

Summary of latest Defra and Environment Agency FCERM developments

This paper highlights some of the key activities and achievements in FCERM since the last meeting in November 2013. There will be an opportunity to raise questions on these topics during the meeting.

Policy and legislation

Flood insurance

There will be an agenda item on flood insurance at the Forum.

Water Bill

The Water Bill has now completed the Parliamentary stages in the House of Lords (without any defeats) and will be returning to the House of Commons to consider the Lords Amendments shortly. It is then expected to receive Royal Assent ahead of the State Opening of Parliament on 4 June.

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 publishing the maps we have improved how flood risk is communicated. They are now more accessible and clearer for partners and the public to use and to help understand and manage the risk of flooding in local communities. Our National Flood Risk Assessment (NaFRA) is now the primary source of flood risk information for rivers and the sea. The 'Flood Map' will still be available on the Environment Agency website as it shows the Flood Zones which are used in land-use planning. Four new categories are now also being used to describe risk – high, medium, low and very low.

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>

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 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.

Reservoir risk designation methodology

The Reservoirs Act 1975 was amended in July 2013 and changes how the Environment Agency regulates reservoirs. The new legislation bases reservoir safety on risk rather than just the size of the reservoir. Only high risk, large raised reservoirs will be subject to the full requirements of the amended Act. We have developed a methodology for designating risk and commenced the designation process. The amendments were made under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, which also gives Government scope to make further changes to reservoir safety legislation. Defra is currently considering whether to proceed with these additional amendments.

Eels Regulations 2009

The Eels Regulations 2009 for England and Wales (the Regulations) came into force in 2010. Under these regulations the UK must take action to stop and reverse the decline in the European eel stock. We are working to ensure safe passage for eels under the Regulations as part of the solution. The Environment Agency has identified sites where this is a priority and has contacted many of the people or organisations concerned to let them know about the Regulations and their responsibilities. We must address all the highest priority critical sites by the legal deadline of 1 January 2015. Not every structure needs an eel pass or screen it will depend on where it is and whether it obstructs the passage of eels.

In May, as part of the Environment Programme (an aspect of the FCRM medium term plan where FCRM grant in aid is allocated) the Environment Agency will be collating and prioritising bids for grant in aid capital from risk management authorities. Some of this funding will go towards proposed eel works on high and medium priority flood risk management structures to ensure they meet the requirements set out under the regulations. The highest priority works will form part of the environment programme of works for the next six years.

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.

FCRM funding

Funding situation

In response to the exceptional events of the winter, Defra has made an extra £270 million available to repair, restore and maintain critical defences. £130m was announced on 6 February and a further £140m in the Budget on 19 March.

£30 million has already been used for the most urgent repairs and additional emergency-related costs between December and March. The remaining £240 million is to be spent in 2014/15 and 2015/16. £10m is earmarked for the Somerset Levels and Moors Action Plan and £70 million is additional funding for the maintenance of Environment Agency priority defences protecting high consequence areas over the coming 2 years.

The remaining £160 million is for the repair of essential local authority, Internal Drainage Board and Environment Agency defence assets damaged since the beginning of December and one-off capital maintenance works needed to restore other Environment Agency priority defences in high consequence areas to target condition. The first priority is to ensure that the most critical defences are repaired and functional before the coming winter.

The additional funding returns the Environment Agency's revenue budget for asset maintenance to the level it estimated it needs to maintain a stable asset base in high consequences area. Defra is now working with the Environment Agency, HM Treasury and Infrastructure UK to consider future options for

maintenance and funding requirements in the light of the national level assessment of asset condition. With the extra funding, overall Government investment in flood and coastal erosion risk management will be at record levels this year. Together with the unprecedented, record level, 6-year capital commitment to improving defence up to 2021, this puts us in a very good position. However, it does not distract from the need to carefully prioritise spending to make sure that flood and erosion risk is minimised. This includes using Government funding to leverage contributions where possible and looking for better ways of working through partnerships at every level ensuring that those who are best placed to do the work effectively are enabled to do so.

Following the 6-year settlement and the strong messages that we received from the evaluation of Partnership Funding that risk management authorities wanted greater certainty of funding, the old annual rounds of capital allocation is being replaced by a 6-year programme of work, which will be published in the Autumn this year. The Environment Agency is working with Risk Management Authorities to bring this about. Updated national funding figures are available on the Gov.uk website.

Flood recovery funding

The exceptionally severe weather experienced over this winter has led government departments to commit to up to £588m to affected homes, businesses and local government impacted by flooding. Of this more than £260m has already been paid out by central government. Departments are now working with local authorities and other delivery agents to monitor distribution and take up.

The Repair and Renew Grant was launched by Defra on 1 April 2014. Households and businesses which were flooded in the period 1 December 2013 – 31 March 2014 will be able to apply for a grant of up to £5000 to establish resilience and/or resistance measures for their property. These are one-off time limited grants. The purpose of the grant is help homes and businesses become more resilient so that the impacts of damage and disruption if there is any similar flooding in the future are reduced.

The £10 Farming Recovery Fund is available to help farm businesses to restore flooded agricultural land and bring it back into production as quickly as possible. Funding is focused on supporting farmers in four key areas of recovery, which will have the biggest impact on helping their business and the natural environment:

1. the restoration of productive grassland
2. the restoration of productive arable and horticultural land
3. restoring farm vehicle access to fields
4. restoring and improvements to agricultural drainage

Council Tax relief is a scheme to support councils to provide council tax rebates to residents whose homes have been flooded, for as long as they are unable to return to their homes. The scheme, originally announced on 20 February 2014, was extended on 11 April 2014 to recognise the fact that the process of homes drying out is going to take a little longer in some cases, and to ensure that no family will have to pay council tax until they are safely back in their own home. Businesses which have been affected by the floods will get 100% business rate relief for 3 months and will get an extra 3 months to pay the business taxes they owe.

