

# Flood Risk Management Strategy

## Outer Hebrides Local Plan District

### Section 1: Flood risk management in Scotland

1.1	What is a Flood Risk Management Strategy? .....	1
1.2	How to read this Strategy .....	1
1.3	Managing flooding in Scotland.....	2
1.4	How the Flood Risk Management Strategy was developed .....	3
1.5	Roles and responsibilities for flood risk management planning .....	5
1.6	Links with other plans and policies .....	8
1.7	Supporting information .....	9
1.8	Next steps and monitoring progress .....	10

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## 1 Flood risk management in Scotland

### 1.1 What is a Flood Risk Management Strategy?

Flood Risk Management Strategies have been developed to reduce the devastating and costly impact of flooding in Scotland. They coordinate the efforts of all organisations that tackle flooding, be it in our cities or rural areas and be it from rivers, the sea or from surface water. The strategies concentrate the work of these organisations to where the risk of flooding and benefits of investment are greatest.

By publishing these strategies, we are giving individuals, communities and businesses the information to better manage their own responsibilities. Everyone can take action with the confidence of knowing what others are doing and when they are doing it.

Flood Risk Management Strategies set out the short to long term ambition for flood risk management in Scotland. The strategies state the objectives, as agreed by responsible authorities, for tackling floods in high risk areas. Actions that will then deliver these objectives are described and prioritised in six-year planning cycles. The decisions are based on the best evidence available on the causes and consequences of flooding. Through this risk-based and plan-led approach, flood management will improve for individuals, communities and businesses at risk in Scotland.

Each strategy should be read alongside its Local Flood Risk Management Plan. The Local Flood Risk Management Plans have been developed by local authorities and provide additional local detail on the funding and delivery timetable for actions between 2016 and 2021. The publication date of the Local Flood Risk Management Plans is June 2016. Both the Flood Risk Management Strategy and Local Flood Risk Management Plan will be updated every six years.

These Flood Risk Management Strategies are approved by Scottish Ministers and published by SEPA, Scotland's strategic flood risk management authority. They have been prepared in collaboration with all 32 local authorities, Scottish Water and other organisations with a responsibility or interest in managing flooding. They are required under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 and the European Commission's Floods Directive. The actions proposed to manage flood risk in high risk areas have been developed using the best available information at the time. The number of actions that are actually delivered over the six years set out in the strategy will depend on a number of factors including funding availability, and community engagement issues such as potential objections to a particular flood protection scheme.

### 1.2 How to read this Strategy

Each Flood Risk Management Strategy has three sections:

Section 1 contains background information on the approach taken in Scotland to manage flooding. It explains the duties and aims of organisations involved in tackling flooding, including how they work together and how flood risk management planning is linked to other government policies and initiatives.

Section 2 is the most important section for those individuals and communities seeking to understand their flood risk and its management. For priority areas (called Potentially Vulnerable Areas) there is a short description of the causes and consequences of flooding. The agreed objectives are clearly set out. And, most importantly, the actions that will deliver these objectives are prioritised and described. Section 3 includes supporting information on the sources of flooding in wider river catchments and coastal areas. A glossary is also provided.

### 1.3 Managing flooding in Scotland

Flood risk management in Scotland aims to manage flooding in a sustainable way. Sustainable flood risk management considers where floods are likely to occur in the future and takes action to reduce their impact without moving the problem elsewhere. It considers all sources of flooding, whether from rivers, the sea or from surface water. It delivers actions that will meet the needs of present and future generations whilst also protecting and enhancing the environment.

The sustainable approach to managing flood risk works on a six year planning cycle, progressing through the key stages outlined below.

#### Identifying priority areas at significant flood risk

The first step to delivering a risk-based, sustainable and plan-led approach to flood risk management was SEPA's **National Flood Risk Assessment**, which was published in 2011. The assessment considered the likelihood of flooding from rivers, groundwater and the sea, as well as flooding caused when heavy rainfall is unable to enter drainage systems or the river network. The likelihood of flooding was examined alongside the estimated impact on people, the economy, cultural heritage and the environment. It significantly improved our understanding of the causes and consequences of flooding, and identified areas most vulnerable to floods.

