



Flood Risk Management Plans

Frequently Asked Questions

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Flood risk management plans

How can I view the flood risk management plans?

The flood risk management plans can be viewed on SEPA's webpage:

<https://www2.sepa.org.uk/frmplans>

How do I access an alternative format of the plans?

For information on accessing this document in an alternative format or language please either contact SEPA by telephone on 03000 99 66 99 or by email at equalities@sepa.org.uk

If you are a user of British Sign Language (BSL) the Contact Scotland BSL service gives you access to an online interpreter, enabling you to communicate with us using sign language. [Contact Scotland \(contactscotland-bsl.org\)](http://contactscotland-bsl.org)

Hard copies may be made available if necessary. This service may be limited due to the ongoing challenges of Covid-19 and lack of access to SEPA offices.

How can I contact SEPA about the plans?

You can contact SEPA about the plans by the following methods:

- **Phone:** 03000 99 66 99
- **Email:** FRMplanning@sepa.org.uk with the subject heading "FRM plans"
- **Post:** If you would like to contact us in writing, please mark any correspondence for the attention of FRM Planning and send to:

Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Angus Smith Building
6 Parklands Avenue
Eurocentral
Holytown
North Lanarkshire
ML1 4WQ

What are flood risk management plans and how are they different from local flood risk management plans?

Flood risk management plans are Scotland's route map for reducing the effects of flooding on our communities. They set the national direction of future flood risk management, helping to target investment and coordinate actions across public bodies. They set objectives for tackling flooding in high risk areas and identify the actions needed to work towards those objectives.

The plans are approved by Scottish Government and published by SEPA as Scotland's strategic flood risk management authority. SEPA have worked in collaboration with all 32 local authorities, Scottish Water and other organisations with a responsibility or interest in managing flooding. They have also been shaped in consultation with the public.

The local flood risk management plans are published by the lead local authority for each Local Plan District. The local plans provide more detail on how the actions set out in the flood risk management plans for 2022-2028 will be delivered including who will lead them and how the actions will be coordinated with other organisations. They also provide further information on when the actions will take place and how they will be funded.

The flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans are published at different times. The plans were published in December 2021 and the local plans will be published during 2022 (publication date to be determined). Further information may become available during this interval that impacts delivery of the actions described in the flood risk management plans.

Have flood risk management plans been published before? And what are flood risk management cycles?

Yes, under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 the flood risk management plans and local plans must be updated every flood risk management cycle (which lasts 6 years). The 2021 flood risk management plans replace the first flood risk management plans which were published in 2015. At the time they were called flood risk management strategies. The updated management plans continue to build on the risk-based, plan-led approach established in the 2015 strategies.

The table below (Table 1) shows the publication date of the flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans across the 6 year flood risk management cycles.

