

Anthony Thompson – Written evidence (RSK0076)

Summary

I submit my response in a personal capacity as someone who is currently involved in civil emergency management, and who has personal experience in related matters extending over some 50 years in the military, police, government, private and voluntary sectors, in the UK and overseas.

The Committee's investigation comes at key moment in terms of the UK's capability to prepare for, respond to, and recovery from civil emergencies. There is an abundance of statutory and non-statutory guidance available, underpinned by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and associated regulations, and a wealth of lessons identified and recommendations from diverse public inquiries following disasters in the UK. The Manchester Arena Inquiry and the Grenfell Tower Inquiry are currently sitting and will inevitably produce further lessons and recommendations. There is a call for a formal investigation into how the UK prepared for, and is responding to, the current coronavirus pandemic, and the World Health Organization is reviewing the global preparedness and response. There is an abundance of information already in the public domain, with much more to come.

The challenge is how to use all that hard-won knowledge and use it effectively to reduce the likelihood and impact of future events and disasters. In my experience we are not very slick at doing that. We have the knowledge and experience and know what needs to be done, but we fall short on preparedness and response. We do not invest sufficiently in training, collaborating, coordinating, and exercising. We were in a better place a few years ago. There is so much guidance and information available to emergency planners and emergency responders across all sectors it is virtually impossible to remain current. Training will never replicate the fast-moving and often changing characteristics of a real emergency, but it certainly helps. We do not do enough of it and response is a product of preparation.

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP, when Home Secretary, stated in the House of Commons on 27th April 2016, following the findings of the fresh inquests into those who died in the Hillsborough stadium disaster on 15th April 1989: '...I am also clear that this raises significant issues for the way that the state and its agencies deal with disasters. Once the formal investigations are concluded, we should step back, reflect and act if necessary, so that we can better respond to disasters and ensure that the suffering of families is taken into account.' To my knowledge, and nearly five years on from the then Home Secretary's statement, nothing has happened. I urge the Committee to use their current investigation to initiate a full review of how we prepare for, respond to, and recover from civil emergencies.

Introduction

1. I submit this as an individual and have a personal and professional interest in the subject and thank the Committee for addressing this important topic.

Relevant background and experience

2. I have been involved in risk assessment, risk planning and emergency management for most of my working life, in various operational and command roles in the police, Civil Service and British Red Cross. I currently work in the private sector providing consultancy and training in safety, security, and crisis management in the UK and overseas. I am a Fellow of the Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management and a former Chair of the Emergency Planning Society, a professional body for emergency management and resilience professionals. I hold a master's degree in civil emergency management and a degree in English law.
3. I served in the British Transport Police (1970-2002) and was involved in the preparation and response to a wide range of risk-based incidents including multiple-fatality train crashes, and terrorist attacks against the rail and underground networks in Great Britain. During the 1970's I was a trained operational 'bomb risk assessor' for improvised explosive devices. The application of risk techniques, including dynamic risk assessment, were vital for safeguarding large numbers of the public in often fast-moving scenarios in London, whilst reducing the closures of stations and related station evacuations to a minimum. Risk assessment worked.
4. During the 1990s I was one of the founding members of the national Police Major Disaster Advisory Team (MDAT) which was created by the police service in England and Wales to advise police forces who experienced 'no-notice' major emergencies. MDAT members were drawn from police officers who had practical experience gained their roles in real disasters such as transport accidents, major fires, and other mass casualty incidents. MDAT was a collective of police subject matter experts in topics that included disaster victim identification, scene management and investigation. There is a case to be made to re-instate this concept across all emergency services – a 'disaster response' advisory team.
5. I was one of the first people to be appointed to lead one of the Regional Resilience Teams for the English regions under arrangements for civil protection established by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. As a Deputy Director (2003-2005) for the then Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and based in the Government Office at Bristol, I had responsibility for initiating the first regional risk assessment for South West England involving contributions from key practitioners from across the region. We took relevant elements from a national overview of risks and applied them in a regional and more local context. The

process worked well. Unfortunately, subsequent policy decisions led to the regional government office structures being scrapped.

