



## All Party Parliamentary Group *for* Sustainable Flood and Drought Management

### Minutes of the Sustainable Flood & Drought APPG

9<sup>th</sup> October 2024 – 1530 -1630,

Portcullis House, Room Q

Attendees;

- Lee Pitcher MP – (elected as Chair)
- George Freeman MP – (elected as Co Vice-Chair)
- Charlotte Cane MP – (elected as Co Vice Chair)
- Rt Hon The Earl of Caithness – (elected as an Officer)
- Pippa Heylings MP
- Kevin McKenna MP
- Roz Savage MP
- Jo White MP
- Claire Young MP
- Simon Opher MP
- Leigh Ingham MP
- Julia Buckley MP
- Maya Ellis MP
- Ben Obese-Jecty MP
- George Freeman MP
- Julie Minns MP

The following have indicated that, whilst unable to attend the meeting, they wish to be members of the APPG;

- Samantha Niblett MP
- Lucy Rigby MP
- Allison Gardner MP
- Rt Hon Graham Stuart MP
- Blake Stephenson MP
- Sarah Green MP
- Joy Morrissey MP
- Patrick Spencer MP
- Sarah Hall MP
- Sarah Dyke MP
- Jess Brown-Fuller MP
- Bill Esterson MP



Others in attendance;

- Alastair Chisholm - CIWEM
- Catherine Moncrieff - CIWEM
- Innes Thomson – ADA ( APPG Secretariat )
- Joseph Eaton – PA to Lee Pitcher MP
- Fraser – PA to J Morrissey MP

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Innes Thomson welcomed everyone with round-table introductions.

### **Elections**

As per APPG rules the very first action on those assembled was to elect the Officers of the Group.

Innes Thomson invited nominations for Chair and Jo White MP proposed Lee Pitcher MP. No other nominations were made. Lee Pitcher MP immediately took over as Chair and George Freeman MP suggested that he would be happy to be a Co Vice Chair alongside a Liberal Democrat colleague and Charlotte Cane offered to also be a Co Vice Chair. The Earl of Caithness was elected unopposed as the 4<sup>th</sup> Officer of the APPG.

It was confirmed that the above election of Officers meets with the requirements of the APPG rules.

### **Presentations**

Two presentations were delivered by Innes Thomson and Alastair Chisholm outlining the suggested plans for the APPG. Both presentations are appended to these minutes.

In brief, after a high-level summary of how water level and flood risk management works in England, Innes Thomson suggested that the 5 subjects for deeper investigation and study by the APPG should cover;

- Sustainable drainage and water resource management
- A catchment-based approach
- Partnership Working
- Maintenance
- Funding
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Alastair Chisholm went on to provide more detail around each of the subject areas and set out several challenges for the APPG to tackle, namely;

- For sustainable flood risk management: regulation, funding and evidence; facilitating sustainable drainage systems and a 'sponge cities' approach
- For sustainable water Resource Management: delivery covering regulation, infrastructure and demand management
- Catchment system management: need for extensive, distributed solutions alongside infrastructure such as flood defences and reservoirs.
- He pointed out the need for the forthcoming government review of water to extend beyond Defra, and that it presented a 'once in a generational' opportunity to fix systemic issues.



### **Officer & Member Discussion**

The Chair invited questions and observations from attendees and started by saying that a major task will be changing peoples' behaviours for the consumption of water, citing the example in South Africa where Capetown almost ran out of fresh water.

George Freeman MP asked about the relative numbers of recordable flood versus drought events.

Ben Obese-Jecty MP challenged on the need to understand if the present system across a wide range of delivery authorities is working and how efficiencies can be achieved.

Julia Buckley MP added that she has experience of experts not communicating with each other leading to potential increases in flood risk and inefficiencies, particularly in relation to ground water and river flooding.

George Freeman MP commented that the state contract with people was broken with a number of "red flashing lights" for flood risk management and he asked for detailed information on the total money map for flood risk and water resource management.

Pippa Heylings MP expressed concern about the disconnect between river catchment plans and strategic growth plans and the real need for Defra and MHCLG to be working much closer together. The Chair offered the example of Hull where there was good joined-up thinking between all Authorities involved.

Claire Young MP expressed concern at the situation in the Severn Estuary where the Environment Agency had allowed the raising of land for Amazon warehouses, which constituents thought would increase flood risk downstream. Innes Thomson added that normally detailed studies were carried out as part of any planning consents to ensure that flooding was not made worse by development.

Pippa Heylings MP commented that the NPPF needed to guard against the cumulative impact of flooding of piecemeal development.

### **Actions from the Meeting**

- Secretariat to provide information on the recent numbers of recordable flood and drought events.
- Secretariat to try to obtain a total money map for Government-funded flood and water resource management, covering both capital and revenue spending (2023-24)
- Chair to convene Officers to define a schedule of meetings and subjects to be investigated further.
- Jo Eaton, the Chair's PA, will be the point of contact for assisting the Secretariat to arrange meeting space on the Parliamentary Estate.

### **Next Meeting**

It was suggested and agreed that the next meeting should be scheduled shortly ( 2 to 3 weeks ) after the 30<sup>th</sup> October Government budget statement, and in time to inform the government's review of water and, if possible, the update to the NPPF ]