Staffordshire County Council

Shropshire and Staffordshire Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Strategic Environmental Assessment for Staffordshire

Post Adoption Statement, April 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction

Please note that this Strategic Environment Assessment was produced in accordance with the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy published in 2015. A revised Strategic Environment Assessment will be published with the revision planned currently for 2024/25

Staffordshire County Council has produced a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) (hereafter referred to as 'the Strategy') under The Flood and Water Management Act (2010). The purpose of the Strategy is to guide the management of local flood risk across the county, reflecting local circumstances such as the level of risk and potential impacts of flooding.

The Strategy reflects that it is not possible to stop all flooding; however, in accordance with the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) it includes the following:

- Information on local flood risk in Staffordshire, highlighting where problems have already occurred, or where areas fall in risk categories;
- Clarification of which authority is responsible for what in relation to the prevention and management of flooding;
- Detail on the measures that will be undertaken to manage flood risk;
- Clarification on how work is prioritised;
- Measures that communities can undertake to improve flood resilience, as it is not possible to stop all flooding, and;
- Consideration on funding flood risk and investment planning.

A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was undertaken to identify significant effects that plans, programmes, and strategies may have on the existing environment, and therefore increase the consideration of environmental issues in the decision making process.

The outcomes of SEA are set out in detail in the SEA Report, which considers the Strategy together with the scope of the assessment, evidence base and review of relevant plans, programmes, and policies to inform the assessment. It includes a discussion of the likely significant effects of the implementation of the Strategy and recommendations are made in relation to reducing likely adverse effects on the environment or enhancing beneficial effects. The report includes proposals for relevant environmental indicators to monitor the effects of the implementation of the Strategy.

The SEA regulations require a number of steps to be taken to adopt the plan or strategy, in this case the LFRMS. Regulation 16 (of the SEA legislation) details the post-adoption procedures for the SEA and requires that as soon as possible after adoption of the strategy for which the SEA has been undertaken, the

planning authority must make a copy of the strategy publically available alongside a copy of the SEA and an SEA adoption statement.

The SEA adoption statement sets out the following:

- How environmental and sustainability considerations have been integrated into the Strategy.
- How the Environmental Report has been taken into account during preparation of the strategy
- How options expressed by the public and consultation bodies during consultation on the strategy and the Environmental Report have been taken into account.
- Reason for choosing the Strategy as adopted ahead of any alternatives
- Measures taken to monitor the significant environmental and sustainability effects of the implementation of the strategy.

2. The Strategy Objectives

Part 1 of the Strategy proposes actions to manage flood risk within Staffordshire. Its objectives reflect the requirements of the Flood and Water Management Act (2010) and the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy (2011).

The following high level objectives within the Strategy set out the approach to managing flood risk within Staffordshire:

1. Develop a strategic understanding of flood risk from all sources
2. Promote effective management of drainage and flood defence systems
3. Support communities to understand flood risk and become more resilient to flooding
4. Manage local flood risk and new development in a sustainable manner
5. Achieve results through partnership and collaboration
6. Be better prepared for flood events
7. Secure and manage funding for flood risk management in a challenging financial climate

Section 10 of the Strategy provides detail of the measures proposed to deliver the high level strategy objectives listed above.

The Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Handbook has been incorporated into the Strategy. The SuDS Handbook contributes to the delivery of Policy 4 in Staffordshire County Council's role as Lead Local Flood Authority in the consideration of proposals for sustainable development. The council will seek to deliver SuDS as part of new development in its roles as statutory consultee for major planning applications and non-statutory consultee for non-major planning applications.

3. Assessment Approach

SEA scoping was undertaken to screen the high-level objectives of the Strategy for those that are likely to have a significant effect. The assessment was a qualitative exercise based on professional judgement taking into account the information gathered in the Scoping Report and other available background information.