6. I moved from my regional resilience role with the Civil Service to Head of UK Emergency Response & Resilience for the British Red Cross (2005-2008) and became involved in many significant incidents of scale in the UK and abroad. Preparation for deployments to extreme events requires effective assessment of risks, adequate training, and the ability to adapt quickly to often fast-moving emergencies. Planning and preparation are vital, but experienced and competent practitioners are needed to deliver an effective response. This is true whether the emergency requires a local response with local responders, or a regional or sub-regional wide-area emergency such as flooding, where national or regional oversight and coordination is needed.
7. My reason for providing a response to the call for evidence is that, in my submission, the arrangements we currently have in place in the UK for preparing for, responding to, and recovering from, major emergencies is inadequate for large-scale, wide-area and cross-border emergencies. This should be not taken as a criticism of individuals who are, and have been, involved in the preparation of the multitude of policies and procedures that currently apply in the UK. Arguably, we have more policies, strategies, statutory and non-statutory guidance available to decision-makers and practitioners than any other country and therein lies a fundamental problem. There is too much, and too little training.
8. Reports, reviews, and public inquiries following major emergencies have identified many lessons to be learned, generating multiple recommendations, many of which are acknowledged by the government of the day and 'accepted in full' only to lie on a shelf or in a hard drive. The comment 'we must make sure that this never happens again' is a familiar and predictable response by political leaders following multiple fatality disasters yet, even when sincerely spoken, rarely lead to change in emergency preparedness or response. The reasons for this are often associated with funding and are worthy of exploring, but they are outside the scope of the current inquiry. That said, these are issues that should be considered by the Risk and Risk Planning Committee because risk assessment outcomes lead to risk planning then emergency preparedness, emergency response, and ultimately recovery. These are all key elements of emergency management and underpin civil protection in the UK.
9. When the Committee determines the best way forward for assessing risk and embedding it as a building block of 'UK resilience', there must be a practical outcome, suitably funded, to ensure everyone who has a role is adequately trained, and tested through exercising, to ensure competence. Response to any emergency is a product of preparedness, and risk assessment and risk planning are the foundation stones of preparedness.

10. I draw the Committee's attention to the statement made by the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, Mrs Theresa May, on 27th April 2016, in the House of Commons, on the determinations and findings of the fresh inquests into the deaths of those who died in the Hillsborough stadium disaster on 15th April 1989. She said, 'I am also clear that this raises significant issues for the way that the state and its agencies deal with disasters, Once the formal investigations are concluded, we should step back, reflect and act if necessary, so that we can better respond to disasters and ensure that the suffering of families is taken into account.' (Hansard, Volume 608, column 1437).
11. To date, it appears that no action has been taken in the context of how the state and its agencies deal with disasters since 27th April 2016, and I understand that all formal investigations are now concluded. Sadly, there have been two further mass fatality incidents, namely the Manchester Arena Attack on 22nd May 2017 and the Grenfell Tower Fire on 14th June 2017. These two incidents are subject to ongoing public inquiries and it would be inappropriate for to comment further other than to note that they are investigating aspects of emergency planning, preparation, and response in the context of those specific incidents. Their terms of reference do not appear to allow for the consideration of the effectiveness of risk assessment and risk planning in a wider UK context.

Question 1

12. What are the most significant extreme risks that the UK faces? Are these kinds of risks discrete, linked or systemic? What do you understand the term 'extreme risk' to mean?

Response to Question 1

13. The most significant extreme risks are ones that cause a major loss of life or sustained widespread disruption over a wide area, or both. The current COVID-19 pandemic is one, but there are others. For example, excluding invasion or war, these risks include:
- Widespread electricity failures and associated blackouts affecting and overwhelming back-up emergency generators.
 - Hostile cyber-attacks on critical national infrastructure (including aviation operations, reducing/cutting off water supplies and other essential services).
 - Pandemics of a scale equal to, or exceeding, COVID-19 and its variants.
 - Major and sustained disruption to imported food supplies and essential medicines manufactured and imported from abroad – this may be related to post-Brexit trade disruption and Channel ports.
 - Major flooding affecting London caused by a failure of the Thames Flood Barrier and climate change weather-related emergencies.

