

Non-technical Summary

Lead Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) - 2019-2025



St. Helens Council

Introduction to the new update

Since the first publication of the Local Strategy in 2014, St Helens Council has continued to develop and strengthen its management of flood risk duties in line with current available legislation and partnership work with neighboring local authorities.

It is vital that organisations work and communicate more effectively, not just with each other but crucially with the public. The new strategy update details the roles and responsibilities of all major stakeholders, including households and community groups so that there is increased clarity and understanding about when different stakeholders should be involved.

The updated strategy continues to focus on the effects of flooding from a number of different sources including and not limited to surface runoff, watercourse overtopping, groundwater and waste water. St Helens Council is keen to ensure that all forms of flooding are managed together and tackled according to level of risk, as well as considering appropriate solutions.

St Helens Council cannot prevent all areas from flooding but can take practical measures to reduce both the likelihood and impact of any flooding that does occur. Since the first Strategy a number of the flood risk locations such as Beech Gardens, Bell Lane, Peasley Cross and West End Road have had either appropriate and positive flood relieve schemes implemented or resilience measures installed, with areas such as College Street and the wider Sankey Valley undergoing further complex assessment.

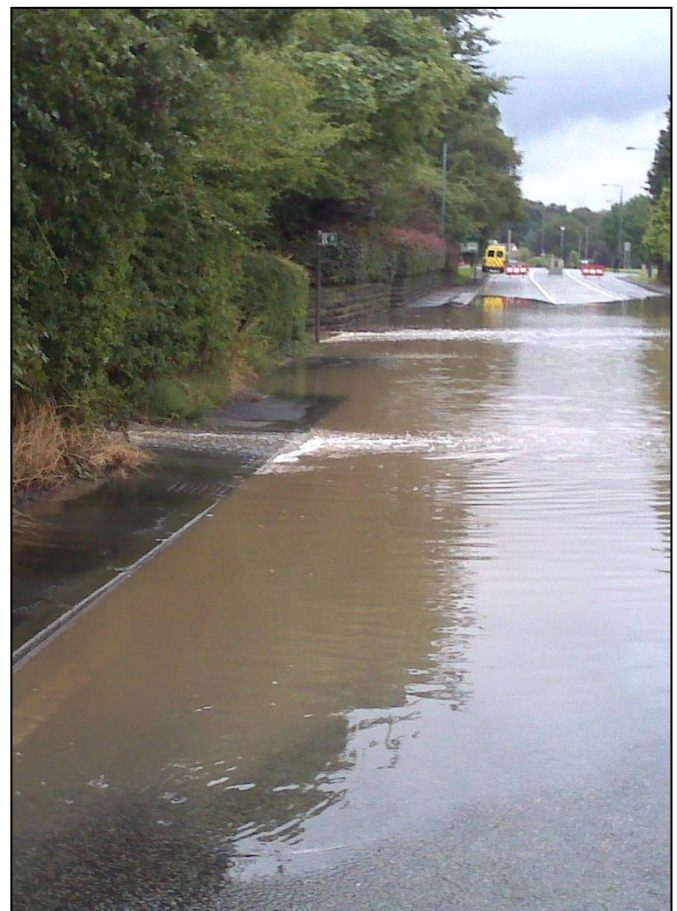
As more development takes place not just at regional and local planning scale but down to individual land owners altering their hard standing footprint, it is essential that it is managed so that the effects on flood risk are minimised. This Local Strategy is our statement of intent as to how St Helens Council will manage flood risk, inform or remind of everybody's responsibilities, how to find out about your flood risk and what St Helens Council can do to help you become safer.

Your thoughts and views are extremely important to help shape the way we manage flood risk in St. Helens in the future.

Summary Contents

All the topics covered in this Summary are expanded upon within the main strategy document. This document contains the following:

- The legislation surrounding this area of work
- Roles and Responsibilities;
- Our Local Partnerships;
- Governance Groups;
- Detailed Action Plans;
- Strategic Environmental Assessment;
- Environmental Considerations;
- Emergency Arrangements;
- Additional flood and water related studies and strategies.



What is Flooding?

‘A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry’

What is the Risk?

The risk of flooding to any particular area can be increased as a consequence of poor maintenance resulting in blockages or other types of failure of watercourses, sewers or drainage systems, or as a consequence of poor development and planning. In addition risk can be measured by inappropriate development in and around floodplains, building on land in a way that prevents rainfall from draining away naturally, and flood defence schemes that are defective or badly designed.

