



Northamptonshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Adoption Statement

Northamptonshire County Council

November 2016



Northamptonshire
County Council

Document Status

Rev	Date	Details	Author	Checked and Approved By
01	18/09/2013	SEA Adoption Statement	P Jones, Climate Change Project Officer, Northamptonshire County Council	J Bateman, Project Manager (Flood and Water Management), Northamptonshire County Council
02	7/09/2016	SEA Adoption Statement	P Jones, Senior Environment Officer, Northamptonshire County Council	J Bateman, Flood and Water Manager, Northamptonshire County Council

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. HOW ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN INTEGRATED INTO THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY	5
3. HOW THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT HAS BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT	6
4. HOW OPINIONS OF CONSULTATION BODIES AND THE PUBLIC HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT	8
5. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES	9
6. HOW WILL THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY EFFECTS BE MONITORED?.....	9

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 gave local authorities a new role to manage local flood risk in their area. The Act requires Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs), which include Northamptonshire County Council, to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS). Northamptonshire County Council has now adopted its LFRMS as Council policy.
- 1.1 Guidance on the production of an LFRMS¹ refers to the need for them to be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), stating that:
- “the Local FRM Strategy is likely to require statutory SEA, but this requirement is something the LLFA must consider”*
- 1.2 The guidance also recognises that:
- “LLFAs should take a proportionate approach to applying SEA to local strategies particularly when environmental effects are not evident in the early stages of plan development. As the detail of plans develops, SEA should be reviewed”.*
- 1.3 Northamptonshire County Council considered that its original LFRMS did require a full SEA, and commissioned ENVIRON UK Ltd to undertake the SEA alongside officers from the County Council. The method and findings of the SEA were described in the SEA Report, which was published alongside the draft and final versions of the LFRMS as it was developed in 2013.
- 1.4 The SEA Report for the LFRMS was finalised in September 2013 following on from a number of amendments after consultation with stakeholders and the public.
- 1.5 The SEA Regulations require the production of a Non-Technical Summary of the information included in the SEA Report, and this was also published in September 2013 alongside the full SEA Report. The LFRMS is updated every three years with the latest iteration in November 2016. The associated action plan is updated on an annual basis. The updated LFRMS (November 2016) was subject to an SEA refresh and this was undertaken alongside the LFRMS, which was subject to a six week public consultation. A specific consultation request was also sent to the SEA statutory bodies to allow for a formal review.

Requirement for the Strategic Environmental Assessment Adoption Statement

- 1.6 The SEA Regulations² require a number of steps to be taken upon adoption of a plan or strategy (in this case the Northamptonshire County Council LFRMS). Specifically, Regulation 16 sets out the post-adoption procedures for the SEA and requires that, as soon as is reasonably practical after the adoption of a plan or strategy for which SEA has been carried out, the planning authority must make a copy of the plan or strategy publicly available alongside a copy of the SEA report and an ‘SEA adoption statement’, and must inform the public and statutory consultation bodies³ about the availability of these documents. The SEA adoption statement must explain:
- How environmental (and sustainability) considerations have been integrated into the plan/strategy.
 - How the Environmental Report has been taken into account during preparation of the plan/strategy.

¹ Local Government Association (2011) Framework to Assist the Development of the Local Strategy for Flood Risk Management.

² The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 - SI No. 1633.

³ Natural England, English Heritage, Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.

- How the opinions expressed by the public, consultation bodies (and where appropriate other European Member States) during consultation on the plan and Environmental Report have been taken into account.
- The reasons for choosing the plan/strategy as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives.
- The measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the plan/strategy.

