

Draft national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England – Questions and Answers (Q&A)

This Q&A is aimed at anyone who is planning to respond to the consultation and needs further information or context. This Q&A covers the key questions about the consultation process and generic points about the draft strategy. This is followed by a section that covers a number of key themes.

This document should be read alongside the draft strategy, key messages document, and DIY slide pack.

1 About the consultation

How can I respond to the strategy consultation?

- The public consultation is an opportunity for us to share the draft strategy and for you to tell us exactly what you think. Our consultation questions will guide you through the document and ensure we capture your views about all aspects of the draft strategy.
- Information about our consultation will be shared here: <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/fcrm/national-strategy-public>

How will the relevant organisations be invited to respond to the consultation?

- The Environment Agency will use our stakeholder list to send the consultation link directly to all those who have been involved in working groups or registered their interest with us. If you would like to be on our list, please email us at FCERMstrategy@environment-agency.gov.uk
- We have formally notified all risk management authority representatives in England about opportunities for them to engage with the consultation, in line with Section 7 (3) of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

2 About the draft strategy

What has happened since the last national flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) Strategy for England?

- The first [national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy](#) was published in May 2011. It provided the overarching framework for action by all risk management authorities to tackle all sources of flooding and coastal change, including surface water. Significant progress has been made and, on the whole, risk management authorities have met the original strategic objectives and measures.
- We also [report to the Minister annually](#) about application of the strategy under Section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

Why does it need updating/revising?

- A lot has happened since 2011, including significant events such as the 2013 east coastal tidal surge, the 2013/14 winter flooding in the south of England and the 2015/16 winter flooding in the north of England. There's growing evidence of the impact of climate

change from the 2017 Climate Change Risk Assessment and the updated [2018 UK Climate Impacts Projections \(UKCIP\)](#).

- Risk management authorities have also had record levels of investment in flood and coastal change, with £2.6 billion of government funding going towards better protecting 300,000 homes between 2015 and 2021.
- All of these things, and more, mean that now is the right time to stop and check what we're doing is right to prepare the nation for the range of possible climate change scenarios and the flooding and coastal change risks they will bring.
- The government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) has also stated that "...we will update the national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy, looking to strengthen joint delivery across organisations".

What is the expected date for the publication of the final strategy?

- The final strategy will be laid before parliament in late 2019 taking account of consultation responses and final strategy will be published in early 2020, and will be approved by the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

What is the strategic aim of the draft strategy?

- The aim of the draft strategy is to create a shared vision for managing flooding and coastal change in England until 2100.
- The Environment Agency will achieve this by working together with our partners from across the flooding and coastal change sector, to create a collaborative vision which can be adopted and delivered. The draft strategy presents our vision for a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100.
- This is a vision that can work for every place. We recognise that every place is different and there is no one size fits all solution to flood and coastal resilience. The only way of doing this is to put people at the heart of decision making.

What will success look like?

- A strategy, resilient to climate change, that reflects the views of a wide range of stakeholders, and that others can commit to implementing.

How will you engage with government?

- The Environment Agency has been working closely with the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs throughout the development of the draft strategy. The final strategy will be approved by the Secretary of State for the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Is the Strategy just for England? What engagement will take place with the devolved administrations and agencies?

- The draft strategy covers England only. However, the Environment Agency are working closely with the Welsh and Scottish governments and their delivery bodies to ensure that any cross border issues are considered.

What evidence have you used to support the draft strategy?

- With help from our partners and stakeholders we have brought together relevant evidence to help underpin the ambitions, strategic objectives and measures that are contained within the draft strategy. This is covered in a document called the Draft Strategy Evidence Base.
- The Draft Strategy Evidence Base has been developed in order to shape the discussions and drafting of the strategy. The document has been developed from an extensive review of available information produced by risk management authorities, government departments, non-departmental public bodies, academics and local organisations.
- The draft strategy also refers to key evidence from UKCP18, and the Environment Agency's [long term investment scenarios](#)

How do I access the strategy evidence base?

- An evidence base will support our draft strategy and will be available on request at FCERMstrategy@environment-agency.gov.uk

How far does the draft strategy look out into the future?

- Looking to the year 2100, the draft strategy aims to blend long-term ambitions with shorter-term practical steps. The strategic objectives in the draft strategy identify outcomes needed over the next 10 to 30 years to help support the longer-term ambitions for change needed by 2100. It also sets out shorter term measures for helping to achieve the strategy's objectives.

Will the strategy recommend policy/legislative changes?

- The draft strategy is not a policy document but a consultation by the Environment Agency, reflecting its own views and those we have heard from other stakeholders.
- Policy on flood and coastal erosion risk is for the government and the strategy will be finalised in the light of the consultation responses and the government's forthcoming 2019 national policy statement on flood and coastal risk before being submitted to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs for approval.

