



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your letter of 8 November 2022 to the Secretary of State on behalf of your constituents about flash flooding in London. I am replying as the Minister responsible for flooding policy and I apologise for the delay in doing so.

I fully recognise the impact flooding incidents have on individuals and communities, and sympathise with those affected. Flooding has a devastating effect, including financially through physical damage as well as possible impacts on physical and mental health.

The Government is committed to taking action. Our long-term Policy Statement, published in July 2020, outlines our policies and supporting actions to create a nation more resilient to future flood and coastal erosion risk. It will accelerate progress to better protect and prepare the country against flooding and coastal erosion in the face of more frequent extreme weather as a result of climate change.

Our Policy Statement includes our record £5.2 billion investment programme (2021-2027) in around 2,000 defences to better protect communities across England now and in the future, by taking account of climate change projections. This programme includes 500 schemes, including sustainable drainage systems, to mitigate surface water flooding, better protecting around 30,000 properties. This is a 50% increase in the number of properties better protected from surface water flooding compared to our last investment programme. Around 110 of these surface water schemes will be in London, better protecting 2,590 properties.

The Government believes that everyone has a role to play and fully supports and encourages greater collaboration and partnership working by providing the tools and powers that help them take action. The statutory responsibility to manage flood risks falls to risk management authorities (RMAs), such as the Environment Agency (EA), lead local flood authorities (LLFAs), and water companies. LLFAs have the operational lead in managing local flood risks, including surface water, in part because they are best placed to understand, mitigate and respond to these local risks, whilst working with others as part of a local flood risk management strategy. RMAs are also under a duty to operate with other RMAs in the exercising of their flood and coastal erosion risk management functions (Flood and Water Management Act 2010).

Following the flooding in London in July 2021, London's key partners (such as LLFAs, the local EA team and Thames Water) have formed a London Surface Water Strategic Group to mitigate surface water flood risk in London including the production of a pan-London Strategy. This group is leading on implementing the actions from the Mayor for London commissioned Task and Finish Group and the recommendations from the Thames Water commissioned independent London Flood Review. The group will be independently chaired and includes the EA's London Area Director and a member from the Thames Regional Flood and Coastal Committee.

It is important to note that in London all highway maintenance issues, including drainage, are devolved to the Mayor and the responsibility rests with this office.

In the role of RMA, all water companies play a part in mitigating flood risk, especially from surface water. Between 2020-2025 water companies are investing over £1 billion to reduce the impact of flooding on communities across England and Wales, and they are investing a further £2.7 billion, through the Government's green economic recovery fund. Water companies are also producing comprehensive drainage and sewerage management plans, setting out how they will manage and develop their drainage and sewerage networks over the long-term. This is a new duty placed on them in the Environment Act 2021.

The water companies in England and Wales are regulated by Ofwat, the independent economic regulator for water. Ofwat holds them to account for the delivery of affordable, secure and resilient water services, and will take enforcement action when they fail to meet any of their licence conditions and statutory duties. The Government fully supports Ofwat's work and has set out its expectations and top priorities for Ofwat through its [Strategic Policy Statement](#).

Finally, your constituents may be interested to know that on 10 January this year, the Government published the findings from its review of making sustainable drainage systems mandatory in new developments through the implementation of Schedule 3 to the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. We have accepted the recommendation that Schedule 3 is implemented and will now consider scope, threshold and process. There will be a public consultation later this year, with implementation expected during 2024.

Thank you once again for taking the time to write about this important issue.



REBECCA POW MP