



**FCERM Strategy 2050 Ambition Working Group
Webex – Monday 30 July, 2018
13:00 – 15:00**

Meeting objectives

- Provide an update on the July Working Group workshops
- Summarise others' feedback on the Ambition Pack
- Allow feedback on the Ambition Pack
- Understand the next steps

Summary of the FCERM Strategy

Where we are in the process

An overview was provided of the overall Strategy development process – two series of meetings (WebEx's in June and face to face meetings in July) have been held with each of the Working Groups and the third series of meetings (WebEx's) is about to commence. Outside of the working group process, wider engagement is being conducted and a DIY engagement pack is due to be launched on the FCERM Strategy website (<https://consult.environment-agency.gov/fcrm/fcrm-national-strategy-info/>) this week that can be used to gain views on the Strategy outside of this process.

Summary of Working Group discussions so far

The July working groups focused on ideas for change. Cross-cutting themes identified across the groups were highlighted as were the key issues addressed by each group.

Cross-cutting themes included catchment-based approaches, managing location that are potentially unsustainable in the long term, the need to maximise integration and collaboration, the importance of language and communication – getting this right is essential to ensure the Strategy can be delivered and is impactful - and consideration of how the Strategy can encourage behaviour change to meet its overall objectives.

The key challenges for the Ambition Group identified by the working groups are identified below followed by a summary of the discussion at the meeting.

Protection and funding

- Do we want to stand still in the face of climate change? Or should be we reducing risk into the future? Are we aiming for specific standards?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How should we respond to climate change? What version of the future should we be using? • A number of ideas are suggesting quite fundamental changes to the appraisal, funding and prioritisation of FCERM schemes
<p>Water focused decision making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Catchment' based approaches are key – link to 25 Year Environment Plan • Spatial Planning is a key decision making process – does the ambition focus on this enough? • How does land-use planning fit?
<p>Communities and businesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the ambition focus on businesses enough? • Language is important to get right -what do we mean by communities?
<p>Roles and responsibilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We need to recognise what currently works well. Does that mean we need to change? • Infrastructure and other organisations need to be involved

Discussion

The first key issue highlighted was the potential adoption of national standards that are recommended in the recently published National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA)- <https://www.nic.org.uk/publications/national-infrastructure-assessment-2018/> - and also what version of the future we are looking at. Futures consultants (Jacobs) have been commissioned to provide a steer on future climate scenarios and their implications.

It was queried how the Strategy will address the issue of standards and confirmed that the Protection and Funding and Ambition working groups need to discuss this – the NIA was published on the day of the Protection and Funding working group meeting so there was no detailed discussion on this. It was also noted that the NIA makes recommendations to Government, it does not make policy so the timing is useful in informing Strategy development discussions.

The NIA recommendations were highlighted as a departure from the long standing cost-benefit approach to funding FCERM and need to be acknowledged as only covering flooding from rivers and the sea – the recommended standards do not include the risk of flooding from surface water and ground water. It was acknowledged that further discussion is required regarding standards but also recognition that the wider levels of protection for an area can be achieved through a range of different interventions rather than single defences.

The reaction of Government departments to the NIA recommendations was commented upon and it was suggested that, in terms of future flooding, we are wrestling with issues that we don't know the scale as the updated climate change projections (UKCP18) will not be available until November when the draft Strategy is due to be published.

Similarly, when considering issues like Natural Flood Management (NFM), there are strong linkages with Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and implications for catchment based approaches in terms of actions undertaken by farmers and landowners, land use and forestry that may be subject to reform as a result of Brexit. The Ambition Group will be making decisions about long term goals during a state of policy flux. The important role of the Forestry Commission in promoting and enabling NFM was highlighted.

It was queried how the work done to date will be translated into an overarching FCERM Strategy and Action Plan. The next round of engagement with working groups will focus on setting the long term objectives, long term action that may be needed such as changing legislation and policy and immediate actions that can be undertaken within the current legislative and policy context. The task then will be to get individuals and organisations to commit to owning and implementing actions. It is likely that a skeleton Action Plan will be issued for consultation with the draft Strategy that will then be worked upon further to flesh out the detail.