What is the government policy statement?

- The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (Defra) Secretary of State has agreed to publish a government policy statement on flood and coastal erosion risk management (FCERM) to set out government's policy in 2019.
- In November 2018, the Secretary of State spoke at the launch of the UKCP19 Climate projections. He outlined: *"As the risk of flooding and coastal erosion increases, we need a new long-term approach. Government will publish a long term policy statement next year, and the Environment Agency will issue a new 50-year strategy, also next year. I believe these should explore new philosophies around flood and coast management."*

How was the draft strategy developed?

- The Environment Agency has collaborated with the very people who will be affected by it or play a part in its delivery.

- The Environment Agency opened up invitations to get involved with the development of the draft strategy over the summer of 2018. Over 150 people from over 90 organisations were involved in a wide range of working groups.
- The working groups developed a large number of “Ideas for Change”, which have been analysed by the Environment Agency team, and influenced the development of the draft strategy.

Will members of the public have the opportunity to feed into the strategy?

- Yes - The draft strategy will be formally published for consultation on Thursday 9 May. This is your opportunity to respond and have your voices heard. The consultation will last for 8 weeks. People will be able to respond to questions in the supporting consultation document.

What will the Environment Agency do following the consultation?

- The Environment Agency will read and analyse all responses to the formal consultation. This information will then be used to revise the strategy before final publication in 2020. The Environment Agency will produce a consultation response document in the Autumn 2019.

How will the draft strategy affect me?

- Everyone has the potential to be impacted by flooding or coastal change. You may be directly affected if your home floods or you experience coastal erosion, or you may be indirectly affected. For example your workplace may be impacted, or roads, rail, or utilities such as water and electricity may be disrupted. We know that for every person who suffers flooding around 16 others are affected by a loss of services such as transport or power. The changes proposed by this draft strategy are relevant for everyone. The aims and ambitions of the draft strategy will be applied to your community, workplace, plus the infrastructure and services you rely on.
- As climate change increases, we’ll need to mobilise and empower a nation of climate champions that can better take responsibility for dealing with the risks posed by flooding and the erosion of our coastline.
- The draft strategy paints a national ambition for England, but one that can work for each different place. It recognises that every place is different – made up of different people with different skills, needs and infrastructure, and often in different environments. It embraces the idea that the best solution for a given place now is likely to look different in the future.

Will the draft strategy stop me from being flooded or stop coastal erosion?

- No, we cannot always prevent flooding or coastal erosion. However it will help make people and places more resilient to flooding and coastal change.

How much will the final strategy cost to implement?

- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 requires that the strategy includes information on the costs and benefits of the measures contained within the strategy.

- Many of the measures contained within the draft strategy are existing activities and ways of working of risk management authorities. These will be cost neutral and sit within their existing roles, responsibilities and statutory duties. There are other measures which have the potential to be more costly than these existing activities. We estimate that the overall costs might be between £40m and £90m over a six year period to 2026. We will update the costs and benefits for the final strategy following consultation.

What are the benefits of implementing the draft Strategy?

- There are strong economic, social and environmental cases for investing in resilience to adapt to the impacts of future flooding and coastal change. The Environment Agency's long term investment scenarios estimate that as a nation we need an average annual investment of at least £1billion in flooding and coastal change infrastructure over the next 50 years. For every £1 spent on protecting communities, around £9 in property damages and wider impacts is avoided.
- All of the measures will also realise a range of wider benefits, namely: stronger links with people and places, better ways of working and more shared information across risk management authorities, infrastructure providers, spatial planners and emergency responders. This will all help to ensure people, places and infrastructure are more resilient to flooding and coastal change.

How will the implementation of the final strategy be governed?

- The Environment Agency will develop arrangements for monitoring and reporting of the final strategy's progress with risk management authorities. Alongside the final strategy, we will publish an action plan on how we will take forward the objectives and measures with partners. We will govern the final strategy by providing leadership and direction in delivering our ambitions, reporting on progress and outcomes, reflecting and learning from our progress, and tracking benefits.
- We will also continue to report to the Minister under Section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010.

What does this draft strategy mean to me if I am not in the flood and coastal sector, or not even at risk of flooding or coastal change?

- We are keen to hear from anyone who has a concern or interest in the issues that this draft strategy consultation raises. The themes go beyond the idea of traditional flood or sea walls and into how we might want our places, homes, offices and commercial spaces to look in the future to be climate resilient.
- We also want to inspire and mobilise a nation of climate champions – if you are not at risk of flooding or coastal change now, this could change in the future. Additionally, your places of work or leisure may also have routes that cut across areas at risk.

3 Key ambitions of the draft strategy

What are the ambitions of the draft strategy?

- The draft strategy has three long term ambitions:
 - **Climate resilient places** - Working with 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 partners 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.