- Catastrophic failure at a major industrial high-hazard industrial complex or nuclear processing facility, with release of materials and substances.
 - Terrorist attacks on schools, hospitals, and places of worship.
 - A combination of two or more of the above risks being realised simultaneously in multiple locations, causing public disorder and widespread disruption.
14. In the UK, we tend to plan and, to a limited extent, train for individual emergencies, often site-specific, rather than 'extreme risk' scenarios where mutual aid opportunities are restricted or non-existent. We need to consider, and perhaps revisit, the comprehensive civil defence arrangements put in place at the end of World War II.
15. The use of the term 'extreme risk' does not currently fit within the language used in emergency management and civil protection arrangements in the UK. I interpret the term to mean a great risk, a risk that is at the top of any measurement scale.
16. The following risk terms are defined in the UK Civil Protection Lexicon maintained by the Cabinet Office, and are in popular use in the risk management industry:
- Risk
 - Risk appetite
 - Risk assessment
 - Risk control
 - Risk management
 - Risk priority
 - Risk rating matrix
17. As the Committee will be aware, the Government published its updated National Risk Assessment on 18th December 2020. The 140-page document sets out a wide range of natural and man-made disasters and security risks that may directly affect the UK over the next two years, and how these emergencies will be managed by central government and local responders (in accordance with their statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, supporting regulations and guidance). The previous National Risk Register was published in 2017.
18. It is interesting to note that on page 48 of the 2020 Register (Chapter 4: Human and animal health, Risk Summaries) it states: '... the UK government is continually learning the lessons from previous infectious disease outbreaks, including COVID-19, to inform preparation for future infectious disease outbreaks and pandemics.' It would be helpful to discover and discuss COVID-19 lessons now, whilst we are still dealing with it. The Prime Minister's comments

that there will be an opportunity 'in time' to learn lessons once the country has beaten the pandemic is understandable, but there is no reason why a 'rolling inquiry' could not have been set up. Much has been said about the rolling assessment leading to early approvals of the vaccines now being deployed. This is being rightly applauded as innovative and ground-breaking. If we could do this for vaccine development, then we could have taken a similar rapid response approach to identifying lessons.

19. It should be noted that a significant fire in a residential tower block did not appear in the 2017 National Risk Register, nor in the one prior to the fire in Grenfell Tower.

Question 2

20. Are there types of risks to which the UK is particularly vulnerable or for which it is poorly prepared? What are the reasons for this?

Response to Question 2

21. The majority of emergencies that occur in the UK are largely within the capability of local emergency responders (as set out in the Civil Contingencies Act 2004), with some requiring central government oversight and support. Cross-border, wide area emergencies such as pandemics, animal diseases and extensive energy outages are challenging to manage at the local level and require cross-border coordination. We are fortunate that these happen very infrequently, but when they do the local capability to respond is largely untested. The current COVID-19 pandemic is an obvious example, but there are many others as quoted in my response to question 1.
22. Preparation and training are key to capability, preparedness and thus an effective response. There is little or no evidence of training at local level in how to respond to emergencies of magnitude and scale. The lack of resources is the main reason for this. This situation is not new. There is also no check on local capability or emergency preparedness other than a self-assessment. Compliance checks and inspections of local emergency capability and preparedness do not take place. This situation should be reviewed, and improvements put in place, although this is not an easy task.

Question 3

23. How could the Government's approach to risk assessment be strengthened to ensure that it is rigorous, wide-ranging and consistent? Your answer could refer to any aspect of the risk assessment process including, for example, its governance, the evidence base, or the degree to which it is open to scrutiny and the input of experts?

Response to Question 3

24. There needs to be transparency in the risk assessment methodology and the processes. An independent panel of subject matter experts should be brought together from across the four nations of the UK to produce the relevant risk assessments and consolidated National Risk Register. These independent members could be assembled and operate in a similar manner to the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and create a Risk Assessment Group for Emergencies (RAGE), or perhaps Civil Emergencies Risk Assessment Advisory Group (CERAAG). A starting point could involve a global review of similar arrangements, where they exist, in other states to identify good practice.
25. The name is not important at this stage. Key features could include:
 - Independence from central government departments
 - Transparency in the selection process of skilled individuals
 - An operating model similar to the existing SAGE
 - Individuals drawn from across the public, private and voluntary sector
 - Assessments to be made public – subject to national security limitations
 - An independent peer review mechanism to ensure quality
 - A requirement to review and revise assessments after a real emergency.
 - Submission of an annual report to Parliament describing the effectiveness or otherwise of the risk assessment arrangements and their practical application

Question 4

26. Given the range of possible national risks, and the need to achieve a balance between efficiency and resilience, what level of assurance should the Government be seeking on the UK's resilience to hazards? What would effective national risk management achieve, and how could its success be measured? ("Risk management", while more usually a financial term, is used here to express the identification, forecasting, and evaluation of risks together with the identification of procedures to avoid or minimise impacts.).

