

# Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

## Oral evidence: Future flood prevention

HC 775

Wednesday 27 April 2016

Ordered by the House of Commons to be published on 27 April 2016.

Written evidence from witnesses:

- [Innes Thomson, Chief Executive, Association of Drainage Authorities](#)
- [Councillor Mark Hawthorne, Chairman of the People and Places Board and Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, Local Government Association](#)
- [Minette Batters, Deputy President, National Farmers Union](#)
- [Ross Murray, President, Country Land and Business Association](#)
- [Kevin Peberdy, Director of Wetland Experience and Creation at Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust](#) and [Blueprint for Water Coalition](#)

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Members present: Neil Parish (Chair); Chris Davis; Simon Hart; Dr Paul Monaghan; Rebecca Pow; Ms Margaret Ritchie; Angela Smith; Rishi Sunak; Valerie Vaz

Questions 125-210

### Examination of Witnesses

*Witnesses:* **Innes Thomson**, Chief Executive, Association of Drainage Authorities, and **Councillor Mark Hawthorne**, Chairman, People and Places Board, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, Local Government Association, gave evidence.

**Q125 Chair:** Welcome, gentlemen. Thank you very much for coming and taking part in our inquiry on flood resilience. It is great to have you here. Can we start off by introducing ourselves, please?

**Innes Thomson:** Thank you very much, Chair, for the welcome from yourself and the Committee this afternoon. My name is Innes Thomson and I am the Chief Executive of the Association of Drainage Authorities. We represent internal drainage boards, local authorities and some of the bigger agencies in the country with respect to water level and flood risk management.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** My name is Mark Hawthorne. I am Leader of Gloucestershire County Council and also the Chair of the People and Places Board at the Local Government Association, which represents all non-city areas in the country.

**Q126 Chair:** Gloucester has its fair share of low-lying land, has it not? I hail a little bit from Somerset and we have a little bit there as well. You are very much welcome, and welcome to Innes as well, because, like I said, drainage boards, localism and everything else needs to be sorted out as we go through this inquiry today. I am going to start off with the first couple of questions. Mark, how effective were local councils in preparing for floods last winter?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Local councils have been very effective in preparing for floods, in building flood resilience within communities. We play a vital role as a linchpin for all the various local emergency services and response services. We are the councils, at the end of the day, that look after the most vulnerable and have easy access to those who need the most help the quickest. Local government, time and time again, has shown itself to be ready and standing by to tackle when these events occur. As I can talk from a Gloucestershire point of view, every flood is very, very different. You can never quite predict what is going to happen next.

**Q127 Chair:** This is one that you probably have some ideas on. Do local authorities have the appropriate powers, responsibilities and resources, including skills, for their communities for flooding? There is an open cheque book for you; what would you like?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Local authorities, over the last number of years, have really shown that they are that key linchpin for gathering together all of the various agencies on the ground that can deal not only with the issues about responding to flooding when it happens, but also about building flood resilience within communities and with infrastructure within those communities. We have proven ourselves, time and time again, to be the organisation that really can crack these issues. What we would like to see is a continuation of that responsibility being given to local authorities and more flexibility being given around how that funding is allocated, specifically so that local authorities can make choices about what is needed within local communities as to how that funding should be allocated and what the priorities should be for delivering the investment that provides that flood resilience within communities. There are many examples up and down the country where we have done that in the past. In Gloucestershire, 2007 was a very difficult year for us. In 2012 and 2014 every single time we had a flooding event, everybody in Gloucestershire worked together, pulled together and delivered what was needed. Give us the tools and we will deliver the results.

**Q128 Chair:** Seeing as you are sitting next to Innes of the Association of Drainage Authorities, what is your position, Mark, vis-à-vis working with the Association of Drainage Authorities on making sure we can deliver flood management and sometimes flood-dredging and the like more locally? Are you happy to work with drainage boards and do you feel there is more we can do for local authorities and drainage boards to work more closely together?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Absolutely. It is about horses for courses; excuse the pun. Every single area of the country is very, very different and what it needs is a very different response, a very different plan, and a very different profile and investment to make sure that we protect communities and build that resilience. We do that by working in partnership. It is not something that councils do on their own. It is about building partnerships with all of those within the local communities, both district and counties, fire and rescue, the Environment Agency, water companies, and all of the various different organisations like drainage authorities that have key responsibilities together as well. What councils can do is bring all those people together under one umbrella and get them working together towards a common plan.

By devolving more powers and responsibilities and decision-making on how prioritisation of funding can take place, we can drive some of the innovations that really make a difference locally. For instance, when I look at some of the innovations that have been delivered right across the country, such as land management, it is not just about big, sexy flood barriers. It is about land management, how we manage our countryside and how we manage the flow of rivers that actually ensures that those peak positions that cause flooding for individuals and homes are dealt with through a gradual, natural way. There are plenty of examples up and down the country where through local investment, led by local councils, those sorts of solutions are brought forward. Local government is very well placed and has the experience and expertise to be that linchpin that delivers those local solutions and local resilience.

**Q129 Chair:** How can local partnerships such as the Somerset Rivers Authority lower flood risk and improve community resilience? That is one for you to start off with, Innes.

**Innes Thomson:** Chair, thank you very much for the question. My immediate response here is that we need to actually look quite broadly around the country for the different kinds of partnership. Mark raised the very important point that the geography of our country is actually quite wide and quite varied. We need to actually think about what is most appropriate in what part of the country. One point I would make from ADA's point of view is that our membership includes the national agencies as well as the local delivery partners. What is most important is getting the right people doing the right jobs; Mark used the phrase "horses for courses" here. We very strongly believe that there is a national strategic and co-ordinating role for the likes of the Environment Agency. There are then local delivery roles that bring the local partners together. One of the things we need to be very, very aware of is that that local partnership needs to be built around a democratic balance between all the partners working very closely together and local priorities being set. I would also say that listening to the customer is important. The customer, at the end of the day, is the local population. It is about listening to what they need and what they are looking for, under the umbrella of a national strategy. Very, very strong local delivery partnerships are being created between local authorities, internal drainage boards, and the

local Environment Agency teams as well. There are additional people in there, such as the water companies, some of the NGOs such as the river restoration groups and some of the wildlife trusts, who can form a very important part in there as well.

**Q130 Chair:** Bringing you on to devolution, what are the pros and cons of devolving more Environment Agency flood responsibilities to such partnerships?

**Innes Thomson:** The pros are very much around the people in the local catchment actually knowing their geography and actually knowing, if I can say it very bluntly, which way the water flows. There are some places in which that is a bit of a debate sometimes. These people know inside out how that catchment works. I would hasten to say that someone sitting in a head office somewhere might find it slightly more difficult to understand the minutiae.

**Q131 Chair:** When you are doing maintenance work, do you actually believe you get enough information from the Environment Agency to know what their costs are compared with what your costs might be?

**Innes Thomson:** I am aware that there are new systems slowly coming in to being, such as System Asset Management Plans—SAMPs for short—and an electric system called Creating Asset Management Capacity. I know that is going to improve that situation greatly. My direct answer to your question, Chair, is we probably do not yet have the full transparency of information in terms of labour, plant, materials and costs to be able to equally compare.

**Q132 Chair:** Are you confident that the Environment Agency is going to speed this up?

**Innes Thomson:** They are heading in that direction. There are a number of examples. In particular, there has been some very good work done in various areas around the country where they have been sharing a lot more of that information. I would hasten to say there is still work to do on that to get us in an even place where we can actually compare like-with-like.

**Q133 Ms Ritchie:** To the Local Government Association, Mark, you argue for more funding to be devolved from the Environment Agency to local authorities. How can you assure us as a Committee that this money will be better spent by local councils than by the Environment Agency?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** It is because we are able to come up with those localised initiatives. When you are putting them into a large pot of schemes that are all being nationally assessed against national criteria and various other bits and pieces that are all brought together as part of that national bidding process, you quite often go for the big and the eye-catching type schemes. Referring back to some schemes that have actually made a huge difference, it is £25,000 here and £50,000 of revenue funding there that has really made a difference in land management and in building resilience within communities. It might

help to fund flood wardens and bring in flood warden training. That is the sort of thing that you can deliver at a local level. It is those sorts of things that make a huge difference.

Another thing we need to talk about is flood resilience. That is a really important issue because it is not just about ensuring that we stop properties flooding; it is about ensuring that we keep communities going through what are now becoming increasingly more common events. That is not just about building barriers. It might be looking at road infrastructure; it might be looking at our water supplies; it might be looking at out power substations, and making sure we have got the resilience in place so that when the worst does happen and that 50-year event that seems to happen every two years happens, we are ready and waiting and willing and able to continue through it.

**Q134 Ms Ritchie:** You talk about resilience and about measures to deal with that. Can you describe those types of measures that you, as the Local Government Association, are probably contemplating?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Up and down the country, the flood warden scheme is called various different things but it is a really, really good example around how councils are working with communities, especially those communities that have a high level of risk when it comes to flooding, to help them prepare themselves for when those events occur. There is a little part of where I live in Gloucester called Alney Island, which is put on high flood alert every single year because of its proximity to the River Severn and the fact that the water levels there can get very high indeed. You walk down there and as a community they have already got themselves sand-bagged up; they have already got all their protection measures in place. The BBC and Sky turn up on a regular basis and the community look round as to why the BBC and Sky have turned up to what is something they do year in, year out. It is through that sort of investment in communities, in building things like flood wardens, that you actually build that resilience. It is only through local government that you get that ability to really focus on those micro-schemes that can make a real difference.

