



<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Correspondence Report</b>
<b>Committee Report Submitted To:</b>	<b>Environmental Services Committee</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	<b>10<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b>
<b>For Decision or For Information</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>To be discussed In Committee</b>	<b>No</b>

<b>Linkage to Council Strategy (2021-25)</b>	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Establish key relationships with Government, agencies and potential strategic partners
Lead Officer	Director of Environmental Services

<b>Budgetary Considerations</b>	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	N/A
Capital/Revenue	N/A
Code	N/A
Staffing Costs	N/A

<b>Legal Considerations</b>	
Input of Legal Services Required	<b>NO</b>
Legal Opinion Obtained	<b>NO</b>

<b>Screening Requirements</b>	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	<del>Yes/No</del> N/A	Date:

## **1.0 Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

**2.0** The following correspondence has been received:

**2.1 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), dated 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (copy attached)**

### **Summary**

#### **Re. Pet Abduction Act 2024**

Correspondence from DAERA dated 4th June 2024 advising that the Pet Abduction Act 2024, which was given Royal Assent on 24 May 2024, creates specific offences for the abduction of dogs and cats in Northern Ireland and England.

### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended** that the Environmental Services Committee consider the correspondence.

**2.2 Ards and North Down Borough Council, dated 18<sup>th</sup> June 2024 (copy attached)**

### **Summary**

#### **Re. Request to DAERA for introduction of enforcement powers**

Correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council dated 18th June 2024, asking Council to consider supporting their request made to DAERA to introduce enforcement powers to deal with instances of bins being left on streets for prolonged periods.

### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended** that the Environmental Services Committee consider the correspondence.

## **2.3 Department for Infrastructure, dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 (copy attached)**

### **Summary**

#### **Re. Rivers Six Year Strategy, 2021-2027**

Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure dated 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024, outlining the Rivers Six Year Strategy 2021-2027, which has been developed by the Rivers Senior Management Team to assess the challenges faced and outline what is needed to stabilise and enhance service delivery with regards to flood risk management responsibilities.

### **Recommendation**

**It is recommended** that the Environmental Services Committee consider the correspondence.



Jubilee House  
111 Ballykelly Road  
Drummond  
Ballykelly  
LIMAVADY  
BT49 9HP  
Email: [animal.welfare@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:animal.welfare@daera-ni.gov.uk)

4 June 2024

Dear Stakeholder,

## **PET ABDUCTION ACT 2024**

As you may already be aware, the Pet Abduction Act 2024, which was given Royal Assent on 24 May 2024, creates specific offences for the abduction of dogs and cats in Northern Ireland and England to recognise that pet animals are not mere property but sentient beings.

These new offences will come into force in England three months after Royal Assent, whereas in Northern Ireland, a Commencement Order by the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) is required to introduce the new offences. Nevertheless, it is anticipated that commencement in Northern Ireland will align with England. Further details on the offences within the Act (which is available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/16/contents/enacted>) are included below, however should you have any comments or concerns that you wish to raise prior to commencement of these new offences, I would be grateful if these could be forwarded to the email address above by 14 June 2024.

## **Background**

Consideration of a pet abduction offence followed a recommendation on the matter in a report published in September 2021 by a Pet Taskforce, which the UK Government had established to investigate the reported rise of pet theft in England and Wales during the Covid-19 pandemic. The report pointed to a small increase in pet theft in England since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, potentially associated with an increase in demand for

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dogs due to their monetary value, but assessed the risk of dog theft in England to be low. Nevertheless, it highlighted the emotional impact of pet theft on owners and the impact of pet theft on animal welfare and recommended that a new offence for pet abduction should be created.

DAERA had no evidence to suggest that pet theft increased in NI during the Covid-19 pandemic and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) did not highlight it as an issue of concern. That said, it is doubtful that the emotional impact of losing a pet on owners here would be any less than that found in England and Wales.

A Pet Abduction offence was therefore included in an Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill, following the recommendation from the Pet Taskforce. However, the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill was later withdrawn, due to it running out of time in Parliament. A Private Member's Bill, supported by the UK Government, was subsequently introduced to the UK Parliament on 6 December 2023. This Bill extended to Northern Ireland and since it related to a devolved matter, inclusion of the Northern Ireland provisions required approval of a Legislative Consent Motion in the Northern Ireland Assembly. Approval of the Assembly was subsequently obtained on 20 May 2024.

## **The Act**

The Pet Abduction Act makes it an offence for a dog or cat to be taken from a person with lawful control of the animal. In the case of dogs, the Act also makes it an offence to detain a dog. It limits the offence to 'taking' cats to account for the different lifestyles of those animals. The intention of the new offences is that it will allow courts to place greater focus on the impact on the welfare of the animal as well as the interests of the owner when deciding penalties rather than the financial loss, which for some animals may not be significant.

The Act also includes a power to enable DAERA to extend the offences to other species of pet, subject to certain conditions. DAERA must consider that animals of that species are kept as a pet, and there must be evidence of a significant number or rise in cases of unlawful taking or detaining. The Act also seeks to enhance criminal justice data reporting and monitoring of pet abduction cases to better understand and tackle the issue.

### *Penalties*

The maximum penalty on conviction on indictment for cat or dog abduction is up to five years in prison, or a fine or both. As the new offences are centred on the impact on the animal, this maximum penalty aligns with other serious animal welfare offences under the Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act 2011.

### *Defences and safeguards*

There are a number of safeguards and exemptions, which are set out in the Act. It doesn't seek to criminalise cases involving domestic disputes between partners. Therefore, no offence is committed where a dog is taken or detained from a household where the dog had entered that household after the two people had started living together.

It is also a defence for a person to show that they had lawful authority to take or detain the dog, for example on occasions where the animal is under the care of a vet or dog

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sitter. There is also a defence in relation to unaccompanied or stray dogs, such that a person charged with the offence could show that they complied with current notification requirements under the Dogs (Northern Ireland) Order 1983 and made reasonable steps to comply with the requirements for collection of the dog.

Finally, a “reasonable excuse” exception is intended to allow courts the discretion to determine on a case-by-case basis whether the taking or the detention of the animal is unlawful. This fall-back defence is to ensure we do not inadvertently criminalise well-meaning behaviour and the burden of proving that such a taking or detention was committed without lawful authority or reasonable excuse will rest with the prosecution.

### **Position in other jurisdictions**

The UK Government offered to ensure the provisions were extended to the devolved administrations. While the Welsh Government previously indicated that it wished pet abduction provision within the Animal Welfare (Kept Animals) Bill to extend to Wales, it was not able to take up the offer to be included in the Pet Abduction Bill at this time.

The Scottish Government intends to deal with the matter through updated guidance rather than legislation. There are of course different laws for theft in Scotland, which operates under a different criminal framework. However, it is possible that similar measures could be introduced in both Scotland and Wales at a later date.

By way of additional context, there is currently no specific offence for pet theft in Ireland. However, a Private Members Bill had been proposed by a TD to amend the Criminal Justice (Theft and Fraud Offences) Act 2001 to reflect that pets are more than property, to act as a deterrent against the theft of companion animals. This Bill is currently at third stage in the Dáil, but there has been no progress since December 2022.

### **Consultation**

Due to extremely tight legislative pressures in securing the necessary LCM, it was unfortunately not possible for DAERA to carry out a public consultation on this matter in Northern Ireland.

However, no part of the UK has formally consulted on the contents of this Bill. Previously, UK Government officials engaged with a number of pet and animal welfare organisations, as part of the work of the Pet Taskforce. Those organisations were also very positive as the Bill progressed through Parliament and as the associated Legislative Consent Motion was being considered in Northern Ireland.

While this letter does not constitute a public consultation, your views on this new legislation are very welcome in advance of the Department introducing an Order to bring the provisions into force.

I hope this information is helpful but should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**Darrin Fullerton**  
**Animal Health and Welfare Policy**

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18 June 2024

Sent by email only to: [david.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk](mailto:david.jackson@causewaycoastandglens.gov.uk)

Dear David

Ards and North Down Borough Council has recently written to the DAERA Minister asking for the introduction of enforcement powers for Councils to deal with instances of bins being left on streets for prolonged periods, causing undue obstruction.

Council would like to see powers modelled upon Section 46A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, whereby we would be able to issue a fixed penalty to a bin owner where they have failed to respond to informal requests to remedy a problem.

I am writing to ask if your Council would consider supporting this request of DAERA.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter, and I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



**Susie McCullough**  
**Chief Executive**



# Rivers Six Year Strategy 2021-2027



Department for

**Infrastructure**

An Roinn

**Bonneagair**

Department für

**Infrastructure**



# Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction .....	4
Strategic Context.....	6
Rivers Directorate’s main responsibilities .....	8
Developments in Rivers over the past decade .....	11
Strategic Priorities.....	12
Implementation .....	17
Revised Staffing Structure.....	17
Rivers Divisions: Operations .....	17
Rivers Divisions: Living With Water and Environment team .....	18
Rivers Divisions: Capital Delivery .....	19
Rivers Divisions: Business Support Unit.....	20
A look beyond the Six Year Strategy .....	21
A look to the future and the next cycle .....	21

## Foreword

The context in which both Rivers Directorates operate is continuously evolving. Societal attitudes to drainage and flooding have changed considerably over the last twenty years and there have been significant advances in the methodology for managing flood risk. In addition, we need to consider the long-term effects of climate change in relation to flood risk and adapt strategies accordingly now to effectively plan for the future. This drives the need to periodically review priorities and our organisational structure to ensure the effective delivery of an up-to-date and acceptable level of service.

The purpose of this Six Year Strategy is to assess the challenges and requirements to stabilise and enhance delivery together with progressing a number of emerging work streams.

We are the statutory drainage and flood defence authority in relation to flood risk from Rivers and the Sea. We are also the statutory authority for the implementation of the 'Flood Risk Management Plan', required as part of the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009.

This Plan is developed in six-year cycles and has most recently been published to cover the period from 2021 to 2027. It identifies the objectives and measures to manage flood risk across Northern Ireland and is a key document in determining how we will take forward this work and interact with other partner organisations and Departments, who themselves may have flood risk management responsibilities, particularly in relation to surface water flooding.

The Flood Risk Management Plan also provides a structure for the identification and management of flood risk through a range of intervention mechanisms such as flood alleviation works, development management and community engagement. It underpins the Northern Ireland Assembly's 'Long Term Water Strategy'.

In recent years, we have identified a number of further work streams that will need to be taken forward, in conjunction with the Flood Risk Management Plan

for 2021-2027, to help with the Plan implementation. It has therefore been considered appropriate to develop the '*Rivers Six Year Strategy*', to coincide and be coterminous with, the six-year period of the Flood Risk Management Plan.

The *Six Year Strategy* follows on from an earlier long-term strategy document entitled "Living with Rivers and the Sea" but with a particular focus on the identification of current priority issues and the changes required to enhance their delivery.

The Rivers Senior Management Team has developed six strategic priorities to form the nucleus of the *Rivers Six Year Strategy* for the 2021-27 period. A series of main activities and key outputs has also been developed for each activity.

As the development of the Strategy progressed it became apparent that the current staff structure needed to be significantly adapted and enhanced to ensure the effective delivery of immediate and longer-term objectives. A review of our staff structure has also identified a need for additional staff and expertise in several areas. The proposed staff structure reflects the necessary staff levels required to effectively deliver our flood risk management responsibilities and the programme of measures identified in the Flood Risk Management Plans. It also lays a solid foundation in relation to the capacity and capabilities we need to manage flood risk now and into the future.

**Jonathan McKee,**  
**Director of Rivers Development**

## Introduction

Land drainage and approaches to flood risk management have evolved with the ever-changing needs and priorities of society. The first half of the 20th century saw an emphasis on bringing land into agricultural production to meet an increased demand for food production. This led to widespread engineering works on watercourses to improve land drainage. Throughout the second half of the 20th century, there was an increased demand for flood alleviation works to protect life and property.



There was also an expanding awareness of the need to assess the environmental impact of engineering works and to work more closely with natural processes. The early 21st century has been characterised by an enhanced public awareness of climate change and our impact on the environment.

The structure and operational practices of both Rivers Directorates has also evolved in line with land drainage and flooding risk management considerations. From 1925-1972, the legislative remit for our work was held by the then Ministry of Agriculture. Legislation from this period, such as the Agriculture Act (Northern Ireland) 1949, recognised the importance of land drainage schemes to increase agricultural production. From 1973 onwards, legislative powers regarding land drainage, primarily provided by the Drainage Order 1973, were administered by the Department of Agriculture at that time.

Moving forward, Rivers Agency was established in 1996 within the Department of Agriculture.

Following devolution and the establishment of the Executive in 1999, Rivers Agency remained within the renamed Department for Agriculture and Rural Development. Then subsequently in 2006, Rivers Agency was nominated as the competent authority for the implementation of the European Floods Directive here.

In 2007, Rivers Agency instigated an independent, comprehensive 'Flood Management Policy Review' which considered all aspects of the management of flood risk. The review took into account wide ranging consultation responses from stakeholders and the general public.

The Executive then produced a response to the independent review entitled "Living with Rivers and the Sea" in 2008. This strategic document set out a flexible framework for building on past success and reflected society's desire for the adoption of environmentally sensitive and sustainable methods for the delivery of flood risk management. It proposed a more holistic approach to flood risk management and strengthened our approach to the identification of flood risk areas.

Subsequently a review of the Rivers Agency structure was undertaken which resulted in an organisational structure more suited to delivering the agreed strategy set by government.

While flood risk management methodology and societal needs continue to evolve, the broad strategic direction set by the “Living with Rivers and the Sea” document and the resulting staffing structure has proved sufficiently flexible to meet evolving pressures until recently.

Following a review of the Executive Departments in 2015/2016, Rivers Agency became Rivers Directorate in the newly established Department for Infrastructure. Rivers Directorate was the further split into Rivers Operations Directorate and Rivers Development Directorate in 2022.



*Flooding in Portadown, November 2009*

## Strategic Context

Both Rivers Directorates currently form part of the Water and Departmental Delivery Group within the Department for Infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> There are three such Groups within the Department:

1. Water and Departmental Delivery,
2. Transport and Road Asset Management, and
3. Climate, Planning and Public Transport.

We also operate within a multifaceted strategic context.

### 1. Sustainable Water: A Long-Term Water Strategy (2015-2040)

‘Sustainable Water: A Long-Term Water Strategy’ sets out a framework for action which will facilitate the implementation of a range of initiatives aimed at delivering a long-term vision to have a sustainable water sector. To achieve this vision, the Strategy encourages a sustainable and integrated approach to managing all our different water needs in a way which promotes regional development, without compromising the environment or increasing flood risk.

We will be integral to the successful implementation of the Long-Term Water Strategy. The implementation of the Flood Risk Management Plan will be fundamental to the successful achievement of aims under the strategy’s Flood Risk Management and Drainage Principles. Furthermore, the adoption of sustainable catchment-based approaches to flood risk management in the Living with Water Programme will support the Catchment Management aims laid out in the long-term strategy. The work of our Planning Advisory Unit will also support the Strategy’s Aims regarding effective land-use planning to manage flood risk.



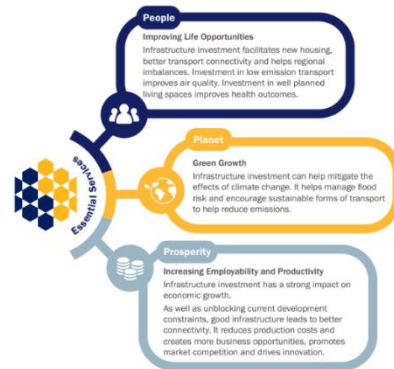
### 2. Departmental Strategic Framework

The Department for Infrastructure’s *Strategic Framework* (2023) identifies three overarching service aims for the Department. These are as follows:

- improve people’s quality of life,
- reduce our impact on the planet by living sustainably and decarbonising key services,
- building prosperity by driving inclusive productivity.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/about-department-for-infrastructure>.

We will be integral to the effective delivery of these aims. As noted in the *Strategic Framework*, approximately 45,000 or 5% of all properties here are located in areas at risk from flooding. This is estimated to increase by 33% to 59,800 when 2080 climate change projections are taken into consideration. We will seek to effectively manage our current flood risk management infrastructure while continuing to develop new assets.



### 3. Flood Risk Management Plan

We are the statutory drainage and flood defence authority in relation to flood risk from rivers and the sea. We are also the statutory authority for the implementation of the Rivers aspects of the Flood Risk Management Plan required as part of the Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations.

The Regulations require the Department to identify significant areas of flood risk, produce detailed flood maps and develop a 'Flood Risk Management Plan'.

The Flood Risk Management Plan provides detail on a range of important functions including:

- I. the maintenance of flood risk management infrastructure,
- II. the provision of flood risk management advice,
- III. a wide range of emergency planning and resilience activities and
- IV. areas where flood alleviation projects can be considered if economically viable.

## Rivers Directorate's main responsibilities

The Flood Risk Management Plan identifies the objectives and measures to manage flood risk here.

As mentioned earlier, a Flood Risk Management Plan for the second cycle of the Floods Directive is now complete and covers the period from 2021-2027. It has therefore been considered appropriate to develop the 'Rivers Six Year Strategy to coincide with this six-year period of the 2021-2027 Flood Risk Management Plan. This strategy will identify a number of further work streams that will require to be taken forward in conjunction with the Flood Risk Management Plan for this period.

### 4. Rivers Asset Management Plan (2020-2030)

As part of the overarching Rivers Asset Management Plan (AMP) 2020-2030, we have produced distinct asset management plans for each type of flood defence asset. These are the Fluvial AMP, the Coastal AMP, the Hydrometric AMP, the Belowground AMP and control structures AMP.

Each of the specific Asset Management Plans assesses the current condition of assets owned and/or managed by us, outlines best and worst-case scenarios for repairs and replacements and makes overarching recommendations for our management of assets, with specific recommendations for each of the four types of flood defence asset.

The Rivers Directorate's aim is to reduce risk to life, property, and the local environment, as a result of flooding from rivers and the sea, in order to facilitate social, economic and environmental development.

Approximately 45,000, or 5% of properties here, are located in areas which are at risk from flooding. When climate change is taken into consideration, there is an increase of approximately 14,800 properties at risk. As a result of this existing flood risk and, in order to mitigate against increasing flood risk as a result of climate change, there is an imperative to invest in both existing and new flood risk management infrastructure and expertise.

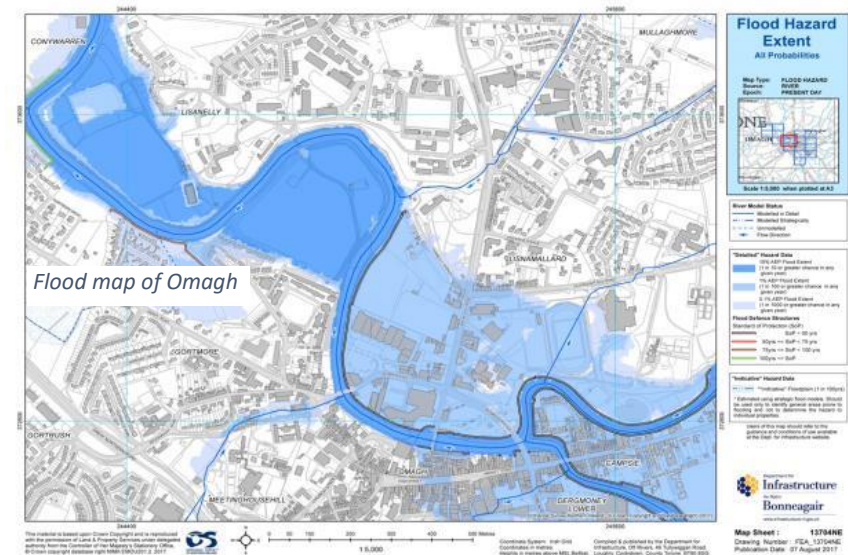
Our main responsibilities can be classified into the following four main categories:

### 1. An integrated approach to flood risk management

We are the competent authority for the implementation of the European Floods Directive here. This requires us to develop strategic flood risk assessments in order to identify Areas of Potential Significant Flood Risk (APSFR). These assessments are reviewed every six years.

We also develop and operate *Flood Maps NI*, a publicly available predictive flood mapping website. These maps give an indication of the areas at risk from flooding and include the current and future flood risk from rivers and the sea, taking account of climate change. The maps are updated in line with the UK Climate Projections (UKCP) guidance.

These strategic flood risk assessments and flood maps provide the basis for the preparation of the regional 'Flood Risk Management Plan'.



The Flood Risk Management Plan provides a strategic, proactive approach to identify measures to manage the risk from flooding. River's capital works projects, maintenance activities, preparedness and community resilience programmes are all informed by a combination of the predictive flood maps and records of local flood history.

We have already overseen considerable long-term investment in the construction of drainage and flood alleviation infrastructure. This is part of a structured approach to flood risk management, which is particularly important given the potential increased frequency of flooding events due to climate change. Flood alleviation schemes are under construction in Belfast and being developed for other areas including Newry and Portadown. We are also developing sustainable flood risk management solutions as part of the Living with Water Programme in Belfast and helping to deliver a similar strategic drainage plan for Derry/Londonderry.



Floodwall replacement at Hunters Crescent, Omagh

We also work closely with Planning Authorities to inform them, from a flood risk management perspective, on development management and control issues.

In the absence of the full commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015, we have engaged with controlled reservoir managers to remind them of their common law responsibilities for reservoir safety. We have also carried out an audit of controlled reservoirs and informed reservoir managers of the findings to assist them in understanding any actions they may need to take as reservoir managers.

## 2. Management of drainage and flood defence infrastructure

We also undertake a range of flood risk management works to reduce the risk of flooding to homes, the environment and cultural heritage.

We proactively manage approximately 154 km of raised flood defence embankments and flood walls and reactively manage a further 272 km of lower risk flood defences. 26km of coastal defences, and 12 control structures are also maintained together with an extensive below ground drainage network of over 364km of culverts. Importantly, we are responsible for managing and maintaining over 135 hydrometric stations

used to measure and record watercourse flow and level information, which is critical to the estimation of flows and design flood levels. This data informs the UK “National Archive” that underpins the overall understanding and estimation of flood return periods. This archive consequently informs our flood models, flood maps and data that is used by us to develop capital investment proposals and to help inform development management and control decisions.

Each of these built assets require regular inspection and maintenance by a large team of skilled staff.

Furthermore, we are responsible for regulating the water levels of Lough Neagh, the Lower Bann and Lough Erne in so far as climatic conditions permit, as required by the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Drainage and Navigation Act (Northern Ireland) 1955 and the Erne Drainage and Development Act 1950.



Lough Neagh



### 3. Preparedness

The Department for Infrastructure is the Lead Government Department for the strategic coordination of the emergency response to severe weather events.

We are key to the development of multiagency emergency plans and processes, in conjunction with our partners, to ensure that the overall Government response to flood events is as effective as possible. When severe weather emergencies occur, our teams respond to requests for assistance from the public and often work closely with the emergency services.

We also support local community groups to enhance their resilience to severe weather emergencies. We have engaged with over 40 local communities to help them develop Community Emergency Plans and share information to help them to improve their preparedness for severe weather emergencies. This work empowers local communities at risk of flooding to manage their own plans and sandbags stores. This provides an additional layer of support to the response already provided by Government during emergencies.

### 4. Understanding and Providing Flood Risk Expertise

We have well-established and effective relationships with the flood risk management industry. Unlike some other areas of infrastructure management, flood risk management approaches can quickly evolve, and it is necessary for the Department to move with the latest industry standards.

We have participated in a number of research and development projects at a national level.

These include working with the **UK Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA)** on a number of projects such as CIRIA C802 'The Natural Flood Management Manual' and CIRIA's Blue-Green Infrastructure Reports.

The Department has a steering role on the Governance Board of '**The UK flood hydrology roadmap**' which sets out a vision for flood hydrology in the UK for the next 25 years. It is accompanied by an action plan that details how that vision will be achieved.

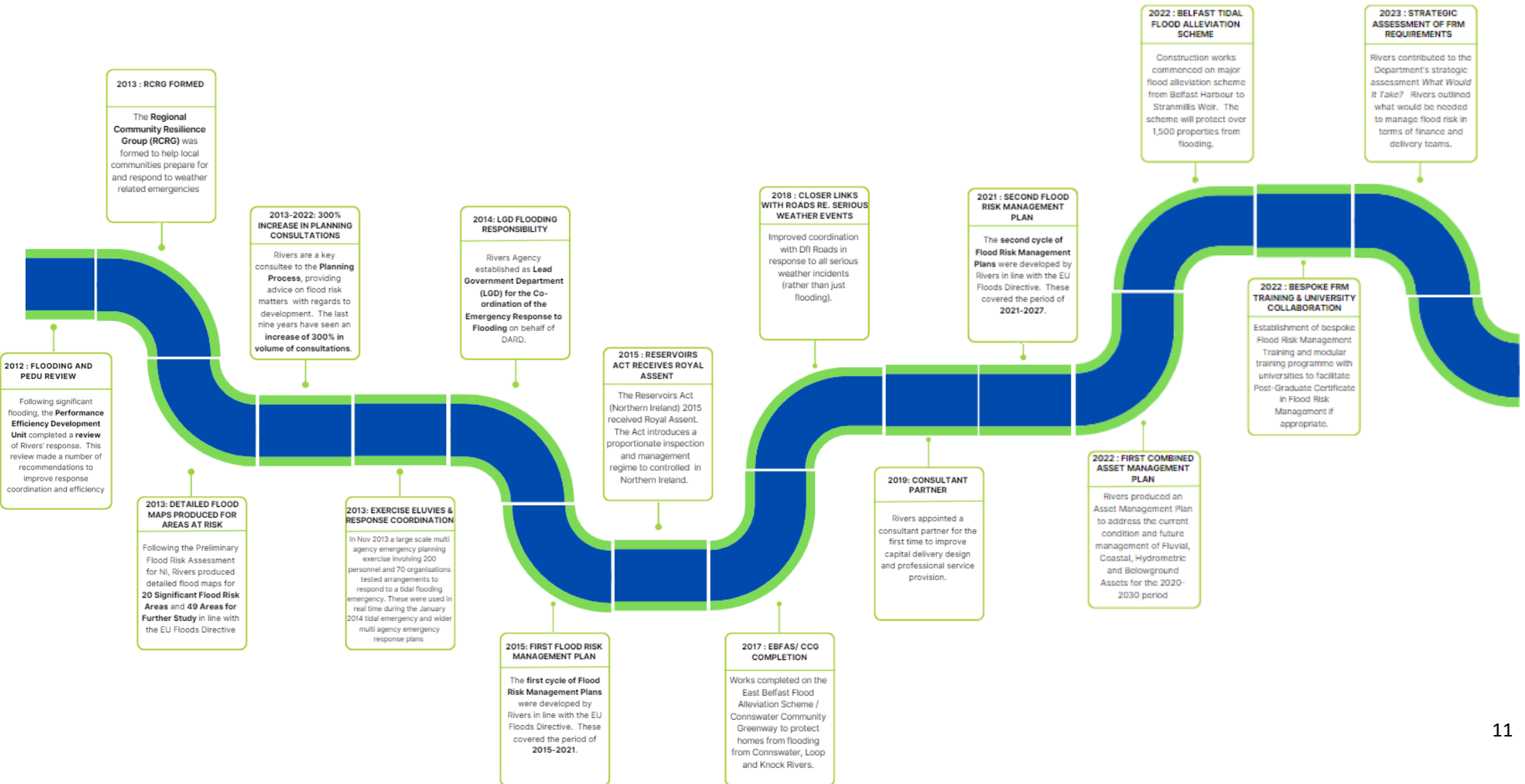
The roadmap considers all sources of inland flooding, including fluvial, pluvial, sewers, groundwater and reservoirs.

We are also involved with the **Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)** led development of natural flood risk management techniques.

We have in recent years developed bespoke Flood Risk Management training for staff and established links with national universities to enable staff to participate in Flood Risk Management training and qualifications.

# Achievements over the past decade

We have made considerable strides in the past decade in developing Flood Risk Management approaches, particularly since 2020 when a strategic assessment of what was necessary to manage our infrastructure appropriately was undertaken. Since then, our structure was significantly augmented, a specialist training programme put in place, links re-established with other UK and ROI flood risk experts and a pragmatic approach was taken in the Department to bring together all Divisions with 'water' functions.



