

# ELIZABETH TRUSS MP

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Richard Benyon MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary, DEFRA  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
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30 March 2011

Dear Nick,

I am concerned about the value accorded to farm land in allocating national funding to capital projects for flood defence. The proposed option for funding outlined in the Future Funding for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management paper would disproportionately undervalue agricultural land, which would continue to fall within the OM1 category.

The assertion made within the Framework for Future Outcomes that flooding and coastal erosion are risks that farmers should factor into their risk management models is flawed. Furthermore grouping agriculture in the same priority group as other businesses does not take into account the wider importance of food production. Food prices have risen dramatically over recent years – a trend widely expected to continue – and the need for food security has rarely been greater. The loss of any farmland to flooding does not just affect farmers, but the entire food chain. In addition while homes can be repaired relatively quickly the debris deposited once flood waters recede can permanently damage farmland, as farmers around Cockermouth learnt after November 2009.

I understand that the final proposals are still under consideration and I would therefore urge you to consider the position of agricultural farmland in the context of the wider national interest while drawing up proposals for the allocation of funding for flood defence.

Elizabeth Truss MP

