

Statement to Planning, Housing and Economic Development Panel.

I am Ian Herve. I live in Henrietta Road, Bath.

(Show Photograph of River Avon in Flood)

This dramatic photograph was taken on the late afternoon Christmas Eve, 2013.

It shows a building just downstream of Cleveland Bridge. It houses vulnerable and infirm residents. Thankfully the flood peaked later that night and only the basement was flooded.

I show this not only because of direct concern for the elderly residents of this area, my Mother was one of them until recently, but to demonstrate the power and levels of the river Avon in flood. I think this is not appreciated by people removed from the river.

This event was NOT, as described by B&NES officials in their public briefing, "The worst Floods in Living Memory";

This was NOT, as stated by a senior councillor of the last administration, "the third of 1:100 year floods in the last few years";

It is a relatively low flow event, measured by the Environment Agency as less than the 1/20 year Annual Return Risk. That is, slightly less than the floods of the year 2000.

The Environment Agency estimate the flow at about 250 cubic meters per second. That is 250 tonnes of water is passing a given point in that photograph every second. Do the multiplication and it becomes about 900,000 tonnes every hour.

The 1/100 year flood will bring flows about 60% greater, over 1.5 million tonnes an hour will pass over Pulteney Weir.

This, the 1/100 Annual Return Risk, with an additional 20% allowance for climate change, is the level of flow that the short section of the Lower Bristol Road is to be protected.

(Show second slide of Flood Area)

In June 2012, the Environment Agency stated that “The current level of flood risk in Bath is considered unacceptable”.

At that time the number of properties currently at risk within the 1:100 annual probability footprint was put at approximately 1,100, increasing to 1,800 with climate change taken into account.

In their September 2014 update the numbers were put at 930 at the moment and increasing up to maybe 2000 with climate change.

Given the multiple occupancy of Bath houses this will be a substantial percentage of the Bath population.

Currently there are no plans for the mitigation of this impending threat to public safety in Bath.

Any schemes presented for purely cosmetic and insubstantial reasons are a distraction from the real concerns of many thousands of residents. They will be “Reintroduced to the river” when it comes to their homes.

We urge the panel and this new administration to seriously address this problem before history is repeated and action becomes necessary after a disastrous flood.