



# Northamptonshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy – Public Summary

December 2012

## Introduction

Nearly 15 years have passed since exceptionally heavy rainfall caused widespread flooding and devastation to many parts of Northamptonshire in April 1998, resulting in over 4,200 properties being flooded, over £75M worth of damage and the death of two people. Whilst the flood defences through central Northampton have since been upgraded to provide the town one of the highest design standards in the country, there are still properties at risk of flooding across the county. It is not technically, economically or environmentally possible to prevent all flooding or to protect all properties from flood risk, however we can focus on working together to implement cost effective measures that will help to reduce flood risk and help to manage the impacts felt by communities.

Recently, the government changed the law to improve the way flooding is dealt with by different authorities. As a result, Northamptonshire County Council is now the Lead Local Flood Authority responsible for preparing a “Local Flood Risk Management Strategy”, which sets out our approach to managing flood risk in the county.

In the development of the strategy, we have already been through a rigorous process of consultation with partners, including the Environment Agency and Borough and District Councils, as well as getting contribution from the public through consultation at the Flood Fairs held last December. However, as the Flood Fairs were held early on in the process, it is therefore vital that we now get feedback from the public on the draft strategy itself.

Please take time to read our draft strategy and respond to the public consultation. Your thoughts and views are extremely important to help shape the way we manage flood risk in Northamptonshire in the future.

All the topics discussed in this Public Summary are expanded upon within the main strategy document. There are also sections on: the legislation surrounding this area of work; our local partnerships we have set up, governance and scrutiny arrangements; and a detailed action plan; plus: links to other Northamptonshire flood and water related studies and strategies; environmental considerations; details of the Water Framework Directive; and what to do in an emergency.



## Why Now?

Sir Michael Pitt undertook a review of the widespread flooding of 2007, in which he called for a fundamental change in the approach to the management of flooding. As a result, the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) (the “Act”) was introduced, which requires Lead Local Flood Authorities (such as ourselves for Northamptonshire) to take the lead in managing local flood risk, and to coordinate the involvement of all relevant groups in the process. The local strategy is a crucial means of achieving this aim.



## What is Flooding?

A flood is defined as when water covers land that is normally dry. There are few places in the United Kingdom where people need not be concerned about flooding, as any place where rain falls is vulnerable.

The main sources of flooding that could affect Northamptonshire are:

**River flooding** – occurs when a watercourse cannot cope with the volume of water draining into it, and overflows its banks onto the surrounding land;

**Surface water flooding** – occurs when heavy rainfall cannot be absorbed into the ground or enter the drainage systems;

**Sewer flooding** – occurs when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked, flood water can be contaminated with raw sewage;

**Ground water flooding** – occurs when water levels in the ground rise above surface levels, which is most likely to occur in areas underlain by permeable rocks, and is likely to occur after periods of prolonged rainfall; and

**Reservoir flooding** – occurs when reservoirs, which hold large volumes of water above ground level, overtop i.e. cannot contain the amount of water flowing into them, or when part of the reservoir fails resulting in a fast release of water.

The risk of flooding to any particular area can be increased as a consequence of poor maintenance resulting in blockages or other types of failure of watercourses, sewers or drainage systems, or as a consequence of poor development and planning resulting in inappropriate development in floodplains, building on land in a way that prevents rainfall from draining away naturally, and flood defence schemes that are defective or badly designed.



## Roles and Responsibilities

Numerous organisations, agencies and authorities have roles and responsibilities relating to flood risk management, including the public. Our preferred approach is to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and authorities in order to deliver our objectives in an efficient and coordinated manner. We also want to help communities to help themselves.

The Act identifies certain organisations as 'risk management authorities' which have lead responsibilities around flooding. In Northamptonshire these are:

- Northamptonshire County Council;
- The Environment Agency;
- The borough and district councils;
- The Bedford Group of Drainage Boards;
- Anglian Water, Thames Water, and Severn Trent Water; and
- The Highways Agency.

All of these organisations have a duty to cooperate with each other. In addition, members of the public who own land adjacent to a watercourse have responsibilities. Specific roles and responsibilities are outlined below:

**Northamptonshire County Council (the Lead Local Flood Authority)** – is now responsible for the management of flood risk from surface runoff, ordinary watercourses (see box below) and groundwater. We are required to investigate flood incidents, to the extent we

### Main River or Ordinary Watercourse?

A watercourse is any natural or artificial channel above or below ground through which water flows, such as a river, brook, beck, ditch, mill stream or culvert. Main Rivers are those classified on the official Environment Agency Main River Map (see their website or contact your local office for a copy). All watercourses not on this map are known as 'Ordinary Watercourses'.

deem necessary, and to keep a register of all the flood risk assets within the county. We will need to set up a body for approving Sustainable Drainage Systems.



