

Flooding: Real Challenge Is Critical Long-Term Management Of National Infrastructure

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As flooding continues to cause havoc across the UK, engineers are highlighting the need for the critical long-term management of our national infrastructure.

Professor Will Stewart from the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) said: "Engineering can do a lot to help us cope with flooding, and other effects of climate change.

"Even in the case of the terrible immediate problems for people and communities that we are now tragically seeing in Somerset and the Thames Valley and around our coasts, modern engineering has helped.

"Greatly improved flood modelling and much better communications has helped provide warnings that may have saved lives and reduced damage. But from an engineering perspective the real challenge is the critical long-term management of our national infrastructure.

"An important consideration is that our national infrastructure, which guarantees our energy and water supplies and enables safe and reliable use of road, rail and air transport, is increasingly interconnected and interdependent (for example flooded power stations mean power cuts, which result in telecommunications failures).

"This makes the systems smarter and more resilient in everyday use but also means that extensive damage to one system can cause problems with others - which needs careful planning to avoid critical loss of services, such as communications in flood-hit areas at times when they are especially needed for example.

"To avoid the kind of long-term economic disruption we are now facing, Government, engineers and the entire supply chain need to work together to make the infrastructure as a whole more resilient - and adapt it to cope with the anticipated increase in flooding as result of climate change.

"Tackling parts of the system in isolation, for example improving electricity network management and retrofitting buildings, will help, but the real challenge for engineers will be to find new ways to plan and manage the integrated system.

"This will include developing and manufacturing new engineering technologies, as well as finding innovative ways to develop multi-purpose infrastructure, such as reservoirs that double up as flood defences."

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Notes to Editors:

Interview opportunities are available with IET spokespeople from a broad range of engineering and technology disciplines including cyber-security, energy, engineering skills, innovation, manufacturing, technology, transport and women in engineering.

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