



**TYNE AND WEAR FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY
EMERGENCY PLANNING UNIT**

Committee Report

Meeting : CIVIL CONTINGENCIES COMMITTEE : 18 JANUARY 2010

**Subject : THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO SIR MICHAEL PITT'S
REVIEW OF THE SUMMER 2007 FLOODS - PROGRESS
REPORT - DECEMBER 2009**

Report of the Chief Emergency Planning Officer

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to bring Members up to date with Government progress on implementing some of the key recommendations arising from 'Sir Michael Pitt's Review of the summer 2007 floods'.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A year on from the Government's response to Sir Michael Pitt's review into the 2007 summer floods, this is the second Government progress report showing what action has been taken to ensure we are better placed to predict, prepare for, deal with and recover from the unique challenges posed by flooding events. The first Government Progress Report, published in June 2009, showed that the positive start that had been made in response to the Pitt review had been maintained, demonstrating progress across the board, with delivery of challenging outputs in some areas. The Government's June 2009 Progress was reported to this Committee at its July 2009 meeting.
- 2.2 The Government has just published its second 6 monthly progress report on actions it has taken in response to the recommendations in the Pitt review. This second report was published on the 16th December 2009, with a covering letter by the Environment Secretary (– see Annex 1).

3 SIX MONTH PITT PROGRESS REPORT

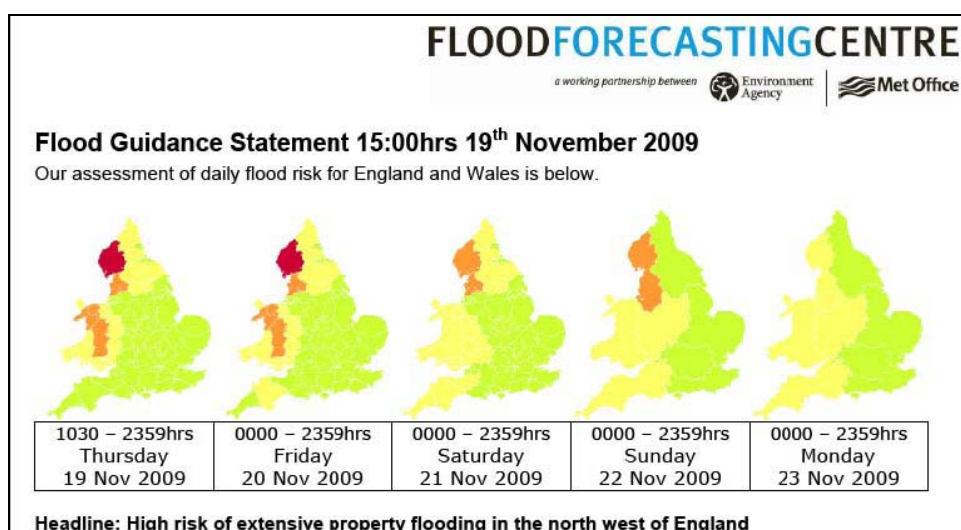
- 3.1 Hilary Benn the Environment Secretary states that significant progress has been made and the Government have taken immediate action to help communities at risk of flooding.
- 3.2 Key developments and progress since the last progress report in June 2009 are summarised in Annex 2 to this report, which shows the

Government's evaluation of the current progress in relation to the following areas;

- Knowing when and where it will flood
- Reducing the risk of flooding and its impact
- Being rescued and cared for during an emergency
- Maintaining power and water supplies and protecting essential services
- Better advice and help to protect families and homes
- Recovery

3.3 For example, in respect of knowing when and where it will flood, since its launch in April 2009 the Environment Agency and Met Office joint Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) has continued to make advances in our ability to deliver guidance on the likelihood of flooding with longer lead times and more accurate, targeted information to emergency responders around the country (rec 6). During the Cumbria floods, the FFC played an important role in providing emergency responders with early guidance on the rainfall forecast as well as expert advice on the risks.