Types of Flood Risk

A flood is defined as when water covers land that is normally dry. There are few places in the United Kingdom where people need not be concerned about flooding, as any place where rain falls is vulnerable. The main sources of flooding that could affect St.Helens are:

- **River flooding:**
Occurs when a watercourse cannot cope with the volume of water draining into it, and overflows its banks onto the surrounding land;
- **Surface water flooding:**
Occurs when heavy rainfall cannot be absorbed into the ground or enter the drainage systems;
- **Reservoir flooding:**
Occurs when reservoirs, which hold large volumes of water above ground level, overtop i.e. cannot contain the amount of water flowing into them, or when part of the reservoir fails resulting in a release of water.
- **Ground water flooding:**
Occurs when water levels in the ground rise above surface levels, which is most likely to occur in areas underlain by permeable rocks, and is likely to occur after unseasonable periods of prolonged rainfall;
- **Sewer flooding:**
Occurs when sewers are overwhelmed by heavy rainfall or when they become blocked, floodwater can be contaminated with raw sewage and chemicals.

River Classifications

A watercourse is any natural or artificial channel above or below ground through which water flows, such as a river, brook, beck, ditch, millstream, culvert, ponds, dams and reservoirs. Main Rivers are those classified on the official Environment Agency Main River Map. All watercourses not on this map are known as ‘Ordinary Watercourses’.

The main river map can be found at the following website: www.environment-agency.gov.uk, and then search for Main River Map.



Roles and Responsibilities

‘What roles and responsibilities do organisations, businesses and the public have’

Who’s in the Spot Light?

Numerous organisations, agencies and authorities have roles and responsibilities relating to flood risk management, including the public. Our preferred approach is to work in partnership with all relevant stakeholders and authorities in order to deliver our objectives in an efficient and coordinated manner. We also want to help communities to help themselves. The Act identifies certain organisations as ‘risk management authorities’, which have lead responsibilities around flooding. These are:

Riparian Land Owners

If you own land adjoining a watercourse or which has a watercourse running through or underneath it, you are a ‘**riparian owner**’ of the banks and bed of the watercourse and any structures (assets) in the watercourse. A document called ‘Living on the edge’ was produced by the EA outlining further your main responsibilities summarised below:

- You have the responsibility to pass on the flow of water without obstruction, pollution or diversion;
- You must accept flood flows through your land, even if these are caused by inadequate capacity downstream;
- You should keep the banks clear of anything that could cause an obstruction;
- You must maintain the bed and banks of the watercourse, and also the trees and shrubs growing on the banks;
- You must keep any structures that you own clear of debris;
- You must apply for consent from the Council to undertake any works affecting the flow of an ordinary watercourse.

United Utilities (UU)

Responsible for managing the Public Sewer Network and the risks of flooding from surface water, foul and/or combined sewer system.

The Environment Agency (EA)

Is responsible for managing flood risk on all main rivers and large raised reservoirs in St.Helens and a supervising role for all flood risk management across England. It has powers to undertake flood risk management works on main rivers. The EA is responsible for flood risk consenting and associated enforcement on main rivers. Therefore if you are planning to erect or alter a structure in, under, above or near a main river, you will need to discuss your plans with and obtain consent from them.

St.Helens Council (Lead Local Flood Authority - LLFA)

Is now responsible for the management of flood risk from surface water runoff, ordinary watercourses and groundwater. We are required to investigate flood incidents, to the extent we deem necessary, and to keep a register of all the significant flood risk assets within the town. The EA is responsible for flood risk consenting and associated enforcement on ordinary watercourses. The LLFA are also a statutory consultee in terms of planning since 2015, which includes the assessment of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), however the Local Planning Authority will have the final decision.

Communities and Parish Councils

Both play an important role in managing flood risk at the community level. They can help us gather information on areas at risk of flooding by reporting any flood incidents to us. Communities and individuals at risk of flooding should prepare flood plans. In addition, communities and Parish Councils can be crucial in raising additional funding for local flood resilience and flood defence measures.

Developers

Have a responsibility to ensure that their development has no negative impact on flood risk both on the site and to others, and wherever possible provide betterment. The main strategy document provides detail of how they can do this. Pre application discussions with the relevant authorities and organisations are encouraged.

Our Catchment Partners

‘There is a duty to cooperate with other risk management authorities’

Knowledge

Much of the local knowledge and technical expertise necessary for St. Helens Council to fulfil duties as a LLFA lies with the Council and other partner organisations. It is crucial that the Council work alongside these partners as they undertake their responsibilities to ensure effective and consistent management of local flood risk. These working arrangements have been formalised to ensure clear lines of communication.

