

**FLOOD PREVENTION POLICY REVIEW 24-02-2020 from Rod Donnington-Smith to
The Rt Hon George Eustice MP** Name Prre-02

Having watched your interview this morning on the Andrew Marr Show, in which you stated that it is intended to spend “£4bn on flood prevention measures over the next Parliament” I would like to point out that our community is not asking for money – just common sense. We need effective reservoir management for storm water storage. It would cost the government nothing or very little, uses infrastructure already in place and could offer greater flood risk reduction than raising river defences etc. We simply need a change in legislation.

Living in Keswick, where over 500 properties were flooded during Storm Desmond (the third time the town had been badly flooded within eleven years), we are very aware that our risk of flooding is directly related to the water level in Thirlmere, a reservoir owned by United Utilities (UU) upstream of the town. There is no record of the town ever flooding from the River Greta as long as Thirlmere is not overflowing. For the last ten years there has been a voluntary arrangement between UU and the community for releases of up to 140Ml/d (the maximum possible before the dam’s valves are upgraded) to be made once the reservoir’s water level reaches pre-agreed trigger points (which vary dependent on the month of the year). The present flow regime is still inadequate to provide sufficient pre-storm space and manage peak flows in the catchment.

Days before the arrival of Storm Ciara we were aware that Thirlmere would probably overflow and requested UU, if possible, to increase their releases. Their response was that, even if they could, they would not do so without first getting permission from the Environment Agency and Natural England. From its response it seems that the Environment Agency feels that it is not in a position to intervene in the terms of the original release agreement. A very disappointing and nerve-wracking situation for the residents of Keswick and other communities further downstream to find themselves in.

By good fortune we missed the worst of the storm and also there was 40cm storage space in the reservoir before the arrival of Ciara. As a result, the town’s river defences were not overwhelmed despite the reservoir overflowing. It was still overflowing when Storm Dennis arrived. Again, we were fortunate to miss the worst of the storm. With Thirlmere still overflowing all we need is for a major storm to hit us (Storm Ellen?) and the town will needlessly flood again for the fourth time within fifteen years.

Yours faithfully,

Rod Donnington-Smith

On behalf of Keswick Flood Action Group