

Delivering Sustainable Flood Risk Management – a consultation

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*Please Note:

The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and The James Hutton Institute

From 1 April 2011, The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute and SCRI (Scottish Crop Research Institute) will join forces to become [The James Hutton Institute](#). By bringing together existing expertise in crop research, soils and land use, The James Hutton Institute will be a world leader of research to tackle key global issues surrounding the sustainable use of land, water and the environment and will enhance Scotland's long-standing international reputation as a centre of scientific and research expertise. Our vision is to be a world leader in research into the sustainable use of land, water and all the natural resources we need to preserve human life, the environment and the health and wealth of all nations. This will be achieved by delivering high quality, innovative research in support of knowledge, products and services; to support policy makers and the communities they serve with the aim of meeting global demands on our finite natural resources of land and water.

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE

- 1. Do you agree that the outcomes described in the introduction will support improvements to how floods are managed across Scotland? If not, please describe your concerns or alternative outcomes.**

We welcome the outcomes set out in the introduction. In particular we welcome the focus on the role of the development planning system to avoid flood risk in the first place. The emphasis on the integration of flood risk management policy with other land management and water management policies is vital.

Whilst it is stated that the list of examples of relevant policy areas is not exhaustive, we would like to see pillar 1 of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) included. As set out in a recent report¹, the CAP distributes around £600 million per year in Scotland; most of this is through Pillar 1 (direct support through the Single Farm Payment) but also through Pillar 2 (rural development funding [which is in the list]).

Consideration of the potential role of Pillar 1 should also be explored as a matter of urgency. The [Final Pack Report](#)² (2010) argues that integrated land and water management (i.e. flood management) in a changing climate should be considered as one of the "global challenges" within the Top-Up funds (50% of Pillar 1 in non LFA and 30% of Pillar 1 in the LFA). The report states that: "Top Up payments using Pillar 1 money are designed to incentivise transformational change to develop farming systems which produce food in a competitive way, but which also address the global challenges and deliver important public benefits." Recommendation 6 of the report is: "A proportion of Pillar 1 funding should be used to create a Top Up Fund to encourage transformational change: in short, a more sustainable agricultural industry which contributes towards tackling the global challenges." This provides a clear opportunity for flood management that should not be missed. However, any work in this area **needs to happen now** as reform of the CAP is currently underway and once decisions are made, they are difficult to change for many years.

- 2. Do you agree that local authorities should lead on surface water management and that this work should form part of a local flood risk management plan? If not, please describe your concerns and alternative proposals.**

Yes

- 3. Do you support the active role of stakeholders in flood management planning and do you have views on how to ensure stakeholders can be become more involved in decision making?**

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/07/28114639/0>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/inquiry>

We agree that stakeholders should play an active role on flood management planning. However, we are concerned about the burden this imposes because of the many different policies stakeholders are asked to become involved with. Recent legislation requires stakeholder involvement in river basin managements, flood risk management, and marine planning to name but a few. There is significant overlap relating to issues, solutions and governance/participation across many of these areas. They need to be strongly managed.

Efforts should be made to reduce consultation fatigue, and ensure efficiencies across different stakeholder groups.

4. Do you agree that the type of partnership working set out in this section will be necessary to deliver flood risk management plans and actions? Are there any alternative arrangements to partnership working that should be set out in the guidance?

We agree that partnership working is necessary to the delivery of flood risk management. We are encouraged that this will take place given the successful history of partnership working in the area of flood risk management in Scotland so far.

We would like to highlight the importance of partnership working across policy areas, as discussed above to ensure efficient implementation of different policies and the realisation of multiple benefits. These include river basin management planning, rural development planning, marine planning, the forthcoming land use strategy and so on.

5. Do you have views on barriers to partnership working and how these can be overcome?

Partnership working needs to be inclusive, combining policy, agency and practitioners. Land managers have been particularly difficult to engage with and particular efforts need to be made to include this sector. Our research suggests that “trusted intermediaries” can be used to act between the policy community and practitioners where existing relationships are inadequate.

We would argue that partnership working might be improved if stakeholders are better defined. In theory 'stakeholders' is just about everybody. If there is a clear rationale for stakeholder engagement, noting the type of stakeholders thought relevant, and how to engage with them, this will help the whole process to be clearer and more focused. It may also help avoid consultation fatigue and encourage substantive discussion rather than box ticking.

Dr Kirsty Blackstock from the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute has been conducting research on the effectiveness of the river basin management process, much of it examining partnership working. She particularly notes the following barriers (and solutions) to effective partnership working:

Too high level: Scale is important in partnership working. Making partnerships locally relevant and focussed on locally specific issues is important. A local focus for flood partnerships is important.

Relations between local and national groups: Improving the relationship between the national groups and associated local groups, and providing mutual support between the two is vital.

Ticking boxes not “doing”: The focus of a partnerships should be on ‘doing’ rather than procedure or ‘ticking boxes’ to comply regulations.

6. Do you support the risk-based approach as set out and its importance to flood risk management? If not, please describe your concerns and alternative proposals.

Yes

7. Do you agree that SEPA should publish and maintain advice on assessing, modelling, mapping and sharing data? If not, please describe your concerns and alternative proposals to delivering consistent assessments of flood risk.

