

Letter to The Telegraph from Emma Howard Boyd, Chair of the Environment Agency

Sir – The Environment Agency’s dedication to protecting the nation from flooding is clear. We are on track to better protect 300,000 properties by March next year.

Your report (“Don’t expect to be protected from flooding, agency warns”, February 18) ignores the efforts of our staff, who have worked round the clock to protect over 85,000 properties from severe weather this winter. We have over 1,000 staff responding to Storm Dennis.

We have seen two storms in as many weeks, both leading to record-breaking river levels, and resulting in hundreds of flooded homes. The nature of extreme weather like this means that flood defences cannot prevent flooding everywhere, all of the time. It is likely that we will see similar events, in more places across the country, due to climate change.

We need to build climate resilience into everything we do, whether by avoiding inappropriate development in the floodplain, working with nature to slow the flow of water or building homes, businesses and infrastructure to be more flood-resilient.

Our long-term strategy, developed with communities and leaders in flood and coastal risk management, addresses these challenges. Key to this is levelling up resilience to flooding and coastal change across the country.

You mention that concerns have been raised about our approach to dredging. We will always dredge where necessary – but with rainfall of the kind we have seen, it would do little to protect homes and businesses. Our hearts go out to all those affected by the flooding, and we will continue to do all we can to keep people safe.

Emma Howard Boyd

Chair, Environment Agency