Given the high-level nature of the Strategy, the assessment has sought to focus on the likely changes and impacts resulting from the Strategy but has not attempted to quantify them. Consideration has been given as to whether the impacts are likely to be either significantly positive or negative. Whilst it is not possible to determine the overall significance of an impact, an indication of the characteristics of significant impacts can be provided:

- Impacts that are likely to result in an adverse effect on the integrity of features of national or international value or will demonstrably increase the extent or improve the value of such features;
- Impacts that are likely to conflict with environmental legal objectives, targets, or duties; and
- Impacts that are likely to result in a demonstrable change in the health and/or social or economic well-being of communities.

The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Framework is outlined below in Table 1. This sets out the key environmental issues for each topic area and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) objectives against which the assessment has been undertaken. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) objectives form the assessment criteria used in this Environment Report and focus the assessment on key environmental outcomes.

Table 1 - Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Framework: Key Environmental Issues and SEA Objectives

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Topic	Key Environmental Issue	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Objectives
Biodiversity	• Staffordshire's SACs which are at risk of flooding, such as Pasturefields' salt marsh and the European sites such as designated Ramsar sites and SSSIs, would benefit from strategies which offer opportunities to	• To ensure compliance with natural environment statutory obligations.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Topic	Key Environmental Issue	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Objectives
	maintain and improve their condition (in full consultation with Natural England). • Several SSSIs rely on maintenance of an appropriate hydrological regime, such as Mottey Meadows SAC, Doley Common SSSI and Doxey and Tillington Marshes SSSI; • Biodiversity should be protected and enhanced, both within and outside of designated sites which cover only a small percentage of the Staffordshire land area; • Staffordshire contains habitats that support a variety of species and communities. Some habitats are likely to be more resilient to flooding than others whereas other habitats, and their component species, are likely to be vulnerable to the effects of flooding; • Overall, biodiversity on designated sites should be protected and enhanced.	• To conserve, and where possible enhance, protected and important habitats and species.
Cultural Heritage	• A range of heritage assets are likely to be at risk of flooding, which may result in harm to or loss of their significance. This may be as a result of direct flood damage as well as inappropriate remedial works; • Proposed flood risk management measures and measures to improve resilience have the potential to impact on the significance of heritage assets, including the contribution made by their setting; • Securing the sustainable reuse of heritage assets, including those identified as at risk, may be hindered by their location in high flood risk areas.	• To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.
Human Health	• Flooding can result in effects on both physical and psychological health, which could exacerbate existing health issues. Repeated flooding can be a particular issue in relation to psychological health and wellbeing; • There is a risk of flooding to residential properties and critical services located in the West Midlands Flood Risk Area (within the South Staffordshire District and Lichfield District councils) and other areas at risk of flooding as identified with the Staffordshire PFRA.	• To improve and enhance the health and wellbeing of communities
Material Assets	• Flooding has caused locally significant consequences to communities in Staffordshire. • There are important transport links within the county, which are at risk of flooding.	• To conserve and protect important material assets and infrastructure
Soil	• Agriculture plays an important role in the local economy of Staffordshire. However, in the event of flooding, areas classified as nitrate vulnerable zones are vulnerable to increased nitrate pollution, from the use of fertilisers in agriculture.	• To conserve and protect the best and most productive agricultural land

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Topic	Key Environmental Issue	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Objectives
Landscape	• The location of future development will be influenced by flood risk and therefore some landscapes will be more likely to be affected than others. • Cannock Chase AONB is one of the most threatened protected landscapes in the country due to the number of nearby conurbations and its coveted mineral deposits.	• To protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape
Water	• There are over 25,000 people living in residential properties at risk from flooding in Staffordshire, including properties within the West Midlands Flood Risk Area. • Although the likelihood of reservoir failure is very small, there is potential for the consequence of the failure to be large. • All water bodies in the county must reach good ecological status by 2027. Currently, only a small number do which is primarily as a result of point source discharges from water industry sewage works. Diffuse pollution from agriculture is also an issue which could be exacerbated through flood events. • Impacts upon surface water and groundwater may arise as a consequence of future flooding and potentially as a result of flood risk mitigation.	• To protect and improve the water environment, for the benefit of the human and / or natural environment