**Q135 Ms Ritchie:** To both of you, how effectively does the Environment Agency model direct funding to the places most in need of protection and to the schemes that deliver the best outcomes for communities?

**Innes Thomson:** They go partway to that but their view is quite short. One of the things I would mention is that we need to be thinking in terms of whole-life investments and whole-life costs. What I mean by that is that when a scheme is put forward, not only do we reason in terms of its capital cost, we must think about how those schemes are going to be maintained. We do not put cars on the road and then forget about taking them to the garage or giving them MOTs; we tend to look after them. We need to do the same with our catchment systems. We also need to be thinking more generally about how we merge together this thinking about capital and maintenance investment. There has been some good progress made in the longer-term settlements for both capital and maintenance, which is allowing people to plan ahead. Some of the works that get done require several years of bringing together. We have got to get away from short-termism. We are starting to make advances on that but we need to do a lot more.

**Q136 Ms Ritchie:** What lessons can be learned from local partnerships, such as the Somerset Rivers Authority, about delivering local priorities on flooding?

*Innes Thomson:* I am going to use several examples, if I may, here. Somerset is one of them but there are actually many around the country.

**Q137 Chair:** You need to cover the Somerset one for the fact that it is now being funded by a wider catchment area. You need to talk about that.

*Innes Thomson:* The advantage of exactly what you have said is that the partnership in Somerset has then been able to take a 25-year view of the work programme. What they have done is all come together and set up a very effective long-term programme that will need investment. The other very important thing is getting the public buy-in to the work that needs to be done over the longer term. There is much progress being made in Somerset around that, as there is in fact in other areas that I was going to mention to you.

**Q138 Ms Ritchie:** Mark, what is your response to both those questions?

*Cllr Hawthorne:* Certainly the Somerset situation is not new. Following 2007, Gloucestershire actually had its own flood levy, which actually raised £48 million since it was introduced to invest in flood prevention, and a matched fund with the Environment Agency, to look at ways of delivering things like gully-cleaning which was causing flash-flooding. Every council, when faced with an event such as we were and such as Somerset was, needs to look at the partnership arrangements it has in place and the means it has to invest to create prevention and community resilience. In both Somerset and Gloucestershire's position we took a particular view about raising additional funding. I am a great believer in partnership working. I look around Gloucestershire every single day and see the benefits of nine years' worth of partnership working. That is the best way forward. You do get to a stage where you have done all your flood prevention stuff and it is about community resilience. That is maybe where the current models nationally going to find work for funding.

**Q139 Ms Ritchie:** Would you argue that community resilience depends on agency and governmental working and partnership working but also support and investment?

*Cllr Hawthorne:* Absolutely, but it is about bringing those investment streams together, it is about looking at the long term and not just the short term, and it is about having a plan that meets the needs of local residents and talking to them. It might well be, as I said, the A417 in Gloucestershire, which once a year floods for four days a week and cuts off communities from the rest of the county. It might be a conversation around the ongoing management of some of our historical river banks, something we have been managing for hundreds of years. How do we take it on for the next 50 or 100 years? There is a different conversation to be had at every single stage. It is through those agencies coming together at a local level and having those conversations that you get the right solutions.

**Q140 Chris Davies:** Before I go to Innes, can I ask Councillor Hawthorne something? I am delighted to hear that Gloucestershire is in such good hands and in such good heart, but you talked about further devolution from the Environment Agency where the money comes directly from Government. Yes, I expect you to understand all about Gloucestershire County Council and Gloucestershire City Council and other forms of council within Gloucestershire, but there are many, many local authorities throughout Great Britain. Do you really think they are all as up to speed as Gloucestershire is or on the same level as Gloucestershire is? We would not be devolving just to Gloucestershire; we would be devolving right the way across the country. Is that really a good idea?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The first thing to say is that the LGA is very much advocating a position whereby we devolve where communities and authorities are ready to take that devolution power. That tends to be the approach generally at the moment with regards to Government policy on devolution. If you look at the Lincolnshire devolution bid, there is a huge amount in that bid around devolving some of the key responsibilities of flood risk management and bringing together all the partners. They have got an expertise there and they know they are ready to take on that responsibility. What we are arguing for, certainly from the LGA point of view, is very much the same approach that the Government have used through say the LEPs, which is actually about creating single pots that can then be prioritised to meet local needs. Again, that speaks to every single part of the country being very different with regards to what those local needs are, what those local priorities should be and how those local agencies interact with each other. I am a very firm believer that devolution is the way forward because you get the best results when decision are made locally, and not made in a national context and have a local impact.

**Q141 Chris Davies:** I agree with you to a point but would we see local authorities passing on the problem to somebody else. For example, in my local authority of Powys, which is just within Wales, we have tremendously beautiful hills that gather a great deal of water. We could channel the water very quickly into Herefordshire or Shropshire and then it is Herefordshire and Shropshire's problem in the devolution, not ours. There are going to be a lot of issues. Gloucestershire will have a similar problem.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Much of your water comes our way.

**Chris Davies:** So there has to be a lot of joined-up thinking before devolution takes its form in this instance.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Local government has always been able to make those connections where it needs to make those connections. I cannot think of any local authority that would deliberately neglect its position to the detriment of another local authority, so from that point of view it is again down to local authorities working together to come up with joined-up solutions to the problems that we collectively face. That is not a risk. That is an opportunity to drive even further closer working at a local level. I go back to the point that I was making earlier: if you run a national scheme, it is quite often the national big, sexy type schemes that get funded. When you have local funding and a local single pot, that is when you really drive innovation around things like land management and building

resilience within communities. That is where funding delivered locally makes a real difference.

**Q142 Chris Davies:** Mr Thomson, you argue for internal drainage boards to be able to take on wider roles of flood management. What changes are needed to national and local funding mechanisms to allow this?

**Innes Thomson:** Internal drainage boards currently operate very effectively under the auspices of the Land Drainage Act. That allows them to raise money in a very consistent way and also to plan well ahead so that they actually know they have got money coming in to be able to do the work at a local level. What would be needed for them to actually expand their ability? Whether it is drainage boards or some other form of management system for water within those areas, having that consistency of funding and that certainty of funding over the longer term is vital for people to be able to plan what you do and how you do it. Watercourse management is not something you do on a year-to-year basis. You have actually got to take a much longer view of that. What we are currently seeing, over a much longer term behind us, is a certain amount of neglect of management of our water systems. We need to try to get that back to a point where they are all functioning healthily from top to bottom so there is total catchment management.

**Q143 Chris Davies:** What wider powers do you need to raise money from outside a local district? Clearly, the in analogy I have used, the wonderful rain in Powys lands in Powys and floods Herefordshire and Shropshire. Sometimes some of the areas that you are covering are the casualty areas because of where the rain actually arrives. How would you gather that funding?

**Innes Thomson:** The funding that is currently gathered by internal drainage boards is based on a rating or a valuation system of the value and use of that land, whether it is agricultural, an environmental area or built-up or industrial land. At the moment within the drainage districts, there is a very good understanding of what that valuation is. Outside those drainage districts there is a far less widespread understanding of what those current valuations are. There is a piece of work that is currently being undertaken with Defra at the moment to see whether we can better that. I hasten to add that it is putting that whole process into a best legal footing so that you are not then exposed to challenges from different people saying “That is not fair because...” We need to have a robust system nationally that would allow that funding process to take place with very little chance of legal challenge. We need to understand what the land ratings would be in areas outside the current drainage districts. We were going to expand that policy.

**Q144 Chris Davies:** We have already heard that local authorities would like to see more responsibility coming from the Environment Agency and national Government and so on. As a drainage board, would you like to see more responsibility being put on you? For example, you could deal not with just the before and the after but you could get heavily involved in the planning processes and be a full consultee, etc. How far do you see your responsibilities going in the future?

**Innes Thomson:** I will give you an answer on behalf of the drainage boards, but ADA does represent the local authorities as well as the drainage boards, so what we take is a very balanced approach here from ADA's point of view, to ask who is best doing what within that particular district. I am going to use Lincolnshire as an example, where there has been a very good partnership forged between the Witham internal drainage boards—several of them have joined together to form a wider consortium—and Lincolnshire County Council. Lincolnshire County Council have asked those boards to carry out some of their consenting duties on their behalf. What they have used is something that the Environment Agency and ADA have developed in conjunction with each other. It is called a Public Sector Cooperation Agreement. Very simply put, that allows the basis for public authorities to get together and say, “Do you know what? You are better at doing that. Can you help us to do this?” They can then forge those relationships. There are just under 50 of those agreements now in place around the country, and they are really starting to show the benefits of the different public authorities working together to actually address exactly the sorts of questions that you have raised.

**Q145 Dr Monaghan:** Innes, I would like to pick up something that you alluded to a short while ago. How effectively do both of you think that the Environment Agency maintains its flood assets?