What are the key messages that cut across these ambitions?

- Common to all three ambitions, the draft strategy will:
 - Make the right investment and planning decisions today so that we can keep pace with population growth and climate change.
 - Ensure everyone plays their part - we can't prevent every flood or change to our coast. Together, people, businesses, public and voluntary sectors need to support each other, to prepare for the unavoidable flooding and loss of homes to the sea. As climate change increases, we'll need to mobilise and empower a nation of climate champions that can better take responsibility for dealing with the risks posed by flooding and the erosion of our coastline.
 - Make sure that we have a nation ready for, and resilient to, flooding and coastal change – today, tomorrow and to the year 2100. Disaster is not inevitable: we can tackle flooding and coastal change, but only if we act now.

How serious are you about climate change?

- Climate change poses the greatest threat to our economy, environment, health, and way of life – it is the underlying driver for the changes we are proposing. The three ambition statements are all aiming to help deal with the effects of climate change.
- The scale of potential future flooding and coastal change is significant. Despite the positive work of the Environment Agency and other risk management authorities we need to adopt a different philosophy.
- We need to move the nation from a concept of protection to one of resilience – traditional flood and sea defences will remain vitally important but we cannot build our way out of future climate risks in many places. In different places we will need a range of tools which enable us to prepare for, respond to and recover from flooding and coastal change.

What are you already doing to address climate change?

- The Environment Agency and risk management authorities are already planning for climate change: building climate change projections into the design of flood and coastal change strategies and projects to make sure they are fit for the future – and over the course of six years up to 2021 are building new schemes which will better protect 300,000 homes.
- The role of planning is crucial too, and we have worked with the government to ensure that the National Planning Policy Framework reflects our climate change adaptation guidance when planning for flood and coastal risks. We and other risk management authorities also work with local authority strategic and spatial planners and infrastructure

providers to advise on planning applications and longer term, strategic spatial plans with respect to flood and coastal risks.

- In addition, we are seeking carbon emission neutrality in our ambitions. We keep our data and modelling under constant review and examine it rigorously after every flooding incident to ensure our plans are climate-proof.

How will you increase resilience?

- We can increase our resilience to flooding and coastal change by working together. The ambitious draft strategy looks out to 2100. This will help ensure that as a nation we take urgent and immediate action so that we can all live in climate resilient places that are able to manage and adapt to flooding and coastal change.
- But we can never entirely eliminate flooding and coastal changes, so in some places we will need to learn to be more resilient by adapting to this risk and recovering more quickly, building back better and in better places.

What is your definition of resilience? There are so many.

- Through the draft strategy we introduce the concept of 'resilience for places', which refers to the ability for a community in a place to cope with, and recover from, all sources of flooding or coastal change.
- The draft strategy's glossary refers to 'resilience of places', where our aspiration is for places to have access to a combination of tools so that they can understand their risk and have more control over how to adapt and respond to flood risk.

What do you mean by resilience standards?

- Resilience is about flood protection, adapting to our changing climate and recovery when a place is hit by a flood. Traditional defences remain vitally important but we want people to be more resilient so they are ready to respond when flooding hits and they can recover more quickly.
- By developing consistent standards, every community will be able to understand their flood risk and expect certain levels of resilience.
- The way we will do that is by offering communities the tools to give them control of how they respond to flooding and coastal change. This could include traditional flood defences, natural flood management, ensuring any new development built is safe from flood risk and adapting their homes so they can respond more quickly after a flood.
- We are planning to work with partners to explore and develop the concept of standards for flood and coastal resilience over the course of the next year.
- Resilience standards will be considered by the government later in the year in their National Infrastructure Strategy which is being developed in response to the National Infrastructure Commission's National Infrastructure Assessment published in 2018.

What is the 25 Year Environment Plan and how does that relate to the strategy?

- A comprehensive 25 year environment plan has been developed by the government to address all aspects of the environment (including air, water, land, wildlife, marine, waste

and resources) and how the Environment Agency, amongst others, can manage them better. The plan includes a commitment to develop the strategy as follows: *“By 2019, we will update the national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy, looking to strengthen joint delivery across organisations”*.

- Delivering the ambitions, strategic objectives and measures of the revised FCERM strategy will support delivery of the 25 year environment plan. There are measures that aim to increase and normalise the use of Natural Flood Management and ensure that farmers and landowners are able to contribute to reducing flood risk and coastal change through the proposed environmental land management scheme. There is also a measure that seeks to maximise benefits from creating and restoring natural habitats such as woodland, peatlands and saltmarsh for reducing flood risk and coastal change. Finally, there are measures aimed at improving both biodiversity and environmental net gain when risk management authorities are implementing schemes and working with developers.
- Flood resilience is a common theme running through the 25 year environment plan. There are many references to enhancing the use of natural flood management, improving sustainable drainage, increasing the flood resilience of the places we live and work, built environment and taking the opportunity to reform farming subsidies to help support environmental enhancement including climate resilience.

