

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2018 REPORT

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The 81<sup>st</sup> Annual Conference and AGM of the Association of Drainage Authorities was held on 14 November at One Great George Street in Westminster, London. This report presents an extended summary of the Conference proceedings. The report includes Association business, reports from the Board, Committees and Chief Executive, keynote presentations, and a summary of the open discussion forum.

## WELCOME BY ROBERT CAUDWELL

Robert welcomed over 220 delegates to the Conference, as well as a number of students from the Flood and Coastal Engineering programme at Brunel University, who had been invited as guests. He said it was important delegates from across ADA's membership were here to make their views known right into the heart of Westminster. Robert thanked the Conference Sponsors, ADA's Associate Members, Tony Gee and the Risk Factor.

Robert explained that ADA had been working really hard in 2018 on the concept of holistic water management and drew out for particular praise the work of members managed water resources through a dry and challenging summer. He highlighted that this work should not be in times of crisis, but working together in partnership throughout the year, every year, given that climate change isn't something that might happen in the future, but was happening now.

Robert welcomed Sue Hayman MP to give the opening keynote address.

## KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

**SUE HAYMAN MP, SHADOW  
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR  
ENVIRONMENT, FOOD AND RURAL  
AFFAIRS**

Sue Hayman was elected in 2015, just six months before Storm Desmond hit her constituency of Workington in December.

In her opening address to the ADA Conference, Sue described the shocking impact this had had on her community in Cumbria just before Christmas. Sue herself was trapped at home for over 24 hours and fortunate to escape flooding, but saw first-hand the sadness it had brought to the people of Cockermouth and surrounding areas. She paid tribute to how hard members of the local community, charities and authorities pulled together in the aftermath.

She highlighted the emotional toll of the event, noting a Barnardo's report, which found that in some areas of Cumbria, nearly half of those children's biggest fear was flooding. Suicide rates had risen faster in the county than anywhere else in the country. Emphasising the need for greater mental health support long after such a critical event, with sufficient funding for these services.

Sue recognised the importance for keeping flooding issues at the top of the public and political agenda once the waters recede. Throughout her presentation Sue emphasised the need to work cross party on flooding, especially in and following

an emergency situation, and was grateful to other local MPs for helping to keep the issue live and in the attention of Government with her. She paid tribute to Thérèse Coffey MP for always taking the time with local MPs on the issue.

Turning to flood risk management, Sue drew attention to how defences had not been designed to be resilient against an event like Storm Desmond, highways drainage had suffered as a result of cuts to local authorities, and how previous activities by local farmers and residents to keep watercourses clear of excess gravel and rubble had ceased over time, with this material now blocking drains. Sue felt that: "We need to understand more about how we actually manage river management for the best of the community without then causing environmental damage. Because if we're not careful, if farmers or riparian owners aren't allowed to do something legitimately, they may well go in and just do something anyway and that may not be the best thing we need."

Sue raised concerns around how the current funding formula works for rural areas, like Cumbria, with a sparse population. She said that "when you're looking at asset damage and cost, you need to also consider how often a property floods and how deep it floods", and that this idea had been put forward in a proposal by all six Cumbrian MPs to Ministers. She also noted that procurement for work completed post-flooding meant that contractors were travelling from hundreds of miles for tasks that could have been done by local trades, letting down local businesses.

Concluding her address, Sue said: "If we're genuinely going to manage flooding to the best we possibly can, then I genuinely believe we all need to work together."

**ROBERT HÖSSEN, EXPERT IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT, VEILIGHEIDSGREGIO NOORD-HOLLAND NOORD (VRNHN)**

Robert described how emergencies such as flooding are coordinated in the Netherlands, where sixty per cent of the country is at flood risk, including nine million people living at or below sea level, along with the area earning around 70% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

The organisation Robert works for is primarily focused on providing emergency services like ambulances, fire and rescue on a day to day basis. But Robert works on the crisis management side, looking at the coordination and planning for major emergencies. He spoke about aspects of a national project, over the past five years, to start to re-evaluate and rekindle the spirit around flooding.

Robert described how severe events in 1916 had preceded the closing of the Zuiderzee to form the IJssel lake, and in 1953, the Delta Works around the Rhine-Meuse-Scheldt delta. These events had framed the modern Dutch approach to tackling flood risk, and today they are continued through the Delta Programme. With these efforts many in the Netherlands felt that they were now safe and that the job was done.

However, as Robert said “I might disillusion them.” He played a trailer from a series called ‘When the Dikes Break’ that aired on Dutch TV in 2016, raising awareness amongst the population of the intrinsic risks they face despite their substantial defences and 1.2% of GDP annual investment.

Robert showed a computer model of how a storm surge passes from the Atlantic onto the Dutch continental shelf, demonstrating how the North Sea acts as a funnel during such events significantly elevating sea levels. But Robert emphasised that the sea was not the only flood risk at play in the Netherlands. Events in 1995, where flooding from high river discharges from the Rhine and Maas resulted in the evacuation of around 250,000 people, had triggered a new programme that is integrating a multi-layered safety approach to Dutch flood risk management. It is made up of primary defences and their management and maintenance, but also spatial planning ensuring that other areas are resilient, and that crisis management is in order. The latter is concentrated on those areas where you will never get defences up due to cost or other reasons.