**Chair:** That one is not loaded at all.

**Innes Thomson:** The Environment Agency has struggled because of the rules that it operate under. There is the expertise, there is the knowledge and there is the know-how, but the Environment Agency, under the Treasury rules that are set for it, has to give priority to high flood risk areas. What that has meant is that they have had to focus largely on those stretches of watercourse that have got that high flood risk attached to them. Using the analogy of the M25, if you were to close two lanes of that permanently in various parts you would get the most almighty congestion at those various places. The same applies to a watercourse. It is very difficult not to take a total catchment approach to how you maintain a catchment area. The Environment Agency is very much supporting and advocating that we have to start thinking slightly differently along the drainage boards and along the local authorities. It does not matter whether you are in Wales or in England, and the water goes across the border; it is thinking about that catchment and how it then operates; it is a bit like a tree, right from the leaves right down to the roots; for it to be healthy it must operate as one.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** That is very true. Certainly in my experience, the Environment Agency, where it has responded to areas of high flood risk, has been fantastic. It has even got Twitter accounts so that local residents can follow where the level of the river is. Where it does run into trouble is where it starts to engage with communities in areas that start to go out of that but are part of that wider watercourse area about that river management plan and flood bank management plans, and you do then start to get complaints from communities that they do not feel they are being fully engaged, or that the Environment Agency is making decisions based on its need to drive down costs rather than the needs to maintain the watercourse over a period. You cannot criticise them for everything they do but there are a couple of occasions where maybe they are not playing to their strengths.

**Q146 Dr Monaghan:** Again to both of you, what do you think the Environment Agency needs to do to develop the active long-term strategy for flood defence maintenance that was recommended by the Worsfield review?

**Innes Thomson:** If I may give you a very quick answer, it is work with all the local partners: work with the internal drainage boards, work with the local authorities, and work with the regional flood and coastal committees that have democratic representation on them from local communities to be able to understand what those local priorities are. I am going to use an example here, if I may. It is also thinking about opportunity in terms of maintenance. Again, I am going to go into the Lincolnshire area. Some of the River Witham and what they call the South Forty-Foot Drain are quite heavily silted up. If you were actually to remove some of the silt from those particular watercourses you would attract back into those watercourses a whole level, for example, of fish population. You would therefore create angling as a sport. You would possibly be able to get navigation back in some of the watercourses. You would create a tourism opportunity. It is with some of those examples that the collective local thinking is going to help drive some of the solutions that we take forward.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I totally agree on that. It has to be that collective approach, and when you do get that approach that is when you get the right results from all the partners around the table.

**Q147 Dr Monaghan:** At this point in time do you think the Environment Agency represents value for money?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Now that is a loaded question.

**Innes Thomson:** I am going to use that phrase that I mentioned earlier on. It is about horses for courses. It is about making sure that the right partner is involved in the right scale of work. The Environment Agency has got an absolutely critical role to play nationally giving strategic guidance, in flood incident management and emergency response—they are unparalleled worldwide in the service that they provide—and thirdly, in terms of modelling data and evidence; they are excellent custodians of that information. We need to reflect and realise that. When it comes to delivery there are some very large projects around the country where it requires a national agency to deliver those but, looking more at the local context, Mark used an example earlier on of spending a few tens of thousands of pounds; is the Environment Agency best placed to do that? Maybe not. It might be an internal drainage board, it might be a local authority, or it might be a water company or a rivers trust that are able to deliver that. We have got to get the equation right about who is best doing what. It is not a one-size-fits-all procurement approach.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I absolutely agree. I have seen huge schemes where the Environment Agency have worked in partnership with local authorities and have delivered fantastic results by using the strength of both organisations to get those schemes delivered in place. If you are talking about programmes that are costing £40,000 or £50,000 a year going round to landowners, talking to them and their land management agents about how they manage their land and the water flowing on it, the EA is probably not best placed to have

those conversations. It is probably better delivered locally by local experts who gain that trust and that willingness for land agents to take on those responsibilities. If the EA were to turn up, I imagine immediately people would say, “This is how much this is going to cost me; who do I send the bill to?”

**Q148 Rishi Sunak:** You have essentially just answered my question, but maybe you could elaborate with more specificity about the Environment Agency’s interaction with local bodies. I am hearing a lot about how local knowledge is paramount. What is your assessment of the Environment Agency’s current interaction with local bodies and taking their information into account when it is designing its strategy, specifically for dredging and channel maintenance. We have had the Environment Agency here in the past and they are very open about the fact that this is something they need to do and it is not something they do not do as well as they want to do but they are getting better at it. It would be helpful to hear your perspective on where things ought to improve.

**Chair:** Can I just add to that too? Historically the Environment Agency has not been terribly keen on dredging. It tells me it has been converted on the road to Damascus. I have got to be convinced that it has been converted, so over to you.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** It is horses for courses. Let us be honest: dredging or silt management is a solution in some places and is not a solution in others; it can cause more problems. Certainly from my own experience, quite often members need to understand how water flows and what causes and does not cause flooding. The EA are getting better at communicating that out to members and members then have a bit more understanding of what the options are and what the options are not. Dredging is not a solution. It is simply part of the watercourse management programme that needs to be put in place both locally and nationally. Drainage boards right across the country probably do that on a day-to-day basis and make those choices on a day-to-day basis.

**Innes Thomson:** Where there is a real skill and a real resource that we need to tap much more into, and be given the Environment Agency’s support on, is under the local area flood risk managers. They do have the working knowledge with the local teams and the local partners. They need to be helped. They need to be resourced up to provide that strategic thinking, which I talked about right at the beginning, but then make sure that the delivery partners are working very closely with them to deliver that strategy that is being set, and has got a national consistency, because one of the dangers that we face here is that if we allow each and every catchment or region to shoot off and do its own thing, you will then lose the potential consistency. We need to be very careful and very mindful that we maintain that.

**Q149 Chris Davies:** I have a slight deviation before my question, because I am going to bring in a very important point. Just a couple of weeks ago, gentlemen, we had Sir James Bevan, the Chief Executive of the Environment Agency, sitting there and he did, as the Chairman quite rightly said, categorically state, “Drainage is back with us and it is a very important tool for the Environment Agency.” Our Chairman is not a great believer, as we have heard, but you are actually managing it. Do you see a change in the Environment Agency or have you seen a change in the Environment Agency as yet?

**Innes Thomson:** I am seeing and feeling that change of tack. It is not a sudden change and I do not think it can be. We need to be mindful of this. There is a hearts-and-minds change here about what we are all trying to achieve. We are aware of the sheer scale of damage that can be done when we have a natural disaster. The most recent ones have been flooding. We have not mentioned, for quite some time, the potential for a drought. What the Environment Agency is starting to think about now, with other partners, is how we actually manage water as a resource. We are spending billions in this country on infrastructure, quite rightly so—railways, airports, roads. The foundation stone for a lot of that is keeping people's feet either dry or making sure that they have got enough water when it is needed so that the country is not brought to a halt. The call that the Environment Agency is understanding and discussing with Defra is to think much more collegiately of water as a resource from the very top of the catchment right down to the point it gets to the sea.

**Q150 Chris Davies:** That is very useful. Thank you for that. I could spend hours pursuing that but I will not. What regulation and guidance is therefore needed to ensure dredging upstream, by farmers or anybody else, is not going to cause more flooding downstream?

**Innes Thomson:** That comes back to the concept of understanding your catchment and understanding where the pinch points are and where the other places are that, for example, you might want to slow the water down. I am quite familiar with Yorkshire. I am quite familiar with what flows out into the Humber. It is a whole case of thinking about what you do in the Yorkshire Dales and what you do in the Yorkshire Moors to try to retain water, a bit like a sponge. When you get down to the likes of the city of York, what you have got to do is get the water adequately through that particular city. When you get it down towards the Humber Estuary you might, by that time, have rather a lot of the stuff and want to understand where you can possibly temporarily put it to allow it to then get out to sea. The other thing you need to then think about is this resilience factor. If you put it somewhere how quickly, for example, can you get it off very valuable food production land so that then that food production can continue with little or no damage to it. We need to think about the whole cycle of the water, from the moors right down to the estuary.

**Q151 Ms Ritchie:** Moving on to planning, which is a fairly contentious issue, particularly in flood risk areas, this question is to the LGA and Mark. Would national planning policy benefit from further powers to allow planning authorities to resist application for development in high flood risk areas?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The first thing to say there is if you look at the planning applications that have gone through in the last 12 months and certainly over the last couple of years, we are talking 98% that have been parked through the Environment Agency providing comments, and mitigations have been put in place. Councils are very much aware of their planning obligations and are working with the Environment Agency to make sure that there is sensible development that takes into account future risks. There is always a tendency to fear that planning is building up a pipeline of future properties that might find themselves at risk of flooding but the experience on the ground, when you look at the numbers, is that by working with the Environment Agency, by looking at a sensible approach to what the mitigation should be, local authorities, certainly from the evidence that we have here, are

at the moment doing a good job in creating that planning environment that is delivering the right sort of results.

**Q152 Ms Ritchie:** Research would inform us that many of the cities in the UK are built on floodplains. It is a natural geographical fact. Councils have allowed planning on housing developments and other developments to take place on those. Are you saying that planning policy is going to change in that respect and that councils are going to resist such pressure from developers and others?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Let us be honest: many cities were built where they were because they probably gave easy access to water or, in the case of Gloucester, easy crossings across the river. That is historically how our settlements have been built within this country. What clearly is the evidence from what we have seen at the LGA is that working with the Environment Agency, where those risks are identified and the mitigations are identified that would reduce the risk of those properties being flooded, we are seeing decisions being made that are protecting future properties. You only need to have a look now at the way that some of those mitigations have been taken forward. You get balancing ponds that are turned into wildlife areas. There is a whole management of the environment that is taking place with regards to new housing development. Certainly we can take that away and feed back more detail for the Committee if that would be helpful. As I said, 98% of those applications that were passed were actually passed with the Environment Agency's comments taken on board.

