



Association of Drainage Authorities

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PRESS INFORMATION

Working together to ensure good water management is vital

Water must be seen as a precious resource, with all sectors of the industry working together to encourage and incentivise people to value good water management without the need for over-regulation and red-tape.

That's the view of Innes Thomson, chief executive, ADA, commenting on the UK Climate Change Assessment 2017 evidence report released this week (July 12).

“Climate change could significantly alter what we take for granted, and if we don't act now, we're leaving a poisoned chalice for future generations. We must trust and work with each other to ensure people see and value the need for good water management,” he says.

ADA is well-placed to meet these challenges, with its members (IDBs, EA and local authorities) already working together to reduce flooding and manage water levels.

In a 2000-word report, the Climate Change Committee says flooding will destroy bridges – wrecking electricity, gas and IT connections carried on them. The committee has also warned that poor farming means the most fertile soils will be badly degraded by mid-century.

On food and farming, the committee warns that UK shoppers could face higher food bills as imported crops such as soya are harmed by heat or drought. It says that while UK farming may benefit from more warmth, soils are likely to dry out quicker and that rain is more likely to arrive in unhelpful downpours.

The report also says that some of the UK's most fertile land – the peat fields of the East Anglian fens – are suffering badly from decades of intensive farming. Up to 85% of the peat has been washed or blown away, and the rest will follow in coming decades unless farmers are more careful.

Six particular areas of inter-related risks for the UK are highlighted, two as health risks, and four that are directly related in turn to how we manage water during floods and, more importantly, during periods of drought.

The membership body for water level management

Member of the European Union of Water Management Associations

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Land management plays an integral part in the processes involved, and ADA's members can and should play a key role in driving the necessary change in attitudes and behaviours through opportunities to influence the sustainable management of water as a valuable resource, says Innes.

Water transfer and abstraction licencing is a top priority for DEFRA and the Environment Agency and if regulation is correctly applied, will serve to encourage the wise management and use of water.

“If considered to be ill-conceived or adding red tape, then we risk retrograde steps, unintended consequences, and a breakdown in trust between operating authorities and the regulator. If we seize the opportunity to encourage and incentivise people to think of water as a precious resource, then our goals will be achieved far more quickly,” he says.

Working together is the key message and, while regulation is a necessary mechanism to ensure compliance, trust and collaboration is a far more powerful weapon to defeat the risk.

“The CCC report highlights the risks which must and can only be solved through the partnership process and, recognising the reality of those risks, ADA calls on all its members to embrace the challenges set out by the report and work together to build the trust and develop the opportunities required to deliver the outcomes we all need to achieve.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

The Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) is the association for water level management organisations in the United Kingdom, with over 230 members.

It was established in 1937 to watch over and support the interests of drainage authorities at a national and parliamentary level, provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and discussions, and disseminate information of common interest.

ADA is recognised as the national representative of the Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs) in England and Wales.

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