

# An Open Letter from the National Flood Forum

**To Sir Michael Pitt, Chair of the South West Strategic Health Authority who is conducting The Pitt Review - Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods**

*Dear Sir Michael,*

We write to you in response to the investigation and your interim findings of the 2007 Summer Floods and as a representative Charity devoted to supporting the victims of flooding. This letter contains the thoughts of the many hundreds of people we have supported and spoken to since the catastrophic floods of the summer. We ask you to give priority to the following:

We feel deeply disappointed that you stopped short of helping end the total confusion of 'who does what'. We need one agency to manage flood risk. Flooding is only managed well when people work in complete partnership, cooperating together collectively to share expertise and knowledge. This will only be managed successfully if there is one united body with the authority and clout to make tough decisions, the



**Sir Michael Pitt**

expertise and most importantly the **money** to deliver the goods.

Your report correctly identifies that the public should be more aware and better prepared for flooding. We agree that everyone who is eligible for an Environment Agency flood warning should have to opt **out** of automatically receiving one if they so chose. Such is our concern in this area that we have written our own fact sheets on preparing for flooding to promote this.

Unfortunately there were many thousands of people who didn't know they were at risk. Those who

### In This Issue...

Sir Michael Pitt on his Report.....	4
A View From Defra.....	5
ABI Demands Action.....	6
The Pitt Report - A Response .....	7
Resilient Repair - Case Studies .....	8
Reports.....	13
Leckhamsted	
Braithwaite	
Hull	
Tewksbury	
The NFF.....	20

flooded from the urban drainage infrastructure were completely unaware of the risk or what they could have done to prevent and prepare their homes from the effects of flood water. What this shows is an urgent need for regular maintenance of our drainage system. In addition there needs to be massive investment into upgrading the drainage system and research is needed into how the drains can be adapted to cope with sudden huge downpours of water

An awareness campaign informing people that our drains and infrastructure aren't built to cope with such huge volumes of water is needed. Surely this begins to show that ultimately every one is vulnerable to the risk of flooding. Maps need to be updated and made widely available as a matter of urgency to enable us to know who is at high risk of urban drainage flooding. And please let's get action, not endless rounds of

*Continued on Page 2...*

# Dear Sir Michael.... (continued)

Page 2

meetings and consultations for years to come. The summer of 2007 shows we need to know as soon as possible, so that we the general public can prepare.

We believe that grants should be widely available to enable and encourage those at risk of flooding to protect their own homes. Advice on how to do so should be readily available with easy to access flood risk assessments. Those protecting their homes need to know and understand how to go about it in the correct way. We believe that every one should be entitled to a basic level of protection ~ not just the chosen few who happen to stack up on the cost / benefit calculations. People who have been flooded must be encouraged to make their homes 'flood resilient and resistant'.

Yet there is still no financial help to flood victims at a time when financial hardship is at its greatest. Easy to access grants would enable the homeowner to build in flood resilience as part of the repairs, which would go some way to help to allay the fear of future flooding forcing people out of their homes for months on end. Another driver to encouraging the uptake of resilience should be from the insurance industry with reductions offered in excess and premiums for those who put flood resilience measures in their homes.

It appears that many smaller 'at risk communities' will never 'qualify' for flood defences but to them flooding is just as devastating. Many smaller communities have been sorely hit and in many instances virtually the whole village has been flooded. Often the cost to actually protect them is very little in comparison to the impact and damage to the community and property ~ only a drop in the total flood defence budget (the sleepy 'village' of Worcester also comes to mind where protection cannot currently be justified). What we would like

to see is a radical rethink of the prioritisation system towards a more inclusive arrangement that helps those many vulnerable people at frequent risk, not just the few who benefit from a Rolls Royce scheme protecting from very rare floods. We also ask that more money is given to regional flood defence committees to enable them to protect the areas that are not a high priority on the Defra list.

The Environment Agency may not like temporary defences but we love them! Had they not been deployed at Walham, the biggest peace time evacuation since the war would have taken place. We have witnessed first hand effective temporary defences successfully holding back the River Severn in full spate, and shared in the euphoria of the Communities when they did not flood. Temporary defences offer some peace of mind to those who don't 'qualify' for permanent defences. We would suggest that there must be better management of where they are stored and greater local partnership commitment in place ready for their speedy deployment. And remember that for every one big flood that might overwhelm the defences, there will be 99 others where the barriers can help reduce the impact of flooding.

So many thousands of people have been flooded recently; many will be displaced for a very long time. The emotional effects of being flooded and particularly losing irreplaceable personal possessions are huge. Yet this aspect of post flood recovery continues to be ignored by many Local Authorities. We think there should be a 'blue print' written for coping in post flood recovery so when the next floods come the 'blue print' can be put into action.

We agree with you and the Association of British Insurers that building on flood plains should be kept to an absolute



# Dear Sir Michael... (continued)

Page 3

minimum. We have heard many stories of areas that have never flooded before but recent development on 'flood meadows' had forced flood waters into their homes. We believe that developers should pay for upgrading sewage and drainage system to stop communities down stream from being flooded. We also agree that the developer on at risk sites should pay for flood defences. We believe that building regulations should be toughened up to ensure that new builds have to be made flood resilient and that necessary defences are in place. Failure to do this should result in the insurance industry refusing to insure the development rendering it blighted before any property is sold.

Flooding has destroyed the lives and caused so much heart ache and distress to so many tens of thousands of people in this year alone. We would ask you to consider the proposals outlined above. The National Flood Forum has worked for over five years on behalf of both those at flood risk and

those who have been flooded. When the media have walked away, the visit of government ministers has ceased, we are the organisation left behind working with and listening to the silent screams, the tears, the heartache of Flood victims and then helping them pick up the pieces of their lives. We also find it regrettable that at the time when the work of the National Flood Forum is needed most, the Environment Agency appear to disregard the needs of the public by removing all funding from the work we do. We hope you recognise the valuable service we provide and recommend greater commitment to the National Flood Forum and the communities we support in the future.

