

By: Max Tant, Flood Risk Manager
To: Kent Flood Risk Management Committee
Subject: Local Flood Risk Management Strategy
Classification: Unrestricted

1. Introduction

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy is a requirement of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 (the Act) for all Lead Local Flood Authorities to prepare. KCC must prepare a Local Strategy that sets out how local flood risks will be managed in the county, who will deliver them and how they will be funded.

The Act gives county and unitary authorities a local leadership role and the Environment Agency a national overview role in relation to flood risk management. This strategy will be central to the implementation of the Act in Kent, and will provide a framework for all risk management authorities to manage local flooding in a co-ordinated way.

The Local Flood Risk Management Strategy must be consistent with the Environment Agency’s National Strategy. The National Strategy sets out how all flood risks and coastal erosion will be managed in England.

The relationship of the local strategy to other flood plans and strategic planning documents produced locally, regionally and nationally is shown in Diagram 1, along with the authorities responsible for producing them.

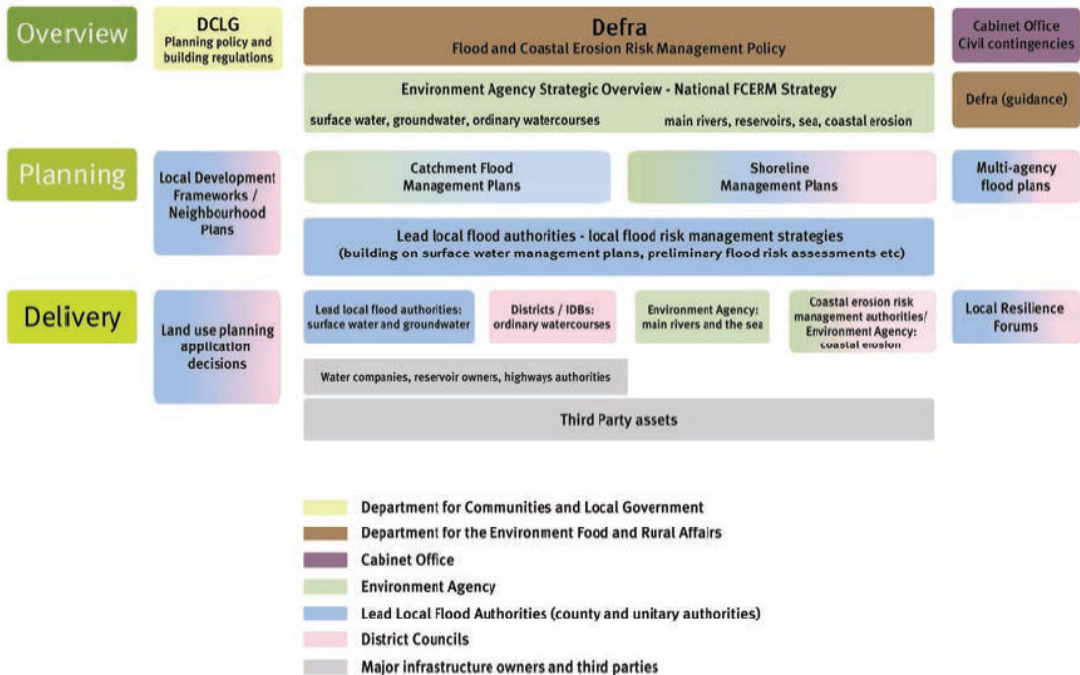


Diagram 1 Flood risk management overview

The local strategy is informed by regional and national flood strategies, including the national strategy, catchment flood management plans and shoreline management plans. In turn the local strategy will inform the delivery of flood risk management in Kent and local planning decisions.

The local strategy must be consulted on with the risk management authorities in the county and with the public.

2. Local Strategy requirements

The Act sets out the minimum that a local strategy must contain:

- The risk management authorities in the relevant area.
- The flood and coastal erosion risk management functions that may be exercised by those authorities in relation to the area.
- The objectives for managing local flood risk and the measures proposed to achieve those objectives.
- How and when the measures are expected to be implemented.
- The costs and benefits of those measures, and how they are to be paid for.
- The assessment of local flood risk for the purpose of the strategy.
- How and when the strategy is to be reviewed.
- How the strategy contributes to the achievement of wider environmental objectives.

Delivering this for Kent in one document will be challenging. It is not possible to know at this stage what the measures are that will be delivered to meet the objectives or how these will be funded for the whole county over the whole lifetime of the local strategy.

It is proposed that the Local Strategy will provide a strategic guide to how local flood risk will be managed in the county by promoting good practice, helping risk management authorities to work together better and improving the understanding of flood risk for the public. One of the measures will be to improve our knowledge of flood risk in areas susceptible to local flood risk by undertaking Surface Water Management Plans. The delivery of local measures to manage these risks will be managed through these plans.

A plan of the measures that have been identified in the Surface Water Management Plans and other measures to meet the objectives of the Local Strategy that will be delivered over the following year will be updated annually.

