



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Sir Andrew Dilnot CBE
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
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9/7/2014

Dear Sir Andrew

I am writing to request an update on the progress of discussions on Government spending on flood defences and further clarification on Government use of statistics on flood risk.

Your reply to my colleague, Hugh Bayley, Member of Parliament for York Central, indicated that the UK Statistics Authority had yet to reach a satisfactory outcome to the discussions between the Head of Profession for Statistics and the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Can you confirm whether a satisfactory outcome has now been reached, and if not can you provide an update on progress?

I would also like to request the view of the UK Statistics Authority on the presentation of statistics on flood risk by the Government in light of the Committee on Climate Change, Adaptation Sub Committee Report 'Managing climate risks to well-being and the economy' published on 9th September 2014.

It is my view that the Government has failed to present official statistics on flood risk in a clear and impartial way creating a barrier to effective Parliamentary scrutiny of Government policy on flooding. The key message of official statistics on flood risk – that flood risk is increasing – is not clear from the Government's use of these statistics in answers to parliamentary questions and in Government press releases.

The Government has repeatedly stated in written and oral answers that 165,000 houses would be better protected from flooding by 2015 and that a further 300,000 would receive improved protection by 2021. The Committee on Climate Change has analysed these figure and discovered that many of these house are already protected and the investment is in the form of refurbishing or replacing existing defences. They conclude that only a proportion of these houses will actually have a lower flood risk following the improvement works and that the net number of houses at risk will actually increase under the Government's current investment plans.

Yours sincerely
Barry Gardiner.