Robert explained how his region of North Holland had taken a lead on civic coordination planning for local government. They had modelled breach event scenarios looking at what would happen in terms of infrastructure, services and people. The approach was inclusive, involving a wide range of people and stakeholders to brainstorm an effective impact analysis. What was evident from the analysis presentation that Robert showed were the cascade effects of a breach. It demonstrated

the vital importance of local & interregional coordination & governance, before, during and after such events.

He said that the next phase they were undertaking was to look in more depth at peoples behaviours. If they are warned a major flood is coming, how do they respond? During such events, how would people move around? Would it be in a controlled or uncontrolled way? And what implications would this have for mass evacuation? And then in the recovery phase, not only in terms of physical support but also just as importantly mental support.

Robert closed with a desire to continue to work together and learn from one another, regardless of Brexit.

**JOHN CURTIN, EXECUTIVE  
DIRECTOR OF FLOOD AND  
COASTAL RISK MANAGEMENT,  
ENVIRONMENT AGENCY**

John focused his presentation on climate change as a prelude to the release of UKCPI8, the new predictions for how climate change is going to affect the UK in terms of precipitation, temperature and sea level rise.

To begin John showed a video by two young filmmakers in Greenland, who captured the largest ever calving of a glacier ever filmed. The size of which was comparable with Lower Manhattan, New York. John explained that the rule of thumb was that every one per cent of land locked ice lost in Greenland or Antarctica, gives one metre of sea level rise.

John articulated that Government is taking

climate change seriously, and that river flooding, surface water flooding and coastal flooding were all right at the top of the Cabinet Office's national risk assessment for natural hazards. He highlighted how far we have already come, noting improvements to our infrastructure, forecasting and warnings. These contributed to the difference in impact between the 1953 East Coast tidal surge event that killed 307 people, in the United Kingdom and the 2013 event.

He contrasted our approach to rising sea levels in the UK with those of Sweden and Japan, both of which he had visited earlier in the year. In Sweden he noted that despite being a nation noted for the state helping people more than most, the country did not have an overall national strategy and individual climate scenario planning is left to the provinces. Individual property owners pay for the majority of coastal flood defences, and indeed many of these defences constructed over 100 years ago were actually built out of compacted seaweed.

In Japan, 75 per cent of all properties are at risk of some form of flooding, and 45 per cent from coastal flood risk. Yet they do not have any scenarios for climate change. Instead they take a highly engineered approach to flood and coastal risk. John showed photos of one town of 5,000 people where they had lifted everything, buildings and the land, by five metres.

Turning to look at future rainfall patterns, John noted that over the winter of 2013/14 we had 12 storms in quick succession. This demonstrated the need to not only look at the capacity of our pumps or defences

on a single storm basis, but also consider the impacts of a cluster of storms, even relatively smaller ones, coming in such close succession that you do not have the time to release the capacity in either your flood storage area or the land that's been flooded.

John finished by highlighting the value of the data UKCPI8 will bring to flood and water managers, and the ongoing work by the Environment Agency to shape the National FCERM Strategy, which he called an "opportunity probably once in a generation to really reset the thinking in this country." He finished with the words of an American expert on sea level rise who had told him that: 'Humanity is rarely lucky enough to know something will happen. The choice is how we use the time that knowledge has given us.'

**DAVID COOPER, DEPUTY DIRECTOR  
FOR FLOOD AND COASTAL  
EROSION RISK MANAGEMENT,  
DEFRA**

David presented a review of policy matters from 2018, which have contributed to Defra's multi-layered approach to flood and water management. The year started with the launch of the 25 Year Environment Plan in January, which included the Government's ambitions for improving the environment, and goals to try to manage natural hazards and resources.

On water resources, David explained that the Plan talked about a dual approach, seeking to reduce demand pressures and increase supply. Defra intend to publish a water conservation report later in the year, as well as a National Policy Statement



on water supply infrastructure, which will include streamlining strategic water transfers within the planning process.

Defra are challenging water companies to ensure their draft water resource management plans are fit for purpose, and OFWAT will be ensuring that water companies have made plans for the necessary investment between 2020 and 2025. Defra were keen to create a stronger regional sense of water resource planning, including potential legislative measures.

On flood risk management, David highlighted the 22 actions within the Government's Surface Water Management Action Plan, and the revised National Planning Policy Framework, both published in July. Defra will be following up on these with more detailed planning policy guidance on flood risk management. David noted that the Agriculture Bill, which entered parliament in September, contains provisions to pay farmers and land managers to help manage natural disasters like flooding and coastal erosion. Whilst the Budget from October contained a further £13 million of funding to support the uptake of property resilience measures, provide better mapping and data on surface water flood risk, and thirdly, extend flood alerts to all communities in high risk areas.