The man on the street now has to live with the increased threat of flooding. Sir Michael, may we ask that as well as listening to the policy makers (many of whom haven't even begun to experience the devastation of being flooded) you

listen to and provide for those people who have been flooded and live in fear of the next time.

*Signed,  
The Chief Executive and  
Directors of the National  
Flood Forum*



**Brendan Glynnane**



**Phil Awford**



**Sue Chalkley**



**Tony Coats**



**Paul Hendy**



**Heather Shepherd**



**Mary Dhonau**



# The Pitt<sup>4</sup> Review

## Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods



In August 2007, I was appointed by the Government to carry out a review into the summer 2007 floods which, I am sure readers of this article will be only too aware of.

The floods during June and July 2007 were a wake-up call. The three months from May to July were the wettest since records began and the events that followed have been linked to the deaths of 13 people. They also resulted in damage to approximately 48,000 homes and 7,000 businesses. Power and water supplies were lost, railway lines, eight motorways and many other roads were closed and large parts of five countries and four cities were brought to a standstill. From an emergency response standpoint, this was a new level of challenge. The flooding triggered a series of emergencies which stretched local resources to the limit.

While the scale of flood damage to property and infrastructure was shocking, it was the level of human suffering that struck me most. During the preparation of the interim report of my review, I visited many parts of the country that were affected by the emergencies, spoken to people involved and inspected damage to homes and businesses. Meeting with people and hearing of their experiences first-hand provided me with a much greater sense of the loss and outrage associated with a home or business being flooded, and the prospect of it happening all over again at some unknown future date.

I saw businesses that had been ruined and met many people who faced the prospect of having to live in caravans or other temporary accommodation for many months to come. It was for this reason more than any other that convinced me to write the interim report from the perspective of the victims of

flooding and why I wholeheartedly believe that those in a position of influence need to do all they can to reduce the risk and impact of flooding in the future.

The interim report of my review, which was published just before Christmas 2007, laid out the initial findings based upon the evidence so far collated and within it I have made 15 key recommendations that I believe need to be implemented urgently in order to prevent or mitigate flooding which might occur this winter or spring. While I was very pleased that the Secretary of State for the Environment, Hilary Benn, has accepted these initial proposals it is important to note that these recommendations are not just for government – local organisations, the private sector and the public also need to take action as the risk of flooding is here to stay.

The interim report also lays out the future direction for my review and acts as a consultation document leading to the publication of the final report in the summer. I would strongly encourage all readers of this newsletter to read the interim report and contact the review team with any thoughts or comments on the interim conclusions. A copy of the report, and how you can submit your comments, can be found at: [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview)

It remains my firm intention that all outcomes from my review are long lasting and help to ensure that, while flooding will remain a threat for the future, its impact on homeowners and businesses can be kept to a minimum and we do not see a repeat of the scenes of last summer.



*Sir Michael Pitt*

*Independent Chair of the review into the 2007 floods.*

# A View from Defra - Sustainable Drainage

5



In the previous newsletter, the Minister of State, Phil Woolas, discussed the Government's response to the severe flooding this summer and explained our approach to manage flood risk in the longer term. One of the most striking aspects from the summer, as some readers may have experienced themselves, was the damage caused from surface water. The Environment Agency estimate that flooding from 'other sources', predominantly surface water, accounted for flooding to around 35,000 homes – that's two thirds of all properties affected.

This is a complex issue. Significantly, urban flooding problems are expected to increase with climate change, particularly due to the finite capacity of any piped drainage system and the possibility of more intense rainfall events. Winter rainfall is predicted to increase by 10-30% by the 2080s, while rainfall intensity could increase by up to 20%. The Foresight Future Flooding report estimated that the number of properties at very significant risk from surface water flooding could rise to 300,000-400,000 by the 2080s.

Our understanding of surface water flooding is still quite limited, in part because organisations are responsible for different aspects of the problem. We are working constructively with these organisations, including the Environment Agency, local authorities, Ofwat and water companies to look at how to improve co-ordination and management of surface water drainage.

We expect to make a range of proposals for better management of surface water drainage in the upcoming Government Water Strategy. This will take on board the recommendations set out in Sir Michael Pitt's interim report on Lessons Learned (published on 17 December), and the 15 pilot projects on urban drainage that Defra is currently funding (see

breakout box for more details). There will be a public consultation early in 2008. We are very keen that members of the National Flood Forum submit their views to us on these proposals.

We recognise that sewer flooding is a particular problem and we are seeking ways in which we can improve the uptake of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS), including addressing the issue of adoption. A further issue we are considering is the ability of developers to connect surface water drainage to the public sewerage system, which can add significantly to loads on the existing network.

Individuals have an equally important role to play. Ministers have recently called for a "shift in thinking", highlighting how people can make a direct contribution to managing surface water. Although it will not be a complete answer, adopting a few simple measures to store and utilise rainwater more effectively may reduce the risk of flooding to

individuals and their communities. This includes, for example, using water butts to collect rainwater and constructing patios or driveways with permeable surfaces so that rainwater enters the water table rather than the drainage system.

Small changes such as these can, if widely taken up, make a significant difference to meeting the challenges of increased development and climate change in a sustainable way. We welcome the assistance of the National Flood Forum in promoting these type of actions through their members and local community groups.

***"We are very keen that members of the National Flood Forum submit their views to us on these proposals...."***

## Integrated Urban Drainage Pilots

Under *Making space for water* 15 pilot projects around the country have been set up to examine a range of different approaches to develop more integrated urban drainage management. The pilot studies will identify effective ways for partnerships to manage surface water flooding in high risk urban areas through an integrated drainage approach.

We aim to produce a final guidance document in 2008 to highlight recommendations for achieving successful management that can be widely applied.