Based on the National Flood Risk Assessment, SEPA identified areas where flooding was considered to be nationally significant. These areas are based on catchment units as it is within the context of the wider catchment that flooding can be best understood and managed. These nationally significant catchments are referred to as **Potentially Vulnerable Areas**. In Scotland, 243 Potentially Vulnerable Areas were identified. They are estimated to contain 92% of the total number of properties at risk.

A small number of Candidate Potentially Vulnerable Areas were identified after the National Flood Risk Assessment in light of new information that warranted further assessment and appraisal. They are included in the flood risk management planning process. The National Flood Risk Assessment will be updated to inform each subsequent planning cycle.

#### Improving the understanding of flooding

SEPA developed **flood hazard and flood risk maps** between 2012 and 2014. These maps improved our understanding of flooding and helped inform the subsequent selection of actions to manage flood risk in Potentially Vulnerable Areas. The flood hazard maps show information such as the extent of flooding, water level, as well as depth and velocity where appropriate. The flood risk maps provide detail on the impacts on people, the economy, cultural heritage and the environment.

In 2012 SEPA also developed an **assessment of the potential for natural flood management**. The assessment produced the first national source of information on where natural flood management actions would be most effective within Scotland.

Flood hazard and flood risk maps and the assessment of the potential for natural flood management can be viewed on the SEPA website [www.sepa.org.uk](http://www.sepa.org.uk).

## Identifying objectives and selecting actions

The objectives and actions to manage flooding will provide the long-term vision and practical steps for delivering flood risk management in Scotland.

Working collaboratively with local partnerships, SEPA has agreed the objectives for addressing the main flooding impacts. Actions that could deliver these agreed objectives have been appraised for their costs and benefits to ensure the right combinations are identified and prioritised. The actions considered in the development of this strategy include structural actions (such as building floodwalls, restoring flood plains, or clearance and repair works to rivers) and non-structural actions (such as flood warning, land use planning or improving our emergency response). Structural and non-structural actions should be used together to manage flood risk effectively.

An assessment of the potential for natural flood management was used to help identify opportunities for using the land and coast to slow down and store water. Natural flood management actions were recommended in areas where they could contribute to the management of flood risk. In such instances these actions were put forward as part of flood protection or natural flood management studies.

## Climate change and future flood risk

The UK Climate Projections (UKCP09) report predicts that climate change may lead to warmer and drier summers, warmer and wetter winters with less snow, and more extreme temperature and rainfall events. The predicted increase in rainfall is expected to variably increase the potential for river and surface water flooding, and similarly, there is expected to be a rise in sea levels that will vary around the coastline.

The predicted increases in flood risk described in Section 3 are solely based on the impact of a changing climate on the magnitude of flooding; they do not take into account any potential increase due to population change, development pressures or urban creep, nor do they take into account any mitigation as a result of actions contained in this or future Flood Risk Management Strategies.

## Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans

For flood risk management purposes, Scotland has been divided into 14 **Local Plan Districts**. Each Local Plan District will have a set of complementary plans: Flood Risk Management Strategies produced by SEPA, and Local Flood Risk Management Plans produced by a lead local authority. Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans aim to make a strong and lasting contribution to sustainable flood risk management, and will be at the heart of efforts to tackle flooding in Scotland. They will help to target and maximise the benefit of public investment.

### 1.4 How the Flood Risk Management Strategy was developed

#### Partnership working

Many organisations and individuals are involved in helping to improve flood management in Scotland. A piecemeal approach to tackle flooding does not work.

Flooding is too complex, and the causes and impacts too complicated for any single organisation to address alone. Flooding disregards local authority boundaries and cuts across the responsibilities of organisations such as SEPA, Scottish Water and emergency responders. To be successful, flood management requires coordination among organisations as set out in this strategy. A willingness to collaborate by those responsible for flood management is essential.

This strategy has been developed in partnership by:

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar;
- Scottish Water; and,
- SEPA.

