

## Section 8

# Oversight, delivery and next steps

This section examines how the improvements recommended in this report can be delivered and contains a full list of all the recommendations. It contains chapters on:

- Oversight and delivery, and
- Next steps

# Oversight and delivery

This chapter considers how the improvements recommended in this report can be delivered, and who should take responsibility for making sure that change is swift and successful. It contains sections on:

- leadership in central government;
- oversight at the national level; and
- scrutiny at the regional and local level.

**30.1** The preceding chapters of this Report make a large number of recommendations about how we can improve the way the UK deals with the risks posed by flooding. If implemented, we believe they will deliver a step change improvement in our capacity to handle events of the kind experienced last summer and which we will experience more frequently in the future. To achieve that, there must be a clear framework for delivery, with proper ownership of actions and oversight of progress.

**30.2** Many organisations have raised this issue in their submissions. The widely shared fear is that important recommendations may be forgotten or ignored if they are too challenging. However, we know from our own analysis that the precedents are positive. The changes proposed in previous flooding reviews have generally been implemented. Indeed, some of the most significant changes in the way we handle flooding have resulted from independent reviews or reports. We regard that as encouraging, but recognise that we must still be specific about delivery. So this chapter deals with the issues of leadership and oversight.

## Leadership in central government

### Defra

**30.3** The recommendations in this Report are directed towards a range of government departments and agencies. Lead amongst these is Defra, as department with responsibility for flood risk management.

**30.4** Defra has a Departmental Strategic Objective to make the economy and society more resilient to environmental risk and encourage adaptation to the impacts of climate change. This is underpinned by measures of performance including the number of households at risk from flooding. Flood risk management is one of Defra's main departmental programmes, and is monitored closely by the Defra board. In addition, Defra sponsors the Environment Agency, which has six-monthly performance meetings with Ministers and continuous discussions with Defra at official level.

**30.5** Defra has already shown itself willing to take on a leadership role, and we understand that it will coordinate both the response to this Review and the wider programme of change.

**30.6** But a positive approach and administrative structures are not enough alone. This programme of work must have teeth and Defra should set out publicly how the government can be held to account and how progress can be monitored. Defra has already agreed to deliver a National Framework for flood emergency preparedness, following the recommendation in our interim report. They must also produce a clear plan of action for implementing our other recommendations.

**30.7** This work must be overseen by a top official, with regular reporting to Defra Ministers and the Board. Defra must recognise that flood risk management is a central issue for the department, and treat it accordingly. Reducing flood risk, handling major flood incidents more effectively and communicating properly with the public need to be priorities for the whole department, from the Secretary of State downwards. **We welcome the positive approach Defra has taken to our work, and we hope it will continue.**

**RECOMMENDATION 86: The Government should publish an action plan to implement the recommendations of this Review, with a Director in Defra overseeing the programme of delivery and issuing regular progress updates.**

### A Cabinet Committee for flooding

**30.8** Defra cannot tackle this job alone. The issues considered in this report are many and varied, and go far beyond Defra's direct interests. In order to support Defra, there should be a new Cabinet Committee to deal with flooding, much as we have already for terrorism and pandemic influenza.

**30.9** Cabinet Committees provide a framework for collective consideration and decisions on major policy issues, and questions of significant public interest. They ensure that issues that are of interest to more than one department are properly discussed and that the views of all relevant Ministers are considered. Cabinet and Cabinet Committees are the only bodies formally empowered to take binding decisions.

**30.10** A Cabinet Committee will provide clear ministerial leadership across government, and ensure that other important departments such as CLG, the Cabinet Office and BERR play their part. As a Cabinet Committee, its business will take precedence within government over other matters. It is a step which raises the status of flooding to bring it alongside the other most serious risks we face. A status which the Government signalled in its own National Security Strategy.

**30.11** We are aware that government has generally been seeking to reduce the number of Cabinet Committees. It is certainly true that we cannot have a Committee dedicated to every subject. But we believe the case for a dedicated flood committee is strong, and perhaps best articulated in the government's own explanation of the rationale for Committees. The example of the Committee established to improve pandemic influenza planning amplifies the point:

*"At best, a Cabinet or Cabinet Committee decision is more than the sum of its parts. Bringing the different knowledge and perspectives of departments, and the varying judgement and experience of Ministers, together enables Ministers to arrive at a much better outcome than would be possible for any one Secretary of State<sup>1</sup>."*

<sup>1</sup>'A Guide to Cabinet Committee Business', Cabinet Office, 2008

### **MISC 32 – a cabinet committee for pandemic flu planning**

A Cabinet Committee on pandemic influenza (called 'MISC 32') was established in 2005 to guide the preparations for a potential influenza pandemic. The Committee is chaired by the Secretary of State for Health, and around 20 ministers are members. The Permanent Secretary Government Communications, the Chief Medical Officer, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser and the Chief Veterinary Officer are also invited to attend as required. Other Ministers and officials, the Devolved Administrations, and representatives of the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Local Government Association attend as necessary. Able to focus on a single issue, the Committee has provided drive and focus to the work to deliver a step change in UK planning, and overseen the production and publication of a national framework for preparedness.

