

Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

Equality Impact Assessment

1.1 Introduction

An Impact Assessment is required when developing policies, plans or strategies and should be used to aid development and produce recommendations for decision makers, covering the potential social, environmental and economic impacts. The Devon County Council guidance on Impact Assessments has been followed during this procedure.

The Impact Assessment must be carried out as early on in the process as possible so that considerations can be taken in to account before decisions are made. Outcomes of this assessment have been taken into account whilst developing the Strategy and are evidenced in the Impact Assessment Form.

Social Impact

Under the Equality Act 2010 an Impact Assessment must consider the impact on all people, including vulnerable or excluded groups before any significant changes are made to policy or practice.

Environmental Impact

Environmental impacts must also be considered, which has been completed for Devon's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy in a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) under the European Directive 2001/42/EC "on the assessment of the effects of certain plans and programmes on the environment". The environmental report for the SEA can be found in Appendix C of the Strategy and the environmental issues will therefore not be covered in this Impact Assessment.

Economic Impact

One of the main impacts of implementing the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will be the improved protection of homes and businesses from flooding, resulting in more resilient communities and economy.

Another aspect of the economic impact assessment is socio-economic issues, where certain protected characteristics such as being elderly or disabled may be combined with socio-economic profiles such as someone on low income. It is felt that the socio-economic issues will need addressing as part of this Impact Assessment and will come under the Social (equality) Impact Assessment.

1.2 Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy

The Equality Impact Assessment for Devon's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy will be assessed on the aims, objectives and principles throughout

the main document, the criteria for prioritising works and investigating flood events and any other factors that will directly affect communities.

With the nature of this strategy and the programme of works and investment identified in the Appendix B Action Plan, further Equality Impact Assessments will be considered for individual flood risk management schemes and the associated communications.

Rural Nature of Devon

The rural nature of Devon means that the usual risk based approach, focusing on larger and more populated areas for investment in flood risk management is not always appropriate as this can lead to prioritising densely urban areas where the count of properties flooded is high, rather than rural areas where a small number of properties may have been affected on several occasions. The large number of agricultural businesses in the area could also be potentially overlooked in favour of protected businesses in urban areas.

As part of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment exercise for Devon, the threshold to identify a 'significant' flood in historic records was reduced to reflect the rural nature of Devon and the fact that in storm events, many smaller communities across the County are affected rather than one large urban location. The significance threshold given in Devon's Local Strategy to identify flood incidents that will be officially investigated under Section 19 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 has also been considered specifically for Devon and is consistent with other neighbouring Lead Local Flood Authorities across the South West Region with similar urban/rural distributions of the population.

Socio-economic issues also play a part here, where urban areas could potentially be populated by deprived members of the population. Therefore a balance needs to be met in how the flood risk in urban and rural areas is addressed.

Devon Local Flood Risk Management Strategy Aims and Objectives

Among the aims and objectives of the Local Strategy it is stated that Devon will encourage more effective risk management by enabling people, communities, businesses and the public sector to work together to ensure that emergency plans and responses to flood incidents are effective and that communities are able to respond properly to flood warnings, focusing on vulnerable properties and people more vulnerable to flooding, such as the elderly, those living with a disability or those living in areas of deprivation. These characteristics are also addressed in the Impact Assessment Form and mitigation measures explained.

Local Strategy Principles

A series of principles have been highlighted throughout the Local Strategy main document, which have all been taken into account in the overall Impact Assessment. Principle 13 shown below identifies characteristics and socio-economic issues to be taken into account in the implementation of raising awareness of flood risk and improving communication:

Principle 13: Raising Awareness and Improving Communication and Involvement

Through the Devon Strategic Flood Risk Management Partnership, all Partners will work together towards raising the awareness of the public (including those that are most vulnerable such as the elderly, those living with a disability or living in areas of deprivation) about flood risk and the roles of the Risk Management Authorities, providing clear and up to date information. Partners, stakeholders and the public will be involved as far as is practicable in actions to improve flood risk management to seek locally acceptable solutions which provide other benefits, such as green infrastructure with amenity use, and local transport routes in addition to a reduction in flood risk.

