

Making space for water

Taking forward a new Government strategy for flood and coastal erosion risk management in England

First Government response to the autumn 2004 *Making space for water* consultation exercise

March 2005



Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR
Telephone 020 7238 6000
Website: www.defra.gov.uk

© Crown copyright 2005

Copyright in the typographical arrangement and design rests with the Crown.

This publication (excluding the logo) may be reproduced free of charge in any format or medium provided that it is reproduced accurately and not used in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Crown copyright with the title and source of the publication specified.

Further copies of this publication or the full First Response document (PB10516) are available from:

Defra Publications
Admail 6000
London
SW1A 2XX
Tel: 08459 556000

These documents are also available on the Defra website.

Published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. Printed in the UK, February 2005, on material containing 80% post-consumer waste and 20% Elemental Chlorine Free pulp.

Product code PB10711

The Government confirms the strategic direction of travel set out in the document *Making space for water* published on 29 July 2004. In the light of positive reactions from stakeholders to that document, the Government will, over the 20-year lifetime of the new strategy, implement a more holistic approach to managing flood and coastal erosion risks in England. The approach will involve taking account of all sources of flooding, embedding flood and coastal risk management across a range of Government policies, and reflecting other relevant Government policies in the policies and operations of flood and coastal erosion risk management.

The aim will be to manage risks by employing an integrated portfolio of approaches which reflect both national and local priorities, so as to:

- reduce the threat to people and their property; and
- deliver the greatest environmental, social and economic benefit, consistent with the Government's sustainable development principles.

To deliver that aim the Government is setting in hand a wide-ranging programme of action.

A more holistic approach

We will be taking action to ensure adaptability to climate change becomes an integral part of all flood and coastal erosion management decisions. We will continue to promote a programme of research on the impacts of climate change. We will review current allowances and recommendations for climate change in the light of the outcome of that research.

We will adopt a whole catchment and whole shoreline approach that is consistent with, and contributes to the implementation of, the Water Framework Directive.

Executive summary

We will involve stakeholders at all levels of risk management, and we will achieve a better balance between the three pillars of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in our risk management activities.

So as to facilitate an holistic approach that is risk-driven, the Government will work towards giving the Environment Agency an overarching strategic overview across all flooding and coastal erosion risks.

Better management of risk

In order to ensure that risk information increasingly drives our activities, we will continue to develop the coverage and reliability of such information, in particular by including better data on the consequences of flooding and coastal erosion events. We will include coastal erosion on our risk maps, and we will also do scoping work with the aim of including other sources of risk (groundwater, urban drainage and overland flow). We will employ a range of techniques to take better account of environmental and social consequences.

We will also take into consideration the social pillar of sustainable development, extending our risk management tools by:

- expanding our flood warning and flood awareness activities;
- encouraging measures to improve resistance and resilience to flooding, including scoping work on the development and delivery of a pilot on direct aid to individuals; and

- working to improve the evidence base in the case of coastal erosion, and to investigate the practical implications of a wider portfolio of coastal erosion risk management tools. (This is in response to suggestions made during the consultation on *Making space for water* that new tools were needed to help coastal communities adapt to a changing coastline.)

Land use planning

The Government will ensure an effective and pragmatic approach is taken in considering the impact of flood risk in the planning process. We will be consulting on extending the Environment Agency's statutory consultee role in areas that are at risk of flooding. We will strongly encourage the inclusion of Flood Risk Assessments at all levels of the planning process, and we will include gateway questions in the Standard Planning Application form to determine whether a Flood Risk Assessment is required. We will consult on a new Planning Policy Statement (PPS) to replace, and improve the operational effectiveness of, Planning Policy Guidance Note (PPG) 25.

Rural issues

As part of the wider portfolio of responses to flood and coastal erosion risk, we will promote the environmental pillar of sustainable development by making greater use of rural land use solutions such as the creation of wetlands and washlands, and managed realignment of coasts and rivers. Where land and property is needed for works associated with managed realignment under a flood management scheme, the Government will continue to provide the finance for this. We will also be undertaking priority research into the role rural land management techniques (such as cultivation practice and woodland creation) might play in managing flood risk at catchment level.

Integrated urban drainage management

The Government supports the concept of integrated management of urban drainage. We will review ongoing best practice and fund pilot projects so as to test different approaches to integrated management, and to investigate who is best placed to lead in specific urban areas. Pilots will look at upstream catchments where appropriate and may include encouraging rural land management changes.

Coastal issues

The Government will develop a more strategic and integrated approach to managing coastal flooding and erosion risks, while ensuring democratic input into the decision-making process. We will carry out a consultation exercise on the decision-making and delivery roles of local authorities, and on different models for ensuring democratic input into decision-making. The models will include possible roles for current coastal groups and their relationship to existing Regional Flood Defence Committees.

PB10711

**Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR**

www.defra.gov.uk

