Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council



Strategaeth Rheoli Perygl Llifogydd Lleol
CRYNODEB GWEITHREDOL
Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Plan
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Plan – Executive Summary

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Foreword

"This Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Plan sets out how we intend to deal with flood risk from surface water, ordinary watercourses, and groundwater within the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC). It describes how we, as the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) will mitigate the risk of flooding to local communities and businesses across the county, with the aim to improve resilience to our communities, infrastructure, and the wider environment. This document will clarify roles and responsibilities, describe how we have come to our priorities, explain what the council is doing to mitigate flood risk in your area, and how we can support you from the risk of flooding. Our long-term objective is to leave a legacy for future generations and for NPTCBC to remain an attractive place to live, work and visit.

We are all feeling the effects of climate change and the impacts are becoming ever more noticeable, particularly in the last 4 years where we have seen significant flood events across the county. Records for NPTCBC show 300 properties have suffered from internal flooding since 2020 compared to 130 flooded properties between years 2013-2020. Rainfall events are becoming more unpredictable, intense, and frequent, causing significant disruption and heartache to many local communities. Whilst it is not possible to prevent all flooding, it is possible to consider the risks and take a pro-active approach to manage these risks, likelihoods, and consequences.

This Strategy and Plan therefore considers how various activities by the LLFA can assist in managing flood risk, including better planning policies to ensure new development does not increase flood risk, the effective management of surrounding landscapes to reduce flooding at the source, and to ensure that emergency services respond to where they are needed the most.

We want to promote wider catchment approaches to managing risk, cross border and multi-agency working and the sharing of ideas. This document intends to be usable, referable, and informative for communities and practitioners alike. It seeks to raise awareness in the community and encourage a partnership approach with other Risk Management Authority's (RMA's) such as Natural Resources Wales (NRW) and Dwr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) who also have a duty to mitigate against flood risk. Only with close community engagement and partnership working with external organisations can we overcome the challenges that lay ahead."



Frances O'Brien – NPTCBC Chief Executive

Introduction

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council (NPTCBC), as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA), is required under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 to prepare a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy. This updated Strategy integrates the previous Local Strategy (2014) and Flood Risk Management Plan (2015) into a single document to reduce duplication and provide a clearer, more effective framework for managing local flood risk.

Flood risk in Wales is driven by climate change, rising sea levels and more severe weather which is increasing, with over 245,000 properties nationally at risk. NPTCBC is responsible for managing "local flood risk," including surface water, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses, while coordinating closely with other Risk Management Authorities such as Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water, neighbouring councils, emergency services, and internal council departments.

The county contains three of Wales' 33 nationally identified flood risk areas (Neath, Briton Ferry, Port Talbot) and must balance complex decisions around defending low-lying coastal and fluvial floodplains. Between 2013 and 2024, 464 properties have experienced internal flooding, highlighting the need for continued investment and strategic management.

Since 2015, NPTCBC has delivered significant progress: over £3 million of council investment and extensive Welsh Government funding have supported capital and maintenance works benefiting hundreds of properties. Asset management has advanced considerably, including extensive mapping coverage that enables faster responses. The council has also adopted Nature Based Solutions and Natural Flood Management, completing projects at Gnoll Country Park and developing several others.

The updated Strategy sets out clear objectives, measures, and actions for managing flood risk, aligned with the National FCERM Strategy and new legislative duties under the Well-being of Future Generations Act and Environment Act. It provides a structured approach covering climate risk, governance, roles and responsibilities, strategic ambitions, action planning, funding mechanisms, environmental considerations, and performance monitoring. The Strategy will be reviewed every two years to remain adaptive and responsive to emerging risks and policies.

How this strategy responds to climate change

Climate change is already driving more frequent and severe flooding across Neath Port Talbot, with clear evidence of rising sea levels, more intense rainfall and increasingly unpredictable weather. Local records show a sharp increase in internal property flooding from **130 properties** (2013–2020) to **334 properties** between 2020 and 2024 demonstrating the accelerating risk. Regional climate projections for 2050 indicate hotter, drier summers; wetter winters; more intense storms; and a projected 24 cm sea level rise, all of which will further increase flood risk across the county borough.

Long-term forecasts show that by 2120, **river, tidal and surface water flooding will significantly worsen**, with particularly high increases in areas such as Neath, Port Talbot, Briton Ferry, Margam, and Morfa Glas. These challenges are compounded by steep catchments, ageing infrastructure and the loss of greenfield land to development.

