



Northamptonshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Public Summary

November 2016

Introduction

Eighteen years have passed since exceptionally heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding and devastation to many parts of Northamptonshire in April 1998, resulting in over 4,200 properties being flooded, over £75M worth of damage and the death of two people. Whilst the flood defences through central Northampton have since been upgraded to provide the town one of the highest design standards in the country, there are still properties at risk of flooding across the county. It is not technically, economically or environmentally possible to prevent all flooding or to protect all properties from flood risk, however we can focus on working together to implement cost effective measures that will help to reduce flood risk and help to manage the impacts felt by communities.

The government changed the law in 2010 to improve the way flooding is managed by different authorities. As a result,

Northamptonshire County Council became the Lead Local Flood Authority responsible for preparing a “Local Flood Risk Management Strategy”, which sets out our approach to managing flood risk in the county. The original Strategy was adopted in October 2013. Now, three years on, this strategy has been updated in light of changing legislation and priorities.

In the development of this strategy, we must undertake a rigorous process of consultation with the public and partners, including the Environment Agency, Water Companies and Borough and District Councils.

All the topics discussed in this Public Summary are expanded upon within the main strategy document. There are also sections on the legislation surrounding this area of work; the local partnerships we have set up; governance and scrutiny arrangements; and a detailed action plan. Furthermore we have links to the Flood Toolkit (www.floodtoolkit.com).



Why Now?

Sir Michael Pitt undertook a review of the widespread flooding of 2007, in which he called for a fundamental change in the approach to the management of flooding. As a result, the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) (the “Act”) was introduced, which requires Lead Local Flood Authorities (such as Northamptonshire County Council for Northamptonshire) to take the lead in managing local flood risk, and to coordinate the involvement of all relevant groups in the process. The local strategy is a crucial means of achieving this aim and must be reviewed every three years.

What is Flooding?

A flood is defined as when water covers land that is normally dry. There are few places in the United Kingdom where people need not be concerned about flooding, as any place where rain falls is vulnerable.



The main sources of flooding that could affect Northamptonshire are:

Surface water flooding – occurs when heavy rainfall cannot be absorbed into the ground or enter the drainage systems.

River flooding – occurs when a watercourse cannot cope with the volume of water draining into it, and overflows its banks onto the surrounding land.

Sewer flooding – occurs when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked, flood water can be contaminated with raw sewage.

Groundwater flooding – occurs when water levels in the ground rise above surface levels, which is most likely to occur in areas underlain by permeable rocks, and is likely to occur after seasonal periods of prolonged rainfall.

Snowmelt flooding – occurs following long periods of snow, where water is stored and accumulated, and a rapid melt results in a significant volume of runoff in a short space of time.

Reservoir flooding – occurs when reservoirs, which hold large volumes of water above ground level, overtop i.e. cannot contain the amount of water flowing into them, or when part of the reservoir fails resulting in a fast release of water.

The risk of flooding to any particular area can be increased as a consequence of; poor maintenance resulting in blockages or other types of failure of watercourses, sewers or drainage systems; poor development and planning resulting in inappropriate development in floodplains; building on land in a way that prevents rainfall from draining away naturally; and flood defence schemes that are defective or badly designed.



Roles and Responsibilities

Numerous organisations, agencies and authorities have roles and responsibilities relating to flood risk management, including the public. Our preferred approach is to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and authorities in order to deliver our objectives in an efficient and coordinated manner. We also want to help communities to help themselves.

The Act identifies certain organisations as 'risk management authorities' which have lead responsibilities for flooding. In Northamptonshire these are:

- Northamptonshire County Council;
- The Environment Agency;
- The Borough and District councils;
- The Bedford Group of Drainage Boards;
- Anglian Water, Thames Water, and Severn Trent Water; and
- Highways England.

All of these organisations have a duty to cooperate with each other. In addition, members of the public who own land adjacent to a watercourse have responsibilities. Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined below.

Northamptonshire County Council (Lead Local Flood Authority) – is responsible for the management of flood risk from surface runoff, ordinary watercourses (see box below) and groundwater. We are required to investigate flood incidents, to the extent we

Main River or Ordinary Watercourse?

A watercourse is any natural or artificial channel above or below ground through which water flows, such as a river, brook, beck, ditch, mill stream or culvert. Main Rivers are those classified on the official Environment Agency Main River Map (see this map on the [Flood Toolkit](#)). All watercourses not on this map are known as 'Ordinary Watercourses'.

deem necessary, and to keep a register of flood risk assets within the county.

The Environment Agency – is responsible for managing flood risk on all main rivers (see previous box) and large raised reservoirs in Northamptonshire. The Environment Agency also has a supervising role for all flood risk management across England and Wales. It has powers to undertake flood risk management works on main rivers, and is responsible for flood risk consenting and associated enforcement on main rivers. If you are planning to erect or alter a structure in, under, above or near a main river, you will need to discuss your plans with and obtain consent from them.



