

The Strategic Flood Map is designed to:



Help us and others to plan and manage our work to reduce flood risk.



Encourage people living and working in areas prone to flooding to find out more and take appropriate action.



Inform anyone who wants to apply for planning permission if flooding is likely to be an important consideration.

The Strategic Flood Map will not:



Increase the existing flood risk to people and property.



Identify the flood risk to individual properties or specific point locations.



Identify areas prone to flooding from sources other than rivers and the sea.

Rivers Agency is an Executive Agency within the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development. We are the statutory drainage and flood defence authority for Northern Ireland and our vision is:

‘To manage flood risk to facilitate the social, economic and environmental development of Northern Ireland’.

Managing Flooding in the Future – The Strategic Flood Map (NI) – Rivers & Sea

Flooding from rivers and the sea is a natural phenomenon that cannot be entirely prevented, but by acting together with other authorities and the public, we can reduce its impact on people, property and the environment.

In the past, when significant flooding has affected communities or infrastructure, Rivers Agency has intervened to reduce the flood risk through the construction of flood defences. Despite all of this valuable work our most recent studies, undertaken with the latest flood modelling techniques, indicate that there are many areas that remain at risk of flooding.

While there will be a continuing need for investment in flood defences in specific circumstances, engineering solutions alone will not be sufficient to meet all of the challenges we face from the increased risk of flooding in the future, particularly in the context of climate change. The emphasis in the future shall be on flood risk management which (in addition to the use of appropriate flood defences), will focus on the use of sustainable wide-ranging catchment based solutions to reduce flood risk, the establishment of effective emergency planning and response measures and the raising of public awareness.

Therefore Rivers Agency (in line with the requirements of the European Union Floods Directive), has recently embarked on a process that will lead to the development of catchment based, flood risk management plans for all of the areas of potential significant flood risk throughout NI. Rivers Agency shall be actively involving and consulting widely with all stakeholders in the development of these plans.

The shared challenge will be to produce plans which contain appropriate and affordable solutions that reduce flood risk and protect and enhance the environment. The first step in this process has been to identify those areas that are likely to be affected by flooding now and in the future. It is with this aim in mind that Rivers Agency has developed the Strategic Flood Map (NI) – Rivers & Sea which is now available on our website at www.riversagency.ni.gov.uk.