Looking ahead towards 2019, Defra would be responding to Major General Tim Cross's review of emergency planning arrangements, and preparing a Policy Statement setting out the government's direction of travel around FCERM. This would act as an important prelude to the Environment Agency's updated National Strategy.

David concluded on matters directly affecting IDBs. He stressed their role was vital as part of a partnership approach to the challenges that had been mentioned in the preceding presentations. Defra Ministers were supportive of legislation that would enable the establishment of new IDBs and put the Somerset Rivers Authority on a statutory footing, but David noted the challenges of this Bill receiving sufficient parliamentary time.

David was delighted with the Good Governance Guide that's been put together, commending it to ADA members as a really useful document. He said that Defra were going to build on the Guide with some research into IDB membership and board membership, with a survey coming out shortly. David reinforced that having transparent governance, good administrative processes, and strong representation back into local authorities and communities is about reinforcing the trust between IDBs and the communities they serve. He encouraged everyone to look through it and use it.

#### CHAIRMAN'S AWARDS 2018

Robert presented for the first time chairman's awards to people who have provided outstanding support to ADA, our sector, and water management in general.

These awards were presented to:

Ian Russell from the Environment Agency for his work on partnership working between risk management authorities and in particular the public sector cooperation agreements which have really changed our industry in a positive way.

Cliff Carson from the Middle Level Commissioners for his instrumental work in changing our view that conservation and good water level management can go hand in hand and his work developing ideas and guidance that give nature an edge in our lowland watercourses.

### OPEN DISCUSSION FORUM

Following the Conference presentations there was an open forum to enable members to raise questions and discuss relevant topics with speakers and other experts in attendance.

Topics raised by delegates included:

- Investment and funding for pumping stations and watercourse maintenance (John Duggleby, North Holderness IDB / Charles Pudge, River Lugg IDB / Tony Bradford, Parrett IDB)
- Management of water resources (Lord De Ramsey, President, ADA / Jane Burch, Suffolk County Council)
- Surface water management planning, importance of keeping outfalls clear (Paul Barnes, North West RFCC)
- River Don condition and flow rates (John Duckett, Danvm Drainage Commissioners)
- International cooperation in climate and environmental challenges (Catherine Nankumba, Brunel University)
- Engagement between local resilience forums and local risk management authorities (Jonathan Goolden, Wilkin Chapman Solicitors LLP)
- Greater opportunities for partnership working under the next National FCERM Strategy (Priscilla Haselhurst,

Medway Council and North Kent Marshes IDB)

- The role of landscaping and trees in flood management (Vanessa McPake, Buckinghamshire & River Ouzel IDB and Anglian Central RFCC)

### ASSOCIATION BUSINESS & AGM

#### ELECTIONS

Robert Caudwell was unanimously re-elected as ADA's Chairman.

Lord De Ramsey was unanimously re-elected as ADA's President along with ADA's Vice Presidents; Baroness McIntosh, Neil Parish MP, David Riddington OBE, Jean Venables CBE, and Henry Cator OBE. These were proposed by Councillor Doug McMurdo (Bedford & River Ivel IDB) and seconded by Charles Pudge (River Lugg IDB).

#### ACCOUNTS

The audited accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017 were presented to the Conference and approved by a majority show of hands.

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

The subscriptions for 2019 proposed by ADA Board of Directors were presented to the Conference as reported in the Conference Handbook. There was an increase of 2% for ADA Members' subscription fees. The subscriptions were proposed by Trevor Purlant (Welland & Deepings IDB) and seconded by Priscilla Haselhurst (Medway Council and North Kent Marshes IDB) and approved, there was one vote against the increase noted.

## MEMBERSHIP

ADA's membership in 2018 was noted as reported in the Conference Handbook as 106 IDBs, 5 national agencies, 1 water company, 6 Welsh internal drainage district advisory groups, 12 RFCCs, 29 Local Authorities, and 64 Associate Members.

## REPORTS FROM ADA'S BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND COMMITTEES

The 2018 reports from ADA's Board of Directors, Policy & Finance Committee, and Technical & Environmental Committee were tabled in the Conference Handbook.

## REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Innes Thomson introduced his report and that of the Board of Directors and ADA's Committees as presented within the Conference Handbook. Innes highlighted the support ADA had received from its members during 2018 and the hard work of ADA's staff. Innes was proud of the work that had gone into producing a comprehensive Good Governance Guide for IDB members and thanked Iain Smith as the principal author and Defra for their support. Innes reported that in 2020 ADA intended to appoint a new technical member of staff and a new working relationship with the Association of SuDS Authorities (ASA) that would be launching in April 2019.

Turning to events Innes highlighted the upcoming FLOODDEX 2019 exhibition and the work of ADA's branches to have a presence at regional agricultural shows such as the Great Yorkshire Show and Lincolnshire Show. Innes concluded by highlighting the importance of communication, and requested that

members stay in touch by completing a Communication Form to ensure the Association remained compliant under the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## AUDIT

The auditors Streets Audit LLP were reappointed as auditors of ADA's 2018 accounts as proposed by Henry Cator (Broads IDB) and seconded by Jean Venables (Vice President, ADA).