**30.12** The process of establishing the Cabinet Committee could be completed quickly to drive and support progress. Its creation would be a strong signal that the Government intends to take flooding and this Review seriously.

**RECOMMENDATION 87: The Government should establish a Cabinet Committee with a remit to improve the country's ability to deal with flooding and implement the recommendations of this Review.**

Resilience Forums provide a strong focus, but the absence of a national equivalent means that the Government relies on a mixture of subject-specific or lower level working groups to give non-government organisations a voice.

**30.14** Key decisions must still sit with government itself, but local responders and the private sector need influence and to be more closely involved. Submissions to the Review from key external organisations, notably local government and critical infrastructure operators, have made this clear.

**30.15** The creation of a National Resilience Forum (NRF), with representatives of local response organisations and Government, would give the kind of multi-agency strategic oversight that we believe is necessary to make the recommendations in this report work.

**30.16** The NRF would deliver four things:

- high level buy-in and strong affirmation of the government's commitment to a multi-agency, consensual approach;
- a clear signal that the centre of government attaches great importance to the work, prompting action and interest of external bodies;
- a public statement of intent through published minutes and collective endorsement of key decisions; and
- a focus for national, regional and local stakeholder groups which do not have a direct link in to Cabinet Committees.

## **Oversight at the national level**

### **National multi-agency planning**

**30.13** The work carried out in government has to be done together with external organisations. Just as at the local level, the multi-agency approach has to be the cornerstone of improving our ability to deal with flooding emergencies. However, at present there is no single body at the centre of government to make this happen. Local and Regional

### How a National Resilience Forum (NRF) might work

The NRF would not be a decision making body. Government would continue to make decisions and the NRF would help to advise and encourage multi-agency working.

The NRF would have a direct relationship with regional and local resilience forums. Regional and local resilience forums would be briefed on debate in the NRF, and the NRF would review progress in resilience at regional and local level. The NRF would also have a direct relationship with stakeholder groups on specific issues, such as the Business Advisory Group on Civil Protection and the Media Emergency Forum. Groups might pass issues up to the NRF, either formally or through their representatives.

The NRF should have a Cabinet Minister in the chair and external representation would be at the highest level. The group would meet approximately every six months, and focus on strategy, delivery policy aims and key government decisions relating to resilience.

The membership of the NRF could include:

- Cabinet Office
- CLG
- Home Office
- Department of Health
- Defra
- Environment Agency
- BERR
- Department for Transport
- HM Treasury
- Local Government Association
- ACPO
- Chief Fire Officers' Association
- Ambulance Service Association
- Confederation of British Industry
- Energy Networks Association
- Water UK
- National Voluntary Aid Societies Emergencies Committee
- Media Emergency Forum representative

**30.17** The Review has considered other options to deliver the same outcome. In particular, we considered the new National Security Forum (NSF) described in broad terms in the Government's National Security Strategy. However, the strong focus of the Strategy on external threats and the likely focus of the NSF on security issues leads us to believe that a

different body is necessary. The government may, of course, consider this proposal and decide that a broadening of the role and membership of the NSF would be a more efficient way to achieve the same effect, but our view is that the NRF model should be pursued in its own right.



**RECOMMENDATION 88: The Government should establish a National Resilience Forum to facilitate national level multi-agency planning for flooding and other emergencies.**

## EFRA Committee

**30.18** We have also considered how delivery should be monitored at a national level once the Review is shut down.

**30.19** The Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Select Committee has followed the progress of our Review and there has been a sharing of ideas. We believe the EFRA Select Committee should build on its own longstanding interests in flood risk management by reviewing progress against our recommendations at key stages. The Committee will have a particular interest when the Government's response and Action Plan are published in late summer or early autumn, and Defra might most helpfully meet with members of the Committee to explain their approach at that stage.

**30.20** In addition, we would encourage the Committee to make an assessment of progress once departments have had time to undertake some of the more substantial policy and operational changes. We expect even the most significant programmes of work to be up and running within a year, and so next summer seems an appropriate time for an assessment of progress.

**RECOMMENDATION 89: The EFRA Select Committee should review the country's readiness for dealing with flooding emergencies and produce an assessment of progress in implementation of the Review's recommendations after 12 months.**

## Scrutiny at the local level

**30.21** National oversight must be matched locally and we consider that there is a role for scrutiny committees of local councillors. Overview and scrutiny is a function of local authorities in England and Wales. It was introduced by the Local Government Act 2000, which created separate Executive

(decision making) and Overview and Scrutiny (reviewing) functions within councils. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 enabled enhanced overview and scrutiny functions – allowing all Members to refer any matter affecting the local authority area or its inhabitants to the oversight and scrutiny process.