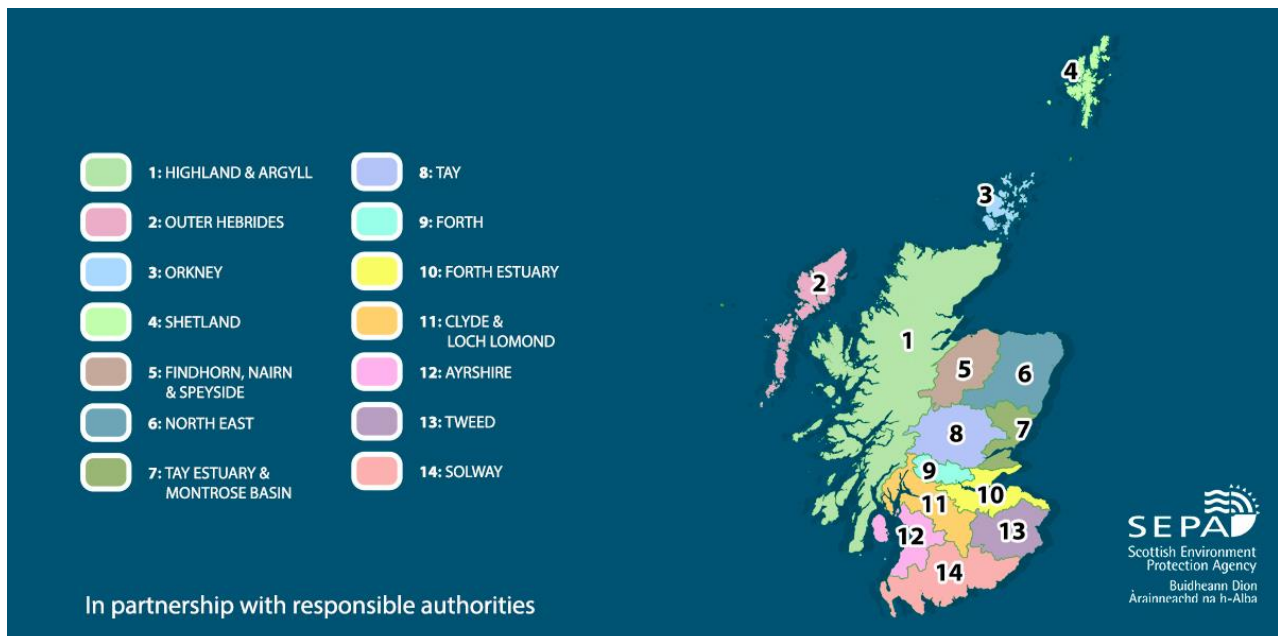
Table 1: Flood risk management cycles

Cycle number	1	2	3	4	5
Flood risk management plans (planning)	2015	2021	2027	2033	2039
Local flood risk management plan (implementation)	2016	2022	2028	2034	2040

Which flood risk management plan is most relevant to me?

Scotland has been divided into 14 geographical areas called Local Plan Districts for the purposes of flood risk management. A flood risk management plan has been developed by SEPA for each of these areas. To find out which plan is of interest to you, please see the Local Plan District map below (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The 14 Local Plan Districts in Scotland for which flood risk management plans have been prepared.



Local objectives and actions for managing flood risk have been developed for 444 communities (known as target areas). You can see a full list of target areas with links to the relevant plan on SEPA's webpage: www.sepa.org.uk/frmplans

Which sources of flooding are considered in the plans?

The flood risk management plans target the risk of flooding from **rivers, the coast, surface water and groundwater**. The risk of flooding from rivers is usually due to heavy or prolonged rainfall causing a river to rise above the top of the bank. Water spreads out and floods nearby areas. Coastal flooding is where the risk is from the sea. Sea levels can be higher than usual due to normal tidal cycles or stormy weather systems. Over the longer term, sea levels and coastal flood risk will increase due to climate change. Surface water flooding happens when rainwater does not drain away through the normal drainage systems or soak into the ground. Instead, it collects or flows over the ground. There can be interactions between these sources of flooding.

In Scotland groundwater is usually a contributing factor to flooding rather than the primary source. It is caused by water rising up from underlying rocks or flowing from springs. Actions to directly target groundwater are quite limited in the flood risk management plans. However, susceptibility to the contributing effects of groundwater on flooding was considered everywhere in the national flood risk assessment which underpins the plans. Maps of areas where groundwater can contribute to flood risk are available to view on SEPA's website: <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmap/map.htm>

The following aspects of flooding have **not** been incorporated into the plans:

Reservoir breaches have been assessed under separate legislation (Reservoirs (Scotland) Act 2011) and so flood risk from reservoir breach is not considered in the plans. There are fundamental differences in probability of flooding and associated management actions for reservoirs. Further information and maps can be found on SEPA's website: www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/reservoirs/

The definition of surface water flooding under the FRM Act does not include flooding solely from a sewerage system. **Sewerage flooding** is therefore not included in flood risk management plans. Under the Sewerage (Scotland) Act 1968, Scottish Water is responsible for managing flooding solely from a sewerage system (that is, sewerage

systems that are designed to manage 'usual' rainfall events, currently interpreted to mean up to the 1:30 year rainfall event).

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 coastal erosion in the flood risk management plans 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, SEPA have looked to see where the focus of coastal flood risk management studies coincides with areas at risk of coastal erosion as identified by the Dynamic Coast project. Subsequent detailed flood studies and scheme design will need to consider coastal erosion in these areas. This includes ensuring that actions to manage flood risk do not contribute to increased coastal erosion and where appropriate, help to manage risks from coastal erosion now and in the future.

The information on coastal flooding used to set objectives and identify actions is based in most areas on SEPA modelling using simplified coastal processes and flooding mechanisms. As a result, coastal flood risk may be underestimated in some areas and overestimated in others. Where more detailed local models were available from flood studies or from flood warning schemes, these have been incorporated into the development of the flood risk management plans, as have other sources of local information such as records of past flooding. SEPA is currently working on updates to the national coastal flood mapping to better represent the effects of waves. Actions in the plans reflect the best information currently available.