**Q153 Ms Ritchie:** Are you saying that local authorities have the resources and the expertise to discharge their planning powers effectively with respect to flood risk?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** As it stands, yes. There is a lot of awareness out there of what needs to be done.

**Q154 Ms Ritchie:** Should developers bear more of the costs of flood risk, including maintenance by way of developer contributions as an example, and if so, how?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** We can certainly provide more information on that. Forgive me slightly; as an upper-tier authority leader and not a district leader, planning is not something that is part of my day-to-day job. Certainly, as I said, we can take that away and if you want further detailed work on that analysis, we can do that for you.

**Innes Thomson:** May I just mention a really good example of where there has been very extensive industrial development linked with the opportunity that Mark mentioned about making water a bit of a feature? That is up near Milton Keynes and Bedford, within the Bedfordshire internal drainage district, working very closely with Milton Keynes Council and the developers. For those who are familiar, they are large logistic storage sheds with very considerable roof areas, which put a lot of water into the river systems. What they have come up with, including housing that has been developed quite extensively around this area, are very attractively landscaped pond areas that actually add to the value of some of the developments, which are effectively sustainable urban drainage systems. They have been done very much in partnership. I would certainly commend the Committee, if it has

time at some point, to go up to Bedford internal drainage board and they will be more than delighted to show you around with the council.

**Q155 Ms Ritchie:** Partnership, collaboration, and sustainable sounds like the way forward.

*Innes Thomson:* Also, it is, with the developer, understanding that there is a contribution to be made, which then the people who would have to manage those facilities going forward and maintain them, effectively in perpetuity, have got the wherewithal to be able to do that. I will use another very practical example that was given to me recently by Derby City Council. The developer approached them and said, “We want to do this development”, and basically the situation was they would have to put a pumping station in to pump water successfully away from this development into the main river, which was going to cost an enormous amount of money. Derby City Council said, “Actually we have got a pond reasonably close by that you may wish to use. To do that we would request from you, please, some contributions to help maintain it for a longer period of time.” Again, it is a brilliant example of how the council was saving the developer money but asking the developer to make the proper contribution to allow that development.

**Q156 Chair:** For not only the development but the future maintenance of the pumping station or whatever.

*Innes Thomson:* Exactly, so it is a much simpler solution. The very important thing is having the ability to be able to see, in perpetuity, who is going to maintain these systems and what money is available for people to be able to do that effectively.

**Q157 Valerie Vaz:** Following up on that, I noticed that you used the words “working with the Environment Agency”. Obviously it is a statutory consultee and can say, “No, I do not think it is a good idea,” and councils can still go ahead with it. I have to declare an interest. I used to do some planning work for the Government in a previous life, so I have seen decision letters where inspectors have said, “No, do not build on there,” but people have still gone ahead and done that. Do you think that there should be some sort of register whereby developments have gone ahead against the advice of the statutory consultee? In this case it is just the Environment Agency, but I will come on to another question after that.

*Cllr Hawthorne:* That potentially opens a huge Pandora’s box on many, many fronts. I will allow someone who has far more knowledge on planning than me to explore that Pandora’s box with you at some future stage. The experience is that there is a pragmatic approach from the Environment Agency and from the planning authority about how best to deal with any potential risks that might or might not occur from a development and working with a developer to manage those risks. Developers do not want to build houses that flood. That is also a key point to remember here. There is an industry-wide issue about making sure that the industry—

**Q158 Chair:** They also will not get insurance, will they, either?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Absolutely. They are not exactly good sales pitches and word does get around.

**Q159 Valerie Vaz:** Nevertheless they do build on floodplains.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Certainly now, given the issues around getting insurance on properties that are in flood areas, there is a real degree of desire from developers to make sure they are not creating problems that then cause themselves issues in selling properties. It gets back to that pragmatic approach. The issue about listing every single one where the statutory consultee has an issue I fear might lead to all sorts of problems.

**Q160 Valerie Vaz:** Or transparency, because obviously someone needs to take the blame if they go against advice.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I would imagine the advice of the Environment Agency would be usually given to members at the time they made their decisions and therefore would probably be a matter of public record anyway.

**Innes Thomson:** May I add one comment around a word that has been spoken several times, which is “resilience”? We need to first of all make sure that people are kept safe. With anything that is built anywhere, we need to first and foremost think of people’s safety.

Secondly, where Britain needs to lift its game a little bit is thinking about alternative designs and innovation, and about actually being able to build properties but then thinking about what happens if the balloon goes up and we have a tidal surge in particular, or we have a river flooding, and perhaps asking people because the house is built with the garage down at ground level, and all their living accommodation and electrics are at first-floor level, so you can actually get people to move safely up a level as the Dutch quite frequently do, and as the French are doing in certain places and as the Italians are doing. We need to think a bit more innovatively about, if we allow development to take place, making sure the developers do not put plaster on the walls at ground floor and make the buildings non-resilient to flooding.

**Q161 Valerie Vaz:** In terms of resilience and what local authorities can do, for example with building regulations, do you think they are fit for purpose? Do you think we should change certain areas where there is flooding and make that a condition?

**Chair:** It is very much part of a planning authority role. I do not know whether you would like to give us some information on that in writing in particular, because I understand you are representing more the county council, which does not really deal with planning directly, does it?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Some of those are valid points and we will certainly take them away. They are certainly not things that are being flagged up to us as areas of issues or concerns that councils are currently coming across in huge numbers but they are valid points that we should provide answers for and we will do.

**Q162 Valerie Vaz:** Innes, do you want to comment on that? Is that part of what you would normally do?

**Innes Thomson:** It is not particularly, and forgive me for bringing ADA's view into that, but from my past role as a flood risk manager, it was all too often that you actually saw more modern-built houses being put in the frontline of flood risk and those properties are possibly not being built to withstand that kind of an event taking place. We need to be far more resilient in this country. It is not just with houses. The Port of Immingham went out of action when we had the tidal surge, not because the port was flooded. The port could have been operational one or two hours after the flood went down. It was because the railway line failed and was not resilient.

**Q163 Valerie Vaz:** What failed?

**Innes Thomson:** The point motors failed so they could not get the trains in and out of the docks. It is that sort of concept that we need to think about far more in Britain: investing in resilience.

**Chair:** Thank you very much. Like I said, Mark, could we have more information on approved development in flood risk areas and how we are going to deal with it and also those areas that are just outside of direct floodplains, and whether we need to have more resilience there in order to hold the water and not flood the low-lying areas? That would be useful.

**Q164 Angela Smith:** I have a declaration of interest to make. I was late arriving, so apologies for doing it now. I made a visit to Whitehouse Construction Ltd two weeks ago. They are civil engineers who are now specialising in manufacturing flood resilient doors, bricks and flood boards. It was specifically to have a look at that. I also enjoyed their hospitality on two occasions at Sheffield Wednesday Football Club. We won on both occasions.

**Chair:** We are delighted to know that.

**Angela Smith:** I am a season ticket holder there, but obviously enjoyed the hospitality. I just needed to put that on the record.

This question is about sustainable drainage systems. We all know that legislation encourages the instalment of sustainable drainage systems in new and existing buildings. Do you think there are any statutory changes that need to be made to ensure that sustainable drainage systems are actually required by developers rather than at the moment where we are seeing something that feels like a voluntary approach?

**Innes Thomson:** I do not have a lot of information that I am personally aware of around the subject. Suffice to say, there is a strengthening that is really needed to encourage the uptake of systems that manage water more effectively. I am not purposefully using SuDS as a specific word here but we do need to strengthen it. The way that things are currently worded, there are too many loopholes that possible allow developers to say they cannot afford that or that they would not get money back from developments. Surely we can find a way of saying, "If that that is going ahead, you really must deal, in some way or another,

with the water that that development might create and not pass the problem on to somebody else”.

**Q165 Angela Smith:** Would you say that public opinion may be changing on this to the extent that developers may actually be able to make the incorporation of sustainable drainage a feature that makes property more attractive to sell.

**Innes Thomson:** There are some really good examples around the country of where that has been taking place. In particular, Welsh Water has been working in a town, the name of which I cannot remember, to provide on-street small storage channels and the use of roadways to channel water away from places. It is thinking about innovative ways of managing the water within a particular site. As you quite rightly say, rather than it being something that you turn your back on and go, “We will push the water over there and forget about it”, you can use it as a feature. You just have to go to Holland and see some of the little villages there, and the main street has usually got a watercourse beside it that is full of flowers and vegetation and people’s houses beyond it. They are very proud of that. One of the themes I would like to mention in front of the Committee is how we educate our people generally to see water as an opportunity and to treat it as a resource rather than something that we need to push as quickly as possible out to the North Sea or the Atlantic.

**Q166 Angela Smith:** I understand that Hull as well has done something really interesting.

**Innes Thomson:** Yes, Hull is very good example of that.

**Q167 Angela Smith:** It may be worth us having a look at that. Did Councillor Hawthorne want to add anything?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Echoing some of the points that have already been made, at the end of the day, when you have areas that are now regularly seeing flood events, whether they are large flood events or small flood events, then people in that area become very acutely aware of the sorts of questions that they want to be asking when they are buying new homes and councillors want to be asking when new developments are coming forward. You are seeing a change in approach, simply due to awareness being far greater in the general public and among members than it perhaps was before.