## Strategic Priorities

Looking to the future we have now developed 6 strategic priorities. These strategic priorities set out the short and medium-term areas of primary focus for both the Operations and Development Directorates during the 2021-2027 cycle of the Flood Risk Management Plan. These strategic priorities will provide a focus to effectively manage flood risk from Rivers and the Sea and implement the Flood Risk Management Plan. The six priorities are as follows:



## Strategic Priority One – Sustainable staffing structure & expertise

**SUCCESS STATEMENT** - Adequately staffed structure, development and retention of skilled personnel across a range of disciplines. Administrative, Professional, Scientific & Technical expertise to deliver agreed work priorities.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

#### *Staff Structure (Capacity)*

- ✔ Timely filling of vacancies in the current structure.
- ✔ Retention of staff with Flood Risk Management expertise and a focus on our hydrometric capabilities.
- ✔ Review of Capital investment requirements and identification of the delivery teams needed.
- ✔ Review and identify the PAU structure needed to respond to planning consultations and meet current projections.
- ✔ Identification of staffing requirements in conjunction with WDPD and Internal Audit to create a Reservoir Authority.
- ✔ Identification of staffing required to deliver our elements of the Living with Water Programme.
- ✔ Seek opportunities for student placement workers to augment delivery & promote the work of the Department.
- ✔ Ongoing assessment of workloads & vacancy management to inform the need for staff redirection or the reassessment of priorities.

#### *Training (Capability)*

- ✔ Identification of Flood Risk Management training needs. Seek agreement that these should continue and include opportunities for the attainment of specialist flood risk management qualifications to master's level.
- ✔ Development and delivery of an annual training & development plan.

#### *Health & Safety / Welfare*

- ✔ Seek to maintain a high level of staff welfare and Health & Safety standards.

## Strategic Priority Two – Investment in Flood Risk Management infrastructure

**SUCCESS STATEMENT** - Adequate investment in Flood Risk Management informed by the Flood Risk Management Plan, Asset Management Plan and other assessments.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Review of Capital investment requirements and identification of delivery teams needed to inform budget allocations.
- ✓ Commence implementation of the second cycle Flood Risk Management Plan.
- ✓ Undertake the delivery of our elements of the LWWP and the management of interfaces with other stakeholders in the overall programme.
- ✓ Commence the implementation of the Asset Management Plan.
- ✓ Progression of assessments of Rivers' flood risk management infrastructure.
- ✓ Relative prioritisation process development for new flood risk management works versus investment in existing infrastructure.
- ✓ Building consultant and contractor capacity/capability to assist in the delivery of enhanced work programmes.

## Strategic Priority Three – Continuance of service delivery

**SUCCESS STATEMENT:** The continued delivery and optimisation of effective flood risk management activities and governance.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Delivery of annual business which includes a watercourse and flood risk management infrastructure maintenance programme, emergency response, an asset inspection programme, provision of flood risk advice (Planning, Sch5&6), water level management, flood modelling and mapping.
- ✓ Continue to support biodiversity and other environmental improvements, if viable and appropriate, in the undertaking of watercourse maintenance and capital projects.
- ✓ Procure modern fleet and equipment to ensure safe and effective delivery of work.
- ✓ Communication with staff
- ✓ Enhance the promotion of FRM activities including capital schemes to the general public.
- ✓ Review, in conjunction with Press Office, how we communicate externally with public and others.

## Strategic Priority Four – Adaptability & Outward looking

**SUCCESS STATEMENT** - Innovating in Flood Risk Management through maintaining and building effective relationships internally across the department and with external partnership organisations.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✔ Develop a Rivers digital strategy and delivery plan in conjunction with DSB to support the delivery of the Rivers Six Year Strategy.
- ✔ Increased levels of internal engagement (including with H&S, LWWP, WDPD and finance colleagues) to enhance expertise, increase interface efficiencies and the streamlining of objectives to raise the overall departmental knowledge base pertaining to this area of work.
- ✔ Continue to engage, develop and enhance effective relationships with Drainage Council and other statutory consultees.
- ✔ Continue engagement with elected representatives and media.
- ✔ Continue and enhance engagement with Council officials regarding the development and delivery of FRM activities including Planning Authorities.
- ✔ Engagement with Academia, Professional Institutions, and research bodies.
- ✔ Inform best practice in Flood Risk Management by engaging with competent bodies in other jurisdictions.
- ✔ Development of a Flood Hydrology Improvement and Flood Warning and Informing Strategy.
- ✔ Develop, maintain, and review emergency response plans.

## Strategic Priority Five – Legislation & Policy

**SUCCESS STATEMENT:** Support the development and implementation of the Legislative & Policy Frameworks to manage flood risk.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✔ Development of processes and procedures to support the full commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- ✔ Inform processes and procedures to administer any Reservoir grant scheme for the private and not for profit sector which may be agreed. The exploration of financial assistance to support public bodies where the Reservoirs they manage have an amenity value if appropriate.
- ✔ Development of a prioritised review programme for Technical Guidance Notes (TGNs).
- ✔ Conduct a further review on the effectiveness of the Homeowner Grant Scheme.
- ✔ Identification of legislative areas to enhance or develop in addition to the vires already contained in the Drainage Order and Water Environment (Floods Directive) Regulations.
- ✔ Support the development of policy and legislation for flood storage and natural flood risk management in partnership with LWWP team & WDPD.
- ✔ Support and inform the timing of any Coastal Erosion policies and any resource implications in a proportionate manner.
- ✔ Continue engaging with Council Planning Authorities/Strategic Planning to ensure local development plans and strategic policies contain sufficiently robust flood risk management planning policies.

## Strategic Priority Six – Response to Climate Change

**SUCCESS STATEMENT:** Aligning our Flood Risk Management activities to take account of climate change developments.

### MAIN ACTIVITIES

- ✔ Support the development of revisions to the DfI Technical Flood Risk Guidance in relation to Allowances for Climate Change in NI including the development of evidence to support any change.
- ✔ Continued adherence where possible to the DFI Technical Flood Risk Guidance in relation to Allowances for Climate Change in NI.
- ✔ Assess possible impacts of climate change on flood defence infrastructure to determine their resilience
- ✔ Climate change horizon scanning.
- ✔ NICS and DfI Climate Change Act / Policy input. Liaison with DAERA to ensure Flood Risk adaption measures and suitable indicators in NICCAP3.

## Implementation

The Six Year Strategy sets out the short to medium-term areas of primary focus for both Rivers Directorates and is timed to coincide with the 2021-2027 Flood Risk Management Plan. The six strategic priorities identified will set the direction for continued and future service delivery which we intend to undertake, or contribute to, during this period.