These organisations are working more closely together than ever before. In local partnerships, here and throughout Scotland, SEPA has provided the technical analysis and ensured a consistent national approach is taken. It has provided the evidence upon which to make sensible, informed decisions. The local authority and Scottish Water have made sure that local knowledge and expertise has informed the decision-making.

### **Consultation, engagement and advice**

SEPA has been keen to hear from the people and communities that live under the threat of flooding to ensure that our technical analysis of the risks is accurate and that efforts to manage flooding are targeted to where most can be achieved. SEPA held two public consultations during the development of the Flood Risk Management Strategies. The first was on the general approach to flood risk management planning and the identification of priority areas (2011); the second, held jointly with local authorities, was on the understanding of flooding in these priority areas and on the objectives and actions to manage flooding (2015).

Further advice has been sought from relevant organisations at key stages. The strategies have benefited from Local Advisory Groups, providing important community and area-based knowledge on both the causes and consequences of flooding and on the appropriate actions for future management. Local Advisory Groups have been especially helpful in considering flood risk management planning in the context of wider plans and initiatives. The Outer Hebrides Local Advisory Group include representatives from a range of sectors, including government agencies, the local authority, non-government organisations, utility companies and land and asset managers.

In producing the Flood Risk Management Strategy, SEPA has also taken advice from a National Flood Management Advisory Group. Over 50 member organisations, reflecting the national importance and impact of flooding on our communities, economy, environment and cultural heritage, have been invited at key stages to provide comment and input.

Some of the work carried out by SEPA has been complex and technical in nature for which we have sought professional advice. Through membership of the Scottish Advisory and Implementation Forum for Flooding (SAIFF), we have received assistance from local authorities, Scottish Water, Forestry Commission Scotland, the National Park Authorities and other key interested organisations. We have also developed some of our methods by working with other organisations with similar responsibilities within the UK and Europe. We have specifically worked with the Environment Agency and English local authorities in the cross border areas.

SEPA's chief statutory function in flood risk management planning is to prioritise future actions across Scotland. To do this, SEPA made a technical, risk-based assessment of the costs and impacts of actions. This independent assessment was used alongside information from partner organisations to jointly agree priorities and identify indicative delivery dates for actions. A National Prioritisation Advisory Group, with representatives from the Scottish Government, COSLA, Scottish Water and local authorities, was established to provide guidance to SEPA on the priority of flood risk management actions, having considered both the technical ranking prepared by SEPA and issues of local priority.

### **Strategic Environmental Assessment and Habitats Regulation Appraisal**

SEPA undertook a strategic environmental assessment to assess the significant environmental effects of the Flood Risk Management Strategies. Our assessment was published in an environmental report, and we consulted the public on our findings. We have published a post-adoption statement, which describes how we have taken account of the environmental assessment and the consultation responses, and how we will monitor any significant environmental effects of the Flood Risk Management Strategies.

We also undertook a Habitats Regulations Appraisal to ensure that the Flood Risk Management Strategies will not adversely affect the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. We consulted Scottish Natural Heritage and Natural England on our appraisal method and took their views into account. We have applied mitigation measures where required.

## **1.5 Roles and responsibilities for flood risk management planning**

Individuals have a personal responsibility to protect themselves and their property from flooding. However, public bodies have responsibilities too and are working together to reduce the impacts of flooding in Scotland. Responsibility for flood risk management planning falls primarily to SEPA, local authorities and Scottish Water. Some of the key roles are outlined below and more information is available from the SEPA website.

### **Your responsibilities**

Organisations and individuals have responsibilities to protect themselves from flooding. Being prepared by knowing what to do and who to contact if flooding happens can help you reduce the damage and disruption flooding can have on your life.

The first step to being prepared is signing up to Floodline so you can receive messages to let you know where and when flooding is likely to happen. Other useful tools and advice on how to be prepared are available on the Floodline website, including a quick guide to who to contact in the event of a flood. For more information visit: [www.floodlinescotland.org.uk](http://www.floodlinescotland.org.uk). You can also check how your area could be affected by flooding by looking at SEPA's flood maps.