Actions in the plans

What is a potentially vulnerable area?

Potentially vulnerable areas (PVAs) are areas where flood risk is considered to be nationally significant and are based on catchment areas, as it is only within the context of the wider contributing catchment that flooding can be best understood and managed.

The potentially vulnerable areas (PVAs) were determined using information from the 2018 national flood risk assessment on the level of risk across the country. A detailed manual review process was used to allow local knowledge from responsible authorities, communities and other supporting information to be considered. There was also a 3 month public consultation on the PVAs to provide the opportunity for others to contribute to the assessment and to provide any additional information. The identification of PVAs is reviewed every 6 years. Further information on how PVAs were designated can be found on SEPA's web page: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/nfra2018/>

What is a target area?

A community perspective was used to identify where flood risk management actions should target their benefits. These communities are located in potentially vulnerable areas and are referred to as target areas.

Objectives and actions have been set for each target area and are described in Section 2 of the flood risk management plans. A whole catchment approach was used to understand the flood risk and the steps needed towards managing flood risk in these areas. To benefit the community, actions may therefore be applied outside the target area.

I don't live within a potentially vulnerable area or target area. Is anything being done to manage flooding in my area?

Around 90% of Scotland's flood risk is contained within potentially vulnerable areas (PVAs). That means that not every location experiencing flood risk is included within a PVA, as PVAs are used to prioritise areas where the risk is highest and the benefits of flood risk management will be greatest. Flood risk management actions which benefit PVAs should therefore be prioritised, but this does not prevent responsible authorities and stakeholders from taking forward actions to tackle flooding in areas located outwith the PVAs.

The flood risk management plans also include national actions that apply across whole Local Plan Districts, including areas which are not located within a PVA or target area. These national actions can be found in Section 2.2. of the flood risk management plans.

How are the actions in the target areas, including flood protection schemes funded?

The Scottish Ministers allocated £42 million per year for 10 years from 2016 from the local authority capital grant settlement as part of the flood funding strategy. Of this funding, 80% supports the delivery of flood protection schemes, and the remaining 20% is distributed pro-rata annually amongst all Scottish local authorities for local authority capital projects. Funding for flood risk management actions can be paid for, either directly by the lead organisations or through applications to capital grant schemes.

Recommendations of how the flooding capital grants should be distributed is currently being developed by a flood risk management group with members from Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) who represent the 32 local authorities, Scottish Government, SEPA and local authority representatives. This group will not have developed the recommendations in time for the publication of the flood risk management plans. As such it should be noted that it may not be possible for all actions identified in the plans to be grant funded. However, funding can be procured from other sources. Inclusion of an action in the plans does not formally commit a Council to implement it if reasons arise which make any actions undeliverable, including inability to secure adequate funding.

A decision on grant funding is expected in time for the publication of the local flood risk management plans. As a result, there may be changes to the detail of actions, or the ability to deliver actions in the identified timescales, compared with these flood risk management plans. The plans remain the best understanding of the objectives and actions required over the long term to manage flood risk in the identified high risk areas of Scotland. The delivery of the plans, particularly the ambitions on how quickly actions can be delivered, may have to be adapted to reflect wider developments in public funding, pandemic recovery and national priorities.

How were the environmental impacts of the actions in the plans assessed?

SEPA undertook a Strategic Environmental Assessment to assess the significant environmental effects of the flood risk management plans. This assessment was published in an environmental report, and SEPA consulted with the public on the findings.

A post adoption statement has also been published detailing how SEPA has taken account of the environmental assessment and the consultation responses, and how any significant environmental effects from the flood risk management plans will be monitored. The environmental report and post adoption statement can be found on SEPA's webpage:

www.sepa.org.uk/frmplanssea

SEPA also undertook a Habitats Regulations Appraisal to ensure that the flood risk management plans will not adversely affect the integrity of Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar Sites. SEPA consulted NatureScot on the appraisal method and took their views into account. Mitigation measures have been applied to actions where required.

I live in an area on the border between Scotland and England. What is the Environment Agency doing to tackle flooding?

The Environment Agency is currently consulting on the plans for the English part of the Solway Tweed. The consultation is a 3 month consultation and will run until 21st January 2022. To see the actions being proposed to tackle flooding and to have your say, visit the Environment Agency's consultation webpage: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/flood-risk-management-plans-information-page>

SEPA and the Environment Agency will continue to work together throughout the consultation process in order to coordinate the management of cross border flood risk.