**30.22** Overview and Scrutiny Committees (OSCs) have a number of specific functions including:

- holding the Executive accountable, by questioning Executive Members and council employees about their decisions; and
- scrutinising services delivered by external organisations to local communities.

**30.23** OSCs are now a well-established feature of local government. They provide a strong focus for public interest in key areas of local service delivery, and ensure that organisations are held to account publicly. As one step removed from the service providers, they can consider the position across the piece. The model is already used successfully on a national basis to improve local oversight of NHS services.

**30.24** The wide range of organisations which have a part to play in reducing the impacts of future flooding in local areas means that the scrutiny model is particularly well-suited. Scrutiny committees have successfully examined the events of last summer in areas such as the East Riding of Yorkshire, Gloucestershire, Doncaster and Berkshire, taking evidence from public and private sector bodies. These have been most effective where a public report has been produced, and specific actions identified. Indeed, the lessons they have identified have provided useful information for this Review.

## Local scrutiny of the NHS

For some time, the Government has encouraged councils to take a stronger role in scrutinising services outside their own organisation. The Health and Social Care Act 2001 provided the Overview and Scrutiny functions of unitary authorities and county councils with statutory powers to call in witnesses from local NHS bodies, and make recommendations that NHS organisations must consider as part of their decision-making processes. The 2001 Act also places requirements on NHS organisations to consult health overview and scrutiny committees when considering substantial developments or variations in the services which they provide.

Overview and Scrutiny Committees are playing an increasingly important role in publicising, scrutinising and questioning key issues in local and national health policy. Health scrutiny has developed well in a challenging and changing environment with OSCs providing democratic accountability for health matters through:

- collaboration (bringing people together to solve common problems);
- corporate support (recognising councils' role in health improvement);
- campaigning (tackling service redesign and reconfiguration); and
- challenge (holding decision makers to account).

Given the constitutional and resource constraints within which health scrutiny operates, evidence suggests outcomes have been promising with scrutiny contributing to changes in both service provision and the attitudes of individuals and organisations involved. Impacts identified by a Centre for Public Scrutiny report include, an improved level of debate about health; greater collaboration amongst service providers; closer working with neighbouring authorities; increased public and patient voice; changes in plans, services or resource allocation; and improved performance.<sup>2</sup>

### Gloucestershire's scrutiny enquiry

Gloucestershire County Council held an in-depth inquiry during October 2007 to discover exactly what happened during the flooding events of the summer and how the county could prepare for the future. Witnesses from various county council departments and other external agencies were asked to provide both written and verbal evidence. The final scrutiny inquiry report was published. It makes a number of recommendations and calls for action plans to be produced. These commit key organisations to actions in response to lessons learned.

### Hull's independent review

The Hull Independent Review identified a number of serious issues with the design, maintenance and operation of the pumped drainage system in Hull. These issues had been recognised and raised as long ago as 1996, but were apparently never acted upon. Had there been effective information exchange, coupled with local scrutiny, it would have provided a better understanding of the risks and would have promoted earlier action and the development of contingency plans. The people of Hull would undoubtedly have benefited.

<sup>2</sup> Centre for Public Scrutiny, Health Scrutiny – Evaluative Research Project, June 2007

### Southwark Council and Thames Water

A review was initiated in response to a mains water burst in Linden Grove in September 2003 which resulted in large numbers of Southwark residents being without water for up to five days. OSC members were keen to find out: the cause of the water burst and the impact it had on local people; how Thames Water and the Council responded to the emergency; and what practical lessons could be drawn from it. Southwark council remarked that although they initially had trouble making contact and agreeing terms of engagement, the experience itself was positive for those concerned.

**30.25** The Review considers that holding scrutiny meetings in flood risk areas would send a powerful leadership message. Such an approach would give locally elected members the opportunity to ask questions about decisions concerning the management of local flood risk, based upon actions within a number of public documents such as SWMPs, Local Development Frameworks and Community Risk Registers.

**30.26** If all those with responsibilities were required to attend, including representatives from water companies, local authority drainage officers and Environment Agency, scrutiny meetings would also provide local authority members with the opportunity to engage with relevant parties and monitor progress. Local authority scrutiny has the benefit of giving greater impetus to ensuring that risk-based actions, once decided, actually take place. It should also ensure a greater understanding of both local issues and the national context. Scrutiny should lead to greater transparency for the public, including better understanding of local maintenance regimes, risk and options for managing risk.

### Scrutiny in practice

**30.27** Our interim report proposed two conclusions in relation to local scrutiny, suggesting a role for OSCs in relation to flood risk management and critical infrastructure. Reactions were generally positive. Most

councils recognised scrutiny as an increasingly important part of local governance and could see its benefits to managing local flood risk. Nevertheless, some issues have led those who would have to implement these proposals to be cautious.

