

# Floods Resilience Taskforce: terms of reference

## Purpose

The Floods Resilience Taskforce will ensure that preparedness for, and resilience<sup>1</sup> to, flooding in England is reviewed regularly before the start of the main autumn to winter flood season, and that it is continuously improved to ensure optimum protection to people, homes and businesses.

It will also provide longer-term oversight of wider flood resilience strategy, such as targets, policy frameworks, and investment programmes.

The taskforce will focus on England. Recognising flood preparedness and resilience is a devolved matter, representatives of the devolved administrations will share perspectives from their nations.

The purpose of the taskforce is to provide Defra ministers with clear advice on the:

- potential flood risks in coming months
- levels of flood resilience and preparedness at the national and local levels
- areas at most risk of flooding and the actions taken to protect them
- preparedness, response and recovery to previous major flood incidents, including issues and key learning
- strategic and longer-term flood and coastal erosion resilience strategy, including targets, policy frameworks (including funding policy) and oversight of investment programmes

The taskforce will:

- include representation from a diverse range of organisations including national and local government, the English regions and the devolved administrations
- consider all forms of flooding (coastal, fluvial, groundwater, surface water, reservoir and dam) and coastal erosion, where longer-term strategy and resilience issues are relevant
- provide a forum for ministers to listen to the views of a range of external stakeholders
- meet four times a year, with an option to convene ad-hoc to discuss specific issues as required

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<sup>1</sup> Resilience here is defined in line with the UK Government Resilience Framework as the ability to withstand or quickly recover from a difficult situation, but also to get ahead of those risks and tackle challenges before they manifest.

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The taskforce will not:

- duplicate the role or remit of existing governance structures or introduce unnecessary bureaucracy
- manage a budget or create an additional financial approval mechanism
- have an operational role in the response to a flood incident
- produce a report with views and recommendations to be responded to

## Focus areas

The taskforce may review the following themes:

- long-term weather and flood risk forecasts
- readiness and condition of flood defence assets drainage systems and natural flood management schemes
- identification and views of preparedness of the most vulnerable areas as well as actions to support the most vulnerable groups<sup>2</sup>.
- capability and readiness of local flood responders and national coordination arrangements including preparations
- selected flood or coastal erosion policy proposals
- regional and national data and information on investment programmes
- longer-term local and national flood resilience and investment strategies
- recovery capability and mechanisms
- plans for public engagement

## Responsibilities

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra):

- Defra ministers to chair.
- Secretariat for meetings and work commissioned.
- Coordination of papers relating to Defra resilience arrangements and flood and coastal erosion policy proposals.

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<sup>2</sup> Vulnerable communities in the context of flooding are those that are at particular risk of flooding, for example because they are frequently flooded or because they were flooded during the previous season and might not have fully recovered yet. In the context of coastal erosion, vulnerable communities are those where homes are at greater risk of becoming uninhabitable due to coastal erosion. Coastal communities are also vulnerable to climate change because of socio-economic issues such as high proportions of older residents and transient populations, low employment levels and high seasonality of work and physical isolation

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- Strategic communications, including relevant public engagement, regarding taskforce activity.

### Environment Agency (EA):

- Report on the readiness of flood defence assets, drainage systems and natural flood management schemes.
- Report on organisational preparedness (including emergency planning, operational risk, key services, National Warning Service) and resilience (people, asset condition).
- Provide an overview of the communities most vulnerable to flooding and how they are being protected.
- Regional and national data and information on investment programmes.

### Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG):

- MHCLG Minister to act as Deputy Chair.
- Updates on MHCLG areas of responsibility, for example preparedness across Local Resilience Forums and update on recovery plans, capability and readiness.

### Cabinet Office (CO):

- CO Minister to act as Deputy Chair.
- Updates on CO areas of responsibility, for example resilience issues of wider national significance including the readiness of central government response arrangements and identification of vulnerable communities.

### Home Office:

- Updates on the state of preparedness of the emergency services.

### Local resilience forums, lead local flood authorities, regional flood and coastal committees and English regional mayors:

- Represent their wider groups to update on the state of preparedness of local regions or areas, and whether support is required from central government.

### Devolved administrations:

- Share experiences on preparedness, response, recovery and policy development.

### Met Office and Flood Forecasting Centre:

- Provide a long-term weather and flood outlook.

## Membership

### Permanent membership

#### Ministers

- Defra: Steve Reed OBE MP, Secretary of State (First Meeting Chair)
- Defra: Emma Hardy MP, Floods and Water Minister (Regular Chair)
- MHCLG: Alex Norris MP, Resilience Minister (Deputy Chair)
- Cabinet Office: Abena Opong-Asare MP, Resilience Minister (Deputy Chair)
- Department for Transport: Mike Kane MP, Aviation, Maritime and Security Minister

#### Senior officials

- Defra: Sebastian Catovsky, Co-Director, Foods & Water Directorate and Gideon Henderson, Chief Scientific Advisor
- MHCLG: Peter Lee, Director of Resilience and Recovery
- Cabinet Office: Roger Hargreaves, Director of COBR Unit and Matt Clarke, Director of Resilience Directorate
- Environment Agency: Philip Duffy, Chief Executive and Caroline Douglass, Executive Director for Flood and Coastal Risk Management
- Lead Local Flood Authorities (3 representatives, membership set for 12 months)
- Local Resilience Forums (up to 4 LRF Chairs, membership set for 12 months)
- Devolved Administrations (1 representative from each administration)
- Flood Forecasting Centre (1 representative)
- Fire service and emergency responders (such as National Police Chiefs Council and National Fire Chiefs Council with 1 representative per organisation)

#### Additional members

- Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Chairs and Coastal Partnerships Network Chair (3 representatives, membership set for 12 months)
- Met Office (1 representative)
- English mayors (2 representatives, membership set for 12 months)
- Flood Re (1 representative)
- Association of Drainage Authorities (1 representative)
- National Farmers Union (1 representative)
- National Flood Forum (1 representative)
- Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) (1 representative)
- Local Government Association (1 representative)

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- Canal & River Trust (1 representative)
- Environmental NGO (1 representative)
- Country Land and Business Association (1 representative)
- Fire Brigade Union (1 representative)
- Other organisations or individuals may also be invited, topic dependent, such as academics and external experts.

### **Meetings**

The taskforce will meet four times a year for discussions on:

1. Near-term oversight of national and local flood resilience and preparedness.
2. Longer-term oversight of wider flood and coastal erosion resilience strategy (such as targets, policy frameworks) and investment programmes.

Meetings may also include consideration of the effects of climate change compounding impacts on future areas becoming vulnerable to flooding or coastal erosion.

The agenda and papers for each meeting will be circulated prior to the meeting.

### **Principle of subsidiarity**

The taskforce will complement, not replace, existing Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response structures at national or local level.

### **Sensitivity of information**

All members of the taskforce should adhere to relevant information security and sharing arrangements and not share information that is classed Official Sensitive unless authorised to do so.