The importance of consistency in language was noted, but also the spatial differentiation in how flood risk challenges are realised in different locations, particularly surface water flood risk. It was agreed that the Strategy needs to set out a nationally consistent ambition and framework whilst allowing and enabling customised responses in local areas dependent on the local context.

Some of the current ways in which FCERM interventions are appraised and funded have been challenged and it was queried whether decisions on these can be made in the Strategy or if HM Treasury needs to make these decisions. The Strategy can only commit to short-term actions that can be delivered within the current legislative and policy framework; the current funding settlement to 2021 is fixed and will not be changing and (separate) discussions are underway regarding the next funding settlement. However, if it is felt that changes required by the Strategy will need to be made to legislation and policy then it can make recommendations for future change. Defra has representatives at the Strategy working groups, is listening to the challenges and recommendations being discussed and is aware of the challenges for long term government policy.

It was suggested that the Strategy can put some markers down around achieving improved environmental management of agricultural land that incorporates FCERM. Land drainage, FRM, nature conservation and agriculture are all key priorities in rural areas and need better alignment that could be threatened by any moves towards increased intensification.

The Strategy direction and decision making regarding water need to be developed within the context of wider objectives and agendas. In stating that water should be the first consideration in planning, there needs to be an understanding of others' priorities. For example, maximising the benefits from changes to agricultural practice needs to be promoted with an appreciation of the wider changes being made to agriculture.

Ambition update and discussion

Ambition

Since the Ambition meeting in June, work has been undertaken to refine the overall ambition, supporting pillars and wider objectives informed by discussion at the working groups. It was highlighted that being able to measure the degree to which the ambition is being achieved will be crucial and there is a need for the Strategy and Action Plan to be measurable. This is currently under discussion in relation to national policy objectives such as the 25 Year Environment Plan and Millennium Sustainable Development Goals plus linkages with other national strategies such as the Infrastructure Strategy.

Key discussion points:

Reduction of risk does not appear in the overall ambition statement or supporting statements. With climate change increasing risk, it is difficult to be definitive in aiming to reduce risk – we need to do more to maintain the current level of risk. It was recognised that this needs to be strengthened and

discussed further by the Protection and Funding working group but is recognised in the supporting statement 'Reducing risk & consequence to people & place are factors in all decisions'. It was recognised that a combination of measures is needed to address immediate and longer term risk; NFM is recognised as being a key long term approach to mitigate flood risk and other aspects of climate change. It was also highlighted that there is where localism comes in as it may not be possible to decrease risk everywhere.

Previous projections have been based on previous trends, but climate change will bring a departure from this that the UKCP18 projections will inform. For example, we are now currently more at risk of large surface water flood events than fluvial flooding and this is more difficult to predict. Is building on what we have always done sufficiently radical to manage future change? We need to look to new technology to help manage future risk and different ways of working.

With regards to statements around valuing the environment, it is important that we are harnessing all attempts to maximise natural capital. All new development should contribute to FCERM including maximising asset value.

It was highlighted that infrastructure resilience does not appear as part of the Ambition statements. Ageing infrastructure is a key contributor to current and future flood risk – should this be included explicitly in the Ambition statements? It is implicit within several statements related to protection, evidence etc. Potentially it needs a more explicit focus. Infrastructure and asset replacement needs to be valued as well as the environment. It was suggested that this is an area where standards should be adopted and applied for all types of infrastructure.

Some of the language and terminology was queried. For example, including targets around getting people back into properties could count against resilience and stating that political expectations should 'be met' could be setting ourselves up for failure as unlikely to ever meet all expectations. The 'We' that we refer to needs to be defined and also need to recognise that this is likely to change over time.

A balance needs to be achieved in relation to how ambitious we are – a Strategy that is realistic and achievable may constrain aspirations, but a Strategy that is too aspirational could be discredited. Ideally 'the target should be just out of one's grasp' so that is something to be strived for but can be reached.

Enablers

The enablers are not part of the overall ambition but are those elements that will help achieve the ambition. These comprise the following:

- Government
- Partnership
- Finance
- Innovation, technology, science and data
- Behaviour and societal change.