Response to Question 4

27. An important starting point is to identify what the UK's resilience to hazards should look like and, importantly, the level of investment the government is prepared to support to achieve this. This could include the development of a set of community resilience standards against which the UK can be measured and assessed for compliance. This requires detailed debate.
28. Perhaps a useful starting point is to investigate whether previous national risk assessments and the National Risk Register have actually brought any demonstrable benefits to the UK. What purpose have they served? Did they help

prevent, or mitigate, the UK's three most recent major emergencies, namely the Manchester Arena Attack, the Grenfell Tower Fire, and the coronavirus pandemic, and if so, to what extent?

29. Measuring 'success' in national risk management terms should be transparent and simple, including addressing the following questions:
- a. Where significant, major, or extreme risks had been identified through a prior national risk assessment, had any of them subsequently happened? And if so, how effective were the plans, preparedness, and response at local and central government levels in mitigating the identified risks?
 - b. What processes are in place to ensure that relevant recommendations, including those from inquiries, inquests, investigations, experts, professional and trade bodies, are taken into account when preparing national, and local, risk assessments and emergency preparedness and response plans?
 - c. What policies, plans and procedures are in place at local and central government levels for dealing with each of the risks identified at national level in the risk assessment, and how is compliance and good practice identified, shared, and recognised?
30. There should be some form of central emergency management agency established, perhaps sitting under the direct supervision of the Home Office and Home Secretary, to set standards and measure compliance across the UK. The details of what it should be named and how it could function would benefit from wide public consultation.

Question 5

31. How can the Government ensure that it identifies and considers as wide a range of risks as possible? What risks does the inclusion criteria for the National Security Risk Assessment exclude and what effect does this have on long-term resilience?

Response to Question 5

32. Drawing together an independent panel of subject matter experts from across the four nations of the UK in a similar arrangement to SAGE would provide the level of knowledge, skills, and experience needed by Government to carry out this function
33. The National Security Risk Assessment is a classified document and for obvious reasons is not publicly available. The publicly available factsheet headlines indicate that the assessment extends to all major or 'extreme' risks to national security and the strategic countermeasures that are in place.

34. A central emergency management agency as outlined in paragraph 30 could take on the responsibility for co-ordinating information gathering and 'horizon-scanning' current, emerging, and future risks and threats.

Question 6

35. How effectively do current ways of characterising risks (for example, the use of a five-point scoring system of a 'reasonable worst-case scenario') support evidence-based policy decisions? What other information would be useful?

Response to Question 6

36. There are many ways of characterising risks and conducting security and vulnerability assessments. 'Reasonable worst-case scenarios' are often no more than crude estimates of what might happen if certain conditions or circumstances occur, or occur in a certain sequence at a certain time at a certain place. That said, they are useful scenario planning tools and are helpful during exercising and training.
37. Risk assessment as a tool is really a simple process and is well documented. There are many methodologies available for consideration and numerous scoring systems that can be applied. The better methodologies will enable the most significant risks to be easily identified and existing control (or countermeasures) to be evaluated. This in turn will allow risks to be prioritised for action. The challenge is gathering suitable and sufficient evidence and verifiable data to drive policy decisions.
38. The promised review of the Government's preparedness and response to the coronavirus pandemic will reveal the risk assessment and management approaches used. These investigations will hopefully demonstrate what worked well, what did not, and the elements that can be used to better inform the National Risk Assessment arrangements.

Question 7

39. How effectively do Departments mitigate risks? Does the Risk Assessment process and the Civil Contingencies Secretariat adequately support Government departments to address risks within their remits? Is further oversight or accountability required, and if so, what form should that take?

Response to Question 7

40. I am not aware of the specific arrangements of individual Departments and am therefore unable to comment on their effectiveness. However, it is suggested that external oversight is both necessary and essential. This takes the discussion back to what I said earlier in relation to an overhaul of the current arrangements for civil protection, emergency preparedness, response and recovery, as

intimated by Mrs Theresa May when she made her statement to Parliament on 27th April 2016 following the fresh inquests of the Hillsborough stadium disaster.

41. Civil protection and the functioning of the arrangements of Civil Contingencies Act 2004 is in need of review. This should include why it was not used during the coronavirus pandemic and the concerns raised by Mrs May as to how the state and its agencies prepare and respond to disasters. The current public inquiries (Manchester and Grenfell) will inevitably touch on related issues.
42. Failing to properly appreciate a risk makes a failure to mitigate that risk almost inevitable.