For more information, including details of the pilots in your region, visit our website:

[www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fcd/policy/strategy/ha2.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/enviro/fcd/policy/strategy/ha2.htm)



# ACTION NEEDED NOW TO TACKLE THE RISING FLOOD RISK SAYS THE ABI.....

Tempting though it might be to do so, we cannot write off this summer's devastating floods as a freak, once-in-a-lifetime event. There is now scientific consensus that climate change is leading to more erratic weather patterns, with bouts of bad weather, like flooding, set to become more frequent, more severe and more costly. Separate reviews from the ABI and Sir Michael Pitt, both published in December 2007 reach the same conclusion: we need a long-term flood strategy if we are to give our communities the protection they need and deserve.



**Stephen Haddrill**  
**ABI Director General**

While the scale of this summer's floods may not have been able to have been predicted, the deficiencies in how we managed the consequences could have been. Back in 2000 the Government described the then floods as a "wake up call" to do more to reduce the risk. Yet today our system of dealing with flooding remains hampered by the lack of clear leadership, incomplete data about the true extent of the flood risk and new homes continuing to be built in high flood risk areas without adequate flood protection.

Insurers of course have a key role to play in providing financial protection against the consequences of flooding and in pushing for a better system in how we manage this growing threat. Following the summer floods insurers dealt with 165,000 claims, arranged temporary accommodation for 15,000 customers and will pay out around £3billion. This work continues, as insurers work to ensure everyone still out of their homes returns as soon as they have fully dried-out.

The UK is fortunate in that flood insurance is widely available in the open market unlike in most other countries. Insurers want to continue to make flood insurance as widely available and affordable as possible. We have an agreement with the Government that commits ABI members to continue to offer flood cover to all existing customers, providing the flood risk is being adequately managed. But unless we see a step-change in the Government's approach we face the real danger that flood cover will become increasingly more expensive for many, and harder to obtain for those at highest risk of flooding.

This why in our recently published report: Summer floods 2007: Learning the lessons, we argued for the

development of a 25- year long- term flood strategy, based around:

- **Clear leadership.** One body, The Environment Agency, should have overall responsibility for implementing flood management strategy. The Climate Change Bill should give the Agency this power.
- **Re assessment** of the true nature of the flood risk from rivers, drainage, and coasts with an investment programme to match. This data should be publicly available.
- **Stronger planning controls.** The Government should review any decisions to grant planning permission for any major new development against advice from The Environment Agency.
- **Better preparedness.** From Government departments to local resident groups, there needs to be better co ordination between all the agencies to ensure the fastest and most efficient response possible.

While an overhaul in how we manage the flood risk must be driven by the Government, homeowners and businesses need more help in being better prepared.

While we believe that the insurance industry responded well to the massive number of claims, we can always improve. So we will be working the Government, the NFF and other agencies to develop clear generic information on what our customers can expect when they make a flood claim, such as typical timescales, and how repairs will be arranged.

We recognise the importance of flood resilience. The ABI is working with the NFF to help and encourage those most at risk to make their homes more flood-resistant. Measures such as concrete floors and greater use of more water-resistant building materials, re positioning of electrical points are not only a wise investment, but could mean that flood insurance is available when it might otherwise be difficult to obtain.

The summer 2007 floods presented the insurance industry with one of its greatest ever challenges, as well as devastating the lives of millions of homeowners and businesses.

The time has come for the Government to professionalise its approach to flood management. Only by doing this will our communities get the protection they need and deserve.

# A Response to the Pitt Report - from Pickering

## This is the Pitts

The Pitt Report is a fig leaf covering the Government's embarrassment over its continued failure to adequately fund flood defences. The remit of the review is to look at lessons learned and deal more effectively with flooding.

It completely misses the point that the best way to deal with flooding is to act to prevent it happening.

The report aims to look at the best way to adapt – again while failing to note that the answer is to build more defences and better infrastructure.

Worse, it scapegoats people who have been flooded, making them victims twice over, as it urges them to be better prepared like good scouts.

In reality however prepared someone is for the worst, their homes and businesses will still be wrecked by flooding.

Homeowners cannot simply move their property to higher ground or turn aside a wall of water sweeping through their living rooms.

Where surface water is the problem, better maintenance and major infrastructure improvements are key.

Adequate protection against river flooding requires flood defences which places like the historic market town of Pickering desperately need.

The report fails to tackle the central issue, which is not about the response to floods but the reason they were allowed to happen.

In the case of Pickering the Environment Agency invested £750,000 in drawing up a viable scheme of



**A distressed flood victim in Pickering is helped to safety by a fireman  
(Photo courtesy of Malton and Pickering Mercury)**

defences five years ago.

Since then not a brick has been laid because the Government pulled the rug on funding – as it has in places like Thirsk, Northallerton, and Ripon.

The report from Sir Michael claims to be hard hitting but it deftly fails to land a glove on the Government.

The devastation in Pickering this summer – its sixth major flood in eight years - was predicted and wholly preventable

The parameters of the review neatly sidestep the basic truth that there has been a comprehensive failure to invest in protecting our communities.

The report proudly refuses to point the finger of blame.

**But there is blame – it lies with the Government.**

*Howard Keal*

*Pickering Flood Defence Group*

### Delite Insurance

- A true solution for flood affected properties or those living in potential flood plains.
- Our Lloyds underwriter will consider every case offering attractive quotations where others fail!!
- Let us prove to you why we won a customer service award for placing complicated risks.

Call Neil at Delite Insurance Agency on

**0844 4128801**

Email [specialist@deliteinsurance.co.uk](mailto:specialist@deliteinsurance.co.uk)

**DELITE- INSURING A BRIGHTER FUTURE**



# Case Studies - Resilient Repair

In the last edition we included reports from 2 people who had just been flooded in the summer floods. They were both experiencing the anguish of being flooded. Now 6 months later we hear from them again and see how they are coping - and how they are preparing for future floods by using resilient repair.