Yes

8. Do you have any other views on how to simplify the communication of flooding information to the public?

In a recent workshop with land managers and their representatives on natural flood management³ a number of means to communicate the flooding message were put forward:

- Get the message across in schools, colleges and universities
- Use farm advisors to communicate the message. Training of the advisers may be needed
- Simple, accessible and consistent messages need to be used frequently and in different fora to get the message across.

The Macaulay Land Use Research Institute is currently undertaking additional research in this area through [UR-Flood](#) relating to flood risk understanding and communication to vulnerable communities. This project will report later in the summer. (See <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/urflood/index.php>)

We would also argue that early action on flood management is useful, not just for itself, but because it can act as a very effective communication tool and help to spread the message to other stakeholders.

9. Do you agree that SEPA should take a lead role in assessing catchment characteristics and promoting a catchment approach to flood risk management?

Adopting a catchment based approach to flood risk management is vital. However, we would argue that SEPA may not be best placed to promote this. A number of research projects conducted by the Macaulay Land Use

³ <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/water/nfmworkshop/>

Research Institute has shown that SEPA is seen as an enforcer rather than a facilitator by many land management stakeholders. In her research on river basin management plans Kirsty Blackstock found that land managers see that SEPA offers policy advice on the one hand and yet enforces policy on the other. This is seen as conflicting and problematic.

In a recent workshop with land managers and their representatives on natural flood management, Langan and Kenyon⁴ found that whilst participants agreed that an integrated catchment based approach was needed for flood risk management (and other policies) a “trusted intermediary” was needed to promote this. SEPA was seen as a policeman. Two examples of a trusted intermediary are: the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute itself in the Tarland catchment and the wider river Dee (MLURI chairs the management group), and the Tweed Forum, in the Tweed Catchment.

Promoting a catchment approach through such a trusted intermediary or catchment champion has numerous additional benefits: trust; independence; can aim to deliver multiple benefits; can consider how land managers and other stakeholders can meet multiple policy drivers; they can co-ordinate and access multiple funding streams; they may be funded from non-direct government funding such as LEADER (for Tweed Forum) or research funding from Government and elsewhere (for Macaulay).

10. Is there any further guidance needed at this stage on promoting the needs of the rural sector or other sectors?

We very much welcome the section on “Promoting and balancing the needs of the rural sector”. We would argue that for far too long land management stakeholders have not been engaged in the flood management debate. This is improving. However, given the key role that land managers will have to play in flood management if implementation of the Act is to be successful, an ongoing and concerted effort is needed to engage this group. All responsible authorities need to be involved in this effort throughout Scotland. Scottish Government has a role to encourage this discussion and engagement, and indeed needs to ensure that the agricultural groups within Government are involved in the flood management policy discussions.

Evidence from the Tarland workshops with land managers and their representatives, highlights the importance on non-financial incentives to encourage implementation of natural flood management, alongside financial compensation. This consultation document seems to focus on financial incentives. At least some reference to discussion, negotiation and communication with land managers with respect to natural flood management might be usefully included.

11. Do you support the principles of integrated urban drainage set out in this section? If not, please provide views on alternative principles.

⁴ <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/water/nfmworkshop/>

No response

12. Do you have views on any alternative approaches to targeting effort to assess and manage surface water flooding?

No response

13. Do you have any views on the potential role of a national flood management target, for instance to reduce all known flood risks to a medium or lower level of risk, to help focus efforts to manage flood risk?

No response

14. Are there any aspects of selecting sustainable actions that have been omitted and should be added to the guidance?

No response

15. Do you support the appraisal process set out in this Section and Annex 2? If not, please describe your concerns and alternative proposals.

We support the appraisal process set out in this section and in Annex 2. However, we are concerned that whilst the processes and techniques set out are well established and used in some academic and policy circles, our experience is that they are many flood management stakeholders (including some responsible authorities) are not familiar with them. For example at flood stakeholder events we often hear participants saying it is not possible to value environmental benefits in monetary terms. We suggest that work is done to raise awareness of these techniques and processes amongst stakeholders, specifically within the flood and Scottish context. Only when stakeholders are familiar with these techniques will they be implemented appropriately. Research that has been carried out (e.g. Kenyon, 2007⁵) and is planned within the Scottish Government core research programme at the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute (soon to be the James Hutton Institute) and the Scottish Agricultural College will address some of these issues. Dissemination of this and other related work to stakeholders in an accessible and concise format would be valuable.

16. Is there any further guidance that you would like to see set out at this time to support a fuller assessment of environmental and social impacts?

See above

17. Do you agree that the steps outlined to support better access to information and public participation are needed?

No response

⁵ Evaluating flood risk management options in Scotland: A participant led multi-criteria approach., Kenyon, W. (2007) [Ecological Economics](#), 64, 70-81

18. Are there any further steps that could be taken to improve participation and engagement with the public on flooding matters?

Please see response to question 8.

19. What additional topics do you feel should be covered by this guidance or subsequent guidance, and who should be responsible for that guidance?

Whilst we are aware that guidance is required to ensure successful implementation of the Act, and is indeed a requirement of parts of the Act, the publication of guidance of itself will not reduce flood risk. We are very keen to see early and effective action on the ground so that the economic, social and environmental costs of flooding can be reduced as soon as possible. Early action is useful, not just for itself, but because it can act as an effective communication tool and help to spread the message to other stakeholders.