

# Thames flooding – the RFCC approach

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# Thames RFCC 'Periodic Report 2011-2017'

'The Regional Flood and Coastal Committee (RFCC) advises on how organisations work together to deliver an integrated approach to flood and coastal risk management across the Thames catchment. The Environment Agency is required to respond to our advice. We play an important role in shaping priorities enabling local input to decisions. We influence and approve the programme of new schemes and the maintenance programme. Our elected members also agree a levy on Council Tax that is invested in flood risk initiatives.'

# Thames RFCC 'Periodic Report 2011-2017'

'Thames RFCC comprises 13 elected Council members whose portfolio includes flooding, 11 independent members, who range from technical experts to residents affected by flooding, and a Chair appointed by the Environment Minister.

Members work closely with Environment Agency staff, who support the Committee, and with Local Authorities, Thames Water, community groups and a range of other partners such as farmers, utility providers and the wider business community.'

# 3 purposes set by the Environment Minister

We promote:

- joined up plans to identify, communicate and manage flood risks
- joined up programmes of works to benefit communities at risk efficiently
- Joined up partners better able to tackle flood risk

# RFCC brings together representatives from:

- the Environment Agency – which leads in reducing flood risk from “main rivers”, the sea and reservoirs.
- County and Unitary Councils which have a lead role in relation to flood risk from surface water, groundwater and more minor “ordinary water courses”. They are known as “Lead Local Flood Authorities”.
- Water Companies, which lead on reducing the risk of sewer flooding.

Collectively these organisations are known as Risk Management Authorities.

# Catchment planning:

The Thames catchment provides a strong unifying logic promoting collective working by many partners throughout the area.

For example, schemes in Essex protect communities in London and flood risk in West London is influenced by the interplay of the tide from the east and river flows from upstream to the west.

# 7 point approach

1. **Slowing the flow of water in the upper catchment** and upstream of settlements by encouraging land management that retains more water, including leaky dams and storage areas, to reduce peak flows.
2. **Helping built up areas adapt to become more “rain ready”** by encouraging urban redesign and approaches to new development that provide space for water, slow and reduce runoff into drains and sewers, and create more resilient buildings and infrastructure.
3. **Empowering village communities to become more resilient to flooding** and supporting water level management where appropriate.
4. **Promoting the value of floodplains**, which can store water away from properties, and the opening up of rivers that have been covered over or put in channels.
5. **Delivering forward-looking, integrated schemes**, including major projects where appropriate, making the most of redevelopment opportunities and any new development, partnerships, alignments and wider benefits.
6. **Supporting plans for managing tidal flood risk in the Thames estuary** ensuring timely actions to keep pace with climate change and rising sea levels, including acting now to safeguard strategic sites and enable the setting back of buildings over time.
7. **Promoting maintenance**, the roles of land and property owners, and the need for contingency plans recognising not all flooding can be prevented.

# Example - Slowing the Flow

- Slowing the Flow at the catchment scale can help keep water out of rivers and help manage flood risk, in all but the largest events
- Slowing the flow often involves extensive activities over large areas of land, rather than intensive defences constructed in a small area
- Slowing the Flow is often achieved through techniques known as Working with Natural Processes or Natural Flood Management
- These techniques are measured on the amounts of water held back in a catchment rather than the number of properties they protect
- So the RFCC cannot easily use DEFRA FRM grant monies to fund NFM
- We currently fund most NFM work from the LA Local Levy monies



# Some issues for Thames RFCC, include

- Understanding flood risk in each sub-catchment of the Thames, rather than just in specific sites with a risk of flooding
- How to work with RMAs and other stakeholders in identifying site based and Slowing the Flow actions in each sub-catchment
- How to cost the range of possible actions and ensure VFM
- How to encourage more partnership working in funding and delivery
- How to ensure maximum multiple benefits from FRM schemes
- How to gather evidence for the value of Slow the Flow expenditure
- How to ensure best join-up between public funding for flood risk management, agri-environment, economic development etc