## Case Study - Resilient Repair - Worcester

**First, Andy Churchill from Worcester talks about raising the floors in his house...**

After the winter 2000 floods I took certain steps to try and hold back the ingress of flood water, some more successful than others! Two damp proof membranes were laid over the soil sub floor and a concrete slab formed on top, all surfaces running to a central sump pump. The pump would then hopefully pump out and keep the level away from the floor-boards, after levels had receded it would then be used to pump out the under floor to speed up the drying out process. The water used to enter rapidly through the soil under floor so by slowing this we hoped to balance pumping out with water entering. Flood barriers for the doors were constructed from marine ply and butyl rubber-

these were not used in the recent floods due to insufficient warning - aluminium covers were cut to cover air-bricks and these worked fine. During the floods more entry points were found and work was done to block these.

After two floods in seven years we had to do something to protect the value of our house and hold on to future flood insurance, our insurers had been excellent in 2000 and we hoped they would this time. As it turned out we had the renewal premium in November and the policy had gone up by about £20 and the excess remained at £75--a most welcome renewal figure!

The floods of summer 2007 had forced us into a  
*Continued on Page 10...*



**FLOODGATE**

**THE UNIQUE FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM**

*"Help protect your home,  
help protect your insurance."*

**BENEFITS INCLUDE:**

- \* AWARDED BSI KITEMARK
- \* NO PERMANENT FITTINGS TO THE PROPERTY
- \* NO INSTALLATION COSTS
- \* QUICK AND SIMPLE TO USE
- \* CAN BE INSTALLED DURING FLOODING - MINIMISING DAMAGE
- \* PROVIDES GREATER PROTECTION THAN 50+ SANDBAGS

**01267 234205**  
**[www.floodgate.ltd.uk](http://www.floodgate.ltd.uk)**



# WHEN FLOODS THREATEN, HESCO FLOOD DEFENCES KEEP VITAL LOCAL UTILITIES RUNNING

*How a great British invention that has already saved countless lives in Iraq and Afghanistan has now been put to good use at home on the flood plains of Gloucestershire*

When Yorkshire businessman, Jimi Heselden invented the Concertainer® Unit in 1990, little could he have imagined the wide range of applications his patented product would have.

These linked wire-mesh and fabric-lined baskets pull out manually in a matter of minutes into a 4'6" high barrier, which can then be filled with aggregate to form a robust defence wall.

They have been used across the world - to defend against coastal erosion; upgrading levees in New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina; and most prolifically in Iraq and Afghanistan to provide blast protection for UK and US soldiers.

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that following the widespread floods in the UK this summer, the expertise of the team from Leeds-based company, Hesco Bastion Ltd, was called upon to provide a swift and effective response to the threat of further flooding at several key utility sites in Gloucestershire.

**A race against the clock**  
When the Severn Trent water treatment plant was struck by severe floods, thousands of homes in the community were left without clean water. As these flood waters began to recede, Severn Trent engineers worked tirelessly to repair the plant and resume service, only to be hit with yet another flood warning that threatened to send the clean up operation back to square one. It was vital to move quickly to prevent a repeat of the previous week's disasters.

On the evening of Friday 27th July, an order was placed with Hesco to provide a protective barrier around the site. It was delivered within four hours and work began on Saturday morning in what South West army liaison officer, Colonel Christopher

Price, described as 'a very slick operation.' Contractors and the military worked together supported by a team from Hesco to deploy over a kilometre of chest-high Concertainer defence walls in less than 27 hours - a task that could have taken an estimated two weeks longer to complete with sandbags.

The units were quickly pulled into position and filled by bucket loaders with 2,400 tonnes of aggregate. The protective walls around the plant are now far more robust than traditional sandbag walls - fewer joins mean less opportunity for the water to seep through and the linked structure provides an extremely stable barrier against the possibility of future flooding.

Commenting on BBC TV's Midlands Today, David Wickens, Quality Manager at Severn Trent said of the new perimeter barrier, "It really does bolster the defences of this site from further flooding quite significantly...[providing] a good measure of protection for the next few years."

**Blending into the local landscape**

Indeed, although these defences can be swiftly deployed in an emergency, the solution they offer is far from just a temporary one. Once deployed, the barriers can be fortified so as to provide long term flood defences and measures can even be taken to ensure that they present as little disruption as possible to the local environment. "The units can be planted with foliage to blend in with the surrounding natural environment and reduce the impact that they might have on the landscape," said Jake McQueen, product manager at Hesco.

**Saving a sub-station**  
For communities, coping with flood waters inundating towns

and villages is hard enough without having to survive a loss of power in the aftermath. At Walham, where news footage showed flood waters just inches away from devastating the sub-station, this was a very real risk for National Grid. The company called in the experts from Hesco, who assisted the Royal Air Force and the Army with the installation of the protective barrier stretching around 700 metres. The wall was securely positioned in just 19 hours, averting a potential national disaster and ensuring that the power remained on for local residents.

**The future of flood defence in the UK**  
Government reviews are underway and protecting key infrastructure is likely to be high on the agenda, judging by the recently published Pitt Review interim report.

According to Sir Michael Pitt, we should now put the flood threat "on a par with the terrorism risk or an influenza pandemic" and ensure that we are prepared for what seems like an increasingly inevitable phenomenon in today's climate.

The expertise of the Hesco team and the years of experience they have in protecting people and locations throughout the world are invaluable assets when implementing flood defences both in an emergency and as part of a planned response to the flood risk.

Learning from the recent experiences in Gloucestershire, it is now hoped that Hesco defences may be used more widely in the UK to protect key infrastructure and ensure that when floods threaten utilities, local residents need not worry that their vital supplies of drinking water and power will be switched off.



Construction crew extending Hesco units at Mythe water treatment plant in Tewkesbury.



Construction crew fill Hesco units at Mythe water treatment plant in Tewkesbury.



Levee upgrade, East Jefferson, Louisiana, USA.



Hesco flood walls protect Walham electricity substation, Gloucester.



Hesco flood walls protect Walham electricity substation, Gloucester.



Hesco flood barrier control, Austria.

For more information on Hesco Bastion Ltd please visit the website [www.hesco.com](http://www.hesco.com) or call Jonathan Bird on 020 7350 5454.

