



The **National Flood Forum** (company no 4349401) registered charity number 1121642.

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For immediate Release

Draft bill will not help flood victims says national charity

The National Flood Forum (NFF) today calls for the draft Flood and Water Management Bill to be rewritten.

The charity claims the draft bill will change nothing for flood victims. The Government had described the bill as taking a major step to protect communities and businesses from floods.

NFF vice-chairman Charles Tucker will hand over the NFF's official response to the draft bill to Martin Hurst, Defra's Director of Water at Defra's Ergon House, Westminster, London.

The response expresses dismay that the draft bill has not simplified the current structure of organisations involved in flood risk management. It calls for the bill to be dramatically amended, focusing on the needs of people affected by flooding.

The NFF provides support and advice to communities and individuals that have suffered flooding or are at risk of flooding. Mary Dhonau, NFF chief executive, was awarded an OBE this year for services to the environment. She said: “We take calls every day from people whose lives have been devastated by flooding.

“One of their most common questions is why they have to make 10 or 12 phone calls just to find out who is responsible for a blocked drain or surface water flooding and who can help them get rid of it.

“The draft bill does nothing to address this.”

The NFF is looking for a bill that offers a clearer, simpler system. It wants one organisation to take charge of flooding matters, with duties to protect the public and powers to force landowners to reduce the risk of flooding to others.

The NFF is also concerned that under the draft bill responsibility for surface water flooding falls to local authorities, with the Environment Agency only having the strategic overview.

Laurence Waterhouse, NFF chairman, said: “The proposals increase the work of local authorities which at the current time do not provide the required level of response to surface water flooding. Many of these make no secret of having other commitments on their time and money.

“Ultimately, we feel that the proposed bill, while good intentioned, will not fundamentally change the way in which organisations who have responsibility for preventing or reacting to flooding will act.”

The NFF's response includes comments from flood victims including:

"The frustration and anger I feel at not being able to obtain the correct information and having to deal with many uninterested and unsympathetic staff as I am given yet another person to try."

"I was stood there knee-deep in water asking for help only to be told it was not his water."

"I don't care whose floodwater it is, I just don't want it in my house."

"No one can truly understand the trauma and impact on our lives. We face years of debt, our marriage is on the rocks and the children cry every time it rains. You have no understanding of the long-term devastation we live with."

This is the last chance in a generation to define the role of managing flooding in this era of climate change. We feel the Government could 'do better'. We urge the government to look again at the proposals in light of our comments.

As it stands, at the moment, we feel nothing has greatly changed for flood victims and climate change will not go away

– Ends –

Notes to editors:

1. Copies of the NFF's response to the draft Flood and Water Management Bill are attached and can also be found on the website www.floodforum.org.uk

2. To arrange interviews with Mary Dhonau and Laurence Waterhouse contact:

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