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.

Evaluation of Partnership Funding Guidance

There will be an agenda item on the evaluation of Partnership Funding at the Forum. A copy of the final report and more information is available on the [R&D](#) website.

Properly valuing future flexibility

The Environment Agency will publish a new guide in May to help project teams justify using more adaptive solutions in flood and coastal erosion risk management. This approach will support the development of more flexible solutions to help deal with future uncertainty, including climate change. The guide will be of interest to practitioners who carry out and commission technical appraisal for flood and coastal erosion risk management projects. Once published it will be available on the FCERM Research and Development [portal](#).

Warning, informing, and incident management

Flood Identity

In November 2013 the Environment Agency released a new standalone flood identity. The identity was set up so that it could be used by the Environment Agency and other external organisations, groups, communities and individuals to increase the reach and consistency of information about flood risk and the actions people can take to protect themselves from flooding. A range of logos, guidelines and templates were produced that people could download and use on their own flood awareness activities and materials. 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. If you would like to access and use the flood identity, please email floodidentity@environment-agency.gov.uk with your name, organisation, email address and contact telephone number.

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.

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.

Revised Asset Maintenance Protocol

The update of the Environment Agency's 'Protocol for the maintenance of flood and coastal risk management assets (England only)' has now been published on the [Gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website. This new version aims to make it clearer what the protocol is for and how it should be used. It outlines the approach the Environment Agency takes to maintaining flood and coastal risk management assets.

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

Somerset Action Plan

At the end of January Owen Paterson asked local leaders to produce a long term Action Plan for the sustainable future of the Somerset Levels and Moors. Following intensive work by Somerset Local Authorities, local farming and business representatives and NGOs supported by central government and agencies, the plan was published on 6 March. The plan is wide ranging, covering specific flood risk management projects, farming and land management interventions, transport infrastructure, planning and community resilience issues.

The priority actions are:

- dredge 8km of the rivers Tone and Parrett
- flood and road infrastructure repair and enhancement works
- accelerate work on design and financing options for the Bridgwater barrage
- set up a new Somerset rivers board to take more responsibility for water management on the Levels, and establish new ways of funding this.
- catchment sensitive farming measures to retain water in the upper catchment
- minimise urban run-off and implement sustainable drainage approaches to reduce pressure of water entering the system
- enhanced local business and community resilience to flooding

Dredging of the River Parrett began on Monday 31 March. Details of the Action Plan can be found on the Gov.uk website.

Flood Resilience Community Pathfinder scheme

The Pathfinders are designed to support community action, and enable us to learn lessons about what really works for local people on the ground in terms of improving resilience to flooding. Local authorities in Blackburn, Buckinghamshire, Calderdale, Cornwall, Devon, Liverpool, Northamptonshire, Rochdale, Slough, Southampton, Swindon, Warwickshire and West Sussex are implementing projects. The overall investment in these projects is £5.2m, of which Defra will be providing funding of over £4m. The National Flood Forum is involved in a number

of the projects and is also working to promote collaboration and sharing of experience among the projects. The projects are now half way through their interventions, and are due to conclude by April 2015.

The results of the Pathfinders will be assessed by Collingwood Environmental Planning and learning disseminated. The first output, a review of academic literature on resilience and communities, which helps to provide a framework for the findings, has been published on the [R&D website](#). The evaluators will be making an interim report to Defra in the summer, and an outline progress report will be published on the website.

Property Level Protection

The online [Property Protection Advisor](#) was launched in November and is hosted on the National Flood Forum website. The simple online resource helps people who are considering property level protection to see what the likely costs are and what kind of measures they will need. It has attracted significant interest from households affected by this winter's floods, including those who may be eligible for the 'Repair and Renew' Grant.

There is currently no formally recognised qualification, national training or approved standard for Property-level Protection Surveyors. In order to gain the trust of householders and local authorities, and ensure consistency across the industry, Defra has launched a research project to identify the additional knowledge that surveyors would require, and to explore the options for upskilling in the profession. An initial workshop was held in conjunction with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors in February and the project will go out to tender shortly. Defra is also considering the need for additional research to support householders looking to make low-cost improvements to their properties after a flood that might limit the cost of future damages and will be hosting a scoping workshop in June.

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.

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 1st 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](#).

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.

Local Flood Risk Research Framework

The Environment Agency is currently working with partners to create a new Local Flood Risk Research Framework that will help coordinate research for surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. The [previous framework](#) helped coordinate over 85 research projects producing guidance, tools and applied research across a range of activities including Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS), communicating local flood risk, small catchment hydrology and model

benchmarking. We want Risk Management Authorities to set and fully participate in the research agenda so that by 2020 we develop and share the right knowledge to give real benefits on the ground.

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.

FCRM Forward Look

The following lists key consultations which are planned over the next 6 months:

- Consultation on the first cycle of Flood Risk Management Plans and the second cycle of River Basin Management Plans from September 2014

If members of the Stakeholder Forum would like to add to this list for future editions of this paper please contact [Jennifer Hines](#) with the relevant details.