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FLOOD PROTECTION

'Outside' cash needed for flood management

Councils must be more 'imaginative' in sourcing funds – By Robin Mannering

Local authorities need to be 'much more imaginative' at generating other sources of funding for flood-management work, the chairman of the Environment Agency has warned.

Lord Smith said councils should not expect much additional funding to accompany the draft Flood and Water Management Bill, which will be published by the end of May. Speaking at a Local Government Flood Forum (LGFF) seminar, he said the Government was unaware of the resources needed to achieve the aims of the Bill, and 'hadn't fully woken up to the scale of the climate change problem'.

With extra government funding uncertain and private sector contributions 'currently unrealistic', he urged councils to exert influence with 'their considerable lobbying powers' – and to 'get better at bringing in outside funding'.

Potential sources of funding highlighted at the seminar included: top-slicing Section 106 agreements for flood funding; urging regional development agencies to re-focus on the economic impact of flooding; introducing a levy on taxes, and even water rates; efficiencies through sharing resources; and encouraging home-own-



Dried up: Expecting the Government to provide more money is 'unrealistic'

ers and residents to take a more proactive approach. Lord Smith cited an example in Suffolk where residents on a vulnerable stretch of coastline liaised with the council and EA to sell land behind their properties to fund flood defences.

But Barry Dare, leader of Gloucestershire County Council and founder of the LGFF, admitted he did not have a funding solution. 'Resources are scarce,' he told *Surveyor*.

Lord Smith emphasised the need for more specialist engineers in local authorities, and urged the

Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to talk with other government departments to build on those skills.

Steven Jones, flood Bill manager, DEFRA, said the final draft Bill would be ready in September, following a 12-week consultation.

The LGFF is pushing for flooding to be the number one priority for a climate change strategy – which would ensure extra funding. It is also calling for the establishment of joint flood management boards to provide the structure for all parties to work closely together.