External briefing

Changes to the Flood Map for Planning service

For: Developers and flood risk assessment consultants

Summary

- On 27 August 2025 we are making changes to the Flood Map for Planning service based on user feedback.
- A ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer will be shown instead of the existing rivers/sea with and without defences layers.
- The removed layers will continue to be available on the Defra Data Services Platform (DSP).

Background

In March 2025 we updated the Flood Map for Planning with new flood risk information. This included layers showing the possible effects of climate change on river and sea flood risk in future.

Following publication, we have been receiving user feedback about the updated service.

As a result of this feedback, we are planning changes to the service. This briefing aims to help you understand these changes.

What changes are we making to the Flood Map for Planning and why?

On **27 August 2025**, we plan to add a layer called ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’. It will show how the combined extent of Flood Zones 2 and 3 could increase with climate change over the next century. This new layer will also be available on the DSP.

This new layer will be shown on the service instead of the following layers, which will be removed:

- Rivers and sea with defences (present day and with climate change) 3.3%, 1%/0.5% and 0.1% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP)
- Rivers and sea without defences (present day and with climate change) 1%/0.5% and 0.1% AEPs

The ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer will also be available on the DSP [we will add a link here as soon as it is published].

The Flood Zones and surface water flood risk information will remain unchanged.

When we updated the Flood Map for Planning in March, we retained our existing Flood Zone information in some locations while we make improvements to our new

data. We will not have ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ information in these locations until the improvements have been made.

Does the new ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer change our understanding of flood risk?

No. The new layer is a simplification of the rivers and sea defended/undefended layers that were published in March. We are not showing any new areas as being at risk of flooding which were not already identified as such by the information published in March.

How and when should the new ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer be used in planning?

You should start using the new ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer straight away. Publishing the new layer will not affect live applications as it is a simplification of our existing data and does not change our understanding of flood risk. Live applications should already be considering the information published in March.

If you use our data in your own GIS tool, you should add the ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer as soon as it is published. As before, we recommend the use of data feeds to ensure your tools always display the latest version of the layer.

The new ‘Flood Zones plus climate change’ layer should be used to help identify the need for:

- A site-specific flood risk assessment
- The sequential test

The layer can also help to inform the preparation of strategic flood risk assessments.

The layer will need to be used alongside other more detailed information and assessments to inform how the sequential test, exception test, and site-specific flood risk assessments are carried out.

It is important that users of any flood risk data always check that it is suitable for its intended use.

Will the datasets being removed from the Flood Map for Planning still be available for use in planning?

The removed layers will still be available on the DSP to help support further assessments and inform planning decisions. Data feeds will continue to work.

In some locations, the best outputs we hold are still only available from local models rather than our nationally created 'with/without defences' layers. These local model outputs remain available via Product 4s, which can be ordered through the Flood Map for Planning service. As set out in our current guidance, it remains important that users check the suitability of our flood risk data before use.

How are we communicating this change?

This briefing aims to inform developers and flood risk assessment consultants about this change.

Further supporting guidance is, or will be, available from:

- DSP Meta Data for 'Flood Zones plus climate change' [Link will be added once published]*
- How to use flood map for planning data*
- How to prepare a strategic flood risk assessment*
- Product suitability diagram
- Town and Country Planning Association website
- Flood risk assessments: applying for planning permission*

* Expected to be available from 27 August

What future changes are we planning to make to the Flood Map for Planning service and datasets?

Our target date for implementing this change to the Flood Map for Planning is 27 August 2025.

We plan a series of three updates to the Flood Zones and supporting datasets that we publish through the Flood Map for Planning in 2025 and 2026. As use of the new system becomes routine and the newer datasets are improved, we expect to return to quarterly updates. In these updates, we will include new local detailed models and make targeted improvements to our data.

We expect to add surface water climate change extents and banded depth information to the Flood Map for Planning in autumn 2025. We are also planning to make rivers and sea banded depth information available by the end of 2025.

Further information

If you need further information about these changes, please use the following contacts.

For local support on what our data means for planning decisions in your area, please contact your local Environment Agency Sustainable Places team.

For questions about the Flood Map for Planning datasets (including supporting datasets on the DSP) or custodianship, please contact the Risk Assessment team.

For questions about planning-related guidance, including how to use the Flood Map for Planning datasets, please contact the Strategy & Resilient Places team.