### Resourcing and timing

**30.28** Some submissions to the Review raised concerns about the scale and frequency of the scrutiny process. Local authorities regard the scrutiny process as generally resource-intensive. Certainly, the experience of those authorities which have carried out scrutiny suggests a review of all matters relating to flooding and infrastructure is a significant one.

*“there are many subjects which the ‘beam of scrutiny’ has yet to touch on and scrutiny must also fulfil its statutory duty to examine health issues... I am not sure there is the capacity to keep the issue of flooding permanently under local authority review year on year.”*

**30.29** Many authorities take a ‘task-and-finish’ approach to scrutiny, choosing topics of particular local importance and producing a one-off report. In practice, we believe that most authorities would not choose to review flood risk management every year through a full-scale scrutiny exercise. Areas of particularly high risk might opt to do so, but for many a large initial exercise followed by a light annual review would suffice. In either case, it is clear that greater scrutiny activity in this area will have resource implications for local government which will need to be resolved.

**30.30** There is a separate issue for infrastructure providers, who have concerns about managing relationships with large numbers of local committees.

*“We are concerned about any proposal to duplicate ownership or reporting responsibility by the introduction of linkage to local authorities. We believe that if there is a case to add or change to emergency planning obligations then the correct route for that is for BERR to do so, and Ofgem to agree any consequential impact on financing. It could be a recipe for confusion*



*and conflict if Local Authorities each believed they had oversight of plans which will overlap a number of Local Authority areas.”*

**30.31** We believe this point is finely balanced. Infrastructure providers do often cover large areas, and taking part in a scrutiny process can be demanding. But as we say earlier in the Report, infrastructure providers now need to make sure they are resourced to manage more complex relationships with the local level. And the pressure on local government to keep its scrutiny activity at an efficient level should mean that all those involved have the right incentives to avoid unnecessary work.

#### *Technical, commercial and security issues*

**30.32** Submissions from both Category 2 responders and local authorities themselves pointed out that there is a shortage of specialist expertise in councils. This, they claim, makes the idea of meaningful, detailed scrutiny of emergency and business continuity plans more difficult.

*“the drainage infrastructure is very complicated from a technical and historical perspective and it would be advisable if some form of readily comprehensible guidance were produced by Government to enable members to grasp the complexities and subtleties of this and what the key issues to focus on are”*

**30.33** The Review recognises that a level of background knowledge would be required to examine the detail of such plans. But one of the great strengths of OSCs is that they are able to ask the questions a layman would ask, representing the public's concerns and providing a reality check for the 'experts'. Gloucestershire's positive experience in the summer demonstrates that technical expertise is not a pre-requisite for meaningful scrutiny.

**30.34** We also recognise some of the sensitivities around critical infrastructure. The contents of emergency and business continuity plans may have implications for security, and critical infrastructure issues can touch on matters of commercial confidence. As such,

Category 2 responders would be reluctant for this information to be public.

**30.35** As outlined in earlier chapters, we believe the balance between public good and security threats should be redressed. While recognising the legitimacy of security and commercial concerns, we note that such plans have been successfully discussed at OSCs in the past. Scrutiny committees can take evidence in private if necessary, and final reports do not need to contain the detail of specific sites or assets.

#### *Expectation management*

**30.36** A point of concern raised in some of the evidence is the management of the expectations of the public and councillors. If scrutiny reports identify areas of concern organisations will come under considerable pressure to resolve problems. Although this pressure is positive, it may not allow for the realities of limited resources and existing priorities or statutory commitments.

**30.37** This is not a concern supported by evidence. The scrutiny enquiries which followed the summer floods asked hard questions of key organisations, but accepted practical programmes of work rather than pushing for unrealistic improvements. Guidance from the Government on how the process should work would be appropriate.

*“In order to be able to rebut excessive demands for routine maintenance through public forums there must be very clear acceptable standards set by central government, for watercourse condition. Detailed guidance would also need to cover such issues as dispute resolution, the level of control the public sector would have over the private sectors plans etc.”*

### Information sharing and co-operation

**30.38** The Review notes that Central Networks refused to participate in Gloucester review and recognises that external organisations may at times not want to fully engage or share information. Again, this issue is surmountable. We believe Government should oblige external organisations to cooperate, as requested, with such exercises.

In its submission to the Review, Severn Trent Water commented on the company's experience of attending the Scrutiny Inquiry conducted by Gloucestershire County Council following the floods of summer 2007:

*“Severn Trent Water has experienced the benefits [that] attending the Gloucester Scrutiny enquiry can bring. We have been able to inform and reassure the communities we serve by demonstrating what we as an organisation are doing to make our networks more resilient and what contingency arrangements we have in place to respond to an emergency in their community.”*

**30.39** Taken together, these issues are significant but manageable. Making the scrutiny process work will require proper guidance, but there are strong precedents and real benefits. Scrutiny enables authorities to ensure that national policy is complied with at the local level. It holds companies who deliver essential public services to account – helping to ensure vital services are correctly maintained for the good of the local community and that robust plans are put in place for potential failure. The Review believes an effective exchange of information, coupled with local scrutiny can act to promote earlier action and the development of better contingency plans.

