

# Leicester Strategy consultation

## Frequently asked questions and answers

15-08-17

### **Q) What is the difference between this Strategy and the council's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy?**

The two documents complement each other. As the Lead Local Flood Authority for Leicester, the council were required to produce a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, which was published in 2015. The council's Strategy has been used to engage local communities in developing local flood risk management decisions.

The council's Strategy referred to the development of this Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy as a medium term action to address flooding arising from rivers, watercourses and surface water runoff. The Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy is being delivered jointly by the Environment Agency and Leicester City Council.

### **Q) Leicester hasn't flooded badly in recent years so why do we need new defences?**

River banks in several parts of the city came close to being overtopped during storms in November 2012 and the evidence we have collated, including computer modelling, has shown that many properties are at risk in more severe flood events. The effect of climate change will increase this risk in the future.

### **Q) Some of the proposals you are recommending through the Strategy involve the building of new defences or the raising of existing ones. Have you looked sufficiently at sustainable flood risk management options such as land use management, rainwater harvesting and SUD's? Is the Strategy sustainable – we can't keep building and raising defences, especially with the predicted impacts of climate change.**

The Leicester Strategy looked first at sustainable, long-term solutions. Those suitable for the River Soar and its major tributaries are natural flood management in upper parts of the catchment and along the River Soar, and improving / creating flood storage areas throughout the city. Following these actions, there is still a residual flood risk – the severity of which requires the need for new / improved flood defences / walls.

### **Q) If you build your defences even higher will this mean that we will never flood again from the River Soar and its major tributaries?**

No. The flood defences proposed will be designed to a specific standard of protection. There is a chance that a larger flood event may occur in the River Soar Catchment in Leicester, and these defences could overtop and cause

flooding. For that reason, members of the public still need to understand their own flood risk and know what actions they can take to reduce the potential damages and to stay safe in a flood event.

However, the proposed Leicester Strategy has defined a solution that will reduce this risk to a less than one in 75 year chance of occurrence in many sections of the catchment.

Although for many areas we are proposing a greater standard of protection than currently exists, there is still a chance of flooding due to large flood events. It is therefore still important to make sure that you are informed by our flood warning service.

**Q) The Strategy doesn't make it clear, how increased flows/levels will be managed as a result of climate change?**

The preferred solution for the Leicester Strategy has considered the projected effects of climate change for the next 75 years. Climate change mitigation is built into our proposals. However, the specific effects of climate change are uncertain and will be constantly monitored (and the Strategy updated) as and when required with regular review intervals.

**Q) You have not provided dates about when individual flood risk management schemes will start on the ground. Why not?**

Once the Leicester Strategy is approved we will be in a position to apply for government funding and may need to obtain additional contributions from partner organisations. We will also need to undertake detailed engineering design of the schemes, which will involve various investigations and surveys, obtaining relevant permits and permissions, and consulting with landowners and other aspects. It is anticipated that the minimum period of time for these to be completed is two years, but for many of the schemes it is likely to be longer.

**Q) Why have we discounted dredging as an option to manage flood risk? Surely this would reduce water levels and reduce flood risk.**

This has not been taken forward as an option because dredging the riverbed has little effect in reducing flooding and has a significant detrimental environmental impact. It is also an expensive option which is not sustainable because it would have to be repeated on a regular basis.

**Q) Your proposals don't mention of how surface water will be managed. In recent flood events, poor surface water drainage has caused more problems than river flooding.**

Our proposals will ensure that any surface water flooding is not made more severe, and where possible will be reduced due to improved local drainage

(where new defences / schemes are proposed). For the wider study area, we are looking at ways of partnering with companies such as Severn Trent Water to produce a joint methodology to combat this issue.

**Q) Why are you recommending different standards of protection across the catchment? Surely everyone should get the same standard of protection?**

The standard of protection has been based upon an economic and environmental analysis. The benefit / cost ratio will have to be assessed on a case by case basis to comply with the government's funding rules and this is one of the factors that decides the standard of protection for each scheme. It is not practically or economically possible to apply the same standard of protection across the entire catchment.

**Q) The Strategy talks about protecting property from flooding. Why aren't you proposing to protect critical infrastructure such as hospitals, water treatment works and road / railway links?**

Some critical infrastructure will be protected by our proposals, but the funding available from government (Flood Defence Grant in Aid) is primarily targeted at reducing flood risk to existing residential properties and businesses.

**Q) The Strategy talks about environmental improvements and enhancements, which will cost money. Can't we use this money to protect more houses and businesses?**

The money used for environmental enhancements and improvements would not have been used to create additional flood defence schemes – nor to raise the standard of protection to existing schemes or those that we have proposed.

**Q) What are you going to do in the interim while we are waiting for the flood schemes?**

The Environment Agency is looking to expand the coverage of our flood warning service in Leicester. We will also continue our existing flood risk management work in Leicester working with partner organisations– providing annual maintenance and upkeep of existing defences.

**Q) Is there anything I should be doing while we wait for the flood defences?**

Sign up to the Environment Agency Flood Warning service and read our guidance on how to make your property flood resilient, and advice on what to do in a flood event. Further information is available online:

<https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/>

**Q) How do I find out whether I can insure my home for flooding?**

To find out whether you can insure your home, contact a range of insurers to obtain quotes. It's good to shop around.

If you live in an area of high flood risk or where there have been previous insurance claims for flooding, you may need to find a specialist insurer, or use a broker to obtain insurance. The National Flood Forum also provides advice on obtaining flood insurance. The Environment Agency has no role in determining insurance cover or setting premiums – that is a matter for insurers.

**Q) Will my insurance go up as my area is shown on your maps as being at flood risk?**

The Environment Agency has no role in determining insurance cover or setting premiums. Insurers are free to use whichever data they like to determine whether to offer insurance and at what price. We make our information on flood risk available to insurers, who may use it alongside other information to make decisions about flood insurance.

If the 'risk of flooding from rivers and sea or risk of flooding from surface water' map shows your area to be at risk of flooding then the flood risk may affect whether flood insurance is available and at what cost.

A new scheme was launched in April 2016 called Flood Re that is designed to help households in flood risk areas to find affordable home insurance.

Flood Re is a re-insurance scheme, so homeowners don't deal with them directly. The homeowner can search for and buy home insurance through the usual methods. Insurers can then pass responsibility of the flood risk part of the policy to Flood Re if necessary and cap the cost of premiums based on the council tax band of the property in question.

For more information on Flood Re, including whether you are eligible, please go to [www.floodre.co.uk](http://www.floodre.co.uk)

**Q) What is going to be the effect on development?**

We will continue to consider proposed development on a site by site basis and work in accordance with the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which sets out government policy on development and flood risk.

Its aims are to ensure that flood risk is taken into account at all stages in the planning process to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding, and to direct development away from areas of highest risk.

Local planning authorities are responsible for determining applications for planning permission taking into account all material considerations including

the issue of flood risk. We are a statutory consultee in this process and will participate in the consultation process at every opportunity.

The Environment Agency powers in respect of flood defence work are permissive: we are not obliged to maintain or build defences but have permissive powers to carry out flood defence works.

Local planning authorities have a responsibility to identify that sufficient land is available for housing in accordance with their local plans.

The Environment Agency will work with local planning authorities to ensure that flood risk is a consideration when land is allocated and the most appropriate locations for development are identified.

#### **Q) Where can I find more information?**

The Leicester Integrated Flood Risk Management Strategy public engagement documents can be found on the consultation website:

<https://consultations.leicester.gov.uk/communications/flood-plan>

The Environment Agency also has related information available online:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/leicester-flood-risk-management-strategy>