

climate change but also acknowledge that there are additional uncertainties that we would need to be contending with if we're going to have robust measures for catchments and places. We must ensure these other uncertainties form part of the decision-making processes, as some schemes are more adaptable than others.

- There is lack of recognition that the absolute basics of managing flood risk aren't always getting done at the local government level, in terms of obstructions to water courses, highway drainage maintenance etc. This needs to be identified in the Strategy because those business as usual activities need to underpin the strategy.
- Flood Re has previously agreed with the lack of recognition when basic duties are not being carried out and acknowledged the implications and impact but there needs to be a stronger approach.
- We need to understand whether funding for the maintenance of assets is adequate to maintain standards. Unless we hold individual organisations to account it is very difficult to monitor and establish if we are performing correctly. The Environment Agency and the government should also be held to account. However, without adequate funding to maintain assets authorities are not equipped to deliver. Funding allocations can be unclear which represents a significant challenge, particularly on the coast.
- We have moved from flood defence to flood risk management. This change has happened (particularly to local authorities) within a period of austerity. We have defined roles but must understand how those roles can be delivered. We need to establish a structure to deliver flood and coastal management for the local public in balance with other services delivered by local authorities.
- It has been suggested that the Dutch model of standards of response and resilience are adopted in England. The Dutch model may be complex because although there are a spectrum of standards or achievements, if we need to consider what happens if these aren't being achieved, or aren't practical or desirable. It would help if the framework around them is adequate, where needs-based and risk-based standards can be established but one size doesn't fit all. Using these as tools to support local authority and government could be extremely useful for helping if not restricting.
- The Canals & Rivers Trust are not including standards in an upcoming strategy to avoid becoming 'hostage to fortune'. Levels set may not be suitable/unrealistic to all areas/people. The affordability of delivering may not meet everybody's needs.
- We should recognise that we all have limited powers, and so should bring together those that we have, even if one organisation is leading, and set standards, or governance/ terms of reference for working together to drive a collaborative ambition.
- Some aspects may be cut out if we only think about one particular theme, so having everybody at the same table will cover all themes of a particular standard. The principles of collaborating, understanding that we can't do things quickly and have to define responsibilities, timeframes, etc.
- Fundamentals are easy to get lost at higher level discussions, so defining them more explicitly may make it easier in the future.
- Common language is important, particularly if different parts of an organisation are saying things differently. We need consistency in language to help with understanding.
- Need a 'freedom within a framework' but more consistency within our approaches to things. Experience around the country is that every Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) works differently.
- RFCCs local choices are pertinent to the local catchment. We need to find the right balance between consistency but providing local areas with choice around local investments and how they do things locally. Basic national standards should be created, with local choices in addition to these.
- Incident response and what happens during a flood has not been captured by any of the working groups. To ensure we don't miss some key areas of activities for all of us

(not just the Environment Agency), we should identify whether or not actions happen before, during or after a flood. This will identify key gaps to address before completing strategy. We need to make it a bit clearer about where incident response falls under – perhaps Protection & Funding, and Water Focused Decision Making groups.

- We need to clarify the roles and responsibilities to manage surface water effectively. Who is meant to respond to surface water incidents? We should consider how LLFAs are involved in this and better define the water companies' role - both of which are only category 2 responders. There needs to be more work within local government to join up and recognise about all different roles and functions of local government and what they have to deliver.

Evaluation

Technical Evaluation Checklist



The draft topics for a technical evaluation checklist were presented and discussed by the working group. This checklist will form the main process of evaluating ideas for change at the September workshop. Ideas will be 'scored' at the September workshop using a ++/+/0/-/-- system.

Discussion – technical evaluation checklist

- We need to add in to the checklist short, medium and long term timeframes so we actually know if targets are achievable. We should not to be fixed by dates.
- Is there a broad enough horizon?
- We need to consider industrial strategy or spatial change as part of this process. The current topics feel like a narrow vision and feel a bit unambitious. Where does this fit in with change within government? Are we being bold enough?
- We need to take account of wider government plans. How does FCERM fit into the wider vision for government and communities being as a component part rather than being a separate strand?

- Would it be possible to flesh out some of the cost considerations of this? It will be a long term strategy, so how early are we considering costs.
- The 'real' costs are short term first steps over 5-10 years and what those actions would be. The strategy should also consider costs over the medium term. Although our ideas should be aspirational we still need to be realistic and consider cost. In the long term there are even less cost considerations because it is about future proofing the strategy. The strategy's ambition should not be naïve.

Feedback

Initial feedback

Initial feedback from the evaluation forms completed by working group members were presented.

A summary of the feedback so far was presented. Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. There has been action taken on suggestions for improvements including:

- 'Two thirds are not clear what is happening in other working groups' – this is why the overarching themes were shared at this meeting as well as summaries from each of the working groups. Meeting notes are available on the FCERM strategy 2050 website: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/fcrm-national-strategy-info/>

Any other points of discussion:

- Before the September workshops we will screen the ideas for change from all of the working groups and put forward each idea to the most appropriate working group for evaluation.
- We need to establish something to enforce the strategy, and this will need to be reflected in the strategy.
- The Strategy is looking at how to deliver within existing policy, but will make reference to how we want it to change going forward. Government is also looking at what policies need to change within FCRM in parallel with existing policy delivery, and the Environment Agency are working closely with Defra to put suggestions forwards on legislative changes or changes in the funding formula and so on.
- Skills, capabilities and numbers of people available in LLFAs are something to be mindful of, as there will be different levels around the country and we should recognise the differences between the larger and smaller local authorities, and also between the Environment Agency and other RMAs. Capacity and resilience is an important issue. Additionally, not all LLFAs have budget for things like this, and it differs massively across the country. Again something else that is inconsistent with some LLFAs having big teams and fairly big budgets to some teams having one officer with very minimal budget (funding is being spent elsewhere because it's not ring-fenced).

Next meeting

Next meeting date: 5 September, likely to be 10:30am – 3:30pm

Venue: Millennium Point, Curzon Street, Birmingham B4 7XG

Actions and next steps:

ACTION	OWNER
Circulate meeting notes & upload to website	Environment Agency
Complete 'End of Event' evaluation form asap (before 13 August)	Working group
Share thoughts about the technical checklist before 20 August by emailing FCERMstrategy@environment-agency.gov.uk	Working group
Continue to use the DIY engagement material available. Talk to your own networks about ideas for change and any new ideas for change and return by email before 29 August.	Working group
Continue to send in evidence or research to be considered for the Evidence Pack	Working group
Keep up to date on the website: https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/fcrm-national-strategy-info/	Working group