**RECOMMENDATION 90: All upper tier local authorities should establish Oversight and Scrutiny Committees to review work by public sector bodies and essential service providers in order to manage flood risk, underpinned by a legal requirement to cooperate and share information.**

**RECOMMENDATION 91: Each Oversight and Scrutiny Committee should prepare an annual summary of actions taken locally to manage flood risk and implement this Review, and these reports should be public and reviewed by Government Offices and the Environment Agency.**

### Learning lessons

**30.40** Oversight and Scrutiny Committees will be the major route through which effective change in the management of flood-risk by public sector bodies and essential service providers will be monitored and driven. Through the improved contingency plans engendered by this committee process, the organisations subject to scrutiny will be better prepared to cope with flood-risk and this will lead to greater resilience at both the local and national levels.

**30.41** However, the other element of work at the local level to achieve improvement following flooding events is internal analysis to learn and share lessons. In this respect, there will be a need for responders to evaluate and share lessons in the response and recovery phases and some of the areas under discussion will be particularly sensitive for security and commercial reasons. The specialist and operational nature of this work means that Local Resilience Forums should play a leading role in its discussion and development.

**RECOMMENDATION 92: Local Resilience Forums should evaluate and share lessons from both the response and recovery phases to inform their planning for future emergencies.**



# Next steps and summary of recommendations

This chapter marks the end of the Review process. It contains sections on:

- the end of the Review process, and immediate next steps; and
- a full list of all the recommendations.

## Next steps

**31.1** The Review was initiated in August 2007 and has now, after some 10 months, reached its conclusions. The Review was given clear terms of reference at the outset of the work and has delivered against those. The Review process now comes to an end and the Review team disbanded.

## Access to evidence

**31.2** Ongoing work and remaining evidence will be dealt with by the Government. The Review mailbox and postal address will continue to be monitored, but enquiries will be passed on to the relevant government department.

**31.3** We want to ensure that the evidence submitted to the Review will be available to those who wish to use it for research purposes. The material will be held at the Library of the Emergency Planning College, and be supplied in full on request. The Library can be contacted

by email at [Epc.library@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Epc.library@cabinet-office.x.gsi.gov.uk) or by telephone on 01347 825 007. In due course, the evidence will be transferred to The National Archives.

## Views and comment

**31.4** The Review Team is not seeking any public comment on this Report or its recommendations. However, we are conscious that many people may have views on what we have said. These should, in the first instance, be directed to Defra as lead government department for flooding. Defra Flood Risk Management Division can be contacted at:

Defra Flood Risk Management Division  
Ergon House  
Horseferry Road.  
London  
SW1P 2AL  
08459 33 55 77

## Government response

**31.5** The Government has indicated to us that it will want to reflect on the recommendations in this Report, and publish a considered response in due course. We recognise that the recommendations touch on a wide range of issues and organisations, and it will take time to reach decisions within government and beyond. Nevertheless, we expect the Government to respond formally to our recommendations by the end of September 2008 at the latest.

## Recommendations in full

A full list of the final recommendations which appear in the earlier chapters of this document follows below.

### **RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Given the predicted increase in the range of future extremes of weather, the Government should give priority to both adaptation and mitigation in its programmes to help society cope with climate change.

### **RECOMMENDATION 2:**

The Environment Agency should progressively take on a national overview of all flood risk, including surface water and groundwater flood risk, with immediate effect.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

The Met Office should continue to improve its forecasting and predicting methods to a level which meets the needs of emergency responders.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

The Environment Agency should further develop its tools and techniques for predicting and modelling river flooding, taking account of extreme and multiple events and depths and velocities of water.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

The Environment Agency should work with partners to urgently take forward work to develop tools and techniques to model surface water flooding.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6:**

The Environment Agency and the Met Office should work together, through a joint centre, to improve their technical capability to forecast, model and warn against all sources of flooding.

### **RECOMMENDATION 7:**

There should be a presumption against building in high flood risk areas, in accordance with PPS25, including giving consideration to all sources of flood risk, and ensuring that developers make a full contribution to the costs both of building and maintaining any necessary defences.

### **RECOMMENDATION 8:**

The operation and effectiveness of PPS25 and the Environment Agency's powers to challenge development should be kept under review and strengthened if and when necessary.

### **RECOMMENDATION 9:**

Householders should no longer be able to lay impermeable surfaces as of right on front gardens and the Government should consult on extending this to back gardens and business premises.