The implications for Neath Port Talbot are substantial. Climate change is expected to intensify existing flooding hotspots, create new risk areas, increase erosion, and place greater pressure on drainage systems. Integrated management approaches, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), natural flood management, coastal defence maintenance and careful land-use planning, will be essential to protect communities.

This strategy sets out how the council will adapt by aligning with national legislation and local plans including the LDP, SMP2, DARE Strategy, Biodiversity Duty Plan and the Corporate Plan. These frameworks

collectively aim to avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas, enhance natural resilience, deliver sustainable drainage, restore ecosystems, and strengthen long-term climate adaptation.

By following the objectives, measures and actions in this Management Strategy and Plan, Neath Port Talbot will improve community resilience, reduce exposure to increasing flood hazards and ensure that infrastructure, development and natural systems are better prepared for the impacts of climate change through the coming decades.

Coordination

This strategy has been developed to align closely with Neath Port Talbot Council's wider local plans and strategic priorities. It draws upon key corporate strategies, land use plans, and environmental frameworks to ensure that flood risk management is fully integrated into broader decision making across the authority.

Collaboration with other RMAs is central to delivering effective flood and coastal erosion risk management. The strategy has been informed by relevant national legislation and partner plans, ensuring a consistent and coordinated approach. (Note: The Flood Risk Regulations 2009 were revoked on 31 December 2023 under the Retained EU Legislation Act.)

The council participates actively in national and regional working groups that support Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) across Wales. Through representation on the Swansea and Carmarthen Bay Coastal Engineering Group (SCBCEG), the Southwest Wales Flood Risk Management Group (SWWFRMG), and the national Flood & Coastal Risk Programme Board, NPTCBC helps shape policy discussions and contributes to evidence based recommendations made to Welsh Ministers.

These layers of alignment with local plans, partner RMAs, relevant legislation, and national FCERM governance ensure the strategy is robust, collaborative, and positioned to deliver long-term resilience for communities across Neath Port Talbot.

Roles and responsibilities for managing flood risk in our area

The LLFA holds statutory responsibilities for managing local flood risk from surface water, groundwater, and ordinary watercourses. While the council has no legal duty to implement flood schemes, it possesses significant powers to investigate incidents, regulate watercourses, enforce on responsible parties, and deliver flood risk management interventions where viable.

Flood and coastal risk management in Wales is shared across multiple RMAs including NRW, DCWW, Local Authorities, highway authorities, and the Welsh Government. Responsibilities vary by flood source, and often overlap, requiring strong collaboration through established regional groups such as SWWFRMG and SCBCEG.

As LLFA, NPTCBC must prepare and maintain local flood risk strategies and plans, keep an asset register, deliver SuDS approval functions, investigate significant floods, and coordinate activities across RMAs and stakeholders. The council also operates as the **Highway Authority**, **Coastal Protection Authority**, **Emergency Planning Authority**, and **Planning Authority**, with associated responsibilities under multiple legislative frameworks including the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, the Land Drainage Act 1991, the Highways Act 1980, and the Coast Protection Act 1949.

NRW leads on managing risk from main rivers, reservoirs, and the sea, providing national oversight, flood warning services, and technical data, including the Flood Risk Assessment Wales (FRAW) mapping used to inform NPTCBC's plans. DCWW manages the public sewer network, addressing sewer flooding risks and working jointly with the council where drainage systems are interconnected.

Source of Flooding	Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA)	Natural Resources Wales (NRW)	Welsh Water (DCWW)	Highway Authority (HA)	SWTRA (WG)	Coastal Protection Authority (CPA)
Main River		✓				
Ordinary Watercourse	✓			✓ *	✓ *	
Surface Water	✓			✓ **	✓ **	
Ground Water	✓					
Sewer			✓			
Interaction between River and Sea		✓				
Coastal Flooding and Erosion	✓	✓				✓
Reservoir		✓				

Table 1: RMA Roles from Source of Flooding

*** Where it passes beneath their land** **** On or coming from the highway**

Other stakeholders play critical roles: riparian (private) landowners must maintain watercourses on or adjacent to their land, and canal authorities manage local canals that present unique flood risks. Flooding in the county may arise from a range of sources including surface water, ordinary watercourses, main rivers, groundwater, sewers, canals, coastal conditions, reservoirs, and tidal interactions, often occurring in combination.