Flood risk statistics in the plans

Where do the flood risk statistics in the plans come from?

Unless otherwise stated the statistics on flood risk come from the national flood risk assessment (see below).

What is the national flood risk assessment?

The national flood risk assessment (NFRA) provides a strategic, high-level overview of flood risk in Scotland. It is based on SEPA's flood maps and information provided by local

authorities, Scottish Water and the public. By improving our understanding of where flooding occurs in Scotland and its impacts, the national flood risk assessment (NFRA) is the first step for protecting and preparing communities at flood risk.

The NFRA can be explored here: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/datavisualisation/nfra2018/>

How does climate change affect flooding in Scotland and how was it assessed in preparation of the plans?

The latest science on the effects of climate change predicts that parts of Scotland will experience wetter winters and more extreme weather events. Although summers might generally be drier there will be a greater risk of very intense rainfall. Sea levels are also expected to rise, and all these effects will lead to an increase in the frequency and severity of damaging floods.

In November 2020 SEPA published future flood maps showing the impacts of climate change on flooding in Scotland for the first time. The maps are based on the 2080s high emissions scenario and their development allowed significant advances in how climate change was assessed in the 2018 NFRA. This enabled climate change to be more fully built into the development of the flood risk management plans. The future flood maps are available to view at <https://map.sepa.org.uk/floodmaps>

Currently 284,000 homes, business and services are at risk of flooding from rivers, surface water and the sea. With the effects of climate change, an additional 110,000 homes, businesses and services are expected to become at risk across all sources of flooding in Scotland. Compared with the current level of flood risk, this represents a 90% increase in the number of properties at risk of coastal flooding, 40% increase in the number at risk for river flooding and 25% for surface water flooding.

How did SEPA take the consultation responses into account and respond to the questions raised?

How did SEPA take the consultation responses into account?

SEPA have held 2 public consultations during the development of the flood risk management plans. The first by SEPA was on the national flood risk assessment and the identification of potential vulnerable areas (2018); 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 (2021).

This second consultation ran in 2 phases. Phase 1 opened on 21 December 2020 and included information on Local Plan Districts and the potentially vulnerable areas as well as a list of the communities identified as target areas. Further information on the objectives and actions planned for each target area was added in July 2021. The consultation was advertised widely by both SEPA and the local authorities. Over 670 responses were received, and these helped shape the content of the flood risk management plans.

As it was a joint consultation, the responses were shared with local authorities who further considered all the submissions for the purpose of shaping the local flood risk management plans published in 2022. A summary of the consultation responses was submitted to Scottish Ministers along with the flood risk management plans and a more detailed report on what contributors said and what SEPA did in response to the consultation will be available on SEPA's website from March 2022. Further information on the consultation and a brief overview of the responses received and how SEPA took the responses into account is provided in Annex 2 of the flood risk management plans. Answers to some of the frequently asked questions raised during the consultation have been included below.

Why do the actions in the plans have limited detail on what they will include and when they will be implemented?

Respondents raised concerns over the lack of detailed descriptions of actions. Actions in flood risk management plans are only described at a strategic level. Local detail, including further information about the actions, timescales, funding and coordination will be provided by local authorities in their local flood risk management plans due to be published in 2022.

Many respondents were also concerned over the lack of detail with proposed timescales. The information on more detailed timescales for implementing actions to manage flood risk will be specified in the implementation part of the local flood risk management plans in 2022.

Are the actions in the plans urgent and ambitious enough to tackle the increasing risk of flooding due to climate change?

Many respondents to the consultation were concerned about whether the actions in the flood risk management plans are urgent enough, and ambitious enough to address the threat of climate change. The future impacts of climate change depend on how successful we are in reducing greenhouse gas emissions globally, however even under optimistic scenarios, we are already facing increasingly turbulent weather systems, and know sea level rise is locked in. SEPA shares the concerns raised via the consultation regarding the urgency of actions to help mitigate the impacts of climate change. SEPA will continue to work with all flood risk management stakeholders to increase Scotland's resilience to flood risk. SEPA's regulatory duties are also undertaken with the ambition of [One Planet Prosperity](#).

Flood risk management actions already have climate change information embedded within them. These include for example flood studies and flood protection schemes carried out by the local authorities, the development of SEPA flood risk information and provision of land use planning advice.