### **RECOMMENDATION 10:**

The automatic right to connect surface water drainage of new developments to the sewerage system should be removed.

### **RECOMMENDATION 11:**

Building Regulations should be revised to ensure that all new or refurbished buildings in high flood-risk areas are flood-resistant or resilient.

### **RECOMMENDATION 12:**

All local authorities should extend eligibility for home improvement grants and loans to include flood resistance and resilience products for properties in high flood-risk areas.



**RECOMMENDATION 13:**

Local authorities, in discharging their responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to promote business continuity, should encourage the take-up of property flood resistance and resilience by businesses.

**RECOMMENDATION 14:**

Local authorities should lead on the management of local flood risk, with the support of the relevant organisations.

**RECOMMENDATION 15:**

Local authorities should positively tackle local problems of flooding by working with all relevant parties, establishing ownership and legal responsibility.

**RECOMMENDATION 16:**

Local authorities should collate and map the main flood risk management and drainage assets (over and underground), including a record of their ownership and condition.

**RECOMMENDATION 17:**

All relevant organisations should have a duty to share information and cooperate with local authorities and the Environment Agency to facilitate the management of flood risk.

**RECOMMENDATION 18:**

Local Surface Water Management Plans, as set out under PPS25 and coordinated by local authorities, should provide the basis for managing all local flood risk.

**RECOMMENDATION 19:**

Local authorities should assess and, if appropriate, enhance their technical capabilities to deliver a wide range of responsibilities in relation to local flood risk management.

**RECOMMENDATION 20:**

The Government should resolve the issue of which organisations should be responsible for the ownership and maintenance of sustainable drainage systems.

**RECOMMENDATION 21:**

Defra should work with Ofwat and the water industry to explore how appropriate risk-based standards for public sewerage systems can be achieved.

**RECOMMENDATION 22:**

As part of the forthcoming and subsequent water industry pricing reviews, Ofwat should give appropriate priority to proposals for investment in the existing sewerage network to deal with increasing flood risk.

**RECOMMENDATION 23:**

The Government should commit to a strategic long-term approach to its investment in flood risk management, planning up to 25 years ahead.

**RECOMMENDATION 24:**

The Government should develop a scheme which allows and encourages local communities to invest in flood risk management measures.

**RECOMMENDATION 25:**

The Environment Agency should maintain its existing risk-based approach to levels of maintenance and this should be supported by published schedules of works for each local authority area.

**RECOMMENDATION 26:**

The Government should develop a single set of guidance for local authorities and the public on the use and usefulness of sandbags and other alternatives, rather than leaving the matter wholly to local discretion.

**RECOMMENDATION 27:**

Defra, the Environment Agency and Natural England should work with partners to establish a programme through Catchment Flood Management Plans and Shoreline Management Plans to achieve greater working with natural processes.

**RECOMMENDATION 28:**

The forthcoming flooding legislation should be a single unifying Act that addresses all sources of flooding, clarifies responsibilities and facilitates flood risk management.

**RECOMMENDATION 29:**

The Government and the insurance industry should work together to deliver a public education programme setting out the benefits of insurance in the context of flooding.

**RECOMMENDATION 30:**

The Government should review and update the guidance *Insurance for all: A good practice guide* for providers of social housing and disseminate it effectively to support the creation of insurance with rent schemes for low income households.

**RECOMMENDATION 31:**

In flood risk areas, insurance notices should include information on flood risk and the simple steps that can be taken to mitigate the effects.

**RECOMMENDATION 32:**

The insurance industry should develop and implement industry guidance for flooding events, covering reasonable expectations of the performance of insurers and reasonable actions by customers.

**RECOMMENDATION 33:**

The Environment Agency should provide a specialised site-specific flood warning service for infrastructure operators, offering longer lead times and greater levels of detail about the velocity and depth of flooding.

**RECOMMENDATION 34:**

The Met Office and the Environment Agency should issue warnings against a lower threshold of probability to increase preparation lead times for emergency responders.

**RECOMMENDATION 35:**

The Met Office and the Environment Agency should issue joint warnings and impact information on severe weather and flooding emergencies to responder organisations and the public.

**RECOMMENDATION 36:**

The Environment Agency should make relevant flood visualisation data, held in electronic map format, available online to Gold and Silver Commands.

**RECOMMENDATION 37:**

The Environment Agency should work with its partners to progressively develop and bring into use flood visualisation tools that are designed to meet the needs of flood-risk managers, emergency planners and responders.

**RECOMMENDATION 38:**

Local authorities should establish mutual aid agreements in accordance with the guidance currently being prepared by the Local Government Association and the Cabinet Office.

**RECOMMENDATION 39:**

The Government should urgently put in place a fully funded national capability for flood rescue, with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a leading role, underpinned as necessary by a statutory duty.