**The Environment Agency** – is responsible for managing flood risk on all main rivers (see box) and large raised reservoirs in Northamptonshire, and a supervising role for all flood risk management across England and Wales. It has powers to undertake flood risk management works on main rivers. The Environment Agency is responsible for flood risk consenting and associated enforcement on main rivers, therefore if you are planning to erect or alter a structure in, under, above or near a main river, you will need to discuss your plans with and obtain consent from them.

**Borough and District Councils** – although the County Council is responsible for managing flood risk from ordinary watercourses, it is the Borough and District Councils that have the powers to undertake flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses in their areas (if not covered by the Drainage Board).

**Bedford Group of Drainage Boards** – has powers to undertake flood risk management works on ordinary watercourses within its district. It has also been delegated the role of flood risk consenting and associated enforcement for ordinary watercourses across the County, therefore if you are planning to erect or alter a structure in, under, above or near an ordinary watercourse, you will need to discuss your plans with and obtain consent from them.

**Water and Sewerage Companies** – are responsible for managing the risks of flooding from water and foul or combined sewer systems.

**Riparian owners** – if you own land adjoining a watercourse or which has a watercourse running through or underneath it, you are a ‘riparian owner’ of the banks and bed of the watercourse and any structures (assets) in the watercourse. Your main responsibilities are summarised below:

- You have the responsibility to pass on the flow of water without obstruction, pollution

or diversion;

- You must accept flood flows through your land, even if these are caused by inadequate capacity downstream;
- You should keep the banks clear of anything that could cause an obstruction.
- You must maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, and also the trees and shrubs growing on the banks.
- You must keep any structures that you own clear of debris.

**Communities and Parish Councils** – both play an important role in managing flood risk at the community level. They can help us gather information on areas at risk of flooding by reporting any flood incidents to us (see below). Communities and individuals at risk of flooding should prepare flood plans, and residents can get involved with Parish Council flood warden schemes. In addition, communities and Parish Councils can be crucial in raising additional funding for local flood resilience and flood defence measures.

**Developers** – have a responsibility to ensure that their development has no negative impact on flood risk both on the site and to others, and wherever possible provide betterment. The main strategy document provides detail of how they can do this. Pre-application discussions with the relevant authorities and organisations are encouraged.



## Prioritising Flood Risk Management

It is not possible to prevent all flooding, and with limited resources we need to be able to prioritise our flood risk management work. An analysis has been undertaken to determine which wards within Northamptonshire are most vulnerable to flood risk, in which we will focus our efforts. This has assessed the number of properties, hospitals, sewage treatment works, GP surgeries, nursing homes, roads, or wildlife/environmentally designated sites that are potentially at risk of flooding under a range of scenarios. The analysis has also considered how susceptible the wards are to the impacts of climate change on flood risk.

14 of the total 144 wards have been identified as being most vulnerable to surface water flooding:

1. St. James Ward, Northampton
2. St. Crispin Ward, Northampton
3. Spencer Ward, Northampton
4. West Hunsbury Ward, Northampton
5. Eastfield Ward, Northampton
6. Rushden Hayden Ward, East Northamptonshire
7. St. Michael's and Wicksteed Ward,

Kettering

8. East Hunsbury Ward, Northampton
9. Desborough St. Giles Ward, Kettering
10. Abbey South Ward, Daventry
11. Abington Ward, Northampton
12. Irthlingborough Waterloo Ward, East Northamptonshire
13. Ecton Brook Ward, Northampton
14. Stanwick Ward, East Northamptonshire

We will undertake activities for managing flood risk in these wards, including:

- Collecting data on assets within the county that affect flood risk;
- Assessment of the impacts of flooding on wildlife and environmental sites;
- Assessment of the impacts of flooding on designated historic assets;
- Review historic flooding and assess viability of potential flood alleviation schemes;
- Designate features which we believe have a significant flood defence function; and
- Undertake a regular, proactive inspection and maintenance regime on our assets.



