



National Planning Framework 4 Early Engagement – Policies

**FLOODING**

Scottish Planning Policy (2014):

The **planning system** should promote:

- a precautionary approach to flood risk from all sources, including coastal, water course (fluvial), surface water (pluvial), groundwater, reservoirs and drainage systems (sewers and culverts), taking account of the predicted effects of climate change;
- flood avoidance: by safeguarding flood storage and conveying capacity, and locating development away from functional flood plains and medium to high risk areas;
- *flood reduction: assessing flood risk and, where appropriate, undertaking natural and structural flood management measures, including flood protection, restoring natural features and characteristics, enhancing flood storage capacity, avoiding the construction of new culverts and opening existing culverts where possible; and*
- *avoidance of increased surface water flooding through requirements for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and minimising the area of impermeable surface.*

*To achieve this the planning system should prevent development which would have a significant probability of being affected by flooding or would increase the probability of flooding elsewhere. Piecemeal reduction of the functional floodplain should be avoided given the cumulative effects of reducing storage capacity.*

**Development plans** should protect land with the potential to contribute to managing flood risk, using the following flood risk framework to guide development.

- *Little or No Risk – annual probability of coastal or watercourse flooding is less than 0.1% (1:1000 years)*
- *Low to Medium Risk – annual probability of coastal or watercourse flooding is between 0.1% and 0.5% (1:1000 to 1:200 years)*
- *Medium to High Risk – annual probability of coastal or watercourse flooding is greater than 0.5% (1:200 years)*

*Infrastructure and buildings should generally be designed to be free from surface water flooding in rainfall events where the annual probability of occurrence is greater than 0.5% (1:200 years).*

*Surface water drainage measures should have a neutral or better effect on the risk of flooding both on and off the site, taking account of rain falling on the site and run-off from adjacent areas.*

*In applying the risk framework to **development management**, the following should therefore be taken into account:*

- *the characteristics of the site;*
- *the design and use of the proposed development;*
- *the size of the area likely to flood;*
- *depth of flood water, likely flow rate and path, and rate of rise and duration;*
- *the vulnerability and risk of wave action for coastal sites;*
- *committed and existing flood protection methods: extent, standard and maintenance regime;*

- *the effects of climate change, including an allowance for freeboard;*
- *surface water run-off from adjoining land;*
- *culverted watercourses, drains and field drainage;*
- *cumulative effects, especially the loss of storage capacity;*
- *cross-boundary effects and the need for consultation with adjacent authorities;*
- *effects of flood on access including by emergency services; and*
- *effects of flood on proposed open spaces including gardens.*

*Land raising should only be considered in exceptional circumstances, FRA will generally be required for applications within areas identified at high or medium likelihood of flooding/flood risk in SEPA's flood maps.*

*Drainage Assessments will be required for areas where drainage is already constrained or otherwise problematic, or if there would be off-site effects.*

*SuDS proposals should be adequate for the development and appropriate long-term maintenance arrangements should be put in place.*

### **What has changed since 2014?**

- 14 Flood Risk Management Strategies<sup>1</sup> were published by SEPA in December 2015 . The strategies state the objectives, as agreed by responsible authorities, for tackling floods in high risk areas. Actions that will then deliver these objectives are described and prioritised in six-year planning cycles. Strategies contain objectives and actions that reflect national Land Use Planning policies and guidance.
- The strategies are supplemented by the local flood risk management plans<sup>2</sup> which were published in June 2016, They set out the detailed actions to be delivered in each plan district by individual councils and their partners.
- Updated version of statutory guidance<sup>3</sup> to SEPA, local authorities and Scottish Water on fulfilling their responsibilities under the Flood Risk Management (Scotland) Act 2009 was published in 2019.
- Scottish Government published online planning advice<sup>4</sup> on flood risk in 2015.
- SEPA has published a suite of guidance<sup>5</sup> on flood risk and land use planning since 2014, including guidance on development behind flood protection schemes and allowances for climate change on flood risk assessment.
- The Scottish Government's *Climate Ready Scotland: climate change adaptation programme 2019-2024*<sup>6</sup> sets out policies and proposals for the next five years to increase the capacity of Scotland's people, communities, businesses and public sector to adapt to climate change.
- The Scottish Government's *Living with flooding: an action plan for delivering property flood resilience in Scotland*<sup>7</sup> was published in November 2019. This includes a

<sup>1</sup> [Flood Risk Management Strategies](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Local Flood Risk Management Plans](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Delivering sustainable flood risk management: guidance \(2019\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Planning Advice on Flood Risk](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Guidance and advice notes](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Climate Ready Scotland: climate change adaptation programme 2019-2024](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Living with flooding: an action plan for delivering property flood resilience in Scotland](#)

recommendation that national guidance and policies should refer to property flood resilience.

- SEPA's *2018 National Flood Risk Assessment (NRFA2)* improves the understanding of flood hazard and risk across Scotland.

**Proposed key objective of NPF4:** To reduce the vulnerability of existing and future development to flooding.

**Issues to consider:**

- What guidance is needed to ensure that local development plans take a proactive approach to avoiding and reducing flood risk?
- What policies are needed to ensure that proper consideration is given to flood risk when considering proposals for new buildings and infrastructure?
- How can NPF4 best complement existing environmental legislation, strategies and guidance, including that from other national bodies?
- Is there a need to safeguard land that is required for current or future flood management?
- How can we ensure that new developments are resilient to increased flooding due to climate change?

## Get Involved

For more information and other resources



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