

## **Responding to the Call for Evidence on Flood Resilience in England**

Response to call for evidence drawing on published peer reviewed work by Lomotey (2024)<sup>i</sup>.

### **Introduction and general response to all questions**

This report responds to the UK Parliament's call for evidence on flood resilience in England, using insights from a peer reviewed book chapter by Michael Lomotey entitled *Antiblackness in Flood Risk in Hull: The Afterlife of Colonialism*. Lomotey's work critically examines the racialised dimensions of flood risk and disaster preparedness in Hull, highlighting systemic inequalities rooted in colonial legacies. This response addresses key themes absent in the call for evidence questions, including vulnerability, preparedness, and equity in flood risk management. Whilst Hull is a case study, integrating these perspectives in a national context is recommended. Where the likely hood of serious social impacts and attention to vulnerable communities' protections and inclusion is recognised and gets a mention in the introduction of the call to evidence, this written response addresses the Call in general by attending to social impacts' challenges which appear missing in the questions.

The questions should be broadened by asking for interventions that seek to understand and address what are the social-cultural challenges and barriers to effective flood resilience? Flooding in Hull underscores the disproportionate impact on marginalised groups, particularly Black communities, whose experiences are often excluded from disaster risk reduction (DRR) frameworks. Lomotey identifies several barriers which are drawn out below:

#### Racial Blindness in Policy

Despite Hull's significant Black population, flood risk assessments and recovery policies have systematically ignored their specific vulnerabilities. Official reports on the 2007 and 2013 floods in Hull and more broadly across the UK, failed to address racialised impacts, mirroring broader trends of erasure in UK environmental justice debates.

#### Intersectionality of vulnerabilities

While socio-economic class is often prioritised in UK flood resilience strategies, Lomotey argues that race and class intersect to compound vulnerabilities. Black residents, who disproportionately belong to low-income groups, face additional barriers due to systemic racism in housing, insurance access, and disaster recovery.

#### Colonial legacy in vulnerability

The structural inequities affecting Black communities in Hull (and the UK) stem from historical patterns of racial capitalism and colonial exploitation. These dynamics persist in contemporary governance and exacerbate the impacts of climate hazards.

#### Recommendation

Flood resilience strategies must adopt an intersectional approach, explicitly addressing how race intersects with other factors like income, housing, and geographic location. Data collection and analysis should disaggregate by race and ethnicity to ensure equitable policy outcomes.

## **How can communities most effectively be supported to prepare for and respond to flooding?**

Lomotey's research highlights the importance of engaging marginalised communities in preparedness efforts. Black residents in Hull reported limited inclusion in planning and decision-making processes, which diminished their trust in local authorities and their capacity to respond effectively to floods.

### Participatory approaches

Lomotey's participatory research model demonstrates how dialogue with Black communities can uncover unique perspectives on flood resilience. Such engagement can empower residents and foster community-driven solutions.

### Cultural and social networks

Black communities in Hull have developed informal networks, such as Black churches, cultural and community organisations, which serve as vital resources during crises. Recognising and integrating these networks into official resilience planning can enhance overall preparedness.

### Barriers to communication

Language and cultural differences often hinder effective communication with diverse communities. Tailored messaging, meaningful engagement and outreach co-created with or by local communities, are essential to bridge these gaps.

### Recommendation

Flood resilience programmes should prioritise inclusive community engagement, leveraging local networks and cultural institutions. Training and resources must be co-created and co-designed with marginalised groups to ensure cultural relevance and effectiveness.

## **Response to Question 6 and 7.**

How should future investment be targeted to improve flood resilience and what should be priorities for the Flood Resilience Taskforce?

Hull's unique geography, with much of the city lying below sea level, necessitates significant investment in flood defences. However, Lomotey's analysis reveals that existing investments often fail to consider the needs of marginalised groups, perpetuating systemic inequalities. These learnings are contextual but have national application.

