

## **Summary of latest Environment Agency FCERM developments**

This paper highlights some of the key activities since the last meeting.

### ***Policy and legislation***

#### **National FCERM Report for England**

The Environment Agency is required, under section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the National FCERM Strategy, to report to Ministers on flood and coastal erosion risk management in England. Preparation of the 2013-14 report is being supported by contributions from across the risk management authorities and other partners, including LLFAs, ADA and IDBs, water and sewerage companies, the Highways Agency and the National Trust. We are very grateful to these and other partners for their time and effort in supporting this project. We expect to publish the report this summer, subject to Ministerial approval.

#### **Flood Risk Regulations – Flood Risk Management Plans**

Together with Defra, Welsh Government and Natural Resources Wales the Environment Agency has developed joint guidance on Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) for Lead Local Flood Authorities in England and Wales. This guidance was published on 1 May and is available on the [Gov.uk](http://Gov.uk) website. Scoping reports which set out what the plans will cover for each river basin district are also being developed and will be published shortly.

We are working closely with the Water Framework Directive (WFD) programme to coordinate River Basin Management Plans and Flood Risk Management Plans. We are planning to consult on both the first cycle of FRMPs and the second cycle of RBMPs in September. The FRMPs consultation will run from September to December 2014 and the RBMPs consultation will run from September to March 2015.

#### **Flood Risk Regulations – Publishing flood risk information**

In December the Environment Agency published new and updated flood maps on its website showing the risk of flooding from rivers and sea, surface water, and reservoirs. We also published flood risk summary maps for each River Basin District. We have recently published information on the depth and velocity of flooding that would result from reservoir failure. These maps ensure we meet the requirements of the Flood Risk Regulations, and more importantly, provide the best available flood risk information to the public.

In summary the maps show that around 5 million properties are at risk of flooding in England, 2.4 million from rivers and sea and 3 million properties from surface water flooding. Some properties are at risk from both types of flooding. The maps

have already been used in earnest. We had on average around 4,000 new visitors to our website and the interactive flood maps around the launch in December. During the Christmas and New Year period this peaked at over 21,000 new visitors per day.

Since publication we have been gathering feedback. We will continue to review these maps as part of our ongoing work to improve how we communicate flood risk, and as part of the ongoing planning cycle required under the Flood Risk Regulations. Our maps are now accessible from our new Gov.UK website. Please visit <https://www.gov.uk/prepare-for-a-flood/find-out-if-youre-at-risk>

### ***FCRM funding***

#### FCRM Investment Programme (6 year capital programme)

Needs based capital programme submissions have been received and Area Teams have carried out quality assurance checks prior to submission to the Environment Agency's National Capital Allocation Team. The indicative six year investment programme is being constructed and should be complete in early June. There will then be a further packaging opportunity review, local choices and internal approvals prior to sharing with RFCCs in July 2014. The indicative programme will be prioritised following the existing principles agreed with RFCCs and the Environment Agency Board.

#### Long Term Investment Strategy

The Environment Agency is drafting the revised Long Term Investment Strategy to share with Defra in the summer. We will then undertake a programme of peer review and engagement with stakeholders in preparation for publication in the autumn. In presenting the Long Term Investment Strategy alongside the six year programme, we will demonstrate the progress that investment decisions being made now will make, and highlight the decisions still to be taken for the longer term.

### ***Warning, informing, and incident management***

#### Updates to the National Coastal Erosion Maps

The National Coastal Erosion Maps were published for most areas of England and Wales in early 2012, but there are still some parts of England (particularly the east coast) which remain unpublished. This was initially due to delays to the approval of the North Norfolk Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) and a desire by local authorities in neighbouring SMPs to publish together as a unit upon approval. Subsequently, data queries in one or two areas have prevented publication.

There is now a rolling programme of updates to the erosion information programmed in for the next four years, starting 2014-15. The first and third years will be more comprehensive data updates, with the second and fourth being more 'light touch' reviews focussing on high level changes such as to SMP policies or dramatic changes in coastal baseline. The Environment Agency will manage this process via the Coastal Groups. It will include an invitation for updates from local authorities followed by incorporation into the underlying Risk Assessment of Coastal Erosion (RACE) model and data validation along similar principles as used in the initial project.

#### Flood Identity

In November 2013 the Environment Agency released a new standalone flood identity. We currently have over 270 people (from over 190 non-commercial organisations) set up with access to the flood identity materials and over 700 items (logos, guidelines and templates) have been downloaded for use.

#### ***Asset Management***

##### National assessment of defence condition

A full report giving the current picture of the condition of all the flood defence assets across the country has been given to the Secretary of State for his consideration, and will be published in due course.

##### Flooding and agriculture project

Seven river maintenance pilot areas were set up last autumn to give farmers, landowners, community and environmental groups an opportunity to be involved in decisions around river maintenance in their area. An additional two pilot areas have recently been created which extend the total pilot areas to nine. Due to the winter flooding all pilots have been extended to March 2015. We are reducing red tape in the pilot areas to make it easier for others to maintain their rivers themselves. The work also includes general watercourse maintenance, strimming of channel sides and weed clearance.

