



National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England:

Non-technical summary of a statement on the environmental content
(Statement of Environmental Particulars - Non-technical summary)

25 September 2020

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

We help people and wildlife adapt to climate change and reduce its impacts, including flooding, drought, sea level rise and coastal erosion.

We improve the quality of our water, land and air by tackling pollution. We work with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations. A healthy and diverse environment enhances people's lives and contributes to economic growth.

We can't do this alone. We work as part of the Defra group (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs), with the rest of government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and local communities to create a better place for people and wildlife.

Published by:

Environment Agency
Horizon House, Deanery Road,
Bristol BS1 5AH

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

© Environment Agency 2020

All rights reserved. This document may be reproduced with prior permission of the Environment Agency.

Further copies of this report are available from our publications catalogue:

<http://www.gov.uk/government/publications>

or our National Customer Contact Centre:
03708 506 506

Email:

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

Non-Technical Summary

This is a summary of a statement on the environmental content of the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England. The statement is also known as a statement of environmental particulars (SOEP). The Environmental Agency must publish the SOEP with the adopted Strategy. The SOEP explains how we took account of the:

- environment in developing the Strategy
- Strategy's environmental report
- responses to the public consultation

The SOEP also outlines:

- the reasons for adopting the Strategy in its final form
- how we plan to monitor the Strategy's environmental effects

The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy for England

The Environment Agency must develop, maintain, apply and monitor a strategy for FCERM in England. This is required by the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Strategy applies to coastal change and flooding, such as from rivers, the sea and surface water. The Strategy provides a general framework for action by risk management authorities (RMAs). RMAs have specific functions in managing flooding and coastal change. In England they are:

- the Environment Agency
- unitary authorities, county councils and district councils
- highways authorities
- internal drainage boards
- water and sewerage companies

The government made a commitment in the 25 year environment plan to update the first national strategy for England published in 2011. The Strategy fulfils this commitment.

The Strategy's vision is for England to be a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change - today, tomorrow and to the year 2100. The Strategy has 3 high level ambitions:

- climate resilient places
- today's growth and infrastructure - resilient to tomorrow's climate
- a nation ready to respond and adapt to flooding and coastal change

To support these longer term ambitions the Strategy sets out a series of strategic objectives for the next 10 to 30 years. Over 50 measures with shorter timescales support these objectives.

For further information please see the [National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England](#).

The environment and developing the Strategy

We considered the environment throughout the preparation of the Strategy. In particular, the urgency and challenge of dealing with climate change underpins its development. This is reflected in the Strategy's vision and ambitions as well as many of their supporting objectives and measures.

The government's 25 year environment plan was another important influence. As a result the Strategy includes measures that seek to:

- leave the natural environment in a better state than before
- expand the use of nature based solutions for managing flooding and coastal change
- encourage the use of sustainable drainage systems (SuDs) that help to drain surface water
- improve the natural, built and historic environment through investments in flood and coastal projects
- improve the water environment by helping to achieve objectives set out in river basin management plans (RBMPs)
- encourage water companies and other RMA's to work together on planning for water resources and managing flooding and coastal change
- work with environmental agencies, farmers and land managers and other partners
- put people at the heart of decision-making on managing flooding and coastal change in local places

We worked with many stakeholders to develop the Strategy, including environmental organisations. We engaged with them at an early stage of the strategy's development. This helped to shape the approach of the Strategy. We held a public consultation on the draft Strategy between May and July 2019. The results of this showed high levels of support for the Strategy.

A [consultation response summary document](#) outlines the responses to the consultation. It also outlines how we took them into account in the Strategy.

We carried out a strategic environmental assessment (SEA) of the Strategy. This ensured we took environmental effects into account when developing the Strategy. We also took technical, economic and other factors into account. The SEA environmental report sets out the findings of the assessment. It outlines:

- the likely significant environmental effects of implementing the Strategy and possible alternatives
- mitigation measures to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset potential negative effects
- enhancement opportunities to help realise greater environmental benefits

For further information on the SEA and its findings please see the [SEA environmental report](#).

We also carried out a habitats regulations assessment (HRA) of the Strategy. The HRA considers the potential implications of the Strategy on designated European sites. These include Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites. The initial findings of the HRA fed into the SEA. The HRA identifies mitigation measures to avoid or reduce potential adverse effects on European sites. We took these measures into account when developing the Strategy.

For further information on the HRA and its findings please see the [final habitats regulations assessment](#).

