

# External briefing



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## Changes to the Flood Map for Planning service

**For: Developers and flood risk assessment consultants**

### Summary

- On **29 January 2026** we are planning to add new surface water climate change extents and banded depth information to the Flood Map for Planning (FMfP).
- New datasets will add to the present day surface water flood risk extents already on the FMfP.
- New datasets will end the need for planners and developers to use the surface water flood risk information on the Check your long term flood risk (CYLTFR) service.

### Background

In March 2025 we added new flood risk information to the FMfP. This included new surface water flood risk information, but for present day only.

There is a clear user-need for providing surface water flood risk information that includes climate change scenarios suitable for use in development planning. User feedback has also told us it can be confusing to have our development planning flood risk information split across our digital services.

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

On 29 January 2026, we plan to add new surface water flood risk extents which account for climate change. We will also add banded depth information for surface water. These new layers will also be available on the Defra Data Services Platform (DSP):

- Climate change extents [\[link will be added here when they are available\]](#)
- Banded depth [\[link will be added here when they are available\]](#)

The Flood Zones and existing present day surface water flood risk extents will be unchanged.

Upon publication, we recommend that you remove the CYLTFR surface water datasets from any GIS tools you use for development planning. For the avoidance of doubt, the layers you should remove and stop using for development planning are:

- [Risk of flooding from surface water](#) – present day extents and depths
- [Risk of flooding from surface water](#) – climate change extents and depths

**How will the new surface water datasets be used in planning?**

The new datasets can be used to identify the need for and to inform the carrying out of:

- A site-specific flood risk assessment
- The sequential test (exemptions may apply)

The new datasets can also help to inform the design of sustainable drainage systems and the preparation of strategic flood risk assessments.

We will be updating our guidance to explain how the new datasets have been produced and to support how planners and developers can use them.

**How and when should the new surface water datasets be used in planning? Are there transitional arrangements for live applications?**

You should add the new surface water flood risk datasets to the GIS tools you use for development planning as soon as they are published. As before, we recommend the use of data feeds to ensure your tools always display the latest version of the layer.

You can start using the new surface water datasets straightaway. Local Planning Authorities will need to consider how to transition to the new datasets for live applications.

In some cases, for example where a site not previously at risk now lies within a flood risk area, the new datasets may trigger a new requirement for a flood risk assessment and sequential test (exemptions apply). In other cases, the new datasets may trigger the need for applicants to update existing flood risk assessments, sequential tests or sustainable drainage system designs.

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

**Do the new datasets affect the Environment Agency's role?**

The Environment Agency is not a statutory consultee on surface water flood risk. Our flood risk advice will continue to be focused on river and sea flooding. Local Planning Authorities will continue to follow the process set out in [National Flood Risk Standing Advice for Local Planning Authorities](#) to determine if the Environment Agency should be consulted.

**What's the difference between the surface water datasets on Check your long term flood risk and Flood map for planning? Which datasets can be used for planning?**

The present day surface water extents on FMfP and CYLTFR are identical. However, the climate change scenarios shown will differ.

Digital service	Climate change scenario	Time horizon
Flood Map for Planning	Upper end (95 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	2070s epoch (2061-2125)
Check your long term flood risk	Central (50 <sup>th</sup> percentile)	2050s epoch (2040 to 2060)

We have previously explained that the surface water climate change scenario and time horizon used on CYLTFR, fall short of those needed for most planning proposals – as set out in our [Flood risk assessment: climate change allowances](#). We also explained that the depth information provided on CYLTFR did not provide appropriate information for use in planning. However, in the absence of more suitable datasets, our previous advice was that the information could be used to inform flood risk assessments.

Now that we are adding more suitable climate change and banded depth information to FMfP, planners and developers will no longer need to utilise the surface water datasets on CYLTFR.

### How are we communicating this change?

This briefing aims to inform relevant developers and FRA consultants about this change.

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

- [DSP Meta Data](#)\*
- [How to use flood map for planning data](#)\*
- [National flood risk standing advice for local planning authorities](#)\*
- [How to prepare a strategic flood risk assessment](#)\*
- [Product suitability diagram](#)
- Guidance for developers and FRA consultants on the [Town and Country Planning Association website](#) and on [Flood risk assessments: applying for planning permission](#)\*

\* Expected to be available from 29 January

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

Our target date to implement this change to the FMfP is 29 January 2026.

We are also planning to make rivers and sea banded depth information available in spring 2026, initially via the Defra Data Services Platform. We will provide more information in due course regarding if, when and how we may incorporate the information into the FMfP.

### 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 planning authority in the first instance.

For questions about how the new datasets have been produced, 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](#).