## Objectives of the Strategy, and Actions Identified as Necessary to Achieve the Objectives

The Strategy sets out seven main objectives and a series of actions to achieve them, as outlined in the table below.

Objective	Actions to achieve the objective
<p><b>1. Collaborative Approach</b> – Adopt a collaborative approach to managing local flood risk by working with local partners and stakeholders to identify, secure and optimise resources, expertise and opportunities for reducing flood risk and increasing resilience to flooding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of partnership working;</li> <li>• Securing and optimising human resources; and</li> <li>• Public engagement in development and delivery of strategy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Local Flood Risk</b> – Develop a greater understanding of local flood risk by improving the scope of local knowledge and understanding of current and future local flood risks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Production of Surface Water Management Plans;</li> <li>• Flood investigation, reporting and recording;</li> <li>• Raise community awareness;</li> <li>• Registration of assets and associated maintenance;</li> <li>• Data management;</li> <li>• Improved Geographical Information System tools; and</li> <li>• Future production and update of technical flood and water management studies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Enhance the Natural Environment</b> – Adopt a sustainable approach to reducing local flood risk, seeking to lessen the risk of localised flooding using mechanisms that are economically viable, deliver wider environmental benefits and promote the wellbeing of local people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment, Habitats Regulation Assessment and Water Framework Directive Compliance Check of the strategy;</li> <li>• Produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) related to Sustainable Drainage;</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to provide additional flood storage attenuation;</li> <li>• Encourage natural flood risk management;</li> <li>• Provide blue and green infrastructure;</li> <li>• Explore opportunities to de-culvert in appropriate locations where improvement is required;</li> <li>• Review land management methods;</li> <li>• Increase tree coverage in appropriate locations;</li> <li>• Promote Catchment Sensitive farming; and</li> <li>• Promote the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Preparedness and Resilience</b> – Reduce the harmful consequences of local flooding to communities and human health through proactive actions, activities and education programmes that enhance preparedness and resilience to local flood risk, and contribute to minimising community disruption.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage flood risk management works;</li> <li>• Improve emergency planning, response and recovery;</li> <li>• Improve public awareness and understanding of flooding and flood risk management;</li> <li>• Promote flood resilience and property level protection;</li> <li>• Review and update the Northamptonshire Multi-Agency Flood Plan;</li> <li>• Develop a flood risk information pack for self-help for home owners and businesses;</li> <li>• Continue to develop business continuity and community emergency evacuation plans and flood warden schemes;</li> <li>• Review essential and critical infrastructure protection and flood risk procedures;</li> <li>• Undertake targeted Flood Incident Management Plans;</li> </ul>

Objective	Actions to achieve the objective
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate the need for retrofitting resistance measures in high priority wards;</li> <li>• Undertake targeted maintenance and improvement works; and</li> <li>• Promote the take up of flood protection insurance.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Flood Risk and Development</b> – Minimise the increase in local flood risk that may arise from new development by producing guidance, setting standards, promoting the sustainable use of water and supporting the development of local polices and guidance, discouraging wherever possible surface water runoff in new and future developments and where possible influencing or supporting developments that seek to reduce existing flood risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of sustainable drainage and source control measures;</li> <li>• Creation of the SuDS Approval Body;</li> <li>• Utilisation of designation powers;</li> <li>• Use of consenting powers for certain works affecting ordinary watercourses;</li> <li>• Adherence to policies;</li> <li>• Promotion of flood risk reduction in land-use planning;</li> <li>• Avoid new development in high flood risk areas;</li> <li>• Increase the standard to which development is protected from flooding;</li> <li>• Water Framework Directive considerations in land use planning;</li> <li>• Management of flood risk remaining in new development once flood defence measures have been implemented;</li> <li>• Assessment of flood risk impacts upstream and downstream;</li> <li>• Runoff rate reduction;</li> <li>• Flood risk and existing development;</li> <li>• Flood risk and regeneration; and</li> <li>• Considerations for future flood alleviation schemes – design and evaluation</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Economically Sustainable Approach</b> – ensure the financial viability of flood related schemes through the development of appropriate policies and assessment tools to ensure that flood risk management measures provide value for money whilst minimising the long-term revenue costs. Seeking to use natural processes where possible or source the costs of any maintenance from the financial beneficiaries of the development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritised approach to implement the most sustainably cost effective measures that will help to reduce flood risk and the impacts felt by communities;</li> <li>• Working together, aligning stakeholders with those who would benefit from further investment in flood risk management;</li> <li>• Identification of funding sources;</li> <li>• Determine what can be afforded with available funding;</li> <li>• Utilise the new partnership approach to funding;</li> <li>• Create an annual programme of works; and</li> <li>• Consider local needs, priorities and pressures.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Riparian Responsibilities</b> – Encourage flood management activities by private owners of ordinary watercourses and flood defence structures as well as limit the development of constrictions on ordinary watercourses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warning and informing of riparian owners (see following page for definition of a riparian owner);</li> <li>• Active encouragement of flood risk management activities by riparian owners;</li> <li>• Advice on how to resolve nuisance flooding; and</li> <li>• Advice on mediation and legal proceedings.</li> </ul>