The environmental report

The SEA environmental report sets out the findings of the assessment. The assessment found that the Strategy is likely to have effects that are mostly positive or neutral. In particular, the assessment identified significant positive effects in relation to:

- population and human health
- climatic factors, including adapting to climate change
- material assets, including homes, businesses and infrastructure, such as roads, railways and utilities

Where the results identified a neutral effect this often reflected a mix of potential negative and positive effects. This was particularly the case for topics relating to:

- resource management, including soils and the use of resources in risk management activities
- water, including water resources and water quality
- cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage
- landscape

In such cases the identified effects were not considered significant at a national scale.

The assessment found that the Strategy could have both positive and negative effects on biodiversity. We adopted a precautionary approach to this. As a result the assessment identified a potential significant negative effect on biodiversity.

For each of the environmental topics in the assessment the environmental report sets out mitigation and enhancement proposals.

The proposals cover a wide range of themes, such as:

- legal requirements to protect and enhance the environment
- local level environmental assessments
- the involvement of environmental organisations, nationally and locally, to manage and adapt to flooding and coastal change
- the importance of engaging communities in an inclusive way and working with the agricultural sector and other land managers
- opportunities for risk management activities to reduce carbon emissions
- the role of SuDs and green spaces especially in urban areas
- how FCERM can improve the environment for people and wildlife
- the sensitivities of historic buildings
- the funding of FCERM especially in deprived areas
- environmental information and good practice on managing flooding and coastal change
- future skills, training and professional development
- updates to guidance for RMAs and the inclusion of environmental and sustainability considerations

We took account of the mitigation and enhancement proposals in finalising the Strategy. The Strategy, for example:

- emphasises that creating a better place for people and wildlife requires compliance with environmental legislation
- acknowledges that many risk management plans, strategies and projects will need environmental assessments at the local level
- encourages RMAs and others to work with Natural England
- reinforces the importance of working with other environmental organisations and stakeholders in managing flooding and coastal change
- includes specific measures on getting local communities involved in flooding and coastal change
- encourages RMAs to work with farmers and land managers
- has a new section on the changing climate recognises the role of RMAs in helping to reduce carbon emissions
- provides more information on the range actions that can be used to improve resilience to flooding and coastal change
- gives further support to the use of nature based solutions for managing and adapting to flooding and coastal change
- describes in more depth the environmental and sustainability benefits of nature based solutions
- indicates that risk management solutions in different places can also benefit recreation and amenity and the historic environment
- recognises the type and age of a building will influence the type of property flood resilience measures
- provides more information on partnership funding for FCERM
- expands on the roles and responsibilities of RMAs and our strategic overview role
- describes the evidence and data we plan to produce on future risk and investment needs
- recognises the importance of environmental skills and specialists to FCERM
- expands on the importance of long-term planning for creating climate resilience places

The public consultation

The consultation on the draft Strategy and the SEA environmental report took place between May and July 2019. The consultation included 3 questions on the environmental report.

1. Do you agree with the conclusions of the environmental assessment?
2. Are there any further significant environmental effects (positive or negative) of the draft Strategy you think should be considered?
3. Are there further mitigations for potential negative effects or opportunities to achieve positive effects that should be considered?

The vast majority of respondents agreed with the conclusions of the environmental assessment. Some responses raised specific points relating to the assessment or the draft Strategy. These included the:

- consideration of climate change
- approach to leaving the environment in a better state
- emphasis placed on planning
- need for more research on the effects of flooding on people
- location of potential environmental effects
- effects on biodiversity
- potential for different environmental effects at the local level
- proposals for monitoring the Strategy's significant environmental effects

Some respondents identified extra things to consider on the potential environmental effects of the Strategy. The comments were variable and spread across a range of topics. They included the:

- positive effects of nature based solutions, including natural flood management approaches
- need for local environmental assessments because of the variety of local places
- benefits of engaging with catchment partnerships and other stakeholders to help identify potential environmental effects in local places
- evidence on climate change
- risk of droughts and water shortages
- proposals for monitoring the Strategy's significant environmental effects

Specific points were also made on potential effects relating to:

- designated landscapes, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs)
- different types of habitats and species
- air quality, noise, and carbon emissions
- people's health and wellbeing

Some respondents identified extra things to consider on mitigation measures or enhancement opportunities. Some of these aligned with the recommendations set out in the environmental report. The comments were spread across a range of topics. Respondents suggested, for example, to:

- put more emphasis on nature based solutions for managing and adapting to flooding and coastal change
- encourage land management schemes that benefit flood risk management
- take forward actions in RBMPs for improving the water environment
- outline how managing flooding and coastal change can improve the environment for people and wildlife
- improve engagement and partnership working with communities and other environmental stakeholders
- strengthen planning policy and regulation
- carry out further environmental assessments
- improve the resilience of infrastructure

- maintain existing risk management assets
- expand support offered by insurance companies

We took account of the issues raised in the consultation in finalising the Strategy. The Strategy, for example:

- has a new section on the changing climate which outlines the latest evidence on climate change
- explains further how FCERM can contribute to improving the environment
- explains in more detail government planning policy and the role of RMAs in planning
- includes measures on getting local communities involved in flooding and coastal change
- encourages RMAs and Natural England to work together to develop new approaches to conserve protected sites, species and natural landscapes
- reinforces the importance of working with other environmental organisations and stakeholders in managing flooding and coastal change
- recognises the role of RMAs in helping to reduce carbon emissions and gives examples of how this can be achieved
- has a greater emphasis on people's health and wellbeing
- encourages closer working between water companies and other RMAs
- provides more information on the range of actions available to improve resilience to flooding and coastal change
- provides further support for nature based solutions for managing and adapting to flooding and coastal change
- includes a direct reference to RBMPs
- encourages RMAs to work with farmers and land managers
- provides more information to help ensure growth and infrastructure is resilient to climate change
- encourages RMAs to work with the finance sector and others to increase the take up of property flood resilience measures
- includes updated arrangements for monitoring its likely significant environmental effects

The Strategy clearly acknowledges that many risk management plans, strategies and projects will need environmental assessments at the local level. These will be at a more relevant scale to assess in detail potential positive and negative effects on the environment. They can also help inform:

- mitigation measures for any negative effects for a specific place
- identify opportunities to enhance positive effects

The adopted Strategy

The main reasons for adopting the Strategy in its final form relate to the:

- consultation responses to the Strategy
- changes made to the Strategy in response to the consultation
- findings of the SEA process as described in the environmental report, including the assessment of alternatives to the Strategy

- consultation responses to the environmental report
- findings of the final HRA and their acceptance by Natural England

These are the main factors we took into account in finalising the Strategy. They are also the factors taken into account by the Secretary of State in approving the adoption of the Strategy.

We explain in the section on developing the Strategy how we worked with many stakeholders. This resulted in the public consultation showing high levels of support. We continued to work with partners to finalise the strategy and respond to comments. The consultation response summary document gives more details about how we took them into account.

The overall support for the approach and ambitions of the Strategy endorses the assessment of alternatives described in the environmental report. We explain in the environmental report section how we took the report's proposals to mitigate potential negative effects and enhance positive effects into account.

We continued to work with Natural England to prepare the final HRA. We took the mitigation measures identified by the HRA into account when developing the Strategy.

We reviewed the changes to the strategy as part of the SEA process. The main purpose of this was to determine if they could change the significant environmental effects of the strategy. Many of the changes to the Strategy involved providing further information or explanation. Other changes were in response to the consultation and further engagement with partners.

Overall, we concluded that the changes made to the strategy do not affect the main conclusions of the SEA as set out in the environmental report. This takes into account the:

- type of the changes made to the Strategy's content and structure
- consultation responses to the Strategy and the environmental report
- environmental report's recommendations for mitigation and enhancement

Monitoring the environmental effects of the Strategy

Due to their likely significant environmental effects we plan to monitor:

- population and human health
- biodiversity
- climatic factors, including adaptation to climate change
- material assets, including the risk to property and infrastructure

We anticipate these can be monitored using or adapting our existing monitoring arrangements. This includes monitoring the number of homes and businesses at risk of flooding and coastal change. It also includes monitoring environmental outcomes associated with risk management projects. We also monitor progress towards meeting environmental objectives set out in RBMPs.

We do not intend to monitor the following topics:

- resource management
- water (apart from aspects already explained)
- cultural heritage
- landscape

This is because the assessment did not identify any likely significant effects at the national level.

We recognise, however, that other organisations are responsible for monitoring environmental data at a national and local level. We will continue to work with such organisations so their data can help inform the Strategy's implementation and future reviews.

Implementing the Strategy

Alongside the Strategy the Environment Agency will develop an action plan for taking the Strategy forward. This will set out activities which will be undertaken, between 2020 and 2025, by the Environment Agency, RMAs and other partners. The next review of the Strategy is planned for 2026, but the vision and approaches described are intended to establish an approach capable of being pursued and adapted over the longer term. The Environment Agency will undertake the review, working closely with other RMAs, government, business, communities and other partners.

Would you like to find out more about us or your environment?

Then call us on

03708 506 506 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

email

enquiries@environment-agency.gov.uk

or visit our website

www.gov.uk/environment-agency

incident hotline

0800 807060 (24 hours)

floodline

0345 988 1188 (24 hours)

Find out about call charges (www.gov.uk/call-charges)

Environment first:

Are you viewing this onscreen? Please consider the environment and only print if absolutely necessary. If you are reading a paper copy, please don't forget to reuse and recycle.