**Q168 Angela Smith:** You may not be able to answer this fully but your opinions would be welcome. Do you think that water companies should be given powers to refuse the right to connect new developments to their drainage systems? There is a real issue sometimes in relation to overloading of our drainage systems?

**Innes Thomson:** If I may be reasonably forthright on this, from a network point of view, if you have an uncontrollable development you can very quickly swamp a drainage or a sewerage system by having too much water going into it, which then has a cost implication because you have then got to dig up the road and put a much larger pipe in, if I just say it very simply. There is a place for the water companies to say, “Hold on a minute. If we have that development of 400 houses there, it is going to reduce the

capacity of the system to be able to cope and there is a cost associated with that.” You have to be very, very careful. We can look back historically even within the city that we are in here, and Bazalgette building these huge sewers, which today are having to be replaced with large transfer tunnels. He did have the foresight to build the capacity for future development. We have got to be very careful that we do not overload our systems without people who know about those systems being able to say, “If you do that, that is going to cause a problem.”

**Cllr Hawthorne:** You need to be quite reasonable on this one. Clearly there is an issue around development that causes a problem by adding too much capacity onto a system. It is right and proper, if that is going to happen, that there is the right recompense to make sure that that does not happen. Equally you have got to balance that as to whether the water company is doing enough to actually manage the overall capacity of the system in the first place. I can speak from personal experience, having two water companies sat on my county. I have one that is very, very robustly putting in extra capacity, building in extra capability right across its network, and another one that is relying on not doing that. I am not going to name either of those organisations. It is not a black-and-white issue in that sense, because there are some that are far more responsible in making sure that the capacity within the system is there and some that are not. If those that are not are simply saying no to development on the basis that they are not doing their own investment profile, that is probably not the right way forward.

**Q169 Chair:** You actually think that we should engage more with the water companies on this.

**Innes Thomson:** Absolutely.

**Q170 Dr Monaghan:** Mark, with the LGA agreement, many people have given evidence in this inquiry that the Flood Re scheme should extend to businesses.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The Flood Re scheme should be for all of those affected by the inability to get insurance. I speak from personal experience, as I know lots of individuals and businesses in my own communities that have really struggled with insurance. I have to say that it is fantastic news that there is a new scheme in place. One or two residents unfortunately had to renew their insurance before that new scheme was put in place and now have got a bit of a hefty bill through the post. You are right that that is something that is worth exploring and taking into account.

With regards to the Flood Re scheme, what the LGA would also say is, “We need to look at what the levy is raising to actually fund the scheme.” If there is an underspend in that levy, we need to make sure that that money is actually being put back into flood prevention to actually reduce the number of properties that need to be reliant on the scheme going forward.

**Q171 Dr Monaghan:** Are there any other qualifications that you would like to add to that general view that the Flood Re scheme should extend to businesses?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The Flood Re scheme is there primarily to help those who cannot get insurance because of the flood risk that their property sits in. On that basis it should be there for both residents and for businesses in that sense. There is not any need to qualify it, though I am sure that if there are any qualifications we will follow that up in writing.

**Q172 Chair:** Could I just say to you that Flood Re works by a subsidy basically being paid by other residents that do not flood. Therefore, if you extended Flood Re to businesses, would you support the idea that other businesses outside the flood area would then pay a levy?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** We are getting into the nuances of how the Flood Re scheme works.

**Chair:** No, we are talking about how it is being paid for.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The principle when you actually talk to residents and businesses in an area that have been affected by this scenario—

**Chair:** I have every sympathy for that, but it is just how you pay for it.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** It could be a couple of £10 extra here or there but sometimes they are seeing that their insurance premiums are triple or quadruple what they would be in two streets down the road simply because of where they are and where they sit. The other thing, as well, is making sure that that flood assessment is actually reassessed on a regular basis as well, because there will be those properties that sit there that have been put down as being a flood risk that get penalised through the insurance system, that have not flooded for 10 years. There is a need to make sure that it is regularly reviewed so that those can be taken out of the flood risk areas and it makes the scheme overall more viable.

**Q173 Dr Monaghan:** In that context, do you think the Environment Agency needs to do anything with this mapping?

**Chair:** It is the maps that are used very often; it is the maps that they create that the insurance companies then use.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** One of the issues there is how regularly that is updated but also it is about how residents get to know about the process by which they can appeal their current designation within that overall process. According to many residents that I talked to before this meeting, it is not very clear.

**Innes Thomson:** If I can just add a word of support around the Environment Agency's mapping, there has been a lot of investment put into their mapping. This is one of the points that I made earlier on to the Committee. This is exactly a service that we need to be encouraging and looking to the Environment Agency to make sure that they have absolutely landed that one. They are well on the way to doing it. There is a very good service provided in terms of mapping. Chair, if I may, I understand that the insurance companies actually use their own series of map. They do not always rely on the Environment Agency mapping. That can create the anomalies. When I was flood risk manager, I did have to write the odd letter saying, "Do you know what? Because you live 70 meters up that hillside, but it is only few meters as the crow flies from being at the

river's edge, no, you do not get flooded.” There are anomalies around that that need to be squared. The problem that we have is that the insurance industry itself actually is quite protective of the information that it has got, for commercial reasons. Perhaps we need to find a way of helping develop that whole process. My whole view on Flood Re is actually that it is very new and we are going to have to leave it some time for it to bed in and settle down and see exactly if there are some tweaks that need to be made as we move a little bit further forward on it.

**Q174 Chris Davies:** This is primarily to Councillor Hawthorne. What changes would you like to see to the Flood Re scheme now, to provide incentives to homeowners to install resilient measures before or after they are flooded?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** My experience on this is actually if you are in a flood area or indeed if you have definitely been flooded, the incentive to install measures is pretty high. This goes back again to some of the points that we were raising earlier on about having that local approach and that single pot. I know from my experience that district councils in particular have done a huge amount of work in raising awareness with property owners about the sorts of schemes that they can put in place to protect their homes, and they have provided grants to make that happen. My experience has shown that actually there is an incentive there already and local authorities are leading that incentivisation of communities.

**Q175 Chris Davies:** You have mentioned lots of things that Gloucestershire are doing with a 10-year plan, 25-year plan and probably a 50-year plan for flooding. I am sure that is what you are thinking of because you are a very forward thinking local authority from what I am hearing. What changes are needed by the time the Flood Re scheme expires in 25 years, as a secure flood risk insurance system is then unsustainable for the long term?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I do not have a crystal ball. I would not even attempt to make such a prediction.

**Q176 Chris Davies:** You are a politician, go on.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I do not think that I know many politicians that make 25-year predictions.

**Chair:** 25 days is a long time to talk about.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Absolutely, the points that I made earlier on about Flood Re are well made. The key issue that we hear is that the more we work locally, the more we can help communities build that resilience, whether that is on a small scale or a large scale. My experience has been that people are willing and able to engage in that process. Communities are willing and able to pick up that mantle and that, for me, is the solution to take this entire agenda forward.

**Chair:** The optimistic view is that we have put so many schemes in place and resilience matters that in 25 years' time you will be able to get insurance anyway. That is going to be quite an optimistic idea.

**Q177 Ms Ritchie:** Again, this is to the Local Government Association and Mark. What are the clearest ways used by local authorities to communicate flood risk information to their communities?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** I mentioned earlier on that one of the most popular ways of finding out how things are in our neck of the woods is via Twitter. You can follow the monitoring station on Twitter. It has its own Twitter account and it regularly tells you what level it is at. That is just a really good example of how technology can make communities more engaged.

**Q178 Ms Ritchie:** What if you are not on Twitter?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The best example is flood wardens. Many communities have been used to having snow wardens in the past. It might have been the farmer who would stick a plough onto one of its tractors and clear some of the local roads. Communities have now got flood wardens, and that is the person who knows who to call and where the most vulnerable in the communities are. They have got the instant access to telephone numbers and it is about creating those micro solutions within each individual community. When I go around and visit communities that regularly have to face this threat and say, “What can we do to help you?” they will say, “Actually, we know what we are doing. We have got everything that we need. We know where your numbers are. We know when to call you. We are used to doing this.” That is building community resilience but that does cost money and it is through that investment, which is again getting back to that single pot. Local councils can think about not just the big, sexy capital schemes but the small investments, which might cost tens of thousands a year but may make a real difference.

**Q179 Ms Ritchie:** Are local councils like yours now prioritising flood risk management schemes as a consequence of the various flooding events that have taken place over the last few months and years?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** We prioritise it along with all of the many other priorities that, as local councils, we face on a day-to-day basis.

**Q180 Ms Ritchie:** That is a very political answer, if I may say so.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** The Government ask us on a regular basis to prioritise many different services. In all seriousness, it is a priority. It is something that local government is taking very seriously, and when you look up and down the country at the many different examples of what is happening within communities that have been affected by flooding, there are a huge number of similarities in the approaches that they have taken, by engaging with local communities and delivering that real difference.

**Q181 Ms Ritchie:** Where does it rank now on your priority list compared to where it would have ranked two to three years ago?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** In Gloucestershire it was fairly high up anyway.

**Q182 Ms Ritchie:** How high up? I am sorry for asking this but we have to understand where you are coming from and the types of issues that will be required to resolve it.

