

APPENDIX B: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM 2015 & 2023 HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENTS & STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENTS

DRAFT VERSION

A draft strategic Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) & draft Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) have been carried out with the final version subject to consultation with relevant public bodies. Previous HRA & SEA recommendations have also been considered in the Action Plan (most generally in relation to Objective 3). In addition, the following general points should be noted:

- During the development of any specific measures or actions emanating from this Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (LFRMS) further appropriate environmental appraisal work will be undertaken at project level and environmental impacts will, therefore, be considered as part of any flood risk management activities. For any activity that might affect a site listed in table 2 in the accompanying HRA, this will include Habitats Regulations Assessment. We will not pursue any activities which could result in a negative environmental impact within Staffordshire or in neighbouring Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) areas.
- The following environmental objectives apply to all Objectives and Actions and to Staffordshire County Council exercise of flood risk management functions including approval of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs), designation of features, consent of works and use of permissive land drainage powers to manage the ordinary watercourse network:
 - use of source control measures (such as SuDs),
 - enhancing biodiversity and habitat networks,
 - sympathy to local landscape character,
 - preserving cultural and historical assets for the future,
 - enabling adaptation to future changes in climate and land use

Environmental impacts will be considered as part of any flood risk management activity. An appropriate level of assessment will be made at every stage, starting with a strategic level of assessment for the Strategy through to environmental considerations during scheme design and whilst considering sustainable drainage systems proposed for new developments.

- Use of 'check, clean, dry' for biosecurity on all equipment and promotion of this through contracts. This will be very important where natural flood management requires interventions further into headwaters.

- A desk-based ecological assessment, including a data search from Staffordshire Ecological Record (SCC) should inform all new schemes and projects. This will indicate whether on the ground survey and mitigation work is needed.
- Staffordshire has several reservoirs for water storage. Although the likelihood of reservoir failure is very small there is also the potential for the consequence of the failure to be large. Local authorities are responsible for developing reservoir flood plans and as recommended by the Pitt Review, the Environment Agency produces reservoir flood maps for large reservoirs (over 25,000 cubic meters of water). The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) should take the opportunity afforded by the LFRMS to work with authorities to ensure these flood plans and maps are considered, new development prevented in these areas due to the potential risks and actions taken by relevant authorities to ensure that reservoirs, including smaller reservoirs, are safe.
- This Strategy should aim to protect, improve and sustainably manage the use of the water environment for the benefit of the human and natural environment. The Environment Agency has in the past noted the possibility of morphological impacts in respect of previous flood defence and drainage schemes. For example, the supply and transport of sediment can be affected by the introduction of hard structures and the introduction of barriers designed to control flow. Where measures introduced as a result of the LFRMS are able to work with natural processes, these should aim to deliver physical (hydromorphology) improvements to the functioning of the water body.
- Opportunities to restore/rehabilitate water courses should be taken through day to day opportunities and actions, for example during planning approvals, or through maintenance programmes.
- The Strategy should look to maintain and improve the quality of waterbodies. Wherever possible proactive and reactive measures should consider the aims of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) to reduce levels of pollution and hazardous substances in surface water and groundwater.
- Additionally, opportunities for targeted new woodland creation to help mitigate water flow issues, whilst simultaneously contributing to biodiversity enhancement, should be encouraged.
- Any plans or projects arising from planned physical activities to have its own HRA assessment

- Flood risk management actions should be sympathetic to the location in which they are being undertaken and the sensitivity of any landscape resources.
- Existing sensitive landscape should be protected, and the amenity and natural beauty of inland waters enhanced.
- Flood risk management actions should ensure high quality design also delivers enhancements/improvements to landscapes where character and/or quality is eroded or in decline'
- Heritage assets can be at risk from increased flooding which may damage the fabric of the asset or its setting, or they may be at risk during any flood alleviation works. These impacts will be dependent on the specific location, the type of flood risk management actions being undertaken and the sensitivity of the resources.
- Given that cultural heritage assets will remain an important feature of Staffordshire, flood risk management defences should seek to protect heritage assets of importance, where they are at risk of flooding, and should be sensitive to the location in which they are undertaken.
- There is a need to place more emphasis on enhancing the environment in the most deprived areas and simultaneously protecting people and places from flooding.
- Sustainable agricultural land management and long-term protection measures to reduce soil degradation to be more actively promoted in order to protect the soils of the best agricultural land. This can deliver multiple benefits and reduce diffuse pollution.