



Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Variation of Membership Consultation document

4 May 2018

We are the Environment Agency. We protect and improve the environment.

Acting to reduce the impacts of a changing climate on people and wildlife is at the heart of everything we do.

We reduce the risks to people, properties and businesses from flooding and coastal erosion.

We protect and improve the quality of water, making sure there is enough for people, businesses, agriculture and the environment. Our work helps to ensure people can enjoy the water environment through angling and navigation.

We look after land quality, promote sustainable land management and help protect and enhance wildlife habitats. And we work closely with businesses to help them comply with environmental regulations.

We can't do this alone. We work with government, local councils, businesses, civil society groups and communities to make our environment a better place for people and wildlife.

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1. About this consultation

This document explains why we are consulting and what we are consulting you on. It is designed to help you understand and comment on the variation of the composition of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC).

1.1. Why we're consulting

We are consulting to get feedback from all of those individuals, groups and organisations, who are affected by, or interested in, the proposed approach to the variation of the scheme of membership of the Wessex RFCC, in line with the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Regulations (2011).

1.2. What we are consulting on

We are consulting on the variation of the composition of the Wessex RFCC as a result of local government reorganisation in Dorset. The variation process is set out in the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) Regulations (2011), Part 3 (9) and requires Ministerial approval.

The composition variation must be made in line with the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Regulations (2011) and subsequently there are certain limitations when proposing a new scheme. These restrictions are outlined in Section 2.

In 2011 when the transition was made from Regional Flood Defence Committees to Regional Flood and Coastal Committees, it was confirmed that LLFA representation was a matter for individual RFCCs to propose.

The Committee agreed to a composition that included a consistent representation from all LLFAs contributing to Local Levy rather than based on either number of Band D properties or the Levy paid by each LLFA. As a result the number of LLFA members was 11.

This gave a total Committee size of 21 including the Chair, 11 LLFA members and 9 Environment Agency appointed members.

At present Poole, Bournemouth and Dorset are LLFAs. The change to 2 unitary authorities will therefore reduce the number of LLFAs by 1 from 11 to 10. If the committee composition is based on the approach taken when it was established in 2011 then the number of LLFAs reduces to 10. In order to maintain a majority of LLFA membership the number of Environment Agency appointed members would also need to reduce by 1 from 9 to 8.

This would give a Committee of 19 members including the Chair, 10 LLFA members and 8 Environment Agency appointed members.

The variation will only take effect when the new Councils come into being on 1 April 2019 or as directed by government.

1.3. We want your views

Interested parties will likely include the Wessex RFCC, Dorset Councils and Local Authorities within the Wessex Boundary, Internal Drainage Boards, Somerset Rivers Authority, Water Boards, Local Flood Groups, and members of the public.

We want to hear your thoughts on our proposed approach as outlined above. Section 2 provides more information on the background for proposing the variation. You will find the consultation questions in Section 3 of this document and information on how to respond in Section 4.