Question 8

43. How well are national contingency plans communicated to and understood by those at a local level, including emergency responders? What could be changed to increase the capability of local responders to effectively plan for and respond to emergencies?

Response to Question 8

44. The capability and competence of local responders is not specifically assessed, tested, or reviewed for compliance with their statutory duties under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and its associated regulations and guidance. Central government's approach is very much 'light touch'.
45. There is a real need to get a proper 'grip' and understanding of emergency preparedness at the local level. The proposal to create a central emergency management agency, with a governance board of subject matter experts, reporting to Parliament, would go some way to achieving this. The agency could, and should, have powers and/or responsibility to oversee and co-ordinate emergency preparedness across government departments and at local level.

Question 9

46. What is the role of the individual in relation to national crises? Are there potential benefits in increasing public involvement and transparency in emergency planning? What limitations are there to this? What lessons have been learnt or should have been learnt about the approach taken to risk assessment and risk planning in this country from the COVID-19 pandemic?

Response to question 9

47. The risk of a new infectious disease emerging and developing into a pandemic in the UK is well documented. The first National Risk Register published in 2008 was tasked with quantifying the respective levels of risk from wars, flooding, terrorism, general disasters, and pandemics. It identified a flu-like pandemic very similar to Covid-19 as the very highest civil emergency risk to the UK, so there was at least no failure of imagination among the experts. A pandemic has remained the top risk ever since.

48. The Prime Minister was questioned in Parliament on 2nd December 2020 (Hansard, Volume 683, column 24) about why the emergency powers set out in Part 2 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA) were not used for the response to the coronavirus pandemic. As you will be aware, the Coronavirus Act 2020 was passed into law as new legislation in preference to using existing powers in the CCA. The pandemic appears to meet the conditions for making emergency regulations as set out in section 21 of the CCA, so this is an area that must be examined in any 'lessons learnt' review or inquiry, in whatever form that may take.
49. Emergency management and resilience professionals, and their professional bodies, do not appear to have been consulted or engaged by Government departments regarding their expertise during the pandemic on any relevant matters. That is, and continues to be, a missed opportunity. Emails offering advice and assistance go unanswered, although I did receive one response some six-months later from an official explaining how busy their department was.
50. There are significant benefits for both the public and the Government in engaging with existing professional bodies in the UK, for example the Institute of Civil Protection and the Emergency Planning Society. This engagement has been sadly lacking.
51. The role of the individual in national crises is one worthy of detailed examination. The provision of public information, clear messaging and calls for action are vital.
52. In 2004, the UK Government launched an initiative to raise public awareness of emergency preparedness and response to emergencies and produced a booklet 'Preparing for Emergencies – what you need to know'. 25 million copies of a 22-page booklet were distributed to households. One of my tasks as Head of Regional Resilience at the time was to help promote the booklet and its advice throughout South West England. There has been no follow-up or similar initiative since then and consideration could be given to launching something similar using a combination of new technology and hard copy for those with limited or no access to online materials. It would also need to be produced in different languages. It's a large task and would require adequate resourcing.
53. Some countries invest significantly in helping their citizens plan and respond to emergencies in their communities. Tsunami warning and evacuation systems are now commonplace in many places affected by the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami. Australia produces magnetic 'Action Guides' for different emergencies for placing on surfaces in homes like refrigerators. These guides contain clear messages about what the public should do before, during and after emergencies such as flooding, heatwaves, earthquakes, bushfires, severe weather, etc. There are

plenty of examples of good practice and initiatives in other countries that could inspire UK creativity in the world of civil protection.

54. There is an argument to be made to create a single body or agency in the UK with responsibility for coordinating emergency planning, preparedness, and response, as outlined in paragraph 30 of this document. The current 'lead government department' arrangements for emergencies with the Cabinet Office providing a cross-government coordinating function is overly complex. Many countries have a Disaster Management Authority or similar with country-wide responsibilities that the UK could potentially emulate, and at the very least evaluate.

Question 10

55. What challenges are there in developing resilience capability? Your answer could refer to critical infrastructure, but also to systems and networks beyond those elements. What is the role of exercising to test risk preparedness, and are these methods utilised effectively in risk assessment and risk planning in this country?

