

DRAFT FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT BILL

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FROM STOCKTON ON TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

Key Issues

We welcome the publication of the draft Flood and Water Management Bill as the legislative response to aspects of the Pitt Review. In particular we support the position of leadership for local authorities in dealing with flood risk management and the clarification of roles and responsibilities for the various agencies and bodies who will deal with this issue. We are pleased to see that there will be a requirement for effective communication and sharing of information between local authorities, water and sewerage companies and the Environmental Agency.

However we do have concerns particularly in respect of the additional resources that will be needed to develop and deliver the local flood risk management plans required within the draft legislation. We do not accept that the increased demand on resources will be adequately off-set by savings on areas such as the transfer of responsibility for private sewers to water and sewerage authorities.

We are also concerned that there is an acute skills gap which needs to be addressed urgently through a comprehensive training programme supported by the government and drawing upon the experience that exists within the water companies and the environment agency.

The proposal to encourage sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) on new development is based upon sound sustainability principles but without the skills, expertise and technical knowledge there is potential for serious environmental damage. Furthermore the proposal that local authorities adopt these SUDS places another burden on our resources, and may well be storing up significant problems for the future.

In a number of areas within the draft bill it is suggested that local authorities are given extra powers to carry out works to minimise flood risk but without providing the means to recover those costs, if appropriate, from a third party. Again this needs to be addressed to minimise resource implications.