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Foreword

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The floods in Britain in Autumn 2000 provided a timely reminder of the vulnerability of this nation and its people to flooding. The same floods also demonstrated the important role of professionals—including engineers—in reducing flood risk. Of the 300 000 or so houses at direct risk of flooding in the Autumn 2000 event, less than 5% were directly affected due to the flood alleviation measures installed in previous years.

In a somewhat prophetic speech in early 2000, Professor George Fleming—the then President of the Institution of Civil Engineers—offered the profession's services to improve delivery of the government's flood and coastal defence policy.

This special issue of *Civil Engineering* will, I hope, serve to demonstrate the importance of the role the civil engineering pro-

fession plays in reducing flood damage. It may also provide an incentive for more engineers to become involved in this area of business—and perhaps encourage those already involved to be more visionary in their approach to a reduction of flood risk.

Research commissioned by the UK government's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has shown that some 10% of the country's population live in flood risk areas with a potential annual damage of some £3.5 billion. That same research has shown that the average annual damage has been reduced by £2.7 billion, an impressive return on investment.

Flood risk reduction is an important area of work for the civil engineering profession and, with its help, we can further reduce the impact on this nation's people and its economy.

