



# news release

**\*\* UNDER EMBARGO – 0001 Friday 19 June 2009 \*\***

## **NEW REPORTS HIGHLIGHT £20BN INVESTMENT OVER 25 YEARS IS NEEDED TO PROTECT ENGLAND FROM INCREASING FLOOD RISK**

Two new reports from the Environment Agency today show that 1 in 6 homes in England are at risk of flooding and that investment in the building and maintaining of flood defences will need to almost double to £1bn a year by 2035, as climate change increases the risk of coastal erosion and flooding from rivers and the sea.

In its Flooding in England report, the organisation has revealed that over 430,000 people in flood risk areas have now signed up to its flood warnings service and is urging those who are not yet subscribed to join. The free service provides vital early warning by SMS, telephone or email, helping to save the lives of those at risk of flooding.

Also publishing a Long Term Investment Strategy for England, the Government's environmental watchdog says that a steady increase in investment will be vital to maintain current levels of protection against rising seas levels, more rapid rates of coastal erosion, and increasingly severe and frequent rainstorms due to climate change. The funding recommendations are based on the latest climate change impact predictions, released yesterday (Thursday 18 June).

The Environment Agency's strategy estimates that the annual cost of damage to residential and commercial property from flooding in England, as well as the cost of further disruption, damage to infrastructure and loss of business, could rise from £2.5 billion to £4 billion by 2035 unless funding for defences is increased. The organisation has calculated that the damage avoided through its investment proposals could save England some £180bn over the next 100 years but accepts that it may be necessary to look at other sources of funding alongside that of central Government.

Over the past ten years, more than 250,000 additional households have benefited from investment in new or improved defences. The organisation has completed 90 flood defence schemes since summer 2007, providing increased protection to over 58,000 properties.

New figures also released today by the Environment Agency show that [for a full breakdown please see notes to editors]:

- One in six homes in England is currently at risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, or surface water from overflowing drains;
- More than five million people currently live and work in 2.4 million properties at risk from rivers or the sea – 490,000 of which have a significant chance of flooding. The organisation is warning that this figure would rise to 840,000 by 2035 if future investment is maintained at existing levels;
- An additional 2.8 million properties are currently at risk of flooding from surface water. The Environment Agency estimates that an additional £150 million a year by 2035 will be required to help mitigate this risk;
- 55 per cent of water treatment works and pumping stations, 14 per cent of electricity infrastructure, 2,358 schools and 2,363 doctors' surgeries in England are situated in flood risk areas, along with some 4,000km of roads and 2,500km of railway.

The Long Term Investment Strategy does not assume that future investment needs will be funded by central government alone and the Environment Agency would welcome a public debate to identify other possible sources of funding, enabling local communities to contribute to reducing flood risk in their locality. Sir Michael Pitt, in his independent review of the summer 2007 floods, recommended that locally-funded flood defences should become a bigger feature of flood risk management.

The Environment Agency's Chairman Lord Chris Smith said: "Our 25 year flood and coastal risk Long Term Investment Strategy for England presents some important choices for Government, local authorities, developers and others to consider.

“The latest UK climate change data shows that the risk of flooding and coastal erosion will continue to increase in future due to rising sea levels and more frequent and heavy storms, and there are important decisions for us all to take about how to manage these risks to protect people, communities, businesses and the economy in future.

“The Environment Agency has completed 90 flood defence schemes since summer 2007, providing increased protection to over 58,000 properties. Whilst continued investment in managing these risks is crucial, we cannot always prevent flooding so communities need to take responsibility for being prepared – for example by signing up to the Environment Agency’s free flood warning service.”

## **ENDS**

**Media enquiries: 020 7863 8710 or outside normal office hours, please contact the National Duty Press Officer on 07798 882 092.**

### **Notes for Editors:**

- The Environment Agency helps to restrict new major development on sites at risk of flooding. Last year, it ensured that 96 per cent of the 6,232 applications to which it objected on flood risk grounds did not obtain planning permission.

### **Regions ranked by the number of properties at significant risk of flooding from rivers or the sea**

South East England Region	111,356
South West Region	86,178
East Midlands Region	81,096
Yorkshire & Humber Region	65,380
Greater London Authority	40,412
East of England Region	33,050
North West Region	28,941
West Midlands Region	19,173
North East Region	19,167
<b>Total</b>	<b>484,753</b>

## **Top ten local areas with the highest number of properties in areas with a significant chance of flooding from rivers or the sea**

Boston District	23,700
North Somerset	20,415
East Lindsey District	14,949
Windsor and Maidenhead	11,477
City of Kingston upon Hull	9,825
Shepway District	9,065
Sedgemoor District	8,092
East Riding of Yorkshire	7,513
Runnymede District	7,007
Warrington	6,533

### **Check if you are in a flood risk area:**

Log on our website at [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk) and enter your postcode to see if your property is in a flood risk area. You can also log on to get simple advice on what to do before, during and after a flood.

### **Sign up to Floodline Warnings Direct:**

Our free service provides flood warnings direct to homes at risk of flooding by telephone, mobile, email, SMS text message, fax or pager. To sign up call 0845 988 1188 or visit [www.environment-agency.gov.uk](http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk).