External briefing

Changes to the Flood Map for Planning service

For: Local planning authority and lead local flood authority staff involved in development planning

Summary

- On **28 May 2026** we are planning to add new surface water climate change extents and banded depth information to the Flood Map for Planning (FMfP).
- New datasets will:
  - Add to the present day surface water flood risk extents already on the Flood Map for Planning service.
  - Help inform flood risk assessments, strategic flood risk assessments and SuDS strategies, making them cheaper and easier to produce.
  - Inform decisions on the location and design of development, ensuring it will be safe and resilient, without increasing risk elsewhere.
  - End the need for planners and developers to use the surface water flood risk information on the Check Your Long Term Flood Risk (CYLTFR) service.

Background

In March 2025 we added new flood risk information to the FMfP. This included new surface water flood risk information, but for present day only.

Providing surface water flood risk information that includes the possible effects of climate change will help enable sustainable development, ensuring the right development in the right places. This will make it easier for local authorities and developers to understand the level of flood risk from surface water and inform decisions about the location and design of development.

What changes are we making to the Flood Map for Planning?

We plan to add new surface water flood risk extents which account for climate change. We will also add banded depth information for surface water. This updated information will also be available from the Defra Data Services Platform (DSP) at:

- Flood Map for Planning – Surface Water Spatial Planning Extents – Climate Change
- Flood Map for Planning – Surface Water Spatial Planning Depths – Climate Change
- Flood Map for Planning – Surface Water Spatial Planning Extents – Present Day
- Flood Map for Planning – Surface Water Spatial Planning Depths – Present Day

The Flood Zones and existing present day surface water flood risk extents will be unchanged by this update.

We previously advised you to use surface water information hosted on CYLTFR as the best available information. The new datasets on Flood Map for Planning will now be more appropriate as the data better aligns with the climate change scenario and time horizon needed for most planning applications. Upon publication, we therefore recommend that you remove the CYLTFR surface water datasets from the GIS tools you use for development planning. The layers you should remove and stop using for development planning are:

- Risk of flooding from surface water – present day extents and depths
- Risk of flooding from surface water – climate change extents and depths

How will the new surface water datasets be used in planning?

The new datasets should be used to identify the potential need for and to inform the carrying out of:

- A site-specific flood risk assessment
- The sequential test (exemptions may apply)

The new datasets can also help to inform the design of sustainable drainage systems and the preparation of strategic flood risk assessments.

We will be updating our guidance to explain how the new datasets have been produced to support how planners and developers can use them.

How and when should the new surface water datasets be used in planning? Are there transitional arrangements for live applications?

You should add the new surface water flood risk datasets to the GIS tools you use for development planning as soon as they are published. As before, we recommend the use of data feeds to ensure your tools always display the latest version of the layer.

You can start using the new surface water datasets straightaway. Local planning authorities will need to consider how to transition to the new datasets for live applications. This should include consideration of whether lead local flood authorities will need to be re-consulted in cases where they have already provided advice. We recommend that local planning authorities and lead local flood authorities consider discussing and agreeing transitional arrangements in advance of publication.

In some cases, for example, where a site not previously at risk now lies within a flood risk area, the new datasets may trigger a new requirement for a flood risk assessment and sequential test (exemptions apply). In other cases, the new datasets may trigger the need for applicants to update existing flood risk assessments, sequential tests or sustainable drainage system designs. Please note that statutory consultation arrangements with lead local flood authorities on major development have not changed.

It is important that users of any flood risk data always check that it is suitable for its intended use.

Do the new datasets affect the Environment Agency's role?

The Environment Agency is not a statutory consultee on surface water flood risk. Our flood risk advice will continue to be focused on river and sea flooding. The new surface water datasets do not need to trigger consultation or re-consultation with the Environment Agency. Local planning authorities should continue to follow the process set out in National Flood Risk Standing Advice for Local Planning Authorities to determine if the Environment Agency should be consulted.

What's the difference between the surface water datasets on Check Your Long Term Flood Risk and Flood Map for Planning? Which datasets can be used for planning?

The present day surface water extents on FMfP and CYLTFR are identical. However, the climate change scenarios shown will differ.

Digital service	Climate change scenario	Time horizon
Flood Map for Planning	Upper end (95th percentile)	2070s epoch (2061-2125)
Check your long term flood risk	Central (50th percentile)	2050s epoch (2040 to 2060)

The surface water climate change scenario and time horizon used on CYLTFR, fall short of those needed for most planning proposals – as set out in our Flood risk assessment: climate change allowances. Additionally, the depth information provided on CYLTFR did not provide appropriate information for use in planning.

Now that we are adding more suitable climate change and banded depth information to FMfP, planners and developers will no longer need to use the surface water datasets on CYLTFR. Rivers, sea and surface water flood risk information, suitable for development planning, will now all be available on the FMfP.

How are we communicating this change?

This briefing aims to inform relevant local planning authorities and lead local flood authorities about this change.

Further supporting guidance is, or will be, available from:

- Our SharePoint site for risk management authorities
- DSP Meta Data
- How to use flood map for planning data*
- National flood risk standing advice for local planning authorities*
- How to prepare a strategic flood risk assessment
- Guidance for developers and FRA consultants on the Town and Country Planning Association website (including a Product Suitability Diagram) and on Flood risk assessments: applying for planning permission*

* Expected to be available from 28 May 2026

Further information

If you need further information about these changes, please use the following contacts.

For local support on what our data means for planning decisions in your area, please contact your local Environment Agency Sustainable Places team.

For questions about the Flood Map for Planning datasets (including supporting datasets on the DSP) or custodianship, please contact the Risk Assessment team.

For questions about planning-related guidance, including how to use the Flood Map for Planning datasets, please contact the Coastal Resilience and Development Planning team.