Co-operation

For the purpose of flood risk management St. Helens Council is part of the wider Cheshire and Mid-Mersey sub-regional LLFA working group. The group has agreed to follow the same principles in producing respective Local Flood Risk Management Strategies. This will ensure we work on a catchment wide basis whilst engaging with our local communities and approaching flood risk management using the same broad range of measures.

Partnerships

St. Helens has taken a whole catchment view of flood risk management. By doing so it ensures we appreciate our actions over the whole area rather than simply within political boundaries. St. Helens administrative area is situated within the higher and mid Sankey catchment area. Therefore the Council has established a strong liaison link with Warrington Borough Council due to the general topography and drainage characteristics of the area inter-playing with that of Halton. All three authorities are group together in a Sankey Valley Partnership working together to resolve cross boundary issues.



Due to the Borough being situated within the upper reaches of the River Mersey catchment, Council has been in partnership with two sub-regional working groups; the Cheshire and Mid-Mersey Flood Partnership and Merseyside Flood Partnership.

The partnership operates at operational (day to day), tactical (scheme delivery) and strategic levels (legislative development). Regular meetings are held with each group in which both the Environment Agency and United Utilities attend. Authorities within the groups are as follows:

Cheshire Mid Mersey Flood Group

- Cheshire East (plus parts of Staffordshire)
- Cheshire West and Chester
- Halton
- St. Helens
- Warrington

Merseyside Flood and Coastal Risk Group

- Knowsley
- Liverpool
- Sefton
- St. Helens / Halton (Projects Only)
- Wirral

Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service

The Merseyside Environmental Advisory Service (MEAS) is a sub-regional service that serves the Merseyside Councils, which provides advice of environmental issues and sustainable solutions. The service comprises professional technical staff and its role is to assist the Merseyside Districts by providing technical advice on a wide range of environmental matters. It assists the Merseyside Districts by providing a 'one-stop-shop' for a broad range of environmental, nature conservation and sustainable development and waste management issues.

Prioritising Flood Risk Management

‘What are the aims and objectives for managing flood risk ’

Wide Range of Issues

It is not possible to prevent all flooding, and with limited resources we need to be able to prioritise our flood risk management work. An analysis has been undertaken to determine which areas within St. Helens are most vulnerable to flood risk, in which we will focus our efforts.

These are assessed via the number of: properties, roads, or wildlife/environmentally designated sites that are potentially at risk of flooding under a range of scenarios. The analysis has also considered how susceptible the town is to the impacts of climate change on flood risk.