Response to Question 10

56. Exercises are an essential tool to for training individuals and organisations, yet they can never replicate the unforeseeable characteristics of real emergencies. I speak as a practitioner with many years of emergency planning, plan testing and responding to real emergencies. Over recent years, budget restrictions and associated resource reductions have had an adverse impact on the capability of emergency services and other emergency responders to prepare for and take part in exercises. The extent of the reduction in capability has not been quantified, so there is a piece of work to be done there.
57. Prior to 2004 and the introduction of the Civil Contingencies Act, the Home Office oversaw ring-fenced funding to local authorities for emergency planning, but the Act changed that. The money allocated specifically for planning for emergencies was absorbed into the local authorities' general budget so that over time the specific funding was 'lost' as it was applied to other priorities. Civil protection duties created under the Act for local authorities were now in one statute, but the funding was not.
58. The Act also devolved planning to the local level to authorities that lacked expertise or will to implement it. When money is tight, the easiest budget to justify cutting is contingency and emergency planning, because by definition it might never happen. But if it does, then you have big problems.
59. There remains no centralised mechanism for auditing local authorities' preparedness for a civil emergency, and training budgets anyway have been cut to the bone if they exist at all.
60. A most recent example of a large - and arguably the largest - exercise held in the UK was Exercise Unified Response (EUR) which was a live exercise that took

place in London over four days between 29th February and 3rd March 2016. The exercise was coordinated by the London Fire Brigade and took two years to plan and deliver. It was co-funded by the European Union. Good practice gleaned from eight previous EU-funded exercises was identified and used in EUR. I was a lead evaluator for some aspects of the exercise.

61. EUR's main aims were to:

- test the UK's ability to activate the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism.
- improve London's preparedness to respond to large-scale emergencies.
- Improve integration of emergency service personnel with colleagues from a wide variety of partners.

62. The EUR Evaluation Report contains many detailed recommendations for improvement whilst acknowledging those elements that worked well. The report contains the headline (on page 10): London's strategic plans proved effective as a basis for identifying risks and provided a framework within which the unfolding scenario and wider impacts could be effectively managed.' The scenario was a collapsed building in central London, with over 70 fatalities.

63. The fire in Grenfell Tower in North Kensington, London took place some 15 months after the exercise. Some elements of the response and aftermath are to be considered by the Grenfell Tower Inquiry, including local and central government's policies, plans and procedures for dealing with a major emergency such as the Grenfell Tower fire, so it would be inappropriate at this time to make any comments in the context of the Committee's investigation.

Question 11

64. What can be learnt from local or corporate risk management processes, or those of other countries? Are there any specific examples of practices, processes or considerations which could improve the UK's national risk resilience? How could businesses and civil society more effectively support national resilience preparation?

Response to Question 11

65. An investigation into risk assessment and planning in other countries would be helpful. Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Taiwan are suggested as useful starting points.

66. The emergency planning and preparedness framework set out in the CCA already allows for this to take place. Local Resilience Forums in England and Wales, and equivalent structures in Scotland and Northern Ireland provide opportunities for closer engagement with businesses and civil society. The role of the wider voluntary sector and the management and deployment of volunteers in emergencies has not been fully explored or utilised. This is an area for

detailed examination. Trained volunteers are used extensively in many other countries and we should explore this and learn from others. Australia would be a good place to start.

Question 12

67. What individual or economic behaviours would strengthen national resilience against hazards, and what mechanisms are open to the Government or society to incentivise these behaviours? How should we prioritise any changes required in approach, process or policy needed to improve risk mitigation and strengthen the UK's resilience to extreme risks and emergencies?

Response to Question 12

68. The main thrust of emergency planning, response and recovery is at the local level, and the planning and response structures set out in the CCA make that clear. Most of our emergencies occur, and are dealt with locally, and history provides clear evidence of this. The challenge is bridging the gap between the local and central levels of government and response in wide-area, cross-border significant and sustained emergencies. The removal of the regional tier of emergency preparedness and coordination around 2010 was a retrograde step and consideration should be given to reinstating it. This, of course, requires investment.
69. The harnessing of the energy, creativity and enthusiasm of local volunteers to set up and train some form of civil defence corps is an area worth exploring. It worked well in the past and could provide a solution to current and future disruptive challenges. Local people will respond to local incidents. They just need some encouragement, harnessing and training. Existing arrangements, where they exist, are ad hoc. Structure is needed.

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