



Representing Drainage
Water Level & Flood Risk
Management Authorities

CIWEM Chartered Institution of
Water and Environmental
Management



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

Notes of APPG Meeting – 25th March 2025

DRAFT

Attendees:

Lee Pitcher MP (Chair)
Charlotte Cane MP (Deputy Chair)
The Earl of Caithness MP (Officer)
Julia Buckley MP
Isaac Tucker (representing Ros Savage MP)
Alice Borrett (representing George Freeman MP)
Nathan Purchase (representing Jack Rankin MP)
Joe Eaton (PS to Lee Pitcher MP)
Professor Jim Hall, FREng (Commissioner of the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) - Speaker)
Ed Beard (NIC)
Alastair Chisholm (CIWEM)
Cat Moncrieff (CIWEM)
Isabel Thompson (CIWEM)
Innes Thomson (ADA)

Apologies:

Cabinet Minister Abena Oppong-Asare MP
Defra Floods Minister Emma Hardy MP

Minutes of meeting on 26th February were taken as a correct record.

Matters arising

There were no matters arising which are not covered elsewhere in these minutes.

Other actions outstanding from the meeting of 26th February were noted as follows;

- Officers and Members to gather evidence of surface water flooding in their constituencies for discussion at the May meeting,
- Defra to provide a more detailed response about the possible adoption of a “Totex” approach to funding and possible future alignment of investment programmes,
- Chair to make appropriate request(s) for a 60 minute and/or 90 minute back bench debate. Noted that Chair has applied for a debate without success so far, and will keep trying.
- ADA and CIWEM to reflect on documents/evidence required to support a Parliamentary debate on SuDS as part of the debate above. To be actioned when debate time has been secured.



Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting was to hear from Professor Hall in his role as National Infrastructure Commissioner about the NIC's view of the UK's resilience to flood and drought risk management.

Speaker - Professor Jim Hall FREng, Commissioner of the National Infrastructure Commission, President of the Institution of Civil Engineers, Professor of Climate and Environmental Risks in the Environmental Climate Change Institute, Oxford University.

Professor Hall commenced his presentation by explaining that the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) and the Infrastructure & Projects Authority (IPA) would be joining together from 1st April 2025, to form the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority (NISTA).

Their emphasis will continue to be on the UK's resilience and adaptation to a changing climate and to try to ensure that future development does not make matters worse. Resilience standards continues to be the headline and Professor Hall reiterated that little had changed in the NIC's opinion from their National Infrastructure Assessment Report of October 2023 ([to add in link to report](#)).

Professor Hall called for the need to manage our assets better, with much more focus on maintenance and renewal of ageing assets. Homing in on water resource and flood risk, he complimented the latest National Flood Risk Assessment (NAFRA) report published in December 2024 by the Environment Agency, and that we should take heed of the information and steer that it was providing to us.

Professor Hall went on to challenge why sustainable drainage had not been further progressed through Schedule 3 of the Floods & Water Management Act and that a serious drought will have more impact on the nation than flooding and he identified concerted action needed to improve water supply capacity and lower demand.

He itemized a list of asks from the NIC as follows;

- We need to continue to develop detailed understanding of the pressures on water resources and flood risk management with the main ones being funding and climate,
- We need to ensure that nature-based solutions are an integral part of flood & drought risk management,
- We need to ensure that, as a nation, we stress-test our systems and procedures,
- We need to focus on outcome-based solutions,
- We need to make longer-term funding commitments,
- We need to consider a better devolution of budgets to local areas,
- We need to ensure that barriers are removed to allow available funding to be better committed to routine maintenance and asset renewals.

Professor Hall said that whilst the levels of Government investment commitment made before and after last year's elections broadly aligns with NIC's recommendations, there is an issue with costs increasing and slowness of delivery. NIC is currently working on providing supplementary analysis to Defra which is expected to be published alongside the UK's 10-year infrastructure strategy plans. The drive is expected to be towards maximising value for money, recognising the value of asset management and equity considerations.

Professor Hall concluded by saying that resilience must become institutionalised in the UK's forward thinking about all forms of assets.



The following questions and discussion followed this presentation;

Charlotte Cane MP welcomed Professor Ha;;'s presentation and the NIC's recommendations. She commented that when people notice the adverse effects of under-investment, it takes more time and cost to rectify than if a "little-and-often" maintenance approach had been taken. Charlotte Can was also interested in how we make better use of landowners and farmers to manage water resources and flooding.

Julia Buckey commented that she had recently visited the Netherlands with a delegation, including the Environment Agency, and that the way their Water Boards operate was worthy of consideration here in the UK. Admittedly, there is a much larger part of The Netherlands which could be impacted by flooding than in the UK, with up to 50% of their GDP at risk in the most severe case. There was also discussion about the Dutch public's willingness to pay and Innes Thomson added that an average Dutch household pays between 450 to 500 Euros per annum in water treatment and flood risk management charges (information source: *Dutch Water Bank (NWB)*).

Short Presentation on the Economic Analysis on Water Scarcity and Housing Growth.

Speaker – Catherine Moncrieff, Head of Policy & Engagement, CIWEM (presentation on APPG website page at xxxxxxxx)

Cat, could you please provide some notes for this – many thanks

Following this presentation, there was a variety of questions and discussion covering the following issues;

Please add comments as appropriate

Forward planning

May Meeting – Sponge Cities & Sustainable Drainage

The Secretariat is reviewing possible dates for the next APPG meeting in May on the subject of sustainable drainage and "Sponge Cities". Potential also to invite a speaker from GWCT, as suggested by the Earl of Caithness.

June Meeting – it has been agreed in principle that the June meeting of the APPG will be combined into a session at Flood & Coast 2025 on the morning of Thursday, 5th June, where APPG Officers and Members, and industry experts, will come together to discuss a range of issues in open forum, with questions from the audience.

Action: To issue direct invitations to APPG members asking if they would be willing and able to attend such a session on the morning of 5th June, in Telford, Shropshire.

July – to be confirmed but may be worth re-approaching Sir Jon Cunliffe.

Autumn – It was suggested that a presentation on the Fens 2100+ study would be welcome.



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Agreed Actions;

- As well as APPG Chair to continue applying for a 60-minute debate, and also applying for a 90-minute back bench debate.
- ADA and CIWEM to reflect on documents/evidence required to support a Parliamentary debate on SuDS as part of the debate above when a debate session is confirmed.
- Officers and Members to gather evidence of surface water flooding in their constituencies for discussion at the May meeting,
- Secretariat to follow up with Defra on providing a more detailed response about the possible adoption of a “Totex” approach to funding and possible future alignment of investment programmes.
- Chair to approach APPG members about their possible attendance at Flood & Coast on 5th June. |