
News Release

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Sir Michael Pitt Says Society Must Take Flooding More Seriously

Sir Michael Pitt will today call for change and direction within society to take flooding and natural hazards more seriously, when he speaks at a conference on Critical National Infrastructure this afternoon.

Following the unprecedented flooding last summer, the Government asked Sir Michael Pitt to identify lessons to be learned from the emergency and make recommendations that would help the country deal with flooding in the future. In December, the review published an interim report with a number of hard hitting recommendations. The review is due to conclude in the next few months, when Sir Michael Pitt will present all of his recommendations in a final report.

In a keynote speech to the audience of the RUSI Critical National Infrastructure Conference, Sir Michael Pitt will say:

“Last summer’s flooding was dramatic and unprecedented. Thousands of homes and businesses were flooded and around seven thousand people were rescued from the flood waters by the emergency services. Nearly a year on, thousands of people are still out of their homes – a situation which is worrying and perplexing. A system of public monitoring should be introduced.

“Events of this kind are likely to become more frequent as the climate changes. That is why we must adapt to increasing risks from flooding – more effectively and more quickly. Direction must come from Government and a new approach is needed for planning and making people aware of the risk of flooding. “

In his speech, Sir Michael Pitt will comment upon some of the findings from his review:

- Flood defence spending will need to rise in real terms every spending review, and Government should plan on that basis.
- Flood defence investment decisions need to give more weighting to the protection of critical infrastructure and the risk of loss of essential services.
- Critical infrastructure operators and security organisations need to be much more open and share information about the vulnerabilities which exist.
- The case for a single flood forecasting and warning centre should be examined.
- Planning authorities will need to toughen their approach to development control, and the building regulations need major amendment.
- Local authorities need the capability and powers to ensure that local communities are properly protected. This means more resource for local authorities, but also requires organisations to reflect upon their internal technical infrastructure.
- We must help the public to do more to help themselves when it comes to flooding and other emergencies. Locally self-funded flood defences should become a bigger feature of the country’s flood risk management.

Sir Michael Pitt will publish his final recommendations in the review's final report.

ENDS

Notes for editors

1. The interim conclusions of The Pitt Review – Learning Lessons from the 2007 Floods were published on 17 December 2007, and can be viewed online at: <http://cabinetoffice.gov.uk/thepittreview>
2. For further information, contact 07968 240412.