

Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment Report 2011 - Frequently Asked Questions

The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment (PFRA) provides an overview of the flood risk to Leicester from an extreme rainfall event. It has been produced to comply with the EU Floods Directive and Flood Risk Regulations 2009.

Please find below answers to some frequently asked questions. If you require further information on this subject, please contact Philip Thompson, Flood risk manager on 0116 454 4975.

What is a PFRA?

A Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is a report written by upper tier local authorities like Leicester City Council to identify the nationally significant areas of highest flood risk from surface water flooding across England and Wales. It is a brief report looking at what floods have happened in the past, what floods are predicted to be possible in the future and assessing whether they meet criteria to define them as being 'nationally significant'.

Why is the council producing one?

The EU Floods Directive requires all member states to predict areas at risk of flooding so they can draw up management plans for the most significant. The Flood Risk Regulations 2009 transposed this into UK law. We are therefore obliged to prepare and submit a preliminary assessment of flood risk for central government to report the nationally significant flood risk areas to the European Union.

What does it show?

The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment shows risk of flooding from surface water only. Surface water flooding is due to heavy rainfall and relates to water flooding out of small watercourses, over the ground as it can't be absorbed or groundwater rising back to the surface. The Environment Agency prepares information on the risk of flooding from rivers, the sea, large brooks and critical ordinary watercourses. They are not preparing Preliminary Flood Risk Assessments for each area as the information which they currently provide is detailed enough.

What will happen next?

Areas which are designated nationally significant flood risk areas will be required to prepare maps of flood risk and flood hazard and management plans for these areas to a national timetable. More information can be found on our website, or on the Environment Agency's website.

As Leicester is a 'nationally significant' flood risk area, we are required to prepare flood hazard maps. These will be delivered as part of the Surface Water Management Plan study.

What will this document be used for?

The document will mainly be used by central government to report on areas of nationally significant flood risk to the European Union.

This document should not be used as an accurate assessment of flood risk to individual properties – it is not accurate at that scale. Therefore it should not be used to make decisions relating to development or emergency planning, nor assessments of flood risk for insurance purposes.

The document is publicly available to anyone to view, but it only forms a very general overview of where flood risk is located. More detailed information will be available from the Surface Water Management Plan.

Where did the information for this come from?

The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment includes details of historical flooding which has been gained from records held by the Environment Agency, Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service, Severn Trent Water and Leicester City Council's Highways Maintenance section.

Future flood risk has been assessed from the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Surface Water. This is a map produced at a national scale to show the areas most likely to flood due to heavy rainfall, based on topography, the amount of rain which falls on average in different areas and the sewerage system. As it is produced for the whole of the United Kingdom it contains a lot of assumptions. The Surface Water Management Plan study provides a more detailed assessment of areas likely to flood in Leicester City.

How was the report produced?

We employed consultants URS Scott Wilson to complete the report. It involved compiling historical records of flooding events and analysing predictions of areas which may flood to assess the numbers of properties, people and critical infrastructure which may be affected.

The Environment Agency has prepared a national methodology which consists of 1km by 1km squares being marked as being at risk of flooding if a certain number of properties within them are at risk. These areas were then added together into clusters. When these clusters covered an area where at least 30,000 people lived they were designated as indicative nationally significant flood risk areas.

The report was approved by the city mayor Peter Soulsby and submitted to the Environment Agency which confirmed that it is 'comprehensively compliant' with the regulations – it covers everything needed in detail.

Is every property in the blue squares on map 5-3 at risk?

No. The blue squares are 1km by 1km areas where a certain threshold of risk is predicted, namely 200 people, 1 piece of critical infrastructure or 20 businesses. This does not mean that all of the properties in this 1km by 1km square are at risk.

Why did we suggest including the M1 junction and Blaby area?

The extension to the indicative flood risk area around the M1 junction 21 and the area around the North of Blaby was reached through discussions with Leicestershire County Council, the Fire and Rescue Service and the Environment Agency local office. Flooding to the junction would cause significant flooding. Blaby forms part of the built up area of Leicester and is adjacent to other areas at risk of flooding. The area police HQ is also in this location which counts as 'critical infrastructure' as the emergency response to a flooding event would be coordinated from there.

I live in one of the blue squares, what should I do?

Most of Leicester is covered by one of the blue squares, but this does not mean that all properties are at risk! You should check to see if your property is at risk from surface water flooding or flooding from rivers.

You can check whether your property is at risk of flooding from rivers on the Environment Agency's website.

Our website also has information about protecting your home from flooding.

What's the difference between the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Surface Water Management Plan?

The Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment is part of a national overview to show only the largest areas of flooding. The Surface Water Management Plan is more detailed so that we can assess the areas most likely to flood in the future to try and reduce the risk. The Surface Water Management Plan is therefore of more use to people trying to assess flood risk to individual areas of Leicester.