## Reporting Flood Incidents

Officers from risk management authorities are not in a position to know about every flooding incident that occurs, particularly those which do not lead to property flooding but which affect roads or land. However it is important that we have a record of all flooding that occurs within the county, regardless of the source or the extent. We will determine who is responsible for managing the flooding, and for incidents which result in flooding inside properties or which results in road closures we will undertake a formal investigation. Smaller incidents will be kept on record and could be crucial in building up cases for flood defence/resilience schemes which require a strong evidence of risk.

If you encounter a flood incident and the problem is either an emergency or requires urgent attention, the emergency services should be contacted in the first instance. For all other incidents, records can be provided to us using the Flood Incident Report Form found on our website or via the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

If the incident affects or originates from a road then the incident should be reported online through the Street Doctor: [www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/firmstepstdoc](http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/firmstepstdoc). Street Doctor allows the public to report problems directly and to see what action the council will take or has taken. The following matters are classed as emergencies on Street Doctor and must be reported by phoning **0300 126 1000** rather than online: blocked ditches causing any flooding or blocked drains flooding a private property or a road/path.

## Contribution to the achievement of wider environmental objectives

In addition to the social and economic benefits of reducing flood risk, it is important that any actions we take forward from the strategy also focus on achieving wider environmental benefits. The implementation of flood risk management options and measures provides a significant opportunity to improve the natural, rural and built environment across the county.

The strategy will contribute to the achievement of wider environmental objectives in the following ways:

- Promote Water Framework Directive targets to ensure no deterioration of the quality of waterbodies through our works;
- Encourage source control measures such as Sustainable Drainage, to improve water quality of runoff;
- Enhance biodiversity and habitat creation within any future flood alleviation schemes;
- Prioritise solutions to manage flooding from local sources that work with natural processes, encourage biodiversity enhancements and minimise adverse effects to the local environment;
- Help to meet Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) targets to ensure an increase of habitat through local flood risk management works;
- Highlight the linkages to existing Green Infrastructure Strategies to achieve common goals and environmental objectives.

## Benefits of getting involved

By giving us your feedback on the strategy, you can influence the way we reduce flood risk across the county and how we plan for resilience against the impacts of climate change. There are a number of approaches we can take to deliver an effective and affordable strategy for managing local flood risk across Northamptonshire, but we need your feedback to ensure that we have our priorities right. We would like all residents, businesses and other stakeholders to read the main strategy document, consider the aspects which are most important to you and use the consultation questionnaire to record your comments. Your responses will be used to inform our prioritisation and delivery of actions, and will structure future revisions of the strategy.



## What happens next?

Although there is no formal deadline for the strategy to be produced or updated, we believe that continued monitoring, review and development are essential to ensure that local flood risk management is responsive to changes. This is especially important in these early years when there are expected to be substantial changes in the planning system, new requirements for sustainable drainage, changes in funding and design of flood management schemes, and improvements in our knowledge of flood risk across the county. Therefore, once public consultation closes, we will take time to consider your comments and update the strategy and action plan as appropriate. The strategy will then be finally approved in June 2013. The strategy will be regularly monitored and reviewed every 3 years, and the action plan updated annually.

## Contact details

The best way for you to provide feedback on the strategy is to complete our consultation questionnaire, which can be found on our website alongside the main strategy document, or you can contact us if you would like a copy of the questionnaire sent to you.

Feel free to get in touch if you have any questions or queries which aren't answered by our Frequently Asked Questions sheet.

	<b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/environ/flood/pages/default.aspx">http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/environ/flood/pages/default.aspx</a>
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