Prioritisation Criteria and Significance Thresholds

The Local Strategy includes prioritisation criteria for its associated Action Plan for investment. As a result of this assessment this has been amended to require risk to life to particularly take in to account the vulnerable, such as the elderly, those living with a disability or in areas of deprivation). Previously the criteria did not specify vulnerable groups.

Thresholds set for determining if an official flood investigation will be carried out following a flood incident have also been amended to include areas where it is considered that the vulnerable are at particular risk. Previously the threshold level did not specify vulnerable groups.

Emergency Planning and Response

The emergency response during a flood event falls outside of this local strategy and its actions and is dealt with by the emergency services, ensuring the safety and well being where possible, of any vulnerable groups and people at risk or in immediate danger.

The Devon, Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Local Resilience Forum have produced some emergency planning guidance in the form of a video to help get a clear message across to be prepared in an emergency and to advance equality to a range of people at risk: <https://services.devon.gov.uk/web/lrf/a-clear-plan>

1.3 Equality Impact Assessment Form

Table 1.1. Impact Assessment Form including mitigation measures in place.

Characteristic	Issues / Potential impacts	Assessment of potential impact High/Medium/Low		Mitigation/relevant policy or practice
		Positive	Negative	
Age	<p>Communication issues: Elderly members of communities may have difficulty in accessing material and reading advice about flood risk, due to poor eyesight, no internet access or being unable to get out to local community events and meetings.</p>	None	Medium	<p>In the promotion of the Local Strategy and raising flood awareness in Devon, a wide range of communication methods will be used, from local Town and Parish Councils to press releases and social media updates.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment will be required for individual schemes to assess the need to make sure that any publications or methods of reporting are accessible to the whole community affected.</p> <p>The Summary of the Local Strategy will be a very simplified explanation of the main and supporting documents aimed at the public, using plain English.</p>
	<p>Mobility issues: Elderly members of communities may have difficulty moving around inside and outside of their home and be less able to help</p>	None	High	<p>The prioritisation criteria for identifying areas for investment in flood risk management will need to identify areas with vulnerable community members, such as the old or those living with a disability. Planned works, schemes and community</p>

	themselves, which could put them in danger in the event of a flood.			action plans in these locations will reduce the flood risk and reduce any danger to the vulnerable population. Emergency plans will make specific reference to identifying vulnerable members of the community that will need assistance.
Disability	<p>Communication issues: Those living with a disability such as a mental health condition, learning difficulties or other brain/cognitive condition may have difficulty with understanding or communication.</p>	None	High	<p>In the promotion of the Local Strategy and raising flood awareness in Devon, a wide range of communication methods will be used, from local Town and Parish Councils to press releases and social media updates.</p> <p>An Equality Impact Assessment will be required for individual schemes to assess the need to make sure that any publications or methods of reporting are accessible to the whole community affected.</p> <p>The Summary of the Local Strategy will be a very simplified explanation of the main and supporting documents aimed at the public, using plain English.</p> <p>In addition to this, documents with larger print for example could be arranged on request for those with visual impairments.</p>
	<p>Mobility issues: Those living with a physical disability may have difficulty moving around inside and outside of their home and be less able to help themselves, which could put them in</p>	None	High	<p>The prioritisation criteria for identifying areas for investment in flood risk management will need to identify areas with vulnerable community members, such as the old or those living with a disability. Planned works, schemes and community</p>

	danger in the event of a flood.			action plans in these locations will reduce the flood risk and reduce any danger to the vulnerable population. Emergency plans will make specific reference to identifying vulnerable members of the community that will need assistance.
	Other issues: Those living with a mental health disability or other brain/cognitive condition may have difficulty coping emotionally in the event of a flood or with the fear of flooding.	None	Low	As part of raising the awareness of flooding and being prepared, Emergency Planning partners will be worked with closely and clear methods of communication will be promoted to reach as many people as possible and to advance equality, such as the Local Resilience Forum website and video advice available.
Gender reassignment/Identity	None	None	None	It is believed that any impacts will not adversely affect this group over any other.
Marriage and civil partnership	None	None	None	It is believed that any impacts will not adversely affect this group over any other.
Pregnancy/maternity	Mobility issues: See mobility issues with Age and Disability above.	None	Medium	See above for Age and disability: Mobility issues
Sex	None	None	None	It is believed that any impacts will not adversely affect this group over any other.
Sexual orientation	None	None	None	It is believed that any impacts will not adversely affect this group over any other.
Race/ethnicity	Communication issues: English may not be the first language of some members of the	None	Low	See above for Age: Communication issues If members of the community where English is not their first language were to