2. HOW ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS HAVE BEEN INTEGRATED INTO THE NORTHAMPTONSHIRE LOCAL FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- 2.0 The SEA for Northamptonshire’s LFRMS sought to ensure that potentially significant environmental impacts of strategy implementation were identified and avoided or mitigated during plan preparation. The SEA was fully integrated into the development of the LFRMS to ensure that environmental considerations were taken into account and show how the SEA has influenced the LFRMS process at SEA and LFRMS submission stage. Where possible, the SEA also identified opportunities for environmental enhancement as well as mitigating potentially adverse effects of the LFRMS.
- 2.1 The way in which the environmental and sustainability effects of the LFRMS were described, analysed and compared was through the use of an SEA Framework comprising a set of SEA objectives and SEA assessment criteria. The SEA Framework and SEA objectives were based on identified local environmental issues throughout Northamptonshire and further developed and amended in accordance with the consultation responses received.
- 2.2 The SEA Framework comprised eight SEA objectives and nine SEA topics that were used to decide what the likely effects of the LFRMS would be. The SEA Framework for the LFRMS is shown in Table 2-1 below. The SEA objectives provided the main tools at each stage of the SEA for assessing the objectives and measures in the LFRMS. All SEA topics were covered by one SEA objective apart from ‘air’, which was scoped out of the assessment. Air was not included because the SEA is required to identify significant effects and it was considered at the scoping stage that it was unlikely that the LFRMS would have a significant effect on air quality.

Table 2-1: SEA Framework for the Northamptonshire LFRMS

SEA Topic	SEA Objective
Water	To protect and improve the quality and condition of water resources in Northamptonshire.
Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna	To conserve and enhance biodiversity and habitat quality across Northamptonshire and to create new habitat through measures to reduce the impacts of local flooding.
Soils	To protect and conserve soils and reduce their ability to act as pollution sources and pathways in times of local flooding.
Climatic Factors	To promote adaptation to the impacts of climate change and its effects on flood risk across Northamptonshire.
Air	Scoped out of the assessment.

SEA Topic	SEA Objective
Material Assets	To safeguard existing and future material assets and critical infrastructure in Northamptonshire from the potential impacts of local flooding.
Population and Human Health	To protect the health and wellbeing of local people and communities in Northamptonshire from the potential impacts of local flooding.
Cultural Heritage	To safeguard (or 'protect') and enhance heritage assets and their settings across Northamptonshire.
Landscape	To protect and enhance the character and appearance of the Northamptonshire's landscapes and townscapes.

2.3 In addition to the SEA Framework above, the SEA was developed alongside the LFRMS and has therefore been used to inform sustainable decision making throughout, including the development of social, economic and environment objectives.

3. HOW THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT HAS BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

3.0 The methodology for the SEA of the Northamptonshire LFRMS was informed by a number of the Government's best practice guidance⁴ and was undertaken iteratively in that it included five main stages and iterative tasks such that an assessment of its sustainability and environmental effects was carried out at a number of stages of the LFRMS development. This allowed recommendations to be put forward at different stages, to avoid or minimise negative effects and enhance positive effects. Northamptonshire County Council Officers then took the SEA findings and recommendations into account while making changes to the LFRMS at each stage.

3.1 Table 3-1 below shows how the preparation of the SEA corresponded with the development of the LFRMS. It also includes the different SEA Stages and SEA tasks, and how any recommendations were taken into account. The first draft of the Environmental Report was created in September 2012, a full year before the original LFRMS, showing that the SEA directly fed into and influenced the creation and ongoing development of the LFRMS.

⁴ A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (OPDM, August 2006); The Plan Making Manual (online guidance – PAS); Towards a more efficient and effective use of Strategic Environmental Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal in spatial planning (DCLG, 2010); and A Practical Guide to the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive (ODPM, 2005)