### Unequal access to flood defences, alerts and warnings

Infrastructure projects frequently prioritise areas with higher property values, neglecting low-income and racially diverse neighbourhoods. This pattern reinforces spatial and racial inequities. There is low access to alerts and warnings amongst marginalised communities.

### Exclusion from decision-making

Black communities in Hull have little representation in discussions about infrastructure planning and resource allocation. This exclusion results in projects that fail to address their specific needs.

#### Insurance disparities

Lomotey notes that Black residents in Hull face barriers to obtaining affordable flood insurance, leaving them more vulnerable to long-term financial impacts.

#### Recommendation

Investment strategies must prioritise equitable access to flood defences, focusing on the most vulnerable areas regardless of property value. Additionally, targeted support should address insurance disparities, ensuring that marginalised groups are not left unprotected.

### **Response to Question 8**

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) overlooks how investment decisions exacerbate social inequalities. It fails to consider the distributional impacts of flood defences and insurance schemes on marginalised groups.

The CCRA does not adequately address how community preparedness efforts must be tailored to the needs of diverse populations. Addressing systemic inequalities - how do we ensure that flood resilience efforts are inclusive and equitable? The lack of culturally relevant engagement strategies perpetuates inequalities in preparedness. Lomotey's concept of "antiblackness" provides a critical lens for understanding how systemic racism shapes flood resilience. Addressing these inequalities requires a fundamental shift in how vulnerability and resilience are conceptualised.

The (CCRA) appears to lack a comprehensive analysis of the social aspects of flooding impacts. While it identifies broad vulnerabilities, it does not disaggregate data by race or ethnicity, failing to account for how systemic inequalities amplify the effects of flooding on marginalised groups.

#### Decolonising DRR

Lomotey argues that current DRR frameworks are rooted in colonial-modern systems that perpetuate racial hierarchies. Decolonising these frameworks involves recognising and addressing historical injustices that shape present vulnerabilities.

#### Fugitivity as resistance

Black communities in Hull have developed strategies of "fugitivity", creating their own spaces of safety and support outside formal systems. These acts of resistance highlight the need for resilience strategies that empower rather than marginalise.

#### Intersectional analysis

To fully address systemic inequalities, resilience efforts must incorporate intersectional analyses that account for the combined effects of race, class, gender, and other factors.

Whilst UK's Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) and National Adaptation Plan (NAP) both consider community support, this needs to go further, applying the concepts and points in this response as a framework to guide improvements.

## Conclusion and recommendations

Flood risk interventions, response, policies and assessments must consider social and political aspects to ensure more effective adaptation co-creation and decision-making. Social factors, such as networks, income inequalities, heritage and neighbourhood characteristics, can influence how floods affect wellbeing. For example communities that have high social capital networks and bonds, would respond better in emergencies, while exclusion from, for example institutional or systemic racism, increases vulnerability.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment does not engage with decolonial perspectives or acknowledge the systemic nature of racial inequalities in flood risk. This limits its ability to propose transformative solutions. Policymakers overseeing CCRA, FCERM and NAP should adopt decolonial approaches to flood resilience, prioritising justice and equity in all aspects of planning and implementation. This includes amplifying the voices of marginalised communities and ensuring their meaningful participation in co-creation and decision-making processes.

Flood resilience in England must evolve to address the systemic inequalities that disproportionately impact marginalised groups, particularly Black communities. Lomotey's work provides a critical framework for understanding these challenges and offers actionable insights for creating more inclusive and equitable policies. By adopting intersectional and decolonial approaches, policymakers can ensure that flood resilience efforts leave no one behind.

This whole premise whilst situated in the Black lived experience, applies to other racialised and minoritised communities in the UK.

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<sup>i</sup> Lomotey, M. (2024) 'Antiblackness in Flood Risk in Hull: The Afterlife of Colonialism', in F. Sultana (ed.) *Confronting Climate Coloniality*. 1st edn. London and New York: Earthscan from Routledge (Routledge Advances in Climate Change Research), pp. 171–187. Available at: <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003465973-14/antiblackness-flood-risk-hull-michael-lomotey>