## Case Study - Resilient Repair - Worcester

*Continued from Page 8...*

corner. Raise the floor levels, rather than try to keep the waters out, was the way to go! While the insurers would "reinstate" the property to pre-flood conditions they could not fund flood prevention measures, we



would have to pay to protect our house and house value. The first job was lifting all the floor joists by 10.75 inches, this was done by a builder employed and managed by myself. All the lifting was done while my wife and I lay on a beach in Turkey! We returned to raised joists and also a raised kitchen roof to allow us to raise the kitchen floor level, all door lintels and windows would have to be raised the same



10 amount. We then called upon friends to assist in the raising of all concrete floors, all plumbing had to be adapted to fit in with the new levels, (£600+), then a damp proof membrane was laid on top. sheets of celotex insulation were then laid and another damp proof membrane followed by a concrete slab and screed, finally finishing with carpet on the wood and tiles on the concrete. Due to the porch door being at too low a level to raise steps were formed to reach the new interior floors, these will be tiled in case of flood water entry - a flood door is the next urgent purchase. The sump pump remains but will be placed at a higher level so as not to create a problem with pressure on the outside walls, it will still be used to pump out after levels recede.

By offering to "project manage" the reinstatement of our property ourselves we were able to do our flood prevention work along-side the insurance funded work. This has worked very well and as the water



levels were six to seven inches in previous floods we have gone a fair way above those levels, we were only able to do this as we had eight foot six inch ceilings, had we had lower head height i dread to think what we would have done!

Severn Trent Water have visited and at their expense will fit non-return valves to the sewers and an increased pit to accommodate "solids" until levels recede. Work is due to start, and be completed, on Thursday 22nd November.

We have now done what we can to floor levels, a flood gate will handle the lower end of the hall and porch, the garage will still flood but we can handle that. We have to hope that the next flood peaks at ,or close to, previous levels as being a semi-detached property creates problems if your neighbouring property has no flood protection measures implemented.

*Andy Churchill*



## Case Study - Resilient Repair - North Cave

**Next, Phil Garland describes the basic steps he has taken to make his home resilient...**

So the question I asked myself “who or what will protect us in the future”

On the 25th June 2007 my family and I were victims of the floods in East Yorkshire.

The village we live in became very proactive immediately after the floods to try and get to the source of the flooding and get some answers to questions we were all asking.

We set up a committee, commissioned a drainage engineer and commenced a flood defence scheme design and proposal.

With the design work starting on our scheme, I could rest easy in the thought that our village would be safe in the future from flooding as our MTP application (an application for 100% direct government funding for flood defence schemes) would be submitted and be successful based upon the previous years submissions, that are point scored for success.

Life seemed to be getting back onto track, the drying certificate on my house was issued to the insurance company and the

contractors were ready to start, with a promise that we would be back in for Christmas. Great.

Then like a shot from the blue the Environment Agency changed the point scoring criteria and our flood defence scheme was thrown out, as it wasn't highly scored enough to be successful.

What would we do now, who or what would protect my property? My thoughts immediately turned to my own flood defences. Without any structured village flood defence scheme will I get insurance in the future? Will the insurance be too expensive or will it have such an excess for flooding that it becomes unviable.

11

I commenced my investigation into flood resilient repairs and construction, from a construction background myself I knew this would be invaluable experience for me, as in the future, flooding will be now be part of design criteria on all new developments in our area.

So timber floors to concrete, sockets relocated at higher level, solid wood kitchen units, install a new wall mounted boiler, install a new wall mounted gas fire as well as many others.

So with my flood resilient repair scheme in hand I approached my loss adjuster to ask for these to be included in my reconstruction. I was confident that



**Flooding in North Cave - Summer 2007**

my insurers would be most grateful to receive these recommendations as in the future, should we flood again it would prevent excessive costs for reconstruction and would allow less time out of the house.

The answer came back that my insurers that they were not prepared to pay for this cost, it would be my responsibility. Their reason? - I could change insurers in the future and they would not see the benefit for this work. They will only pay like for like reinstatement costs.

How could I afford this when my house is apparently worthless and the only way I can the value back is by

## Case Study - Resilient Repair - North Cave

12

these construction methods and the village flood defence scheme. Right back to square one again.

This made me start to think just slightly out of the box, certain things could be done, that relatively speaking would not be that expensive when reinstating the house after a flood.

- Install the boiler or service meters on a wall or on a plinth off the floor
- Change timber floors to concrete. If the cost precludes this then look to fit air brick covers.
- Fit all timber skirting boards, door frames and architraves and paint them to a finish on all sides, front and back.
- Look to tile all concrete floors with a non-porous floor tiles with solid adhesive backing and non-porous grout.
- Don't paint over your hinges to your doors, leave them exposed so that they are easy to unscrew and remove quickly.

- Look to use a lime based plaster or sand and cement render and skim when replastering the walls
- Consider using waterproof paints for all surfaces that you feel to be in the flood line.
- Fit non return valves on all drainage pipes.
- Remove any floor mounted kitchen appliances and either site on plinths or have integrated products.

With these changes now incorporated on my house I am now hoping that when I receive my insurance renewal I can confidently inform my insurers of these and hopefully ensure that my excess is minimal and cover is continued.

As the for the village flood defence scheme well a lot of hard work is ahead of us but I'm sure that we will be successful.

*Phil Garland*

The leading flood protection  
company in the UK!

 **Floodguards**<sup>®</sup>  
Systems Limited

*Providing total solutions for your home and business  
against the devastating effects of flooding!*



**RAPIDAM**<sup>®</sup>



***Floodguards win Defra Leeds City Council  
contract for flood protection products***



T: 0845 500 0077 F: 0845 500 0088 E: [sales@floodguards.com](mailto:sales@floodguards.com) [www.floodguards.com](http://www.floodguards.com)

*Keeping you out of deep water!*





## Leckhamsted

### Laura Young describes her experience of being flooded and talks about how difficult it is to find anyone to accept responsibility...

