Flood Investigation –
S19 Flood & Water Management Act 2010

Appendix D
to the Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy

March 2016
CONTENT

Flood Investigation S19 Flood & Water Management Act 2010 3
Flood Incident Recording 5
Flood Incident Priority 6
Flood Investigation Report 7
Suffolk County Council, as Lead Local Flood Authority, has been undertaking flood incident investigation work since 2011. During this time, processes have been put in place and reviewed based on the knowledge gained from these investigations. One of the elements that has not been addressed is the requirement to publish the outcomes of these investigations, as there appears to be some ambiguity to the detail required. Guidance from Central Government or Defra was not forthcoming on how this should be addressed.

This appendix outlines the requirements, the process, and what will be published.

Flood & Water Management Act 2010

Section 19 - Local authorities: investigations

(1) On becoming aware of a flood in its area, a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) must, to the extent that it considers it necessary or appropriate, investigate—

(a) which risk management authorities have relevant flood risk management functions, and

(b) whether each of those risk management authorities has exercised, or is proposing to exercise, those functions in response to the flood.

(2) Where an authority carries out an investigation under subsection (1) it must—

(a) publish the results of its investigation, and

(b) notify any relevant risk management authorities.

Defining ‘Necessary or Appropriate’.

The act states where it considers it ‘necessary or appropriate’. This allows the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) to determine the level of investigation required, as it would be neither practical or desirable for LLFA’s to carry out formal investigations for every occasion where flooding occurred. This gives the LLFA’s a great deal of latitude in determining the threshold that will determine whether or not to investigate a flood.

The Suffolk Flood Risk Management Strategy defines the criteria of when Suffolk will investigate;

An investigation will normally be carried out when any of the following criteria are met:

- where there was a risk to life as a result of flooding;
- where internal flooding of one property (domestic or business) has been experienced on more than one occasion;
- where internal flooding of five properties has been experienced during one single flood incident;
- where a major transport route was closed for more than 10 hours as a result of flooding;
- where critical infrastructure was affected by flooding;
- and where there is ambiguity surrounding the source or responsibility of a flood incident.
Reporting of incidents;

Incidents can be reported quickly and easily via Suffolk County Council’s “Highways Reporting Tool” (http://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/), or called in using our customer contact number 0345 606 6067. All reports are stored on a central reporting system, and are plotted onto a digital mapping system; see appendix 1. These incidents are then analysed by an initial investigation, whether desktop or by site visit. Each incident is then prioritised from 1 to 3; 1 being a full investigation and 3 being insignificant. The definitions of these priorities can be found in appendix 2.

During 2014, 515 incidents of flooding were reported. However, it has been recognised that not all flood incidents are reported to SCC, as other flood risk management authorities will resolve the issues directly (e.g. Environment Agency or Anglian Water). Although this is beneficial in the short term, if these incidents are not recorded on a central database, then it is difficult to build an historical database to recognise flood patterns and areas that may benefit from long term solutions.

Once an incident has been designated priority 1, a full investigation is undertaken and a report will need to be published. Currently there are 5 reports published for incidents in Sudbury, Lawshall, Kesgrave, Felixstowe, and Lowestoft.

Level of Data to be Published

It must be recognised the sensitivity of published information which may blight an area. However, the whole purpose of publishing is to share information to increase our understanding of local flood risk. It should also be noted, that if the properties have been flooded then the owners have an obligation to declare the flooding in any insurance contract or property sale.

The minimum amount of information required to meet the act is;

**Date:** 15/07/2014  
**Location:** Town  
**Source:** Surface Water  
**Relevant RMA:** LLFA

Although this will meet the criteria in the Act, it may be subject to many of a Freedom of Information requests and will likely be more resource intensive.

At the other end of the spectrum, a full report could be produced, detailing: rainfall data, flood levels, specific locations, property addresses etc. Although this data is useful for the investigation, some of this data could fall foul of the data protection act.

Therefore, the proposal is to publish a report that identifies, date of incident, the area of flooding, historical data, photos and plan of location. The format of such report can be found in Appendix 3.

Publishing

Before the report can be published;

- it will be passed through internal quality checks.
- be ratified by the Partnership.
- the flood risk management authority responsible will be informed.
- those who reported the flood will be informed.


Proposal

The proposal is to use the format proposed in Appendix 3 and publish on the Suffolk County Council website. A review of process and performance will be carried out after a 12 month period.

Discussion;

(1) Appropriateness of priorities  
(2) Level of detail to publish  
(3) Ratification process  
(4) Publishing timescale  
(5) Other RMA reporting mechanisms and cross communications
Flood Incident Recording

Surface Water Flood Risk for - Leiston, Suffolk

*Please note this map should not be used to assess flood risk for individual properties. It should only be viewed at its local-scale scale to give an approximate flood extent. For example, small drainage ditches may not have been incorporated into these flood maps with an underestimated flood risk."
Flood Incident Priority

A flood incident can take varying forms and be interpreted in different ways in terms of where water should not be present. When reported the significance of the flood is associated with varying levels of expectation. Given that the number of incidents tends to increase when there is a period of intense rainfall, the incoming incidents of flooding need to be prioritised to effectively deal with those of worst impact. Therefore a priority system is used to guide the investigations to effectively reduce the impact of flooding.

The priority system is based on the SFRM strategy and put into 3 categories; Priority 1, 2 & 3, defined as follows;

Priority 1; Full investigation and publish a report

Criteria;
- there was a risk to life as a result of flooding
- internal flooding of one property (domestic or commercial) has been experienced on more than one occasion
- internal flooding of 5 properties or more has been experienced during one single flood incident
- a major transport route was closed for more than 10 hours
- critical infrastructure was affected
- there is ambiguity surrounding the source or responsibility of a flood incident
- political request
- repeated priority 2 incidents.

Priority 2; Desktop and possible site investigation, no published report, recorded, inform those responsible, cursory feedback.

Criteria;
- Threat of P1, but less impact
- Less than 5 properties flooded internally
- Garden flooding, probable overspill internal to property
- Culvert blocked properties may be affected
- Highway impassable less than 10 hours
- Watercourse at high level, no flow
- Repeated priority 3 significance assessment.

Priority 3; Desktop investigation, recorded, no published report, feedback?

Criteria;
- Insignificant;
- No property flooded;
- Garden flooding but will not spill into property;
- Highway ponding;
- Culvert blocked, no threat to property;
- Watercourse at high level and flowing.
Flood Investigation Report

Upon learning of the following flood event the Council determined it was necessary to carry out an investigation under Section 19 (1) of the Flood and Water Management Act in order to determine which risk management authorities had relevant flood risk management functions and whether each of those risk management authorities had exercised or was proposing to exercise those functions in response to the flood. In accordance with Section 19 (2) of the Flood and Water Management Act this report details the results of the investigation.

| Reference: | FW2014-0376 (may be more than one for a storm event) |
| Location:  | (Street name, Town, County, postcode)               |
| Flood Event Date:                                      |
| Reported to SCC Date:                                  |
| Investigation Date:                                   |
| Reason for investigation:                             |
| (State priority criteria)                             |

Investigation area map

| OS Grid Reference: |                                      |
| **Extent of flooding:**  
Include approximate dimensions and depths |  |
| **Effect of flooding:**  
Properties affected, road closed, critical infrastructure, duration |  |
| **History:**  
Record historical data sourced from locals and desktop study |  |
| **Causes:**  
Information found from desktop study and site investigation, rainfall intensity, obstructions, topography |  |
| **Additional Information & Photos:**  
Maintenance regimes, condition survey, flow paths, images of flood, levels |  |
Additional Information & Photos:
(Maintenance regimes, condition survey, flow paths, images of flood, levels)
### Risk Management Authority:
(May be more than one)

### Functions:
(Asset responsibility, riparian owner)

### Action:
(action required and by when, completed)

### Recommendations:
(Increase maintenance/inspection, alter control devices, designate features)

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