**Cllr Hawthorne:** Maybe we in local government do not think in the same way as national Government does. We do not have a league table of priorities. Every service that we deliver is a priority in these periods of continued restrained funding; everything that we do is spent because it is important. When we are spending money on providing community resilience, it is because we believe it is important. We do not have any spare money to spend on things that we do not think are making a real difference to our communities.

**Q183 Ms Ritchie:** You have talked quite a bit in the last hour or so about community resilience and building that up. How do councils promote the uptake of resilience measures by those living and working in areas that are likely to flood in the future as well as those that have flooded in the past?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** It is about building that level of resilience.

**Q184 Ms Ritchie:** How do you build that level of resilience?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** You build it through working with your local communities, your local parishes and local neighbourhood partnerships. They are the sort of things that local councils do day in, day out, whether it is providing street wardens, help on social care, or help on all of the many other services that we deliver and are responsible for day in, day out. We have the access, we have the relationships and we have the ability to make this happen, which really adds to the overall weight. If you give us the powers and responsibilities and if you give us that single-pot approach to investment then we know where best to place it so that it will make the best and biggest difference.

**Q185 Ms Ritchie:** Do you believe and would you assert that, having built that level of community resilience now and with the measures in place to mitigate flood risk, the situation is now much better for local communities?

**Cllr Hawthorne:** We are much better prepared. Why is it much better? We can never predict what is going to happen with the weather and, as I said right at the very beginning of this, I have had about three or four of these flood events in Gloucestershire during my time as leader, and every single one is different. They do not follow a pattern but we are prepared, we know what to do, we know how to react, we know how to engage with the community and that is because we have got that network and this is what we do.

**Innes Thomson:** I will use perhaps an example, and I know that some of you round the table have got quite rural communities that you represent. It can be an entirely different kettle of fish. I will use the example of North Yorkshire where, for example, you have got almost 600 separate rural communities, as against a city such as Hull or Leeds or Sheffield or wherever it may be. Again, there are different ways of dealing with that. One thing that I would add to Mark's comments is that in those more dispersed situations there is even more of a reliance on all of the partners, those being the councils, the drainage board,

the water companies and the Environment Agency. It requires that they all actually work together to provide that service. It can get quite heavily dispersed and actually, dare I say, rather too light-touch when you have got some massive areas to cover with quite small and isolated communities.

**Chair:** Thank you very much, gentlemen. That is some very good evidence, which we will use for our report. Thank you very much for so generously giving your time this afternoon.

### **Examination of Witnesses**

*Witnesses:* **Minette Batters**, Deputy President, National Farmers' Union, **Ross Murray**, President, Country Land and Business Association, and **Kevin Peberdy**, Director, Wetland Experience and Creation, Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Blueprint for Water Coalition, gave evidence.

**Q186 Chair:** Thank you very much for hanging on. We had a little bit of a longer session there than we expected but we heard some good evidence. Starting with you, Minette, please would you introduce yourselves, who you are and what you represent?

**Minette Batters:** Thank you Chairman. I am Minette Batters. I am Deputy President of the National Farmers' Union.

**Kevin Peberdy:** I am Kevin Peberdy. I am Deputy Chief Executive of the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust and I am also representing the Blueprint for Water Coalition.

**Ross Murray:** Chairman, good afternoon. I am Ross Murray. I am President of the Country Land and Business Association. I live in a river floodplain in the Usk Valley and I am an upland forester and a trustee of the Rivers Trust.

**Q187 Chair:** This is a question to all of you. What is your assessment of the role that natural flood management could play in flood risk reduction?

**Kevin Peberdy:** It feels like we are on the cusp of a new approach to flood management. It is exciting to us because it can deal with a lot of issues, not just flooding, which we know causes a huge amount of cost and damage every year, but also it can also help with some other environmental issues that are very relevant. There is the crisis for water, for example, as only one-fifth of our water bodies are in good condition, and a crisis for nature generally in England where 60% of our species are in decline. The idea that there might be something in the future that could help all of those things is quite exciting. There will always be a requirement for the direct engineered solutions to help safeguard certain properties and communities. However, there is a growing realisation that we need something that is more catchment-based, longer-term and more diffuse, and which will not just deal with flooding but with drought. It seems very quickly that we have forgotten some of the issues not so long ago where drought was as much an issue as too much water.

Natural flood management is that answer but we consider it to be across a catchment, so not just leaky dams, which I think you have heard about and not just tree planting but looking at upland areas and making sure that we conserve soil. We need to do some basic work there; we can store water in upland habitats. We can go into lowland areas and store water on the floodplain where it is required but in a managed way. We can also go into our towns and cities. It was very interesting earlier to hear the discussions about cities because the urban environment gets forgotten. It almost seems to be the place where the water comes to from rural areas. As you will know, with the flooding in 2007, for 60% of the houses that flooded, this was because of surface water generated locally because water could not get away quickly enough. That is only going to happen in the future. The great thing, as I said earlier, is that we think that by having a whole range of those interventions at a small scale and large scale through the catchment, we can also have multiple benefits. That is really exciting. These places and habitats can also be good for water quality improvement and wildlife, but again picking up on what we said earlier, they are great places for people. We know that they will create fantastic habitats.

**Chair:** We will pick up on quite a number of these points in a minute, thank you.

**Kevin Peberdy:** Can I just quickly say one thing before we move on, just while it is relevant? Regarding the discussion on SuDS earlier, I do not know whether there is an opportunity later to discuss your question to the previous panel. Will there be that opportunity?

**Chair:** Perhaps we will pick that up towards the end. I am conscious that we want to get through the questions. I do not know whether Minette or Ross would like to come in next.

**Minette Batters:** We would agree that it is one tool in a very large box. What we are lacking, Chairman, is an evidence base here. We very much agree that we have to look at this as a whole-catchment approach and a long-term approach. We see short-term approaches so often. I was in the north not long ago, where obviously 15 or 20 years ago we were paying farmers to put in grips, and lime and drain land. That has all stopped now; we have changed the agenda and moved on. We have got to have a long-term approach that is absolutely underpinned by sound science, which we do not have enough of. We do not have enough ecology or hydrology reports. I agree that it is part of a multi-faceted solution. I do not think that we have enough evidence there yet.

**Q188 Chair:** Before I bring Ross in, another part of my question is: should we bring in larger schemes now? We can replicate the impact of smaller schemes such as the Pickering system of slowing the flows. Do we actually need to take that and enlarge it much more into whole catchment areas? Ross, do you want to come in on that one?

**Ross Murray:** You have got to look at these things from source to mouth. Pickering is a very good example of an individual scheme at mid-point in the catchment. Regarding the question of whether the natural flood management is something to be encouraged, it is. There is an opportunity there. If we wait for the evidence base for too long, we will never get anything done. The orthodoxy of rewetting up in situation up in a moorland situation, upland planting and allowing flooding in the floodplain at times of severe flood is reasonably established. The difficult thing is working out the funding mechanisms for allowing this to happen, because some of these things are very long-term projects and so

much of our funding is short-term. The emphasis should be on giving it a go. Many schemes and players, some private and some state, are trying to find multiple sources of income to actually allow this to happen.

**Q189 Chair:** Minette I will let you back in, but I think that you will find that question 15 may well cover the point you want and I will ask this next question. What role does water storage on natural catchment management play in natural catchment management? What evidence is there that water storage on farmland can go hand in hand with productive agriculture? I suspect you might want to chip in there.

**Minette Batters:** Regarding Pickering, we would like to pick up on that. Pickering has a pretty amazing dam there, which can hold 130,000 cubic meters of water, and when we speak to the Forestry Commission they will say that 90% to 95% of the water is going into that dam, which effectively is acting as a reservoir. It is working but it is working for a multitude of reasons and that dam is absolutely critical to Pickering working. As far as water storage on farmland goes, again I will go back to the long-term approach and the whole-catchment approach. Already, through agri-environment schemes we see a slightly divisive nature on watercourses. Watercourses flow from beginning to end and if they have things that do not work within the whole catchment you create a divisive situation. It is about that long-term approach and working with the landowner. We also have got problems with tenanted land and resource not coming back from the tenants and sitting with the landowner. There are challenges, but I specifically wanted to make that point about Pickering because that is key to why it works.

**Q190 Chair:** It is important to press you on this one, because we will need to look at the management of land and how we store water in the future. Dare I say it: you sound a little negative, if I could be so bold. It is all very well to ask for more and more plans but in the end we have got to have a plan and we have got to move forward. What is the NFU's attitude towards storing water on land in the future?

**Minette Batters:** As long as there is full agreement with the landowner and that obviously financially it fits with the farming system, we are totally supportive of that. The challenges creep in. At the moment we have a lack of recognition of the value of agricultural land.

**Q191 Chair:** Question 16 will get into that. Shall we leave it there and then we will move onto 16? Ross, do you want to make a point?

**Ross Murray:** The CLA says that it is an opportunity not a problem, so as long as it is funded and profit forgone is dealt with and there is adequate confidence in the longevity of the funding scheme the farmers and landowners should take it seriously.

**Q192 Valerie Vaz:** I just wanted to follow up what you were saying. We all want a long-term solution, but who do you see as co-ordinating this long-term solution?

