

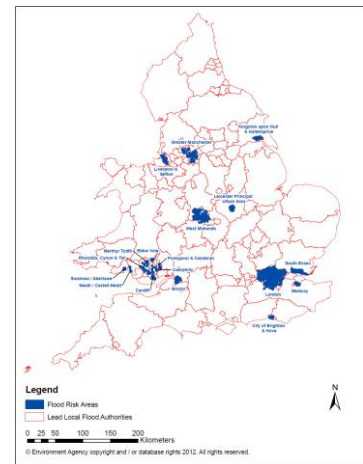
Flood Risk Management Plans - June 2013

The proposed way forward following the FRMP Consultation

Under the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 (the Regulations) some Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs), Natural Resources Wales and the Environment Agency are required to produce Flood Risk Management Plans by December 2015 in England and Wales. We've consulted on the approach to producing these plans and, taking into account the responses, we're now proposing a preferred way forward.

Introduction

The Regulations implement the requirements of the European Floods Directive, which aims to provide a consistent approach to managing flood risk across Europe. We are currently in the first cycle of implementation, where some LLFAs (county councils and single tier authorities) need to prepare flood hazard and risk maps and Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) for the 10 Flood Risk Areas in England¹ and 8 in Wales (see adjacent figure). The Environment Agency and Natural Resources Wales need to prepare flood hazard and risk maps and FRMPs for main rivers, the sea and reservoirs covering the whole of England and Wales.



Why did we consult on the approach to Flood Risk Management Plans?

FRMPs are important because they set out how risk management authorities and communities will work together to reduce the potential adverse consequences of flooding. Defra, the Welsh Government, the Environment Agency and the newly formed Natural Resources Wales (who took over the functions of the Environment Agency in Wales on 1st April 2013) wanted to raise awareness of the planning requirements and to get views on the possible approaches to delivering FRMPs for the first and subsequent cycles.

What was the response to the consultation?

The consultation closed at the end of October 2012 and there were over 80 responses from national organisations, risk management authorities, private companies and individuals.

“...nearly 70% of responses came from risk management authorities, with over half the responses from Lead Local Flood Authorities.”

Nearly a quarter of all LLFAs responded to the consultation...”

What is the preferred approach to developing FRMPs?

Having reviewed the feedback the preferred approach to developing FRMPs in this planning cycle is for the Environment Agency (EA) and Natural Resources Wales (NRW):

*“...to prepare consolidated FRMPs in partnership with others so that they cover flooding from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs, as well as from surface water flooding
.....all in one place”*

¹ A further three Flood Risk Areas in England are currently under review

The EA and NRW will work in partnership with LLFAs and other risk management authorities to develop these consolidated plans at a catchment scale by pooling information from various plans (Catchment Flood Management Plans, Shoreline Management Plans and Reservoir Plans for flooding from main rivers, the sea and reservoirs). The EA and NRW will seek for LLFAs to pool information from Local FRM Strategies (or Surface Water Management Plans) so that, as a minimum, it includes the Flood Risk Areas identified in the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA). This information on local flood risk management will be set within the context of the broader catchment plan.

What about outside the Flood Risk Areas?

While the focus for local flood risk management in this first planning cycle is on the Flood Risk Areas, we welcome LLFAs also pooling information covering areas that are outside of the Flood Risk Areas should they wish to. This means that information covering the whole of their LLFA patch could be pooled into the consolidated FRMP. This way we can build and share a picture of flood risk across all sources.

How would consultation of draft FRMPs work?

There is still more thinking to be done with LLFA partners but our current suggested way forward is for consultation on the draft consolidated FRMPs to be co-ordinated by the EA and NRW at a catchment scale. We see that there could be real benefits in undertaking this consultation at the same time as the consultation for the draft river basin management plans prepared under the Water Framework Directive from June 2014 and this is something that we should aim to do. We welcome the consultation on the draft consolidated FRMP being undertaken in partnership with LLFAs wherever possible: we think this would improve local engagement and foster local ownership. We do not propose delaying progress on Local FRM Strategies. Where feasible, LLFAs may want to consider including options for implementing their local strategy into the consultation of draft FRMPs, in particular where there are opportunities for synergies across the wider catchment for concerted action such as with land management measures. FRMP and RBMP are both processes aimed at focussing partnership action to deliver environmental and social benefits. We will look to find simple ways of doing this planning together, to deliver more outcomes and save time and money.

What about future planning cycles?

For future planning cycles, Defra and the Welsh Government are currently supportive of extending the coverage of FRMPs so that they include the whole of England and Wales for all sources of flood risk, and are prepared in partnership by all risk management authorities. Building on experience in this first planning cycle, we aim to be able to deliver closer alignment between flood risk management planning and River Basin Management Planning under the Water Framework Directive in the future. How this planning may be co-ordinated effectively can be considered further under the emerging Catchment Based Approach

What next and where can I find out more?

We appreciate the views that have been shared with us through this consultation and we will aim to share the draft proposal widely so that others, particularly LLFAs and other Risk Management Authorities, can consider its merits in more detail (See the EA web site for the Summary Report)

We welcome further feedback from risk management authorities, particularly those who have not shared their thoughts previously (e-mail the EA at: FRMPConsultation@environment-agency.gov.uk). In the next few months we will set out further guidance on this preferred approach to developing FRMPs.