### **SEPA**

SEPA is Scotland's national flood forecasting, flood warning and strategic flood risk management authority. We have a statutory duty to produce Scotland's Flood Risk Management Strategies. As described above, we work closely with other organisations responsible for managing flood risk through a network of partnerships

and stakeholder groups to ensure that a nationally consistent approach to flood risk management is adopted.

SEPA also has a responsibility to identify where in Scotland there is the potential for natural flood management techniques to be introduced. Natural flood management uses the natural features of the land to store and slow down the flow of water. In running Floodline, we provide direct warnings, live flooding information and advice on how to prepare for or cope with the impacts of flooding 24 hours a day, seven days a week. To help us forecast for flooding we work in partnership with the Met Office through the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service. SEPA has piloted surface water flood forecasting to help urban areas improve their resilience to and preparedness for flooding. The development and wider roll-out of this service is being considered alongside the technical, resource and communication challenges with providing surface water flooding guidance.

To raise awareness of flooding at a national level SEPA runs education initiatives, community engagement programmes and an annual campaign to promote the useful advice and information available through Floodline. We work in partnership with local authorities, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland, Ready Scotland and others to share our resources and help to promote preparedness and understanding of how flood risk is managed.

### **Local authorities and lead local authorities**

Local authorities work together for flood risk management planning purposes through a lead local authority. The lead local authority must perform several important functions over and above the general flood-related duties and powers given to local authorities. Most significantly, the lead local authority, having contributed with other local authorities to the production of the Flood Risk Management Strategy, must prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Plan. Although the lead local authority is responsible for the production of the plan, its content will be drawn from and agreed by all relevant local authorities, other responsible authorities and SEPA. Local authorities have been working collaboratively in the manner described above to develop these Local Flood Risk Management Plans.

It is the responsibility of your local authority to implement its flood protection actions agreed within the Flood Risk Management Strategy, including new schemes or engineering works and their statutory requirements to monitor, clear and maintain watercourses. You can help your local authority to manage flooding by letting them know if debris is blocking watercourses or if flood defences have been tampered with.

During severe flooding, local authorities will work with the emergency services and coordinate shelter for people evacuated from their homes.

### **Scottish Water**

Scottish Water is a responsible authority for flood risk management and is working closely with SEPA, local authorities and others to coordinate plans to manage flood risk.

Scottish Water has the public drainage duty and is responsible for foul drainage and the drainage of rainwater run-off from roofs and any paved ground surface from the boundary of properties. Additionally, Scottish Water helps to protect homes from flooding caused by sewers either overflowing or becoming blocked. Scottish Water is not responsible for private pipework or guttering within the property boundary.

## National parks

The two National Park Authorities, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park and Cairngorms National Park, were designated as responsible authorities for flood risk management purposes in 2012. Both have worked with SEPA, local authorities and Scottish Water to help develop Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans. They also fulfil an important role in land use planning, carrying out or granting permission for activities that can play a key role in managing and reducing flood risk.

## Other organisations

- The **Scottish Government** oversees the implementation of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, which requires the production of Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans. Scottish Ministers are responsible for setting the policy framework for how organisations collectively manage flooding in Scotland. Scottish Ministers have also approved this Flood Risk Management Strategy.
- **Scottish Natural Heritage** has provided general and local advice in the development of this Flood Risk Management Strategy. Flooding is seen as a natural process that can maintain the features of interest at many designated environmental sites, so Scottish Natural Heritage helps to ensure that any changes to patterns of flooding do not adversely affect the natural environment. Scottish Natural Heritage also provides advice on the impacts of Flood Protection Schemes and other land use development on designated sites and species.
- **Forestry Commission Scotland** was designated in 2012 as a responsible authority for flood risk management planning purposes and has engaged in the development of the Flood Risk Management Strategies through national and Local Advisory Groups. This reflects the widely held view that forestry can play a significant role in managing flooding.
- During the preparation of the flood risk management plans **Network Rail** and **Transport Scotland** have undertaken works to address flooding at a number of frequently flooded sites. Further engagement is planned with SEPA and local authorities to identify areas of future work. There is the opportunity for further works to be undertaken during the first flood risk management planning cycle although locations for these works are yet to be confirmed.
- **Utility companies** have undertaken site specific flood risk studies for their primary assets and have management plans in place to mitigate the effects of flooding to their assets and also minimise the impacts on customers.
- The **Met Office** provides a wide range of scientific support, forecasts and weather warnings. SEPA and the Met Office work together through our partnership; the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service.
- The **emergency services** provide emergency support when flooding occurs and can coordinate evacuations. You should call the emergency services on 999 if you are concerned about your safety or the safety of others and act immediately on any advice provided.
- **Historic Environment Scotland** considers flooding as part of its regular assessments of historic sites. As such, flooding is considered as one of the many

