Reservoir Safety and National Policy Statement for Water Resources Infrastructure

You kindly provided the Committee with an update on Defra’s reservoir safety research project in your letter of 17 December 2018. In it you informed us that you expected it to conclude in June 2019.

Our predecessor Committee’s report on the post-legislative scrutiny of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (published 26 April 2017) examined the debate as to whether to bring reservoirs with a capacity of between 10,000 and 25,000 cubic metres into the range regulated by the Reservoirs Act 1975.

At that time the Government informed the Committee that it was carrying out research into the safety of smaller reservoirs, and the results of that research would inform its decision on whether the reduce the regulatory threshold.

The Government Response to our Report stated that the results of the research would be published in December 2018. However, in your letter of 17 December you informed us that the scope of the research had been extended to include “cascade reservoirs”, and that you expected the full research to be completed by the end of June 2019.

We would therefore welcome a further update on the findings of this research, and whether as a result you intend to extend regulation to smaller reservoirs. I also call your attention to our predecessor Committee’s recommendation that any such decision should be accompanied by a full evidence base to justify how it balances safety, economic and water management issues.
The Committee also requests an update on the response to our report on the draft National Policy Statement for water resources infrastructure, published on 26 April.

I look forward to your reply, which I would expect to be published on the Committee website.

Neil Parish
Chairman of the Committee