



Environment and Transport Committee
Date of meeting 30 June 2011

Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for Surrey

Purpose of the report: Scrutiny of Services

This paper presents to the Environment and Transport Committee, the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment report for Surrey and provides background to the assessment process.

Introduction:

- 1 As part of the Flood Risk Regulations 2009, all Unitary Authorities and County Councils, have been designated as Lead Local Flood Authorities and tasked with producing a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment for their area.
- 2 The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment applies only to flooding from surface water, groundwater, ordinary water courses and canals and does not include flooding from rivers.
- 3 The report is presented in Annex 1 of this paper.
- 4 The report follows a set specification provided in the Defra and Environment Agency Guidance documents. A summary sheet is presented in Annex 2 of this paper.

Background

- 5 Following decades of flooding across Europe, the European Commission produced the European Floods Directive (Directive 2007/60/EC) to assess the current situation and to look for potential solutions to reduce the risk from flooding in the future.

- 6 The Flood and Water Management Act was originally intended to take The European Commission's Floods Directive forward, however, the Flood Risk Regulations were introduced to provide a more timely transposition of the European directive.
- 7 The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment report is a high level screening exercise to identify areas of significant risk of surface water flooding. The information is to be submitted to the Environment Agency on 22 June 2011, and minor amendments confirmed to them by 19 August. The Environment Agency will then collate it into their River Catchment Basin Area reports before it is submitted to the European Commission.

Flooding

- 8 The information being gathered by this process is being used to authenticate the flooding modelled at the national level and to identify flooding at a regional level. The critical information that Unitaries and Counties are providing has been recorded in extensive pre formatted spreadsheets in the annexes of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report. The text in the report basically outlines the methodology and assumptions used.
- 9 The first part of the process has involved the use of sophisticated geographical computer models. This type of work is currently beyond the capabilities of County and Unitary Authorities, so has been carried out by Defra. This has produced 10 national flood areas within England. These areas are all based around cities or large towns and are termed, 'Indicative Flood Risk Areas'. London is the largest of these areas. The areas are shown in Annex 3 of this paper.

It is worth noting at this point, that a lot of areas that have had extensive media coverage of flooding, for example Gloucestershire in 2007, are not Indicative Flood Risk Areas.

A small portion, approximately 5% of the London Indicative Flood Risk Area, falls within Surrey. These areas that overlap into Surrey are shown in Annex 4 of this paper.

- 10 The second part of the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment process, is for the Unitary and County Councils to validate the Indicative Flood Risk Areas given to them. To do this, we have engaged Districts, Boroughs and other stakeholders to gather flooding information. For many this will have been an onerous task, however in Surrey, considerable information was already in the county's possession from the work initiated by the SCC Flooding Task Group (2007- 2009). The methodology for the validation is based around using data gathered from stakeholders and checking it against the geographical computer models created by Defra.

The sections of the Indicative Flood Risk Area in Surrey were validated by the County and a recommendation to slightly extend them registered.

- 11 The third part of the process was for the authorities to identify areas of 'significant flood risk'. This process is aimed at picking up areas like the 2007 Gloucestershire floods . In the 2007 Gloucestershire floods, 5000 homes were flooded, 48,000 homes lost electricity and 130,000 had to be provided with bottled water .The Welham power station was very nearly inundated. If it had been lost, 250,000 people would have been without electricity. Similarly if the Mythe Water treatment works had been lost, 350,000 people would have been without drinking water. This would have lead to a mass evacuation of a large part of the county. No areas of significant flood risk were identified in Surrey. However it is recognised that localised parts of Surrey are regularly affected by flooding. These areas will be addressed in local flood management plans brought forward by the Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board when it is formed later this year.
- 12 For Surrey and the majority of authorities who don't have any Indicative Flood Risk Areas or significant flood risk areas, the most important outcome from the process isn't in the report, being submitted to Europe, but the vast amount of data on surface water flooding that is now held in authority databases. This combined with the relationships and communication channels that have been established with other stakeholders will prove to be invaluable to the Surrey Flood Risk Partnership Board in developing its surface water flood risk policy.
- 13 The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is in a draft status at present, as SCC are currently waiting for an instruction from the Environment Agency as to whether or not the County should report on the London Indicative Flood Risk Area that falls within Surrey. If it is decided that the consultant working for 'Drain London' is to report on it, those sections will be removed from the Surrey Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment report.

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| Conclusions: |
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- 14 The County have complied with their statutory duty to produce the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report

Financial and value for money implications

- 15 Financial implications are as yet unknown.

Equalities Implications

- 16 The production of a Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is the first stage in producing a flood risk policy for the County. Flooding affects all parts of the community but it has been recognised that the vulnerable are

generally more at risk during flood events. The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is the first step in reducing this risk.

Risk Management Implications

- 17 The appointment of Surrey County Council as a Local Lead Flood Authority has resulted in additional statutory duties, which has increased the County's responsibilities. The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is the first stage in managing and subsequently reducing the risk associated with those new responsibilities.

Implications for the Council's Priorities or Community Strategy/Local Area Agreement Targets

- 18 None

Recommendations:

- 19 It is recommended that the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is agreed and confirmed to the Environment Agency by 19 August for inclusion in their River Catchment Basin Area Reports to the European Commission.

Next steps:

The areas identified as Indicative Flood Risk Areas will have to be mapped for risk and hazards over the next 2 years and a Flood Risk Management Plan produced for those areas by 2015.

In 2017 the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment will be reviewed.

Report contact: Mark Howarth, Drainage Asset Team Leader, Operations, Highways and Countryside. Environment and Infrastructure.

Contact details: 01483 517431 / mark.howarth@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers:

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