On July 19th My boyfriend and I headed off to Lyme Regis to my boyfriend's Dad's house for a well deserved weeks holiday, on the 20th July we were having a lovely breakfast in the sunshine only to receive a telephone call from my friend saying that the stream by our house had got very high and did I want her to move my car. I thought she was joking or overreacting so asked her to send me a picture text of how high the water was, we have been used to the stream going up and down very quickly so just wanted to be sure. The picture showed the water just inches from the top of the doorstep – which is about 15 inches high and she said it was still raining! At that point I panicked, we packed things up into the car, left our two dogs with my boyfriend's dad and started a horrendous 7 hours journey back, even the motorway was flooded it was so scary. We were getting regular calls from my friend as she grabbed neighbours to try and help put what furniture they could up high, I just told her to put towels down but didn't realise there was just no way to stop it getting in the house. The next picture showed a person on a bike outside our kitchen window, the water was so high you couldn't see the bike. By the time we got back the house wasn't our home anymore, we waded round to a window to get in, the wooden floors created a tidal wave as you stepped on them and the whole place stank, our home was destroyed.

As for support it was hopeless, our insurance company lost our details 3 times and we had a constant battle with them, I know millions of people where affected by the heavy rainfall on the 20th and just felt sorry for some people who perhaps didn't have the friends/family to support them like we did. We lived in a hotel for 3 weeks and then eventually moved into the upstairs of the house, which wasn't ideal but at least we were

home and could have the dogs with us (and trying to save the insurance company money) After 3 months of dryers and de-humidifiers going in the house, the noise was horrendous, we were finally announced dry and got the decorators and under floor heating re done, we were both looking forwards to having our home back and a normal Christmas.

Then on October the 16th it happened all over again, it had been raining for a long time and we checked the steam when we went to bed at 11pm, by 2.30am my boyfriend was up and telling me he was moving the cars again. I went down the village to see how high the water was and it wasn't even coming down the road. Then it just all happened so quickly the water kept coming up, it hit all the doors and started bubbling up through the floors. By 4am the house was flooded

***“By the time we got back the house wasn't our home anymore...  
.....the whole place stank, our home was destroyed”***

again, the now familiar smell of the musty/dampness. If your house floods once you think ok one off, get things put straight and move on, but to happen twice in 3 months! Something has to be done

or someone must be able to help.

We were back to square one again, not knowing what to do I rang the environment agency who told me it wasn't their responsibility because it wasn't a “main river”. They also informed me it wasn't the British Drainage board so I needed to contact our local council. I was scouring the web to try and find help or support that is available for people like us which is when I discovered the flood forum, speaking to Mary was a great help because she was able to advise me what further steps I could take. Following that I wrote to our local MP and organised for Aylesbury vale to do a site visit, which took place also attended by the Chairman of the Parish Council. It was explained that our property is now classed as being partly on a flood plain, and that the funding is very limited for flooding support. Our nearest town (3 miles away) Buckingham is classed as having 10 points flooding rating which means they may get

## Leckhamsted (Continued)

some work done in 2014, which doesn't even put us on the first rung of the ladder!

We were offered some help to re-instate banks the other side of the village (where cattle have trodden them down) but to be honest the feeling is that this would only make it flow faster past the back of the house. I asked about having the stream dragged but was told this is not an

option, to us the main contributing factor was the bridge which roughly 12 years ago used to have a

larger arch way for the water to pass through. Now when it hits capacity a small arch way with 3 holes each side it backs up onto our house. We asked



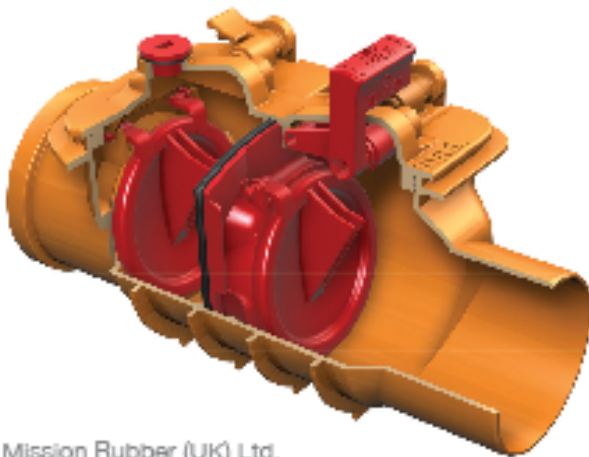
about having the changed but told that was down to the Highways department in the council and would cost £250,000 and that funding is not likely to be available for this. We left it that we would get the debris/branches cleared out of the stream (which we spent a long hard

weekend armed with chainsaws doing) and that the lady from Aylesbury vale would contact the



## Reliable Backwater Protection from Mission

Protect your property against flooding from the main sewer with Mission double flap in-line anti-flood valves



- Available in sizes from 50mm to 200mm diameter
- Comply with the requirements of the Building Regulations for double flaps (Approved Doc. H)
- Manufactured to BS EN 13564
- Single Flap In-Line Valve available up to 500mm diameter
- End Flap Valves available up to 1500mm diameter

Mission Rubber (UK) Ltd.  
Units 4+5, Atlas Business Park  
Stannhill Close, Sheffield S35 9TG  
Tel 0114 257 0040 • Fax 0114 257 1122

[www.missionrubber.co.uk](http://www.missionrubber.co.uk)



## Leckhamsted (Continued)

planning office to see what could be done about the bridge. We said we would do some figures to see how much it holds the water back by, which has been done and it is about 50% once the bridge hits capacity, its like having a huge brick wall in the middle of a river.