Borough and District Councils – although the County Council is responsible for managing flood risk from ordinary watercourses, it is the Borough and District Councils that have the powers to undertake flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses in their area (if not covered by the Drainage Board).

Bedford Group of Drainage Boards – has powers to undertake flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses within its district. It has also been delegated the power of flood risk consenting and associated enforcement for ordinary watercourses across the county. Therefore, if you are planning to erect or alter a structure in, under, above or near an ordinary watercourse, you will need to discuss your plans with and obtain consent from them, see their [website](#).

Water and Sewerage Companies – are responsible for managing the risks of flooding from water and foul or combined sewer systems. There are three in Northamptonshire: [Anglian Water Services Ltd](#), [Thames Water Utilities Ltd](#), and [Severn Trent Water Ltd](#).

Riparian owners – if you own land adjoining a watercourse or which has a watercourse running through or underneath it, you are a ‘riparian owner’ of the banks and bed of the watercourse and any structures (assets) in the watercourse. Your main responsibilities are summarised below:

- You have the responsibility to pass on the

flow of water without obstruction, pollution or diversion;

- You must accept flood flows through your land, even if these are caused by inadequate capacity downstream;
- You should keep the banks clear of anything that could cause an obstruction.
- You must maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, and also the trees and shrubs growing on the banks.
- You must keep any structures that you own clear of debris.

Communities and Parish Councils – both play an important role in managing flood risk at the local level. They can help gather information on areas at risk of flooding by reporting any flood incidents (see page 9). Communities and individuals at risk of flooding should prepare flood plans, and residents can get involved with Parish Council flood warden schemes. In addition, communities and Parish Councils can be crucial in raising additional funding for local flood resilience and flood defence measures and for undertaking regular maintenance.

Developers – have a responsibility to ensure that their development has no negative impact on flood risk both on the site and to others, and wherever possible provide betterment. The main strategy document provides detail of how they can do this. Pre-application discussions with the relevant authorities and organisations are encouraged.



Prioritising Flood Risk Management

It is not possible to prevent all flooding, and with limited resources we need to be able to prioritise our flood risk management work. An analysis has been undertaken to determine which wards within Northamptonshire are most vulnerable to flood risk, in which we will focus our efforts. This has assessed the number of properties, hospitals, sewage treatment works, GP surgeries, nursing homes, roads, or wildlife/environmentally designated sites that are potentially at risk of flooding under a range of scenarios. The analysis has also considered how susceptible the wards are to the impacts of climate change on flood risk.

The top 15 of the total 144 wards that have been identified as being most vulnerable to flooding from all sources are:

1. Barby and Kilsby Ward
2. St. James Ward
3. Blisworth and Roade Ward
4. Long Buckby Ward

5. Weldon & Gretton Ward
6. Delapre and Briar Hill Ward
7. Irchester Ward
8. Weedon Ward
9. St. Michael's and Wicksteed Ward
10. Spratton Ward
11. Queen Eleanor and Buccleuch Ward
12. Central Ward
13. Castle Ward
14. Rushden Spencer Ward
15. Kingswood & Hazel Leys Ward

We will undertake activities for managing flood risk in these wards, including:

- Collecting data on assets within the county that affect flood risk;
- Review reports of flooding and offer advice and guidance;
- Designate features which we believe have a significant flood defence function.



Objectives of the Strategy, and Actions Identified as Necessary to Achieve the Objectives

The strategy sets out seven main objectives and a series of actions to achieve them, as outlined in the table below.

Objective	Actions to achieve the objective
<p>1. Collaborative Approach – Adopt a collaborative approach to managing local flood risk by working with local partners and stakeholders to identify, secure and optimise resources, expertise and opportunities for reducing flood risk and increasing resilience to flooding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of partnership working; • Securing and optimising human resources; and • Public engagement in development and delivery of strategy.
<p>2. Local Flood Risk – Develop a greater understanding of local flood risk by improving the scope of local knowledge and understanding of current and future local flood risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production of technical flood and water management studies; • Flood reporting, recording and investigation; • Raise community awareness; • Registration of assets and associated maintenance; and • Data management.
<p>3. Enhance the Natural and Historic Environment – Adopt a sustainable approach to reducing local flood risk, seeking to lessen the risk of localised flooding using mechanisms that are economically viable, deliver wider environmental benefits, conserve and enhance heritage assets and their settings, and promote the wellbeing of local people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an environmental assessment of the strategy; • Explore opportunities to provide additional flood storage; • Encourage natural flood risk management; • Provide green space and water environment; • Explore opportunities to de-culvert (de-pipe) in appropriate locations where improvement is required; • Review land management methods; • Increase tree coverage in appropriate locations; and
<p>4. Preparedness and Resilience – Reduce the harmful consequences of local flooding to communities and human health through proactive actions, activities and education programmes that enhance preparedness and resilience to local flood risk, and contribute to minimising community disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active enforcement, maintenance and inspection; • Encourage flood risk management works; • Improve emergency planning, response and recovery; • Improve public awareness and understanding of flooding and flood risk management; • Promote flood resilience and resistance measures, and property level protection; • Further develop the Flood Toolkit for self-help for home owners, communities and businesses; • Continue to develop business continuity and community emergency evacuation plans and flood warden schemes; and • Promote the take up of flood protection insurance.
<p>5. Flood Risk and Development – Minimise the increase in local flood risk that may arise from new development by producing guidance, setting standards, promoting the sustainable use of water and supporting the development of local policies and guidance, discouraging wherever possible surface water runoff in</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of surface water drainage proposals for major planning applications by the Surface Water Drainage Team; • Production of guidance relating to Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and to groundwater flooding in Northamptonshire; • Utilisation of designation powers; • Use of consenting powers for certain works affecting