4. Consultation Process

Stakeholder engagement is important to the development of the Strategy and the SEA in order to arrive at a strategy that is acceptable and to engage all parties in the SEA process. Together with wider consultation as identified in Table 2 below, consultation has been on going with both external and internal key to Staffordshire CC:

- Environment Agency;
- Historic England (HE); and,
- Natural England (NE).

Table 2 – Key Consultation Dates

Consultation	Dates	SEA/LFRMS
Environmental Report	April 2014	Combined LFRMS and SEA
Council Approval	October 2015	Combined LFRMS and SEA
Web site	December 2015	Combined LFRMS and SEA

5. Summary of Significant Environmental Effects and Mitigation and Enhancement Opportunities

Biodiversity:

The Strategy takes a sustainable approach to flood risk management in order to deliver wider environmental benefits and improvements under the Water Framework Directive. The approach will be sensitive to habitats and wildlife. Flood defence structures will be carefully considered and, where possible, natural processes will be applied.

Flood risk management schemes will be encouraged to enhance designated and undesignated habitats.

Cultural Heritage:

Heritage assets can be at risk from increased flooding which may damage the fabric of the asset or its setting, or they may be at risk during any flood alleviation works. These impacts will be dependent on the specific location, the type of flood risk management actions being undertaken and the sensitivity of the resources.

Given that cultural heritage assets will remain an important feature of Staffordshire, flood risk management defences should seek to protect heritage assets of importance, where they are at risk of flooding, and should be sensitive to the location in which they are undertaken.

Human Health:

The Strategy seeks to deliver wider social benefits through enhancements that assist the health and wellbeing of communities, by increasing public knowledge of flood risk so better informed decisions can be made for the preparation and duration of flood events. Recreation and public access to waterside environments could improve through the promotion of blue corridors and green infrastructure. Improved flood risk management is also likely to have long term financial benefits for local communities as the population will be better protected and will have an improved ability to recover from flood events.

There is a need to place more emphasis on enhancing the environment in the most deprived areas and simultaneously protecting people and places from flooding.

Material Assets:

The Strategy is likely to have predominantly positive impacts on material assets. Improved understanding of flood risk should increase resilience and aid faster recovery from flood events. The Strategy also includes measures to avoid an increase in flood risk as a result of new development.

New developments will be managed in order to ensure no new flood risk is created and to reduce flood risk where possible.

Soil:

The Strategy makes reference to protecting soils and increasing resilience to soil degradation of the best agricultural land. It promotes better management of surface water through sustainable solutions which should have a positive impact in this regard. The promotion of Sustainable Drainage Systems to reduce flood risk will have a positive impact on water quality through managing diffuse pollution from urban runoff.

Sustainable agricultural land management and long term protection measures to reduce soil degradation should be more actively promoted in order to protect the soils of the best agricultural land. This could deliver multiple benefits and reduce diffuse pollution.

Landscape:

The Strategy should have a positive impact in terms of enhancing the natural beauty and amenity of inland waters, and should support wider landscape benefits through promoting blue corridors and green infrastructure.

Any flood risk management measures employed should be sympathetic to local landscape character and be designed to be sensitive to any designated landscape resources.

Water:

The Strategy includes measures to prevent additional flow from new development entering existing drainage systems and watercourses. It should have a positive impact on the human environment by reducing flood risk through engaging stakeholders in the flood management aspects of resilience to climate change.

6. SEA Monitoring

Article 17 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive requires that once the Strategy has been adopted, its significant environmental effects should be monitored. Monitoring is proposed to determine whether changes to the Strategy are required to account for unexpected events.

