

# The Floods and Cameron's Lies

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I've put up a couple of posts recently on the lies David Cameron has told about the floods. In the first post I questioned Cameron's assertion that the Coalition had spent more on flood defences than the Labour Party. The second post I put up was reblogged from *Pride's Purge*, which provided the figures showing that the Coalition was spending far less on the floods than Labour. Further confirmation of this comes from this article from *Private Eye's* issue for 20th to 23rd January 2014:



"There are a lot of flood defences being built," claimed David Cameron outside a flooded village pub in Yalding, Kent, at the end of December. "But we have got to do more."

Days later environment secretary Owen Paterson insisted that cuts to 550 flood prevention, warning and recovery jobs at the Environment Agency (EA) – splashed on by the *Telegraph* last week, though *Eye* readers read about them last year – are somehow being made "with the intention of protecting frontline services concerned with floods." "This government is spending more than all preceding governments on flood defences," he added. It should, but it isn't.

Things were already bad under Labour. In 2007, official figures showed the EA missed its target of keeping just 63 percent of England's existing flood defences up to scratch (*Eye* 1187); and the National Audit Office said it would take an extra \$150m a year just to reach the target. But since the coalition came to power in 2010, far from tackling the flood defence backlog it has actually spent even *less* on flood defences.

A briefing paper last year found a 6 percent overall fall in central government funding for flood and coastal defence during the 2011-15 spending review period. Even the extra £120m announced in November 2012 – after it was revealed that 294 flood defence schemes across England were on hold after never receiving funding they'd been promised – didn't bring spending back up to even 2010 levels.

But never mind! Government had a new wheeze to encourage local and private funding of flood defence through "Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding". This, claimed the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, would enable "more local choice" and "encourage innovative, cost-effective options". Alas, as the Local Government Association told parliament last year: "securing private sector contributions in the current economic climate is particularly challenging." By 2015, just £38m for flood defence is expected to be raised from private sources – and the likely funders are firms who want to develop on flood plains.

Extra cash is available from taxpayers via the government's "Growing Places Fund" – which is specifically for infrastructure, such as transport or flood defence, which will "unlock jobs and housing "developments. So the only way to get flood defence funded is ... to build yet more on land at risk of flooding! Clever, eh?"

This piece not only shows that Cameron has been lying once again – and one wonders if anyone at the Coalition has ever, in their entire lives, told anyone the truth – but it's also par for the course for the lamentable performance of Thatcher's programme of wholesale privatisation. Thatcher, you will remember, was insistent that private industry would give you more choice, as well as be more efficient than state-managed monopolies and concerns. Hence the Coalition's boast that their Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership Funding would provide 'more local choice'. Well, it has been demonstrably less efficient and effective at raising money for flood defences than traditional forms of state taxation, borrowing and allocation of funds. As for choice, that hasn't noticeably been one of the Partnership's priorities either. None of the poor souls now being flooded out of their

homes and businesses in Somerset, Berkshire and elsewhere chose to be so, and the government has gone back to using state spending to combat the floods. So that's another resounding triumph for private industry then.

Or at least it will be the next time Cameron and his cabinet start telling lies about it.

Tags: [Berkshire](#), [Cameron](#), [Coalition Somerset](#), [Department for Environment](#), [Environment Agency](#), [Flood and Coastal Resilience Partnership](#), [Floods](#), [Food and Rural Affairs](#), [Labour Party](#), [National Audit Office](#), [Owen Paterson](#), [Pride's Purge](#), [Private Eye](#), [Privatisation](#), [Telegraph](#), [Thatcher](#)