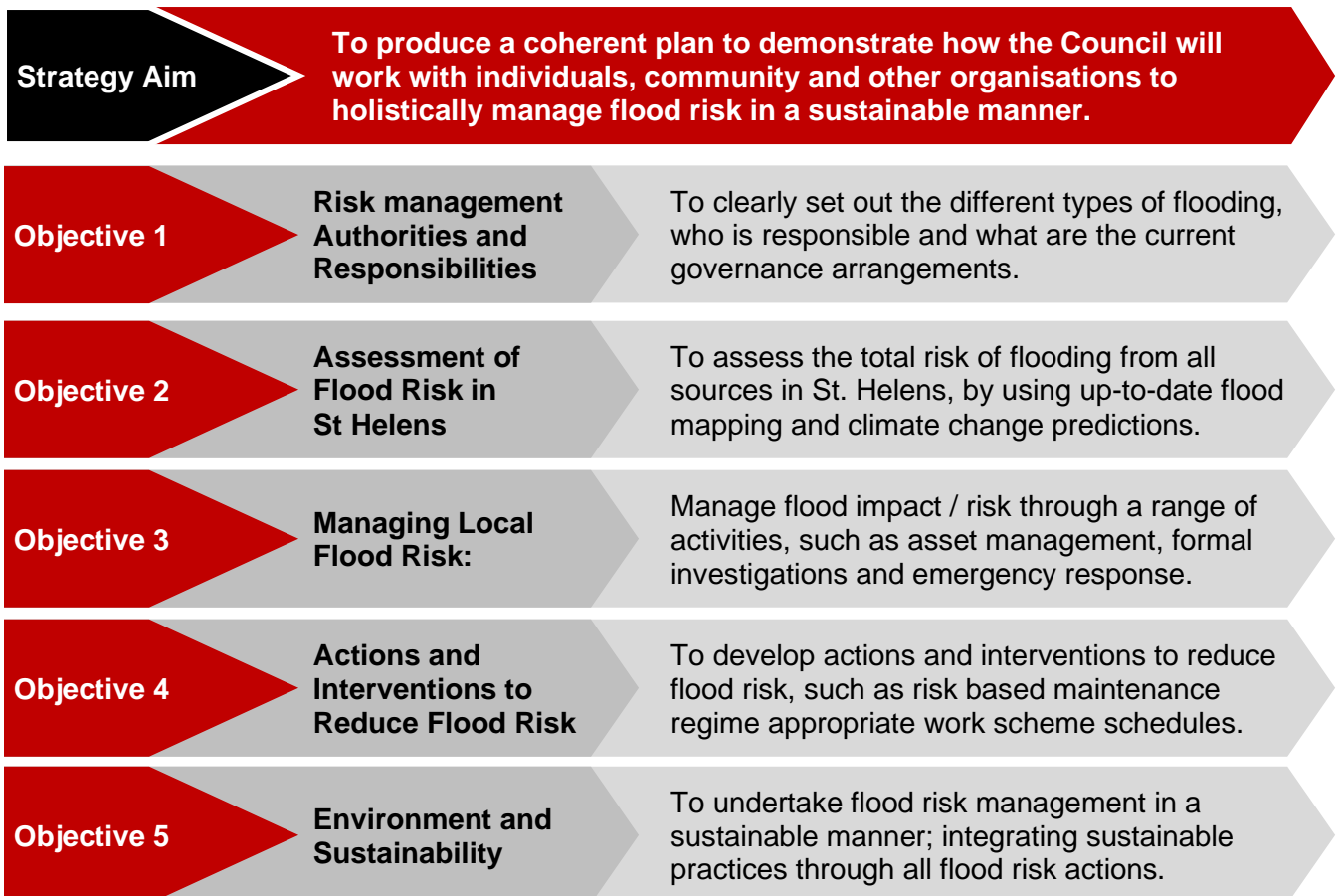
Aim, Objectives and Measures

The Strategy sets out its main ‘aim’ in managing flood risk and a breakdown of the five key ‘objectives’ along with series of measures to achieve this aim (shown below). Council will work with individuals, the community, and organisations to undertake the aims and objectives.

Activities

We will undertake activities for managing flood, alongside the Water Framework Directive by including the following points:

- Collecting data on assets within the Borough that affect flood risk;
- Assessment of the impacts of flooding on wildlife and environmental sites;
- Assessment of the impacts of flooding on designated historic assets;
- Review historic flooding and assess viability of potential flood alleviation schemes;
- Designate features which we believe have a significant flood defence function; and
- Undertake a regular, proactive inspection and maintenance regime off our assets.



Environmental Objectives

'Incorporating environmental benefits where possible in flood management'

Wider Environmental Objectives

In addition to the social and economic benefits of reducing flood risk, it is important that any actions we take forward from the strategy also focus on achieving wider environmental benefits. The implementation of flood risk management options and measures provides a significant opportunity to improve the natural, rural and built environment across the town. The strategy will contribute to the achievement of wider environmental objectives in the following ways:

- Improve and/or maintain the capacity of existing drainage systems by targeted maintenance;
- Take a sustainable approach to flood risk management, balancing economic, environmental and social benefits;
- To reduce the impact and consequences for individuals, communities, businesses and the environment from flooding;
- To ensure that planning decisions are properly informed by flooding issues and the impact future planning may have on flood risk management and long term developments;
- Establish and develop Sustainable Drainage Systems Guidance; and embrace Government guidance on the encouragement, adoption and maintenance of SuDS (Subject to Enactment of Schedule 3 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010).



Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems

SuDS are a sustainable management approach to surface water, where water is drained more naturally than traditional methods. SuDS provide opportunity to address continuing pressures on the environment, by reducing the causes and impacts of flooding and the reduction of pollutants through the water cycle.



With the enactment of the Government Sustainable Drainage guidance in 2015, Council LLFA's are now designated as Statutory Consultees to the Planning Process. As part of the updated strategy St Helens Council have produced our own SuDS Guidance document. This guidance is primarily aimed at developers, to take into account national and local requirements in making sure that water is effectively managed on a development site and make sure that the effects of future climate change is built into the design of the site.

The criteria in which the LLFA comment on applications is the following:

- Development contains 10 plus dwellings;
- Development is equal or greater than 1 Hectare;
- Development is equal or more than 1000 square metres (m²) of floor space.

The general aims of SuDS are as follows:

- Reduce the discharge of water to natural flow from a development;
- Mimic natural drainage conditions;
- Capture and store storm water during flood events to help alleviate downstream flooding.

Council Policies and Activities

‘Managing the risk is also protecting the environment we have left now’

Flood Investigations

It is important that we have a record of all flooding that occurs within the Borough, regardless of the source or the extent. We will determine who is responsible for managing the flooding, and for incidents, which result in internal flooding or which results in road closures; we will undertake a formal investigation.