I have heard back from our Local MP who has said that it is awful people are not offered more support by local authorities and then followed up with a letter after Aylesbury vale have gone back to him. In the letter Aylesbury vale said "it is possible to carry out minor earth works to reduce the overflow onto the road. Replacing the bridge is not a viable option because of the cost, but I will explore with Buckingham county council whether further relief can be achieved in any way e.g. an additional converted channel alongside. Funding for this is likely to be difficult to obtain however" I have

*"It's like no one will help you they are all just passing the problem round and meanwhile we live in fear that the flooding could happen again..."*

since phoned Aylesbury Vale to ask them if they can dig out some of the sediment that has build up under the arch of the bridge and at the sides so the water can flow through earlier when/if it gets high again. I have now been told because the sediment is on part of the structure of the bridge it needs to

go back to the Council to ask them to do something about it because the bridge is their responsibility. It's like no one will help you they are all just passing the problem round and meanwhile we live in fear that the flooding could happen

again.

The picture attached is the view of the road from our house, at the far left hand side you can see the top rung of the bridge which indicates how high the water is. This was when the flood had started to go down for a few hours !

*Laura Young*



## International Conference on Flood Recovery Innovation and Response

### FRIAR 2008

Dates - 2 - 3 July 2008 Venue – One Great George Street, LONDON

Organised jointly by - **University of Wolverhampton** and **Wessex Institute of Technology**

This two day Conference will provide a unique opportunity for **Practitioners, Researchers and all others** interested in the topic of flooding to meet in order to exchange experience and ideas.

Conference themes include:

- Risk management in relation to flood events
- Pre-event planning & business continuity
- Management of major events
- Post damage restoration and recovery
- Victims of flooding
- International & national government policy

**For further information please contact:**

Jenna Solanki  
Conference Secretariat - FRIAR 2008  
WESSEX INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
Ashurst Lodge, Ashurst  
Southampton SO40 7AA  
Tel + 44 (0) 238 029 3223  
Fax + 44 (0) 238 029 2853  
EMail jsolanki@wessex.ac.uk

### 2008 Workshops from the Flood Repair Network Series

**Details including dates and venues will shortly be  
announced via the NFF website**

### The Misery from the 2005 Floods Continues

Our village shop has served the rural community for over 100 years. We also have the benefit of being in the middle of a beautiful tourist area with many holiday visitors and walkers.

In both January and October 2005, the shop flooded. Council workers and employees told us that the shop had flooded due to lack of maintenance to the drains. I have received no help, financial or otherwise from the local authority.

In March 2006 I had to close the shop so that it could be re-plastered.

Although contents claims were settled after a while, nobody had warned me that the shop might suffer a downturn in trade after three closures in the space of 15 months. Once I became aware of the decline, I contacted the insurance company and was told to gather information as the loss may be "substantial".

At present I have only had an insulting offer of 6 months loss of trade cover despite being covered for 24 months - because the loss adjuster thinks that's enough time to recover.

He suggested there was a general decline in trade, despite the fact that I had grown the gross profit margin and turnover - he only had to look at previous years figures.

The shop's turnover is now half of what it was before the floods. I have only kept it alive this long thanks to generosity and support of friends and family.

My favourite quote from the company was ; " I know I'm being devil's advocate here, but why wouldn't trade just go back to normal as soon as you reopen the shop doors?". Let me see now, anybody out there got 'O' level economics, or even just some basic common sense?

The insurance company have sat on this claim hoping that I would go away, several times I have been in tears on the phone to them, they know the pain and heartache, financial hardship and loss of self esteem I have suffered because of this. Nobody has come to me and said lets sit down right now and sort this out.

I have four children, I can not begin to express how the whole thing has affected our home life.

*Daphne*



The photo is from around 1878 I'm told!

## Hull

**It's Never Dull in Hull...**

Sometimes don't you just wish you could get your hands on the person who thinks up slogans for Tee Shirts? In this beautiful and vibrant city of Hull June 2007 will always be remembered for the overwhelming sense of darkness and despair imposed on them from the skies.

Just 6 months ago Hull and the surrounding areas experienced an unprecedented rain storm (greater than 1 in 150 year occurrence) which overwhelmed the city's ability to cope with such a massive quantity of water. This resulted in some 8657 houses on more than 600 streets being flooded (or damaged by floodwater). With over 20,000 people affected. This is approximately eight per cent of the population within the area of Hull City Boundary.

The magnitude of the scale of the disaster has to be seen to be believed, yet the resilience and fortitude of

the people of Hull was exceptional as much then as it is now. Sadly a life was lost bringing more heartache in an already difficult situation.

National Flood Forum was to work within the local Community and within local Businesses where we provided support and help as people sought to cope with the destruction caused by the flood water.

It was a special privilege to be able to work along side Hull City Council in developing a recovery strategy. This led to the development of a Hull Flood Advice programme, providing a dedicated flood telephone helpline, with teams of Community workers travelling out to flood affected areas. Leaflets, advice and massive support were made available to people still traumatised by the flooding.

With our experience of previous floods and its impact on Communities The National Flood Forum provided and continues to give vital help to Flood victims as

***"This resulted in some 8657 houses on more than 600 streets being flooded (or damaged by floodwater). With over 20,000 people affected. This is approximately eight per cent of the population within the area of Hull City Boundary"***

**FLOOD WALL**  
flood protection engineers

**DO YOU NEED TOTAL  
FLOOD PROTECTION?**

Floodwall's unique flood defence products are the best way to safeguard your property from flooding

**FLOOD WALL**  
flood protection engineers

**CALL 01242 544 554 OR VISIT [WWW.FLOODWALL.NET](http://WWW.FLOODWALL.NET)**



## Hull (Continued)



they struggle to cope with the difficulties of a major Insurance claim. Lack of communication, delayed payments and a failure to dry out property featured in many of our early case loads. Working closely with the Federation of small businesses in Hull we were able to put together a list of local builders who were able to help with house repairs.

Now Christmas has passed, the trauma and fear is still there for families every time it rains. Some people managed to find room in a caravan in which to put up a Christmas tree, but cooking a turkey in a caravan oven defeated so many others, some just put Christmas off for a year.

Now in this New Year, many people who thought they had escaped flooding now find their home showing signs of damp, warped doors, peeling wall paper, black mould, and new claims are being presented daily.

