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Press Release 18/02/20

Flooding Exposes Folly of Misbalanced UK Climate Policies



London, 18 February: In view of the habitual failure of UK governments to prevent and alleviate significant flooding events the GWPF is calling for a radical rebalancing of adaptation and mitigation in the country's climate change policies.

Since 2002 the UK has been spending increasingly large sums on climate change mitigation, mostly through subsidies to renewables. Between 2017 and today, according to the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR), the UK has spent £25 billion on subsidising renewable electricity, with over £9 billion in the last year alone. (<https://obr.uk/efo/economic-fiscal-outlook-march-2019/>)

The OBR estimates that in the next four years alone (2020 to 2024) the UK will spend nearly £44 billion on renewables subsidies.

A fraction of these vast expenditures could have delivered greatly improved flood prevention, defences and disaster recovery systems. Comparable spending would have made the UK extremely resilient in the face of natural disasters.

The UK obviously has the balance of adaptation and mitigation very badly wrong.

As a direct result of costly and ineffective climate change mitigation policies the country has underinvested in adaptation measures. These measures are very effective and "no regrets" policies because they yield dividends immediately and protect citizens against flooding and other natural disasters whether they are related to climate change or not.

All political parties must take a share of the blame for this costly failure. It should be noted, however, that the fixation with climate change mitigation via renewable energy is largely the result of decisions taken by the European Union. That can now change.

The opportunity of rebalancing UK climate policy is one of the most significant Brexit dividends and should be seized without delay.

Dr Benny Peiser, the GWPF's director, said:

"The UK's current climate and decarbonisation policies deliver few if any benefits to UK communities affected by persistent flooding.

"Even if the UK were ever to achieve Net Zero CO₂ emissions, towns and communities would still have to deal with flooding and other extreme weather events that won't disappear just because the Government throws billions at wind and solar energy.

"It is time for the government to redirect resources towards adaptation measures that would have prevented or minimised much of the misery and economic harm caused by flooding."

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