

# Floods Review: Independent Chair's opening letter

Dear Secretaries of State,

This is the first of two reports on the lessons to be learned from the severe flooding which took place during June and July 2007.

In preparing this Report, members of the Review Team and I have examined evidence from all concerned, including over 600 written submissions from the public and a wide variety of organisations. We have also visited many parts of the country affected by the emergencies, spoken to people involved and inspected damage to homes and businesses.

The scale of flood damage to property is shocking, but above all we have been moved and troubled by the first-hand accounts of people. It is difficult to fully capture in words the sense of 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. We saw businesses that had been ruined and met many people who face the prospect of Christmas and Easter in a caravan or some other form of temporary accommodation. It is for this reason that we have chosen to write this Report from the viewpoint of the flood victims and why those in a position of influence should do all they can to reduce the risk and impact of flooding in the future.

We also want to pay tribute to the very many people who worked tirelessly during the floods, saving lives and doing what they could to help people directly affected. There may be questions about multi-agency states of readiness, but once the level of risk became known, all of the relevant organisations acted with considerable force, compassion and effectiveness.

Despite the impressive efforts of emergency responders, much work needs to be done to avoid emergencies of the scale we witnessed this summer happening again. Our emerging conclusions are wide-ranging and will require a determined effort on the part of central government and other relevant organisations to see them through. In some instances, we have

made urgent recommendations which have already been the subject of intensive study and discussion and should be progressed and implemented immediately. In others, the position is less clear-cut and in these cases, we would like readers to regard this first Report as a consultation document. Our second and final Report will be published next summer and will firm up areas of uncertainty.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has given so generously of their time and, in particular, those members of the public who showed such fortitude at a difficult time in their lives. I am also grateful to the Review Team for their considerable efforts over the last few months. We reached agreement on all matters, although, of course, the ultimate responsibility for the contents of this report rests entirely with me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Pitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

**Sir Michael Pitt**  
*Independent Chair*