better preparing our communities

We will ensure that every single home currently at high risk of flooding is better protected or better prepared. We will maintain and enhance our planning policies that direct new development away from areas at risk. We will ensure our communities and businesses have the information they need to take ownership of their resilience. Our policies will help to ensure that buildings, important infrastructure sites and key public services are better prepared to manage flood risk. We will work together to support communities, including when flooding happens and in recovery.

Enabling more resilient places through a catchment-based approach

We will adopt a catchment-based approach which means considering the full range of actions that could be taken in an area, upstream and downstream, by a variety of bodies to improve resilience. We will transform the current approach to local flood and coastal erosion risk planning so that every area of England will have a more strategic and comprehensive local plan by 2026 which drives long-term local action and investment. In areas facing significant coastal erosion and impacts from sea levels rising, we will support local areas to implement long-term plans to manage risk.

Alongside the Policy Statement, the Environment Agency will shortly lay before Parliament its National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England. The Strategy which will provide direction to the work of risk management authorities on the ground and includes strategic

objectives to improve the resilience of the nation through to 2100.

The new £200 million innovative resilience programme will test and demonstrate actions which are needed to deliver the ambition outlined in the Policy Statement. As well as delivering innovative actions in 25 selected areas, the evidence gained from the programme will enable successful approaches to be identified and implemented more widely.

In July 2019 Flood Re published their first Quinquennial Review into the scheme – a legislative requirement every five years – and made a number of proposals to government. Having carefully considered these proposals I am today announcing that we will consult on a number of them, including some proposals which go further in order to increase the uptake of Property Flood Resilience and better support customer and insurers to recognise the benefits. The proposals will improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the scheme and incentivise the use of property flood resilience measures to make properties more resilient to flooding.

The actions the government is committing to today will strengthen our approach to tackling flood and coastal erosion risk for the long-term and demonstrates the UK's world-leading work to tackle climate change. They will improve our health and wellbeing, enhance our environment and support our economic recovery. Taken together this means that our country will be significantly more resilient to flooding and coastal erosion and will ensure that every place can thrive in a changing climate.

RT HON GEORGE EUSTICE MP