Table 3-1: Stages in the SEA Process

Date	SEA Stages	SEA Tasks
Spring 2012	<p>Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope</p> <p>The Scoping Report was consulted on for a 3 week period from Thursday 22nd March to Thursday 12th April 2012. Following the receipt of comments, the Scoping Report was updated in accordance with the comments received. Comments mainly related to baseline data and the SEA Framework.</p>	A1: Identifying other relevant policies, plans and programmes, and environmental protection objectives.
		A2: Collecting baseline information.
		A3: Identifying environmental issues.
		A4: Developing the SEA objectives and framework.
		A5: Consulting on the scope of the SEA.
Autumn 2012	<p>Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects</p> <p>The SEA Framework (detailed in Table 2-1) was amended in accordance with the consultation responses received.</p> <p>In close consultation with Officers at Northamptonshire County Council a number of reasonable alternatives were developed. An assessment of the alternatives making a relative comparison between them, and to the baseline evidence was undertaken using the SEA objectives of the Assessment Framework and then verified with Northamptonshire County Council Officers and other stakeholders in a workshop on 4th September 2012.</p> <p>The preferred option for the draft LFRMS was then subject to assessment against the SEA Framework and the significant potential impacts were described and identified. Wherever possible, baseline data, references and evidence were provided to support the assessment.</p>	
Autumn – Autumn 2012 - 2013	<p>Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report</p> <p>Following on from Stages A and B, the Environmental Report was then drafted in September 2012 with the final document created September 2013. This document is Part 3 of the SEA Environmental Report. It outlines the significant effects of the LFRMS and sets out a proposed strategy for monitoring these significant effects.</p>	
Winter 2012 - 2013	<p>Stage D: Consulting on the draft LFRMS and the Environmental Report</p> <p>A three month formal public consultation was undertaken on the draft LFRMS from the beginning of December 2012 to the end of February 2013. The Environmental Report was consulted upon with the statutory SEA consultees, other key stakeholders and the public. All comments received were reviewed and amendments made to the LFRMS and associated documents including the SEA.</p> <p>Following consultation, minor changes to the Environmental Report were necessary to address comments received. Changes were also made to the LFRMS in response to comments received. None of the changes were deemed to be significant and therefore further assessment to identify whether they would result in significant effects was not required.</p>	

Date	SEA Stages	SEA Tasks
Winter (Jan) 2013 – Spring 2016	<p>Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the LFRMS</p> <p>A monitoring framework has been put in place that links the predicted impacts, effects and monitoring indicators. Once implemented, this should enable the responsible authority to determine at the earliest opportunity if any adverse effects are occurring as a result of the implementation of the LFRMS.</p>	
Spring 2016	<p>Updating the Environmental Report</p> <p>The Environmental Report was updated to reflect the changes to the LFRMS. This document is Part 3 of the SEA Environmental Report. It outlines the significant effects of the LFRMS and sets out a proposed strategy for monitoring these significant effects.</p>	
Summer 2016	<p>Consulting on the updated LFRMS and the Environmental Report</p> <p>A six-week formal public consultation was undertaken on the updated LFRMS ending on the 28th July 2016. The Environmental Report was consulted upon with the statutory SEA consultees, other key stakeholders and the public. All comments received were reviewed and amendments made to the LFRMS and associated documents including the SEA.</p> <p>Following consultation, minor changes to the Environmental Report were necessary to address comments received. Changes were also made to the LFRMS in response to comments received. None of the changes were deemed to be significant and therefore further assessment to identify whether they would result in significant effects was not required.</p>	
Ongoing	<p>Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the LFRMS</p> <p>A monitoring framework has been put in place that links the predicted impacts, effects and monitoring indicators. This enables the responsible authority to determine at the earliest opportunity if any adverse effects are occurring as a result of the implementation of the LFRMS.</p>	

4. HOW OPINIONS OF CONSULTATION BODIES AND THE PUBLIC HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT

4.0 At each stage of the SEA of the Northamptonshire LFRMS, the relevant reports were published for consultation with the public and the consultation bodies specifically relating to the SEA Directive (Historic England, Environment Agency, Wildlife Trust and Natural England). The SEA Regulations require the SEA Adoption Statement to summarise how any opinions expressed by the public and the consultation bodies about the SEA have been taken into account. The SEA consultation responses are summarised in Table 3 2: of the Consultation Response Form Communication, Engagement and Consultation Strategy document found here: <http://www.floodtoolkit.com/pdf-library/>

4.1 Note that while all the statutory consultation bodies for the SEA may not have commented directly on the SEA Report at each stage, they were consulted.

5. REASONABLE ALTERNATIVES

- 5.0 The purpose and content of the LFRMS is clearly defined by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and this means that there is limited scope for the consideration of radical alternatives. However, at points through the development of the LFRMS certain decisions have been made which had alternative options. Checks have been made to make sure that the preferred option did not have significant negative effects on the SEA objectives, and where necessary mitigation measures have been included. Table 3-1 in Part 3 of the final SEA Report (November 2016) details the 'Assessment of LFRMS Alternatives' and explains the reasoning behind selection or rejection of these.

