

Flood defence spending 'favours wealthy areas'

 [news.sky.com/story/flood-defence-spending-favours-wealthy-areas-10630366](https://www.sky.com/news/story/flood-defence-spending-favours-wealthy-areas-10630366)

The system for allocating taxpayers' money to flood defence schemes is favouring the wealthy, and those in the South East, because of the formula used to calculate the spend, analysis shows.

The Press Association says the methods to determine where the money goes is based on the value of the assets protected, meaning areas of the country where house prices are higher could receive a larger share.

It has prompted calls for a fairer system to prevent the poor being worst hit by flooding events, which are set to increase as the climate changes.

To secure funding, a flood protection scheme has to demonstrate that it delivers more in benefits than it costs to implement and maintain the defences - by calculating the economic losses avoided through protecting property and infrastructure.

The calculation looks at direct damages for homes and other buildings and their contents, clean-up costs, loss of agricultural production and commercial stock as well as indirect damages such as disruption to transport links, water, electricity or access to amenities.

PA also say that people who are in a higher social class, such as upper middle or middle class, in professional or managerial roles, are considered to have better quality household items than working class families, so losses from their properties are greater.



Treasury guidelines also require appraisers to "cap" or limit the value of the damages expected so they do not exceed the market value of the property - which is likely to be much higher in London and the South East than other parts of the country.

The guidelines do have some measures designed to level the playing field, but Green Party MP Caroline Lucas said it seemed the funding formula was not "fit for purpose".

"Whether you are rich or poor having your home damaged by flooding is devastating - and a postcode lottery to decide who gets protection simply isn't fair. It's simply wrong for richer areas to get more protection than poorer ones," she said.

"The Government should urgently review this policy, and re-purpose the formula to give equal protections to people's homes, no matter what their value.

"With climate change accelerating and flooding expected to become a more regular occurrence it's crucial that the Government gets this right."

In Appleby in Cumbria, a small town devastated by last winter's flooding, there is little faith in the Government's promise to provide improved flood defences. And the news that the funding process may not be fair was met with disappointment.

Julie Baxter, who owns a wool shop and haberdashery in the town, said: "David Cameron promised billions of pounds of help the areas that most needed it, but I've seen very little being done around here.

"It shouldn't matter where you are, or how well off you are, flood victims are flood victims and they should be treated fairly."

An Environment Agency spokesman said: "We know the devastating impact that flooding has on lives and livelihoods.

"We invest in flood defences where the risk is highest, wherever it is across the country and wherever it will benefit the most people and property.

"We give each scheme careful consideration - and this includes additional weighting for regional economic differences."