**Minette Batters:** It is a very good point. There are real challenges there and my other worry is when Government devolve responsibility and we work with a smaller Government. It is very clear from the conversations that we were having earlier that we need local solutions but we absolutely need national leadership. I worry about our national glue, especially as we devolve responsibilities out to local authorities. At the moment we know through our membership that we do not have commonality across the country. The rules and regulations that I have to follow on a watercourse will be very different. I farm without any drainage board on my watercourse, and these are very different rules and regulations to farmers farming in, say, East Anglia with a drainage board. There is a lack of commonality. There are big concerns working with Government when it is devolving responsibility without that national strategy. We do need to look at the funding.

**Kevin Peberdy:** I just wanted to pick up on the issue of evidence base very quickly, if I may? It is important. The Pickering example has been in the press. It has been talked about and I think you are going to go and see it or you have already seen it as a Committee. There are many other examples. I am from the Stroud valleys. There is a small project there that has achieved about 170 interventions, so small dams and small storage areas. That has happened in a matter of 16 months and has stopped houses flooding in those valleys that have flooded every year, it seems, for the last four or five years. That is a very low-cost scheme. There are many other examples that I could go into here. There is a lot of empirical evidence from other habitat developments. Most of the bodies that I represent here today manage very large areas of agricultural land on the floodplain for multi-benefit that actually adapted to take flood water, because of the type of grasses that grow there and the habitat that has been created. It is multi-benefit and almost every one of our organisations deal with floods on a regular basis, and those reserves, as we call them, are still tenanted. They have an agricultural regime and we work under an agricultural operation. It is just that those areas are a lot more adapted, they allow water on and off and we have control of it. It has to be part of the equation going forward that we can manage larger areas like that but I absolutely agree with the other members of the panel that we have to incentivise those people managing those areas to do that. Again, a result could be hugely multi-beneficial

**Q193 Valerie Vaz:** Who do you see co-ordinating it?

**Kevin Peberdy:** There is talk in the 25-year plan for the environment to have what is called a catchment director. That is probably it. Certainly if we are going to bring in some sort of multi-benefit analysis to the opportunities that each catchment presents, someone has got to have a co-ordinating view. I totally agree with the other opinions that we have heard today that that needs to filter down to a local level and natural flood management gives us that opportunity, more than any other way of taking flood forward, to actually tap into that local knowledge as well.

**Ross Murray:** It has to be the Environment Agency. I cannot see any other organ of the state that has the capacity to do it. That is their role. They need to adapt their functionality. They need to be far more responsive to other interests in a river catchment basis. They have got the statutory powers; they have got the money. I cannot see anyone

else doing it. It is actually being the organiser, but everybody else has a role to play as well.

**Chair:** Natural England need to involve Defra and others in particular where you are looking at schemes of managing water, and that neatly brings me to question 16.

**Q194 Chris Davies:** Unlike Pickering where there is a dam and various areas where there are reservoirs, I would like to ask you about when we are using your members' land or ground for temporary reserve or floodplains where water will flow on and hopefully off just as quickly. We understand that members have to be incentivised. How would you suggest that we go around valuing that ground for the CAP purposes or incentive purposes? What system would you like to see in place?

*Minette Batters:* It is key that it is done on an individual approach, really, to a certain extent. Obviously crops vary enormously and we know that 58% of grade 1 land is floodplain. We have got a high proportion of very valuable land that is part of the floodplain. It is also the other impacts of flooding and the damage that causes to fences and soil nutrients. It is one thing valuing the land but it also has to be worked out with that land area as to the other damage that is done. I suppose when you look to other countries—Holland was used as an example earlier—they are doing a lot of farming on paths. They are allowing the land to flood. In Holland, it is far more serious. They are raising the steadings where they are living and they are having their farming systems on the steadings so the land can flood, the floodwater can go away again and then they can carry on farming again. It is about building that resilience into agricultural land, which of course does make up 71% of the UK land mass.

**Q195 Chris Davies:** It does and you have pointed out lots of many, many useful points, but you did not answer the question. How would you suggest we go around putting a valuation process in place?

*Minette Batters:* First of all, there has to be a desire to put the valuation process in place and that has not been there so far, so we would be absolutely up for valuing agricultural land, but so far it is something that we have asked for but there has not been the political desire to do it. At the moment we are protecting, as you know, urban areas. We are not prioritising, in any shape or form, agricultural areas, so it is something we would be very keen to do.

**Q196 Chair:** You do not think it is part of the role of the NFU to be perhaps a little more forthcoming and say, "This is the sort of thing we would like to see. This is the sort of payment we would like to have." Many other industries come forward to Government and say, "That is what we want". They do not sit there and wait for Government to come forward with a proposition. I do draw you out on this. We have to be a bit more positive with all this, rather than sitting and saying, "It is all very difficult and we cannot value it". It is up to the NFU to start coming forward, and I am a member of the NFU as you well know. It is up to the NFU to come forward with a little bit more of a positive approach.

**Minette Batters:** Chairman, I take your point and the criticism, but we have a challenge in that we have such diversity across the country. We have a situation, for instance, in the Lyth Valley in the north-west where you have a small percentage of farmers dealing with a massive acreage of land. You have semi-redundant IDBs and you have all the constituencies round the edge saying, “The Lyth Valley is nothing to do with us. Those few farmers can deal with it.” That just is not remotely feasible.

You need to get a national strategy whereby everybody, as in Holland, is investing in the watercourse infrastructure. We do not have that. It is divisive by its very nature. We will have some parts that have fully functional IDBs that are saying, “It is fantastic.” I am sure Ross will back me up on this. We have other parts of the country where they are saying, “This is dreadful. We have nowhere to go. We are dealing with archaic IDB systems that are not fit for life at all.” It is that commonality that we do not have and we are being very proactive on an individual basis.

Our farmers in Lincolnshire, for instance, will say, “The Environment Agency is great. IDBs are great. It is all working really well. Everybody is investing. Fantastic.” That was Owen Paterson’s vision that he wanted the Lincolnshire model rolled out nationally so we had a national approach and we were really supportive of that.

**Q197 Chair:** Okay. It is just whether you could put a value on grassland and put a value on crops and the time you have the water on the land. We have to be a bit more practical and come forward with some ideas.

**Ross Murray:** The traditional valuation approach would be profit forgone and for capital works it would be cost-plus. You would build a certain profit margin into it for the farmers’ infrastructure and equipment and time and all the rest of it. There are valuation approaches that can be used, but the critical thing is that they are multi-annual. You have to look at this over a reasonable period of time, so that farmers who farm often high-value crops, as Minette has said, in floodplains know that they are going to accept breaches in flood defences to absorb water that is not going to hit the town downstream, and they are going to be compensated for it.

**Q198 Chris Davies:** Would you agree that there is no one-size-fits-all here? There would be no particular valuations \*inaudible\*[16:03:41] sadly towards the end. Each area, each farm, would have to be valued on its own merits, whether they choose the valuer, blah, blah, blah. We all know the process. We would have to look at each farm on its own merits.

**Ross Murray:** Valuation is an art, not a science, as you and I know from our professional activity. That probably is the case. In terms of how you co-ordinate these financial schemes within the river catchment, that really is the challenge for the Government through Defra and particularly through the Environment Agency. What the CLA is really asking the Committee to consider is recommending some sort of long-term funding scheme. We need a new scheme approach that draws in money from multiple sources to allow these sorts of things to happen.

**Q199 Chris Davies:** One last question, if I may: I am sorry, as a member of the NFU as well I am struggling slightly with the answer that you have given us because you have to be a lot more definitive and a lot more involved. I understand you cover a broad spectrum of farmers, as we have seen with various things recently, but both organisations will have to come forward and would ask you to be coming forward with some firm plans, because it is easy to blame civil servants and Government afterwards, whereas we are asking you to get involved now at the early stages when we are trying to plan something that will benefit your members and farmers around this country.

**Minette Batters:** Can I come back on that? We are very keen. We are both working with ADA. We are very keen to put solutions, and it is one of my great annoyances that people just put complaints forward and do not put solutions in place. I do come back again to looking at the Environment Agency; they are a Government agency. They will tell you, they tell us and I know they will tell the CLA the same: “We sit within the framework. We are stuck within the triangle. The policy comes from Government. The ministers sit at the top of the triangle—

**Chair:** We want to find out what you would like to see in this policy. We are a Committee that looks at the role of Government, right, so therefore I do not want you complaining about what Government are doing now. I want you to say what you would like Government to do.

**Ross Murray:** We have this new pot of money, which the Chancellor gave to Defra to deal with specifically flood issues. £700 million was handed over earlier this year. That is a great recognition of a problem. That has got to stretch out through to 2020. Let us see some of the £310 million that is uncommitted specifically put into schemes. We will both work with the Environment Agency to work up these schemes. They have to be targeted. They have to be done on a river catchment basis and prioritise. Each river catchment will have different priorities. The principle of allowing land managers and farmers to sacrifice farm land for flooding is not one that we demur from, but it has to be paid for and we have to work out within that budget.

**Q200 Chair:** That is exactly what I agree with, but what we need from the land-owning side, both CLA and NFU, is to have a positive approach and say, “This land is worth X to farm. If we are going to have to manage water for a week—fine. Two weeks—not so good. If we have to have it for a month what can we then farm it with?” Therefore, a much higher value needs to go to the farmer, the landowner and vice versa, where you can take water for a short period of time. We just have to be much more imaginative here; otherwise we are going to be stuck where we have been.

