# Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce: Terms of Reference

## Strategic Context

Flooding and drought are two of the most serious natural hazards facing communities, businesses and our resilience system. They pose significant risks to public safety, economic activity and critical infrastructure, requiring a sustained collective approach to water management, emergency preparedness and adaptation.

Improving resilience to flooding and drought is fundamental to protecting communities, particularly the most vulnerable, and supporting economic activity, including our essential industries, on which growth and our national security depend.

Flooding and drought present in different ways, but they are driven by many of the same underlying pressures, including climate change, population growth and ageing infrastructure. They also share many of the same strategic, policy, adaptation and water management challenges. Bringing these risks together within a single forum supports greater coordination, strengthens policy coherence and helps national, regional and local government, regulators, industry and resilience partners to work towards common objectives.

The Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce has been established to align strategic improvement across flood and drought resilience. It will improve coherence, enhance learning and delivery and above all continue to place communities at the centre of our thinking.

## Purpose

The purpose of the Taskforce is to:

- Strengthen oversight of flood and drought resilience, from anticipation and risk identification through prevention, preparation, emergency response to recovery.
- Improve strategic connectivity between flood and drought systems, professional communities, organisations and geographical areas to support more integrated water management and better protect communities and the economy.
- Enhance the voices of communities and businesses affected by flooding and drought to inform development of policies, capabilities and approaches.

The Taskforce will:

- Bring together local, regional and national government, regulators, industry and civil society to develop a shared understanding of flood and drought resilience as a connected system, and to identify and drive the actions needed to improve resilience outcomes.
- Identify and address resilience challenges across all forms of flooding, including coastal, fluvial, groundwater and surface water flooding and coastal erosion, and all forms of drought, including agricultural, environmental and water supply drought.
- Drive a more integrated approach to flood, drought and coastal erosion resilience by identifying dependencies, opportunities and trade-offs across the resilience system and promoting coordinated action. The taskforce will capture the critical activities needed in the medium to long term to improve flood and drought resilience.
- Review resilience to flooding and drought against seasonal and longer-term risks, identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement, and promoting action to strengthen resilience.

- Provide strategic advice to Ministers on flood and drought risks, national and local preparedness, protection of vulnerable communities, lessons from major incidents and priorities for long-term resilience.
- Engage directly with communities and businesses affected by flooding, drought and coastal erosion, ensuring their experiences and insights inform policy development, investment decisions and delivery activity.
- Deliver priority outcomes through member-led Action Groups, which will coordinate activity, drive implementation of agreed improvements and strengthen engagement across the wider resilience system.
- Consider research to explore issues and inform action where this would support the Taskforce's objectives.

The Taskforce will not:

- Duplicate the role or remit of existing governance structures.
- Determine budgets or create an additional financial approval mechanism.
- Direct live operational responses in flooding or drought incidents.

The Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce has been designed to complement, rather than duplicate, existing governance arrangements. The National Drought Group will retain responsibility for monitoring and managing the operational drought position, providing regular updates to the Taskforce on risks, impacts and response activity, including learning and recommendations from drought events. The Taskforce will provide strategic oversight of wider drought resilience issues.

The Water Infrastructure Taskforce will continue its existing role overseeing water infrastructure delivery and performance. The Flood and Drought Resilience Taskforce will not consider water infrastructure delivery in detail but will receive updates on issues relevant to flood and drought resilience, providing Ministers and members with oversight of key risks, dependencies and emerging challenges.

Flood, drought and coastal erosion are devolved matters. Representatives from the Devolved Governments are warmly invited to participate but will not be directed by the Taskforce.

**Management information for the taskforce**

The taskforce will consider all forms of flooding, all forms of drought and will have a work programme agreed with members. Examples of focus areas are below:

- Hearing from flood, drought and coastal erosion affected and at-risk communities to inform development of strategy, policy and capabilities.
- Long-term weather, flood, drought and coastal erosion risk scenarios and short-term outlooks and forecasts.
- Identification of areas most vulnerable to flooding, drought and coastal erosion and assessment of their preparedness.
- Capability and readiness of the resilience systems at local, regional and national levels for preparedness, response and recovery arrangements.
- Increasing connectivity between flood and drought risk, including how expertise and lessons from each can build resilience across the hydrological cycle.

- Readiness and condition of infrastructure such as flood defence assets, drainage systems, natural flood management schemes and drought infrastructure.
- Selected drought, flood or coastal erosion strategy and policy proposals to improve short-term and longer-term resilience.
- Considering devolution issues in England relating to flooding, drought and coastal erosion.
- Supporting the delivery of agreed recommendations from Parliamentary Committees.

**Responsibilities**

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

- Ministerial Chair. Secretariat function. Deliver agreed work on policy development and operational capabilities within departmental remit. Strategic communications, including relevant public engagement, regarding taskforce activity.