**RECOMMENDATION 40:**

Defra should amend emergency regulations to increase the minimum amount of water to be provided in an emergency, in order to reflect reasonable needs during a longer-term loss of mains supply.

**RECOMMENDATION 41:**

Upper tier local authorities should be the lead responders in relation to multi-agency planning for severe weather emergencies at the local level and for triggering multi-agency arrangements in response to severe weather warnings and local impact assessments.

**RECOMMENDATION 42:**

Where a Gold Command is established for severe weather events, the police, unless agreed otherwise locally, should convene and lead the multi-agency response.

**RECOMMENDATION 43:**

Gold Commands should be established at an early stage on a precautionary basis where there is a risk of serious flooding.

**RECOMMENDATION 44:**

Category 1 and 2 responders should assess the effectiveness of their emergency response facilities, including flexible accommodation, IT and communications systems, and undertake any necessary improvement works.

**RECOMMENDATION 45:**

The Highways Agency, working through Local Resilience Forums, should further consider the vulnerability of motorways and trunk roads to flooding, the potential for better warnings, strategic road clearance to avoid people becoming stranded and plans to support people who become stranded.

**RECOMMENDATION 46:**

The rail industry, working through Local Resilience Forums, should develop plans to provide emergency welfare support to passengers stranded on the rail network.

**RECOMMENDATION 47:**

The Ministry of Defence should identify a small number of trained Armed Forces personnel who can be deployed to advise Gold Commands on logistics during wide-area civil emergencies and, working with Cabinet Office, identify a suitable mechanism for deployment.

**RECOMMENDATION 48:**

Central government crisis machinery should always be activated if significant wide-area and high-impact flooding is expected or occurs.

**RECOMMENDATION 49:**

A national flooding exercise should take place at the earliest opportunity in order to test the new arrangements which central government departments are putting into place to deal with flooding and infrastructure emergencies.

**RECOMMENDATION 50:**

The Government should urgently begin its systematic programme to reduce the disruption of essential services resulting from natural hazards by publishing a national framework and policy statement setting out the process, timescales and expectations.

**RECOMMENDATION 51:**

Relevant government departments and the Environment Agency should work with infrastructure operators to identify the vulnerability and risk of assets to flooding and a summary of the analysis should be published in Sector Resilience Plans.

**RECOMMENDATION 52:**

In the short-term, the Government and infrastructure operators should work together to build a level resilience into critical infrastructure assets that ensures continuity during a worst-case flood event.

**RECOMMENDATION 53:**

A specific duty should be placed on economic regulators to build resilience in the critical Infrastructure.

**RECOMMENDATION 54:**

The Government should extend the duty to undertake business continuity planning to infrastructure operating Category 2 responders to a standard equivalent to BS 25999, and that accountability is ensured through an annual benchmarking exercise within each sector.

**RECOMMENDATION 55:**

The Government should strengthen and enforce the duty on Category 2 responders to share information on the risks to their infrastructure assets, enabling more effective emergency planning within Local Resilience Forums.

**RECOMMENDATION 56:**

The Government should issue clear guidance on expected levels of Category 2 responders' engagement in planning, exercising and response and consider the case for strengthening enforcement arrangements.

**RECOMMENDATION 57:**

The Government should provide Local Resilience Forums with the inundation maps for both large and small reservoirs to enable them to assess risks and plan for contingency, warning and evacuation and the outline maps be made available to the public online as part of wider flood risk information.

**RECOMMENDATION 58:**

The Government should implement the legislative changes proposed in the Environment Agency biennial report on dam and reservoir safety through the forthcoming flooding legislation.

**RECOMMENDATION 59:**

The Risk and Regulation Advisory Council should explore how the public can improve their understanding of community risks, including those associated with flooding, and that the Government should then implement the findings as appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION 60:**

The Government should implement a public information campaign which draws on a single definitive set of flood prevention and mitigation advice for householders and businesses, and which can be used by media and the authorities locally and nationally.

**RECOMMENDATION 61:**

The Environment Agency should work with local responders to raise awareness in flood risk areas and identify a range of mechanisms to warn the public, particularly the vulnerable, in response to flooding.

**RECOMMENDATION 62:**

The Environment Agency should work urgently with telecommunications companies to facilitate the roll-out of opt-out telephone flood warning schemes to all homes and businesses liable to flooding, including those with ex-directory numbers.

**RECOMMENDATION 63:**

Flood risk should be made part of the mandatory search requirements when people buy property, and should form part of Home Information Packs.

**RECOMMENDATION 64:**

Local Resilience Forums should continue to develop plans for door-knocking, coordinated by local authorities, to enhance flood warnings before flooding and to provide information and assess welfare needs once flooding has receded.

**RECOMMENDATION 65:**

The Met Office and the Environment Agency should urgently complete the production of a sliding scale of options for greater personalisation of public warning information, including costs, benefits and feasibility.

