

Written evidence submitted by Mr Paul Barnes and Mr Keith Harryman (FLO0082)

I am a member of the North West Regional Flood and Coastal Committee. I am on the CSFP and run our farmer flood group.

Question 1. There is an acceptance that flooding is not preventable. Some floods are. We do not have a joined up strategy involving weather forecasting, groundwater conveyance rates and capacity in the system. We focus on location not whole catchment which often includes more than one authority. River basin approach was for different EU countries, not to add another governance hurdle. There is a hierarchy of pettiness which abounds during a crisis or the aftermath such as not allowing rescue boats across Ullswater with drinking water because they are used in salt water. Or by sending thousands of tons of "contaminated" rock across the country to bury. Flood mitigation needs devolving to the lead flood authority without the regulator. Environmental issues must not be prioritised in emergency situations. Our councils are elected. The EA aren't. Passing responsibility of flood mitigation to river trusts, universities and flood groups gets us no where. Don't react, get ahead of the game. EA should not hold the portfolio on flooding. The sharp suits get between the MPs and the way ahead.

Question 2. The response to flooding is to allow the insurers to pick up the bill which allows the EA to sidestep flood events as soon as water subsides. Preventing water entering the property should be a last resort. Public engagement which the NFF practice allows EA to take the heat off themselves instead of the community being allowed to speak truth to power. The ability to respond to events has been degraded by the neglect of river system since 1990's. The WFD places habitat above people but does not deal with flooding. The "choked" rivers, used as slow the flow means flood water can be on the flood plain. In 2002, EU Best Prevention on Flooding states reversing the management on our rivers as a key priority. That is correct. You can not go from 5th gear into reverse!, select neutral and manage the retreat. Apart from several very expensive engineered defences which all fail eventually Howard Boyd says we can't build higher walls but that's what we always resort to.

Question 3. Climate change means we have to build with exceedence. Priority has to be on the bigger urban areas and those at higher risk. That does not mean we neglect easy win solutions that can protect smaller communities. Some solutions are to blame time and again for increasing flood risk because nothing gets done other than more expensive modelling and feasibility studies which use scarce funds. With regard to level of investment. We overlook simple solutions. In Cumbria 10,000 tons of huge boulders from UU pipeline have been crushed rather than be used to prevent rapid erosion of coast not 20 miles away. Similar boulders bought from Scotland are used on sea defences. The EA technical advisory committee say they are not solid enough. They aren't granite but they were free, local and better than nothing. Inexcusable.

Question 4. To give communities the chance to determine their futures need to educate them on the truths, including budgets, causes of floods reasons for inaction and who is blocking progress. Then, get the river trusts, and their supporters out of the way (they are milking the EA) as their agendas and expertise is not aligned and explore what the community demands. Get the National

Flood Forum out of the way and stop the procession of wannabes using others misfortune to meet MPs who can effect change.

Question 5. ELMs offers a good opportunity to change the picture. However promises of co-creation have not happened .Expertise within the rural community is ignored. The whole show is in danger of splitting into rewilding /abandonment or being refused.NFM has been pushed not for its original title but as an opportunity for habitat change. That is not always enhancement.The CAP and production targets removed many NFM features. I farm on a floodplain whose SAC/SSSi sites are threatened and degrade by their use as enhanced NFM sites.All NFM is of limited value if it does not have the opportunity to naturally ar preferably manually to draw down,recharge,reinststate its capacity. Our water bodies in Cumbria have been shown to offer water retention capability at 1p per cubic metre compared to £80 per cu metre from river trust schemes and for millions of cubic metres not a few. The same scheme was dismissed as a no goer because they looked at increasing capacity rather than using the natural capacity outlet.

We need a whole catchment approach as highlighted in EFRA report 2016/17 still not done. We need a recognition that safe conveyance rates away from flood areas hold the key and their maintenance should be mandatory. Well farmed land manages water.Soil moisture deficit denotes porosity in the soil, Dry land can absorb water,saturated land cant. Water level management give a 8:1 benefit according to ADA. NFM has had to demonstrate 1:1 benefit.

Water needs treating as an asset. Hydro,heat exchange,water supply .Flooding needs treating as a symptom of climate change . Climate change mitigation has crossovers but should not be an excuse for long term approach while we keep flooding.

Question 6. Listen to common sense. I do not expect my opinions with regard to planning,development to have any weight.

Paul Barnes.