How will the draft strategy contribute to wider environmental objectives?

- The draft strategy’s objectives and measures will contribute to wider environmental objectives, and in particular, a range of objectives in the 25 year environment plan which sets out the government’s ambition to leave our environment in a better state than we found it.
- Specifically the draft strategy will support the 25 Year Environment Plan objectives to protect threatened species and provide richer wildlife habitats; reduce the risk from natural hazards; and adapt to and mitigate climate change. The draft strategy also takes account of the natural, built and historic environments that are valued by so many people and protected within different pieces of legislation.
- There are measures that aim to increase and normalise the use of natural flood management and ensure that farmers and landowners are able to contribute to reducing flood risk and coastal change through the proposed environmental land management scheme.
- Finally, there is also a measure that seeks to maximise the benefits from creating and restoring natural habitats such as woodland, peatlands and saltmarsh for reducing flood risk and coastal change.

Will working with natural processes really be that effective?

- All risk management authorities need to work with natural processes. Our evidence has shown that working with natural processes can reduce risk in smaller catchments for low magnitude-high frequency flood events and can contribute to reducing coastal erosion. They can also provide additional benefits including: water quality improvements; strengthened water resource provision; mitigation of and adaptation to climate change through, for instance, wetland creation and coastal and fluvial realignment; and providing urban biodiversity and amenity green spaces through sustainable drainage systems.

What will working more with natural processes mean for risk management authorities?

- Guided by this draft strategy, wider government policy and legislative requirements all risk management authorities will face choices and long term decisions that will benefit the environment.
- The following list are just some examples of those choices:
 - balancing wider carbon costs or benefits over the life of new flood and coastal management projects;
 - achievement of sustainable development goals,
 - balancing the needs of society, the economy and the urban, rural and natural environment;
 - securing environmental benefits; and meeting legal requirements to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage.
- Working with natural processes is a key part of our approach and can take many forms. This includes encouraging the most appropriate crops and farming techniques that limit soil erosion, natural flood risk management tools on farmland as well as the creation of inter-tidal or coastal habitat.

What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

- Net gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. Development that adopts a biodiversity net gain approach seeks to make its impact on the environment positive, delivering improvements through habitat creation or enhancement after avoiding or mitigating harm as far as possible.
- Based on a standardised approach, biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements by comparing habitat losses and gains and steering mitigation and compensation accordingly.

What is Environmental Net Gain?

- Biodiversity net gain is a positive step towards the wider opportunities offered by 'environmental net gain' - a way of improving all aspects of resilient and sustainable development. Environmental net gain was identified in the government's 25 year environment plan as a key means of achieving its ambition 'to be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we found it.'
- We know growth will not be sustainable if its net impact is to harm our natural environment – which includes geology, soil, air, water and all living things, or our cultural heritage – or ignore the risks posed by natural hazards. Establishing environmental net gain in the planning system would allow us to maintain and improve the nation's resilience to natural hazards such as flooding and coastal change as well as the effects of climate change.
- We know growth will not be sustainable if its net impact is to harm our natural environment. Establishing environmental net gain in the planning system would allow us to maintain and improve the nation's resilience to natural hazards such as flooding and coastal change as well as the effects of climate change.

- Our objective is: *“Between now and 2030 all new development will seek to support environmental net gain in local places”*.

What will the draft strategy mean for the coast?

- The draft strategy deals with flood and coastal issues in equal measure. Throughout this document we use the term ‘flooding and coastal change’ to refer to the risks of coastal erosion and sea flooding, as well as inland flooding. All of the principles within the draft strategy apply to managing risks on the coasts as well as inland.

Does the draft Strategy cover all sources of flooding, as well as coastal change?

- The draft strategy considers the current and future risks of flooding and coastal change. This includes all sources of flood risk (flooding from rivers, sea, reservoirs, surface water, groundwater and ordinary water course), and also coastal change (coastal erosion).

How are insurance and finance industries included? Will the draft strategy help to lower insurance premiums?

- If you're already paying for clean-up and other related activities, it can be quicker and cheaper to just return your property to how it was before the flood. Most insurance companies take this view too, and won't pay for replacement with flood-resilient products. But more should be done to encourage property owners to build back better and in better places, with support from their insurance company. This will help people and businesses get back to normal quicker after a flood.
- With enhanced mapping and modelling tools proposed for delivery through the draft strategy it will be possible to better assess flood and coastal risks. In turn, this will help inform the insurance industry, as well as people and businesses understand the impact of their flood or coastal change risks.
- Our draft strategy includes a long term objective to address this, which will involve working with government, insurers and financial institutions.