



## **NEWS RELEASE**

Ref: 252/07

Date: 8 August 2007

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### **Appointment of independent chair for the Flooding Lessons Learned Review**

Environment Secretary Hilary Benn today announced that Sir Michael Pitt, Chair of the South West Strategic Health Authority, will lead the review into the recent floods.

The Lessons Learned Review, to be carried out by the Cabinet Office with support from the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs and the Department for Communities and Local Government, will examine both how to reduce the risk and impact of floods, and the emergency response to the floods in June and July. It will seek views from those involved in the floods, including affected residents, the emergency services, business and professional associations.

Sir Michael Pitt will take up the position of Independent Chair of the review, which was originally announced by Hilary Benn in a statement to the House of Commons on July 12.

The terms of reference for the review are:

- a. Flood risk management, including the risk posed by surface water flooding and the way in which public and private sector might adapt to future risks.
- b. Vulnerability of critical infrastructure, including:
  - i. The ability of critical infrastructure to withstand flooding, and what improvements might be made.

- ii. The resilience of dams and associated structures and what improvements might be made.
- c. The emergency response to the flooding, including social and welfare issues.
- d. Issues for wider emergency planning arising from the actual or potential loss of essential infrastructure.
- e. Issues arising during the transition period from the response to recovery phases.

## Notes to Editors

1. In his role as Independent Chairperson of the Lessons Learned Review, Sir Michael Pitt will report to Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, and Ed Miliband, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.
2. Sir Michael Pitt will chair the review, supported by teams drawn in the main from Defra, CLG and the Cabinet Office. These teams will be assisted by experts from other bodies such as the Met Office, the Environment Agency, local authorities, major utilities.
3. The review will draw on evidence from all those involved in the emergency response; those who suffered the impact of the flooding, including businesses, public organisations such as schools and hospitals; and the public and their locally elected representatives.
4. Specific objectives for the Review are:
  - i. To understand why the flooding was so extensive.
  - ii. To learn lessons on how in future we can best predict, prevent or mitigate the scale and impact of flooding incidents in a potentially changing environment.
  - iii. To look at how best to co-ordinate the response to flooding in future, including the significant social implications for communities.
  - iv. To establish what access to support, equipment, facilities and information is needed by those involved in the response at local, regional and national levels.
  - v. To ensure the public has as much access as possible to information on the risk of flooding to allow them to take appropriate precautions, be adequately informed on developments as an emergency unfolds, and be looked after properly in the immediate aftermath.

- vi. To establish how the transition from response to recovery is best managed.
- vii. To identify those aspects of the response that worked well and should be promoted and reinforced.
- viii. To make recommendations in each of these areas to improve the UK's preparedness for flooding events in the future.
- ix. To make recommendations, drawing on the experience of the flooding incidents, to improve the UK's broader ability to manage the loss of essential services in any future emergencies.

## 5. Biography

Sir Michael Pitt is currently Chair of NHS South West, the Strategic Health Authority for the region. Previously he was Chief Executive of Kent County Council, after which he took up a short term interim appointment as Chief Executive in order to support the recovery of Swindon Borough Council.

He holds a range of other appointments including: chairing two companies (Solace Enterprises Ltd and Swindon Commercial Services) and providing consultancy advice to a variety of public sector organisations.

He was formally the national President of the Society of Local Authority Chief Executives.

He graduated from University College London in 1970 with a first class honours degree in Civil Engineering. He has worked for the Civil Service, private sector and local government, with the majority of his career in County Council Technical Departments. During 1990 he was appointed as Chief Executive of Cheshire County Council and then Kent County Council in 1997. He was knighted in the Queen's Birthday Honours 2005.

- 6. It is anticipated the review will provide an interim report by the end of the year and a final report after that.

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