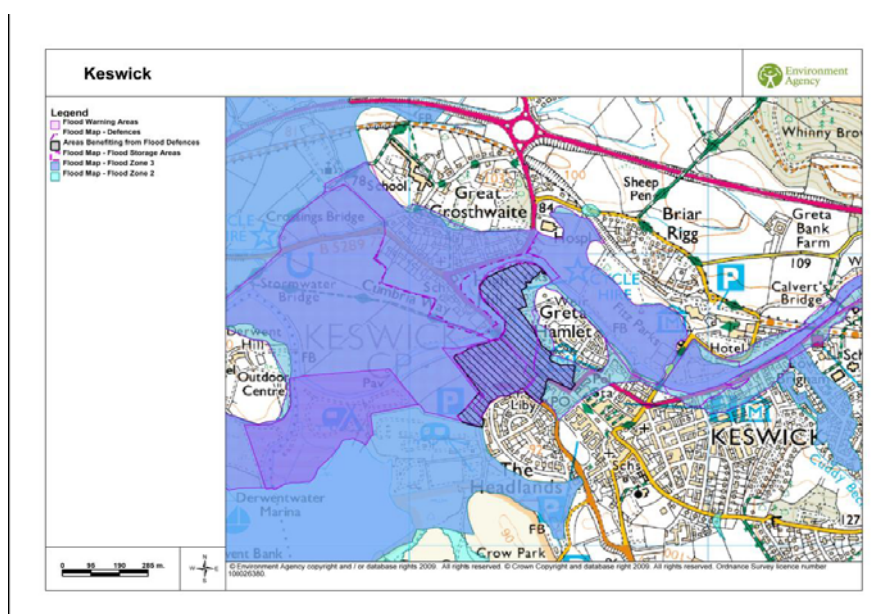
Thirty-six hours before the flooding occurred, the FFC indicated a high risk of significant property flooding and extreme danger to life in Cumbria via its Flood Guidance Statements and rolling telephone conferences with local responders. This was achieved by having Met Office forecasters and Environment Agency hydrologists working side-by-side, giving emergency responders a longer lead-time to prepare and respond. The picture below shows the Flood Guidance Statement from 3 pm on 19 November 2009.



3.5 The Environment Agency has continued to develop its visualisation data for Silver and Gold Commands (rec 36-7). For example, the map below was used at Cumbria Gold Command in November 2009. These maps

were created by the Agency's staff at Gold Command using the latest forecasts on river level rise from regional forecasters, to make an assessment in conjunction with local forecasters, of the likely inundation area.

They were able to create and print maps of the forecast inundation area, overlaid with maps showing where a flood warning service is offered. The areas of potential inundation on the maps are divided into flood zones. Zone 3, shaded dark blue, has the highest probability of flooding and would be affected before Zone 2, which is shaded light blue (- this report is in greyscale, but the general concept can still be seen on the map below). Providing this type of information in real time was vital for Gold Command.



4 LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PITT RECOMMENDATIONS - PROGRESS

- 4.1 Defra and the Cabinet Office wrote to Local Authority Chief Executives, Government Offices and Chairs of Local Resilience Forums on the 21 September 2009 to ask what progress had been made on their implementation of the Pitt recommendations that relate to them.
- 4.2 All Tyne and Wear councils responded to this request, and their replies have been included in the cumulative responses summarised in Annex 3. The responses were coordinated through the Tyne and Wear Resilience Operations Group (Northumberland County Council also participated) which includes Resilience officers from the Councils and the Tyne and Wear Emergency Planning Unit, to ensure a co-ordinated local perspective was given.
- 4.3 There was also a Northumbria Local Resilience Forum (LRF) response which was delivered by the LRF Flood Group, of which the officers mentioned in paragraph 4.2 above are founder members.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The recent major flooding in Cumbria and the heavy rainfall elsewhere in the country has underlined once again the importance of Sir Michael's recommendations. The response to those events by the emergency services, agencies and many others shows that lessons have been learnt. Nonetheless the impact on families and communities has been keenly felt and the process of recovery will take many months.
- 5.2 The Government progress report shows that significant progress has been made in meeting Sir Michael Pitt's recommendations, which are important in attempting to reduce the likelihood of flooding, and to mitigate the impact of any flooding that does occur. If we are to meet the future challenge of flooding it is stressed by Sir Michael that we must continue to develop the culture of partnership and cooperation which was evident during recent events.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members are asked to note this progress report and to receive further updates when these are published.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Progress of Implementation of the Pitt Report recommendations:
<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/risk/floodreview2007.htm>
- The Government's Response to Sir Michael Pitt's 'Review of the Summer 2007 Flood'
- The Government's Response to Sir Michael Pitt's 'Review of the Summer 2007 Flood' – Progress Report June 2009
- Tyne and Wear Civil Contingencies Committee Report – 'Northumbria LRF Flood Plan, Flooding Debrief report and Flood Related Issues' - 6 July 2009.

Copies of these documents are available in the Emergency Planning Unit.

