25 October 2013

Dear Rob

I am writing to inform you of the publication on the Scottish Government’s website of an important research report entitled Flood disadvantage in Scotland: mapping the potential losses in well-being (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/10/5328).

The Scottish Government commissioned this research for Scotland following work by the University of Manchester for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), as part of the Foundation’s climate justice work, which developed a methodology for identifying and mapping the communities in England and Wales most vulnerable to flood events (http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/climate-change-justice-and-vulnerability). This research looks at the communities most vulnerable to flooding in terms of their underlying spatial and social demographic characteristics (i.e. ‘socio-spatial vulnerability’), with a focus on flood disadvantage (i.e. socio-spatial vulnerability combined with the probability of being flooded). The report for Scotland identifies the local authorities with the highest percentage of flood disadvantaged neighbourhoods and maps flood disadvantage for other local authorities.

Recognising that the impacts of climate change, such as those arising from an increased risk of flooding, are not felt uniformly throughout society, the intention is to help policy-makers and practitioners explore the potential of an approach to flood and climate change adaptation planning and management focused on the underlying vulnerability of people and places.

The research findings are presented as a basis for discussion with practitioners for potential further development. The Scottish Government will seek feedback from local authorities and others on how the mapping work and its underlying model can be used to inform local policy and planning, complementing the National Flood Risk Assessment.

This work builds on the Scottish Government’s international climate justice agenda which recognises that some of the world’s poorest communities will be most vulnerable to climate change, an issue emphasised by the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report on The Physical Science Basis. Our Climate Justice Fund supports some of the
poorest communities in the world to develop resilience to the worst impacts of climate change. Climate Justice is also a concept that has relevance at home too, with many of our more disadvantaged communities, in both urban and rural areas, living in areas that are vulnerable to flooding.

I am aware that the Committee expressed interest in work by the JRF on climate justice when it took evidence on the draft Scottish Climate Change Adaptation Programme on 9 October. Further research is available on their website at www.jrf.org.uk/topic/climate-change. As members of the Committee may be aware, the Scottish Government held a joint conference with the JRF and Adaptation Scotland on Climate Justice: Delivering Socially Just Adaptation in Scotland in Edinburgh last year. Research from the Foundation’s programme was presented and discussed, alongside work by other organisations (see http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/environment/social-research/climatechangeadaptation/climatejusticeadaptation). This demonstrates our commitment to developing an approach to protection of our most vulnerable communities from the impacts of climate change.

I hope this is helpful in highlighting some of the ongoing work by the Scottish Government on this issue.

Kind regards

[Signature]

PAUL WHEELHOUSE