NPTCBC mitigates these risks through proactive maintenance of drainage assets, targeted operational responses, capital flood alleviation schemes, and strategic planning supported by extensive GIS mapping and monitoring. Prioritisation of works is based on historical flooding, asset condition, and a structured scoring system for minor and major schemes.

Overall, effective management relies on coordinated action between RMAs, stakeholders, and the public to address diverse flood sources and enhance community resilience across Neath Port Talbot.



Figure 1: Overview of Roles and Responsibilities (Extract from National Strategy)

Our strategic Objectives

The National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management in Wales sets a clear aim: to reduce risks to people, communities, and the environment. It outlines five national objectives, emphasising shared responsibility across Welsh Government, RMAs, and the public. Reflecting these national priorities, the Council has developed 14 local strategic objectives tailored to local needs and conditions. These objectives collectively focus on:

1. **Reducing** risk to life and property through targeted flood mitigation and investment.
2. **Minimising** impacts on communities, businesses, and the environment, improving resilience and wellbeing.
3. **Providing** strong local leadership and ensuring compliance with legislation and policy.
4. **Enhancing** understanding of local flood risk and climate change impacts to inform long-term planning.
5. **Strengthening** collaboration between RMAs and stakeholders for integrated, efficient delivery.
6. **Prioritising** investment using a risk based approach, focusing resources where risk is greatest.
7. **Protecting** critical infrastructure and services to maintain community function during severe events.
8. **Raising** public awareness to support community resilience and informed decision making.
9. **Improving** land-use policy and development controls to create sustainable drainage and reduce future risk.
10. **Maintaining** and upgrading key flood assets to remain fit for purpose.
11. **Ensuring** effective emergency response and recovery during flood events.
12. **Developing** a long-term investment programme to deliver future projects and secure funding.
13. **Embedding** sustainability and environmental enhancement in all flood risk projects.
14. **Expanding** the use of natural flood management solutions to deliver catchment wide benefits.

Overall, the Council's objectives fully align with the national vision, ensuring a comprehensive, collaborative, and future focused approach to managing flood and coastal erosion risk across the region.



Figure 2: WG National Strategy Objectives

Flood Measures

Our plan sets out a comprehensive programme of measures designed to reduce flood risk across Neath Port Talbot, aligned with national policy and local objectives. Measures are organised into seven key themes; development planning and adaptation; flood forecasting and response; land and environmental management; asset management; studies and assessments; community engagement; and monitoring.

The plan prioritises actions that deliver the greatest reduction in flood risk, focusing resources on areas where human health, infrastructure, the environment, cultural heritage, and economic activity are most at risk. While the Regulations require action within designated Flood Risk Areas, the authority recognises that flood risk affects all communities and has therefore applied measures borough wide.

Delivery of the plan is dependent on continued and increased funding to meet statutory duties and achieve the proposed outcomes. Measures are assigned indicative timescales extending to 2030, covering short, medium and long-term activities, as well as core, ongoing statutory functions.

The suite of measures includes sustainable development practices such as SuDS, strengthened planning processes, improved flood forecasting and emergency response, natural flood management and biodiversity enhancement, systematic asset inspection and maintenance, construction of major flood alleviation schemes, detailed risk assessments, statutory flood investigations, feasibility work and business case development for major schemes.

Community resilience is supported through improved communication, early warning, and active engagement, alongside strong partnership working with Natural Resources Wales, Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water, emergency services and other Risk Management Authorities.

Together, these measures aim to create a safer, more resilient Neath Port Talbot focused on protecting people, property, and the environment while delivering social, economic, and ecological benefits consistent with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.

What is the risk of flooding in our area?

Neath Port Talbot County Borough contains a diverse mix of steep valleys, coastal lowlands, and rural uplands, all of which contribute to significant and recurring flood risk from rivers, the sea, and surface water. High-level assessments by NRW, identify Neath, Briton Ferry, and Port Talbot as the communities at greatest combined flood risk. However, these assessments do not fully reflect localised surface water and ordinary watercourse issues, which remain a major cause of flooding across the county.

To address this, the Council has updated its Strategic Flood Consequence Assessment (SFCA), shifting from ward-based analysis to a catchment-based approach using 15 Strategic Flood Risk Areas (SFRAs). This method better reflects natural drainage patterns and leverages improved datasets, modelling, and asset information. Flood risk has been assessed using property counts across fluvial, pluvial, and coastal sources, drawing on NRW's FRAW maps, OS building data, local catchment mapping, and the authority's LLPG system.

