

Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management: ADEPT Newsletter June 2019

Summary

Climate change is the biggest risk we face – it is already causing more frequent, intense flooding and sea level rise. We need to take urgent action to prepare for a range of future scenarios including a 4°C rise in global temperature. This is the driving force behind the Flood and Coastal Risk Management (FCRM) Strategy consultation, which sets out how we can develop a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100. The strategy puts people at the heart of local decision-making, recognising that if we don't, people will feel like decisions are being imposed on them.

Article

The aspirations for the Strategy focus on creating climate resilient places, ensuring today's growth and infrastructure is resilient in tomorrow's climate and creating a nation of climate champions.

- ***Climate resilient places***
Working with government and partners to explore and develop the concept of standards for flood and coastal resilience as well as a national suite of tools that can be used to deliver flood and coastal resilience in places.
- ***Today's growth and infrastructure resilient in tomorrow's climate***
Getting the right kind of development in the right places to deliver sustainable growth and working with government and other agencies to enable infrastructure resilient to flooding and coastal change.
- ***A nation of climate champions***
Better preparing society through education and accessible digital information as well as being a world leader in flood and coastal resilience.

The scale of potential future flooding and coastal change is significant. Despite the positive work the Environment Agency and other risk management authorities are already doing we need to adopt a different philosophy. If we don't change our approach, we risk locking future generations into a legacy of increasing challenges.

Traditionally, investment has been targeted at new flood and coastal infrastructure and its subsequent maintenance. While this will remain very important, we'll need a wider range of tools for creating climate resilient places, for example natural flood management, and ensuring improved response and recovery. We need to move from the concept of protection to resilience – property owners should be encouraged to build back better after a flood. This could involve home improvements such as raised electrics, hard flooring and flood doors. In the long term this is beneficial because it means the next time it floods, the property owner will experience less damage and be able to recover more quickly.

Central to creating climate resilient places will be the need to explore and develop the concept of standards for flood and coastal resilience for all places at risk. By

developing consistent standards, communities will have greater certainty about their flood risk and greater choice in how they respond to it.

The draft strategy paints a national ambition for England that can also work for local places. It recognises that every place is different with different needs and infrastructure, and in often very different environments. It embraces the idea that the best solution for a given place now is likely to look different in the future.

The strategy is clear on the challenges we face but also the opportunities. Low-carbon, flood resilient planning and development in the right places will deliver long term returns for investors and the environment. It will also develop skills, technology, and expertise in the national economy and create jobs.

We need to inspire people to take action ahead of time and take responsibility for some of the solutions needed to help them when warnings are issued. Achieving this will need a range of approaches, tailored to different people. For some, easy-to-use digital tools will be the most appropriate answer, but for others it may be formal education in schools. There's no 'one size fits all', and all risk management authorities need to be able to adapt their approach.

The Multi-Agency Flood Plan Review, published in 2018, found that there are many good people and organisations engaged across the country in this work and the overall picture is reassuring. The review found there was room for some improvements in aspects of flood response planning. This largely involves reinforcing success, spreading existing good practice, extending national support measures and increasing resources devoted to flood emergency preparedness rather than more fundamental reform. It recognised flood recovery can be even more challenging, with all the public agencies working together with flooded people, business and the third sector.

The FCERM Strategy aims to continue to better join up the organisations involved in providing incident response and recovery to provide a consistent and coordinated service.

Next Steps

The FCRM Strategy is now open for consultation and will remain open until Thursday 4 July. We want to hear your views, so we can ensure the final strategy sets an ambition that everyone can see and understand their part in.

You can view the consultation documents and questions online at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/fcerm-national-strategy-info/>

After the consultation the Environment Agency will use your views and others to explore further the concepts being proposed and ultimately finalise the strategy. The final strategy will also sit alongside Defra's forthcoming flood policy statement and the Environment Agency's next 5-year Action Plan, due to be published in 2020.