factors which inform the development and delivery of its management and maintenance programmes.

## **1.6. Links with other plans and policies**

### **River basin management planning**

River basin management aims to protect and improve the condition of our rivers, lochs, estuaries and coastal waters. Taking action to reduce flood risk in Scotland provides an opportunity to connect with plans to improve the quality of Scotland's water environment at the same time. For example, coordination between river basin management and flood risk management can reduce flood risk, whilst improving water quality and biodiversity.

SEPA is leading the delivery of River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Strategies and has worked to ensure that there is integration and coordination between them. This coordination, particularly in regard to consultation and engagement, will be important for stakeholders many of whom have an interest in the objectives of both plans.

### **Land use and spatial planning**

Land use planning decisions are one of the most powerful tools available to manage flood risk. The alignment of flood risk management and land use planning policy is pivotal to achieving sustainable flood risk management. Decisions relating to flood risk management can have significant implications for the location of development and, likewise, decisions relating to the location of development can impact on flood risk. Land use planning has the potential to contribute to sustainable flood risk management through the location, use and design of new development and the redevelopment of existing areas. Actions that deliver national level land use planning policies are summarised in Annex 2.

SEPA is a statutory consultee providing advice on planning applications with regards to flood risk. Guidance aims to minimise flood risk to development and ensure no adverse effects occur elsewhere.

Land use planning objectives and actions have been agreed with responsible authorities, which will ensure that flood risk is adequately taken into account throughout the planning process.

### **Emergency planning and response**

Emergency plans are prepared under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. They are in place across Scotland and are prepared by Category 1 and 2 Responders, such as Police Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service. Emergency plans ensure the effective management of response to emergencies. Emergency plans can either be generic and deal with all emergencies, or specific to deal with, for example, flooding. The information contained in the Flood Risk Management Strategies can be used to inform wider emergency response plans for flooding.

Many organisations have specific roles and responsibilities during an emergency response to a flood for example, local authorities, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Services, Police Scotland and SEPA. In many cases, this response is augmented by the work of voluntary organisations, communities and individuals. During an emergency, the response by these agencies will be co-ordinated through regional and local resilience partnerships.

## Scottish Water investment plans

There is a close relationship between Flood Risk Management Strategies and Scottish Water's investment plans. Sewer flooding is not considered in detail in this strategy although it remains a high priority for Scottish Water and its customers. Scottish Water's close involvement in flood risk management planning aims to ensure that there is strong coordination between the management of sewer and surface water flooding and the actions to be taken forward by local authorities.

### 1.7. Supporting information

#### Sources of flooding described in this strategy

The Flood Risk Management Strategy addresses the risk of flooding from rivers, the coast and surface water. The risk of flooding from rivers is usually due to rainfall causing a river to rise above bank level spreading out and inundating adjacent areas. Coastal flooding is where the risk is from the sea. Sea levels can change in response to tidal cycles or atmospheric conditions. Over the longer term sea levels and coastal flood risk may change due to climate change. Surface water flooding happens when rainwater does not drain away through the normal drainage systems or soak into the ground, but lies on or flows over the ground instead. There can be interactions between these sources of flooding, but for the purposes of this strategy they are dealt with independently.