Objective	Actions to achieve the objective
<p>new and future developments and where possible influencing or supporting developments that seek to reduce existing flood risk.</p>	<p>ordinary watercourses;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to policies; • Promotion of flood risk reduction in land-use planning; • Avoid new development in high flood risk areas; • Management of flood risk remaining in new development once flood defence measures have been implemented; • Assessment of flood risk impacts upstream and downstream; • Flood risk and existing development; • Considerations for future flood alleviation schemes; and • Water quality considerations in land use planning
<p>6. Economically Sustainable Approach – Ensure the financial viability of flood related schemes through the development of appropriate policies and assessment tools to ensure that flood risk management measures provide value for money whilst minimising the long-term revenue costs. Seeking to use natural processes where possible or source the costs of any maintenance from the financial beneficiaries of the development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritised approach to implement the most sustainably cost effective measures that will help to reduce flood risk and the impacts felt by communities; • Working together, aligning stakeholders with those who would benefit from further investment in flood risk management; • Identification of funding sources; • Determine what can be afforded with available funding; • Utilise the new partnership approach to funding; • Create an annual programme of works; and • Consider local needs, priorities and pressures.
<p>7. Riparian Responsibilities – Encourage flood management activities by private owners of ordinary watercourses and flood defence structures as well as limit the development of constrictions on ordinary watercourses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warning and informing of riparian owners (see following page for definition of a riparian owner); • Encourage community enforcement of flood risk management activities by riparian owners; • Advice on how to resolve nuisance flooding; and • Advice on mediation and legal proceedings. • Encourage private owners to take responsibility for their land, with regard flooding and flood risk management, provided they are correctly consulted and adhere to policy and legislation.



Reporting Flood Incidents

- **If the flooding is an emergency:** contact Fire and Rescue by calling 999. This service is primarily responsible for saving life. They may also pump out floodwater from your property. During flooding, you should focus on the safety of yourself and others.
- **If the flooding is highway related:** use the Street Doctor service at <http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Transport/roads/streetdoctor/Pages/Step1.aspx> to report flooding relating to a highway such as blocked ditches, blocked drains or flooding on a road.
- **If the flooding is from a burst water main or sewer flooding:** contact your service provider ([Anlian Water Services](#), [Thames Water Utilities](#) or [Severn Trent Water](#))
- **For all other flooding:** use our online report form on the [Flood Toolkit](#) to report all other flooding. Please note that this service is not to be used in an emergency situation. We will endeavour to respond to your submission within 21 days.

Our online report form can also be used to tell us about historic flooding that has affected your property or community. If you have photos or videos of flooding please upload these to the online form.

environmental objectives

In addition to the social and economic benefits of reducing flood risk, it is important that any actions we take forward from the strategy also focus on achieving wider environmental benefits. The implementation of flood risk management options and measures provides a significant opportunity to improve the natural, rural and built environment across the county.

The strategy will contribute to the achievement of wider environmental objectives in the following ways:

- Promote Water Framework Directive targets to ensure no deterioration of the quality of waterbodies through our works;
- Encourage source control measures such as sustainable drainage, to improve water quality of runoff;
- Enhance biodiversity and habitat creation within any future flood alleviation schemes;
- Prioritise solutions to manage flooding from local sources that work with natural processes, encourage biodiversity enhancements and minimise adverse effects to the local environment.



Contribution to the achievement of wider





What happens next?

Although there is no formal deadline for the strategy to be produced or updated, we believe that continued monitoring, review and development are essential to ensure that local flood risk management is responsive to changes. The strategy and action plan have been updated in line with comments received as part of the public consultation. The strategy will be regularly monitored and reviewed every three years, and the action plan will continue to be updated annually.

Contact details

Feel free to get in touch if you have any questions or queries which aren't answered by our Frequently Asked Questions sheet.

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