3. Objectives

The objectives of the strategy are proposed as the following:

1. Improving the understanding of the risks of flooding from surface runoff, groundwater and ordinary watercourses in Kent.

In order to plan for and mitigate local flooding information needs to be gathered to assess the risks, which can then be used by the risk management authorities to identify the areas most at risk, to target responses and investigate what options may be available to manage them.

The information currently available about local flooding is inconsistent, scant and sometimes unreliable. Data on historic local flooding may not be available in some parts of the county, or is only available for some not all local flooding risks (for instance ordinary watercourse data is available but not surface water flooding). There is very little data about predicted risk of local flooding from models.

This reflects the focus on the more life threatening flood risk from rivers and the sea that have been the focus of flood risk management in the past two decades and of the fragmented responsibilities for local flooding amongst several risk management authorities.

In order to be able to make robust plans for local flood risks better data needs to be gathered about the history of flooding and the predicted risks that is consistent, reliable and available to all risk management authorities.

2. Reducing the impact of flooding on people and businesses in Kent.

Flooding causes damage, disruption, uncertainty and loss of business. The ultimate objective of flood risk management should be to reduce the impact of flooding wherever possible.

This does not always mean constructing formal flood defence works or the outright removal of the risk. The most sustainable ways to manage flood risks may be a simple intervention that achieves a significant reduction in the likelihood or consequences of a flood.

Flood risk management must focus on the highest risk areas, be cost-effective, sensitive of the needs of the local community and seek multiple benefits. Local communities should be involved in the development of flood mitigation actions and encouraged to help fund them.

3. Ensuring that development in Kent takes account of flood risk issues and plans to effectively manage any impacts.

The best way to prevent flood risk from increasing is to build new developments in a flood sensitive way, which includes avoiding areas of existing flood risk where possible and managing runoff sustainably.

Sustainable development helps to provide homes and communities that are pleasant places to live free of flood risk and enhance the surrounding communities and environments.

4. Providing clear information and guidance on the role of the public sector, private sector and individuals in flood risk management in Kent and how those roles will be delivered and how authorities will work together to manage flood risk.

Given the number of authorities that exercise flood risk management functions and recent changes to these it is important that clear, effective information is provided about how, when and where risk management functions will be exercised. This will help to improve the awareness of public that risk management functions are being undertaken and will help to identify opportunities to coordinate risk management functions.

The need for this was identified in the Pitt Review 2007, which states:

“we firmly believe that the public interest is best served by closer cooperation and a presumption that information will be shared. We must be open, honest and direct about risk, including with the public. We must move from a culture of ‘need to know’ to one of ‘need to share’”.

Sharing information and cooperation go hand-in-hand, only by knowing what roles and how we plan to deliver them can we work effectively together.

Everybody has a role to play in managing flood risk, by understanding our roles and how each of us will deliver them we can work together to effectively manage the risks.

5. Ensuring that emergency plans and responses to flood incidents in Kent are effective and that communities understand the risks and their role in an emergency.

Flooding cannot be prevented entirely. It is important to recognise and plan for eventualities that cannot be mitigated. Even with the collation of data and mapping of flood risk some risks are too expensive or technically unfeasible to remove the flood risk entirely. Even in cases where the flood risk can be managed there will remain a residual risk that the mitigation measure may fail. In all these cases the flood risks that remain must be managed through appropriate emergency responses.

These responses should use the best available information and be clear about what has to be done to manage the risks during and emergency to all stakeholders, including the public.

4. Delivery

The Local Strategy will set out how KCC will undertake its role as Lead Local Flood Authority for Kent and how it will deliver the new flood risk management functions it has been given by the Act. It will also set out how risk management authorities will work together to deliver the objectives of the Local Strategy.

The Local Strategy will include how it will prioritise the delivery of Surface Water Management Plans across the county, as these will be the primary means to assess local flood risk in the county and identify options to reduce it.

5. Timetable

The Local Strategy is currently being drafted. It is intended that it will be published for public consultation in September for three months. Consultation responses will be reviewed in early 2013 with the Local Strategy timetabled for cabinet approval in March 2013.

The Local Strategy will be reviewed three years from its adoption, to monitor the delivery of the measures proposed in it and to assess the relevance of the objectives. It is likely that future versions of the Local Strategy will have longer shelf lives. This first Local Strategy will help to put in place many of the mechanisms needed to manage our new functions and these will need to be reviewed sooner.

6. Recommendations

That the committee provide any comments about the objectives of the Local Strategy.

Background documents

The Floods and Water Management Act -

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/pdfs/ukpga_20100029_en.pdf

The Floods and Water Management Act explanatory notes -

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/pdfs/ukpgaen_20100029_en.pdf

What does the Flood and Water Management Act mean for Local Authorities, Defra -

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/flooding/documents/policy/fwmb/fwma-lafactsheet.pdf>

National Strategy for Flooding and Coastal Erosion Risk Management, Environment Agency - www.environment-agency.gov.uk/research/policy/130073.aspx

Author contact details

Max Tant, Flood Risk Management Officer, Natural Environment & Coast Team, EHW

max.tant@kent.gov.uk 01622 221691