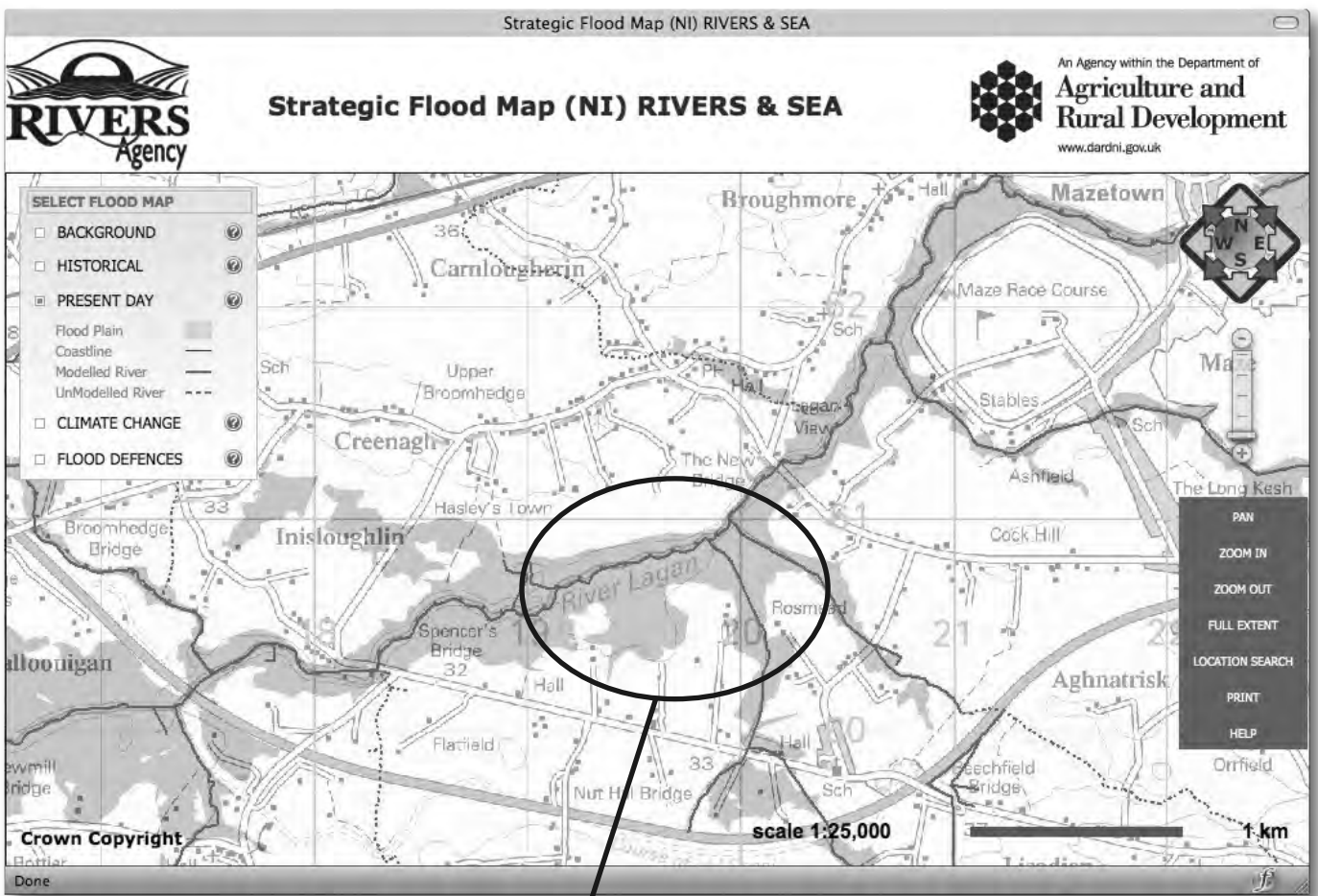
An Overview of the Strategic Flood Map

The Strategic Flood Map illustrates the areas throughout Northern Ireland that have flooded from rivers and the sea in the past and those which are estimated to be prone to flooding now and in the future. It also provides additional information on the location of existing flood defences and highlights the areas that benefit from these defences.

As there are inherent uncertainties with the flood modelling techniques and data used to produce this national snapshot of our flood prone areas, the Strategic Flood Map is not sufficiently accurate to determine the flood risk to individual properties or specific point locations. It is also important to note that the map does not illustrate flooding from other notable sources such as surface water and overflowing sewers.



Aerial Photograph of the River Lagan Flood Plain (for illustration purposes only)



Actual Screen View of Strategic Flood Map (NI)

Note the agreement between the actual recorded flood plain in the aerial photograph above and the flood plain that is illustrated in the Present Day flood map that has been produced using our flood modelling methodology.

Flood Plains & Flood Defences

Flood plains are the relatively flat areas of land adjacent to our rivers and the sea that are estimated to be subject to periodic coverage by flood water.

The flood plain outlines within the Strategic Flood Map highlight those areas that in any year have a 1 in 100 or greater chance of flooding from a river and/or a 1 in 200 or greater chance of flooding from the sea.

These flood plains have been estimated using predictive modelling techniques and in line with government's land use planning policies include those areas which would flood if it was not for the presence of existing flood defences. In other words the areas which benefit from flood defences will still appear within the predicted flood plain outlines. The reason for this approach is that, although flood defences undoubtedly reduce the likelihood of flooding, they do not eliminate it entirely. Therefore the residual flood risk to 'defended areas' remains a material consideration for all planning applications in these areas.

Contents of the Strategic Flood Map

For the purposes of clarity and ease of use the Strategic Flood Map currently contains four distinct map layers. A description of the data contained within each of the map layers and their intended use is as follows:

The Historical flood map layer illustrates the outlines of areas that have been inundated by flood water from rivers and the sea in the past.

This map will be periodically revised as new information becomes available and is useful insofar as it can serve as a strong visual reminder that the risk of flooding is very real.

However, this information in itself is not sufficient to determine the likelihood of flooding now or in the future. To identify potential flood risk areas in a consistent and comprehensive manner across NI, we have used predictive modelling and mapping techniques to estimate the extent of our river and coastal flood plains. These are illustrated within the Climate Change and Present Day flood map layers.

The Present Day flood map layer provides an illustration of the river and coastal flood plains under current climate conditions.

This map enables government, industry and commerce to better understand and manage the flood risk to their infrastructure, business and services. It also provides important information to those groups with responsibilities for flood emergency planning and emergency response and will raise public awareness of flood risk so that communities can be better prepared in the future.

The Climate Change flood map layer provides an illustration of the river and coastal flood plains under projected future climate conditions.

These flood plains have been estimated with models that use the best available predictions for increased river flows and sea levels relevant to the year 2030.

This map has been developed to support the Department of Environment in its application of Planning Policy Statement 15 (PPS 15) – Planning and Flood Risk. PPS 15 adopts a precautionary approach to development decisions which takes account of the impacts of future climate change. PPS15 is founded on the principle of risk avoidance and its policies are specifically tailored to the NI situation. Its primary aim is to avoid, wherever possible, development that may be at risk from flooding or which may increase flooding elsewhere.

The Flood Defence map layer identifies the location of flood defences (such as embankments and walls) and shows the areas which benefit from a reduction in the likelihood of flooding as a consequence of their presence.

How to Access the Online Strategic Flood Map

Subject to acceptance of the terms and conditions of use, the Strategic Flood Map can be accessed through the Rivers Agency's website www.riversagencyni.gov.uk. The map-viewer interface has the facility for users to do a quick search for a location of interest using a postcode or street name or alternatively, to browse around the map using the zoom and pan controls. Each of the flood map layers that make up the Strategic Flood Map can be viewed individually and prints of the map can be taken for personal (non-commercial) use.

How to Contact us About the Strategic Flood Map

If you require any further information in relation to the Strategic Flood Map or if you do not have access to a computer and would like a printed copy of the map for your area, you may contact us by:

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