We now have stakeholder groups up and running in all pilots, and all of these groups have met. Stakeholders include, NFU, CLA, Wildlife Trusts, local interest groups, IDB's, RSPB, Angling Representatives, Local Authorities and the landowners and occupiers. There have been a number of landowner meetings, drop in sessions, face-to-face meetings and farm walkovers. We are also making links with the RFCC's and the catchment based approach with the aim to co-ordinate activities over a wider area to manage the whole catchment more sustainably and economically.

### Managing Flood Assets – AIMS Update

The Environment Agency launched the new Asset Information Management System (AIMS) internally last year. Since then we have been working to provide secure access those Internal Drainage Boards and Lead Local Flood Authorities who want to use AIMS. Our intention had been to make AIMS available to external users via the Government Gateway. As this gateway is no longer being used we are considering other options to make AIMS available to external organisations.

At the Defra Capacity Building Workshops in 2013 a large majority of organisations indicated that they did not intend to use AIMS as their core asset database. Instead, many expressed a wish to use AIMS just to view Environment Agency asset data, and the asset data of other organisations. We intend to work with partner organisations to better understand this requirement and explore whether this can be met in other ways.

### ***Environment Management***

#### Integrated Environment Programme

A new programme is being established to help achieve a wide range of environmental outcomes. The Integrated Environment Programme (IEP) will ensure we achieve high quality environmental outcomes in a timely and most cost effective way. We need to achieve more (multiple) outcomes with every project. We need to work more with natural processes at a catchment scale so that flood risk management is more sustainable and resilient in the longer term. The IEP will be underpinned by clearly defined environmental outcomes set out through national outcome measures and through the FCRM Grant in Aid allocation process. We will co-ordinate and where possible integrate with activities of other Environment Agency functions, risk management authorities and partners.

The IEP is all about achieving more effective and efficient delivery by reducing duplication of effort, identifying and acting on synergies and integrating flood risk and water management environmental outcomes as far as possible. The IEP will help us plan how we will achieve environmental outcomes during the 2015 to 2021 settlement period and to submit a costed plan of environmental works to Government by the autumn statement 2014.

### ***Guidance, Reviews and Partnership Working***

#### Environment Agency Organisational Change

The Environment Agency is currently going through an internal reorganisation in order to become more streamlined and efficient. From 1 April we have moved from a three tier to two tier business model. We aim to do more things nationally

once to improve efficiency whilst retaining our strong engagement with local communities. We have recently confirmed the new senior management level appointments. We will ensure that our frontline incident response is maintained.

#### Move to Gov.uk

On 1<sup>st</sup> April the Environment Agency's website moved to Gov.uk. As part of the move we reviewed our content to ensure it meets the needs of our customers. Our new website can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/environment-agency>

#### Environment Agency Corporate Plan

At the end of April the Environment Agency published its corporate plan 'Creating a better place 2014 to 2016'. The plan sets out our priorities and our aims and performance measures for each of our business areas. It also describes how we will work to achieve our ambitions. The Plan is available on the [Gov.uk website](#).

#### Price Review 2014 (PR14) – working with water companies

On the 10 March Ofwat announced their decision on which water companies will pre-qualify for enhanced status on their business plans. They have decided that only two companies have passed their tests for outcomes, costs and affordability, and demonstrated robust water company Board assurance. These are South West Water and Affinity Water and their draft determinations were published on 30 April.

Sixteen other companies did not qualify for enhanced status. They will now need to improve their business plans to deliver the best outcomes for customers.

Ofwat have published [guidance and next steps](#) for those companies. In summary, Ofwat will be working with companies and regulators on draft determinations and refining business plans during the spring and summer. Ofwat will announce final business plan determinations in December 2014. The Environment Agency is working with the companies to ensure sufficient evidence is included in resubmissions to secure environment and flood risk outcomes.

#### Capacity Building

A Local Authority Capacity Building Advisory Group has been established to represent the wider community of local authority officers on matters related to the capacity, capabilities and skills of officers within Lead Local Flood Authorities and other Risk Management Authorities. The group has formed to follow on from the Defra-led Capacity Building programme to support LLFAs and other RMAs as they fulfil their responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act and the Flood Risk Regulations as well as general duties laid out in the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy. The Advisory Group will act as a forum to present common views, feedback and advice to policy/decision

makers in Defra and the Environment Agency, specifically concerning capabilities and skills in the flood and coastal erosion risk management sector.

FCERM Research and Development Programme

The Joint FCERM R&D Programme has recently undergone a refresh in order to better reflect key stakeholders and changes to delivery. Defra and the Environment Agency have been joined on the programme board by Natural Resources Wales and Welsh Government, to better reflect Welsh interests. We are now operating with three themes; Policy, Strategy and Investment (PSI), Incident Management and Modelling (IMM) and Asset Management (AM). The three themes have a revised Thematic Advisory Group containing a range of Academics, Consultants and End-Users. The Programme aims to continue to deliver high-quality user-focused research and tools for practitioners. We are also increasingly looking to influence the research expenditure of both Research Councils and the EU to align with the priorities outlined within the Living with Environmental Change (LWEC) FCERM Research Strategy and to ensure alignment between basic science and practical application.