The following aspects of flooding have not been incorporated into this strategy:

- **Groundwater** is generally a contributing factor to flooding rather than the primary source. It is caused by water rising up from underlying rocks or flowing from springs.
- **Reservoir breaches** have been assessed under separate legislation (Reservoirs (Scotland) Act 2011). Further information and maps can be found on SEPA's website.
- The Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 does not require SEPA or responsible authorities to assess or manage **coastal erosion**. However, SEPA has included consideration of erosion in the Flood Risk Management Strategies by identifying areas that are likely to be susceptible to erosion and where erosion can exacerbate flood risk. As part of considering where actions might deliver multiple benefits, we have looked to see where the focus of coastal flood risk management studies coincides with areas of high susceptibility to coastal erosion. Subsequent detailed studies and scheme design will need to consider coastal erosion in these areas.
- **Coastal flood modelling.** The information on coastal flooding used to set objectives and identify actions is based on SEPA modelling using simplified coastal processes and flooding mechanisms at work during a storm. Wave overtopping cannot be accurately modelled at a national scale due to the importance of local factors such as prevailing wind conditions, the depth and profile of the near-shore sea bed or the influence of any existing defences or management structures. As a result, coastal flood risk may be underestimated in some areas. Conversely, in locations with wide and flat floodplains, the modelling may overestimate flood risk. To address this, in a number of locations where more detailed local models were available they have been incorporated into the development of the Flood Risk Management Strategies. Where wave overtopping has been specifically identified as a concern – but where no further detailed

modelling is available – particular compensation has been made in the selecting actions to address coastal flood risk.

## Commonly used terms

Below are explanatory notes for commonly used terms in this strategy. A glossary of terms is also available.

- **Reference to flood risk.** During the development of this strategy flood risk has been assessed over a range of likelihoods. For consistency in reporting information within the strategies, unless otherwise stated, all references to properties or other receptors being ‘at risk of flooding’ refer to a medium likelihood flood (up to a 1 in 200 chance of flooding in any given year). By exception, references will be made to high or low risk flooding, which should be taken to mean a 1 in 10 chance/likelihood or 1 in 1000 chance/likelihood of flooding in any given year respectively.

Chance / likelihood of flooding	
High	1 in 10 year
Medium	1 in 200 year
Low	1 in 1000 year

- **Annual Average Damages** have been used to assess the potential economic impact of flooding within an area. Depending on its size or severity each flood will cause a different amount of damage to a given area. Annual Average Damages are the theoretical average economic damages caused by flooding when considered over a very long period of time. It does not mean that damage will occur every year: in many years there will be no damages, in some years minor damages and in a few years major damages may occur. High likelihood events, which occur more regularly, contribute proportionally more to Annual Average Damages than rarer events. Within the Flood Risk Management Strategies Annual Average Damages incorporate economic damages to the following receptors: residential properties, non-residential properties, vehicles, emergency services, agriculture and roads. They have been calculated based on the principles set out in the Flood Hazard Research Centre Multi-Coloured Handbook (2010).
- **History of flooding.** The history of flooding sections of this document report floods that have occurred up to July 2015.

## 1.8. Next steps and monitoring progress

Flood risk management planning has progressed significantly in recent years. Scotland now has the most advanced nationally consistent and locally informed understanding of the causes and consequences of flooding that it has ever had. SEPA is committed to improving this knowledge and understanding during subsequent planning cycles, accepting that these first Flood Risk Management Strategies are based on the best available current knowledge and data.

SEPA has prioritised actions based on funding assumptions provided by Scottish Government and the capacity of local authorities to deliver within the next six years. Lead local authorities will provide an interim report on the progress of delivering all actions in the Local Flood Risk Management Plan not earlier than two years and not later than three years from its publication. A final report will also be prepared at the end of the first planning cycle.

A second set of Flood Risk Management Strategies and Local Flood Risk Management Plans will be published in December 2021 and June 2022 respectively.

### **Licensing acknowledgements**

Full data licensing acknowledgements can be found in Annex 3 of this strategy.