ANNEX 1

Written Ministerial Statement by Hilary Benn on the Progress report on the Government's response to the Pitt Review into the 2007 summer floods - 15 December 2009

I have today placed in the House library copies of the Government's second update report detailing the progress made in implementing the recommendations contained in Sir Michael Pitt's report on the 2007 summer floods. A copy of the report is also available on the [Pitt Report pages of the Defra web site](#).

We continue to make significant progress. We have introduced our Flood and Water Management Bill which implements Pitt recommendations that require legislation, and will strengthen coordination, improve accountability and reduce the impact of future floods.

In advance of the Bill becoming law, we have taken action to help communities at risk of flooding. We have, for example:

- Set up a £7.7m Flood Forecasting Centre, jointly run by the Environment Agency and the Met Office, which is already providing important services to local authorities and emergency responders, helping them to be better prepared for potential flooding;
- Strengthened arrangements for local and national coordination in the event of an emergency, as recently tested in Cumbria – for example through publishing updated Emergency Response and Recovery Guidance;
- Announced that local communities across England will benefit from £16 million funding to help them tackle surface water flooding, including £9.7 million made available to 77 local authorities for areas where the risk and potential impact of surface water flooding could be highest;
- Issued guidance to regulators on protecting essential services; local action includes reinforced defences at Mythe Water Treatment works in Gloucestershire and flood defences at East and West Hull sewage pumping stations;
- Invested in building capacity, including funding Local Authority places for the Environment Agency's flood management Foundation

Degree and developing an NVQ level 2/3 course on flood risk management;

- Delivered, through the Environment Agency:
 - 106 flood defence schemes protecting over 63,800 additional homes in England.
 - 140,000 additional people signed up to receive flood warnings in England and Wales: and the introduction of “opt out” telephone warning systems in February 2010 will significantly increase that number.
- Doubled our overall investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management in the last ten years to a record £2.15 billion over the current 3-year spending period.

The progress report explains the further steps we are taking to implement Sir Michael’s recommendations. The risk of flooding remains and the recent events in Cumbria underline once again the importance of this work. The Government remains determined to enable us to be better able to anticipate and deal with the impact of flooding.

I will continue to keep the House informed of progress through future progress reports.

ANNEX 2

EXTRACT FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S PROGRESS REPORT – DECEMBER 2009

Knowing when and where it will flood

The Environment Agency has been working closely with local authorities on the six first edition Surface Water Management plans, they are being used in conjunction with local knowledge, to identify areas susceptible to surface water flooding and define the need for further work to understand surface water flooding.

Since its launch in April 2009 the Environment Agency and Met Office joint Flood Forecasting Centre (FFC) has continued to make advances in our ability to deliver guidance on the likelihood of flooding with longer lead times and more accurate, targeted information to emergency responders around the country.

The work being carried out by the Met Office on probabilistic forecasting techniques is allowing more informed decision making, particularly for emergency response organisations.

In addition, Met Office work on high resolution modelling will enable forecasts to become more precise about the weather expected in a particular locality

Reducing the risk of flooding and its impact

Progress has been made to help mitigate the risk of future flooding events through the deployment of flood defences, changes to the planning system and local leadership on flood risk management.

Since summer 2007 the Environment Agency (EA) has completed and maintained 106 flood defence schemes providing improved protection to more than 63,800 homes in England.

In relation to development planning, the practice guidance accompanying Planning Policy Statement 25 (PPS25) was updated on 7 December 2009.

Defra has taken forward a number of initiatives to support local authorities realise new and expanded responsibilities on flood risk management.

Being rescued and cared for during an emergency

In its work to develop more tailored flood warnings for infrastructure owners, the Environment Agency has agreed to pilot a solution which identifies the infrastructure affected by each flood warning so that during a flood event it can receive tailored warnings about what infrastructure is at risk. The Agency has also established a working group with the Energy Networks Association (ENA) to plan the roll-out of this service to other ENA members and to other infrastructure operators in due course.

The Environment Agency has continued to develop its visualisation data for Silver and Gold Commands using the latest forecasts on river level rise from regional forecasters, to make an assessment in conjunction with local forecasters, of the likely inundation area.

Good progress has been made in developing a Flood Rescue National Asset Register which will be coordinated by the Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre.