Flooding will not go away in the UK, for the people of Hull, East Ridding and other areas we pray for some respite from another reoccurrence in the near future.

The greatest difficulty we all face is bring understanding to Central Government and Local Authorities the reality of the impact of flooding and both its short and long term effects on people and Communities. So many local people have said to me if '10 Downing Street had been flooded, as we have, perhaps there would have been greater support and understanding. For them it's a paragraph in a Newspaper, to us its our lives'.

*Paul Hendy*

*NFF*

# DamFast Flood Barriers

- **Proven Over 10 Years**
- **Still the Cheapest**
- **Still the Best**
- **Thousands in use with councils, businesses, communities and householders.**
- **Light**
- **Quick and easy to use**
- **Effective**
- **Standard Channel and Panel Door Unit**

**Still Only £60 plus VAT**

**[www.damfast.co.uk](http://www.damfast.co.uk)**

**01604 810507**



## Tewkesbury

**NEVER IN THE TOWN OR FIELDS OF TEWKESBURY HAS SO MUCH DAMAGE BEEN DONE TO SO MANY BY SO FEW**

*"I recognise that people believe the land to be in the floodplain but it is not. Nor did it flood in July"*

*A Spokesman*

*Tewkesbury Borough Council*

NACRA (Newtown Area and Residents Association) was formed to give the people of Newtown Tewkesbury a strong voice on flood issues.

The photograph opposite and statement from the Tewkesbury Borough Council illustrate the problems that we have to overcome. This is the site for a further 107 houses that the council has approved to be built.

The people of Tewkesbury protested about this development, it was deferred for one month but eventually passed at the following planning committee meeting; the decision was made on a technicality that it was a redesign of the houses and the original approval was given two years previously. The councillors of the planning committee were also nervous that if they did not approve it the developers would take the council to court on appeal and the council would lose costing

Community

them a lot of money.

On the 31st of October, 2007 NACRA wrote to the Secretary of State Hilary Benn asking him to call in the application and reverse the decision, no reply or acknowledgement of the letter was received and on 28th November we sent a letter chasing Mr. Benn.

Would anyone in their right mind build on this site? The ordinary man in the street would look at the picture and say no way. The question needs to be asked why disregard the evidence and build



**The Site for a Further 107 Houses Approved by Tewksbury Borough Council**

anyway?

One residents association such as NACRA does not have a strong enough voice to sway entrenched authority thinking, consequently all the residents associations in Tewksbury have come together and formed the Severn and Avon Valley Combined Flood Group and we hope that this will strengthen our lobbying position.

Contact details for both groups can be obtained on the NACRA website

**[www.nacra-tewkesbury.org.uk](http://www.nacra-tewkesbury.org.uk)** .

Both groups are affiliated to the National Flood Forum.

*Dave Witts*  
*Secretary*

**AquaFence**  
[www.aquafence.com](http://www.aquafence.com)

**AN EFFECTIVE AND FLEXIBLE FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM**

- Compact, secure and easy to set up
- A 10 man team can build 100 m AquaFence in 1 hour
- Fully mobile on solid ground, no foundation required
- Self-sealing, uses the physical forces of the water

Minerva Mill Innovation Centre  
Station Road, Alcester  
Warwickshire, B49 5ET

Phone +44 (0)1789 761370  
E-mail [info@aquafence.com](mailto:info@aquafence.com)  
Web [www.aquafence.com](http://www.aquafence.com)





Registered Charity Number 1121642

**Address**

**Old Snuff Mill Warehouse  
Park Lane  
Bewdley  
Worcestershire  
DY12 2EL**

**Tel**

**01299 403055**

**Email**

**info@floodforum.org.uk**

**Web**

**www.floodforum.org.uk**

**Chief Executive**

**Mary Dhonau**

**Office Manager**

**Amanda Davies**

**Directors**

**Brendan Glynane (Chairman)**

**Phil Awford (Deputy Chairman)**

**Sue Chalkley**

**Tony Coates**

**Paul Hendy**

**Heather Shepherd**

## The NFF Needs YOU!

We need information from your flood action group...

Send us your story with pictures where possible to...

info@floodforum.org.uk

# Can you help us grow to meet the growing needs of the flood victim?

A major step has been taken by the National Flood Forum towards keeping its head above water!

The forum which now supports well over 100 communities at risk has moved up a gear to strengthen its fight for flood victims.

It has now gained charitable status to help the group to raise the funds it needs to underpin and expand vital services.

Chief Executive **Mary Dhonau** said: "We are very relieved to win this recognition for what we do.

"Since the floods in summer the demand for the work of the National Forum has been huge."

"Hundreds of calls for help came in and we are still receiving more from people facing problems putting their homes back together and calls from people wanting advice on how to protect themselves from future floods..

"Others are coming to us with worries over insurance and we

continue to raise the plight of flood victims with the industry and government."

Supporters now have the opportunity to help drive the work of the forum with anything from coffee mornings to community events.

"It will all help," said Mary. "We were initially funded by the Environment Agency but that has now stopped altogether, although we are now

able to charge the Agency for our services but we urgently need a guaranteed income" It is essential we raise funds to enable us to take on more staff to support the increasing numbers of people going through the terrible ordeal of flooding."

**"We are very relieved to win this recognition for what we do...."**

**"We were initially funded by the Environment Agency but that has now stopped altogether..."**



- Can be rapidly assembled by one person.
- No bolting to the ground required.
- Direct substitute for sandbags in term of cost, but far superior in terms of assembly and function.
- 100% recyclable.

To see the "award-winning" FLOODSTOP in action please visit:  
[www.fluvial-innovations.co.uk](http://www.fluvial-innovations.co.uk)  
or Call: +44 (0)7909 576127



**".....As seen on the BBC and in the Financial Times"**

**We would be interested in hearing your reactions. Anyone wishing to respond to these articles are more than welcome to contact us at the address opposite.**

Whilst the NFF cannot endorse any products and services included in this newsletter we give thanks for the generous support of the organisations concerned.