6. HOW WILL THE ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY EFFECTS BE MONITORED?

- 6.0 The SEA Regulations require that *"the responsible authority shall monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action"* (Regulation 17), and that the environmental report should provide information on *"a description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring"* (Schedule 2).
- 6.1 Part 3 of the November 2016 SEA Report for the LFRMS includes proposals for how the potential significant environmental effects identified for the LFRMS in the Action Plan could be monitored. The result was that the LFRMS Monitoring Framework, set out below in Table 6-1, sets out monitoring indicators and identifies those partners who are able to assist with monitoring. Following on from responses received to the consultation on the updated LFRMS and accompanying SEA Report, Natural England, The Environment Agency and Historic England made suggestions which were accepted and resulted in minor changes to the wording of Part 3 of the updated SEA Report and the LFRMS Monitoring Framework (November 2016).
- 6.2 It is not necessary to monitor every potential effect of the LFRMS. SEA monitoring should be focussed on the significant environmental and sustainability effects that may give rise to irreversible damage (with a view to identifying trends before such damage is caused) and the significant effects where there is uncertainty in the SEA and where monitoring would enable preventative or mitigation measures to be taken. The potential uncertain effects and also potential significant positive effects of the LFRMS that have been identified by the SEA Report are shown below: -

Potential significant positive effects of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

- Promoting the sustainable use of water as a natural resource [SEA Topic – Water] (LFRMS Objective 3).
- Contribute to improvements in the quality of water bodies in the County [SEA Topic – Water] (LFRMS Objective 7).
- Conserve, and where possible enhance, designated nature conservation sites (SSSI, SPA, SAC and Ramsar) [SEA Topic – Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna] (LFRMS Objective 3).

- Protect and conserve soils, and increase resilience to degradation [SEA Topic – Soils] (LFRMS Objective 3).
- Minimise risks to vital infrastructure and community facilities [SEA Topic – Material Assets] (LFRMS Objective 4).
- Reduce the risk of local flooding to properties and businesses [SEA Topic – Material Assets] (LFRMS Objective 6).
- Minimise and reduce local flood related risks to the population and the environment and adverse impacts on human health [SEA Topic – Population and Human Health] (LFRMS Objectives 2 and 4).
- Protect areas with an amenity use and reduce community disruption from local flooding [SEA Topic – Population and Human Health] (LFRMS Objectives 3, 4 and 5).
- Improve local resilience and resistance to local flooding events [SEA Topic – Population and Human Health] (LFRMS Objective 4).
- Protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings from the impacts of flooding [SEA Topic – Cultural Heritage] (LFRMS Objectives 3, 4 and 5).

Potential uncertain effects of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

- Uncertain negative effects on biodiversity, flora and fauna, including destruction and fragmentation of riparian habitats, alteration of bank structure and disturbance of related fauna species from projects which require consent and from actions/projects within the Action Plan. Such effects could be temporary and permanent. This could potentially be a Water Framework Directive compliance issue [SEA Topic – Biodiversity – Flora and Fauna] (LFRMS Objective 3).
- Uncertain temporary negative effects on water quality from engineering works, from increased sediment movement / turbidity. This could potentially be a Water Framework Directive compliance issue [SEA Topic – Water] (LFRMS Objective 3).
- Uncertain temporary or permanent effects on the condition and settings of historic assets at risk of flooding and in close proximity to ordinary watercourses from projects which require consent and from actions/projects within the Action Plan [SEA Topic – Cultural Heritage] (LFRMS Objectives 4 and 5).

6.3 It is recognised that these are all potential effects, and the uncertain effects may be able to be mitigated by proper implementation of other measures in the LFRMS if required. Nonetheless, monitoring will need to be undertaken to try and identify trends before any damage is caused, and to enable preventative or further mitigation measures to be taken. Similarly, in order to achieve the potential significant positive effects identified, other measures in the LFRMS will need to be properly implemented. Monitoring will help to identify whether this is occurring. The full monitoring framework is set out in Part 3 of the updated SEA.