Findings show that 40% of all properties in NPTCBC (25,821 out of 64,708) are at some level of flood risk. Key themes include:

- Fluvial flooding presents the greatest overall risk, affecting 13,448 properties, mainly at low risk.
- Pluvial flooding threatens 10,939 properties, with a notably high proportion at high risk.
- Coastal flooding affects 1,434 properties, mostly at medium risk.

Historical records highlight the severity of flooding locally, with 464 properties recorded as internally flooded between 2013 and 2024 across 31 storm events. Experienced drainage officers identify blocked or defective culvert intakes as the most common cause of flooding, emphasising the importance of maintaining "Critical Flood Risk Assets, (CFRAs)" which are monitored weekly.

County-wide property count analysis shows that Neath has the highest overall flood risk, followed by Afan and Neath Vale, whereas catchments such as Lower Clydach and Twrch show very low exposure. Environmental sites, infrastructure, agriculture, and cultural assets also face varying levels of risk across all flood sources.

Overall, the assessment highlights the need for targeted, evidence-based flood risk management, prioritising communities most vulnerable to both frequent and severe events. Continued integration of incident records, investigations, and asset management will be central to improving resilience and directing future flood mitigation measures.

Source of Flooding	Numbers of Residential and Commercial Properties at Risk in NPTCBC			
	All Risk	**High Risk**	**Medium Risk**	**Low Risk**
Fluvial (Rivers)	13,448	2,632	1,820	8,996
Pluvial (Surface Water and Ordinary Watercourses)	10,939	3,548	1,279	6,112
Coastal (Sea)	1,434	444	764	226
Total Risk	**25,821**	**6,624**	**3,863**	**15,334**

Table 2: NPTCBC Property Count Summary



Figure 3: Strategic Flood Risk Areas (Risk Ranked)

Flood Actions

The council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, must continue meeting its duties under the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 by assessing local flood risk and publishing a Action Plan. The new Plan is incorporated into Chapter 7 onwards of the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, supported by a series of targeted **Flood Action Plans** that translate the risk assessments into clear operational tasks.

The Strategy and Plan set out a coordinated, partnership based approach to managing flood risk across the county borough. All sources of flood risk have been identified, recognising that many areas may be affected by multiple flood mechanisms. Risk Management Authorities and stakeholders have been made aware of their responsibilities and are committed to supporting joint flood management activities led by the LLFA.

Delivery of the Strategy is driven by the Flood Action Plan, which outlines actions to review strategic risk areas, identify and prioritise mitigation measures, evaluate costs and benefits, align activities with environmental legislation, and ensure compliance with the Water Framework Directive, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Habitats Regulations. Appendices A1–A3 provide supporting detail:

- **Appendix A1** updates actions from the 2013 FRMS and 2015 FRMP.
- **Appendix A2** sets out new actions for 2024 and beyond.
- **Appendix A3** introduces a streamlined 'Business as Usual' plan capturing core, recurring LLFA duties.

Actions will progress according to available resources, statutory obligations, and evolving priorities, with updates scheduled on a two year cycle. Timescales range from short-term to long-term delivery (1 year to 6+ years), alongside continual activities, and costs vary from very low to very high depending on the scale of intervention. The Action Plan framework will guide flood risk management activities until 2030, ensuring that NPTCBC continues to fulfil its statutory responsibilities while improving long-term resilience.

Funding and prioritisation

Our Strategy and Plan requires a clear and sustainable approach to funding in order to deliver the proposed actions, statutory duties, and capital flood alleviation schemes (FAS). The LLFA relies heavily on Welsh Government funding, supplemented by internal capital and revenue budgets, to manage both planned and emergency flood risk activities.

Current internal funding includes approximately **£300k annually for capital works**, a variable **15% contribution** to WG funded schemes, and a **£2.9m annual drainage revenue budget** for operational maintenance. Notably, no dedicated capital allocation exists for Minor Works, meaning these are delivered only when funding becomes available.

Welsh Government remains the primary external funding source, offering a mix of revenue and capital grants for business case development (100%), construction of FAS projects (75–85%), and small scale works (up to £150k annually). Additional grants include the Flood Revenue Grant (transferred into the RSG from April 2024), the NFM Accelerator Grant (from 2023), and potential emergency funding assessed case by case. WG also supports highway drainage resilience improvements through the Regional Transport Fund and the Local Government Borrowing Initiative; and Coastal Resilience through the Marine Resilience Challenge Fund.