In Cumbria, it was evident that coordination between flood rescuers was greatly improved. The Government has put in place interim guidance for requesting mutual aid and has an agreement to use the Fire and Rescue Service National Coordination Centre

A fully fledged National Asset Register will also be established and through a gap analysis which will be completed in January 2010, we will assess and look to address any shortfall in capability that exists. Also, the Highways Agency has completed a number of work programmes to deliver better warnings, more strategic road clearances and support to stranded passengers on motorways and trunk roads following a flooding event

Maintaining power and water supplies and protecting essential services

The new Natural Hazards Team in the Cabinet Office has, as part of its work to build resilience of critical infrastructure sites, issued for consultation its strategy and policy statement on resilience of critical infrastructure.

Since summer 2007, the infrastructure sectors most affected by floods have invested in flood defences and other measures to improve their resilience. The Natural Hazards Team is co-ordinating this work to ensure appropriate standards of resilience are in place across all nine infrastructure sectors.

The Natural Hazards Team has screened nearly 1000 critical national infrastructure sites for flood risk across the nine sectors and identified 171 that are in areas that could flood from rivers or the sea:

The lead Government departments are preparing a Sector Resilience Plan for each sector to understand the vulnerability of these 171 sites from flooding and to identify what actions are needed to improve resilience to disruption from natural hazards.

The Cabinet Offices critical infrastructure resilience programme is working across Government to identify the risks to other critical infrastructure from flooding and other natural hazards.

In relation to reservoirs, the Government has completed reservoir mapping and is in the process of distributing those maps to Local Resilience Forums.

Better advice and help to protect families and homes

The Environment Agency has continued to improve advice to householders and businesses on flood prevention and mitigation by raising awareness and providing an on-line registration service for the public to sign-up to flood warnings.

Through its new awareness raising approach the Environment Agency is on track to support in the production of 120 community floods plans this financial year.

Recovery

The Government has published its updated Emergency Response and Recovery Guidance. Representations from Government Offices and Local Resilience Forums have illustrated that many of the principles in the guidance are being implemented.

ANNEX 3

EXTRACT FROM PROGRESS ON LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PITT RECOMMENDATIONS

On 21 September Defra and the Cabinet Office wrote to Local Authority Chief Executives, Government Offices and Chairs of Local Resilience Forums to ask what progress had been made on their implementation of the Pitt recommendations that relate to them.

Some authorities commented that progress on implementing recommendations depended on funding.

152 responses were received from local authorities, which is around 43% of all authorities

Recommendation 13: Local authorities, in discharging their responsibilities under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 to promote business continuity, should encourage the take-up of property flood resistance and resilience by businesses

The majority of reports from local authorities show that action is being taken in this area by the provision of advice and support for business continuity planning, achieved by the use of a number of media or promotional events,

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – The Tyne and Wear Local Authorities are engaging with local businesses to promote awareness of flood risk where appropriate, in various local and regional business fora. All of the Council websites contain BCM information relating to their local areas. TWEPU are currently developing a BCM workshop for Council supplier companies to raise awareness of business continuity issues.

Recommendation 14: Local authorities should lead on the management of local flood risk, with the support of the relevant organisations

This recommendation is reflected in the new legislation Defra is putting in place in the Flood and Water Management Bill and also in its transposition of the EC Floods Directive, which makes county and unitary local authorities responsible for local flood risk management in relation to the deliverables under the Directive.

Responses from authorities demonstrated their engagement in local efforts to manage flood risk by, for example,

- participating in local partnerships, and
- engaging with the Environment Agency, utility companies and neighbouring districts to: (1) identify flood risks within their areas; (2) cross boundary implications; and, (3) the appropriate responses.

Responses from local authorities demonstrated that some were taking leadership of local flood management issues by setting up Strategic Flood Management Groups or by taking the lead in developing multi-agency flood management plans.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – All of the TW Local Authorities take key roles in coordinating the management of local flood risk. This is taking place in a multi-agency environment with input from other Category 1 and 2 Responder organisations as well as voluntary bodies. Local Authorities are leading the development of multi agency Operational, Tactical and Strategic Flood Plans using the DEFRA flood plan checklists as guidance.

As Category 1 Responder organisations under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004), all of the Council's regularly share flood risk information with the Environment Agency and other responder organisations and vice-versa. These important relationships are solid and the authorities enjoy excellent and productive working relationships with their partners.

Recommendation 15: Local authorities should positively tackle local problems of flooding by working with all relevant parties, establishing ownership and legal responsibility.