The implementation of the Six Year Strategy will be overseen by the Senior Management Team. The main activities and key outputs for each of the six strategic priorities will be reviewed on an annual basis for the duration of the strategy.

The successful implementation of the Six Year Strategy will remain dependant on budgetary allocations to the Department. The Directorate will not be able to fully apply all aspects of the Strategy without adequate finance and staff.

To implement this strategy will require at least £30M per annum of capital investment on average over the next 6 years. In addition to this, a further £8M of Resource funding is necessary to maintain existing rivers flood risk management infrastructure and establish a Flood Forecasting Centre.

### *Revised Staffing Structure*

The current staffing structure has been reviewed as part of the Six Year Strategy implementation in order to provide a sustainable approach to the delivery of flood risk management activities at the required level.

The roles and responsibilities of our Superintendent Civil Engineers (Grade 6) have been realigned to enhance the delivery of services, to aid the implementation of the Flood Risk Management Plan and to facilitate the development of the Living With Water Programme Catchment Delivery Plans.

The revised Grade 6 structure will improve organisational resilience and create more Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) capacity as we seek to take forward increased levels of capital investment in flood risk management infrastructure.

An overview of the realigned and new Grade 6 responsibilities for each of the existing Units is outlined below.

### *1. Operations*

#### **Operations will have responsibility for:**

- i. Regional Area Office – Eastern Region
- ii. Regional Area Office – Western Region
- iii. Emergency Planning and Hydrometrics Unit
- iv. Reservoirs, Inland Waterways and Control Structures

The Operations Division will be fundamental to the successful implementation of Rivers six strategic priorities for the 2021-2027 period.

The Eastern and Western Area Offices will be at the forefront of our Flood Risk Management maintenance activities and will be a key contributor for the Continuance of Service Delivery priority during the 2021-2027 period.



The Emergency Planning Unit will be responsible for discharging the Directorate's Lead Government Department responsibilities and supporting the multi-agency response to flooding.

### **The Reservoirs, Inland Waterways and Control Structures branch**

will primarily be responsible for overseeing the administration associated with the full commencement of the Reservoirs Act (Northern Ireland) 2015. In the absence of a fully commenced Act, the Reservoirs Team will develop a suite of processes and



Ben Crom and Silent Valley Reservoirs

procedures required to administer the Act by a future Reservoirs Authority. Rivers will continue with the administration of the Responsible Reservoir Manager Scheme, where relevant.

**The Inland Waterways team** will be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Lagan Towpath from Stranmillis to Aghalee, including Broadwater Reservoir. A Departmental owned asset, which includes the towpath, carparks (Lockview Road, Stranmillis; Drumbridge; and Soldierstown) and abandoned canal. Under the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Drainage and Navigation Act (Northern Ireland) 1955, the Department has a statutory duty to dredge the entrance to the Sixmilewater River and to maintain two navigation posts or marks at the entrance to the Sixmilewater River. The Department exercises discretionary powers under Section 41 of The Water (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 to maintain a further 46 markers on Lough Neagh.

**The Control Structures team** will be responsible for managing the inspection and maintenance programme of the 11 control structures in the Department's ownership.

### *2.Living With Water and Environment*

#### **The LWWP and Environment team will have responsibility for:**

- i. The development and delivery of the Rivers elements of the LWWP Catchment Delivery Plans (CDP).
- ii. The management of all aspects of the Rivers Environmental Team and the integration of this work with the LWWP.

The Living With Water Programme will be integral to the successful implementation of Rivers' six strategic priorities for the 2021-2027 period. The Living With Water team contributes to investment in Flood Risk Management Infrastructure and is an innovative and outward-looking approach to the provision of infrastructure that will help with Rivers' effective response to climate change.

Living With Water is a multiagency initiative led by the Department to develop a Strategic Drainage Infrastructure Plan (SDIP) for Belfast. It represents a catchment-based approach to the provision of drainage and wastewater infrastructure. LWWP focuses on developing integrated drainage solutions by adopting sustainable 'soft' drainage and wastewater solutions where possible.

The Rivers' LWWP Team will coordinate and manage the development, delivery and funding of these individual CDP projects, including feasibility studies, modelling work, detailed design and construction in the Belfast Area. These works will generally be undertaken in agreement with other stakeholders in the overall programme.

For specific Rivers schemes, the initial presumption is that all flood risk management works within LWWP catchment delivery areas will be taken forward by the Rivers LWWP team unless the proposals are shown to be not integrated with other stakeholders.

**The Environment team will have responsibility for:**

Providing support to all Business Units on environmental matters and driving environmental best practice across the organisation.

*3.Capital Delivery*

**Capital Delivery will have responsibility for:**

- i. Capital Projects Unit
- ii. In house Design Unit
- iii. Rivers Blue/Green infrastructure team.
- iv. Planning Advisory Unit (PAU)
- v. Asset Management Unit (AMU).
- vi. Mapping and Modelling Unit

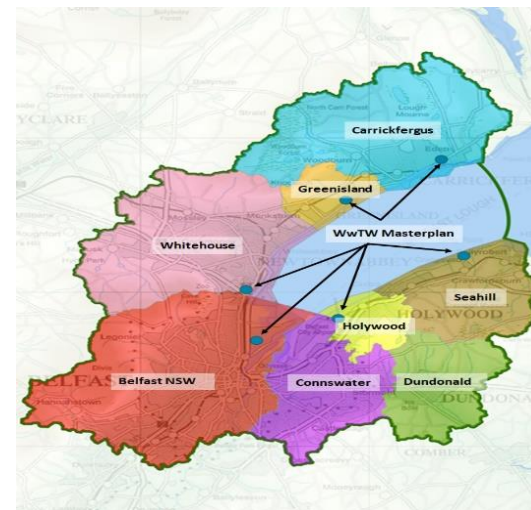
The Asset Management Plan and the programme of Capital Investment associated with the Flood Risk Management Plan will be essential to the successful implementation of Rivers’ six strategic priorities for the 2021-2027 period. Capital Delivery will oversee significant investment in Flood Risk Management Infrastructure. Such programmes of works will also be central to Rivers’ response to climate Change.

