

Investment in flood defences inadequate to cope with climate breakdown warn Greens



Green Party

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The Green Party has warned that with expected shifts in the British climate to more intense rainfall and greater frequency of flash floods, government investment plans for flood defences contain no guarantee that the country will be more resilient to flooding.

The warning comes as a new report from the National Audit Office highlights that the Environment Agency (EA) has reduced its forecast of the number of properties it will be able to better protect by 2027 from 336,000 to 200,000 – a 40 per cent reduction. The EA is removing 500 of the 2,000 new flood defence projects that were originally included.

A shortfall of £34 million in the budget for maintenance will also leave another 200,000 properties in danger due to erosion of existing flood defences.

Green Party co-leader, Adrian Ramsay, said:

“Despite the promise of record funding, the delivery is less than needed to cope with the potential flooding that we are beginning to witness from climate breakdown. As the thousands who have recently been flooded out will testify, prevention is better than cure. There is a big shortfall in the Environment Agency’s own targets, with over a hundred thousand people living in the most vulnerable areas being told that they are not a priority. Also, the false economy of skimping on maintenance means that another 200,000 people have to keep their fingers crossed that their existing flood defences don’t collapse.

“The government should allow people in vulnerable areas to apply for small grants to protect their businesses and households before a flood hits, rather

than only making these available after the event.

“There also needs to be a greater emphasis on creating natural flood defences through practices such as planting trees and hedges that absorb more water and restoring bends in rivers. And rather than bulldozing planning laws, as Labour proposes, we need to reassess planning regulations which unbelievably still allow for new buildings on flood plains.

“Ultimately, we need to deal with the root of the problem, which is to tackle the emissions responsible for heating our planet.

“The UK government needs to show leadership at the forthcoming COP28 climate talks by demonstrating a strong commitment to ending the use of fossil fuels, ramping up renewable energy, insulating homes, and boosting public transport and infrastructure for active travel.

“Unfortunately, instead, the Conservatives are taking a wrecking ball to the climate by making it easier to drill for oil and gas and undermining investment in renewables. Invariably the cost of inaction on flood defences and climate change will be borne by ordinary people.”

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