

## PE1720/G

Scottish Government submission of 9 August 2019

Thank you for your email of 12<sup>th</sup> July regarding the above petition, which is calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to develop a natural flood alleviation strategy under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009.

The Scottish Government recognises that working with nature brings multiple benefits, for the environment and society, including helping to reduce flood risk. The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act ('the Act') promotes *sustainable flood risk management*; a process based on a collaborative, sustainable, planned and proactive approach to managing flood risk. Importantly sustainable flood risk management recognises natural features in the landscape, such as floodplains and wetlands, can lower flood risk to communities downstream by managing the sources and pathways of flood water in a catchment. It also emphasizes that along our coast sand and shingle beaches protect communities from flooding and erosion. If there is enough space to allow the natural cycle of erosion and deposition to take place they are also resilient to climate change.

The Act recognises the important role of, promotes and encourages the use of natural flood management ('NFM') techniques. Whenever possible Ministers expect these measures to be considered first. The Scottish Government has embedded NFM as an integral part of Delivering Sustainable Flood Risk Management in the statutory guidance to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and responsible authorities. As a result of this approach the Local Flood Risk Management Plans for 2016-22 include proposals for four NFM schemes and a further 10 engineered schemes that will include an NFM element. In addition local authorities will carry out 23 NFM only studies and a further 69 engineered scheme studies that will include options for NFM during this period.

In order to further promote uptake of NFM measures, we need to improve our understanding of these measures and develop a robust evidence base to persuade practitioners, planners, and land managers of the case for NFM. The Scottish Government is supporting the long term Eddleston Water project which is developing an evidence base to improve our understanding and to encourage practitioners, planners, and land managers of the case for NFM. As part of this project we are a partner, with SEPA and the Tweed Forum, in the EU Interreg (North Sea Region) Building with Nature (BwN) project which aims to demonstrate how working with natural processes can manage flood and coastal erosion risks. We are also funding the Natural Flood Management Network Scotland, a web based tool that enables the sharing of knowledge and best practice for all working with NFM.

The Scottish Government believe it is important that NFM is not viewed as separate from other options to manage flood risk, but as one of a range of measures available alongside, for example, flood warnings, awareness raising, property resilience and formal flood schemes. A separate strategy would set NFM apart from other measures, and as such would not sit well within the holistic approach to flood risk management taken in Scotland.

We note you raise the points made in the CCC final assessment report on Scotland's First Adaptation Programme from March 2019. The findings of the two Independent Assessments of Scotland's Climate Change Adaptation Programme from 2016 and 2019 are helping to inform the development of the new five year Adaptation Programme to be published in 2019. An update on progress in implementing SuDS will be provided in a report due to be published by the Scottish Government in the autumn. This report will set out progress in Scotland towards achieving actions set out in the Local Flood Risk Management Plans.

I hope this information is helpful to the Committee in considering this petition.