Smaller incidents will be kept on record and could be crucial in building up cases for flood defence / resilience schemes, which require a strong evidence of risk.

Sandbag Policy

The Council has no legal duty to provide sandbags to the community unless the flooding is due to flooding from the Highway or other Council owned land. Although the Council has no legal responsibility to provide assistance to residents during times of flooding, where possible, the Council will provide sandbags and other equipment to protect people or property within areas being affected by flooding on request.

However, in times of emergency the Council will be trying to protect the public at large and may not be able to assist a large number of individual homeowners who find their properties threatened.

Culverting Policy

St.Helens council considers it be beneficial for watercourses to remain in an open state for both flood defence and environmental purposes. Conserving watercourses is one of the councils main aims as the LLFA and, where possible will encourage and promote the removal of culverts in order to restore a more natural river environment where possible.

In considering new development proposals the LLFA objective is to retain open watercourses with a corridor of open land on both sides. This maintains a flood channel and creates a valuable environmental feature which can enhance the site, increase vegetation and provide vital habitat to wildlife. In some cases the Council will consider and weigh the options especially for access means and where the safety risk to the public is greater.

Funding

The public need to be aware in regard to the different types of flooding there are also different criteria that is required in gaining funding for flood relieve measures. While the Council has a budget to investigate flood issues and for some minor works, large scale flood schemes require grants or contributions from the Environment Agency, United Utilities or other organisations. In regard to Environment Agency grants these are only available while there are properties or businesses that have been internally affected. Meaning priority is usually given to those that have been internally affected.

Milestones

Outside the duty to update the strategy every six years there is no formal deadline for the strategy to be updated in-between this period, we believe that continued monitoring, review and development are essential to ensure that local flood risk management is responsive to changes. As the local knowledge of flood risk grows along with updates in flood modelling and new changes in legislation the Council will aim to update the document whenever possible.

Media Links

In times of adverse events, the Council’s website flood pages have recorded large numbers of visits. We will therefore exploit this as our main form of information provision and continue to develop the web pages to provide comprehensive appropriate links to specialist publications. Other applications such as the growing use of social media outlets as a means of communication will be investigated.



Public Engagement and Information

‘Valuable information and contacts for the public and businesses’

Flood Hub Public Resource

While the Council will provide certain information to the public, we have been working with the EA and other authorities to help develop a single information resource called the Flood Hub.

The Flood Hub has been designed to be a one stop shop for flood information and resources to support householders, businesses and communities across the North West in becoming more flood resilient.

This resource has valuable information as a homeowner or business in producing individual flood response plans, checking the flood risk of a property or getting advice for flood insurance. The website is as follows:

- <https://thefloodhub.co.uk/>

National Flood Forum

As a member of the public if you wish to receive advice if you have been affected by flooding. There is a charity dedicated to providing guidance, advice and support called the National Flood Forum. The details are as follows:

- Tel: 01299 403 055
Email: info@floodforum.org.uk
<https://nationalfloodforum.org.uk/>

Products and Equipment

While neither St Helens Council or the National Flood Forum endorse this site, it does provide a list of national suppliers for flood products and equipment and what standards to look for.

- <http://bluepages.org.uk/>



Contact us?

We would like all residents, businesses and other stakeholders to read the main strategy document, consider the aspects, which are most important to you and provide feedback. By giving us your feedback on the strategy, you can influence the way we reduce flood risk across St.Helens and how we plan for resilience against the impacts of climate change. If you just want to contact us or any other organisation, please use details below.

- www.sthelens.gov.uk

Full St.Helens Local Flood Risk Strategy is available at:

- www.sthelens.gov.uk/what-we-do/environmental-services/flood-management/

We have an email contact to send the feedback correspondence at:

flood@sthelens.gov.uk

Important Contacts

- St Helens Council
Tel: 01744 676789
www.sthelens.gov.uk
- Merseyside Police
Tel: 0151 709 6010
www.merseyside.police.uk
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
Tel: 0151 296 4000
www.merseyfire.gov.uk
- Mersey Regional Ambulance Service NHS
Tel: 0345 112 00990
www.nwas.nhs.uk
- United Utilities
Leaks: 0800 330033
Water Supply: 0845 746 2200
<http://www.unitedutilities.com/>
- Environment Agency
Flood line (24-hour) Tel: 0845 988 1188
Emergencies (24-hour) Tel: 0800 807 060
<http://www.environment-agency.gov.uk/>