SEPA's 2018 national flood risk assessment (NFRA) considers the flooding impacts associated with climate change using scenarios based on the UK Climate Projections 2009 (UKCP09) analysis. The methodology for the 2018 NFRA took account of climate change significantly better than the previous NFRA in 2011, and this underpins these updated flood risk management plans.

The next major update to UK climate change understanding was the UK Climate Projections 2018 (UKCP18), published in 2020. SEPA has begun work to take these into account in SEPA flood hazard mapping which will help inform future flood risk management activities.

SEPA is also committed to continuing to improve data on climate resilience by maintaining and developing its hydrometric network, contributing to UK and international data archives, and improving and updating the datasets used for flood frequency analysis. To complement this work SEPA has committed to future flood risk management planning which will make the next flood risk management plans more ambitious than ever before to try to meet the challenges of climate change.

How was a catchment approach and natural flood risk management incorporated in the plans?

This is a question raised in multiple responses to the consultation of the flood risk management plans. A whole catchment approach is at the heart of sustainable flood management. A key component of sustainable flood management is working with natural processes to manage the sources and pathways of flood waters. This technique, commonly referred to as natural flood management, can help deliver environmental benefits and provide resilience to the effects of climate change, whilst also helping to reduce flood risk.

Where possible, natural processes are embedded within the actions carried out to manage flood risk across Scotland. The benefits of these approaches are being increasingly recognised. Local authorities consider the opportunities for natural flood management as part of their flood studies. Whilst some obstacles to implementing these approaches remain, we are seeing increasing use of these techniques across Scotland. There are several good examples of projects being taken forward across the country including on the Eddleston Water, the Allan Water, and the South Esk.

Information on how consideration of the whole catchment informed SEPA's approach is further explained in Section 1.2.7 of the flood risk management plans. A wide range of information on opportunities and constraints at the catchment scale underpinned the development of the objectives and actions. Scottish Forestry in consultation with SEPA have agreed to a new action in the plans to produce guidance on designing and managing forests to reduce flood risk, in collaboration with its UK counterparts. SEPA plan to make further background information available on catchments, to support the delivery of the flood risk management plans, in 2022.

What is being done to prevent new development which increases flood risk?

Many respondents raised concerns about new development in their areas. There were concerns about new development reducing land available to provide natural buffers to flooding, reduced nature and biodiversity and increasing surface water runoff to nearby areas.

Land use planning decisions are one of the most powerful tools available to manage flood risk sustainability. It ensures that new development avoids flood risk areas and does not increase flood risk or move the problem elsewhere. This is underpinned by national planning policies, which set out the Scottish Ministers' priorities for the development and use of land. Under this approach, new development in areas with medium to high likelihood of flooding should generally be avoided. Current national planning policies aim to restrict development within the floodplain and limit exposure of new receptors to flood risk, promote flood reduction via natural and structural flood management measures and restoration of natural features, and avoid increased surface water flooding through sustainable drainage and the minimisation of impermeable surfaces. Locally determined planning policies may place further requirements within their area of operation to restrict inappropriate development and prevent unacceptable risk. Section 1.4.2 of the plans further explains the links between the flood risk management plans and the land use planning process.

Land use planning is already one of the key actions identified to apply across the whole Local Plan District. The Local Plan District wide actions are set out in Section 2 of the plans. An objective to avoid an increase in flood risk is also included in every target area.

Who is responsible for maintaining flood defences?

Local authorities are responsible for maintenance of existing flood protection schemes or works. Some flood defences may be privately owned which may be the responsibility of the owner. Details of maintenance activities may be set out by local authorities in the local flood risk management plan.

Further information on flood risk management responsibilities can be found under the responsibilities section of this FAQ document or in Section 1.3.2 of the plans.

Who is responsible for clearance and maintenance of watercourses?

Concern was expressed by members of the public on clearance and maintenance of their local watercourses especially following floods when woody debris can build up on the banks of rivers. Local authorities have a duty to maintain and clear watercourses. Schedules of local works are available from local authorities. In areas where land is privately owned, there are also responsibilities on landowners to manage their land using guidance from SEPA to protect the natural environment.

Further information on flood risk management responsibilities can be found under the responsibilities section of this FAQ document or in Section 1.3.2 of the plans.

Where do community flood groups fit into flood risk management in Scotland?

