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Our ref: PO2018/12049/TV

14th June 2018

M D Lambert

Thank you for your letter of 17 May about flood defences.

Having completed the programme of recovery works in Carlisle after Storm Desmond, the Environment Agency (EA) has been going through an appraisal of the flood risk options that will protect the City to a Storm Desmond standard, and works will begin on the ground in December. The flooding mechanisms in Carlisle are very complex and this appraisal has taken time. Extensive analysis and modelling using information observed following Storm Desmond has been used to determine the requisite level of flood protection and assess the costs and benefits.

The strategic case has now been approved and the business case is currently being developed. Delivering the scheme will require the support of partners Carlisle City and Cumbria County Council, United Utilities, Network Rail (identified as a key partner due to the key role their infrastructure has in relation to flooding in the city), wider stakeholders and landowners. The EA is engaging with all of the above to gain that support.

The EA has also held community drop in events including the short list options event in February. The EA is also continuing to work closely with the Carlisle Flood Action Group (CFLAG), meeting on a regular basis to discuss progress and key concerns. CFLAG is also a founding member of CRAGG (Cumbria Rivers Authority Governance Group). CRAGG wants proactive river management and drainage infrastructure management to be examined as a way of mitigating floods throughout the whole county. CRAGG has developed a document which was recently presented to Defra by the Cumbria MPs which set out the 'Special case for Cumbria' in relation to its 'manifestly different' flooding issues.

The combined team of the appraisal consultant (Jacobs), the design and construction contractors (BMM Joint Venture) and the EA's National Capital Programme Management Service (NCPMS) is moving towards the preferred option combination. The programme through to design and construction sets out phases for delivery in different parts of the city. The latest programme sees the EA on the ground with its contractors in Rickerby in December, following business case approval autumn/winter 2018. Work in the city is due to start in summer 2019 and continues until 2022. Full business case sign off is currently scheduled for March 2019.

With best wishes,

DAVID RUTLEY MP

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