

**PRESS NOTICE**

**SIR MICHAEL PITT PUBLISHES FINAL REPORT:  
'LEARNING LESSONS FROM THE 2007 FLOODS'**

Sir Michael Pitt today called for urgent and fundamental changes in the way the country is adapting to the increased risk of flooding and called on the Government to set out publicly how it will make rapid progress, and be held to account, on improving the country's flood resilience.

Publishing his Independent Review into the floods of 2007, one of the widest ranging policy reviews of our time, Sir Michael said:

"During the year I have received more than one thousand written submissions from the public, consulted widely and visited communities to see for myself the extraordinary hardship so many families across the country are facing. It is unacceptable that one year on, thousands of people remain in temporary accommodation.

"Research published as part of my report today shows that the risk of flooding continues to escalate; making the events that shattered so many communities last year an ever increasing threat. I urge the Government to show leadership and urgently set out the process and timescale for improving resilience in the UK. The recommendations in my report are realistic and affordable and should be made a priority. Waiting for another serious event is a dangerous 'strategy of luck'; we need to act now to protect our future."

The Government should:

- Establish a Cabinet Committee dedicated to tackling the risk of flooding, bringing flooding in line with other major risks such as pandemic flu and terrorism;
- Publish monthly summaries of progress during the recovery phase of major flooding events, including number of households still displaced;
- Ensure proper resourcing of flood resilience measures, with above inflation increases every spending review;
- Establish a National Resilience Forum to facilitate national level planning for flooding and other emergencies;
- Have pre planned, rather than ad hoc, financial arrangements in place for responding to the financial burden of exceptional emergencies;
- Publish an action plan to implement the recommendations in this review, with regular progress updates.

Sir Michael also expressed concerns about the quality and availability of flood risk information currently available to emergency responders and the public:

"We need to be more willing to tell people the truth about risk. The current lack of clarity and transparency has the potential to put not only people's homes, but lives in jeopardy.

“People purchasing a property in a flood risk area should be made aware of the potential for flooding so they can make informed choices, including on taking out insurance. While the current flood code system needs to be simplified, with earlier and more personalised warnings issued jointly by the Met Office and Environment Agency that say what they mean and give clear advice.

“Our current attitude to reservoir safety is also concerning. Insistence on secrecy about the area that would be flooded from a dam breach, so as not to give information to would-be attackers, has meant that we cannot be as ready to respond as we should be, whether a breach occurs because of attack or natural failure, and this puts lives unnecessarily at risk.

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

“Events of last summer also demonstrated the vulnerability of infrastructure and the dependency of our society on the essential services they provide. The loss of Mythe left 350,000 people without drinking water, while the potential loss of power in Sheffield would have seen 750,000 people without electricity.

“Government must act to ensure critical infrastructure is as resilient as possible, whilst essential services providers should become considerably more active in local and national emergency preparedness and response.

“The Environment Agency can play their part by providing Infrastructure operators with a specialised site-specific flood warning service, offering longer lead times to enable defences to be set up in time.

Commenting on the role of Local Authorities, Sir Michael said:

“Local authorities should play a major role in the management of local flood risk, taking the lead in tackling local problems of flooding and co-ordinating all relevant agencies. Upper tier authorities should establish oversight and scrutiny committees to review work being undertaken to reduce flood risk and publish annual updates on the work undertaken.”

Other key recommendations include:

- The Environment Agency and Met Office should work together, through a joint centre, to improve their technical capability to forecast, model and warn
- The Government should put in place a fully funded national capability for flood rescue, with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a lead role, underpinned by a statutory duty, if necessary;
- The Ministry of Defence should identify a small number of trained Armed Forces personnel who can be deployed to advise Gold Commands on logistics during wide-area civil emergencies and, working with Cabinet Office, identify and suitable mechanism for deployment.

- The rail industry, working through Local Resilience Forums, should develop plans to provide emergency welfare support to passengers stranded on the rail network.
- The EFRA Select Committee should review the country's readiness for dealing with flooding emergencies and produce an assessment of progress in implementation of the Review's recommendations after 12 months.

Concluding, Sir Michael said:

"I welcome the positive approach and administrative structures that the Government has so far pledged to put in place to improve the UK's flood resilience. I have worked closely with Government and our key stakeholders throughout the process and am pleased that so many of my recommendations are already being taken forward. Momentum on these issues must continue and I know we will all be watching with interest as my full list of recommendations are implemented."

## Note to Editors

The following can be found on the Pitt Review website:

[www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview)

- Sir Michael Pitt's final report: 'Learning lessons from the 2007 floods', which is published at 10am on 25 June 2008.
- Research on future flooding, commissioned by the Pitt Review and carried out by academics in the field, which is published today, alongside the report.
- A full biog and photo of Sir Michael Pitt.
- A full list of recommendations

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