Staffordshire County Council has developed an Action Plan in Part 2 of the Strategy, which will be reviewed by the Staffordshire and Shropshire Service Delivery Group, which will publish a statement setting out how the Strategy is being implemented.

Table 3 on the following page sets out the proposed monitoring of the effects of the Strategy.

Table 3 Proposed Monitoring

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Topic	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Objectives	Proposed Monitoring	Proposed Monitoring indicator
Biodiversity	To ensure compliance with natural environment statutory obligations. To conserve, and where possible enhance, protected and important habitats and species.	We will undertake a review of the strategy and we will report back to ensure ongoing compliance. We will liaise with Natural England and act upon any issues which relate to the Strategy.	• Number of flood alleviation/drainage schemes where environmental mitigation has been needed • % flood alleviation / drainage schemes with biodiversity enhancement
Cultural Heritage	To conserve and enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their setting.	We will undertake a review of the strategy and we will report back to ensure ongoing compliance. We will liaise with Historic England and act upon any issues which relate to the Strategy.	• Number of flood risk management measures implemented that conserve and enhance heritage assets
Human Health	To improve and enhance the health and wellbeing of communities.	We will undertake a review of the strategy and we will report back on any changes in flood risk and the potential effects negative and positive this will have upon human health.	• Number of people with a reduced risk of flooding as a result of investment in flood risk management infrastructure. • Number of flood risk management communications campaigns • Number of projects and schemes that provide amenity benefits
Material Assets	To conserve and protect important material assets and infrastructure.	As elements of the strategy are acted upon we will report back on any changes in flood risk and the potential effects (positive and negative) this will have upon material assets.	• Number of properties, businesses, and critical infrastructure with a reduced risk of flooding as a result of investment in flood risk management infrastructure. • Number of projects and schemes that provide green infrastructure. • Number/scale/quality of SuDS schemes adopted into existing and future developments
Soil	To conserve and protect the best and most productive agricultural land.	We will review and report upon, whether any of the actions associated with the Strategy have led to any changes (positive and negative) with regard to the	• Number of land management projects with flood risk management as a key objective. • Number of issues escalated to the LLFA regarding land management

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Topic	Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Objectives	Proposed Monitoring	Proposed Monitoring indicator
		best and most productive agricultural land or any significant changes in land-use.	
Landscape	To protect, conserve, and enhance the landscape.	We will undertake a review of the Strategy and its potential effect upon landscape. We will report and act upon any issues if they relate to the Strategy.	• Areas of enhanced landscape and green infrastructure as a result of flood reduction measures.
Water	To protect and improve the water environment for the benefit of the human and / or natural environment	We will review and report upon whether any of the actions associated with the Strategy have led to any changes (positive and negative) with regard to the water environment.	• Number of projects and schemes that provide water quality improvements • Number of flood alleviation/drainage schemes with external funding contributions • Number of studies completed that quantify local flood risk • WFD objectives achieved on watercourses where measures have been implemented

It should be noted that there are other influences on environmental outcomes so it will not be possible for a direct relationship to be identified between the proposed indicators and the Strategy. Nevertheless, as reported within the SEA Report[1] for the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) Strategy (2011) "it is reasonable to monitor environmental outcomes to determine whether changes to the Strategy are required to further reduce conflicts or make a greater contribution to achievement of environmental objectives".

It is recommended that the impact of the implementation of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Action Plan on the SEA objectives is reviewed every five years with an interim review every three.

1 Environment Agency (2011) Strategic Environmental Assessment Report for the National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy

7. Conclusions

The SEA has shown that Staffordshire County Council's LFRMS is likely to have beneficial impacts upon the environment in both the short and long term (i.e. beyond the life of the Strategy). This is due largely to the proactive, holistic, and sustainable approach of the Strategy which has the primary aim of protecting communities, businesses, and the environment in Staffordshire. Each of the Strategy objectives is predicted to fulfil each environmental objective identified within the SEA framework with a beneficial outcome.