Behaviour and societal change were highlighted as being front of mind. It was reported that there has not been much debate about the enablers to date.

Guiding principles

The guiding principles have been discussed in detail by all working groups and changed considerably from those presented at the face to face Ambition working group meeting. The current version is provided below – more detail was provided on each at the meeting.

- We put people at the heart of what we do
- We create great places for people and for wildlife
- We continually improve our understanding of risk and solutions
- We trust one another to deliver
- We manage all sources of flooding and coastal change
- We value flexible solutions that adapt to changing risk
- We are carbon-neutral and climate resilient
- We actively grow and support the range of skills we need
- We seek innovative finance solutions to fund resilience.

These have been revised with the assistance of the creative writers that have been commissioned to support the development of the Strategy. Key issues highlighted to date regarding language ‘Who are we talking about when we say we?’, the term ‘Flood family’ does not easily encompass coastal erosion interests, what do we mean by ‘community’?

Both the enablers and guiding principles refer to innovative and solutions in various places. We ought to be pioneering innovative solutions e.g. new technological developments such as the sand engine, NFM etc. and to reflect this, the language and goals should be more positive, challenging and far reaching. This was intended in the third bullet ‘We continually improve our understanding of risk and solutions’.

The principle regarding ‘earning’ trust relates to building relationships. This relates back to the ‘We’ and whether the same ‘We’ is delivering as gaining the benefits. The whole area of behaviour change – beliefs, actions, benefits, plans, processes – is of crucial importance in the development and implementation of the Strategy.

Communities are referred to in the Ambition statements and implied in the enablers and guiding principles – have we got the right structures in place to facilitate collaboration and cooperation? The Roles and responsibilities working group discussed the need for consistent roles across the country, perhaps Regional Flood and Coastal Committees (RFCCs) could be given a wider role to achieve this? Changing institutional structures is not necessarily within the gift of the Strategy but there needs to be broader thinking around structures and perhaps longer term recommendations for change. The Defra Policy Statement on flooding may provide some pointers on this. Institutional structure should be seen as a Strategy enabler rather than an ambition in its own right.

Related to roles and responsibilities is the need to align different, but related programmes of work and funding. Aligning targets between organisations and sectors would enable us all to do things consistently better. Also need to consider where these conflict and consider the overall target outcomes not just the implementation programmes. This highlights a key linkage between the working groups discussing Water focused decision making and Roles and responsibilities – one suggestion was for a body with responsibility for joining up spatial decisions at a bigger scale.

The Communities and Businesses working group had discussed collaboration and how this thrives on trust in relation to who benefits, who contributes and the implications of any partners withholding.

A key test to the collaboration desired will be achieving this where parties are not inclined and/or do not have the capacity or capability to do so.

It will be important to develop benchmarks to understand where we are now and where we are going. For example, currently we have a very low understanding of groundwater risk, we should be aiming to get a better understanding through groundwater maps of flood risk for the whole country. This led to the suggestion for evidence to be included in the enablers; this could replace or be additional to science.

Linking back to earlier discussions about infrastructure, aspirations around how we manage this into the future would need to focus on collaboration across risk management authorities through mechanisms such as Public Sector Cooperation Agreements.

Key issues that require further consideration include: longer term issues relation to other agendas e.g. how FCERM will be affected by global food security issues in the 2050s, the importance of societal behaviour change and how to achieve this and the ongoing challenges of what does the future look like and how this helps influence our decisions over investment/intervention decisions.

Final comment of the meeting ‘The recent drought has made us to think much of water as an asset, not a threat and that changes how you think about managing it’.

Next meeting

Next meeting date: 22 August, likely to be 10:30am – 3:30pm

Venue: The Studio, 7 Cannon Street, Birmingham, B2 5EP

Actions and next steps:

ACTION	OWNER
Confirm August meeting details	EA
Circulate meeting notes	EA
Continue to refine your ambition and any ideas for change and send these to FCERMStrategy@environment-agency.gov.uk by the end of August	Group
Continue to send in any research and evidence that we should include in the evidence pack	Group
Check the website and see other working groups’ ideas	Group
Complete evaluation baseline if not already done and post meeting evaluation	Group