**RECOMMENDATION 66:**

Local authority contact centres should take the lead in dealing with general enquiries from the public during and after major flooding, redirecting calls to other organisations when appropriate.

**RECOMMENDATION 67:**

The Cabinet Office should provide advice to ensure that all Local Resilience Forums have effective and linked websites providing public information before, during and after an emergency.

**RECOMMENDATION 68:**

Council leaders and chief executives should play a prominent role in public reassurance and advice through the local media during a flooding emergency, as part of a coordinated effort overseen by Gold Commanders.

**RECOMMENDATION 69:**

The public should make up a flood kit – including personal documents, insurance policy, emergency contact numbers (including local council, emergency services and Floodline), torch, battery or wind-up radio, mobile phone, rubber gloves, wet wipes or antibacterial hand gel, first aid kit and blankets.

**RECOMMENDATION 70:**

The Government should establish a programme to support and encourage individuals and communities to be better prepared and more self-reliant during emergencies, allowing the authorities to focus on those areas and people in greatest need.

**RECOMMENDATION 71:**

The Department of Health and relevant bodies should develop a single set of flood-related health advice for householders and businesses which should be used by all organisations nationally and locally and made available through a wide range of sources.

**RECOMMENDATION 72:**

Local response and recovery coordinating groups should ensure that health and wellbeing support is readily available to those affected by flooding based on the advice developed by the Department of Health.

**RECOMMENDATION 73:**

The Government, the Association of British Insurers and other relevant organisations should work together to explore any technological or process improvements that can be made to speed up the drying out and stabilising process of building recovery after a flood.

**RECOMMENDATION 74:**

The monitoring of the impact of flooding on the health and wellbeing of people, and actions to mitigate and manage the effects, should form a systematic part of the work of Recovery Coordinating Groups.

**RECOMMENDATION 75:**

For emergencies spanning more than a single local authority area, Government Offices should ensure coherence and coordination, if necessary, between recovery operations.

**RECOMMENDATION 76:**

Local authorities should coordinate a systematic programme of community engagement in their area during the recovery phase.

**RECOMMENDATION 77:**

National and local Recovery Coordinating Groups should be established from the outset of major emergencies and in due course there should be formal handover from the crisis machinery.

**RECOMMENDATION 78:**

Aims and objectives for the recovery phase should be agreed at the outset by Recovery Coordinating Groups to provide focus and enable orderly transition into mainstream programmes when multi-agency coordination of recovery is no longer required.

**RECOMMENDATION 79:**

Government Offices, in conjunction with the Local Government Association, should develop arrangements to provide advice and support from experienced organisations to areas dealing with recovery from severe flooding emergencies.

**RECOMMENDATION 80:**

All central government guidance should be updated to reflect the new arrangements for recovery and Local Resilience Forums should plan, train and exercise on this basis.

**RECOMMENDATION 81:**

There should be an agreed framework, including definitions and timescales, for local-central recovery reporting.

**RECOMMENDATION 82:**

Following major flooding events, the Government should publish monthly summaries of the progress of the recovery phase, including the numbers of households still displaced from all or part of their homes.

**RECOMMENDATION 83:**

Local authorities should continue to make arrangements to bear the cost of recovery for all but the most exceptional emergencies, and should revisit their reserves and insurance arrangements in light of last summer's floods.

**RECOMMENDATION 84:**

Central government should have pre-planned rather than ad-hoc arrangements to contribute towards the financial burden of recovery from the most exceptional emergencies, on a formula basis.

**RECOMMENDATION 85:**

Local Recovery Coordination Groups should make early recommendations to elected local authority members about longer-term regeneration and economic development opportunities.



**RECOMMENDATION 86:**

The Government should publish an action plan to implement the recommendations of this Review, with a Director in Defra overseeing the programme of delivery and issuing regular progress updates.

**RECOMMENDATION 87:**

The Government should establish a Cabinet Committee with a remit to improve the country's ability to deal with flooding and implement the recommendations of this Review.

**RECOMMENDATION 88:**

The Government should establish a National Resilience Forum to facilitate national level multi-agency planning for flooding and other emergencies.

**RECOMMENDATION 89:**

The EFRA Select Committee should review the country's readiness for dealing with flooding emergencies and produce an assessment of progress in implementation of the Review's recommendations after 12 months.

**RECOMMENDATION 90:**

All upper tier local authorities should establish Oversight and Scrutiny Committees to review work by public sector bodies and essential service providers in order to manage flood risk, underpinned by a legal requirement to cooperate and share information.

**RECOMMENDATION 91:**

Each Oversight and Scrutiny Committee should prepare an annual summary of actions taken locally to manage flood risk and implement this Review, and these reports should be public and reviewed by Government Offices and the Environment Agency.

**RECOMMENDATION 92:**

Local Resilience Forums should evaluate and share lessons from both the response and recovery phases to inform their planning for future emergencies.