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

- MHCLG Minister to act as a Deputy Chair. Deliver agreed work on MHCLG areas of responsibility, for example preparedness across Local Resilience Forums, the Fire and Rescue Service, Lead Local Flood Authorities and Flood Recovery Framework.

Cabinet Office (CO):

- CO Minister to act as Deputy Chair. Deliver agreed work 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.

Department for Transport:

- DfT Minister to act as a Deputy Chair. Deliver agreed work on flood- and drought-related risks and impacts across the transport sector, including implications for operations and infrastructure.

Environment Agency:

- Deliver agreed work on policy development and operational capabilities within organisational remit, including but not limited to reporting on the readiness of flood defence assets, drainage systems, and natural flood management schemes and drought infrastructure (where EA owned), operational readiness for floods and drought, including emergency planning, operational risk, key services and an overview of the communities most vulnerable to flooding and drought and how they are being protected. Regional and national data and information on investment programmes.

Met Office and Flood Forecasting Centre:

- Provide a long-term weather and flood outlook.

Local Resilience Forums/ Lead Local Flood Authorities/ Regional Flood and Coastal Committees/ English Regional Mayors:

- Represent their wider stakeholder groups, provide updates on preparedness in local regions and areas, and inform whether support is required from central government. If the taskforce visits an area with a Regional Mayor, they will be invited to co-chair that meeting.

Devolved Governments:

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

Non-Government Members

- Represent their wider stakeholder communities, provide updates and actively engage as members of the Taskforce, bringing expertise to Action Groups and delivery of work.

**Membership**

Government

Ministers

- Defra: Emma Hardy MP, Floods and Water Minister (Regular Chair)
- MHCLG: Baroness Blake of Leeds CBE, Resilience Minister (Deputy Chair)
- Cabinet Office: Baroness Twycross, Resilience Minister (Deputy Chair)
- Department for Transport: Keir Mather MP, Aviation, Maritime and Security Minister (Deputy Chair)

Senior Officials

- Defra: Sebastian Catovsky, Director, Water Regulation & Resilience; Stuart Armstrong, Deputy Director, CBRN, Water and Floods Resilience; Anjali Goswami, Chief Scientific Advisor; David Hallam, Director, Water Delivery; Martin Woolhead, Deputy Director, Water Infrastructure Delivery.
- MHCLG: Zainab Agha, Director for Resilience and Recovery, including Fire Response and Recovery responsibilities.
- Cabinet Office: Natasha Grant, Deputy Director for Readiness and Response.
- Environment Agency: Caroline Douglass, Executive Director for Flood and Coastal Risk Management; Helen Wakeham, Director for Water; Lyn Peart, Director Incident Management, Operational Risk and Resilience.
- Lead Local Flood Authorities (up to 3 representatives, membership set for 12 months)
- Local Resilience Forums (up to 4 LRF Chairs, membership set for 12 months)
- Devolved Governments (1-2 representatives from each administration)
- Flood Forecasting Centre (1 representative)
- Fire service/ emergency responders (e.g. National Police Chief's Council/ National Fire Chief's Council with 1 representative per organisation)
- Met Office (1 representative)
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (1 representative)
- Agricultural and Horticulture Development Board (1 representative)
- Relevant Regional Mayor (dependent on meeting location).
- Ofwat (1 representative)

Non Government Members

- Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Chairs/ Coastal Partnerships Network Chair (3 representatives, membership set for 12 months)
- FloodReady: Graham Watts, Chief Executive, Construction Industry Council, Chair of Flood Ready Leadership Group.
- Flood Re (1 representative)
- Association of Drainage Authorities (1 representative)
- British Red Cross (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)
- Canal & River Trust (1 representative)
- Environmental NGO (1 representative)
- Country Land and Business Association (1 representative)
- Fire Brigades Union (1 representative)
- Water UK (1 representative)
- Horticultural Trades Association (1 representative)
- Water companies (representative selected based on agenda and location)
- Flood Mary (1 representative)
- Flooded People (1 representative)
- Tenant Farmers Association (1 representative)
- Nature Friendly Farming Network (1 representative)
- UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology (1 representative)
- National Association of Agricultural Contractors (1 representative)
- Agricultural Industries Confederation (1 representative)
- Water Resources East (1 representative)

Other organisations/ individuals, such as academics and external experts, may also be invited dependent on the topic.

**Administrative Arrangements**

Meeting Frequency

The taskforce will meet at least four times a year, but potentially more frequently during periods of heightened risk or where business requires it. The agenda and papers for each meeting will be circulated prior to the meeting.

Principle of Subsidiarity

The taskforce will not replace existing Emergency Preparedness, Resilience and Response structures at national or local level nor seek to make decisions that are devolved to be made at a regional 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.

Costs and Expenses

Members must meet their own costs for participating in the taskforce and Defra will not pay travel and subsistence for participation. Costs for use of meeting facilities offered by hosts will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.