	community and therefore may be a barrier to clearly communicating flood risk and raising awareness.			be affected by any outcomes of the Strategy or proposed works, individual and appropriate measures would be put in place to ensure that they fully understand any impacts on them and their rights and responsibilities.
Religion/belief	None	None	None	It is believed that any impacts will not adversely affect this group over any other.
Deprived areas	Socio-economic issues: Those living in deprived areas may be more likely to receive investment for flood risk management, due to methods of prioritising communities and towns by assessing the number of properties at risk.	Medium	Low	The prioritisation criteria for prioritising communities at risk of flooding and the methods used for assessing if an official flood investigation will be carried out now both include considerations to be taken into account that particularly affect or endanger the vulnerable, including those living in deprived areas. This will cover both urban and rural locations.
Rural communities	Small rural communities with very few properties affected could be missed when prioritising flood risk management works due to the low number of properties affected.	None	Medium	Rural areas will be identified as such on the priority list and it will be recognised (Principle 8) that offering support to small communities and groups with individual property protection may be more appropriate than investing in a flood defence scheme, which could be costly, with little economic benefit.

1.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Age (specifically the elderly population) and disabled members of the population have both been identified as characteristics potentially susceptible to negative impacts of this Strategy and associated principles and actions. The reasons for this are for potential difficulties in communicating with the population and raising awareness of flood risk, in addition to the difficulties in mobility and safety during a flood event response and recovery process. Pregnant women or those with very young children also come under the mobility issues discussed.

Rural areas being missed as part of the prioritisation of works and the investigation of significant flood incidents has also been addressed in the Impact Assessment Form.

In many cases, a further Impact Assessment will be carried out to assess the particular impacts of individual communities affected by flood risk management works.

Table 1.1 summarises all of the issues and Table 1.2 below summarises the conclusions reached and any recommendations or changes made.

Table 1.2. Conclusions and recommendations of the Impact Assessment

✓	Outcome of Impact Assessment chosen	Reason for outcome chosen
	<p>No major change: The assessment made shows that the strategy and principles are robust and the evidence shows no potential for discrimination, taking all opportunities to advance equality between different groups.</p>	<p>The Strategy and principles throughout, aim to encourage more effective flood risk management and evidence how this will be delivered in the Action Plan for investment. Flooding can occur anywhere and affect all members of the population. This strategy sets out how flood risk will be communicated, managed and prioritised across Devon, whilst taking into account the needs of the diverse population with different characteristics identified in this assessment report.</p>
✓	<p>Amend the strategy/principles: Steps are required to amend the Strategy to include considerations to any groups at risk of discrimination or to remove barriers to advance equality between groups.</p>	<p>The prioritisation of flood risk management works often relies on the potential economic benefits. As a largely rural area, many small</p>
	<p>Continue with the strategy/principles: Adopting the strategy and principles despite any adverse effects on certain characteristics of the population or any missed opportunity to advance equality between groups.</p>	<p>The prioritisation of flood risk management works often relies on the potential economic benefits. As a largely rural area, many small</p>

<p>Stop/remove the strategy/principles: Removal of the strategy or specific policies is required due to unlawful discrimination or adverse effects which cannot be mitigated.</p>	<p>locations can be affected by flooding. Therefore methods have been set out showing how the rural areas will not be marginalised when prioritising works and studies.</p> <p>The threshold level for investigation of flood events and the prioritisation criteria for actions and investment at locations across Devon have been amended to ensure that vulnerable members of the population such as the elderly or those living with a disability are considered and are not adversely affected.</p>
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Impact Assessment completed by:	Responsible Officer:
Name/Job Title	Name/Job Title
Jessica Bott, Flood Risk Officer	Dave Black, Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment
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