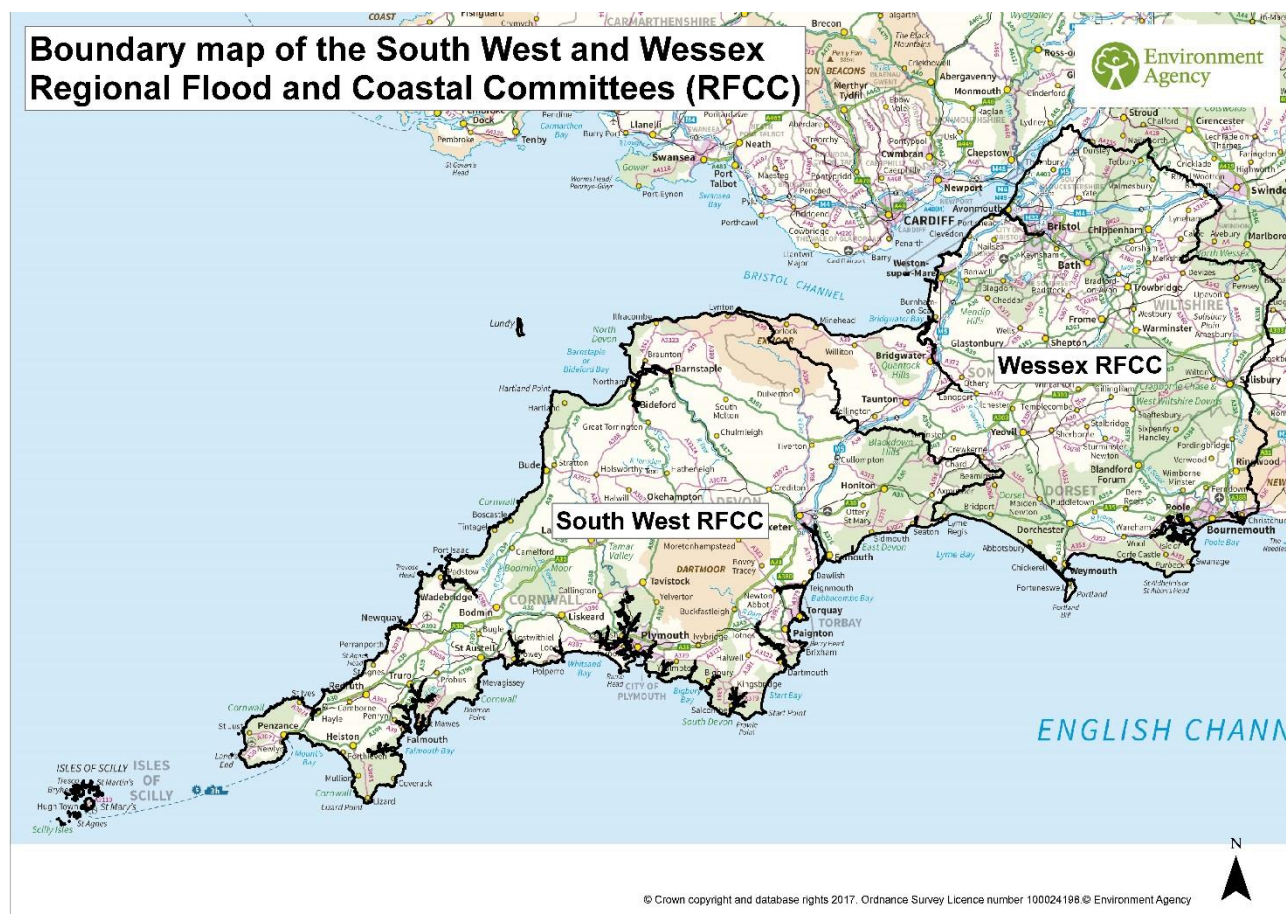
2. Background to the proposal

On 26 February 2018 Sajid Javed (former Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government) announced the decision to create 2 new unitary authorities in Dorset, replacing the existing 9 councils. The decision is subject to parliamentary approval and the new structure, aimed at saving £108m over 6 years, will come into effect in April 2019. Under the plans, Bournemouth Borough Council, Poole Borough Council and Christchurch District Council would merge, and the second council would be formed from East Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council, Purbeck District Council, Weymouth & Portland Borough Council and West Dorset District Council.

Each authority will deliver all local government services in their respective areas including being Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFAs) and Coast Protection Authorities (CPAs). The creation of these new authorities has implications for the composition of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coast Committee (RFCC).

The Wessex RFCC membership currently includes representation from each of Dorset County Council, Bournemouth Borough Council and Poole Borough Council. This membership was signed off by the Secretary of State in 2011. Due to the changes in Dorset, the Committee membership will need to be varied before 1 December 2018 to represent the new councils in order that a levy can be issued for the Wessex area in 2019, as per the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Regulations 2011.

Map of Legislation boundaries



Legislative restrictions

Any variation to the composition of the committee must be made in line with the Regional Flood and Coastal Committee Regulations (2011).

These Regulations require the total number of members to be at least 11 and no more than 25 (unless approved by the Minister). There can be no more than 11 Environment Agency appointed members and the number of members appointed by a constituent authority must be at least one more than the sum of Environment Agency appointed members and the Chair.

A variation takes effect when the Environment Agency publishes a document specifying the region for which the Committee is established and the composition of the Committee.