Some authorities explained that they already investigate sources of local flooding events in order to ascertain ownership and responsibilities. Almost all authorities that commented explained that they worked closely with a range of stakeholders and parties locally to resolve flooding related issues.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – All five local authorities share similar concerns about the precise role Council's play in flood risk management. It is hoped that further clarification of this responsibility will be provided by the Royal Assent and ratification of the Flood and Water Management Bill (2007) in 2010. Additionally, it is hoped that the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) enhancement programme will further clarify the roles, responsibilities and duties of Category 2 Responder organisations (e.g. Northumbrian Water Limited and CE Electric) involved in flood risk management.

Recommendation 16: Local authorities should collate and map the main flood risk management and drainage assets (over and underground), including a record of their ownership and condition.

Almost all local authorities who reported on this recommendation stated they had begun work on mapping drainage assets, for example through the completion of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments (SFRA), but that this work was ongoing as new information came to light.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – Several local authorities are currently going through the process of reviewing and updating their Strategic Flood Risk Assessments through consultant engineers. It is hoped that reviewed SFRA's will aid local authorities in mapping drainage assets. All five authorities are making use of the latest Environment Agency supplied data such as the surface water data (new version issued in Jul 2009) to inform their flood plan writing and development.

Recommendation 17: All relevant organisations should have a duty to share information and cooperate with local authorities and the Environment Agency to facilitate the management of flood risk.

Almost all authorities reported strong working relationships with local partners, especially as part of their Local Resilience Forums in adhering to the provisions in the Civil Contingencies Act and this is demonstrated by the existence of multi agency flood groups and development of multi agency flood plans.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – All of the Tyne and Wear Authorities are represented at the Northumbria LRF Multi-Agency Strategic Group and on the LRF Multi-Agency Flood sub groups and play a central role in leading the development of flood plans and mechanisms. Excellent working relationships are being maintained with key partner organisations both within the LRF structures and at a local authority level and flood risk information is being shared freely between organisations wherever possible.

Recommendation 18: Local Surface Water Management Plans, as set out under PPS25 and coordinated by local authorities, should provide the basis for managing all local flood risk

A number of authorities have received funding from Defra to develop Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs); this included the 6 pilots which were funded earlier this year. In August 2009, Defra announced funding for an additional 77 SWMPs.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – The development of Local Surface Water Management Plans currently under review through the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) work which is currently ongoing through consultant engineers in several of the Local Authorities. Should critical drainage areas be identified by the SFRA, Local Surface Water Management Plans will be developed and be made operational.

The latest (Jul 2009) Environment Agency surface water datasets are being utilised to inform the actions of the multi-agency Tactical and Operational Flood Plans. This data, coupled with Flood Zones 2 & 3 and historical data about flooding events will inform these plans and help us to better understand flood risk in Tyne and Wear.

Recommendation 19: Local authorities should assess and, if appropriate, enhance their technical capabilities to deliver a wide range of responsibilities in relation to local flood risk management.

Reports from local authorities in this area provided a diverse range of viewpoints and statements on progress. In most cases local authorities had reviewed or carried out a skills audit of current capacity to find out what more was needed.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – Efforts have been made to coordinate roles and responsibilities with regard to flood risk management within the Tyne and Wear Local Authorities. This work will continue to ensure that an integrated approach to flood risk management is adopted. Most authorities have identified a need for additional technical specialists such as drainage engineers to be employed by Councils in light of the Flood and Water Management Bill

requirements. Local Authorities are currently awaiting funding in order to expand its technical capabilities.

Councils, through TWROPS, are currently reviewing the possibility of using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to better inform flood risk plans and mechanisms. The EA Surface Water, Flood Zones 2 & 3 (and soon the reviewed SFRA data) datasets are being used to identify vulnerable areas and critical infrastructure. GIS may also be used during the response phase to flooding events so that Incident Controllers have an enhanced intelligence picture of the flood and the affected areas. GIS was recently deployed in the annual NORLAND 76 exercise to great affect; it assisted Incident Controllers and their supporting staff to identify vulnerable people, groups and properties which moulded the operational response to the simulated emergency.

Recommendation 38: Local authorities should establish mutual aid agreements in accordance with the guidance currently being prepared by the Local Government Association and the Cabinet Office.

Almost all authorities that reported on this recommendation said that mutual aid agreements or memoranda of understanding (MoUs) were in place between local authorities.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – A mutual aid agreement is place for Local Authorities across the Northumbria LRF which includes Tyne and Wear Councils and Northumberland. This agreement was used as an example of good practice in the National Guidance recently produced by the Cabinet Office.

