

Surface Water Management Plans (SWMPs)

A Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) is a plan which outlines the preferred surface water management strategy in a given location or within a given area. In this context surface water flooding describes flooding from sewers, drains, groundwater, and runoff from land, small water courses and ditches that occurs as a result of heavy rainfall. SWMPs are recommended for areas of high flood risk with complex integrated drainage arrangements.

A SWMP study is undertaken in consultation with key local partners who are responsible for surface water management and drainage in their area. Partners work together to understand the causes and effects of surface water flooding and agree the most cost effective way of managing surface water flood risk for the long term. The process of working together as a partnership is designed to encourage the development of innovative solutions and practices.

A SWMP should establish a long-term action plan to manage surface water in an area and should influence future capital investment, drainage maintenance, public engagement and understanding, land-use planning, emergency planning and future developments.

The following benefits will be achieved through undertaking a SWMP study:

- increased understanding of the causes, probability and consequences of surface water flooding;
- increased understanding of where surface water flooding will occur which can be used to inform spatial and emergency planning functions;
- a co-ordinated action plan, agreed by all partners and supported by an understanding of the costs and benefits, which partners will use to work together to identify measures to mitigate surface water flooding;
- identifying opportunities where Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) can play a more significant role in managing surface water flood risk and may also contribute to fulfilling the requirements of the Water Framework Directive;
- helping to meet the requirements of the Flood Risk Regulations (2009) and the Flood and Water Management Bill;
- increased awareness of the duties and responsibilities for managing flood risk of different partners and stakeholders;
- improved public engagement and understanding of surface water flooding.

It is recognised that SWMP studies will vary to meet local needs and circumstances and the guidance available from DEFRA (and other bodies) offers a flexible approach that will allow lead local flood authorities to undertake a SWMP study which is tailored to their needs and requirements.