Rivers valued assets have a current value of approximately £1 billion.

The Rivers Asset Management Plan (2020-2030) outlines the capital investment required over the next decade to bring all flood defence assets up to standard. In addition, work is well underway to provide

comprehensive reviews of all flood risk management infrastructure. This will also lead to sizable programmes of work.

Sustained capital investment in new flood risk management infrastructure will be required over the duration of the Six Year Strategy in order to deliver the measures contained in the 2021-27 Flood Risk Management Plans. Major schemes are currently underway or in development in a number of areas including Belfast, Portadown and Newry.



The structure of delivery teams across the Capital Delivery Unit has been revised and enhanced as a result. Additional staffing is also required in the Asset Management Plan delivery team, Environment and Corporate Support Service Teams and the Infrastructure Improvement Team.

Investment in Hydrometrics and Flood Risk Management expertise to support flood modelling and mapping will also be necessary. This will facilitate the commencement of the ‘Flood Hydrology Improvement and Flood Warning and Informing Strategy 2022-2028’, if adequate funding is allocated.

Additionally, Rivers’ role as a statutory consultee in the planning process will be important to the effective delivery of the Six Year Strategy. Timely responses to planning consultations and staffing of the Planning Advisory Unit (PAU) will form part of achieving the Rivers’ Sustainable Staffing Structure and Expertise priority and support the Continuance of Service Delivery.

#### *4. Rivers Divisions: Business Support Unit*

The Rivers technical staff structure will continue to be supported by the **Business Support Unit**, which is led by a Grade 7, who has responsibility for financial management, the management of correspondence, assembly business, business planning, SMT and Divisional support. In addition, the Unit provides secretarial support to the Drainage Council.

## A look beyond the Six Year Strategy

The Six Year Strategy sets out a clear direction for both Rivers Directorates for the 2021-2027 period and coincides with the timeframe of the second cycle Flood Risk Management Plan. It proposes a coherent approach to flood risk management and outlines an effective staffing structure in the short and medium term to manage flood risk.

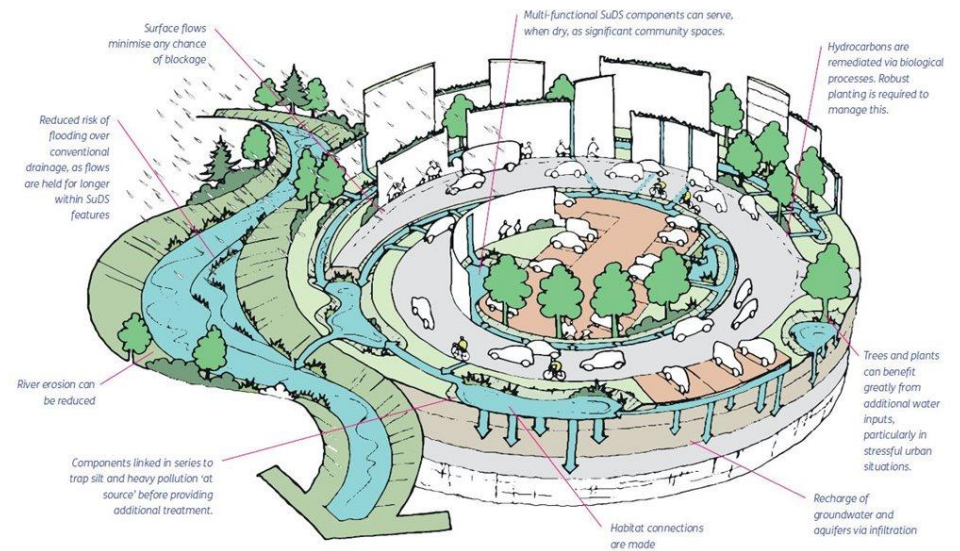
As Climate Change increases the likelihood of severe weather events and flooding, we may need to increasingly augment flood prevention with flood attenuation through the creation of upland storage and Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), where this is viable and supported by the necessary policy legislation and teams.

The Rivers Directorates, and the Department at large, will also contribute to cross Departmental Climate Change work, contribute to the implementation of the recommendations from the Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP2) which covers the 2019 – 2024 period and inform the next Northern Ireland Climate Change Adaptation Programme (NICCAP3).

The Living with Water Programme may also prove to have a wider influence on Rivers' future Flood Risk Management approaches across Northern Ireland. Living with Water 'principles' could be rolled out regionally or form the basis of considerations of any new flood alleviation projects or the upgrading of existing infrastructure.

### *A look to the future and the next cycle*

The next cycle of Flood Risk Management Plan will cover the period 2027 to 2033. This subsequent Plan will require a reassessment of the previous regional Flood Risk Assessment (NIFRA) and updates to our flood mapping. This work will be informed by the revised *Technical Flood Risk Guidance in*



*relation to Allowances for Climate Change in Northern Ireland (2019).* Colleagues in the Department's Water and Drainage Policy Division are currently revising this guidance.

We will develop a subsequent Six Year Strategy to cover this 2027 to 2033 period and we will need to continue and enhance our approach to flood management in light of climate change. This will require developing infrastructure, which is adaptable and, as a Department, helping society to learn to 'live with flooding' as the construction of infrastructure for the complete prevention of flooding becomes less tenable.

Further policy development will be needed to consider 'Living with Flooding' and how to maximise Natural Flood Risk Management approaches where development with landowners cannot be assumed. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) approvals, as part of new

developments, also need to be legislated for and an appropriate approval body resourced.

The challenges of flood risk management will continue beyond the cycle of this 6-year strategy and so to will the need to adapt new approaches where possible. It will be increasingly important to and enhance communication of the risks associated with flooding and what can reasonably be undertaken. However, the achievements of the past and the clear priorities outlined in this Strategy will lay a solid basis to inform the management of flood risk both now and in the future.