Recommendation 41: Upper tier local authorities should be the lead responders in relation to multi-agency planning for severe weather emergencies at the local level and for triggering multi-agency arrangements in response to severe weather warnings and local impact assessments.

Almost all authorities indicated that action had been taken on this recommendation, with either established arrangements in place or appropriate flood plans being developed to achieve clarity on who takes the lead.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – Councils are leading the development of Tactical Flood Plans in their areas of responsibility which includes triggers for a multi-agency response to a flooding event in the five LA areas and, if necessary, outside of Local Authority borders.

Impact Assessments are under development as part of Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and the risk assessment process for Multi-Agency Tactical Flood Plans.

Recommendation 66: Local authority contact centres should take the lead in dealing with general enquiries from the public during and after major flooding, redirecting calls to other organisations when appropriate.

The majority of authorities reported that they have mechanisms in place to deal with queries from the public during and after major flooding, with arrangements to provide training and core scripts to deal with emergency scenarios.

However, a number of authorities commented on potential overlap with the Environment Agency's floodline service. Defra is working with local authorities, the Environment Agency, local flood risk groups and other stakeholders to develop a framework within which local authority and the Environment Agency contact arrangements will link to and complement each other, providing a single initial point of contact for flood response, warning and preparation.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment –Multi-Agency Flood Plans, which are currently under development, will set out the requirements for Local Authority Call Centres. Once plans are completed and made operational, Call Centre staff will be trained on their role during a response to a flood. This will include how and where to redirect calls to (to other multi-agency organisations) and how to answer questions from the general public. Some Tyne and Wear Councils have already put in place a dedicated number for the public to call in order to gain information and advice during a flooding emergency.

Recommendation 68: Council leaders and chief executives should play a prominent role in public reassurance and advice through the local media during a flooding emergency, as part of a coordinated effort overseen by Gold Commanders

Those that reported progress on this recommendation said their leaders were trained to undertake this role.

Others commented that protocols and procedures were in place to secure engagement of council leaders. In the main, local authorities reported that their leaders accepted their responsibilities in this respect.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – This recommendation will be incorporated into the Multi-Agency Tactical Flood Plans which are currently under development. The strategic role of Council Leaders and Chief Executives will also be described in the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Multi-Agency Strategic Flood Plan.

Awareness of elected members role during a flooding incident is being raised through ongoing training.

Recommendation 81: There should be an agreed framework, including definitions and timescales, for local central recovery reporting.

Many authorities who reported on this recommendation stated that frameworks for recovery reporting were incorporated in recovery plans or guidance documents. Others pointed to the Local Resilience Forum flood response plans.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – Both the Northumbria Local Resilience Forum Multi-Agency Strategic Flood Plan and the Local Authority Multi-Agency Tactical Flood Plans include agreed reporting proformas (Situation Reports) which can be used by Local Authorities request further support from Government. These will be processed through the Government Office for the North East Regional Resilience Team who act as a link-pin between the local, regional and national levels.

Recommendation 82: Following major flooding events, the Government should publish monthly summaries of the progress of the recovery phase, including the numbers of households still displaced from all or part of their homes.

Those that covered this point in their responses stated that they adhered to any central Government requests for reports and worked with Local and Regional Resilience Forums. Some authorities stated that a reporting requirement was embedded in their procedures by way of their multi-agency action plans.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – The TW Local Authorities will provide this information to central government through Situation Reporting mechanisms agreed with Government Office for the North East.

Locally, Geographical Information Systems may be used to keep a centralised record of which properties were directly affected by a flooding event and what progress has been made to make the properties habitable once again.

Recommendation 90 and 91: All upper tier local authorities should establish Oversight and Scrutiny Committees to review work by public sector bodies and essential service providers in order to manage flood risk, underpinned by a legal requirement to cooperate

Each Oversight and Scrutiny Committee should prepare an annual summary of actions taken locally to manage flood risk and implement this Review, and these reports should be public and reviewed by Government Offices and the Environment Agency

A number of county and unitary authorities reported that they had established oversight and scrutiny committees; some were dedicated to floods whereas in other cases flood management featured on the agendas of related committees, such as Housing or Emergency Preparedness Committees.

Tyne and Wear Local Authorities Comment – A number of the Local Authorities have established scrutiny commissions relating to the management of flood risk and climate change adaptation.

These will review how Local Authorities, along with the partner organisations, manage flood risk in their areas of responsibilities. The results of the commissions will be shared with the other Tyne and Wear Local Authorities to ensure that good practice is disseminated.