

Fiona Twycross, Deputy Mayor for Fire and Resilience

Thank you for your kind introduction and thanks to Bob Ward from the Grantham Institute and the London Climate Change Partnership for organising this event.

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I think we are all aware of how important it is for us to be having this discussion now, to understand what needs to happen to make us as resilient as we can be as a city to future climate change events.

Today I will talk about London’s preparedness in the face of climate change risks, and how those link to the wider climate change

adaptation agenda. The Mayor has declared a climate emergency in London. But we know that we will experience the impacts of climate change. We will face increased risks as a result of climate change. We must be prepared for these events as best we can be.

Shirley has already talked about the types of risks we face, such as flooding, and adaptive measures we are taking to mitigate against these. I would like to speak to you a bit more about how we focus on managing these type of risks in London.

As part of my role, I chair the London Resilience Forum and oversee the work of the Resilience Partnership in preparing for emergencies in London.

The Partnership is made up of around 200 private and public sector organisations, including emergency responders, utilities and the transport sector as well as business, faith organisations and the voluntary sector.

The Partnership maintains the London Risk Register. This focuses on the risks facing the capital over the next 5 years, both in terms of likelihood and the extent of impact.

At present, the London Risk Register includes several climate-related risks, such as flooding, severe drought and extreme weather - including heatwaves or extreme cold weather like the 'Beast from the east' last year.

We used to plan for these being exceptional events. But they are no longer an exception and we have to anticipate them becoming the rule.

We already know that trends in temperature and rainfall are becoming more extreme and less predictable. Surface water flooding is already an issue and likely to become more common in London.

And we also face the prospect of increased likelihood of periods of drought due to a lack of rain and diminished ground water.

One of the main problems we have to overcome is that generally people don't believe in drought. They think-despite the evidence that we are a rainy city. Heavy downpours don't help.

Emergency response plans are crucial in terms of ensuring we have a joined-up, cross-sectoral, way of managing the safety of our communities.

But they won't solve the problem or protect individuals, businesses and communities on their own.

As you have probably already spotted – a 5-year time horizon does not allow for planning the types of adaptive resilience measures that address climate change. This is why the Mayor's environmental strategy, and Shirley and the environment team's work is fundamental to the long-term resilience of our capital.

From being prepared through emergency planning, to adapting what we already have – these are all measures that can improve our resilience, be it in 1 year, 5 years or 25 years' time.

Last year, London Resilience held a Strategic Coordination Summit on drought. Much like today, it brought together many different responders and experts to help us better understand the risk and implications of a severe drought in London, and it was designed to inform future emergency planning on water resource.

The summit looked at examples from other cities to understand the challenges of dealing with drought, such as those faced by Cape Town and closer to home in Barcelona.

The summit highlighted how profound the impact of a drought would be on London. High-rise social housing would be affected, as would healthcare, and safety measures such as fire suppression. It would also be the vulnerable who would suffer disproportionately as they would be least able to afford adaptation measures.

Services would be affected, as – arguably – would the capital’s ability to continue as usual.

During the extreme drought event in Cape Town, residents and business were required to reduce water consumption by two thirds. To achieve this in London would require an enormous and coordinated effort across many different sectors.

How would schools plan and manage? What would be the implications for care homes? For individuals? For businesses?

There are also further repercussions: if you were an employer who operated their business out of a high-rise building, what would your plans be if there wasn't enough pressure in the water system to ensure sprinklers can work on the top floors of the building? How would you keep your staff safe, and your business functioning?

Drought may well not occur in isolation. Instead, it could coincide with a heatwave, such as the one we are seeing at present in France and all over mainland Europe. An event for which we need to ensure people stay cool and hydrated, not least to try to limit the number of excess deaths that may occur as a result of the heat. And consequently an event likely to put more pressure on our water systems.

The strategic summit on drought enabled London Resilience to start building robust emergency response plans for drought. Plans such as developing messaging to help people use less water, and finding ways of working with water companies to manage supply and demand.

But it is also a sobering message that resilience is complex. It needs short term emergency planning and long-term planning to ensure adaptation to climate change. It requires coordinated cross-sectoral action. It also demands that we develop ways of treating our limited resources sustainably.

In London there is no one simple lever to achieve resilience to drought. Our coordinated work between London Resilience and Shirley's Environment and Climate change adaptation team reflects this.

At one end of the scale we need to look at how we can develop emergency messaging about reducing water consumption. At the other end of the scale we also need to make robust plans for our future water infrastructure and supply across the country as a whole. Coordinating our

work across the whole of this spectrum is the only way to achieve true resilience.

And true resilience of this nature takes a long time to achieve. Large projects to adapt to climate change don't happen overnight, but – as Shirley as already made the case for so powerfully – need to start happening now.

London Resilience is also looking at other climate-related issues caused by extreme weather, such as the effects of heat islands, and challenges with our food supply systems.

The London Resilience Partnership's work on no-deal planning for Brexit has uncovered some inconvenient truths about the supply chains that underpin the availability of food in the capital.

This planning has shown as that we rely on extremely complex, international sourcing of food. The majority of which is delivered just in time.

So why is this relevant?

Much of our food is grown outside the UK. And food producers anywhere may be affected by a changing climate. From tomatoes and onions in Spain to cereal harvests in the United States could be disrupted.

This means both food prices and availability could fluctuate. Again, this would disproportionately affect the most vulnerable members of society. It will also be hard to understand without good awareness of our supply chains, and cooperation with food suppliers.

It also means we should be ready to ask challenging questions about the amount of risk we are prepared to tolerate in our food supply chains. And whether we should be taking action to mitigate against being wholly reliant on just-in-time, just-enough systems.

To me, this yet again underlines the importance of climate change adaptation work. The more we can adapt, the more resilient we will be.

London is currently in the process of developing an Urban Resilience Strategy, as part of the 100 Resilient Cities programme. This will allow us to develop more ways of improving city resilience. It will be closely aligned with the climate change adaptation work, and build on our

Environment Strategy and climate change adaptation plans. The strategy will look at how we can embed resilience thinking across London, and make our communities more resilient.

This will help us prepare for and adapt to climate change, and in doing so make London more resilient, and better prepared for disruptive events that may face us in future.

Thank you.