Community based groups are key to planning for, responding to, and recovering from flooding. Communities have engaged through the consultation on these plans and will be consulted on more detailed information on the implementation of many of the specific actions. The local information provided on their experience of flooding has shaped the identification of potentially vulnerable areas and informed decision making on the objectives and actions.

What progress has been made in implementing the actions and meeting the objectives described in the 2015 flood risk management strategies?

Multiple respondents requested information on the progress towards meeting the objectives and implementing the actions set out in the 2015 strategies. As a result, SEPA published a summary of progress which can be viewed in Section 1.2.1 of the plans. A full assessment will be published in 2022 by the lead local authorities which will provide progress on each of the actions.

Responsibilities

What can I do to protect myself from flooding?

It is your responsibility to manage your own flood risk and protect yourself, your family, property or business. There are steps you can take now to be flood prepared and reduce the damage and disruption flooding can have on your life.

1. [View our flood maps](#) to check if your area is affected by flooding
2. [Sign up to Floodline](#) to receive messages when flooding is forecast in your area
3. [Know who to contact](#) if flooding happens

Other useful tools and advice on how to be prepared are available on the [Floodline](#) website.

What responsibilities do public bodies have regarding flooding?

Public bodies have responsibilities and are working together to reduce the impacts of flooding in Scotland.

Local Authorities

Local authorities are responsible for producing Scotland's local flood risk management plans and work in partnership with SEPA, Scottish Water and other responsible authorities to develop these.

It is the responsibility of local authorities to implement and maintain flood protection actions. Local authorities also inspect, clear and repair watercourses to reduce flood risk and routinely maintain road gullies on public roads and highways.

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

SEPA

SEPA is Scotland's national flood forecasting, flood warning and strategic flood risk management authority. We work in partnership with the Met Office to forecast flooding and operate Floodline in Scotland to warn the public and emergency responders when flooding

is likely. We produce Scotland's flood risk management plans. We work closely with other organisations responsible for managing flood risk to ensure that a nationally consistent approach to flood risk management is adopted. We provide flood risk advice to land use planning when requested and we raise awareness of flooding at a national level through education initiatives, community engagement and campaigns.

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 draining wastewater from properties and businesses, and rainwater run-off from roofs and paved areas within the boundary of properties. Pipework and guttering within the boundary, are the responsibility of the property owner.

Scottish Water helps to protect homes from flooding caused by sewers either overflowing or becoming blocked. This is done in a way that is fair and consistent to customers across the country, with sewer flooding investment prioritised to tackle the problems to provide the biggest benefit for customer and environment first. Currently investment to reduce the risk of sewer flooding is prioritised towards properties that have experienced internal sewer flooding and are at the highest risk of repeat occurrence of sewer flooding during frequent rainfall events.

National parks

The National Park Authorities, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park and Cairngorms National Park, work with SEPA and other responsible authorities to develop the flood risk management plans and local flood risk management plans. They also fulfil a key role in land use planning, carrying out and permitting activities that can help manage and reduce flood risk.

Scottish Government

The Scottish Government oversees the implementation of the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, which requires the production of flood risk management plans 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 the flood risk management plans.

Other Organisations

Scottish Forestry and **Forestry and Land Scotland** took over the roles of Forestry Commission Scotland in 2018 when the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 came into force. While these executive agencies of Scottish Government are not formally designated as a responsible authority under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009, they support Scottish Government in delivering its flood risk related duties. This includes engaging in the development of the flood risk management plans through national and local advisory groups, local plan district partnerships, and collaborative projects. This reflects the widely held view that forestry can play a significant role in managing flooding.

The **Met Office** provides a wide range of forecasts and weather warnings. SEPA and the Met Office work together through the Scottish Flood Forecasting Service (<https://www.sepa.org.uk/environment/water/flooding/forecasting-flooding/>) combining SEPA's hydrological expertise with the Met Office's meteorological data to predict the likelihood and timing of river, coastal and surface water flooding.

The **emergency services** provide emergency relief 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.

The **Scottish Flood Forum** aims to reduce the impacts of flooding by providing immediate support and by establishing a network of community resilience groups in flood risk areas, to equip communities to cope with flooding.

Community based groups are key to planning for, responding to and recovering from flooding. Communities have been engaged through the consultation on these plans and will

be consulted with more detailed information on the implementation of many of the specific actions set out in these plans. The local information provided on experience of flooding has shaped the identification of potentially vulnerable areas and informed decision making on the objectives and actions.