



House of Commons
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To the constituents of Maidstone & The Weald

10th December 2015

Dear constituent

Medway River Flood Management

It is now almost two years since the floods of Christmas 2013 and in the wake of the dreadful flooding in Cumbria last weekend I thought it might be a good time to review our preparedness for future events here in the constituency of Maidstone & The Weald.

I am delivering this letter in hard copy to one randomly selected person per household from the electoral role within the Yalding and Laddingford ME18 6 postcode area, which was particularly badly affected in 2013. Many other parts of the constituency were also affected; Allington Marina, Maidstone town centre, Hunton and Marden, to name but a few. I am therefore also sending this letter to my entire email database to try and reach as many people as possible who might be at risk of flooding here. It contains several links to some valuable information and guidance, so please forward this to others you know if you think it may be of some help to them.

In February 2014 I established a Flood Forum to pull together a comprehensive plan of action to manage future flood threats. Participants included County, Borough and Parish Councils, the Environment Agency (EA), Emergency Services, Residents and Businesses. A joint action plan was devised and I continue to monitor progress of that plan, a brief summary of progress being as follows;

The authorities' response report on the events of 2013-14 has also been reviewed and shared with residents and parishes; Public flood risk meetings have been held by the EA; personal flood plan leaflets have been devised and distributed; revised flood warning systems are in place; sandbag sites have been earmarked; local flood wardens have been appointed and trained. You can download the contact details and zones of responsibility for our wardens for Yalding and Laddingford here; <http://bit.ly/1OT3v5W>

A key part of the action plan was to secure the funding for two new major local flood management projects. In December 2014 central government rewarded our efforts by confirming £17m of funding, which was matched by a pledge of a further £17m by Kent County Council. The Chancellor reconfirmed the Government's funding commitment in his Autumn Statement as a part of over £2 billion committed to protect 300,000 homes across the country.

The initial work for these projects has been underway during 2015 through the development of a new Medway flood model to test the defence options. The complexities of the Medway catchment area, with the number and orientation of the tributaries, has posed quite a challenge.

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The EA tell me, however, that they expect to have completed this work by February 2016 with projected design and construction completion dates of 2019 and 2022 respectively. For more information go to the EA website here: <http://bit.ly/1Q5fChF>

The EA are issuing newsletters every 6 months updating on progress with the River Medway Flood Storage Areas which are being distributed to local people or published in the Yalding Parish Magazine by the Parish Council. The first two can also be downloaded here;

- No.1 – June 2015 <http://bit.ly/1mcdsjU>
- No.2 – December 2015: <http://bit.ly/1RbRg67>

The EA have also provided me, and our flood wardens, with a range of very helpful documents all of which can be downloaded from my website at www.helengrant.org/media/downloads or individually as follows;

- **What to do before, during and after a flood** – EA practical advice on what to do to protect yourself and your property. <http://bit.ly/1NOzhMq>
- **Flooding – Minimising the Risk**; EA flood plan guidance for communities and groups – practical advice to help create a flood plan. <http://bit.ly/1RGhFby>
- **Personal Flood Plan**: The Government template for householder flood planning - updated on 16th May 2014. <http://bit.ly/1MSXxwp>
- **Sandbags**: EA guidance on how to use them properly for flood protection. <http://bit.ly/1mec5ks>
- **Your Flood Warning Service**: How the warning service works, how warnings are issued and what each level of warning means. <http://bit.ly/1Y4BSYj>

Help with **household insurance** for houses in flood risk areas is also being planned through the world's first Flood Reinsurance scheme Flood Re. Details are available on the website www.floodre.co.uk which also confirms that April 2016 remains the target date for implementation.

In Yalding last Friday (4th December) I met the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Environment Agency Sir James Bevan (pictured right, on Yalding Bridge) to ensure he was fully apprised of the urgency of the situation here.

Sir James was accompanied by the EA Area Strategic Planning Engineer Neil Gunn and EA Area Manager Andrew Pearce who told me that they felt the local Yalding community had never been as well prepared as they are now and took their hats off to them for such a sterling effort.



Of course, flood risks will not be significantly mitigated until the longer-term capital projects are completed but I hope local people can take some comfort from the co-ordination now in place between the County and Borough and Parish Councils, the Environment Agency, Landowners and Emergency Services.

Yours sincerely



HELEN GRANT MP