Other possible funding streams include the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), Section 106 agreements linked to new development, and partnership funding from Welsh Water for sewer related flooding schemes. However, none of these mechanisms cover long-term maintenance costs, which remain the responsibility of the LLFA.

To achieve the Strategy's objectives, **significant additional internal funding will be required**. Without it, key actions and measures risk partial or non delivery.

The prioritisation of FCERM activities in Neath Port Talbot aligns with national policy, with schemes that reduce flood risk to homes receiving highest priority. Wider benefits—such as biodiversity enhancement, regeneration, and community resilience are encouraged, and partnership contributions are expected where third parties' benefit. The Flood Action Plan lists major schemes and activities, categorised by delivery timescale rather than internal ranking.

Environmental Assessments

Development of the Strategy and Plan has been supported by comprehensive environmental assessments to ensure that proposed objectives, measures, and actions protect the environment and comply with statutory requirements.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

A full SEA was undertaken as legally required. The assessment confirmed that:

- The Strategy and Plan is necessary due to national legislative duties and offers clear environmental opportunities through Natural Flood Management (NFM), Nature Based Solutions (NBS), and sustainable drainage (SuDS).
- The Strategy's objectives strongly align with environmental protection aims, with no conflicts significant enough to prevent its progression.
- Key measures, particularly those related to SuDS, NFM, biodiversity enhancement, and community preparedness, are expected to deliver wide ranging environmental, social, and climate resilience benefits.
- Asset management and maintenance activities generally offer slight but positive environmental effects, although some short-term construction impacts (e.g., siltation, noise, habitat disturbance) may occur but can be managed with standard mitigation practices.
- Hard engineered flood alleviation schemes may pose greater risks to biodiversity, water quality, and carbon emissions; however, these schemes will undergo further project level assessments (including EIA/HRA as required) and incorporate mitigation through design and construction management plans.
- Many actions focus on improving understanding of flood mechanisms, mapping, and feasibility studies, which have neutral environmental effects but are essential for informed long-term management.
- Effective partnership working with NRW, Welsh Water, emergency services, highways authorities, and private landowners is vital and expected to yield further benefits, despite potential coordination challenges.

Overall, the SEA concludes that the Strategy and Plan represents a balanced and environmentally sound approach to managing flood risk across Neath Port Talbot.

Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

An HRA was undertaken due to potential impacts on protected European sites (SACs, SPAs, Ramsar sites). Key findings include:

- Likely Significant Effects could not be ruled out, necessitating Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.
- High level assessments were undertaken where project specific details were not yet available.

With proposed mitigation in place, the Strategy is **not expected to adversely affect the integrity of any European site**, alone or in combination with other plans or projects. Additionally, any future projects requiring planning permission will undergo project level HRA where necessary.

Water Framework Directive (WFD) Assessment

WFD considerations were integrated into the SEA. Key outcomes:

- Some Measures and Actions may modify watercourses or affect flow patterns, potentially increasing risks such as sedimentation or spread of invasive species if managed poorly.
- Other measures particularly SuDS, NFM and NBS strongly support WFD objectives by improving runoff quality, reducing pollution, and enabling more natural watercourse functioning.
- Any future schemes involving fluvial, estuarine, or coastal works must undergo WFD assessment at design stage, considering the waterbody status at that time.

The Council already incorporates WFD compliance into ordinary watercourse consenting and will continue to do so for LFRMSP derived schemes.

Monitoring progress

The Council will review its Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan every two years to align with Section 18 of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the National Strategy for Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM). These bi-annual reviews will assess progress in reducing flood risk, enhancing habitats, and delivering benefits in line with Water Framework Directive objectives. Although not mandatory, NPTCBC considers this reporting cycle to be best practice.

Each bi-annual report will outline progress against measures, objectives, and actions; detail how activities have been implemented; evaluate changes in flood and coastal erosion risk; highlight major FCERM projects; and reference significant flood events and related Section 19 reports. It will also showcase local and regional best practice, including innovative projects, natural flood management, partnership working, and community engagement. The report will be prepared by the LLFA and published alongside the updated Action Plan.

Routine “Business as Usual” activities including those required under relevant legislation such as the FWMA 2010 and FRR 2009 (Revoked) will not be reported, as they are considered to be embedded within the council’s daily operations and internal reporting.

The Strategy and Action Plan will continue to be monitored and updated every two years, ensuring alignment with current legislation, national policy changes, and the latest evidence. Amendments will undergo review by senior management and relevant political processes before being made publicly available, with the Action Plan published as an addendum on the council’s Flood Risk webpage.