The variation does not take effect unless the Environment Agency has consulted with interested persons for a period of not less than 6 weeks in relation to the variation to the composition of the Committee; taken account of any representations; and the varied composition has been approved by the Minister. The Minister may require a change to the proposed varied composition of a Committee before approving the varied composition.

The Environment Agency may not issue a levy to constituent authorities in a region for a financial year if the composition of the Committee for that region is varied on or after 1 December in the financial year preceding that for which the levy is issued.

Wessex RFCC LLFA composition on formation in 2011

In 2011 the following composition was signed off by the Secretary of State.

Council	Number of members	Overall composition
Bournemouth Borough Council	One	Committee comprises 21 members including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11 LLFA members• 1 Chair• 9 EA appointed members
Dorset County Council	One	
Hampshire County Council	One	
Poole Borough Council	One	
Somerset County Council	One	
Wiltshire County Council	One	
Gloucestershire County Council	One	
Bath & North East Somerset Council	One	
Bristol City Council	One	
North Somerset Council	One	
South Gloucestershire Council	One	

We are proposing the following constituent authority composition following local government review.

Council	Number of members	Proposed composition
Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole	One	Committee comprises 19 members including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 10 LLFA members• 1 Chair
Rest of Dorset	One	
Hampshire County Council	One	
Somerset County Council	One	

Wiltshire County Council	One	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 EA appointed members
Gloucestershire County Council	One	
Bath & North East Somerset Council	One	
Bristol City Council	One	
North Somerset Council	One	
South Gloucestershire Council	One	

3. Consultation questions

We welcome your comments on our proposed approach and in particular would value your views on the questions listed below:

Q1. Do you think that the proposed membership appropriately reflects the Constituent Authorities in the Wessex Area as defined in the RFCC Legislation boundaries? (Please refer to the Legislation boundaries map.)

Q2. We are planning on reducing the overall membership of the Committee from 21 to 19. Do you think that a smaller Committee will still be able to properly represent the Wessex Area when discussing flood risk management?

Q3. Please let us know if you think there is anything else we should be considering.

4. Responding to this consultation

4.1. Important dates

Opening date: 4 May 2018

Closing date: 15 Jun 2018

Published Responses: 1 July 2018

Environment Agency Board Date: 21 July 2018

4.2. How to respond

You can view the consultation documents and questions online at <https://consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/>. Here you can submit your response using our online tool which will enable you to manage your comments more effectively. It will also help us to gather and summarise responses quickly and accurately as well as reduce the costs of the consultation.

If you would prefer to submit your response by email or letter, or if you would like to ask for a printed version of the document to be posted to you, please contact 02030 250180, or email hannah.ovett@environment-agency.gov.uk.

However, if you would like to send your response by post, please send your completed response form by 15 June to:

Hannah Ovet
Environment Agency
Rivers House
East Quay
Bridgwater, TA6 4YS

4.3. What will the responses be used for

We will use the responses from this consultation to evaluate whether any changes need to be made to the proposed approach before submitting this to the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee, Environment Agency Board and Minister. Environment Agency staff dealing with this consultation will see all responses in full.

We will provide a full summary of the responses on GOV.UK by 1 July 2018.

4.4. How we will use your information

Throughout the consultation we will look to make all comments (excluding personal information) publicly available on the Environment Agency's online consultation portal. This includes comments received online, by email, post and by fax, unless you have specifically requested that we keep your response confidential. We will not publish names of individuals who respond, but we will publish the name of the organisation for those responses made on behalf of organisations.

If you respond online or provide us with an email address, we will acknowledge your response. After the consultation has closed a summary of the responses will be published on our website. We will contact you to let you know when this is available. We will also notify you of any forthcoming consultations unless you tell us otherwise.

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, we may be required to publish your response to this consultation, but will not include any personal information. If you have requested your response to be kept confidential, we may still be required to provide a summary of it.

4.5. Consultation Principles

Government is improving the way it consults by adopting a more proportionate and targeted approach. We are running this consultation in accordance with their Consultation Principles¹.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way this consultation has been carried out, please contact:

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Horizon House
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Bristol BS1 5AH
Email: emma.hammonds@environment-agency.gov.uk

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance>

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