We all accept we need land to be used for water, but we also need it for producing food. I get all that but, like I said, somehow or other we have to be much more proactive and that is why I want to see part of this report dealing with it. That is why, perhaps if you do not necessarily want to give us all the information today, we are really happy to receive some in writing about where you can think Government can change the policy, move forward and get a deal for landowners and farmers.

**Kevin Peberdy:** Generally, not getting into the detail, we definitely need a payment system that recognises all the services that each farm provides. That is across the board and it is like any market: if we can generate a market here for these services then we can be

innovative about it. There are lots of sources of funding for all of those different services. I include in that the water companies, which are already doing a number of schemes to try to improve water quality in upland catchments and are paying for that service because it means that they are spending less money trying to clean the water up when it gets down to their centres. Why do we not consider flooding as part of that whole equation?

The Government's role in this will be to just give those landowners the confidence that it is worth the investment like setting up any new business. We have to look at this very differently.

**Q201 Rebecca Pow:** Apologies for being late but I have been on a soil inquiry, which is quite relevant. Carrying on from the Chairman's point, would this not be the time to come up with your own plan that does take into account all of those things, including water being a tourist attraction, for example? On the Somerset Levels, that could have been a—it was spectacular. That is not to say it was not horrific, but in the winter time when it naturally floods it is spectacular and it is supposed to do that. What are your views on those wider interests? Should you be feeding those into the Government's 25-year plan?

**Kevin Peberdy:** Absolutely, and we would love to see a plan worked up that recognises all the existing services—natural capital, whatever term you want to use. This land can provide many services, including a sustainable agricultural system as long as the farm is incentivised to perhaps change from arable to the more grassland system, for example. There are many benefits to all these schemes that should all be valued and put together.

**Ross Murray:** The time when you will see to this challenging question you have given us, Chairman, is as we respond to the plan. When we get the plan, which we think will be in July-ish, there will be a period of consultation and that is the time when we will come forward and try to cost these services. As you alluded to earlier, if you are looking at long-term damage of crop or pasture—I am thinking particularly of the Somerset Levels—we are going to have to monetise, through a compensatory scheme, what it costs the farmer to put his land back into good farming condition the next year. I know from my experience of Somerset that there were quite significant costs involved.

**Q202 Chair:** What should be taken into consideration when evaluating ecosystem services and land management to provide flood risk reduction? We have talked a lot about that. Is there anything more you want to add on that?

**Minette Batters:** Chair, can I just say that we have various evidence bases—the Lyth Valley and others? We are very, very clear and very, very specific in what we want and how much it would cost. Would it help if I got all of that over to you? The elephant in the room here is the money. The money is the problem. We are very clear on what we want and how it can work. I will make sure I get all of that over to you.

**Chair:** I do not argue with you on that point. What we want is some real evidence of what you would like to see and to get a value on it.

**Minette Batters:** We will get that to you.

**Chair:** This is all part of our inquiry, really, to look at that. Thank you very much for that.

**Chris Davies:** I fully agree with what Ross said, and it would be nice to have a note coming in with a slight expansion, if we may, Ross, of your professional background. You have exactly the right idea and it is going to be loss-gain, so it would be very useful information.

**Chair:** Even if those figures are frightening let us have them. That is the key. We will know what we are talking about then and we can negotiate as well as anybody else.

**Q203 Rebecca Pow:** Apologies again for being late. It very much touches on this. Many witnesses that we have had have suggested that compensation for these schemes and flooding of land or incentives might come through the CAP payment scheme. Do you think that the scheme's pillar 2—the countryside stewardship scheme—is a valid way of trying to achieve some of these things?

**Minette Batters:** The short answer is no, for various reasons. Pillar 2 is a competitive scheme, so it is about income forgone. They are not long-term. You are looking at five to 10 years. That is not long-term enough. We need something that is looking at the long term on this one. You are dealing already with a much smaller budget, so no, we do not see that pillar 2 funds are in any way suitable here.

**Kevin Peberdy:** We would agree. 70% is already committed; it is short-term. Multi-farm coordination is a problem, which is against a catchment approach and natural flood management. I would also say there are some issues with pillar 1 as well, because I am not sure that everything in pillar 1 is helping towards natural flood management, particularly over issues with soil conservation in the uplands. There is a need for strengthening cross-compliances and more robust standards there.

**Q204 Rebecca Pow:** In terms of what?

**Kevin Peberdy:** In terms of stopping erosion happening before it happens and then reacting to it. There is an awful lot that still needs to be done to prevent that happening. I visit a lot of places where that continues to be a problem, even though they are part in receiving basic payments. There are also PIFs—permanent ineligible features—as part of pillar 1, which include things like hedgerows, woodland planting and ponds, which farmers do not get any payments for—they are ineligible—and yet these are important features for flood management. There are issues with pillar 1 too.

**Ross Murray:** I am in agreement with both previous speakers. It is too short-term but it does play a small role in a whole mosaic of measures.

**Q205 Rebecca Pow:** Turning it around, what would you like to see? Does this have to be something that has to come back to our Government for a fund and a big plan?

**Ross Murray:** Yes. 25-year plan, 25-year funding stream through the British Exchequer.

**Q206 Chair:** One of the challenges with this is to use part of the stewardship scheme and the single farm payment as part of the payments to farmers and then top it up. We have to be

careful about whether we are going to be allowed to do that under certain rules. This is the challenge because some parts of the compensation to farmers and landowners can come through CAP payments and can come through the stewardship scheme, but we will need to top those up, especially if we are going to have to keep water there for a long period. This is the challenge to Government.

**Ross Murray:** The evidence of failure is in the tree-planting statistics. There were 10,000 hectares in Britain planted last year. It is just not enough. It is so small. There is no adequate incentive on the upland landowner to plant trees, and we all know that that is part of the solution.

**Q207 Chair:** Again, it is planting the trees in the right places, not just planting the trees because, again, that is simplistic.

**Ross Murray:** It is the most overregulated land use though, Chairman. It really is overregulated.

**Chair:** I understand that.

**Q208 Angela Smith:** Just briefly, Chair, because I do not want to prolong things too much. Apologies for constantly moving; I have the media onto me all the time about Hillsborough. You will understand that. I just wanted to ask whether there is a danger, if we use CAP money to supplement the funding for flood management, of overlooking the requirement to improve our biodiversity status and the role that agriculture particularly has to play in improving biodiversity in our landscape.

**Kevin Peberdy:** That is why it is not really suitable, because it needs to maintain exactly where we are now in terms of biodiversity, but it does lead to the question of maximising modulation in 2017 when the next opportunity comes, because most of the prescriptions, most of the activities for natural flood management on a wider scale, sit in pillar 2. If it is to become a source, which I agree it perhaps should not, we need more money in it.

**Chair:** We will probably get unanimity across the panel on that one. I am not going to start the argument about modulation. I have had too many arguments on that over the years.

**Q209 Ms Ritchie:** This is a question to all of you. What assessment have you made as to the level of the Environment Agency funding that should be directed to support natural catchment methods?

**Minette Batters:** We have always wanted more flexibility with the maintenance and capital budget. Again, I go back to the lack of glue at the top for what “good” looks like. On my patch of watercourse, it is probably one of the most divisive watercourses in the country because the EA has walked away from it. We have horrendous problems on a water meadow that was put in by the Dutch in the 17th century. There is real animosity on that river where they do not feel they have been allowed to engage with the river basin management plan.

I take your points, Chairman, about a partnership approach, and in theory that could work, but partnership has to mean both sides having an equal say. At the moment for many

farmers—not in all areas; some areas are working very well—certainly in my patch there is not even the conversation going on, so agriculture feels excluded from the river basin management plan. That is not the way to build a different sort of relationship. You already have an antagonistic approach there in places. In other places it is working really well. What would be good is to roll out the good practice where we do see it working very well. In some areas it is very divisive. In these challenging times, that does not help.

**Kevin Peberdy:** The existing partnership formula that the EA apply, and other flood authorities, is not suitable for funding natural flood management as we go forward. Again, there is a short-term nature, narrow focus, and a cost-benefit analysis that is based around properties rather than a more diffuse and long-term solution. It is a single issue. It does not account for any of those multiple benefits that we were discussing earlier. The funding model needs to change completely in terms of how we assess going forward.

In terms of what the Environment Agency's role is going forward with those funding issues, as I said, they are probably part of a series of players and there is potentially funding from many other sources as well as the Environment Agency for those multiple benefits. What we need is a body that can distribute that across a catchment.

**Ross Murray:** The straight answer is no assessment as yet. The reason for that is we really need to see those river catchment plans: the individual plans, what the opportunity is, what the bill is going to be and whether there are non-Government sources of funding—private funding, water company funding, charitable funding—that could come in to supplement what the Environment Agency pot is to divide up. Not as yet.

**Q210 Chair:** Are we approaching water companies enough at the moment?

**Ross Murray:** There are examples of water companies being engaged. I know on Exmoor there is a scheme where South West Water are funding land management up on Exmoor to slow the flow. This is happening and many water companies are also significant landowners in their own right who will be actively engaged in this whole sphere as well.

**Chair:** We have moved to a division. I am not going to ask you all back for one question. There is a question on grouse moors. I suspect that you can probably give us that in writing, please. It was Angela's great moment of glory; you have missed that one; I apologise for that, but we cannot drag you all back for the one question. We can have that in writing, please. Thank you very much. I apologise for being slightly over-robust, but I do want to see something positive come out of all of this and I am sure if we all work together we can manage to do it. Thank you very much.