

WSBF Roundtable: The National Resilience Strategy

10.00AM, Wednesday 15th September 2021

Introduction

The aim of this roundtable was to discuss the Cabinet Office's call for evidence, which will inform the forthcoming National Resilience Strategy. The Westminster Sustainable Business Forum considers that resilience to flooding should form a central part of the National Resilience Strategy, especially in light of our recent inquiry, [Bricks and Water](#). The vision for the National Resilience Strategy is 'to make the UK the most resilient nation' and in order to deliver this vision, the strategy's core principles include investment in preparation to better prevent, mitigate, and recover from risks. We consider these principles complementary to the current methodology for managing the risk of flooding in England.

The roundtable was kindly chaired by shadow minister for nature, water, and flooding, **Olivia Blake MP**, with contributions from **Roger Hargreaves** (Director, Civil Contingencies Secretariat), **Dermot Kehoe**, (Director of Communications, Flood Re), **David Nash** (Climate Change & Partnerships Senior Manager, Zurich Insurance), **Helen Jackson** (Founder, Climate Node), **Rob Allen** (Policy Manager, Policy Connect), and **Baroness McIntosh of Pickering**.

Speakers

- **The National Resilience Strategy will be published in spring 2022.** The Call for evidence sets out the vision and principles for strategy. The Strategy aims to provide a framework to allow disruptions to be minimised to the greatest degree possible and give individuals and businesses the confidence to continue with life as normal.
- **Mitigation and adaptation are key to solving the climate crisis and it is essential that we do both.** When considering the risks from flooding, prevention (through reducing our climate impact and robust planning policy) and resilience (through installation and retrofit of property flood resilience measures) can go hand in hand.
- **Property flood resilience measures are usually only installed after a home or business has been affected by flooding – this is a problem.** Changes to insurance industry practices and the Flood Re scheme should be implemented to allow wider uptake. Updates to building regulations to mandate the installation of property flood resilience measures in new homes would also help.
- **Surface water flooding is an increasing problem, especially in urban areas.** In addition to affecting residential properties, surface water flooding has a significant impact on business and infrastructure. In particular, it can affect the ability of the emergency services to discharge their responsibilities, as recently seen in London, where two east London hospitals declared major incidents and were forced to evacuate patients.

Discussion

Prevention

- Ofwat is too focussed on water supply, rather than preventing flooding (which also affects water quality) through good drainage and sewerage. We need an approach that prioritises the entire water cycle, underpinned by the Ofwat price review process.
- The role of data is key in managing risk. Flood Risk Assessments, used to inform planning decisions are still routinely limited by the quality and quantity of data. The Environment Agency does a good job of managing data with the resources that it has, but it should grasp wider options, such as community monitoring and citizen science to collect better data for modelling purposes.
- Increased flood risk as a result of poor development decisions is a far bigger threat to communities than climate change. The National Resilience Strategy should be used to inform the Government's intentions for planning reform.

Mitigation

- High quality Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) are key to mitigating the risks from flooding and improving community resilience. Implementation of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act could be a mechanism for Local Planning Authorities to fund installation, adoption, and maintenance of SuDS.
- SuDS and natural flood management techniques provide multi-functional benefits that can mitigate against wider risks that go beyond flooding. These include drought, biodiversity loss, heat island creation, access to amenity, and mental health issues.
- Information for consumers is important in mitigating risk – the introduction of Flood Performance Certificates (PFCs) can address this. The use of PFCs will be an important mechanism for scaling the installation of property flood resilience measures.

Recovery

- Property Flood Resilience (PFR) measures are vital to increase community flood resilience and help homes and businesses to recover quickly after a flood. Uptake of PFR has been slow and Government must therefore play a role in accelerating this. Options include, changes to building regulations to require all properties at risk of flooding to include property flood resilience measures, introduction of discounted insurance premiums for buildings that incorporate PFR, and changes to the Flood Re reinsurance scheme to allow properties to be 'built back better' after a flood.
- The Code of Practice and Guidance for property flood resilience is a valuable resource and this should be championed to aid recovery. Development of a database to demonstrate the performance of various types of PFR will be essential to wider uptake.

About the Westminster Sustainable Business Forum

The Westminster Sustainable Business Forum (WSBF) is Policy Connect's coalition of high-level stakeholders informing better policy-making on sustainability issues for the built environment.

The WSBF's members include key UK businesses, Parliamentarians, Civil Servants, academics and third sector organisations. Providing a politically neutral environment for knowledge sharing and discussion on sustainability policy, we help to impact the agenda in government and are a trusted source of independent information and advice for policymakers.

We publish authoritative research reports; impact on government policy through our in-depth round table policy discussions and outputs; and inform the wider sustainability debate by convening key stakeholders at our larger policy events and seminars. The WSBF works in the policy areas of construction, infrastructure, water, sustainable planning, green finance and natural capital. We are cross-party, independent and not-for-profit. For more information on our activities, please visit: www.policyconnect.org.uk/wsbf